WILLIAM FAULKNER AND REIFICATION

by

LANCE LA ROCQUE
B.A., University of Victoria, 1987

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department

of

English

ACCEPTED
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
[redacted]
DEAN
DATE Sept 28, 1989

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ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that Faulkner's object within Absalom, Absalom! and The Sound and the Fury is to explore the development and effects of what Georg Lukacs calls reification. By placing these novels within this intellectual framework, Faulkner's critique of the social landscape can better be understood. The concept and conditions of reification, as outlined in Lukacs' History and Class Consciousness, will clarify the social picture painted in the novels and sharpen the reader's perception of the world that Faulkner critiques.

The first chapter examines Lukacs' concept of "reification", providing a context for the psychological drama in Faulkner's novels and finding a vocabulary that speaks to that context. Lukacs fuses Weber's theory of rationality with Marx's notion of the commodity structure, showing the effects of these processes on subjectivity. History and Class Consciousness addresses the history and meanings (increasing formalism, rationalization, and commodification) of reification.

The second chapter focuses on Absalom, Absalom!, a work in which Faulkner juxtaposes the Southern code with the homogenizing effects of the industrial world. By

opposing Sutpen's amorphous country background to his assumption of an over-arching design, Faulkner dramatizes the sudden invasion of abstract formalism on social relations and consciousness. Although Sutpen wants to fit into the role of the Southern gentleman landowner, his method of approach is more in keeping with the values of the industrial world -- he attempts to buy respectability.

The third chapter focuses on the development of reification as a totalizing social problem. In The Sound and the Fury, Faulkner uses Quentin to contrast reification with the value system of the South. Coming from a culture not yet dominated by reification, Quentin has the perspective to locate and protest against it. Whereas the commodified social order must quantify the world so it can function, Quentin appears, both to the reader and to the North, as a question mark, and hence a point of resistance.

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INTRODUCTION

My thesis argues that in order to understand Absalom, Absalom! and The Sound and the Fury, the reader must see in them a response to the social process of reification; this shifts a critical focus from the limits of the essential individual, family structure, or myth. My analysis of these novels attempts to locate the social disintegration outside, where many critics view its origin, the family. For example, in his critical work Faulkner: First Encounters, Cleanth Brooks writes that the Compson children fall into decay and corruption because their mother has withheld her love from them. He argues that it is not the South's decay (a general social phenomenon) that damages Quentin, since, after all, neither Spoade nor Gerald "shows any suicidal tendencies" (52). For Brooks, Quentin's problem is that he "is conscious of the fact that he has no mother" (53).

I agree with this line of reasoning, and its importance has been amply demonstrated by Brooks' and his intellectual heirs. In my thesis, however, I want to expand the scope and look to the broader forces that may have caused Mrs. Compson to withhold her love. Certainly

Quentin may express his pain at his mother's coldness, as when he remembers the picture book, but this pain may not have been enough to bring him to suicide had other conditions not arisen simultaneously with the mother's attitude. I argue that the code of the South, a guide for the Southerner's behaviour, has lost its meaning, being replaced, as it is, by a new code (industrial capitalism). Motherhood, for example, no longer has its old meaning -- an activity of nurturing, and recognizing an off-spring's specialness -- because of the larger social transformation: one in which such kinship values are subsumed by the sameness of the commodity structure.

Because it discusses the homogenizing process of what is referred to as "reification" (the culture of rationalization) Georg Lukacs' formidable History and Class Consciousness is useful for placing Absalom, Absalom! and The Sound and the Fury into an intellectual context. In his discussion, Lukacs identifies and defines the process and effects of reification: the increasing mechanization, the limiting of thought to universal abstract categories (i.e. rational time) at the expense of private experience, and the reduction of all human behaviour to predictable patterns. Reification itself is not a new development. It exists in any culture, capitalist or not. However, as Lukacs argues, in pre-capitalist societies rational techniques have a

limited use, they are only a means to an end, and not an end in themselves. This limited range of rationality in previous cultures does not allow it to have a dominating effect on social relations. For example, the religious systems of Hindu asceticism use "highly rationalized techniques" which can "predict exactly all of its results" (Lukacs 1971, 114). But these techniques are not the purpose of the Hindu ascetic's activity. His real purpose is to achieve a non-rational experience; without his prior non-rational value, he would not concern himself with his system, it would be empty. Until the rise of capitalism such rational systems were always partial systems, a "means to a -- non-rational -- end" (Lukacs 1971, 114). But, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, formalism has developed into a total system, in which rationalism became an end in and of itself. Values took second place. From this point on, Lukacs writes, reification dominated every aspect of human perception and behavior.

The overwhelming scope of commodity exchange, which I discuss in my theoretical chapter, underlies Lukacs' analysis of reification, for only with such dominance "does the commodity become crucial for the subjugation of men's consciousness" (Lukacs 1971, 86). Most useful for giving insight into Faulkner's novels is Lukacs' elucidation of the characteristics of reification. The formalism, repression of quality, and rationalism,

identified by Lukacs as the constituents of a reifying ideology, situate Sutpen's obsessive formalism (his design) and Quentin's inward retreat (away from the brutality of industrial mechanization and exchange) in the thick of an ideological battlefield: between the diversity of experience and the reduction of people to predictable ciphers.

Absalom, Absalom!'s Thomas Sutpen is a paradigmatic example of the internalization of formalism. Not only does Faulkner present him with all the attributes of a reified consciousness (valuing only his design and not the unique people who are a part of it), but he also makes a point of showing that Sutpen's ideology comes from outside himself.

The formalism imposed on Sutpen's consciousness, unlike the Hindu ascetic's, dominates all of his actions. His schematic approach to life devalues unique experiences and memories that do not fit into his logic, because for him the form is the experience, and its particular instances (e.g. his experience of his first wife, his childhood, Bon) are either replaceable or meaningless in light of his ideology. Lukacs' concept of reification details the causes and effects of Sutpen's kind of universalizing world view. Reification explains not only Sutpen's treatment of others (i.e. his practice of

exclusion), it also explains why he becomes what he becomes, why he takes on the values of the ruling class).

After discussing Sutpen, I move on to discuss the second chapter of The Sound and the Fury, "June Second, 1910". In "June Second, 1910" the universalizing formalism of Absalom, Absalom! has become a total feature of the social landscape. In Quentin's wanderings, we can see all the crucial characteristics of reification, as they are articulated in History and Class Consciousness. The characters in Faulkner's North are dominated by the power of exchange and the demands of industrial technology; reification is a way of being, as we see with the jeweler who has so internalized the rationalized lanfscape that he has become, metaphorically, inseperable from his machinery (his glass eye becomes a part of his body).

"June Second, 1910" expresses the full blossoming of the reified social relations of the kind that Sutpen represents. Because reification is so prevalent in the North, Quentin recognizes the oppressiveness of the modern world and -- unlike Sutpen -- deliberately protests against the universalizing standardization that swallows up everything that is personal, contingent, or external to the given order. Furthermore, I will suggest that Quentin's behavior can be explained as a rebellion against reification, and that his reaction locates a potential, if

limited, point of resistance in the margins. My thesis then attempts to situates Absalom, Absalom! and The Sound and the Fury within a specific ideological event -- namely, the reification of consciousness. Therefore, before turning to Faulkner's two novels, I will introduce the main characteristics of reification, by examining History and Class Consciousness.

CHAPTER ONE

THEORETICAL CHAPTER

In this chapter I will discuss my theoretical approach to Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom! and the Sound and the Fury. I work out of a Marxist tradition; within this range of discourse, I am primarily interested in the way capital transforms the subject. Let me state briefly how I think a Marxist point of departure can enhance our understanding of Faulkner's texts. Most obviously, Marxism wrenches us away from locating Quentin's and Sutpen's disintegration in their individual consciousnesses, or in their family situations. Instead, a Marxist reading looks to historical modes of production for the constituting factors that shape the individual subject.

For me, Quentin's suicide is not the result of an individualistic pathology, nor is it due to a degenerate family structure. These are real problems, but they are themselves the result of capital, not causes of transformation, as I will show in my analysis of Faulkner's two novels. What I have discovered in Quentin and Sutpen are the reifying effects of capitalism in

constructing consciousness: the mechanization, abstraction, and division of the self from its material base. What I have also discovered, in "June Second, 1910" are patterns of dereification, based on recovering the marginalized senses, personal histories, and unique individual qualities.

I could not have properly seen the processes of reification or the strategies of dereification (in The Sound and the Fury) without first having read Georg Lukacs' Marxist work History and Class Consciousness. This work places the subject in a historical context, viewing him or her -- not an eternal individual with an essential, human nature -- as a historical product. I ground my analysis in Lukacs because he specifically addresses the historical effects of capital on the psychology of the subject, especially in his development of the concept of reification. While I do not always agree with Lukacs, he provides an excellent vocabulary for describing and explaining what is happening in The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom!.

Lukacs may not seem like an obvious source for this thesis's agenda. He despised high modernist writers, finding them unethical, anti-social promoters of reification. By re-reading Lukacs, I hope to use his categories and insights to create an analysis of Faulkner. I hope to show, then, that like Lukacs' texts, Faulkner's

novels are critical of how bourgeois ideology, or any ideology, "dehistoricizes reality and accepts society as a natural fact" (Eagleton 1981, 30). In my reading, I do not want to maintain the rigid opposition between realism and, for example, Bertolt Brecht's "illusionism". (Brecht used the term "illusionism" to describe any comfortable ideology which "takes for granted the assumption that the dramatic performance should directly reproduce the world" [Eagleton 64].) Instead I want to show how Lukacs' philosophical challenge to reification can find aesthetic allies in the workings of both Absalom, Absalom! and The Sound and the Fury. For Faulkner's texts -- modernist as they are -- attack reification, revealing false consciousness in his characters, and perhaps even overcoming it in a way of which Lukacs would approve.

In this chapter I will look at Lukacs' History and Class Consciousness (1969). I will also refer to key twentieth-century Marxist thinkers including Fredric Jameson (especially Marxism and Form [1974]), Max Horkheimer, and the sociologist George Larrain.

At this point I will briefly summarize Lukacs's essay "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat", from History and Class Consciousness. In such a short space, I do not expect to do justice to this complex social and philosophical analysis, but even a cursory introduction will help explain the issues that Lukacs

deals with and why reification will apply to Faulkner. There are a number of points that must be emphasized. Most importantly, Lukacs describes the rationalizing effects of commodification on the consciousness of both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. I do not want to discuss here in detail the complex process of commodification, although Lukacs assumes a knowledge of it. Commodification is that process in production where "use-values cease to be use-values, and become means of exchange, i.e. commodities" (History and Class Consciousness 84). Lukacs comments further:

> The essence of the commodity-structure ... that a relation between people takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires a 'phantom objectivity', an autonomy that seems so strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature. the relation between people (Lukacs 1975, 83)

What concerns Lukacs is the rationalizing effect of commodities on consciousness. Lukacs sees commodification in terms of dehumanization and denaturalization. The surplus of use-value turned into exchange-value ends the closed, organic relations where one uses only what one needs.

The freeing up of surplus value for exchange, by the time it reaches the money form, dehumanizes and denaturalizes in the following ways. First, by levelling qualitatively unlike things (wax, coal, wool, etc.) to the same plane (money), individual uses and qualities are

repressed. They are turned instead into manageable quantities. Side by side on a ledger book, coal, wax, and wool can be assigned identical values -- but only by ignoring their uniqueness, and the context of their production. "Objectively, in so far as the commodity form facilitates the equal exchange of qualitatively different objects, it can only exist if that formal quality is in fact recognized" (Lukacs 1975, 87).

In my chapter on Quentin, I want to argue that he is caught in this levelling of values, and that he spends much of his time resisting this simplification of the rich texture of the world to abstract relations. The production process itself becomes more rationalized, again stripping the individual of all his or her unique qualities. There is in fact a tremendous power in the manageability of reducing different things to the same plane. But this power comes only through ignoring the quality of the thing. The same holds for human behaviour. Its variability must be levelled off, and this is achieved in one way by repressing the individual's qualities, turning him into rational time. The worker sells his time when he sells himself, separating his personality from his objective work conditions.

Lukacs points out that commodification and rationalization have existed before capitalism, but only with capitalism does commodification dominate every aspect

of life: "[o]nly then does the commodity become crucial for the subjugation of men's consciousness to the forms in which this reification finds expression" (Lukacs 1975, 86).

Once the commodity becomes a universal category in society, it also comes to be seen as natural (as second nature). This suggests the historical nature of perception. For Lukacs, at the height of capitalism, consciousness is changed so as to facilitate calculability. The subject begins to think in terms of reified categories, i.e, categories that conceal natural relations (e.g. money, which hides the real producer of value: the relation between workers). He quotes Marx:

> Through the subordination of man to the machine the situation arises in which men are effaced by their labour .... Time is everything, man is nothing; he is at the most the incarnation of time. Quality no longer matters. Quantity alone decides everything. (Lukacs 1975, 89-90)

This lengthy quotation works well in my analysis of Quentin because we can see him attempting to resist this kind of rational time. It is important to note that rationality in the above sense is not rational in relation to a desired end. It is an instrument, an efficient method of reaching a nonrational end, since no particular desire can be seen as rational. Furthermore, Lukacs points out, while rational techniques are powerful tools for controlling information (from standardizing legal

procedures to transforming unlike products into the highly calculable/abstract money form) their actual goals are never rational. One may efficiently and rationally send people to gas chambers, but that does not make the end itself rational. What rationality does achieve is the reduction of desire, of human wants.

Implicit in Lukacs is a longing for a more natural relation among men It is true that he idealizes precapitalist relations, as somehow more organic, and that we also see hints of a nostalgia, when Lukacs speaks of the greater flexibility of law among primitive people: "[the law] renewing itself with every new legal decision, while modern law, caught up in the continuous turmoil of change, [is] rigid and static" (Lukacs 1975, 97). Nevertheless, the capitalist world involves a transition from a loosely nonrational organized community, to one that controls human relations on the basis of calculability. This means that the subject of those laws must become predictable. If calculability is all-important, then the object being controlled must be subject to calculation. This means people are just pronouns: he, she or it must be transformed onto the same scale; wax, wool, and coal have nothing in common, so they can be calculated only by being transformed into the same scale, people are different, so they can become calculable objects only if they can be turned into

identical, regulated units. It is this abstract and uniform world that Quentin is moving into, one that cannot deal with the hierarchical differences of the old south, with its irrational biases, and inefficient traditions (unmechanized labour, for example).

In terms of my analysis of The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom!, one of the key features of Lukacs' argument is that history creates consciousness. There are two aspects of this historical consciousness that I want to deal with, because they explain the odd forms of consciousness of both Sutpen and Quentin (odd in the pathological sense). In the first place history produces capital, but at the same time, because of capital's tendency to conceal the productive forces of history, consciousness loses its ability to recognize the history that creates it. Hence the reified consciousness cannot recover its productive roots.

I have already shown part of the process whereby the human subject is constructed by capital, insofar as he must look at all relations as rational. The worker must objectify himself, see himself as an object, in order to sell his labour. Because of this separation from the obvious organic relation to work that we saw earlier, the worker cannot see his value in the production of commodities. Since value is now in money, and not in his actual labour, his true relation and power are concealed.

In this case the worker repeats the commodity structure; he "must present himself as the 'owner' of his labour-power, as if it were a commodity" (Lukacs 1975, 92).

Consciousness only becomes fully commodified when capitalism becomes a universal factor in society, when the more organic and natural world cannot be remembered, or more accurately has been rewritten as unnatural. The effects of capital are that the subject perceives himself as an isolated and interchangeable part in a machine. He has no unique qualities of his own. But not only is the worker's subjectivity divorced from his objective existence, from work, but human subjectivity in general dominates consciousness. Lukacs describes this rationalization in regard to journalism, where "it is precisely subjectivity itself, knowledge, temperament and powers of expression that are reduced to an abstract mechanism functioning autonomously" (Lukacs 1975, 100).

Outside the capitalist way of seeing, the place for subjectivity shrinks. We will see that in the case of Quentin, he is left with no space, no alternative but reification, which I argue is the decisive reason for his suicide. Sutpen, on the other hand, is sucked into the categories of commodification, as we see with his embracing of rationalization.

In conclusion, reification is a process through which human relations are turned into a thing (commodity). I have argued that reification represses the non-rational and human aspects of social relations while transforming perception to think only in terms of levelling or rational categories. Even at a most basic level perceptions are repressed. Smell, taste, touch, etc., are not amenable to calculation as are observable (written) items on a chart, graph, or book of accounts. Now I will discuss briefly some more of the qualities of reification. Up to now I have been trying to get across the way that capitalism is not just a method of production but a way of perceiving that translates human relations into its own terms and interests. Now I will examine in more detail just how capital controls thought. In particular, I will look at Lukacs' ideas of isolated particularity and contemplation.

LUKACS' REIFIED RELATIONS

As Lukacs demonstrates, severe limitations to the individual's consciousness result when he or she fails to recognize the constituting modes of production, hidden as they are behind layers of reified surfaces; like a commodity, the subject is meaninglessly static, apparently floating unhinged from history.

Lukacs locates the individual as necessarily a part of the totality of social relations. Because man is a

social animal, separation from that society destroys his humanity and his history. Consciousness, for Lukacs, is a relation between men (a process) and not a static thing. He opposes this developing self to the eternal and ahistorical commodity which shapes all perceptions in capitalist society. For example, we see this opposition in Lukacs' articulation of the factors which draw the contours of the Self. The Self comes into a full self-realization only through a dialectic involving both abstraction and the concrete:

> Abstract potentiality belongs wholly to the realm of subjectivity, whereas concrete potentiality is concerned with the dialectic between the individual's subjectivity and objective reality. (23-24)

Here Lukacs sees that subjective possibilities (abstract potentiality) when turned into action (concrete potentiality) form the definition of the Self in the context of the social world. Only through the interplay of subjective thought and action can the Self become definable both to itself and to other social beings. Lukacs posits a causal relation between the self and the world. He sees that the disintegration of one entails the disintegration of both: "The disintegration of personality is matched by a disintegration of the outer world" (25).

THE NEED TO GRASP THE WHOLE

In History and Class Consciousness (Lukacs 1975), Lukacs explains how the human subject is forced to disengage from social relations, articulating the world in terms of abstract quantities and standardized forms which repress the qualitative, the different, and the heterogeneous. Lukacs begins his analysis with Marx's critique of commodity-fetishism. He calls this estrangement a "reification", or the transformation into a "thing" (res; the "phantom objectivity" [Lukacs 1975, 83] that resides in the commodity disguised as pure exchange-value) the social relations that go into the manufacture of any product. Reification hides social relations -- work or labour especially -- in things with the result that the solitary man cannot see that the world around him is the result of his own work, not just of his own abstract perception.

This reified sensibility is deeply rooted in the bourgeois intellectual tradition culminating in Kant, for whom the world is reduced to its surface phenomena. For Kant, our perceptions are simply given, and whatever apparatus (or in the current jargon: deep structure) we have for observing reality remains universal and unchanging. Hence Lukacs calls the bourgeois perception "contemplative" (130): a dogmatic and ahistorical mode of perception, guided by "the assumption that the rational

and formalist mode of cognition is the only possible way of apprehending reality" (121).

The problem with Kant, according to Lukacs, lies in his view that a static nature, and not history, produces our modes of apprehending the world. Or as Fredric Jameson explains in Marxism and Form

> According to Kant, the mind can understand everything about external reality except the incomprehensible and contingent fact of its existence in the first place: it can deal exhaustively with its own perceptions without ever being able to come to terms with noumena, or things-in-themselves.
> (Jameson 1974, 185)

There is no question of different points of view, of false consciousness; modes of perception are simply given, as if this given were natural and not historical.

Lukacs' critique of Kantian reification is rooted in socio-economic history. The mystification of the individual's relation to history and the stripping away of the unique and particular qualities of people is reification. By emphasizing the universal forms arising from the capitalist economy, the individual worker loses sight of his relation to the commodified product, to the surface, just as the entrepreneur cannot see the connection between labour and the reified commodity. Lukacs comments that the

> quantification of objects, their subordination to abstract mental categories makes its appearance in the life of the worker immediately as a process of abstraction of which he is the victim, and which cuts

> him off from his labour power, forcing him to sell it on the market as a commodity, belonging to him. (165-166)

The worker, transformed into a thing or a tool, becomes a universal measure which subordinates his or her unique features to an abstract form, what Lukacs calls "a cipher reduced to an abstract quantity" (166); homogenized, integrated, her or his physical movements reduced to those that service the assembly line or office desk, the worker is easily identifiable in the economic marketplace.

For Lukacs, reification exists only within a society where the commodity structure has "become the universal category" (86). In other words, because the capitalist world veils "use values" by disguising them as "exchange values" (commodities), "[o]nly [during capitalism] does the commodity become crucial for the subjugation of men's consciousnesses to the forms in which this reification finds expression" (86). Only then can we say that man as a machine, having internalized a rationalized world, considers the quantified set of relations to be natural. Man, made to believe that fragmented relations are natural, distorts his connection with others. Thus we become "mediated to an increasing extent exclusively by the abstract laws of the mechanism which imprisons them." (90)

As exchange values, people themselves function like commodities, seeing each other as objects and taking this

objectification as natural. People thus transformed, crystallize into specialized types: father, mother, husband, wife, son, daughter, master, slave. Each of these types has a social value that can be -- if we carry commodification to its extreme -- exchanged on the social marketplace.

Exchange embraces even social types, making them a fixed value, repressing the qualitative and particular. Therefore one wife can be exchanged for another, one son for another. In turning to the two Faulkner novels, we will see that once internalized by the self, commodification no longer stays within a purely economic realm. As Jorge Larrain writes, "reification of the economy is not a mere illusion, but the result of the social appearances of capitalism impressed upon the uncritical consciousness" (176). Reification creates a mode of perception -- embraced by Sutpen, and resisted by Quentin -- a philosophical world view. Thus, unaware of the set of historical relations, just as is a cog in a machine, the individual <u>reacts</u> programmatically. the individual's new illusory (and yet no "mere illusion") "material independence contributes to the <u>image</u> of self-sufficient totalities related externally" (Larrain 176, my emphasis).

The Marxist social critic Max Horkheimer makes precisely this point when he writes: "As soon as thought

or a word becomes a tool, one can dispense with actually `thinking' it" (Horkheimer 23). Then consciousness is trapped by preset categories and the mind becomes a thing-like tool in the "intellectual economy":

> Such mechanization is indeed essential to the expansion of industry; but if it becomes the characteristic feature of minds, if reason itself is instrumentalized, it takes on a kind of materiality and blindness, becomes a fetish, a magic entity that is accepted rather than intellectually experienced. (23)

Consciousness that has internalized "exchange-values" creates a market place for social relations, while repressing the actual qualities belonging to men and women. This repression of "quality" will be a main focus in the chapters that follow, to which I now turn.

CHAPTER TWO

REIFICATION AND REPRESSION:

CHAPTER VII OF ABSALOM, ABSALOM!

INTRODUCTION

My exploration of Thomas Sutpen largely relates to my interest in reification. In his transformation from a "natural" mountain boy to a thoroughly rationalized "individual", Sutpen reveals the repressive and oppressive features of reification.

For simplicity's sake, and because I am not interested in analyzing Faulkner's over-all narrative strategy in so short a thesis, I will focus on chapter VII of Absalom, Absalom! (Faulkner 1964, 217-292), and examine the violence that reification inflicts on Sutpen and those close to him. I argue that the internalization of an abstract formalism systematically destroys his personal memory. Speaking broadly, Lukacs tells us that by the nineteenth century commodification has become a universal category. He sees a transition from religion (myth) to science, feudalism to homogeneous states, unsystematic rules of order to rationalized jurisprudence. The end

result is an overarching formalism pervading every aspect of society. Of course, from a Marxist viewpoint, this formalism with no essential human subject must be seen as constitutive of consciousness.

Sutpen has fully internalized a reified consciousness. Because he is seen as a commodity in the social world, he comes to see others as commodities too. Given Sutpen's reified perception of complex social relations, he cannot evaluate, or function in, the world around him. This is the violence of reification: a formalism which represses anything that does not fit into its universal categories. In Sutpen we see that formalism, for all its pretense to the eternal (i.e. Sutpen's desire for immortality) and to the universal, is nothing but one not-so-unique outlook. Sutpen imposes his narrow fragmented consciousness on all other social relationships, violently ignoring difference.

INNOCENCE

Faulkner carefully places Sutpen under the influence of two opposed forms of consciousness: one open, with loosely defined borders, and the other closed and rational. Starting from the former and moving into the latter, we witness in Sutpen the effects of a transformation. This transformation takes Sutpen from a natural, loosely organized existence to a fixed and rigid rationalized

mentality. Quentin tells us that Sutpen was born in West Virginia in 1808 (Faulkner, 1986, 275). But Shreve corrects him, saying that "there wasn't any West Virginia in 1808 ... " (Faulkner, 1986, 275) This is significant because it suggests that Sutpen comes from a place that has not yet been fixed into a definable territory.

Life in West Virginia is somewhat shabby and unorganized. It represents nothing ideal, just potential in its sheer lack of shape. The "few other people he knew lived in log cabins boiling with children" (Faulkner, 1986, 275), says Quentin. This procreative energy further emphasizes the unformed nature of Sutpen's early background. Also unformed are any severe divisions among the races. Racial division does not impose itself on these people's consciousness, since they had never seen "colored people" except "Indians and you only looked down at them over your rifle sights" (Faulkner, 1986, 276).

Furthermore, Sutpen comes from a background that encourages the very opposite of a rigid work ethic. Contrasted with Sutpen's later frenzied activity, these mountain "men and grown boys .. hunted or lay before the fire on the floor" (Faulkner, 1986, 275). Even their bodies are presented as unformed, almost fluid, resting on the floor, "while the women and older girls stepped back and forth across them to reach the fire to cook" (Faulkner, 1986, 275-6).

In this world, people and their surroundings merge together. (We will see this again in my next chapter when Quentin recalls a Southern black and a mule that are carved out of the landscape). The Virginian landscape hints of mythic American images: the log cabins and the cowboys and Indians. It is not a rational order. Compare this natural past with Sutpen's new world, in Tidewater, Virginia. The new order is defined. Here, the land is "all divided and fixed and neat with a people living on it all divided and fixed and neat" (Faulkner, 1986, 176).

The undefined social boundaries of West Virginia create a self-consciousness with loose boundaries. Under capitalism, power depends on the definable, the quantifiable, man must learn to see the land as belonging to others, and as well he must see his own labour as a measurable commodity that he sells in a calculable marketplace. Lukacs gives the example of the poor worker who "sells" himself as "his only commodity" (Lukacs, 1971, 166). He himself becomes a definable thing because "his commodity is inseparable from his physical existence" (Lukacs, 1971, 166). This is the opposite of the West Virginia myth that Faulkner presents us with.

In the rationalized and mechanized world order all things are definable parts of an overarching machinery, one that preexists the worker, "complete and able to function without him and in which he is no more than a

cipher reduced to an abstract quantity, a mechanized and rationalized tool" (Lukacs, 1971, 166). This means that a universal identity is given to all subjects under capital, universal in the sense that no inefficient or uncalculable variation, no personal contingency is allowed to overrule the rules of capitalism.

Sutpen's transformation from a natural mountain mentality parallels Lukacs's description of the shift into reification. In West Virginia, as we have seen, Sutpen and his family were at one with the land, in part "[b]ecause where he lived the land belonged to anybody and everybody" (Faulkner, 1986, 276); sophisticated categorization is unheard of. But on Pettibone's Tidewater plantation there is first an unconscious internalization of divisions, of categorizations. Sutpen begins to see that blacks are different, but at first he had "begun to discern that without being aware of it" (Faulkner, 1986, 282). Then after a psychologically devastating incident, during a simple errand, Sutpen fully internalizes, in a sudden gestalt, the rationalized world he inhabits.

Just before Sutpen is sent by his father to deliver a message to the Pettibone house, Quentin describes Sutpen's social innocence and lack of self definition:

> He didn't even know he was innocent .... a boy either thirteen or fourteen, he didn't know which, in garments his father had got from the plantation

> commissary and had worn out and which one of the sisters had patched and cut down to fit him, and he was no more conscious of his appearance in them or of the possibility that anyone else would be than he was of his skin ....
>
> (Faulkner, 1986, 286)

Sutpen has not yet been reified by the new system. Here, he is still outside rationality: he has an undeveloped sense of time, and little ability to classify people according to the simplified (and therefore manageable) feature of skin color. So he is not self-conscious of the low place he inhabits in the class structure.

The violence and fragmentation caused by this lack of understanding of relations is revealed when Quentin describes the story of Sutpen's father returning to his cabin after a drinking bout where he helped beat a black slave. Sutpen's father wakes Sutpen and tells him:

> "We whupped one of Pettibone's niggers tonight" and he [Sutpen] roused at that, waked at that, asking which one of Pettibone's niggers and his father said he did not know, had never seen the nigger before. and he asked what the nigger had done and his father said, "Hell fire, that goddamn son of a bitch Pettibone's nigger."
>
> (Faulkner, 1986, 289)

Even though Sutpen's father lives segregated from Pettibone's house, in a squalor, oppressed along with the blacks, he beats up a slave (possibly, unconsciously, as a substitute for Pettibone). He cannot see, as Sutpen later does, that the slaves are not the problem: "they (the niggers) were not it, not what you wanted to hit" (Faulkner, 1986, 287). It is worth noticing that Sutpen's

father has been drinking, an activity which, for a price, deliberately destroys rationality. Kept in a squalor, and allowed to drink, it is as though the loose borders of the mountains are here on the plantation recreated. What better way to keep a cheap labour force controlled than to impair their ability to properly think out their true oppression. It is as though the natural mentality, plastic consciousness has been rationalized (made predictable and controllable) by the ruling class.

The father does not understand why he acts as he does, exposing the lack of rationality behind his actions. As Lukacs writes in History and Class Consciousness, "when judging whether an action is right or wrong it is essential to relate it to its function in the total process" (Lukacs, 1971, 198). Although the Sutpens and the slaves play specific roles on the plantation, they are unaware of how the roles interconnect, since they deal with each other according to the categories which support the ruling class. Sutpen's innocence, like his father's, is all the more significant because it is an innocence that supports the oppressor -- Sutpen senior does not attack Pettibone, but a slave.

REALIZATION

We can see in Sutpen's transformation the ruthless repression of personal memory and experience under the

universalizing effects of rationalization. Delivering a message to Pettibone's house, Sutpen is unexpectedly told by a black servant to use the back entrance: this is when Sutpen comes up against the excluding walls of existing social relations. Sutpen's reaction is extreme, uncalm, non-rational. "[a]ll of a sudden he found himself running and already some distance from the house ... He just had to think" (Faulkner, 1986, 290).

Sutpen discovers that he exists, and that he exists in a system that sees him as almost worthless -- he had never considered his physical appearance "until he saw that monkey nigger ... housebred in Richmond" (Faulkner, 1986, 290). The dominating power, Sutpen realizes, considers him no more than a property, a thing, a tool-like messenger, which need not have any real relationship with his work: "he didn't remember ... what the message was ... he still didn't know exactly just what his father did ... what work the old man had in relation to the plantation" (Faulkner, 1986, 286). Sutpen is not aware of what he is delivering, or of the relation between the sender and the receiver. Sutpen carries out orders mechanically, the meaning of his labour hidden from him, undermining his own value.

In Absalom, Absalom!, the "owned" cannot be aware of their own interests, but rather support the system which oppresses them, and keeps them in a second rate state of

nature as a raw quantity of resource "because of what color their skin happened to be and what they happened to own" (Faulkner, 1986, 276):

> the ones who owned the objects not only could look down on the ones that didn't, but could be supported in the down-looking not only by the others who owned objects too but by the very ones that were looked down on that didn't own any objects and knew they never would.
>
> (Faulkner, 1986, 276)

The mode of understanding for the oppressed, whether black or white, is constructed by their reified relations. For this reason even Sutpen and the slaves submit to the values of the ruling class.

This objectification of relations deems some people more human than others. The less-human people/commodities are put to use as machines, for use and for sale by "a certain few men [who] not only had the power of life and death and barter and sale over others, but ... had living human men to perform the endless repetitive personal offices" (Faulkner, 1986, 277). The fact that the "owned" accept the ruling classes' downward gaze legitimizes that very condescension (i.e. giving the authority "to look down at others" [Faulkner, 1986, 276]).

We can see a pattern emerging: despite Sutpen's recognition of this system, he does not decide that it is "crazy" (a thought that once crossed his mind [Faulkner, 1986, 276]). After his crisis he runs, mentally, through his cabin, suddenly seeing "all the objects from the other

side and [he] find[s] out [he] had never seen them before" (Faulkner, 1986, 287). Sutpen does not pit himself against this alienating object-world. Rather, as we will see, he trades one form of unawareness for another, one denial of social relationships for another. What is also important to recognize is that Sutpen's shift in consciousness, his growing, but limited, realization of his reified labour-value, comes about in a social context (his confrontation with the black servant).

REIFIED DESIGN

Sutpen has no conception of history, either before or after his crisis. He is moved by forces external to himself -- that is, a formalism external to his interests. When he criticizes rifle-ownership, as a metaphor for (slave) possession, he locates the agency of ownership in the "crass advantage of ... luck which gave the rifle to him" (Faulkner, 1986, 285). It was not a particular work or historical action ("a fight with rifles" [Faulkner, 1986, 285]) that brought the owner his object, but chance. Under capitalism abstract methods for predicting and managing the world have become so finely honed and so total that it is thought that "the rational and formalistic mode of cognition is the only possible way of apprehending reality" (Lukacs, 1971, 121). Of course this power is gained only at the expense of repressing that

which cannot be managed by rational categories (such as the senses, non-rational beliefs).

Within the Lukacsian framework it makes sense that Sutpen believe in chance and not historical cause. For Lukacs a world totally rationalized is a world without history· "man in capitalist society confronts a reality 'made' by himself (as a class) which appears to him to be a natural phenomenon alien to himself" (Lukacs, 1971, 135).

Sutpen embraces a fatalism that recurs again and again. People are reduced to objects. And all events occur by chance or by an alien determinism, suddenly "he discovered, not what he wanted to do but what he just had to do, had to do it whether he wanted to or not" (Faulkner, 1986, 274-5). Sutpen's slavery to his design and to fatalism may seem paradoxical given his strong individualism. But one of the crucial aspects of rationalism is that it must isolate its objects, and its objectified people in order to categorize them. The individual may feel free so that he can carry out the interest of capitalism, but in reality this is but a necessary illusion. Every class is a slave to the formalistic rules of capitalism:

> he is wholly at the mercy of its 'laws', his activity is confined to the exploitation of the inexorable fulfilment of certain individual laws for his own (egoistic) interests.
>
> (Lukacs, 1971, 135)

Not surprisingly, Sutpen never feels powerful enough to challenge the given ideology, his internalization of formalized thought clearly exposes his determination by his design:

> 'You see, I had a design in my mind. Whether it was a good or a bad design is beside the point, the question is, Where did I make the mistake in it, what did I do or misdo in it, whom or what injure by it to the extent which this would indicate I had a design. To accomplish it I should require money'. (Faulkner, 1986, 328)

The drive itself is non-rational. Certainly the ruling class would not predict Sutpen's response. But more importantly Faulkner articulates the fuel of Sutpen's rationality, as essentially mythic (again, non-rational) in nature. According to Quentin's Grandfather (who heard it from Sutpen's own mouth), while at school one day Sutpen heard the teacher tell a fantastic story, "that there was a place called the West Indies to which poor men went in ships and became rich" (Faulkner, 1986, 302). Furthermore, these men are unbound by social constraints, being able to achieve anything, "so long as that man was clever or courageous" with "energy and will" (Faulkner, 1986, 302). Underlying Sutpen's rationality is a non-rational dream.

But rationality is the method that drives Sutpen to find his dream. Some of the characteristics manifest themselves after Sutpen has been sent away to the back by the black butler. To his horror, young Sutpen's self

splits in two ("the two of them inside that one body" [Faulkner, 1986, 292]), internalizing both his oppressed image and the condescending gaze of the butler (representing white power). Secondly the formal bureaucratic calm of the violence that takes place during the errand is also internalized. The raw violence has been transformed into a formal violence. Thus after he runs from the big house, while he "lay down on the pallet" (Faulkner, 1986, 295) at home, we see him not only divided from himself, contemplating himself as a commodity and as a potential actor, but we also see him fitting into the rational order:

> he just lay there while the two of them argued inside of him, speaking in orderly turn, both calm and reasonable and unrancorous: But I can kill him. -- No. That wouldn't do no good -- Then what shall we do about it?
>
> (Faulkner, 1986, 295-6)

Here Sutpen has changed from an undifferentiating self to a rational self. I would argue that his decision not to kill Pettibone is rational. The effective violence in Tidewater is formalized violence (the butler) as opposed to raw natural violence (his father's beating the black). If as I argue Sutpen has internalized a formalistic mode of apprehending the world, then he would now identify power in what can be isolated, categorized, and controlled. To shoot Pettibone would be to regress to natural violence.

For Lukacs contemplation is a feature of rationality. Since people cannot change the rules of the formalist order they are reduced to contemplating and accepting its movement, even for people in power "there is the same doubling of personality, the same splitting of man into an element of the movement of commodities and an .... observer of that movement" (Lukacs, 1971, 166). At this early stage after the incident at the big house, (he is 13 or 14) Sutpen learns to contemplate himself as commodity. He also internalizes the contemplative downward gaze of white power. This gaze is another form of rationalized control that by-passes raw violence.

Sutpen follows his dream of riches (again, suggesting the non-rationality underlying his logical methods), he goes to the West Indies and eventually becomes an overseer on a plantation. By this time he has internalized the rationalized categories of Tidewater. When revolution erupts in Haiti, Sutpen is dramatically alienated both from the action and from his own feelings. "all it was to him [was]... a spectacle, something to be watched" (Faulkner, 1986, 312). Hence Sutpen watches, sensing no direct relation to the events, and oblivious to his own cut off feelings: "he did not even know that at first he was not terrified" (Faulkner, 1986, 312)

Sutpen reproduces the events of his childhood on the plantation. Reproducing the reified relations of the

ruling class, he bars a door, in Haiti, just as the black servant once barred him from entry. Unaware before the childhood crisis, again unaware of what goes on outside the door, Sutpen blindly goes on "overseeing what he oversaw and not knowing that he was overseeing it ... he apparently did not know, comprehend, what he must have been seeing every day because of that innocence" (Faulkner, 1986, 314).

Sutpen's reductive reactions to the world -- dealing with it in terms of his "code of logic and morality" (Faulkner, 1986, 344. also an "impotent logic" [348]) -- cuts him off from "the complex tissue of man's relations with his environment" (Lukacs 1969, 28), leaving him locked and repressed in pure form. Whenever the world is reduced to pure form, suggests Lukacs in History and Class Consciousness, the mind cuts itself off from the content, the quality inherent in social relations, the resulting "reified structure of consciousness" (Lukacs 1975, 110), exemplifying Sutpen's situation, splits experience from thought, where we are left, writes Lukacs, with the

> assumption that the rational mode of cognition is the only possible way of apprehending reality (or to put it in its most critical form: the only possible way for 'us'), in contrast to the facts which are simply given and alien to 'us' ...
>
> (Lukacs, 1971, 121)

Faulkner makes an identical point. For example, when telling his trouble to Quentin's Grandfather, Sutpen's

mind works in a binary pattern, "as instantaneous and complete and unthinking as the snapping on and off of electricity ..." (Faulkner, 1986, 339, emphasis mine). It is unresponsive to the nuances of personal experience, to quality. Reflecting the imprint of his childhood consciousness, Sutpen's thought reacts programmatically, independently of him, so that the Grandfather finds that Sutpen is alienated from his own conscious thought, "Grandfather not knowing what he was talking about because now Grandfather said he did not believe that Sutpen himself knew" (Faulkkner, 1986, 339).

Reified by the myth of rationality, Sutpen's design displaces his "old" innocence with a fragmented individual without memory, without history, and consequently with little narrative capacity. Yet the reader may realise that Sutpen's character only comes into focus through narrative devices which both transcend and dramatically contrast with Sutpen's schematic approach to life.

A symptom of the schematic or the overly rational is that they repress contradiction, detail, and narrative structures which draw out the connections of a character to others and to the social backdrop. Such rationalization is a repression of history: a replacement of complexity for the smooth surfaces of commodity relations. When Sutpen recounts his youth to Quentin's

grandfather, the details are strangely vague: he "didn't know why they [Sutpen's family] moved, or didn't remember the reason if he ever knew it" (Faulkner, 1986, 278); as for how he ended up going to school, "[h]e didn't remember" (Faulkner, 1986, 333).

Later (if we accept Quentin's or his father's narrative) when Sutpen fixes a design for his life, he still lacks memory " he didn't remember how he got to Haiti, and then he didn't remember how he got into the house with the niggers surrounding it" (Faulkner, 1986, 318). That this is put as a question and not just another bit of narrative chronology brings to the reader's attention the fact that Sutpen exists not as an isolated commodity, but as a construct of voices and interpretive labour. This peculiar lack brings us back to the idea of alienation from historical relations.

Despite his assimilation of hierarchical structures (Lukacs via Weber would say <u>because</u> of it), his acquisition of a "design", Sutpen still lacks memory. The details of history are like "things" to him, viewed in a "faintly forensic anecdotal manner" (Faulkner, 1986, 311), his sense of his experience schematized to a mere "synopsis of his history" (Faulkner, 1986, 339), leaving, as Quentin's Grandfather once recounted:

> [n]o more detail and information about that [the revolution in Haiti] than about how he got from the field, his overseeing, into the besieged house when

> the niggers rushed at him with their machetes, than how he got from the rotting cabin in Virginia to the fields he oversaw. (Faulkner, 1986, 311)

Sutpen's determination by his design excludes room for the invasion of human complexity, detail, or the "maelstrom of unpredictable and unreasoning human beings" (Faulkner, 1986, 343). Sutpen's tragedy is that he forgets his personal interests precisely because such personal interests are excluded by his rationalism. Given a mind that attempts to repress history, we should not expect much of a memory just an understanding of the governing "constitution" or logical code.

THE BAR AS TROPE

It is possible to view Sutpen's "barring" of the black revolutionaries in Haiti from the plantation house not only as a reproduction of his previous exclusion from Pettibone's house, but also as a textual trope of that very exclusion. Reproducing the function of the black servant from his past (and therefore denying the possibility of change between two geographically [spatially] and historically [temporally] different locations), Sutpen "bars" history from trespassing on his entrapped consciousness. He bars the door against the blacks, in Haiti, an act which reminds us of the earlier barring when the "... nigger butler kept the door barred

with his body while he spoke ..." (Faulkner, 1986, 288, emphasis mine).

If Sutpen once wanted to shoot Pettibone, now he quells those who would revolt, assuming the role of Pettibone's housebred butler, upholding the status quo. Sutpen incarnates the bar as a kind of mobile hierarchy police. Like a dedicated policeman (he even risked his life once), he "had someone unbar the door and then bar it behind him..." while he "...walked out into the darkness and subdued them" (Faulkner, 1986, 317), but only because by now he has internalized the bar. We saw in the theoretical chapter how reified representations -- such as Sutpen's boy-symbol -- can replace narrative development with a static image, in fact for Lukacs the symbol "...is not just another technique, but represents a qualitatively different mode of apprehending the world from the realistic one" (Jameson 1974, 197)

In describing Lukacs' position, Jameson writes that the use of symbolism is "always a second best, always a kind of admission of defeat on the part of the novelist, for by having recourse to it the writer implies that some original, objective meaning in objects is henceforth inaccessible to him, that he must invent a new and fictive one to conceal this basic absence..." (Jameson, 1974, 197).

The butler blocking the door symbolizes white wealth for Sutpen. But he also represents the Slave upholding the reifying relations that enslave himself, just as Sutpen will later uphold this bar, against Bon. The butler is an object, a fixed form like a rifle which is used to say "Pettibone" is superior. It is also a sign telling Sutpen that he is not at home, unlike Quentin for whom blacks ideally signal home, in The Sound and the Fury.

To see how Sutpen's narrow design can be upheld, we have only to consider this role as bar. Sutpen bars the outside world from his consciousness. He cannot recognize the value of the those factors which "endure and support" his big house.

For Sutpen, a rigid border stands between outside and inside, and he wants to be inside the big house, looking down on those outside. He feels driven to protect the "boy-symbol" -- the one who will not be able to live with himself "for the rest of his life" (Faulkner, 1986, 292), if he does not take action. But the alternatives within the meanings assigned by his society are severely limited. He can revolt. Or he can attempt to cross the bar, built on the black servant, and barricade himself inside the white house. But ultimately the past and social relations invade Sutpen's space, because that space really builds through time, really conceals the past.

HISTORY AND DEATH

If the confrontation with an unnamed black butler is the turning point in Sutpen's life (a turning point that is scarcely radical or historicizing), Wash's murder of Sutpen thematizes his (Wash's) undeniable role as historical agent. Wash undermines Sutpen, because Wash can see his relationship to his grandaughter Milly as something more than a relation between commodities. Sutpen only views Milly merely as a way to reproduce a male child. But Wash maintains a deeper, more complicated relationship with her.

When Wash tells Sutpen "`I'm going to tech you, Kernel'" (Faulkner, 1986, 357), the dialect-pun of meaning in "tech" ushers in Sutpen's collapse. Wash "tech's" Sutpen the broader meaning of relationships. We can read "tech" in two ways; and this alone threatens Sutpen's simplistic ideas about relations. "Tech" can be "teach" or "touch". In fact Wash does both. He <u>teaches</u> Sutpen that he cannot exploit Milly, that he cannot exchange her as a machine or an animal: "[w]ell ... too bad you're not a mare", Sutpen tells Milly when he learns their child is a girl (Faulkner, 1986, 357). Wash also punishes and kills (<u>touches</u>) Sutpen with a scythe. The linguistic subversion (which can also be read in "Kernel": Sutpen's rank as mere commodity) contradicts Wash's action itself:

"Wash Jones has fixed old Sutpen at last" (Faulkner, 1986, 358).

Of course Sutpen is not to blame because he remains trapped inside the house, with the ideological blinders shut. He does not understand the complexity and inescapablity of history, as Wash suddenly does: "And how could I have lived nigh to [Sutpen] for twenty years without being touched and changed by him?" (Faulkner, 1986, 358). Outraged at Sutpen's failure to recognize the relationship to his (Sutpen's) and Milly's child, Wash sparks a minor revolution, one that Sutpen decided against, fifty years earlier.

It is no accident that Wash is repeatedly characterized as unclean, as sloven, and dirty for he represents the untidy complexity of life He is then the antithesis of Sutpen, for whom relationships equal the untidy complexities of a history he excludes, a past he thinks can be, says Shreve, "paid off" (265), or as Quentin says "clean[ed] up" (265), and smoothed over. Sutpen's clean view proves fatal as a direct result of the invasion of an untidy and violent history in the person of the unwashed Wash, ironically and necessarily destroying his reified consciousness, fixing "old Sutpen at last." In this reading of Faulkner, I have attempted to show how certain Sutpen's internalization of reified structures represses both personal history, and the contingencies of

experiences and qualities that cannot be drawn into the universal demands of capital. For me, Sutpen's reification is a tragedy because, as I have shown, he had little choice in his actions. Finally I have argued that rationality itself is fueled by non-rational desires, and that rationality is just one of the very repressive possible worlds.

In my next chapter, I will examine more specifically what exactly is lost in reification. I have already suggested here that reification is repressive even at the level of the senses (rationality gives priority to the gaze), this tyranny of the eye will be discussed in more detail. I have also suggested in passing that rationality draws Sutpen out of a timeless world into one more controlled by rational spatial and temporal values. I will show how pervasive time is in controlling and reducing human relations, and how much reification robs us of the richness of the senses. Finally, in what follows I discuss not only the totality of formalism but also various patterns of dereification that Quentin attempts in The Sound and the Fury.

CHAPTER THREE: PATTERNS OF REIFICATION & STRATEGIES OF DEREIFICATION IN "JUNE SECOND, 1910"

In "June Second, 1910" Faulkner leads the reader into the apparent impasse of reification. We see in Faulkner's style the trappings of what Lukacs calls the ideology of modernism: the static, the sensational, the distorted (Lukacs 1969, 18-19). But I argue that this apparent stasis dereifies by undermining the universal standardization of technology (especially the clock) and the culture of exchange. What I explore here are both how Quentin is reified, and how he undermines that reification. I will discuss the success and failure of his attempts in the conclusion to this chapter, but I will suggest that Quentin's goal, his plan of escape from dehumanizing reification, is to become black or more generally speaking, marginalized.

For Lukacs one of the most oppressive forces of capitalism is the translation of experience onto the reduced plane of commodity exchange, where "the commodity form facilitates the equal exchange of qualitatively different objects" (Lukacs, 1971, 87). Everything that

evades capital's formalistic categories is repressed or marginalized. This demands a homogenization of human needs and perceptions in order to fit them into the narrow interests of the ruling class, for such formalism "can only exist if ... formal equality is in fact recognized" (Lukacs, 1971, 87). Quentin deliberately does not acknowledge these formal rules, refusing to legitimate reifying practices. I argue that to escape Quentin must share -- wants to share -- a marginal social position held by blacks, women, and children. Only in these areas can he escape the homogenizing forces of capitalism. In all this I suggest that Quentin is successful in his protest against reification.

REIFICATION: A CHARACTER SKETCH

At this point I want to show that the culture Quentin lives in is one of exchange. According to Lukacs, exchange, depending on calculability, must reduce the world to rational categories, and this "principle of rationalization [is] based on what is and <u>can be calculated</u>" (Lukacs, 1971, 88). At the same time, I argue that the formalism and the mechanization of the capitalist's world repress the multi-dimensions of human experience, transforming people into one-dimensional machines. By the "multi-dimensions of human experience", I refer, in part, to the multiplicity of the senses, and

as well, the different possibilities of perception (e.g. those held by a child).

There are other ways to talk about reification, but these, as we will see, are emphasized in The Sound and the Fury. By "reification", I mean to describe the process of channeling all human experience into formalistic, and mechanical frameworks, such as commodification, and technology. Both commodification and technology narrow the possibilities of human behavior in the name of efficiency and manageability, I will enlarge on this process as I discuss the powerful effects, observed from Quentin's viewpoint, of exchange.

There are, at every turn, in "June Second 1910" images of exchange. Quentin goes North because Benjy's land was sold to pay for Quentin's stay at Harvard ("We have sold Benjy's pasture so that so that Quentin may go to Harvard" [Faulkner 1984, 108]). This move itself equals the translation of honor into a capitalistic exchange. After all Quentin only goes to Harvard to please his mother, to honor his father's dictum that "no compson has ever disappointed a lady" (Faulkner 1984, 204). What I argue here is that exchange has become a way of life and a way of thought. Either to get what one wants or conceal something, the characters resort to money. Not surprisingly, Quentin too has internalized this form of exchange, but he also undermines it.

At the start of the chapter, when he begins his walk, he is accosted by the two bootblacks. All Quentin wants is to be left alone, and so he pays them off with a recent purchase and some money: "I gave the cigar to one of them, and the other one a nickel" (Faulkner 1984, 94). Interestingly, after buying his freedom, through exchange, turning his cigar into a commodity, Quentin witnesses the perpetuation of exchange as "[t]he one with the cigar was trying to sell it to the other for the nickel" (Faulkner, 1984, 94).

Capital is transportable, being the highest form of exchange. Not only can capitalist exchange translate relations into commodities (one form of repression), but such exchange also conceals relations. We see this repression explicitly in the case of Benjy, whose intolerable difference must be kept separate from the family. Hence his name is changed from Maury (Quentin's uncle's name) to Benjy. One name is exchanged for another, not for any spiritual or enchanted reasons as we can see from one of Quentin's recollections:

> Can he smell that new name they give him? Can he smell bad luck?
> What he want to worry about luck for? Luck cant do him no hurt.
> What they change his name for then if aint trying to help his luck.
>
> (Faulkner 1984, 101)

The new name covers up the family relations between Quentin's maternal uncle, Maury, and the retarded Benjy.

A signifier like a name is not money, but both fulfill an homologous function in respective kinship and economic structures: in this case, concealing relations. The mindset that allows something as important as a name to be traded in is in keeping with reified thought. It is especially important that Benjy is repressed, marginalized outside the family, because he, like Caddy, children and the blacks, represents that which eludes reification.

Benjy's land is traded away for Quentin's schooling. From this we learn that Benjy's land was sold because he is so far outside modern rationality that he is powerless, that the sale symbolizes the devaluation of Benjy's characteristics, the multiplicity of the senses, intuitive thought, a personal sense of time. These lost ways of perceiving are what Quentin wants to recapture.

Formalism does not deal with the content, or with complex qualities that cannot be fitted into a formal scheme the "underlying material base is permitted to dwell inviolate and undisturbed in its irrationality ('non-createdness', 'giveness')" (Lukacs, 1971, 120) The metaphors to describe rationality are words like "exact" and "orderly" (Lukacs, 1971, 120). The marginal, which does not fit into rational categories is seen as second rate, capricious, and disorderly (Lukacs, 1971, 136). The repression of this marginality results in the

"unproblematic ... methodically purified world" (Lukacs, 1971, 120).

A foreign child is doubly marginal. The foreign girl whom Quentin encounters in the bake shop, for example, is disorderly and dirty, compared to the tidy order established by capital. This opposition between the clean mechanized order and the slovenly marginal, will recur again and again, as we will see. The woman waiting on Quentin, at first, does not see the girl, before she perceives the child, the woman acts smoothly, concealing her real temperament. This is normal under capitalism, because relations are controlled by capital, smoothed over, calculable. Quentin finds the process to be fraudulent:

> Sir?" she said. Like that. Sir? Like on the stage. Sir? "Five cents. Was there anything else?"
> (Faulkner 1984, 144)

In fact the woman is a formalist, from Quentin's point of view. She reminds him of an rigid school marm, forcing the most formal of the sciences down her student's throats ("she just needed a bunch of switches, a blackboard behind her 2 x 2 e 5." (Faulkner 1984, 144). The little girl is not accepted as a normal customer (outside the work force, where would a child get money?), she is outside the formalism of the exchange economy, so she is necessarily oppressed:

> "You little wretch," she said. She came out from around the counter but she didn't touch the girl. "Have you got anything in your pockets? ... "She'll hide it under her dress and a body'd never never know it."
>
> (Faulkner 1984, 144)

The little girl's position is tenuous -- even though she does have money -- because she appears to be a slovenly child. Once her money is shown, things go more smoothly; with Quentin's assistance she carries out her transaction (Faulkner 1984, 145). To the degree that the little girl can master capital she gains acceptance. This means that everybody's behavior in the store, including the saleswoman's is regulated by money exchange. I do not want to belabor this scene, but since I have suggested children are associated with the undermining of reification, let me add the following quotation:

> She extended her fist. It uncurled upon a nickel, moist and dirty, moist dirt ridged into her flesh. The coin was damp and warm. I could smell it faint and warm.
>
> (Faulkner 1984, 145)

Significantly, Faulkner has a child draw our attention to the materiality of the coin. Quentin notices it, smells the suddenly unreified money. Earlier, Quentin recalls another marginal figure who makes a similar gesture, when Quentin throws him a quarter, a Southern black foregrounds the materiality of the coin, when "[h]e got down and picked up the quarter and rubbed it on his leg" (Faulkner

1984, 99). I will return to discuss the marginality of the Southern black in a moment.

There are other examples of exchange, too many to deal with here. But I will show how Faulkner shows us that his characters think formalistically, and as well that they look inhuman, embodying reification I choose the following examples because they lead into my next point: the mechanization of people. What I want to consider is a continuity between the saleswoman and the squire. In the first place, both work at rationalized jobs, one in business, and one in law. Note that for Lukacs, the law, treating everyone according to universal rules, represents one of the highest forms of reification, next to business (Lukacs, 1971, 97).

Both the squire and the saleswoman are perceived by Quentin to be inhuman: cold, contemplative, translating other people into their own one dimensional visions. Consider his description of the squire as a "man with a fierce roach of iron gray hair" who "peered at us over steel spectacles" (Faulkner 1984, 163). He is a machine, with the unthinking eyes of an animal, "eyes .. clear and cold, like a goat's" (Faulkner 1984, 164). If that does not figure him to be unnatural and oppressed, consider how he sits confined behind a desk and a "huge dusty book" (Faulkner 1984, 163), that demands from his pen "excruciating deliberation" (Faulkner 1984, 164). He

submits his body to repression in order to carry out his duty.

He is a machine, and his language reflects his mechanization. He uses the word "calculate" twice when he sells Quentin his freedom (Faulkner 1984, 165); which might be unimportant, except that the saleswoman uses the same language, when talking about one of her products: "I calculate you wont know the difference when you eat it" (my italics, Revised 146). Against the damp and warmly human hands of the little girl, the saleswoman, like the squire, is associated with dusty books (also associated with injustice):

> She looked like a librarian. Something among dusty shelves of ordered certitudes long divorced from reality, desiccating peacefully, as if a breath of that air which sees injustice done.
> (Faulkner 1984, 143)

For Quentin, books are manageable, categorizable objects which achieve certitude and order at the expense of nature, taste, smell, and so on. The continuity between the saleswoman and the squire is exact. She too, at least from Quentin's viewpoint, is transformed into a machine, note the precise similarities between squire and saleswoman:

> Above the counter where the ranks of crisp shapes behind the glass her neat gray face her hair tight and sparse from her neat gray scull, spectacles in neat gray rims riding approaching like something on a wire, like a cash box in a store.
> (Faulkner 1984, 143)

Her gray image mimics the squire's iron hue, and their near identical gaze completes the picture of inhumanity ("the woman all iron-gray behind the counter, watching us with cold certitude", for example [Faulkner, 1984, 146, emphasis mine].

I have been describing the effects of a reified culture. One of the most prominent effects of reification is the repression of the human under the tyranny of mechanization. The saleswoman and the squire do not so much become appendages of the cash box, of the ledger, of the legal apparatus, as they become the form. In these instances we also witness the repressive aspects of mechanization. It has no room for the child. The child must have the lesson ("2 x 3 e 5") violently imposed upon it (Faulkner, 1984, 144). A refusal or the inability to buy into exchange, as we saw with the little girl, marginalizes the subject, pushes him or her out of predictability and therefore out of the social order. I argue that to resist reification, one must inhabit the margins, because it is there that reification is escaped. Quentin's wanderings are a search to escape his society's dehumanizing formalism. He resists I would go so far as to say that in the end Quentin desires to be black, for in being black he can recover the wholeness that the formalization of the world conceals.

STRATEGY

Quentin's strategy is the opposite of the squire's and the saleswoman's, who translate everybody into their narrow categories. Quentin has decided against categorizing anyone. He remembers being self-conscious about coming from the South, and he remembers his sensitivity about how he should treat blacks. After trying to fit into what the Northerners wanted him be, he finds his own outlook.

> I learned that the best way to take all people, black or white, is to take them for what they think they are, then leave them alone.
>
> (Faulkner 1984, 98)

At first Quentin was concerned over terminology, over how to categorize blacks (reify them): are they "coloured" or are they "niggers"? His lesson however allows him to recognize the quality of the thing not try to exploit it. Instead of changing people he leaves them alone.

Quentin tries to teach this dereifying tactic to some boys, who are going fishing. They are enthusiastically talking about a twenty five dollar reward for catching a particular trout, a "neigbourhood character". They become increasingly interested in the fish's exchange value, only: from a horse and buggy to a new rod to straight cash (Faulkner 1984, 134-35) Quentin describes their talking, and it is an excellent description of reification:

> They talked about what they would do with the twenty-five dollars. They all talked at once, their voices insistence and contradictory and impatient, making of unreality a possibility, then a

> probability, then an incontrovertible fact, as people will when their words become desires.
> (Faulkner 1984, 134)

Here, Quentin notices how they stray from the material (qualitative) thing, the fish. They talk about it purely in terms of its exchange value, so that really, the fish is concealed behind layers of abstraction. Of course they are right to see the power of money, just as the bootblack does. It is like magic that bring anything available at the market place. Quentin brings them back from the abstract surfaces down to the the unique meaning of the material thing, asking them not to "catch that fellow down there. He deserves to be let alone" (Faulkner 1984, 137, emphasis mine).

I am being somewhat presumptuous by saying that Quentin teaches the boys, since earlier I have argued that children inhabit a marginal social position and that they therefore tend to dereify the rational order. This case is no different. The boys have already decided against capturing the fish ("We dont try to catch him anymore" [Faulkner 1984, 136]). Furthermore, they give up the work of fishing altogether, lay down the means of production (fishing rods) and go swimming. They are beyond "work", although their money fantasies suggest that this state is only temporary.

TIME

Many of Quentin's thoughts and his refusal of reification center on the notion of rational time. Lukacs argues that rational time reduces human experience to manageable categories: the universal schedule of the clock. As we saw in the theoretical chapter, time is a powerful rationalizing force, structuring human perception and action so deeply that Lukacs writes, "Time is everything, man is nothing, he is at most the incarnation of time" (Lukacs, 1971, 89). This is because time can be described, observed, predicted, whereas human experience cannot be so fixed. With the example of the little girl, we have seen that the dominant social practice (capitalism) refuses to recognize anything outside its own categories of exchange. From the capitalist point of view this repression makes sense. Its goal is to make money in the most efficient (cost effective) way possible. This depends on controlling human behaviour so that its productivity etc. can be measured to best advantage. And this need to control, to formalize, demands a particular mentality.

Lukacs tells us that the commodification of the world creates us as subjects. As with the saleswoman, capitalism structures our thought. The same holds true of rational time (Quentin for example, as I will show, structures his thoughts in terms of the clock). Because

Lukacs does not describe in detail the specific effects of the clock on consciousness, I will quote from Marshall McLuhan's Understanding Media on the internalization of rational time. McLuhan is no Marxist. But he is a materialist, a technological determinist, and he shares with Lukacs a belief that consciousness is not an eternal essence, but a historical-technological construction. For example, he has this to say about the clock:

> The mechanical clock ... helps to create the image of a numerically quantified and mechanically powered universe ... Time measured not by the uniqueness of private experience but by abstract uniform units gradually pervades all sense life .. Not only work, but also eating and sleeping, came to accommodate themselves to the clock rather than to organic needs. (146)

Quentin's own musing on time demonstrates his implication in the above process. He sees that the clock is crucial for structuring a reified consciousness. Any rejection of the clock will marginalize Quentin's place in society, but such a rejection might also free the repressed senses, and restore to him a unique sense of time, restore him to nature.

"June Second, 1910" begins with a meditation on the mechanical nature of time, on the watch that Quentin's father has given him. His attitude toward the watch is that it oppressively mechanizes body and mind. For this reason he protests against time, breaking his watch. Such a gesture, both symbolic and practical, must confront the

deep internalization of rationality. For Lukacs, reification -- the reification of time -- is a reflex that deeply defines the individual, turning people into time, into particular affirmations of the universalized clock. While walking past a jeweller's window filled with clocks, Quentin discovers his own dehumanization, as he finds that his body automatically, turns to see "a clock high up in the sun" thinking "how, when you dont want to do a thing, your body will try to trick you into doing it" (Faulkner 1984, 94). He feels the muscles "in the back of [his] neck" (Faulkner 1984, 94) pulling toward the assurance of the clock.

Even before passing the jeweller's shop, Quentin was assaulted by time. While he eats in town, at Parker's (significantly, enjoying his sense of taste), Quentin "heard a clock strike the hour" (Faulkner 1984, 94). His automatic response disturbs his dining. But he consoles himself, thinking " ... I suppose it takes at least one hour to lose time in, who has been longer than history getting into the mechanical progression of it" (Faulkner 1984, 94). Time is all pervasive, a structure of thought, described best by Mr. Compson: "Father said that constant speculation regarding the position of mechanical hands on an arbitrary dial ... is the symptom of mind function" (Faulkner 1984, 87).

Mechanical, universal time robs Quentin of his own unique perception of time. It precedes him, and dominates his perception so much that he thinks, accurately "I dont suppose anybody ever deliberately listens to a watch or a clock. You dont have to" (Faulkner 1984, 86). But if "you dont have to" it is because time is working at an unconscious level, making consciousness a mere reflex (Lukacs, 1971, 91) of a universal and reductive standard.

There are less exacting kinds of time. There is cyclical time (the wheel of fortune). There is the less certain mythic time, but this has been pushed out of the social scene altogether. Quentin expresses this when he remembers his father saying "[t]hat Christ was not crucified: he was worn away by a minute clicking of little wheels" (Faulkner 1984, 87). The Christian myth of the return with its uncertain beginning and ending is closed off in the endless and exact repetition of the clock.

I have already referred to a Southern black who shared a dereifying characteristic with the little girl from the bake shop. For Quentin, this black also represents a different sense of time, one that escapes rationality and returns to mythic time. The concrete (and relative) context that instigates Quentin's meditation: he has just purchased some flat-irons in preparation for his suicide, and he is riding on a street car. His imagination transports him to another train: one that

brought him home from Harvard, for Christmas. At a crossing, Quentin sees, from his train window, the Southern black sitting on a mule, motionless, like one unit. These might seem like trivial details, but if we look closely at this scene, we can see how Faulkner compares two kinds of time.

The train (of which the street car is a development) is the epitome of mechanization. The black man, on his mule, is the epitome of nature:

> ... he sat straddle of the mule, his head wrapped in a piece of blanket, as if he had been built there with the fence and the road, or with the hill, carved out of the hill itself.
>
> (Faulkner 1984, 98)

The mule, a comparatively natural mode of transportation, and the "shabby" (Faulkner 1984, 99) man, from Quentin's point of view, are as natural as "the hill".

This black man is unlike the black on the street car, whose appearance has been smoothed over (wearing "a derby and shined shoes" [Faulkner 1984, 97]). The modernized black man is a part of mass culture: he is on the street car with those who read the newspaper, arch symbol of mass communication. Confined within the sharply defined spatial territory and time frame of the train, Quentin sees the Southern black as a natural man. The violent movement of the train takes Quentin away from the harmonious figure of man and beast, "the two of them shabby and motionless and unimpatient" (Faulkner 1984,

99). Using "unimpatient" instead of simply "patient, comments on impatient, likely, Quentin is opposing the black man's calm to the busy, industrious, impatient North. Appropriately, a train takes Quentin away from this vision; appropriately, because historically trains created the need for standardized time (Kern, 1983, 12), a universal conformity to a predictable timetable.

In The Sound and the Fury, Southern blacks, like children, are often associated with nature. From a formalist viewpoint, according to Lukacs, nature is always seen as disorderly and uncultivated (Lukacs, 1971, 136), in contrast to the smooth, logical order of mechanization, of uncluttered (with the qualities of things) money exchanges, paved streets and automobiles. Lacking all this, for Quentin, means that Southern blacks are blessed with a sense of time more open ended than rational time. He generalizes about such people, like the man on the mule, who have a

> ... quality about them of shabby timeless patience, of static serenity· that blending of childlike and ready incompetence and paradoxical reliability that tends and protects them
>
> (Faulkner 1984, 99, my emphasis)

This state exists outside reification. It is marginal in both a positive and a negative way. On the one hand that which cannot follow the rules of mechanization, exchange, etc., is excluded from power, but on the other hand the margins free the subject from the dehumanization of

capital. Quentin's mythologizing of nature may be taken as a dereifying technique, in that it allows him to attempt to think outside of rationalization. `Nature' can be a way of suggesting that something (not necessarily anything specific) exists besides rationality, it "becomes the repository of all ... inner tendencies opposing the growth of mechanization, dehumanization, and reification" (Lukacs, 1971, 136).

Speaking of Deacon to Shreve, Quentin says "[i]f it hadn't been for my grandfather he'd have to work like white folks" (Faulkner 1984, 94), suggesting that blacks are outside the predictable and predicting capitalist order. In fact, while Quentin and Shreve discuss Deacon's absence, Quentin goes on to think that blacks escape predictability, that "[he] never knew even a working nigger that you could find when you wanted him" (Faulkner 1984, 94). Out of context this sounds like a condemnation, but in the context of Quentin's desire to escape rational time, and in relation to the admiration he expresses for blacks, we can see that blacks share his protest against the given order. Returning for a moment to the Southern black man and mule, I can more powerfully show that Quentin actually identifies with blacks. For, he saw the black -- not Caddy, not his family -- as the very representation of where he belongs: "like a sign put there saying You are home again" (Faulkner, 1984, 98).

Quentin resists reification by destroying the measuring capacity (the rationalist/quantitative function) of his watch. But, as I have shown, he still falls into the rational temporal order, because it surrounds him: heard not only in the factory whistle Quentin seeks out, but also in the more mythic (non-rational) unitarial church steeple (Faulkner 1984, 136-7). He also resists time by mythologizing blacks as timeless, and natural, making of them an ideal to identify with. According to the myth, they are eternal, so Quentin turns over his watch.

I would argue that Quentin's myth-making is active, as opposed to the usual image of Quentin as passive protester. He tries to create his own ritual, while learning from those outside rationality, like the blacks. For example, as he begins his day, Quentin ritualistically shaves and bathes (Faulkner 1984, 92), then formally destroys his watch. Then he dresses up, so that Shreve asks him "Is it a wedding or a wake?'" (Faulkner 1984, 93). All this grooming keeps Quentin from his class schedule (Faulkner 1984, 93), as though he were now focused on his own sense of time. Again, Shreve lets us know that Quentin's actions are out of the ordinary: "'What's the matter? You think this was Sunday'" (Faulkner 1984, 92). Sunday, Wake, wedding, all of these are non-rational occasions, mythic modes of shaping

experience. To the degree that myth does not succumb to rationality (as the unitarial church does), they resist reification.

The power of myth in the release of the repressed senses is brought home as Quentin watches the schooner pass under the bridge. Note that before he sees the water he smells it (Faulkner 1984, 101). This immediately situates Quentin with Benjy, who "knows" the world through smell: when he learns that Damuddy died, "He cried. He smell hit. He smell hit" (Faulkner 1984, 103). For Lukacs, formalism is connected to sight, to observation techniques, which can passively contemplate the world (Lukacs, 1971, 87). Smell does not keep objects at an alienated distance: it overwhelms. Significantly, Benjy does not just smell, but he gains understanding from this sense ("Benjy knew it when Damuddy died", Faulkner, 1984, 103, emphasis mine).

Looking into the water, trying to drown his shadow, Quentin remembers an old saying, "Niggers say a drowned man's shadow was watching for him in the water all the time" (Faulkner 1984, 102). This mythic image has a distinct meaning for Quentin, who continually plays with his shadow, as I will discuss later. But right after this recollection he shows how meaningless logical categories are to him:

> The displacement of water is equal to the something of something. Reducto absurdum of all human experience, and two six pound flat-irons weigh more than one tailor's goose.
>
> (Faulkner 1984, 102-3)

For Quentin abstract formulaic thought is empty. He also shows the absurdity of the capitalist's quantifying mentality, since such measuring fails to account for the significance of the flat-irons, their non-rational use. Measurement, according to Quentin's father kills experience ("clocks slay time" Revised 97), and "only when the clock stops does time come to life" (Faulkner 1984, 97).

Finally, tying myth and time together in this discussion, Faulkner shows us a myth of rational time, when Quentin goes into the jeweller's shop, to see if his watch can be repaired. The jeweller, a rational-time technician, bears the imprint of mechanization, like the other paradigmatic symbols of the reified order: the saleswoman and the squire. We find that "[t]here was a glass in his eye -- a metal tube screwed into his face" (Faulkner 1984, 95). Later the violence of the mechanization is explicitly drawn. "Bent over his bench, the tube tunnelled into his face" (Faulkner 1984, 97).

But what we find in the shop are clocks and watches before they are sent into the rational order. When Quentin asks if the watches and clocks in the store are accurate, the jeweller says, "[n]o But they haven't been

CONCLUSION

Protesting reification must take its toll on Quentin. Certainly he is marginalized, forced into his imagination to satisfy his desire for wholeness. His attempts to find a place for his own humanity, separate from the dehumanizing process of reification, lead him to a more and more marginal position, one in which, as we will see, he would himself produce the whole of society: incest. But this contradiction is not the whole story, for it reveals a desire to escape reification. He does try to work out his emotional despair rather than simply buying into capital. We can see a contradiction in his incestuousness, but we must not lose sight of the protest inherent in this desire.

At the bridge, looking down into the habitat of that impossible signified, the uncatchable fish, Quentin associates the peaceful waters with an unchanging space. He imagines an ideal union with Caddy taking place beyond history, perfectly cut off:

> If it could just be a hell beyond that: the clean flame the two of us more than dead. Then you will have only me then the two of us amid the pointing and the horror beyond the clean flame.
>
> (Faulkner, 1984, 133)

Here Quentin negates the social world: "walled by the clean flame" and hence free from "the pointing and the horror" (Faulkner, 1984, 134). Here Quentin would still maintain a community, he does not want to end social

relations. He desires to escape the universalizing finger that "points" to both categorize and exclude the marginal. But Faulkner also shows the reader that the figure (Quentin and Caddy) cannot be separated from the ground (the gaping mob), revealing the impossibility of Quentin's quest to escape the social world.

Furthermore, this flame is clean and uncontaminated by the external world. But what Quentin wants to rescue Caddy from is her fall from the mythic code of the South into capital. She is marrying Herbert Head, a banker, who attempts to buy Quentin off (Faulkner 1984, 126), and who also represents mechanization ("It's her car aren't you proud of your little sister owns first auto in town" [Faulkner 1984, 106]). Quentin's incestuous desire is like a bargain to keep Caddy from marrying a paradigm of capitalism: "Why must you marry somebody Caddy Do you want me to say it do you think that if I say it it wont be" (Faulkner, 1984, 140).

Incest ensures the exclusion of change in the social gaze and in all others that threaten to alter the previous meaning of the self. In an incestuous relationship with Caddy, Quentin can sustain his ideal of the family; then he can both spare the Southern family from disintegration and spare himself the isolated individualism of the North

Quentin tries to control his identity in an incestuous relationship by playing the roles of father,

brother, husband and son simultaneously. By admitting to the incest, Quentin excludes the invading Dalton Ames (Caddy's fiancee). "I have committed incest I said Father it was I it was not Dalton Ames" (Faulkner, 1984, 90). This desire for control shows how little control he has, and how marginalized he has become. But the margins are where Quentin wants to be, despite the pain, because only outside the rationalized world can he recover the qualitative, natural world associated with blacks, and children.

This happens in the fusion of Caddy and the water imagery. Quentin thinks of her when he goes by water, and the images he has of her go back to the muddy drawers from playing in the pond. We also see Caddy again, after a sexual encounter, lying at the edge of the pond ("she was lying in the water her head on the sand spit the water flowing about her hips" [Faulkner, 1984, 171]). Quentin's suicide by drowning can be seen as a final joining with with the marginal. In his walk the water has contained the children who give up fishing to simply play and swim, the mythical fish, Caddy, and his shadow ("... I had tricked it. I walked it into the shadow of the quai" [Faulkner, 1984, 105]), with the obvious association with blacks. The boys give up reifying the fish, they leave it alone. Now Quentin himself will leave the work reification alone.

Quentin's decision to drown himself can be seen as a response to the psychological violence (reification) already inflicted upon his consciousness. Recall that he will weigh himself down with flat-irons: like the iron of the reified saleswoman's and squire's hair, their glasses, her cash-register. He is forced into the margins by the sheer weight of reification. His psychological suicide may be seen as a protest against the categories imposed on him. But there is a more aggressive side to his protest. Quentin becomes an empty sign, but as an empty sign he opens a hole that the managing categories of reification cannot manage. He literally refuses to be reduced to appearances as he plunges beneath the surfaces of the world.

CONCLUSION

My goals throughout this thesis have been modest. To give some dimension to my understanding of Faulkner, I have situated the novels in the historical transition from a somewhat agrarian culture to one fully controlled by the effects of capitalism. In the same spirit, I have attempted to utilize a precise language -- Lukacs's conceptual apparatus -- for discussing what (I think) is going on in both Absalom, Absalom! and The Sound and the Fury. The theory underlying my method directly opposes a humanist critical approach which would focus on the individual as the center of history.

Contrary to critics such as Cleanth Brooks, I have tried to show the constructedness of human nature, instead of a model based on a universal human nature. From my viewpoint (itself constructed out of my readings of Lukacs) the contrast between a Sutpen and a Quentin exposes the profound difference between human beings -- a difference that is increasingly homogenized (but only through the historical developments of capitalism and its relentless quantification).

Of course, my bias in favour of a non-essentialist human nature admits a profound problem in terms of social change: since the individual is so completely constructed by his or her context, little room is left for protest, especially from within the same society (Quentin can protest against capital precisely because it is in some ways foreign to him).

One of the most important lessons of The Sound and the Fury, for me, is the narrow limits from which Quentin can protest -- and this protest is usually a kind of harmful withdrawal (suicide, silence) rather than a positive expression of his own desires. In the end, Quentin protests, but we can also see in his protest how limited a space he has for creating an alternative mythology, this creation becomes an impossibility. If an individual refuses to conform to the social world (as Sutpen does) and fails to reconstruct the family, then his space for change appears extremely limited. Add to this the fact that society itself teaches what we can and cannot think, and we can see how remote the possibilities are for liberation.

On the positive side, there is in Faulkner's novels -- despite my denial of an essential human nature -- an expressed desire for the liberation of the senses from their repression by the purely formal operations of thought. For example, Benjy is referred to by Quentin and

others as being able to understand through his senses (even such primitive senses as smell) -- an idea vehemently denied by a reified sensibility. We need not take this appeal to the senses as anything other than a symbol for a potentially different mode of understanding. As such it opens up the range of experience without rigidly defining "nature" or turning it into an essence.

In effect, my reading of the novels does not discover in The Sound and the Fury or Absalom, Absalom! an affirmation of life and the essential self. I find instead a self thoroughly problematized, located in a transsubjective power struggle, one encompassing historical, institutional, and political forces. This vast intersection of forces controlling, creating and defining the human subject appears to leave the individual subject with very little power to change the status quo. But at least, through our understanding of reification, we can now see more clearly the nature of the struggle.

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ISBN 0-315-53757-4

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