Maria Haar

The Phenomenon of the Grotesque in Modern Southern Fiction

Some Aspects of Its Form and Function

Universitetet i Umeå

Almqvist & Wiksell International, Stockholm, Sweden
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Some Aspects of Its Form and Function

Doctoral Dissertation
by due permission of the Faculty of Arts
of the University of Umeå
to be publicly discussed in the lecture hall F
on March 11, 1983 at 10 a.m.
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Umeå 1983
ABSTRACT

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Title: The Phenomenon of the Grotesque in Modern Southern Fiction - Some Aspects of Its Form and Function
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After a general historical outline of the term and concept 'grotesque' attention is focused on the grotesque in Southern fiction and an attempt is made to explain the abundance of this mode in the literature of the South. It can seemingly be linked to the distinctiveness of that region as compared to the rest of the United States—a distinctiveness that has been brought about by historical, geographical, sociological and economic factors.

Basing the discussion on the theory of Philip Thomson, who defines the grotesque as "the unresolved clash between incompatibles in work and response," various critical approaches to the Southern grotesque are examined, all of which are found to be too all-embracing. An effort is then made to analyse the grotesque as displayed particularly in Caldwell, Capote, Faulkner, Goyen, McCullers, O'Connor and Welty. The study deals first with the macabre-grotesque, then the repulsive/frightening-grotesque and finally the comic-grotesque. The last chapter is devoted to more recent authors writing in the 1960s. Their works reveal that the South is still a breeding ground for the grotesque.

Key Words: Caldwell, Capote, Faulkner, Goyen, McCullers, O'Connor, Welty, macabre-grotesque, repulsive/frightening-grotesque, comic-grotesque, Philip Thomson


Distributed by Almqvist & Wiksell International, Box 62, S-101 20 Stockholm, Sweden
Errata

p. 46, note 16: probably
p. 73, 1. 30: 61
p. 98, 1. 23: dwarf
p. 93, 1. 14: (see pp.

read: probably
read: 62
read: dwarf
read: (see pp. 143-44).

p. 121, 1. 34: never know
read: never now
p. 172, note 24: the title of the work by Blotner & Gwynn
given in note 42 should appear here
p. 180, 1. 22: Louisiana
p. 197, 1. 9: want

read: Louisiana
read: wants

The square brackets round the following words or phrases
present in the original, are missing due to a technical fault:
p. 6, 1. 24--real
p. 9, block quotation, 1. 1--sic
p. 13, 11. 39-40--the South's
p. 26, 1. 11--grotesque
p. 33, 1. 37--sic
p. 44, note 1, 1. 29--in King Lear
p. 61, block quotation, 11. 2 and 4--sic
p. 62, 1. 5--who
p. 63, block quotation, 1. 1--Mrs. McIntyre
p. 66, 11. 8-9--Mr. Fortune
p. 70, block quotation, 1. 1--great-
p. 79, 1st block quotation, 1. 1--the rooster
p. 135, block quotation, 1. 2--the comic as well as
p. 145, block quotation, 1. 4--Sister's
p. 148, 1st block quotation, 1. 6--of Troy
p. 150, 1st block quotation, 1. 12--which
p. 158, 1. 20--her farm
p. 162, 1. 6--Addie; 1. 22--sic
p. 169, 2nd block quotation, 1. 1--the congregation; 1. 2--his wife
p. 180, 1st block quotation, 1. 1--war
p. 187, 1. 38--sic
p. 188, block quotation, 1. 1--as the narrator comments
p. 189, 1. 9--is
p. 194, 1. 17--s in places
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Almqvist & Wiksell International, Stockholm, Sweden
In memory of my late husband, Arthur Haar, without whose encouragement this dissertation would never have been written
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to my dissertation adviser, Dr. Ingrid Melander, for her unfailing interest in my work and for her many helpful suggestions. I should also like to thank my very good friend Pearl Sjölander, who has been a patient 'sounding-board' for my 'grotesqueries' and has given me a great deal of good advice and moral support. Thanks are also due to another good friend, Margareta Nystedt-Ostergren, who has assisted me in proof-reading; to Pat Shrimpton, who has checked the language; and not least, to Britt Johnson, who has typed the final copy of the dissertation.

Umeå, January, 1983.

Maria Haar
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Dictionary Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COD</td>
<td>The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OALD</td>
<td>The Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webster's</td>
<td>Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the</td>
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<td></td>
<td>English Language</td>
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PREFACE

A great deal has already been written about the grotesque in Southern literature. My reasons for nevertheless venturing to add to the many studies on the subject are threefold: firstly, I feel that the term 'grotesque' has been used much too loosely, and I therefore wish to advocate a theory that might limit its misuse; secondly, I think that a systematic delineation of the grotesque can be of general interest; thirdly, I believe that an effort should be made to counteract the almost complete lack of commentaries on the grotesque in Southern fiction in the sixties.

My own study begins with Faulkner in the twenties and covers approximately fifty years. Although restricted to fictional prose and works by non-black writers, the subject nevertheless proved so extensive that the high hopes I originally entertained of being exhaustive in the field soon founded. There has also been some difficulty in acquiring information about relevant primary sources actually in existence. This applies particularly to the grotesque in more recent fiction, which has therefore been treated in a less comprehensive way than was planned from the outset.
INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

An Historical Outline of the Term and Concept 'Grotesque'

If one looks up the word 'grotesque' in some of our most frequently used dictionaries, such as the COD, the OALD and Webster's, one will undoubtedly become confused. Apart from corresponding definitions of the grotesque in art, where, to quote the COD, it is seen as a "decorative painting or sculpture with fantastic interweaving of human and animal forms with foliage" or a "comically distorted figure or design," there seems to be no real agreement as to what the word actually means. Many adjectives, such as 'distorted', 'bizarre', 'absurd' and 'fantastic' are enumerated as possible synonyms, but leave one with the feeling that in themselves they cannot convey the meaning of this intricate term. Such important aspects of the grotesque as the horrifying and the macabre are not mentioned at all.

If there is a lack of agreement amongst the compilers of the various dictionaries about the meaning of the term, the disagreement is even more obvious amongst the critics, scholars and writers who have probed more deeply into the subject. As a French critic has put it, "l'ambiguïté est souveraine." However, to prove the point about the variance that exists, and always has existed on the subject of the grotesque--perhaps due to its radical and extreme nature, as Philip Thomson suggests--and in the hope of making this dissertation more comprehensible, a brief historical outline of the term and concept 'grotesque' will first be presented.

The origin of the word 'grotesque' can be traced back to the Italian noun grotte--caves, where paintings from the reign of Augustus of the type described in the COD were discovered during the excavations of Rome at the end of the fifteenth century. As a result of the great interest in these paintings and the extensive imitation of them, the adjective form of the word, grottesco (as well as the noun grottesca), soon spread to other
European countries; in both France and England the word grotesque was used until, around 1640, the English began using their own form of the word, grotesque. Initially, the use of the word was limited to the visual arts, but eventually it came to include literature and other phenomena outside the original field. In France it was used as early as the end of the sixteenth century by Montaigne, who saw a likeness between his own ornate style of writing and grotesque painting; about seventy years later Boileau employed it in an exclusively literary sense: to him 'grotesque' signified 'burlesque' or 'parody' and was altogether justifiable when directed, for instance, at "'Gothic' or barbarous poetry." In 1695, in "A Parallel of Painting and Poetry," Dryden revealed his conception of farce based on Boileau and Horace:

There is yet a lower sort of Poetry and Painting which is out of Nature. For a Farce is that in Poetry, which Grotesque is in a Picture. The Persons, and Action of a Farce are all unnatural, and the Manners false, that is inconsistent with the characters of Mankind. Grotesque-painting is the just resemblance of this; and Horace begins his Art of Poetry by describing such a Figure; with a Man's Head, a Horse's Neck, the Wings of a Bird, and a Fishes Tail; parts of different species jumbled together, according to the mad imagination of the Dawber; and the end of all this, as he tells you afterward, to cause Laughter. A very Monster in a Bartholomew-Fair, for the Mob to gape at for their two-pence. Laughter is indeed the propriety of a Man, but just enough to distinguish him from his elder Brother, with four Legs. 'Tis a kind of Bastard-pleasure too, taken in at the Eyes of the vulgar gazers, and at the Ears of the beastly Audience. Church-Painters use it to divert the honest Countryman at Publick Prayers, and keep his Eyes open at a heavy Sermon. And Farce-Scriblers make use of the same noble invention, to entertain Citizens, Country-Gentlemen, and Covent Garden Fops. If they are merry, all goes well on the Poet's side. The better sort goe thither too, but in despair of Sense and the just Images of Nature, which are the adequate pleasures of the Mind.

As can be seen from this quotation, Dryden, being a writer and critic of the neo-classical school, relegated grotesques to a place "among the ignoble subjects of painting and literature" in the conviction that they did not make sense, or depict nature or serve a moral purpose. Unlike most of his French colleagues, however, Dryden did not reject grotesques altogether; as the end of the parallel indicates, he felt that a farce-writer's primary concern must be to amuse the audience rather than to elevate
their minds.

On the whole, however, during the seventeenth century 'grotesque' was used almost exclusively as an art term both in England and Germany. It was not until the beginning of the next century that the word was adopted as a literary term and then with a derogatory meaning. Being primarily associated with caricature—as a result of the grotesque work of the French engraver Jacques Callot—and with farce and burlesque, "the more general sense... which it has developed by the early eighteenth century is... that of 'ridiculous, distorted, unnatural' (adj.); 'an absurdity, a distortion of nature (noun)," according to Arthur Clayborough in his book on the subject. This view of the grotesque was to prevail for almost two hundred years. In Germany it revealed itself in the works of Justus Möser, Karl Flögel and Heinrich Schneegans; in England in the criticism of Thomas Wright and John Addington Symonds. None of these writers condemned the grotesque as such—Schneegans, for instance, spoke admiringly of the particular satirical grotesque found in Rabelais, which he defined as "die bis zur Unmöglichkeit gesteigerte Übertreibung," and both Flögel and Möser defended the existence of the comic-grotesque, which they saw as the result of a natural inclination inherent in man from time immemorial; yet they all looked upon the grotesque primarily as a grossly exaggerated and absurd form of art.

A different but not very favourable attitude is met with in Coleridge, whose own grotesqueries have been scrutinized by Clayborough. For Coleridge the grotesque constituted something odd, something incongruous, used only to create sensation or "to excite bodily disgust, but not moral fear." In a lecture on Rabelais, Swift and Sterne in 1818 he specified, "When words or images are placed in unusual juxta-position rather than in connection, and are so placed merely because the juxta-position is unusual—we have the odd or the grotesque." This type of grotesqueness was found in Smollett's Peregrine Pickle and Sterne's Tristram Shandy and represented a sort of false humour. In contrast to these works, the "phantasmagoric allegories" of Rabelais were held by Coleridge to be examples of true, non-grotesque humour, a humour that was sublime and highly moral. As Frances Barasch points out, the Rabelaisian allegory has since
been categorized as a very noble form of grotesque-satire; thus, unwittingly, Coleridge made later critics aware of the possible sublimity of the grotesque.\textsuperscript{14}

This predominantly low opinion of the grotesque was, however, not shared by all; the German Romanticist and theorist Friedrich Schlegel discovered some very commendable qualities in the grotesque, such as the playful element which together with the paradoxical, the ironic and the fantastic was entirely in keeping with Romantic ideas.\textsuperscript{15} As Wolfgang Kayser was later to note, Schlegel was the first to see the grotesque as "der klaffende Kontrast zwischen Form und Stoff, die auseinanderdrängende Mischung des Heterogenen, die Explosivkraft des Paradoxen, lächerlich und grauenerregend zugleich."\textsuperscript{16} A few decades later another Romantic, Victor Hugo, spoke warmly of the grotesque as being "comme objectif auprès du sublime, comme moyen de contraste... la plus riche source que la nature puisse ouvrir à l'art," and considered it especially well-suited for the new drama which was a mirror of nature itself with its beauty and ugliness, its sublimation and trivialities, its horror and ludicrousness, its tragedy and comedy.\textsuperscript{17} Hugo found all these elements in the grotesque.

Like Schlegel, the Victorian writer and art critic John Ruskin stressed the playful aspect of the grotesque, especially in combination with the terrifying. To him, however, a distinction had to be made between the 'noble' or 'true' grotesque, which was "the expression of the repose or play of a serious mind" and involved "the true appreciation of beauty," and the 'ignoble' or 'false' grotesque, which was "the result of the full exertion of a frivolous one."\textsuperscript{18} Being full of admiration for the 'true' grotesque, Ruskin even went so far as to state:

\begin{quote}
... wherever the human mind is healthy and vigorous in all its proportions, great in imagination and emotion no less than in intellect, and not overborne by an undue or hardened pre-eminence of the mere reasoning faculties, there the grotesque will exist in full energy. And, accordingly, I believe that there is no test of greatness in periods, nations, or men, more sure than the development, among them or in them, of a noble grotesque.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

Whereas Ruskin discoursed a great deal upon the grotesque in art, Walter Bagehot was the first one to make a close study of the grotesque from a solely literary point of view. In an
essay entitled "Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning; or Pure, Ornate, and Grotesque Art in English Poetry" (1864) he expressed his opinion that the grotesque was far inferior to pure and ornate art but was useful insofar as it revealed not what "nature is striving to be, but . . . what by some lapse she has happened to become," and reminded you "of the perfect image by showing you the distorted and imperfect image." To illustrate "not the success of grotesque art, but the nature of grotesque art," Bagehot quotes some lines from "Caliban upon Setebos" where Browning, according to Bagehot, depicts "mind in difficulties--mind set to make out the universe under the worst and hardest circumstances." Judging by this and other examples that are given, however, it becomes evident, as Thomson observes, that what Bagehot saw as something extremely ugly and monstrous and termed grotesque is rather what one would nowadays call "bizarre and 'vulgar'" (p. 28).

Other critics, notably G. K. Chesterton and Lily Campbell, have also dealt with the grotesque in Browning but they have a much more favourable attitude towards this aspect of his poetry than Bagehot.

In her Master of Arts thesis called "The Grotesque in the Poetry of Robert Browning" (1906) Lily Campbell welcomed the fact that such subjects as the ugly and the grotesque were beginning to be thought of as legitimate by literary critics, and rightly prophesized that grotesque writing would reach undreamt-of heights in the near future. To Lily Campbell, Browning was "the prophet of the grotesque" for, with the exception of Swift, he was the first one to make conscious use of this art form; he discovered "new ways of interpreting life, of elevating the debased," and he paved the way for the rhythmic irregularities that would later become so characteristic of modern poetry. In contrast to the nineteenth century writers of weird Gothic tales, who used the grotesque merely for the sake of sensation, Browning was also a true poet of the grotesque--a master of the so-called "great" or "natural grotesque" that resulted from the unbridled imagination of a great mind and was closely related to the sublime. A few less successful poems were classified as examples of "the fanciful grotesque," which was the product of "fancy's creation in the realm of the ugly," and "the artificial gro-
tesque"--the chaotic work of a strained imagination. One might also note Lily Campbell's distinction between caricature and the grotesque. Both grow out of the ugly, she says, and both contain elements of humour and terror, but whereas caricature stresses the comic, the grotesque stresses the terrible. Frequently, the grotesque is also, as in Browning's case, the outcome of a struggle or confusion between idealism and realism. It is this very conflict that, according to Lily Campbell, makes him such a great poet.

Chesterton, too, praises the poetry of Browning and states, "Browning's verse, in so far as it is grotesque, is not complex or artificial; it is natural and in the legitimate tradition of nature." He then goes on to explain a specific function of the grotesque found in this poet: "To present a matter in a grotesque manner does certainly tend to touch the nerve of surprise and thus to draw attention to the intrinsically miraculous character of the object itself. . . . Now it is the supreme function of the philosopher of the grotesque to make the world stand on its head that people may look at it." In Chesterton's opinion, Browning succeeded in doing exactly this—even if he sometimes went too far "in his indulgence in ingenuities that have nothing to do with poetry at all."

This idea that the grotesque may be used, as Thomson puts it, "to make us see the real world anew, from a fresh perspective which, though it be a strange and disturbing one, is nevertheless valid and realistic," has become a dominant one in modern criticism (p. 17). It also ties in with the notion of alienation which Wolfgang Kayser stresses so much in his work Das Groteske: Seine Gestaltung in Malerei und Dichtung—the first large-scale attempt to analyse the grotesque from an aesthetic point of view. "Das Groteske ist eine Struktur. Wir können ihr Wesen mit einer Wendung bezeichnen, die sich uns oft genug aufgedrängt hat: das Groteske ist die entfremdete Welt," Kayser states. He goes on to explain that by 'alienated world', he does not mean a world of fantasy, like that of a fairy tale, but the familiar world suddenly presented in a new and strange way which may strike us as funny and/or frightening. Kayser also looks upon the grotesque as "ein Spiel mit dem Absurden" and as "der Versuch das Dämonische in der Welt zu bannen und zu be-
schwören." Like Clayborough and other critics after him, Kayser also sees the grotesque, to quote Thomson, as a "violent clash of opposites, and hence, in some of its forms at least, as an appropriate expression of the problematical nature of existence" (p. 11).

This view of the grotesque, which seems to prevail in literary criticism today, is also shared by Thomson, whose work *The Grotesque* referred to earlier has been found to be of special value. Not only does his study seem thorough--besides tracing the history of the word and the concept, he gives his own definition of the grotesque, clarifies its function, and discusses related terms--but his theory of the grotesque is convincing. Thomson's analysis will therefore be used as the basis for the present discussion of the grotesque in Southern fiction.

Before discussing Thomson's theory, however, a few words should perhaps be said about the efforts that have been made in the last few decades to explain the grotesque with the help of psychology. The most noteworthy attempt of its kind so far is the above work Clayborough's *The Grotesque in English Literature* in which he seeks to describe the grotesque in Swift, Coleridge and Dickens in Jungian terms, taking it to be a result of a regressive-negative or progressive-negative "attitude of mind" in the writers. However, as Michael Steig points out in a recent essay, it is doubtful, whether an examination of this type can result in any useful definition, considering the frequent lack of essential biographical data and the possibility of interpreting what is available in so many different ways. Finding all existing studies inadequate in one way or another, Steig offers his own definition:

The grotesque involves the managing of the uncanny by the comic. More specifically: a) When the infantile material is primarily threatening, comic techniques, including caricature, diminish the threat through degradation or ridicule; but at the same time, they may also enhance anxiety through their aggressive implications and through the strangeness they lend to the threatening figure. b) In what is usually called the comic-grotesque, the comic in its various forms lessens the threat of identification with infantile drives by means of ridicule; at the same time, it lulls inhibitions and makes possible on a preconscious level the same identification that it appears to the conscience or superego to prevent. In short, both extreme types of the grotesque ... return us to childhood--the one attempts a libera-
tion from fear, while the other attempts a liberation from inhibition.

Steig also speaks of the "unresolved tension" that results from certain types of grotesque—an expression that we are to come across again in Thomson where it constitutes a very important part of his definition.34

Basing his theory partly on the conclusions of others, partly on his own findings, Thomson in turn sees the grotesque as a mixture of two or more incompatible elements. One of these ought to be the comic; the other or others might consist of the terrifying, the disgusting, the repulsive, etc. The mixture may or may not be disproportionate; the essential thing is that one perceives a conflict between the elements in question and, furthermore, that this conflict remains unresolved and is felt to exist both in the work itself and in one's reaction to it. Thomson's basic definition of the grotesque is therefore: "the unresolved clash of incompatibles in work and response" (p. 27).

Both in Thomson's booklet and Frances Barasch's ambitious work about the grotesque one finds mention of the absurd and the "Theatre of the Absurd," whose foremost spokesmen today are Beckett, Ionesco, Genet and Pinter.35 This genre is undoubtedly akin to the grotesque, but, as Thomson points out, there is an essential difference between the two concepts. Whereas the grotesque has a particular structure, "there is no formal pattern, no structural characteristics peculiar to the absurd: it can be perceived as content, as a quality, a feeling or atmosphere, an attitude or world-view" (pp. 31-32). The grotesque is just one of the many ways through which the absurd can be presented.36

As this outline has shown, the grotesque as a literary phenomenon has been, and still is, the subject of many interpretations. Some of these, judged to be of minor importance, have been left out for want of space; others, pertaining specifically to the Southern grotesque, will be aired below. There will also be reason to refer back to Thomson and take up other aspects of his theory in the course of the following discussion.

### Possible Reasons for the Abundance of the Grotesque in Southern Literature

There has been much speculation about the abundance of the grotesque in American and especially in Southern fiction. Most
critics and scholars seem to agree that this phenomenon is a
sign of an era of turmoil and transition. In the afore-mentioned
study Das Groteske: Seine Gestaltung in Malerei und Dichtung,
Wolfgang Kayser speaks of three such periods in Western history
during which the grotesque has flourished because people "nicht
mehr an das geschlossene Weltbild und die bergende Ordnung des
vorangehenden Zeiten glauben konnten"--our century is one of
them.37 Martin Foss expresses a similar line of thought when he
says, "In times of chaos men return to a magic form of art,
using the demoniac aspects of life for their stories and plays:
sickness, insanity, death; but they turn them into grotesque
means for laughter, in order to regain their inner balance."38

One essential reason why the grotesque has made itself so
strongly felt in the South is perhaps, as Lewis Lawson contends
in his doctoral dissertation, that the Southern States have had
to cope with a double transition; they have been affected both
by all the general changes taking place in the world and by all
the particular changes resulting from the effort to catch up
with the rest of the nation.39

Other reasons for the profusion of grotesque elements in
the literature of the South may be found in those factors which
have contributed to the uniqueness of this region. That the
South differs from the rest of the United States, for instance,
historically, economically, sociologically, seems to be a matter
of general agreement, even if the opinions of the experts as to
the degree and continuance of this divergence may vary a great
deal.

A great many books have been written on the history of the
South, most of which no doubt mention the defeat of the Confed-
eracy in the Civil War. The exact effect of this defeat is im-
possible to assess but Professor Degler, author of Place Over
Time, is one of the many historians who believe that it "en-
hanced the distinctiveness of the South."40 He says:

Insofar as southerners "sic" lack some of that belief
in progress or that optimistic outlook upon the future
which is so characteristic of Americans, that lack is
surely to be related to the remembrance that the South
lost a war. Certainly the modern southern interest in
the Confederacy, the war, its heroes, and its legend am-
ply testify to the persistence of that memory. Indeed,
David Potter has recently traced a "deeply felt southern
nationalism" to "the shared sacrifices, the shared efforts,
and the shared defeat (which is often more unifying than victory) of the Civil War. The Civil War," he adds, "did far more to produce a southern nationalism which flourished in the cult of the Lost Cause than southern nationalism did to produce the war."  

Critics and scholars alike have seen a connection between the South's pervading feelings of defeat and frustration and the phenomenon of the grotesque. "The South," Larry Finger says, "unlike other parts of the country, has known what it means to suffer great defeat; consequently, the Southerner has a great sense of the complexities of human existence. Such complexities no doubt are reflected in the literature of the grotesque." William Van O'Connor, again, touches upon the ideas expressed in the above quotation when he speaks of the tendency of many Southerners to live with a code that has ceased to be applicable and that signifies "a detachment from reality and loss of vitality." This is one factor, Van O'Connor feels, that has contributed to the fostering of the grotesque in Southern literature.

The defeat of the Confederacy, then, is one circumstance which has set the South apart from the rest of the nation. Degler's expression that it "enhanced the distinctiveness" indicates, however, that the South was divergent even before the outbreak of the Civil War. Perhaps the most important difference of all, since it has had such a far-reaching effect on Southern life as a whole, is the almost tropical climate. Some observers, James Dabbs for instance, have seen a correlation between the hot, humid weather and the high frequency of violent deeds in the South. The question of the effect of the weather on human behaviour is interesting but open to dispute. The fact remains, however, that acts of personal violence—that is, violence directed against others in the form of murder and manslaughter are far more numerous in the South than in the rest of the United States. A study made of the years 1920-24 reveals that the homicide rate per 100,000 Southerners was about 2.5 times greater than for the rest of the population. Later surveys show that the rate in the South remains far above the national average (see p. 180).

Even if this violence cannot be directly traced back to the climate, it can, according to Degler, be said to have its roots in the plantation system which developed largely because
of the climate. "The climate did not make men grow tobacco or cotton, but the climate did make it possible for them to grow those crops that had set the South's agriculture apart from that of the North. . . . The great staples encouraged the use of dependent labor to meet the world demand, thus creating the plantation." Degler goes on to say:

Slavery itself contributed quite directly to making the South violent, as Charles Sydnor showed years ago. On several counts, Sydnor remarked, slavery weakened the rule of law in the antebellum South. Since slaves could not testify against white men even when they were witnesses to crimes, injustice sometimes went unpunished by the normal processes of the law, thus encouraging men to take into their own hands the punishment of wrongdoers.

... The ending of slavery did not end this tendency toward extra-legal action. In fact, it can be said that emancipation reinforced and extended it. From the beginning, after all, slavery had been much more than a form of labor; it was always a way of subordinating black people in a society that feared and hated them. When slavery was abolished the problem of controlling blacks became more, rather than less insistent. Once they were citizens, blacks could no longer be legally coerced or punished differently from other citizens. Yet the whites' desire to keep them "in their place" remained as strong as ever.

This prevalence and persistence of violence in the South is of interest from a literary point of view since it is mirrored in contemporary literature, as Louise Gossett shows in her book Violence in Recent Southern Fiction. Of even greater interest here is her contention that violence, in whatever form it may take, is intimately connected with the grotesque—a connection that has also been emphasized by William Van O'Connor and Irving Malin, among others. Louise Gossett writes:

Both violence and grotesqueness are dramatizations of disorder. And just as the negative implies the positive—grief, joy and evil, good—disorder argues order. In the most comprehensive perspective, violence is part of the acute criticism to which Western writers in the twentieth century have subjected their culture. It is also part of the total response of creative artists to jarring changes in man's view of himself. Affected by theories of evolution and psychoanalysis and faced by the threats of automation, the totalitarian state, and nuclear annihilation, the thinking man has questioned both his humanity and his being. He has been torn between feeling either that his culture has failed him or that he has failed his culture. He does not ask for the recovery of the old order but for the rediscovery of order itself. Patently, Southern writers are touched by
these currents, and the broad contours of violence and grotesqueness in their work are shaped by them.

Louise Gosset then goes on to mention the "particular direction" the above-mentioned phenomena have taken in Southern fiction due to "local qualities"—a statement that makes it appropriate to revert to the description of the fundamental differences between the South and the non-South.

The climate not only aided the establishment of a plantation society that was unique in several respects; it also encouraged the development of the South into "the most agricultural region of the country." In 1940, the census for that year describes 40 percent of the white population as rural farm residents as compared to 16 percent of white people in other areas. The rural character of the South has in turn resulted in fewer towns and cities and in cities that are considerably smaller than those of other regions. Even this rurality has, according to the critics, affected the literary output of the South. Malcolm Cowley, for example, has examined the works of about a dozen outstanding Southern writers, including William Faulkner, Truman Capote, and Eudora Welty, and found that their fiction has grown out of "the rural dweller's propensity to talk and spin stories." Eudora Welty herself has commented on this predilection:

Southerners . . . love a good tale. They are born reciters, great memory retainers, diary keepers, letter exchangers, and letter savers, history tracers, and debaters, and--outstaying all the rest--great talkers. Southern talk is on the narrative side, employing the verbatim conversation. For this plenty of time is needed and it is granted. It was still true not very far back that children grew up listening--listening through unhurried stretches of uninhibited reminiscence, and listening galvanized. They were naturally prone to be entertained from the first by life as they heard tell of it, and to feel free, encouraged, and then in no time compelled, to pass their pleasure on.

Degler rightly states that no matter how plausible such an account may be, it is hardly sufficient to explain the literary achievement generally referred to as "The Southern Renaissance," as Cowley attempts to do. Yet, rurality "deserves recognition as a characteristic that sets the region apart," says Degler and adds that there are other qualities that can be traced back to the South's rurality with more reliability. One such characteristic that can hardly be disputed is that the South has long
been and continues to be the poorest section of the United States. As late as 1969, almost 22 percent of the population of the Southern States subsisted below the so-called poverty level.\textsuperscript{57} Even those workers engaged in manufacturing--as increasingly many are--are poorly paid. A survey from 1963 reveals that the hourly wages received by such workers in all the former Confederate States were far below the national average, one explanation for this being the lack of unions.\textsuperscript{58}

With poverty comes lack of education, even illiteracy. In 1930, only two states outside the South had more than 5 percent illiteracy whilst all of the Southern States except Delaware and Maryland exceeded this figure; in South Carolina, for instance, the percentage was as high as 16.7.\textsuperscript{59} Twenty years later the rate of illiteracy had decreased considerably throughout the country but the Southern States still topped the list.\textsuperscript{60}

Even here a possible link with the grotesque can be found, unfortunately not one susceptible to statistical proof. Ignorance, coupled with an abundance of backwood areas, often leads to inbreeding and this, in turn, to a great deal of abnormality—a phenomenon that has always interested the grotesque writer. Offering one explanation for why the South probably "has produced more than its share of the grotesque," William Van O'Connor suggests that "the old agricultural system depleted the land and poverty breeds abnormality."\textsuperscript{61} Also, in contrast to more "civilized" parts of the world, these mentally and/or physically afflicted people are not as readily tucked away into institutions. Thus such people have become a much more common sight in the South than in many other regions—a fact which must also have contributed to the reflection and description of grotesqueness in Southern literature.

The South is also unique as regards the structure of its population. As Degler points out, no other part of the United States has such a high percentage of black people—a circumstance that "has differentiated the South not only in the minds of southerners, but in the minds of other Americans as well."\textsuperscript{62} Although the attitude of white Southerners towards black people is bound to vary and is obviously undergoing a change for the better, it is a well-known fact that "the duality of its racial makeup," has caused and still causes a great
deal of conflict and violence, as indicated earlier. It might be added that the relationship between blacks and whites has probably been affected for the worse by the homogeneity of the latter race which springs almost exclusively from Protestant areas of northwestern Europe and includes very few Jews and Catholics. It is supposedly no coincidence that the Ku Klux Klan, with its anti-immigrant propaganda and fomenting of racial hatred, has grown so strong among white Southerners with their lack of "religious and ethnic diversity."

Two other factors that should not be overlooked in this attempt to map out the possible causes of the grotesque, are that the South is not only the most religious but also the most conservative part of the country. It is the region where the Bible still tends to be interpreted literally and 86 percent of the population, who identified themselves as Protestants, professed that they believe in the existence of the Devil. It is also the region where—as a study conducted in the 1950s revealed—the nation's smallest margin of tolerance was registered toward such "dissenters" as Socialists and atheists. A conservatism and religiosity of the type found in the South easily becomes the breeding ground for grotesque exaggerations which are likely to be reflected in the literature of the region. As later sections of this dissertation will show, this has in fact been the case.

In whatever way one chooses to interpret this account of the distinctiveness of the South and its alleged connection with the occurrence of the grotesque, the fact remains that this phenomenon is unusually abundant in recent Southern literature. As Lawson stresses in his dissertation, however, the grotesque existed in Southern fiction long before it began to blossom in the twentieth century. The literary roots of its modern use are traceable to two very different sources. One of these is the so-called tall-tale, which constituted an essential part of the coarse frontier humour. Of the origin of this type of narrative Lawson writes:

Whatever the surface water of Southern fiction had been before Faulkner, there had been an under-current of the grotesque, both in oral tradition and in consciously contrived literature. The earliest white settlers in the region, the Scotch-Irish, brought in with them, says Constance Rourke, in American Humor, fragments
of Gaelic lore that contained elements of magic, fantasy, and other aspects of the supernatural. They also brought with them a fondness for the ballad, a type of literature in which event overshadows character ... in which violence is the keynote. Nor have these elements disappeared in recent Southern fiction ....

The mixture of the European folktale and the ballad together with traces of Indian legends and the actuality, which often seems strange enough, of Southern life, led to the Southern tall-tale, the humor of which still pervades Southern comic fiction, as in Faulkner's The Hamlet or Eudora Welty's The Ponder Heart or Flannery O'Connor's "A Late Encounter with the Enemy," and the exaggeration and violence of which still pervade Southern literature in general. (p. 203)

The other influence on the use of the grotesque in contemporary Southern fiction is the writing of Poe--a one time resident of the South--who in his turn was inspired by "the European practitioners of the grotesque of the period after Sturm und Drang" (p.209). Evidently Poe felt that a writer's work had to be of a sensational and very special nature in order to be read. To one critic he wrote:

You ask me in what does this nature consist? In the ludicrous heightened into the grotesque: the fearful coloured into the horrible: the witty exaggerated into the burlesque: the singular wrought out into the strange and mystical.

Irrespective of Poe's influence on later generations of writers as compared to that of the so-called frontier school, there are two motifs handed down from him that should be noted in particular. One is the conception of life as a bad dream; the other is the "use of the decaying house as the externalization of the decaying family which inhabits it" (p. 210). The latter, Lawson claims, "is perhaps the most recurrent motif in Southern fiction, regardless of time" (ibid.). One need only think of such stories as "Clytie" and "A Rose for Emily" or novels like Sanctuary, Absalom, Absalom! and Other Voices, Other Rooms to realize that he is right.

Through his own works and his continuous efforts to prove that the grotesque was an aesthetic category, Poe also influenced the criticism of this mode in Southern literature. From having been employed very much as a term of abuse--as was the general trend both in Europe and America--the word 'grotesque', thanks to Poe, gradually came to be used in an approbative or at least less prejudiced way than before.
Nowadays, the tendency to use 'grotesque' with a negative connotation seems to linger on mainly among Northerners in their criticism of Southern writing. As in the past, these critics also frequently make the mistake of using 'grotesque' and 'Gothic' as interchangeable terms. This can be seen from the rather contemptuous way in which Northern critics speak of the "School of the Southern Grotesque" or alternatively the "School of Southern Gothic"—the existence of which is firmly repudiated by its supposed members, Eudora Welty, Flannery O'Connor, Carson McCullers and others.72

In an article called "A Theory of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction," published in 1972, Alan Spiegel has presented both a theory of the grotesque in the South and an analysis of the difference between the grotesque and the Gothic novel.73 The article is of special interest as it probably contains the only theory that deals exclusively with the Southern grotesque. It also provides an opportunity for comparing Thomson's conception of the grotesque with that of an American scholar and critic. Spiegel's essay will therefore be examined at some length.
NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

1The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English, 5th ed., s.v. 'grotesque'.


3Philip Thomson, The Grotesque, The Critical Idiom, no. 24, ed. John D. Jump (London, 1972), p. 11. (Subsequent quotations are from this edition and page numbers are indicated in the text.). This historical outline has been based upon the work by Philip Thomson, Frances K. Barasch's The Grotesque: A Study in Meanings (Mouton, 1971) and other works referred to in this part of the dissertation.

4According to Arthur Clayborough, The Grotesque in English Literature (Oxford, 1965), pp. 3-4, Montaigne's comparison is made in his essay "On Friendship" (1580); Barasch, pp. 120-21.


6Barasch, p. 125.

7Clayborough, p. 6.

8Justus Möser, Harlekin, oder Vertheidigung des Groteskekomiche(n) (Harlequin or the Defence of the Grotesque-Comic), neue verbesserte Auflage (Bremen, 1777); Karl Flögel, Geschichte des Groteskekomiche(n) (History of the Grotesque-Comic) (Leipzig, 1788); Heinrich Schneegans, Geschichte der grotesken Satire (History of the Grotesque Satire) (Strassbourg, 1894); Thomas Wright, A History of Caricature and Art (London, 1865); John Addington Symonds, "Caricature, the Fantastic, the Grotesque," Essays Speculative and Suggestive, 2 vols. (London, 1890).

9Schneegans, p. 485 ("exaggeration heightened to impossibility"—my trans.)

10Clayborough, pp. 158-200.

11As quoted by Barasch, p. 153.

12Ibid.

13Ibid., p. 154.

14Ibid.
15 Friedrich von Schlegel, Gespräch über die Poesie (Discourse on Poetry) (Berlin, 1800).

16 Wolfgang Kayser, Das Groteske: Seine Gestalt in Malerei und Dichtung (Oldenburg, 1957), p. 55 ("the clashing contrast between form and content, the unstable mixture of heterogeneous elements, the explosive force of the paradoxical, which is both ridiculous and terrifying"—as quoted by Thomson, p. 16).

17 Victor Hugo, Préface de "Cromwell" (1827). References are to Théâtre complet, eds. J.-J. Thierry and J. Meleze (Paris, 1964), pp. 23-24 ("the richest source that nature can open to art as an aspiration to the sublime and as a contrast"—my trans.); ibid., pp. 19-51 passim.


19 Ibid., p. 187.


21 Ibid., pp. 369, 367.

22 Lily Campbell, "The Grotesque in the Poetry of Robert Browning," Bulletin of the University of Texas, 1 April 1907.

23 Ibid., pp. 38, 34.

24 Ibid., p. 20.

25 Ibid., p. 15.


27 Ibid., p. 151.

28 Ibid., p. 152.

29 Kayser, p. 198 ("The grotesque is a structure. Its nature could be summed up in a phrase that has repeatedly suggested itself to us: THE GROTESQUE IS THE ESTRANGED WORLD"—from The Grotesque in Art and Literature, trans. Ulrich Weisstein (New York, 1966), p. 184.

30 Ibid., p. 202 ("a game with the absurd"—my trans.; "AN ATTEMPT TO INVOKE AND SUBDUE THE DEMONIC ASPECTS OF THE WORLD"—The Grotesque in Art and Literature, p. 188.

31 Claybororough, p. 73. As Thomson explains, "progressive art is associated with a predominance of the conscious mind in the creative process, regressive art with a predominance of the unconscious. Positive art is art where no inner conflict is felt, where the presentation of truth or reality proceeds harmoniously, negative art the opposite" (pp. 17-18).

Ibid., pp. 259-60.

Ibid., p. 260.

Together with Brecht these dramatists are descendants of "The Grotesque School" of Pirandello.

The Southern writer John Barth has made much use of both the grotesque and the absurd. Since his works, however, are more universal than Southern in character, they have been left out of the present study.

Kayser, pp. 202-3 ("the belief of the preceding ages in a perfect and protective natural order ceased to exist--The Grotesque, p. 188). The other two eras mentioned are the sixteenth century and the time between the Sturm und Drang period and Romanticism.


Lewis Lawson, "The Grotesque in Recent Southern Fiction" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1964), p. 225. (Subsequent quotations are from a mimeographed copy of this dissertation and page numbers are indicated in the text.)

Carl Degler, Place Over Time: The Continuity of Southern Distinctiveness (Baton Rouge, 1977), pp. 104-5. By the Southern States Professor Degler means the states of the former Confederacy plus Kentucky and Maryland.

Ibid., pp. 105-6.

Larry Finger, "Elements of the Grotesque in Selected Works of Welty, Capote, McCullers, and O'Connor" (Ph.D. dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1972), pp. 17-18. (Subsequent quotations are from a mimeographed copy of this dissertation and page numbers are indicated in the text.)


As mentioned by Degler, p. 11.

Degler, pp. 24-25. As can be expected, and as has also been proved by other studies, more families own guns in the South than in other parts of the United States and believe strongly in their rights to do so.

Degler, pp. 11-12.

Ibid., pp. 63-64.

Louise Gossett, Violence in Recent Southern Fiction (Durham, North Carolina, 1965).
According to Professor Degler, this plantation society was unique in two ways: it was the only one in the New World situated in a non-tropical region, one consequence of which was that whites came to outnumber blacks; also, white Americans had little interest in intermarriage or interbreeding which was common in other plantation societies and frequently led to a softening of the relationship between the races.

As mentioned by Degler, p. 15.

As quoted by Degler, p. 15.

Degler, p. 15.


Degler, p. 17.


Ibid.

Van O'Connor, p. 6.

Degler, pp. 17-18.

Ibid., p. 17.

Ibid., pp. 18-19.

Ibid., pp. 20-21.

Ibid., p. 22. This was shown in a poll conducted in 1966.


Lawson gives E. T. A. Hoffman as one example.


are indicated in the text.; William Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1971; reprint ed., 1975. (Subsequent quotations are from this edition and page numbers are indicated in the text.); Truman Capote, Other Voices, Other Rooms (New York: The New American Library, Signet Books, 1949; reprint ed., 1960). (Subsequent quotations are from this edition and page numbers are given in the text.)


73 Alan Spiegel, "A Theory of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction," Georgia Review 26 (1972), pp. 426-37. (Subsequent quotations are from this issue and page numbers are indicated in the text.)
CHAPTER TWO

CRITICAL APPROACHES TO THE SOUTHERN GROTESQUE

Spiegel's Theory of the Southern Grotesque

Spiegel's definition

Spiegel begins his article by stating that it is indeed hazardous to speak of a literary phenomenon as being 'grotesque'. This is due to the fact that modern critics have used the word so often and so carelessly that it has become almost impossible to apply it without risking obscurity and imprecision. Thomas Mann, for instance, looks upon the grotesque as the 'most genuine style' of modern art with its conception of 'life as tragi-comedy'; William Van O'Connor takes a more limited view and sees the grotesque as a new American genre--grouping together such different novels as Winesburg, Ohio, The Day of the Locust and As I Lay Dying for the reason that they have "sought to incorporate the antipoetic into the traditionally poetic, the cowardly into the heroic, the ignoble into the noble, the realistic into the romantic, the ugly into the beautiful;" and Leslie Fiedler narrows down the term even further by describing it as the particular 'mode of expression' employed by the writers of 'Southern Gothic,' the 'Distaff or Epicene Faulknerians.'

Spiegel discards all three applications of the term. In his opinion, the first two are too sweeping and all-embracing and hinder the differentiation between Southern literature and other American literature. They also make it difficult to separate a great deal of American literature from European literature--or even a great deal of modern fiction in general from "all that is bizarre in fiction anywhere at anytime" (p. 427). Fiedler's definition is rejected by Spiegel as being much too exclusive. He sees it as a derogatory term, applicable to works with "an exotic or extravagant subject-material (very often of a perverse sexual nature)" (ibid.). As such, it may be used of
novels like Faulkner's *Sanctuary* or Capote's *Other Voices, Other Rooms* but not equally well of Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* or Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," for example, the subject matter of which is also very much out of the ordinary—unless one wants to condemn them.2

Feeling the need, then, to clarify and define a "muddled and misused terminology," Spiegel undertakes to present a theory of his own as the basis of a new approach to some features of Southern literature (p. 427). The first task he sets himself is "to define the exact nature of that literary idea which has come to be called 'grotesque'" and to prove that a special variant of this genre exists that can be termed the Southern grotesque (ibid.). His second task is to show that the Southern grotesque novel has its roots in the classic Gothic story, but differs from it substantially. The knowledge of this difference, Spiegel asserts, makes it possible for us to separate modern Southern fiction from the other type of fiction which exists at present in the United States, that is, the non-Southern or, as Spiegel prefers to call it, the Northern type.

According to Spiegel, the grotesque in Southern fiction "refers neither to the particular quality of a story (noble or ignoble, beautiful or ugly, etc.), nor to its mood (light or dark, sad or joyous, etc.), nor to its mode of expression (fantasy or realism, romance or myth, etc.) The grotesque refers rather to a type of character that occurs so repeatedly in contemporary Southern novels that readers have come to accept--indeed, expect--his appearance as a kind of convention of the form" (p. 428). This character, Spiegel goes on to explain, is always deformed in one way or another. If physically deformed, he may be "a cripple, a dwarf, a deaf-mute, a blind man, or an androgynous adolescent (i.e., the deformed as the unformed)" (ibid.). If mentally deformed, "he may be either an idiot or a madman, a half-wit or a psychotic--a subnormal or an abnormal figure" (ibid.).

Here Spiegel could perhaps have added yet another type: the spiritually warped adult, that is, the insensitive kind of person one meets, especially in Flannery O'Connor's stories, like Mrs. Turpin in "Revelation," Mrs. McIntyre in "The Displaced Person" or Julian's mother in "Everything That Rises Must
Completely unaware of their own faults they plod their way through life with blinkers on "with a single-minded sense of righteous proprietorship that prevents them from recognizing a fundamentally spiritual estrangement from their surroundings, an estrangement rooted in their inability to act charitably toward their neighbors." To call these people half-wits or abnormal would undoubtedly be to use too strong an expression, but nevertheless, they are grotesque—both ludicrous and frightening in their spiritual blindness and presumptuousness.

Before Spiegel’s definition is discussed in detail, however, an objection might be raised to his categorical statement that the Southern grotesque is a character in that he indirectly denies the existence of all other forms of the grotesque, such as the grotesque situation which seems so important to Flannery O’Connor, for instance. Frequently, when one tries to recall one of her stories, it seems that what most readily comes to mind is not the characters themselves, although they are usually described in a very concrete and vivid manner, but the situations in which they find themselves at the end. By way of example, one might mention the grotesque ending of the story about General Sash, the one hundred and forty-year-old veteran, who after being dressed up in his best uniform and forced to attend his sixty-two-year-old granddaughter’s graduation from college, is wheeled out of the auditorium by a boy scout, who, unaware that the old man sits dead in his wheelchair, lines up with him in front of the Coca-Cola machine; or the terrible predicament of the deaf and dumb girl whose husband leaves her asleep in a roadside restaurant while he himself drives off in the rattling old automobile, for the sake of which he married her in the first place; or the awkward situation of Hulga who sits helpless in the hayloft after her seducer, a Bible salesman, has absconded with her artificial leg.

Of course, it might be said that these grotesque incidents have grown out of the characterization. On the other hand, Flannery O’Connor’s own comments on her writing indicate that she worked out these grotesque situations especially to shock people in order to get her "vision across to a hostile audience." Be this as it may, there are many instances in Southern
fiction where one can truly speak of grotesque situations. There is, for instance, the very comic-macabre scene in Faulkner's *Sanctuary* describing a funeral reception:

The tables had been moved to one end of the dance floor. On each one was a black table-cloth...

The archway to the dice-room was draped in black. A black pall lay upon the crap-table, upon which the overflow of floral shapes was beginning to accumulate. People entered steadily, the men in dark suits of decorous restraint, others in the light, bright shades of spring, increasing the atmosphere of macabre paradox. ...

In a private dining-room, on a table draped in black, sat a huge bowl of punch floating with ice and sliced fruit. Beside it leaned a fat man in a shapeless greenish suit, from the sleeves of which dirty cuffs fell upon hands rimmed with black nails. ... "Come on, folks. It's on Gene. It don't cost you nothing. Step up and drink. ..."

The orchestra played again. The woman in red staggered into the room. "Come on, Joe," she shouted, "open the game." A man tried to hold her; she turned upon him with a burst of filthy language and went on to the shrouded crap table and hurled a wreath to the floor. ... (A fight ensues)

... The floral offerings flew; the coffin teetered. "Catch it!" a voice shouted. They sprang forward but the coffin crashed heavily to the floor, coming open. The corpse tumbled slowly and sedately out and came to rest with its face in the center of a wreath.

"Play something!" the proprietor bawled, waving his arms; "play! Play!"

When they raised the corpse the wreath came too, attached to him by the hidden end of a wire driven into his cheek. He had worn a cap which, tumbling off, exposed a small blue hole in the center of his forehead. It had been neatly plugged with wax and was painted, but the wax had been jarred out and lost. They could not find it, but by unfastening the snap in the peak, they could draw the cap down to his eyes. (pp. 143-47)

In the above example, a single scene is grotesque; in Capote's *Other Voices, Other Rooms* the entire setting might be called grotesque. Even the sentence structure can be grotesque as Robert Reichnitz has pointed out in dealing with Carson McCullers's *Reflections in a Golden Eye*. In the present author's opinion, Spiegel should have mentioned these other aspects of the grotesque, at least in passing, even if he feels that the character is the most typical and, therefore, the most important form of the grotesque in Southern literature.

25
The grotesque character

The grotesque character is so common in Southern fiction, Spiegel states, that it has become a convention. He is obviously correct. There is a whole gallery of these deformed individuals in Southern novels and stories—most of them strangely unforgettable—like the dwarf, Cousin Lyman, in The Ballad of the Sad Café, the club-footed Rufus Johnson in "The Lamé Shall Enter First," the halfwitted Enoch in Wise Blood or the pathological Miss Grierson in "A Rose for Emily." To the question of why they are so unforgettable, Spiegel has a ready answer. "Whether the grotesque appears as a physical cripple or a mental cripple, he succeeds as a literary creation because his deformity never exceeds his humanity; that is, if we find him meaningful, his deformity will not separate him from us, but rather will bring him closer to us" (pp. 428-29). This seems to be an important and valid explanation. As Spiegel points out, it helps us to understand why, for instance, the idiot Benjy in The Sound and the Fury "transcends his deformity" and becomes "a timeless and placeless embodiment of suffering innocence" (p. 429). It also explains why we feel so sorry for Miss Amelia in The Ballad of the Sad Café in spite of all her strength and masculinity. By the same token, it enables us to see why Flannery O'Connor fails in the portrayal of the main characters in her two novels; especially Haze Motes is so obviously deformed, so warped in his thinking that he never becomes human enough for us to identify with. As to Spiegel's own example of an inferior grotesque creation, Joel Knox in Other Voices, Other Rooms, it seems difficult to agree for the simple reason that Capote's protagonist can hardly be considered a true grotesque—a matter that will be treated presently.

"When the grotesque calls attention to his grotesquery," Spiegel goes on to say, "he becomes either picturesque, or repellant, or self-pitying, or all three; he becomes, indeed grotesque. On the other hand, when he transcends his grotesquery, he becomes an archetype" (p. 429). The archetype he becomes, according to Spiegel, is the scapegoat, "the pharmakos; that figure whose alienation from society never seems quite justified because his punishments always exceed his crimes" (ibid.).
examples of this type of grotesque character Spiegel points to the above-mentioned Benjy and Joel Knox, also to Jim Bond in Absalom, Absalom!, Quentin Compson in The Sound and the Fury, Mick Kelly in The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter and Haze Motes in Wise Blood. Except for Benjy, and, in some respects, Quentin, Spiegel's choice of examples seems very unfortunate.

Jim Bond is a very minor character of whom the reader only catches a glimpse. He is described as a "hulking, slack-faced" Negro idiot and is the last remnant of the Sutpen dynasty. This is no doubt both tragic and ironic, but as for Jim himself, one sees too little of him to judge whether he rises above his grotesqueness—it does not seem so—and to what extent he is victimized. Quentin, speaking metaphorically, does not look upon him as a victim. "I think the Jim Bonds are going to conquer the western hemisphere," he says.

Haze Motes, although a definite outcast, has mainly himself to blame for his alienation; his message of a Church without Christ is incomprehensible to the few who stop to listen to his preaching; eventually he blinds himself and withdraws voluntarily from the world. Besides being both repulsive and self-pitying, he is—to use Spiegel's own words—"indeed grotesque" and therefore apparently belongs in the above-mentioned category of grotesques who draw attention to their grotesqueness.

As to Quentin, the young Harvard student who ends up committing suicide, there is no doubt that he, like most of Faulkner's grotesques, "transcends his grotesqueness," but unless one interprets him as a naturalistic character, à la Zola, who totally lacks free will and is the sum of his heredity, his environment and his upbringing, one cannot very well speak of his alienation from society as being unjustified or his punishment as exceeding his crimes. His neurotic mother and his cynical father are not without blame, as several critics have pointed out, but Quentin is undoubtedly his own worst enemy, obsessed as he is by the chastity of his sister, Caddy, and the honour of the Compson family. It is especially in his relationship with Caddy that one can see the ludicrous in his abnormal behaviour: his attempt to fight the man who is his rival for his sister's love, which ends with Quentin's fainting; his thinking of Caddy as a dead person when he learns that she is going to marry; and
his desire to change the past by pretending to his father that he and Caddy have actually committed incest—while in reality they have "only" been close to doing so. All these actions are part of the comicality which, according to Thomson, is such an essential feature of the grotesque. Here too, as Quentin goes increasingly mad, one senses both the tension in Quentin's nature and the conflict in one's own reaction. "Delight in novelty and amusement at a divergence from the normal turns to fear of the unfamiliar and the unknown once a certain degree of abnormality is reached," Thomson explains (p. 24).

As to Joel Knox, Spiegel has just finished saying that he "is a weak character because his deformity merely refers back to itself and the very special world in which it appears, rather than beyond itself to the world we live in" (p. 429)—a statement with which one is inclined to agree—when, in the next paragraph, the critic surprisingly enumerates Joel Knox among the scapegoats, the outcasts, who have transcended their grotesque behaviour. Puzzling as this may be, the present author would like to maintain that Joel Knox is not a true grotesque—at least not when the story closes—for, as a careful reading reveals, it is not until the very end of the novel that Joel takes a course that may lead to his becoming as perverse and repulsive as Cousin Randolph. Up to that point, he is hardly more than an innocent, lonely and bewildered boy, equipped with a vivid imagination. In other words, the idea that Joel is a grotesque either because of his own appearance and behaviour, as Spiegel seems to suggest, or because of his own opinion of himself, as Finger asserts, must be rejected (p. 163). With Thomson's theory in mind, it seems safe to say that Joel, in contrast to many of the other characters who are both ludicrous and frightening, lacks the qualities that make up a true grotesque. He appears to have been created as a serious character—only in the lies to which he sometimes resorts, can one detect a comic strain—and not until one realizes that he is about to enter into a homosexual relationship, does a conflict arise in one's mind as to how to view him. If Capote had depicted Joel as a grotesque throughout the book, the story would, in all probability, have been much less convincing; the large number of strange characters, the weird setting, the many nightmarish situations, etc., could
easily have turned it into a mere Gothic tale of horror. As it is, however, everything is seen through the eyes of Joel whom one takes to be a reliable narrator, hence the genuine suspense and interest in Joel's struggle "against overwhelming odds to establish an identity and to find love." 

Spiegel also considers Mick Kelly, the young girl who is so excellently portrayed by Carson McCullers in The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter, to be the type of grotesque "who demonstrates the extent of his exclusion and victimization in the very distortions of his physical or mental make-up" (p. 429). For someone who finds it difficult to consider Joel Knox a true grotesque, it is even harder to look upon Carson McCullers's protagonist as such. To all appearances, Mick Kelly is a typical teenager—perhaps a little more gifted, a little more precocious and a little more sensitive than the average—but typical in her dreams and ambitions and her frequent desire to be left alone. She is a very serious girl, and like John Singer, the deaf-mute, who is one of the few people whose company she seeks, she has no comic characteristics to speak of that, according to Thomson, would warrant one's calling her grotesque. Like Frankie Addams in The Member of the Wedding, another of Carson McCullers's young adolescents, Mick lives in two worlds, an outer world where she goes to school, looks after her little brothers, has discussions with Portia, the cook, etc., and an inner one, a secret world, to which she withdraws and nourishes her dream of becoming a famous composer and pianist. In the outline of The Mute, as Carson McCullers first planned to call her novel, the author describes Mick Kelly's story as being "that of the violent struggle of a gifted child to get what she needs from an unyielding environment." In spite of her "great creative energy and courage," which are her essential traits, Mick fails, primarily because of the increasing poverty of the Kelly family. Not only is she forced to leave school and begin work in a ten-cent store, thus losing the opportunity of taking piano lessons and practising on the school piano, but her friend Singer commits suicide, leaving her "defeated by society on all main issues before she can even begin." 

Perhaps Spiegel has this last statement in mind when he refers to Mick as a victim. It seems, however, grossly exagger-
ated to speak of a young girl as being victimized or "defeated" because she has to give up practising the piano or because a friend dies; the expression might be used of Joe Christmas in Light in August, for instance, whose tainted blood drives him to commit murder and to be killed in turn, but it cannot properly be used in this case. As to the distortions in her "physical or mental make-up," Mick Kelly, like Joel Knox, evidently falls into Spiegel's category of the "androgynous adolescent." It is true that Mick looks "as much like an overgrown boy as a girl" when the reader first makes her acquaintance, but this is her only physical "distortion," and she does undergo a change; at the end she is described as a "lady-like and delicate" person who wears earrings and takes care to pull down her skirt when she crosses her legs (pp. 119, 311).

As to Mick's mental state, she appears, as already mentioned, far too normal to be called a grotesque--it is in fact the very accurate way in which she is described that makes her so plausible--and it would be very interesting to know on exactly what grounds Spiegel classifies her as such. Perhaps it is for the same reason that Robert Reichnitz calls both her and Frankie Addams grotesque, namely, because of "faulty perceptions" of life (p. iii). To support this view, Reichnitz mentions Mick's anxiety and restlessness after her first sexual experience. This reaction is, on the contrary, just a further proof of her normality. What fourteen-year-old girl of a respectable family living in the South in the forties would not have had a sense of guilt and been worried after such an adventure?

Everything points to the fact that Mick is portrayed as a rather tragic figure who never arouses those mixed feelings of amusement coupled with horror or repulsion which Thomson claims would be one's reaction to a truly grotesque character. Carson McCullers, too, speaks of Mick's "tragedy." Yet her case is not altogether tragic as can be seen from the hope expressed in the following excerpt:

But maybe it would be true about the piano and turn out O.K. Maybe she would get a chance soon. Else what the hell good had it all been--the way she felt about music and the plans she had made in the inside room? It had to be some good if anything made sense. And it was too and it was too and it was too and it was too. It
There is a mixture there of different elements but not of the kind which constitute the grotesque.

On the one hand, Spiegel says, the Southern grotesque signifies the end of the old order, on the other hand, it stands for "the physical and mental distortions shaped by the new pressures of industrialism and the modern city" (p. 431). To exemplify the first case, Spiegel again selects Quentin whose growing insanity is meant to symbolize the final decay of the Compson family, and Jim Bond whose idiocy similarly illustrates the ultimate degeneration of another prominent Southern family, the Sutpens. As an example of the other phenomenon, Spiegel mentions Jake Blount in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, a stranger in town, whose revolutionary ideas are rejected by his work-mates and whose hopes for social justice are thwarted.

As is often the case with fanatics, Blount is somewhat deranged, though his mental condition is not comparable with Quentin's or Jim's; apart from his fanaticism, his attempt at self-mutilation might suffice to indicate his instability. Like Quentin, he is obsessed by an idea—that of social equality. Several critics of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and *The Sound and the Fury* have interpreted Quentin Compson and Jake Blount as grotesques on the basis of the following statement by Sherwood Anderson in his preface to *Winesburg, Ohio*:

> It was the truths that made the people grotesques. The old man had quite an elaborate theory concerning the matter. It was his notion that the moment one of the people took one of the truths to himself, called it his truth, and tried to live his life by it, he became a grotesque and the truth he embraced became a falsehood.

Unfortunately there is no way of knowing if Spiegel, too, had this theory in mind when he reached the conclusion that Blount was a grotesque character, or whether the fact that Blount is slightly mentally disturbed was enough to classify him as such. In this connection Thomson's ideas on abnormality may be of interest:

> ... the abnormal may be funny (this is accurately reflected in the every-day usage of 'funny' to mean both 'amusing' and 'strange') and on the other hand it may
be fearsome and disgusting. . . . Mirth at something which fails to conform to accepted standards and norms gives way to fear (and anger) when these norms are seen to be seriously threatened or attacked. This is a paradoxical matter, and we can perhaps make it clearer by taking the example of very small children (good guinea-pigs because their reactions are still spontaneous and uncomplicated) to whom one makes grimaces which increasingly distort the face. The child will laugh at the face pulled only up to a certain point (presumably, while it is still sure of the face as a familiar thing); once this point is passed, once the face becomes so distorted that the child feels threatened, it cries in fear. It is the thin dividing line between the two reactions which is of interest to the student of the grotesque, or, to put it more precisely, the situation where both reactions are evoked at the same time, where both the comic aspect of the abnormal and the fearful or disgusting aspect are felt equally. (p. 24)

It has already been noted that there are some frightening aspects to Jake Blount. The question is whether there is anything ludicrous or comic in his physical make-up or behaviour. Carson McCullers herself writes in The Mortgaged Heart that "In physique he suggests a stunted giant," and mentions his "flourishing moustache," grown to keep his lips from revealing his feelings, giving "him a comic, jerky look."25 She notes too that on account of "his nervous whims," he finds it difficult to get along with other people, who prefer to stay away from him.26 "This causes him either to drop into self-conscious buffoonery or else to take on an exaggerated misplaced dignity."27 In other words, there are certain comic features about Jake Blount, but, on the whole, he is portrayed as a serious, quite tragic character. "It is his tragedy," his creator says, "that his energies can find no channel in which to flow. He is fettered by abstractions and conflicting ideas—and in practical application he can do no more than throw himself against windmills."28 In such cases as this, where the comic element appears to be so slight, it is, according to Thomson, debatable whether the term 'grotesque' should be used (p. 21).

Spiegel ends this part of his article by making a very sweeping statement: "the grotesque is always a thorn in the side of the society which produced him. His existence tells the society something about itself whether it wishes to acknowledge his presence or not" (p. 431). He then goes on to say that the deformity of the grotesque character is not just his own but
that of society as well. This statement may be applicable to some cases but hardly to characters of the type that Mick Kelly represents and whom Spiegel obviously looks upon as grotesque.

The grotesque versus the Gothic

In the second part of his essay Spiegel takes up the discussion of the grotesque versus the Gothic, and here he seems to make some very sound observations. First of all, he claims that the Southern novel is not dependent upon its Gothic counterpart as far as subject matter, technique or style are concerned; furthermore, that its entire philosophy of life is radically different. Instead the classic Gothic novel has rather emerged again in the contemporary novel of the North. An examination of the great differences between the novels produced by Northern writers and those produced by Southerners, Spiegel contends, will make it possible to establish the distinctive character of each type.

The Gothic novel had its heyday towards the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. Its best-known exponents were Horace Walpole, "Monk" Lewis, Ann Radcliffe and Charles Maturin, but it also came to influence poets like Shelley and Coleridge and fiction writers like Dickens, Dostoevsky and Poe. It presented a strange world of "weird castles, ghosts, dungeons, mysterious chases and disappearances" and functioned evidently as an outlet for feelings that could not be expressed in the realistic novel of the type produced by Fielding, Hardy and Balzac (p. 432).

Whereas the last-mentioned writers placed the action of their novels in a recognizable society, the Gothic novelist made no effort to portray a real world; the one he presented to his readers was an imaginary world, a world of make-believe.

The main character in the Gothic novel was the demonic hero, who, as Fiedler asserts, 'had come to stand for the lonely individual challenging the mores of bourgeois society.' Both the Gothic hero and the grotesque character in Southern literature are primarily anti-social phenomena or "gestures," as Spiegel calls them, but--and this is an important point--whereas "the gothic sic gesture takes place outside of society in a nightmare setting, . . . the grotesque gesture takes place with-
in society in the daylight setting of ordinary communal activity" (p. 433).

There are also essential differences between the Gothic and the grotesque protagonist. The former is a dynamic non-conformist, the latter is a puppet, a misfit, an outcast and a victim. The Gothic hero scorns, the grotesque protagonist is scorned.

Spiegel also points out that the mode of representation used by the writer of Gothic novels, the "melodramatic" and "hyperbolic," developed through Poe, Dostoevsky, Kafka and the Surrealists and found its most extreme expression in the contemporary Northern novel, whereas the "mimetic" and "normative," used by the writer of the eighteenth century realistic novel, developed through Flaubert, James, Proust, Joyce and Woolf and eventually manifested itself in modern Southern fiction (pp. 433-34). Thus such Northern writers as Nathaniel West, Nelson Algren, John Hawkes, Joseph Heller and James Purdy depict the world "as nightmare fantasy" (p. 434). Challenging the view expressed by Irving Malin and other critics that the only difference between novels produced in the North and novels produced in the South is the size of the community in which the action takes place—in the former, the big city of the New York or Chicago type, in the latter, the small town or village—Spiegel asserts that such factors as technique, mood and point of view also account for the difference. The two types express, in fact, a basically different outlook on life: the Northern writers deliberately break down the reader's concept of reality; "the violent, the ugly, and the distorted are not only their subject matter, but also their technique" (p. 434).

Another difference that Spiegel emphasizes is that when a story is told from the viewpoint of one character, in the Northern novel that person is likely to be the only one who is normal in relation to the world around him, whereas in the Southern novel the opposite is usually the case; the character from whose point of view the story is told is an abnormal person in an otherwise normal world.

This is a very interesting point and would, if it were true, provide us with an excellent rule of thumb for separating Northern from Southern literature. The trouble is that it seems
hard to find a single Southern novel in which there is but one
grotesque character from whose angle the story is related. In
Capote's Other Voices, Other Rooms the happenings are seen
through the eyes of Joel Knox whom Spiegel considers a grotesque
but the world around him is far from normal; in The Grass Harp
Collin Fenwick relates the story, and he is certainly a very
normal person; the same goes for the narrator in Breakfast at
Tiffany's, and in his most famous work, In Cold Blood, Capote
has used a kind of reportage style—-in addition the story con­
tains at least two physically and mentally deformed charac­
ters. As to Carson McCullers, both Reflections in a Golden Eye
and The Ballad of the Sad Café deal with several characters who
diverge from the normal; in The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter one is
allowed to look into the mind of every major character, but, ac­
cording to Spiegel, Mick, Singer, and Blount are all grotes­
ques—he does not mention Biff Brannon and Doctor Copeland but
there is every reason to believe that he would also consider
them grotesque; nevertheless, one cannot speak of a single ab­
normal person in a normal world. Possibly, The Member of the
Wedding would qualify as an example of Spiegel's theory, pro­
vided that one views Frankie, through whose conscience the story
is filtered, as a grotesque, but that would be stretching a
point. Carson McCullers's last novel Clock Without Hands does
not contain any overtly grotesque elements.

As to Faulkner's novels, there are some that are written
in the I-form, but the identity of the "I" changes with each
succeeding chapter, as in As I Lay Dying, or with the different
sections of the book as in The Sound and the Fury, but even when
that character is a grotesque like Benjy, for whom Faulkner uses
an interior monologue equivalent to the I-form, he is not the
only one of his kind; he is surrounded by other abnormal
people. Only if one were to make his world a very large one,
could one possibly think of it as normal. The same goes for
other works by Faulkner where the story is broken up and pre­
sented piecemeal by various characters. As to the world of
Flannery O'Connor, it is indeed a very strange one, regardless
of point of view, and this applies especially to her two novels.

There are, of course, many other Southern novelists whose
works could be taken into consideration—-unfortunately it is
hard to know what writers Spiegel himself had in mind—but the ones mentioned are the ones most often connected with the grotesque. In any case, these examples are probably sufficient to prove that Spiegel's theory must be approached with a certain caution. 35

In other cases Spiegel's observations seem quite convincing: for instance, when he says that "in contrast to the Northern novelist's detached, even contemptuous attitude toward his characters," the Southern writer portrays the grotesque with "pity and compassion," often giving the figure "a spiritual life that is morally richer than the lives of those people who reject him as a social aberration" (pp. 436-7). Spiegel's assertion that "once we get inside the skin of the grotesque, along with the novelist, we begin to experience life from his particular angle of vision," also sounds feasible. The examples that Spiegel chooses to illustrate his point are very strange, however. He mentions John Singer, whom one is never permitted to get to know intimately, because of his symbolic function. He also singles out Haze Motes, that weird preacher from Wise Blood, with whom it is so hard to identify and sympathize. Finally, he mentions Dolly Talbo, the charming protagonist of Capote's The Grass Harp, whom it does not only seem impossible to regard as a grotesque but also to pity, considering her exuberant spirit, her love for everything alive and her extraordinary courage.

Dolly's inner qualities might serve as a starting point. Craig Goad has summed up her personality in this way:

... despite her wispy, detached personality, "heroine" is not too strong a term to use in describing her. She is the catalyst of the story, an innocent who ultimately brings herself and others to revelations, and, as such becomes a kind of "wizard man" in reverse. Instead of forcing people to reveal things to themselves which can only destroy them, Dolly enables people to understand things which enable them to live for the first time. (Italics mine)

In the story she is also described as a gentle and harmless woman with "the eyes of a gifted person" and "the subterranean intelligence of a bee that knows where to find the sweetest flower" (pp. 13-14). She is extremely generous and has a very soft heart, as evidenced by her fondness for poor ugly Catherine and her grief when she learns that a customer has died, as well as by her decision not to marry Judge Cool but stay with her.
sister who needs her more. She also has a sense of humour and, above all, a very special quality about her that might be called empathy. "I've never loved a . . . gentleman. . . . Except Papa . . . But I have loved everything else," she says (p. 45). The Judge calls her a spirit and adds, "spirits are accepters of love" (p. 40). However, her shyness has caused people in town to gossip and conclude that she must be a burden to her sister and, in view of the lack of visitors, "that more went on in the house on Talbo Lane than a body cared to think about." Collin says, "Maybe so. But those were the lovely years" (p. 14).

The very fact that Collin, who is only eleven when he first joins the household, immediately falls in love with Dolly, as he puts it, and later thinks back with nostalgia of the happy days spent with Dolly and Catherine in the warm, cozy kitchen, belies the theory that Dolly is a grotesque. For children are perceptive creatures, and if there had been anything frightening or repulsive in Dolly's nature that would have warranted her being called a grotesque, Collin would surely have sensed it. What she can be called, though, is "bizarre" a term which many people tend to think of as synonymous with the grotesque. As Thomson explains, however, "the grotesque is more radical and usually more aggressive" than the bizarre (p. 32). Referring to Kayser with whom he agrees, he adds, "the bizarre . . . can be used synonymously with 'very strange', 'outlandish'--it lacks the disturbing quality of the grotesque" (ibid.).

To come back to John Singer, however, it remains to be established whether or not Spiegel is right in calling him a grotesque. As several critics have pointed out, the story can be said to centre around Singer whom his friends look upon as a Christ figure. Even if he does not deserve that epithet--as proved, for instance, by his letters to Antonapoulos--it seems unlikely that Mick Kelly, Biff Brannon, Jake Blount and Doctor Copeland would have held Singer in such high esteem if he had been a truly grotesque person. In actual fact, he has many fine qualities: he is unselfish, especially in his love towards his Greek friend, he is considerate and generous--one might recall the Beethoven record he gives Mick on her birthday, the radio he buys for the pleasure of his visitors and the many presents he bestows upon Antonapoulos on his visits to the hospital. He is
also a very sympathetic listener.

However, neither the reader nor Singer's friends ever get to know him very well. This has to do with his being a deaf-mute; and the fact that Carson McCullers has chosen to give him this handicap indicates she wanted to illustrate in a symbolic way that communication is not dependent upon such a thing as speech. Singer who, physically speaking, is the most isolated of all the main characters is, ironically, "the only one who achieves a sort of happiness, however provisional and short-lived." He overcomes his handicap and becomes "a singer."

All things considered, there is nothing specifically grotesque about the deaf-mute. If one looks for the qualities that Thomson requires in a grotesque character, the only comic actions that can be detected are that Singer out of sheer habit cleans his ashtray and glass before he shoots himself and that he writes long letters to Antonapoulos but never posts them. There is nothing frightening or repulsive about him. In other words, according to Thomson's definition at least, John Singer is no true grotesque.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it must be said that Spiegel presents a fine analysis of the difference between the Gothic and the grotesque and between the literature of the North and that of the South. His theory about the Southern grotesque is, however, less convincing. As mentioned before, it is very dubious whether such aspects as situation, setting, style, etc., can be left out when defining the particular type of the grotesque that has come to be termed Southern. Probably Spiegel himself is aware of their relevance; otherwise, it is hard to understand his emphasis on the differences in technique between the Northern and the Southern novel or his attempt to show, in the case of The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter, how essential a setting may be for the creation of an image of "a peculiarly Southern way of life" (p. 436).

Another point of criticism is that Spiegel seems to regard every person with a handicap, no matter how small it may be, as a grotesque--that he, colloquially speaking, sees a grotesque under every bed. He is not the only one to have this penchant, of course. There are, in fact, some very strange ideas in vogue
as to what constitutes a grotesque. Besides Sherwood Anderson's theory that the adherence to certain truths can make people grotesque and Reichnitz's "faulty perceptions" of life as the criterion of the grotesque, there is Olley Tine Snow's idea that characters at times "turn into grotesques because their values are the reverse of what is expected of them." According to Patricia Kochanek even characters "who are too perfectly adjusted to social reality... are clearly grotesque." All of which leaves few "normal" people.

However, the main objection to Spiegel's essay must be that he does not fulfil his promise to define clearly the nature of the grotesque. He merely asserts that the grotesque is a deformed character and then simply uses deformity as a criterion. This undoubtedly makes it very difficult to argue against him. Judging from the many instances where our opinions differ entirely as to what constitutes a grotesque character, Spiegel's conception is much broader than the present author's. It is, however, necessary to bear in mind that, just as in the case of humour, the reaction to such a phenomenon as the grotesque differs markedly in different people, a point that Thomson is most eager to underline:

... we do well to remember that in the matter of aesthetic categories the classification is very much in the eye of the beholder, however much, by a process of consensus, comparison and argument, we may be able to establish certain guidelines. (p. 70)

Other Critical Approaches

In contrast to Spiegel, Lewis Lawson asserts in his very comprehensive dissertation "The Grotesque in Recent Southern Fiction," that the term 'grotesque' is applicable to the tone or atmosphere of a fictional work, even a Southern one. "More specifically," he says, "it can be applied either to the style or to the characters, actions, or situations of the content" (p. 127). Like Thomson, Lawson speaks of a feeling of tension in response to the grotesque. This impact, he claims, "arises... from the clash of real and unreal" (ibid.). Thomson does not deny that the grotesque can be brought about by such a clash; on the contrary, he agrees with Gerhard Mensching that the grotesque is often found "in the realm of the fantastic" (p. 24), but he would undoubtedly repudiate Lawson's statement that the
grotesque always contains "unrealistic or surrealistic . . . elements" (p. 127). Nor would Thomson accept Lawson's idea that "the grotesque is not a category determined by form . . . . It is an aesthetic category that is determined only in the subjective perception of the viewer" (pp. 180-81), for Thomson repeatedly stresses that "the grotesque can be reduced to a certain formal pattern" (p. 31), and, as will be recalled, he defines the grotesque as "the unresolved clash of incompatibles" not only in response but also in work (p. 27). Most important of all, perhaps, is the fact that Thomson's insistence upon the comic as an essential component of the grotesque is not shared by Lawson—the result being, as can be seen from his examples, a much more elastic conception of the grotesque.

A few years after the appearance of Lawson's work, Robert Reichnitz felt prompted to write his dissertation "Perception, Identity, and the Grotesque: A Study of Three Southern Writers," partly in an effort to rectify the shortcomings of Lawson's thesis. However, his definition seems only to make matters more confusing. Reichnitz does not merely claim "that the grotesque is the image reflected by a faulty perception" and "that the grotesque is the objectification of an individual's lack of identity," but that anyone having "a faulty perception" or a "lack of identity" subsequently becomes grotesque (pp. 247-48). In other words, to Reichnitz the observer is the all-important factor, that is to say, the fictional character as observer, not the reader. If we were to follow this argument to its conclusion, it would seem to mean that all those who believe that we live in a grotesque world are themselves grotesque. As Finger rightly points out in his study "Elements of the Grotesque in Selected Works of Welty, Capote, McCullers, and O'Connor," Reichnitz's definition is a very narrow one (p. 8).

Finger, in his turn, has made no attempt to put forward a theory of his own. Instead he simply calls attention to three possible ways of defining the grotesque, namely, a) an abstract definition of the term, b) a philosophical definition, i.e., "one's approach to or reaction to life" and c) viewing "the grotesque in relation to categories and classifications" (pp. 4-8). Like the above-mentioned scholars, Finger makes no claim that the comic should be part of the grotesque, and as a result many
of his illustrations of this mode seem quite far-fetched to someone who believes in the validity of Thomson's theory.\textsuperscript{46}

The scholar whose conception of the grotesque at first sight tallies best with that of Thomson is Robert Ferguson. In his dissertation "The Grotesque in the Fiction of William Faulkner," Ferguson states that the grotesque should arouse "mixed reactions of fear and amusement, laughter and pain in the observer."\textsuperscript{47} Upon scrutiny, however, it becomes obvious that far from all of the no less than forty-five characters which Ferguson lists as grotesques—and which, using a terminology borrowed from Ruskin, he divides into two groups: the noble and the ignoble—fulfil the requirement quoted above.

Such, for instance, is the case with Vardaman in \textit{As I Lay Dying} who, as Ferguson states, struggles "to comprehend the mysteries of life and death" (p. 35). To describe him as a grotesque because of "his seemingly unorthodox, comical reaching out for answers" appears absurd (p. 36). As Ferguson admits, Vardaman is only an innocent child, and anyone familiar with the ways of children knows that it is in their nature to be curious and ask the most preposterous questions and draw conclusions that strike adults as both illogical and ludicrous. Vardaman's thoughts and behaviour are therefore neither unnatural, nor improbable for a boy of his age.

Vardaman's sister, Dewey Dell, also seems to be falsely labelled a grotesque (p. 43). She is tragi-comic in her fruitless efforts to put an end to her undesired pregnancy, being the one who always gets the worst of things, such as when she is seduced instead of helped by the chemist's assistant. Considering her dilemma, her thoughts and observations seem quite natural, not grotesque as Ferguson states. Nor is there anything frightening or repulsive about Dewey Dell that, together with her other qualities, can arouse that tension in response of which Thomson speaks. It is Dewey Dell's situation rather than the girl herself that is grotesque.

Ferguson also places Cash Bundren among Faulkner's grotesques because of his "comically exaggerated obsession with exactness" (p. 34). This seems to be a more valid case than that of Dewey Dell, for Cash is not only comic in the way he always measures everything in feet and inches—he views the whole of
life as if it were to do with carpentering—but he is also frightening in that he lets this obsession, as Ferguson calls it, completely smother his feelings. It is typical of Cash that his grief at Addie's death does not find expression in tears but in a perfectly made coffin. Yet, in the present writer's eyes, his monomania is not particularly offensive; it does not show him in too ludicrous a light, and considering the congenial impression he makes, it is doubtful if he should be classified as a grotesque at all.

Lena Grove and Byron Bunch in *Light in August* have also been classified as grotesques. Ferguson says of Bunch that "his grotesqueness develops from the incongruity of his total innocence and inexperience in a world of hate and corruption" (p. 65). He goes on to say that Bunch "persists in his belief in life, in affirming, according to Faulkner, 'the basic possibility for happiness and goodness'" (p. 65). It seems ironic that such a character, of whom the worst that can be said is that he is naive, should be referred to as a grotesque. It seems that Faulkner's own statement regarding Bunch reveals that it was not his intention to portray him as such but rather as a healthy contrast to the other characters.

The same goes for Lena Grove, whom most critics regard as a wonderfully ingenuous, high-spirited, composite character, who, as Faulkner states, remains the "captain of her soul" no matter what befalls her, and who becomes a sort of personification of fertility and motherhood. It is hard to believe that anyone would classify her as a grotesque, albeit genial, on account of what Ferguson describes as her "free, natural response to life"... and "incredible detachment from the terror and violence of the real world" (p. 69). Furthermore, there seems to be a certain contradiction in the words "response" and "detachment".

Other examples of characters who fall outside the frame of Ferguson's definition, or of cases where Ferguson's opinion of what constitutes a grotesque differs from that of the present author, will be given in the course of this study.

Another dissertation on the same subject is more modestly entitled "Six Grotesques in Three Faulkner Novels." This thesis by Edward Clark uses Sherwood Anderson's famous passage on the
grotesque in Winesburg, Ohio as a point of departure (see p. 39). Claiming that Faulkner has been influenced by this passage, Clark sets out to prove that the six characters--Quentin and Jason Compson in The Sound and the Fury, Joe Christmas, Joanna Burden and Gail Hightower in Light in August and Colonel Sutpen in Absalom, Absalom!--"emerge as grotesques because of their pertinacious and blind adherence to their private versions of truth" (p. 204). Regardless of the influence Anderson might have had on Faulkner, it can be argued that a reliance upon Anderson's theory is likely to lead one astray when attempting to determine what is grotesque and what is not. Many people have their ideologies, blind beliefs, or personal "truths," hence such a theory tends to become too all-embracing. Above all, it does not include the requirement that a character have a comical side in addition to, say, a frightening or repulsive one.
NOTES TO CHAPTER II

1 Thomas Mann, Past Masters and Other Papers (1933), as quoted by Spiegel, p. 426. Although the present author is inclined to agree with Thomas Mann that the grotesque is a style that is especially well suited to our age, a certain cautioniness must be exercised when comparing the tragi-comic with the grotesque--there seems to be a trend to equate them in a very casual way. If, for instance, we look at a modern phenomenon from a field outside literature, namely, Charlie Chaplin, we would probably all agree that he is a typically tragi-comic character; he makes us laugh and he makes us cry--sometimes both at the same time. However, even if our reaction to Chaplin is divided, as is always the case with the grotesque, the laughter he provokes is, so to say, purer than the defensive or nervous laughter that is elicited by the grotesque. As Thomson puts it, the grotesque laughter "is not 'free' or undisturbed; the simultaneous perception of the other side of the grotesque--its horrifying, disgusting or frightening aspect--confuses the reaction" (p. 54). And this is the whole point: Chaplin does not appear repulsive or frightening to us and thus there is no sense of conflict in our response to him. If, on the other hand, one examines the drama King Lear, to which G. Wilson Knight has devoted an interesting chapter in The Wheel of Fire, 4th ed., rev. and enl. (London, 1949; reprint ed., 1962), pp. 160-76, one finds some truly grotesque tragi-comic elements. For instance, in that terrible scene where Gloucester's eyes are put out and Regan's only comment is, "'Go thrust him out at gates, and let him smell His way to Dover,'" we sense the great tension between incompatibles and respond to it with horror and nervous laughter. "The effect of the grotesque here in King Lear is to screw even tighter the cruelty and tragedy," Thomson explains (p. 62); Van O'Connor, p. 19; Leslie Fiedler, Waiting for the End (1964), as quoted by Spiegel, p. 426.


3 Flannery O'Connor's "Revelation" and "Everything That Rises Must Converge" are included in the collection Everything That Rises Must Converge (Harmondsworth. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1975), pp. 157-78, 7-23 (Subsequent quotations are from this edition and page numbers are given in the text.); "The Displaced Person" is found in Good Man, pp. 185-233.

4 Gilbert H. Muller, Nightmares and Visions: Flannery
O'Connor and the Catholic Grotesque (Athens, Georgia, 1972), p. 46. Muller calls characters of this type "cultural grotesques." They will be treated in greater detail in Chapter IV together with a few other groups, to which Spiegel's definition of grotesque characters is not applicable.

All three stories are found in Good Man: "A Late Encounter with the Enemy," pp. 147-58, "The Life You Save May Be Your Own," pp. 54-66, "Good Country People," pp. 159-83.

O'Connor, Mystery and Manners, p. 185.

Robert Reichnitz, "Perception, Identity, and the Grotesque: A Study of Three Southern Writers" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Colorado, 1967), p. iii. (Subsequent quotations are from a mimeographed copy of this dissertation and page numbers are indicated in the text.); Carson McCullers, Reflections in a Golden Eye (New York: New Classics Series, 1950). (Subsequent quotations are from this edition and page numbers are indicated in the text.)


Haze Motes is the main character of the afore-mentioned Wise Blood, Tarwater the protagonist of The Violent Bear It Away (New York, 1960).

Pharmakos means "one who is sacrificed as a purification for others ... scapegoat." A Lexicon Abridged from Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon (Oxford, 1903), s.v. 'pharmakos'.

Carson McCullers, The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1943; reprint ed., 1977). (Subsequent quotations are from this edition and page numbers are indicated in the text.)

Faulkner, Absalom, p. 305.

Ibid., p. 311.

Cleanth Brooks—William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha County (New Haven, 1963), p. 333—is among those who blame Quentin's mental illness on his mother; Michael Millgate—The Achievement of William Faulkner (New York, 1966), p. 95—blames both parents and says that "a major cause of Quentin's tragedy is that just as his mother has failed him as a source of love, so his father fails him utterly in all his roles of progenitor, confessor, and counsellor."
Many critics have, in fact, regarded it as such, prob-
due to their rigid interpretation of Joel as a grotesque.

Craig M. Goad, "Daylight and Darkness, Dream and De-
lusion: The Works of Truman Capote," Emporia State Research

Carson McCullers, The Member of the Wedding (Harmond-

McCullers, The Mortgaged Heart, p. 139.

Ibid., p. 142.

William Faulkner, Light in August (Harmondsworth,
quotations are from this edition and page numbers are indicated
in the text.)

McCullers, The Mortgaged Heart, p. 139.

Edward Clark--"Six Grotesques in Three Faulkner Novels," (Ph.D.
dissertation, Syracuse University, 1972), p. ii--is among those
who feel that Faulkner has been inspired by Sherwood Anderson's
theory in his portrayal of Quentin Compson in The Sound and the
Fury. (Subsequent quotations are from a mimeographed copy of
this dissertation and page numbers are indicated in the text.)

McCullers, The Mortgaged Heart, p. 139.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid., p. 142.

Carson McCullers, who reacted strongly against being
labelled a Gothic writer, expresses a similar line of thought
when she says, "The effect of a Gothic tale may be similar to
that of a Faulkner story in its evocation of horror, beauty, and
emotional ambivalence--but this effect evolves from opposite
sources; in the former the means used are romantic and super-
natural, in the latter a peculiar and intense realism." She adds,
"Modern Southern writing seems rather to be most indebted to
Russian literature, to be the progeny of the Russian realists"
(The Mortgaged Heart, p. 258).

Leslie Fiedler, as quoted by Spiegel, p. 433.

Spiegel erroneously speaks of 'Louis' Malin.

Truman Capote, The Grass Harp and A Tree of Night and
Other Stories (New York: Signet Books, 1951). (Subsequent quo-
tations are from this edition and page numbers are indicated in


34 William Faulkner, As I Lay Dying (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1963; reprint ed., 1973. (Subsequent quotations are from this edition and page numbers are indicated in the text.)

35 Spiegel's idea is probably just too categorically stated or somewhat wrongly worded to hold true. Even in the next paragraph he modifies his previous statement by speaking of the Southern grotesque as living "in a literary universe . . . oriented towards the actual and the normative" versus "in a normal world" before (p. 437).

36 Goad, "Daylight and Darkness," p. 33.

37 In the autobiographical story The Thanksgiving Visitor (New York, 1967) Capote describes his own upbringing at the hands of some elderly relatives in Alabama. From this account one can readily conclude that Dolly in The Grass Harp is modelled on his cousin Miss Sooks, "a woman in her sixties who became my first friend" (p. 12).

38 In Webster's, for instance, the word is found under 'grotesque'.

39 Many critics have pointed out that the story centres around Singer--e.g., Marvin Felheim, "Eudora Welty and Carson McCullers," Contemporary American Novelists, ed. Harry T. Moore (Carbondale, Illinois, 1964), p. 48; Alicia Hamilton, "Loneliness and Alienation: The Life and Work of Carson McCullers," Dalhousie Review 50 (Summer 1970), p. 218; Frederick J. Hoffman, The Art of Southern Fiction (Carbondale, Illinois, 1967), p. 66--but as Oliver Evans points out in "The Case of the Silent Singer: A Revaluation of The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter," Georgia Review 19 (Summer 1965), p. 191, it is probably more correct to speak of Singer as "the apparent center" of the story and Spiros Antonapoulos, the man he himself idolizes, as "its real center." It is also possible to view the structure as a pyramid as Frank Durham does in "God and No God in The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter," South Atlantic Quarterly 56 (Fall 1957) p. 495; Antonapoulos is then at the apex with Singer below him and the other main characters form the base.

As to whether Singer is a Christ figure or not, a close reading of the novel seems to reveal that he is no "god" but opinions vary. David Madden, for instance, contends in "The Paradox of the Need for Privacy and the Need for Understanding in Carson McCullers' The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter," Literature and Psychology 17 (1967), p. 129 that Singer is "that recurrent device in modern literature, Jesus our Savior," John B. Vickery claims in "Carson McCullers: A Map of Love," Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature 1 (1960), p. 14, that he is "transformed into a Christlike figure of compassion and understanding," in Radical Innocence: The Contemporary American Novel (Princeton,

40 Evans, p. 194.
41 Ibid., p. 195.

42 Commenting on Spiegel's article, Thomson wrote in a letter dated July 7, 1978 to the present author: "Mere deformity, physical or mental, is not enough by itself to justify the use of the term 'grotesque'... one has to insist on an element of the ludicrous or comic."


45 To this can be added that the difficulty in treating the grotesque lies not only in the fact that what seems grotesque to one person—or, by extension, to one society—might not seem so to the next one, but also in the constant changes in people's attitudes. To make matters worse, one and the same person's reaction to one and the same piece of grotesqueness may vary with time depending on that person's mood, just as one's perception of what is humorous can differ a great deal due to one's frame of mind at the particular moment when one is confronted with the phenomenon.

46 References to the above studies will be made in the presentation that follows.

47 Robert C. Ferguson, "The Grotesque in the Fiction of William Faulkner" (Ph.D. dissertation, Case Western Reserve University, 1971), p. iii. (Subsequent quotations are from a mimeographed copy of this dissertation and page numbers are given in the text.)


49 Gail Hightower will be discussed in the chapter on the comic-grotesque and the other five characters in Chapter Four.
CHAPTER THREE

THE MACABRE-GROTESQUE

One of the most common forms of the grotesque in Southern literature is the macabre-grotesque, that is, the type of the grotesque where the macabre predominates or constitutes an essential part. The word 'macabre' derives from OF 'macabré', used as early as the fourteenth century in the expression la danse Macabré, and designates something associated with death, hence something grim and gruesome. However, since 'grim' and 'gruesome' can be used equally well of the repulsive and the frightening, the original meaning of the word 'macabre' has been retained in this dissertation and the use of it restricted to incidents and situations involving death, provided that death is described in a detailed and appalling way. The following excerpt from Mildred Haun's The Hawk's Done Gone about a man who has decided to get rid of one of his sister's newborn twins is a typical example of the macabre-grotesque.

He said one of Burt Hurst's youngons was enough for him to keep up. He allowed as how he would fix one of them—nobody would ever know. Nobody had reason to know that there were two of them. They were both girl babies. It didn't matter which one he fixed.

Meady tried to snatch it out of his hands. She couldn't. She was too weak. She couldn't raise her body up. She was wore out from having to get up and wash both of them. . . . She just laid there and held the other one.

She heard flesh spewing and crackling in the other room. Like ham meat frying, she said. Smelled like it too—sort of. She heard something pop like a rifle. The bones. The smell and sound of a cholery hog being burnt. And she had cut the wood that burnt it.

Here are the conflicting elements Thomson speaks of: the macabre, which is the most prominent one, and the comical, which reveals itself in the very incongruity of the situation, as well as in Meady's realization that she herself has, ironically enough, cut the wood for the fire. Here, too, is the confused reaction on the part of the reader which Thomson for one takes
as a sign of the truly grotesque (p. 27). 5

As Thomson points out, the grotesque may be completely un-intentional, that is, an expression or a passage may achieve a grotesque effect that was never intended from the outset (pp. 65-69). At other times a writer may indulge in the grotesque simply because of a desire to be capricious or eccentric (pp. 64-65). As a rule, however, the grotesque has a very definite function. Primarily it is used to develop such central aspects as theme, plot and characterization. One example of this usage involving the macabre-grotesque is the scene in Capote's Other Voices, Other Rooms where John Brown, the mule that has accompanied Joel and Randolph on their excursion to the Cloud Hotel, meets with an uncanny death (see p. 21).

Little Sunshine held his torch higher, and brought into view a balcony which overlooked the lobby: there, iron-stiff and still, stood the mule. "You hear me, suh, come down off yon there:" commanded the hermit, and John Brown reared back, snorted, pawed the floor; then, as if insane with terror, he came at a gallop, and lunged, splitting the balcony's rail. Joel primed himself for a crash which never came; when he looked again, the mule, hung to a beam by the rope-reins twisted about his neck, was swinging in mid-air, and his big lamplike eyes, lit by the torch's blaze, were golden with death's impossible face, the figure in the fire. (p. 124)

This gruesome incident, in which the comic lies mainly in the unexpected and the absurd, might be said to mirror Joel's own situation at the Landing. John Aldridge even suggests that the Cloud Hotel itself "with its fantastic, haunted history and picturesque decay, is a microcosm of the entire world of the Landing." 6 In other words, the macabre-grotesque is not used per se but is closely integrated with theme, action and portrayal of characters. 7

In addition to having the above-mentioned fundamental function, the grotesque may be used to present an entertaining story or to further a wider purpose, such as levelling social criticism or conveying a religious message.

The Macabre-Grotesque Used
Primary for the Sake of Entertainment

A good example of a macabre-grotesque scene that is to all appearances written for entertainment is Faulkner's description of Red's funeral wake in Sanctuary, parts of which were quoted
in the second chapter (see p. 25). Here, in what seems to be exuberance of spirit, the author uses the macabre, fused with the comic, to parody the atrocities presented in popular thrillers. The passage is full of comic touches, such as the description of Gene with his soiled cuffs and dirty fingernails, and the intoxicated woman who refuses to accept the fact that the dice-room has been turned into a funeral parlour. The culmination of these humorous effects is reached when the fight breaks out and the corpse is tumbled from its coffin, causing the wreath to land around the dead man's head, thus focusing everyone's attention on the bullet-hole in his forehead that had been so cleverly camouflaged.

The writer who most readily comes to mind, however, when one thinks of the macabre-grotesque in combination with entertainment is Erskine Caldwell. In The Bastard we find an entirely different type of funeral scene but one which also meets the criteria for classification as both macabre and comic. The episode which bears this out occurs at the burial of Sheriff Jim when Sooks, an old prostitute friend of the deceased, makes her appearance. Spotting Sooks, the minister, whose first funeral it is, forgets what he has memorized and starts speaking of Jim's "noble and faithful wife"—words which Sooks takes as a reference to another woman by the name of Kitty (p. 50). Blinded by jealousy, Sooks pulls out her .38 caliber revolver and starts firing wildly in all directions. While the mourners run for cover, the minister becomes so excited that he drops his prayer book into the grave. After much ado Sooks is overpowered, calmed down with a shot of cocaine, the undertaker retrieves the prayer book, and the service can finally be concluded.

In this vividly described episode which, due to the minister's misunderstanding, takes on almost farce-like proportions, the macabre is to a large extent overshadowed by the hilarious.

The same holds true of Caldwell's story "Savannah River Payday" which is funny in much the same way as Faulkner's As I Lay Dying. Here two men, Jake and Red, are bringing a Negro, who has been killed by a cypress tree, into town to have him buried. They travel in a rattling old car with the Negro tied to the running board and, because of the hot sun, the body soon begins to smell. Nevertheless, they make a stop, and it is then
that Jake discovers that the Negro has several gold teeth. He immediately decides to knock them out and sell them. When Red insists on getting the major part of the teeth since he is providing the car, Jake disagrees. Red then hits him so hard that he temporarily loses consciousness. After yet another fight—this time over a girl—in which Jake loses an ear, they eventually reach town. However, instead of taking the Negro to the undertaker's and having Jake's head dressed, they go straight to a poolroom and start playing. Finally, the marshal sends a summons to Jake and Red to "tote that nigger down to the undertaker's before he stinks the whole town up," but by this time Jake is feeling so good that he cockily replies that the marshal can "'jump to hell--Me and Red's shootin' pool!'"

The macabre in this story stems particularly from Jake's and Red's complete lack of reverence for the dead man, shown in their outrageous treatment of him. As Robert Jacobs points out, however, "Erskine Caldwell's writings . . . are in a tradition of American humor that reaches back over a century to the humorous tales of that region once called the Southwest," and the callous attitude towards Negroes displayed in "Savannah River Payday" is but a part of that coarse frontier humour. One does not really require an awareness of this tradition, however, to appreciate the story as it is told in such a rollicking manner that it is hard not to be amused.

In "Joe Craddock's Old Woman" the macabre is given an unusual twist. With her muscular body, her coarse, dirty hair, her ugly face marked by hard work and her breasts "like saddle-flaps" Joe's wife has always seemed old and hideous to him. She dies, and when the undertaker brings back her body prepared for the burial, Joe cannot believe that it is his Julia: she has been bathed and shampooed, her finger-nails have been manicured, the hollows in her cheeks have been filled out with cotton, her face has been powdered and rouged, and she who has never owned a nice dress in her life is wearing a silk outfit. The change is so striking that Joe remains the whole day by the coffin, "silent, weeping, worshipping her beauty," and he even tries to get the funeral postponed. So short is Joe's memory, in fact, that when the children question if the woman in the casket really is their mother, he replies without hesitation, "'Yes, .
Julia--your mother--was a beautiful lady...14

The story reminds one of Evelyn's Waugh's famous novel *The Loved One* where grotesqueries of a similar kind are encountered.15 The difference is that, whereas Waugh's account of the treatment of the dead in "Whispering Glades" is a ruthless satire of a particular aspect of American life, Caldwell's story is only mildly satiric in tone and is related with great tenderness.16

In "John the Indian and George Hopkins" two sisters, Jessie and Grace, bury their father on the homestead but soon fall out about the fence around the grave.17 Their quarreling leads not only to Grace's leaving the house but also to Jessie's decision to hire an Indian to unearth her father's body and dig a new grave. The work is hard and cannot be finished before dark. The Indian therefore agrees to take the body, which has been propped up against the ice-house, with him home for the time being. The next day when Grace discovers that the grave has been opened, she immediately has a warrant issued for her sister's arrest. Jessie, however, refuses to open the door, both to the man who has come to serve the warrant and to the Indian when he calls. Finally, the Indian, whose house is beginning to smell bad, tires of waiting. He places the body of George Hopkins in a canoe, ties a fishing rod to him, and pushes the boat away from the shore. Soon a large salmon hooks the line and starts pulling the man down the lake "so fast the wind blew his hat overboard."18

In view of the fact that George Hopkins is dead, the story is in fact rather macabre but this quality is greatly toned down by the quiet humour that permeates it. Owing in particular to the Indian's natural way of dealing with the dead man--including his amusing "conversation" with him before he subjects him to that final jest--one is given the impression of having encountered something predominantly funny.

After the thirties Caldwell's fiction--although still full of grotesque characters and episodes--contains relatively few macabre elements. One exception is *Trouble in July* (1940) with its gruesome, yet hilarious, description of how Annie Barlow falls into a well and drowns when filling up a washbasin with water.19 When her husband finds out what has happened, he has a fit, not out of sorrow, but because he has made a fool of him-
self looking for her everywhere when all the time she was in the well. So lazy is he that he then seals up the well with household goods rather than try to retrieve her body.

In all these stories by Caldwell, presumably written mainly for the sake of entertainment, the macabre is closely connected with, and frequently overshadowed by, the comic.

The Macabre-Grotesque
Used as a Criticism
of Society

Fiction meant to draw attention to the deplorable situation of the poor white farmer or sharecropper

In another group of stories, dealing with the wretched existence of the Southern sharecropper or farmer, the macabre element considerably outweighs the comic one. Three macabre-grotesque incidents in Caldwell's Tobacco Road that remain in one's mind belong to this category. One is the account of what happens to Jeeter's father when he has died. In the night following his death Jeeter and his friends keep the customary vigil over the dead body. In view of the many hours of waiting before the funeral the next day, someone suggests that they all go over to the nearest town for some Coca-Colas and cigars. This is no sooner said than done; in the meantime, the body in its wooden box is placed in the only safe place on the farm, the corn-crib. As soon as the men return, they bring the casket into the house again and continue their watch. Just before the funeral, the lid of the coffin is removed so that the relatives and friends of the deceased may take a last farewell. At that moment a large rat that has evidently gnawed its way into the box leaps out and disappears.

One by one the people filed past the casket, and each time it became the next person's turn to look at the body, a strange look came over his face. Some of the women giggled, and the men grinned at each other. Jeeter ran to the side of the box and saw what had happened. The rat had eaten away nearly all of the left side of his father's face and neck. Jeeter closed the lid and had the box lowered into the grave immediately. He had never forgotten that day. (p. 66)

It is Jeeter's immense fear of rats and worry that a similar fate may one day befall him, rather than concern for his father, that makes him so upset (pp. 66-67).

That Jeeter, like the rest of the family, is incapable of
feeling any empathy or sorrow is also borne out by another truly macabre incident in the book—the one where Mother Lester is run over by a car and just left to die in the front yard without anyone moving a finger to help her.

"Is she dead yet?" Ada asked, looking at Jeeter. "She don't make no sound and she don't move. I don't reckon she could stay alive with her face all mashed like that."

Jeeter did not answer her. He was too busy thinking of his hatred for Bessie to bother with anything else. He took another look at the grandmother and walked across the yard and round to the back of the house. Ada went to the porch and stood there looking back at Mother Lester several minutes, then she walked inside and shut the door. (p. 142)

The nature of this scene, like that of the previous one, undoubtedly gives rise to several different reactions. Some readers may, like the present author, find the incident so absurd and ludicrous that they are tempted to laugh, only to find, as is so often the case with grotesque humour, that their laughter, to use Thomson's words, "dies in the throat and becomes a grimace" (p. 56). Others may laugh in what Thomson calls "a nervous or uncertain way"—"the mere fact that one is in doubt points to an awareness of comic possibilities," he claims—while still others may react only with horror and disgust (p. 54).

Whatever our reactions may be, Jacobs claims that _Tobacco Road_ is a comic novel whose most appalling characters and episodes are entirely in keeping with the humorous tradition mentioned above (see p. 52). Even the incredible insensitivity displayed by the Lesters has its comical aspects, Jacobs asserts:

None display any family feeling for brother, sister, father, mother, son or daughter. With the exception of Jeeter Lester's farming instinct, which seems spurious in the context of his general shiftlessness, the attitude of any character is predictable, once one has learned the general traits of Lester himself. Their responses are mechanical, another source of the comic according to Henri Bergson. The comical in human action derives, in part, from the unthinking, automatic quality of a response, or a kind of machine-like indifference when an emotional reaction is called for . . . These people respond like automatons to given stimuli, but like robots they fail to respond to situations that demand compassion or grief.

As to the reason why the Lesters have become such unfeeling creatures, Carson McCullers offers a plausible explanation in her comparison between the South and Old Russia:
In both the South and old Russia the cheapness of life is realized at every turn. The thing itself, the material detail, has an exaggerated value. Life is plentiful; children are born and they die, or if they do not die they live and struggle. And in the fight to maintain existence the whole life and suffering of a human being can be bound up in ten acres of washed out land, in a mule, in a bale of cotton. In Chekhov's, 'The Peasants', the loss of the samovar in the hut is as sad, if not sadder than the death of Nikolai or the cruelty of the old grandmother. And in Tobacco Road, Jeeter Lester's bargain, the swapping of his daughter for seven dollars and a throw-in, is symbolical. Life, death, the experiences of the spirit, these come and go and we do not know for what reason; but the thing is there, it remains to plague or comfort, and its value is immutable.

With this in mind, it is perhaps easier to understand the reaction of Ada and Jeeter, to whom the grandmother is just one more mouth to feed, and to see not only the macabre but also the comical in the situation.

This same insensibility towards other people manifests itself in a third macabre incident in the novel, the one where Dude has run over a Negro. The following conversation, where Dude explains to his father why the new car is so dented, calls to mind the previously quoted dialogue in Huckleberry Finn (see p. 82):

"It was that nigger," Dude said. "If he hadn't been asleep on the wagon it wouldn't have happened at all. He was plump asleep till it woke him up and threw him out in the ditch."

"He didn't get hurt much, did he?" Jeeter asked.

"I don't know about that," Dude said. "When we drove off again, he was still lying in the ditch. The wagon turned over on him and masked him. His eyes was wide open all the time, but I couldn't make him say nothing. He looked like he was dead."

"Niggers will get killed. Looks like there ain't no way to stop it." (pp. 106-07)

Strangely enough, the light-hearted way in which this accident is treated is somehow infectious so that one seems to be less appalled by it than when Mother Lester is run over and left to die in the yard.

In the title story of Kneel to the Rising Sun (1951), which deals with the same subject as the previous novel, and like Trouble in July constitutes an exception to Caldwell's use of the macabre, some exceedingly macabre and gruesome scenes are found. Here, for instance, one finds the account of the ter-
rible fate that befalls the aged father of a sharecropper named Lonnie. Driven by hunger, the old man gets out of bed at night and tries to find his way to the smokehouse of Lonnie's employer in the hope of coming across something to eat. In the dark, however, he gets confused and ends up falling into the hog pen where a good part of him, including his face, is devoured by the hungry pigs before Lonnie and his Negro friend Clem succeed in pulling him out.

This scene brings to mind a statement by Steig who claims that "when a character arouses anxiety in a direct way, techniques of degradation or ridicule may be used that are not obviously comic or laughable"—only the word 'character' must be replaced by 'situation'. In this case, the muddle-headedness of Lonnie's father lends him a certain air of the ridiculous, as does the disgrace of ending up among such obnoxious animals as pigs. Primarily, however, the comic can be detected in the unheard-of situation.

In all of Caldwell's stories forming this second group, the comic is subordinate to the macabre. The narrative technique can be described as naturalistic. When things are at their worst, poverty and starvation have reduced the characters to a state where they act and behave more like animals than human beings.

Stories describing the lynching or mutilation of Negroes

In the third group of stories in Caldwell's copious production, the comic strain is likewise very slight or practically non-existent due to the horrific subject matter: the lynching or mutilation of Negroes. Thus readers will certainly have no trouble restraining their laughter when confronted with the macabre scene in Caldwell's "Saturday Afternoon," which Donald Heiney calls "one of the most effective anti-lynching pieces ever to be written by a Southern writer." What makes the story all the more gruesome is the fact that the victim is innocent. "They had him tied to a sweetgum tree in the clearing at the creek with a trace-chain around his neck and another around his knees. Yes, sir, they had Will Maxie now, the yellow-faced coon!"—and a paragraph later:
Will Maxie was going up in smoke. When he was just about gone they gave him the lead. . . . They filled him so full of lead that his body sagged from his neck where the trace-chain held him up.

Yet even those who are completely repelled by such an account can perhaps sense the ironic humour that pervades the story. This applies particularly to the portrayal of the thrifty Cromer boy, who makes a great deal of money selling ice-cream and soft drinks to all the participants and spectators, and to the description of the good time that everyone is having.

More frightening than funny and exceedingly macabre is the scene in The Bastard where the main character of the book, Gene Morgan, helps Sheriff Jim's son John to kill a Negro who has been caught eating on the job. The man is first clubbed with a piece of knotted wood and then--to make sure that he will die--pushed under a mechanical saw and struck with an ironbar. When the body comes apart, John jokingly remarks, "'It can be handled in two little pieces better than it could be in one big one, eh, Gene?'" (p. 54) For the fun of it they also fill the Negro's mouth with water which first bubbles in his throat, then trickles "to the ground from the mass of intestine where the stomach had been bisected by the rip-saw" (ibid.).

A no less macabre scene is found in the more recent work Close to Home, where the entire action hinges on the issue of racial conflict. When Native Hunnicutt, a bachelor of long standing, weds the wealthy widow Maebelle, he does not for a moment consider giving up his nocturnal tete-à-tetes with Josene, a pretty octoroon, who also happens to be Maebelle's maid. When one night, however, Maebelle finds her maid--without her uniform--in the arms of her husband, she is shocked and hurt. Turning to the sheriff for help to have them both punished, she is told that he will not interfere with a white man's privilege of "race mixing" but he does promise to have Josene arrested for prostitution. This instigates an action which reaches its culmination when the sheriff's deputy, Clyde Hefflin, kills and castrates Josene's fiancé, Harvey Brown, in a scene marked by grim humour and an almost unbearable brutality. Considering that Clyde finishes his atrocious crime by stuffing Harvey's testicles down his trroat, the outcome of the coroner's inquest the next day is the acme of irony:
Following a few routine questions and answers, the coroner quickly ruled that Harvey Brown, colored, had lost his life by strangling and choking to death on something that had accidentally lodged in his throat.

Here Caldwell not only expresses his abhorrence of deeds of this kind and calls attention to the flagrant lack of justice for Negroes in the South; he also attacks the double standard of morality that prevails amongst such a large proportion of white Southerners, who gladly exploit coloured girls but at heart consider them far inferior to any white.

In none of these instances is the macabre used in a far-fetched way or as a fictional device; it is simply a part of a very grim reality that the author is trying to describe. Caldwell has himself testified to the violence of the South:

I've seen a man beat a mule to death because the sun was hot and he was tired and tense, sick of the endless sameness of his life. I've been in a barnyard at the end of a day in the cotton fields when the boss came over to ask why a mule was lame. A Negro explained that the mule had stepped in a rabbit hole. The boss beat the Negro unconscious—knowing the Negro couldn't fight back. I've been an unwilling witness at a number of lynchings.

Whether dealing with society's maltreatment of its poor or the white man's maltreatment of the Negro, the stories belonging to the last two groups have in common that they are intended to focus the reader's attention on these unfortunate people in the hope that their situation will some day be changed for the better. In other words, Caldwell is not just a writer of entertaining stories—he is said to be the world's best-selling living novelist—but also a severe critic of the social evils of the South.

In this connection it seems appropriate to mention an incident in Faulkner's Light in August, the action of which also springs from a false belief in the superiority of the white race. The episode referred to is the very macabre scene where Percy Grimm catches up with Christmas and empties his whole magazine into the table behind which the runaway has sought cover.

When the others reached the kitchen they saw the table flung aside now and Grimm stooping over the body. When they approached to see what he was about, they saw that the man was not dead yet, and when they saw what Grimm was doing one of the men gave a choked cry and stumbled back into the wall and began to vomit. Then Grimm too sprang back, flinging behind him the bloody butcher knife. 'Now you'll let white women alone, even in hell,'
The macabre deed that is implied here constitutes the culmination of the hunt for the murderer of Joanna Burden. In other words, the macabre-grotesque forms an essential part of the plot. At the same time, it serves the purpose of completing the satiric portrait of Grimm—a man so blinded by his racial hatred that both his killing and mutilation of Christmas can be said to constitute a sacred rite. Since Christmas presumably has Negro blood, the scene can also be seen as a protest against the treatment of coloured people, only Faulkner's way of protesting is more circuitous and veiled than Caldwell's.

The Macabre-Grotesque Used to Convey a Religious Message

Another and unique way of using the macabre-grotesque is found in Flannery O'Connor who invariably employs it to convey a spiritual message, a usage which in no way prevents her stories from also being entertaining.

Of all the Southern writers treated here none have used the macabre-grotesque more frequently than Flannery O'Connor. An examination of her works reveals that about one third of the stories in the first collection and two thirds of those in the posthumous one end in a macabre way. Of her two novels, Wise Blood as a whole, including the macabre ending, can be labelled macabre-grotesque and The Violent Bear It Away contains several macabre incidents.

Thus in the title story of A Good Man is Hard to Find what was supposed to be a pleasant holiday excursion ends in tragedy as a whole family is wiped out at the hands of an escaped killer, The Misfit, and his cronies. The killing-off occurs step by step: first Bailey, the father, and the eight-year-old son are lured away and shot. Then The Misfit turns to the children's mother, who is sitting in a ditch with her baby boy and her daughter, and asks politely, "'Lady, . . . would you and that little girl like to step off yonder with Bobby Lee and Hiram and join your husband?'" (p. 27) Gratefully, the woman accepts. Soon afterwards there is a shrill scream, followed by a shot. Only then does the grandmother seem to become aware of her own precarious situation. "'Jesus!'" she cries. "'You've got good
blood! I know you wouldn't shoot a lady! . . . Pray! . . . I'll give you all the money I've got!" (p. 28) The Misfit dryly retorts that nobody ever tips the undertaker. Registering the sound of two more pistol shots, he then goes on to say:

"Jesus was the only One that ever raised the dead, . . . and He shouldn't have done it. He thrown sic everything off balance. If He did what He said, then it's nothing for you to do but throw sic away everything and follow Him, and if He didn't, then it's nothing for you to do but enjoy the few minutes you got left the best way you can--by killing somebody or burning down his house or doing some other meanness to him. No pleasure but meanness." (ibid.)

Hearing that The Misfit's voice is about to crack, the grandmother reaches out to touch him while she mumbles, "Why, you're one of my babies!" (p. 29). At this The Misfit leaps back as if bitten by a snake and rapidly fires three shots at the old woman, who sinks down "with her legs crossed under her like a child's and her face smiling up at the cloudless sky" (ibid.).

What makes this story particularly macabre is the drawn-out murdering of the family and the coldbloodedness with which it is done. The humour, which at the same time warrants its being called grotesque and emerges particularly in the dialogue and the characterization, is coupled with fine irony and biting satire. It is ironic that the grandmother should take such care to dress up in case of an accident, and that the family should run across The Misfit, whom they have read about in the paper, and who is the last person on earth they would like to meet; it is also ironic that The Misfit displays such an extreme courtesy towards his intended victims. The acme of irony is reached, however, when The Misfit after his monstrous liquidation of six people complains, "It's no real pleasure in life" (ibid.).

The satire, on the other hand, is generated primarily by the characterization of the gullible family. Most satiric of all is the portrayal of the grandmother, who belongs to that large group of female O'Connor characters who believe themselves to be the very incarnation of Christian virtue and righteousness when, on the contrary, they are immensely hypocritical, self-centered and lacking in judgment. In spite of the fact, however, that the author draws the old woman with a great deal of contempt, she is given the mission of planting "the mustard seed of faith in The Misfit's heart" when she recognizes him as one of her children--
an action which Flannery O'Connor herself has described as the crucial point of the story. Thus, as Walter Sullivan states, "the reconciliation is effected in the midst of bloodshed."

In Flannery O'Connor's opinion, it is "writers who see by the light of their Christian faith who will have . . . the sharpest eyes for the grotesque, for the perverse, and for the unacceptable." She goes on to say:

The novelist with Christian concerns will find in modern life distortions which are repugnant to him, and his problem will be to make these appear as distortions to an audience which is used to seeing them as natural; and he may well be forced to take ever more violent means to get his vision across to this hostile audience. When you can assume that your audience holds the same beliefs you do, you can relax a little and use more normal means of talking to it; when you have to assume that it does not, then you have to make your vision apparent by shock—to the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost-blind you draw large and startling figures.

This mode of procedure naturally includes the macabre-grotesque. If one examines the specific use of it in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," one finds that it relates to theme as well as to characterization. Every person has a value, Flannery O'Connor seems to wish to say, even coldblooded killers. Compared to the grandmother, who is a Christian in name only, The Misfit stands, in fact, closer to salvation, for he has undergone a spiritual struggle; it is of less consequence that he has chosen the evil side.

A close look at Flannery O'Connor's portrait gallery reveals that a good man is indeed hard to find; Mr. Guizac in "The Displaced Person" is one of the few exceptions (see p. 44). As a D. P. from Poland he is met with suspicion by the other hired hands on Mrs. McIntyre's farm, especially by Mrs. Shortley. As for Mrs. McIntyre herself, she thanks her stars that she has let Father Flynn talk her into hiring the Pole who can handle all sorts of machines and do both carpentry and masons' work. She therefore ignores Mrs. Shortley's remarks and later even welcomes it when the Shortleys pack up and leave. However, when she learns that one of her "half-witted" Negroes is paying three dollars a week to Mr. Guizac so that his young orphaned cousin may come to America to marry the coloured man, Mrs. McIntyre is completely shaken; she forbids the Pole to bring about such a match on her place and considers firing him. After Mr. Shortley
has returned, his wife now being dead, she makes up her mind to let Mr. Guizac go. The moral obligation the priest claims she has towards the D. P. keeps her, however, from carrying through her decision. Finally, an "accident" solves her problem. While Mr. Guizac is lying on his back halfway under the small tractor repairing it, Mr. Shortley brings out the large tractor, parks it on the small hill in front of it and returns to the shed. Suddenly the large tractor starts rolling.

Later she, Mrs. McIntyre remembered that she had seen the Negro jump silently out of the way as if a spring in the earth had released him and that she had seen Mr. Shortley turn his head with incredible slowness and stare silently over his shoulder and that she had started to shout to the Displaced Person but that she had not. She had felt her eyes and Mr. Shortley's eyes and the Negro's eyes come together in one look that froze them in collusion forever, and she had heard the little noise the Pole made as the tractor wheel broke his backbone. (p. 232)

The macabre in the above scene hardly needs pointing out. What gives it a simultaneously comic touch appears to be the simile of the spring and the sudden "helplessness" of the spectators who find themselves united in a secret understanding. Knowing Flannery O'Connor's religious views and judging by the allusions in the story, it seems safe to presume that Mr. Guizac is meant to be looked upon as a Christ figure and the "accident" as a sort of crucifixion. The ironic outcome of this event is that all involved soon find themselves turned into "displaced persons," including even Mrs. McIntyre who ends up "collapsed, bedridden and alone."40 The only positive thing about her foreman's death where she is concerned, is that it "is redemptive insofar as it abases her pride."41 Again then, the macabre-grotesque is seen to be closely linked to theme and characterization, at the same time as it lends itself to symbolic interpretation.

The macabre ending of "A Late Encounter with the Enemy" has already been mentioned in the second chapter of this dissertation where a boy scout queues up in the Coca Cola line with the general dead in his wheel-chair (see p. 24). As is often the case in Flannery O'Connor's stories, the comic effect is achieved through the startling and through the incongruity of the situation. A macabre tone, though mixed with the amusing, pervades the entire description of General Sash. He is so old
that he has not only forgotten almost all that ever happened to him, including the war, but also "the name and face of his wife and the names and faces of his children or even if he had a wife and children" (p. 156). He has, in fact, become a museum piece in his own lifetime, a sort of grotesque fossil, as is very clearly shown, for instance, by the following passage (italics mine):

Every year on Confederate Memorial Day, he was bundled up and lent to the Capitol City Museum where he was displayed from one to four in a musty room full of old photographs, old uniforms, old artillery, and historic documents... He wore his general's uniform... and sat, with a fixed scowl, inside a small roped area. There was nothing about him to indicate that he was alive except an occasional movement in his milky grey eyes. (pp. 152-53)

The general's thoughts and observations as he sits on the platform during the graduation, at what is to be his last public performance, are also described in macabre-comic terms:

A black procession was flowing up each aisle and forming to stately music in a pool in front of him. The music seemed to be entering his head through the little hole and he thought for a second that the procession would try to enter it too.

He didn't know what procession this was but there was something familiar about it. It must be familiar to him since it had come to meet him, but he didn't like a black procession. Any procession that came to meet him, he thought irritably, ought to have floats with beautiful gulls on them....

When all the procession had flowed into the black pool, a black figure began orating in front of it. The figure was telling something about history and the General made up his mind he wouldn't listen, but the words kept seeping in through the little hole in his head. ... then a succession of places--Chickamauga, Shilok, Marthasville--rushed at him as if the past were the only future now and he had to endure it. Then suddenly he saw that the black procession was almost on him.... He made such a desperate effort to see over it and find out what comes after the past that his hand clenched the sword until the blade touched bone. (pp. 155-56, 158)

The purpose of this grotesque portrayal seems to be to act as a deterrent. General Sash is set up as a frightening example of a person who has lived to reach old age, and yet is completely unprepared when his life draws to its end. Vain, selfish and interested only in worldly pleasures, he goes to meet a face where there is no hope of redemption.

In the title story of Flannery O'Connor's second collec-
tion of short stories, "Everything That Rises Must Converge," we meet again one of those obnoxious female characters that the author is so good at drawing (see p. 23). "Julian's mother," as she is referred to throughout the story, is a widow and Julian is her only son.

On the particular day described in the story Julian is taking his mother to her reducing class at the Y. On the bus ride downtown a coloured woman with a small child gets on and sits down next to them. Although Julian's mother both dislikes and distrusts everything connected with Negroes, she readily gets involved in a game of bo-peep with the little boy, which she keeps up until his mother tells him to stop his foolishness. Then, as the four of them get off together, Julian's mother condescendingly hands the boy a penny. The Negress, however, becomes furious; exploding "like a piece of machinery that had been given one ounce of pressure too much," she knocks the older woman down with a swing of her pocketbook and screams, "'He don't take nobody's pennies!'" (p. 20) Completely crushed by this unexpected turn of events, Julian's mother remains sitting helplessly on the pavement. At last she allows herself to be helped up by Julian who angrily tells her, "'You got exactly what you deserved'" (p. 21). However, she does not seem to hear him. Setting off at a quick pace she starts heading for home.

Stunned, he let her go and she lurched forwards again, walking as if one leg were shorter than the other. A tide of darkness seemed to be sweeping her from him. 'Mother!' he cried. 'Darling, sweetheart, wait!' Crumpling, she fell to the pavement. He dashed forwards and fell at her side, crying, 'Mamma, Mamma!' He turned her over. Her face was fiercely distorted. One eye, large and staring, moved slightly to the left as if it had been unmoored. The other remained fixed on him, raked his face again, found nothing and closed. (p. 22)

The comic in this passage comes to the fore in the vision that the author conjures up of Julian's mother "walking as if one leg were shorter than the other" and in the grotesque description of her uncoordinating eyes. As to the macabre ending, it apparently constitutes a warning: those who are half-hearted and do not practise true Christian charity are beyond redemption.

The same moral seems applicable to "A View of the Woods," where a stubborn and greedy old man gets into a dispute over a
piece of land with his favourite grandchild; the fight that ensues leads to the death of both. The story contains one particularly interesting grotesque metaphor which ties in with the action and, as so often in Flannery O'Connor, foreshadows the ending: a "huge yellow monster... gorging itself on clay" (p. 69). The reference is to a bulldozer which is excavating a site for a new camp and which, to quote Carter Martin, "is transformed into an image of the damnation to which he Mr. Fortune is delivered." 44

Although it cannot be deduced from the brief summary given here, a message similar to that of the last two stories is also conveyed in "Greenleaf" where the reader meets another version of Julian's mother, Mrs. May. 45 Here the setting is in the country. Mrs. May owns a farm, and Greenleaf is the name of her foreman, a shiftless man, of whom the best that can be said is that he does not have "the initiative to steal" (p. 26). The story deals with the trouble Mrs. May has getting rid of a stray bull. Receiving no help from either Mr. Greenleaf's sons, to whom the bull actually belongs, or from her own sons, who are not interested in farm work, Mrs. May decides that the bull must be shot and that Mr. Greenleaf is to shoot him. They drive out into the pasture where the bull is, Mr. Greenleaf throws a rock at him, the bull sets off, and the foreman follows "at his leisure" (p. 45). In the meantime, Mrs. May gets out of the car and sits down by it to rest. Suddenly she catches sight of the bull coming at her with lowered horns.

She remained perfectly still, not in fright, but in a freezing unbelief. She stared at the violent black streak bounding towards her as if she had no sense of distance, as if she could not decide at once what his intention was, and the bull had buried his head in her lap, like a wild tormented lover before her expression changed. One of his horns sank until it pierced her heart and the other curved around her side and held her in an unbreakable grip. (pp. 46-47)

It is not only a macabre ending but also a very ironic one considering all Mrs. May's efforts to get rid of the animal. The comic lies in this irony and in the description of Mrs. May's "freezing unbelief" that completely immobilizes her at the sight of the charging bull (p. 47). It also comes out in the comparison of the bull to a "wild tormented lover" whose ardent embrace becomes the death of Mrs. May--a fate that the author evidently
deemed fitting for someone as arrogant and godless as she (ibid).\textsuperscript{46} Taken as a whole, the story is a good illustration of Louise Gossett's statement that existence in Flannery O'Connor's works "is a series of malevolent frustrations which prove that man is alienated not only from God and human kind but also from nature."\textsuperscript{47}

"The Lame Shall Enter First" also ends in a macabre-ironic way. In his frantic attempt to help a clubfooted, socially mal-adjusted fourteen-year-old by the name of Rufus Sheppard, a social worker, so completely ignores the needs of his own motherless son that the boy ends up taking his own life. Persuaded by Rufus that his mother is "on high" and that you have to be dead to get there, Norton, as he is called, decides to join his mother—the only person who ever gave him any love, and whom he imagines he can see in the telescope in the attic. His father finds him there, hanging "in the jungle of shadows, just below the beam from which he had launched his flight into space" (p. 156). Sheppard's awareness of his own shortcomings and his failure as a father comes too late to save his son. Everything seems to indicate, however, that Sheppard will finally achieve redemption. Norton's macabre death is a part of the suffering he must undergo on his way to salvation. As Caroline Gordon has said, every incident in a Flannery O'Connor story must be seen in the light of eternity.\textsuperscript{48} The comic permeates the dialogue and is also found in the irony of the outcome.

In "Judgement Day" the emphasis is not only on redemption—even if the main character is very much concerned with his own departure from life—it also deals with racial relations and human isolation.\textsuperscript{49} It is the story of an old man's dream of being buried in Georgia instead of in New York, where he is living with his daughter and son-in-law in a sordid apartment building. When the narrative opens, he is just waiting for his daughter to leave so that he can carry out his plan to take a taxi to the freight yards and get on a train going South. However, the unforeseen happens; when he is approaching the staircase, his legs suddenly give way under him and he plunges forward. A Negro actor, who lives on the same floor, and with whom he has vainly tried to make friends—ignoring his daughter's warning, "'They ain't the same around here!'"—finds him lying on the stairs un-
able to get up but does nothing to help him (p. 212). When his daughter returns an hour later, he is dead.

His hat had been pulled down over his face and his head and arms thrust between the spokes of the banister; his feet dangled over the stairwell like those of a man in the stocks. (p. 219)

With its metaphor of that old implement of torture, the stocks, this passage seems to be a good example of Flannery O'Connor's predilection for startling effects. "The shock-effect of the grotesque," Thomson says, "may . . . be used to bewilder and disorient, to bring the reader up short, jolt him out of accustomed ways of perceiving the world and confronting him with a radically different, disturbing perspective" (p. 58).

As to the macabre outcome of the story as a whole, it ties up with the author's vision of the city as a hostile place, where the idea of everyone minding his own business frequently leads to loneliness and isolation and sometimes to disaster. At the same time it exemplifies the proverb: "Man proposes, God disposes," for in the end all Tanner's plans pertaining to his decease, described in such a comic and irreverent manner, are frustrated. Or as Muller expresses it:

... by rendering death in various postures of the absurd, Miss O'Connor places Tanner's will in opposition to the climax of the story; and this opposition between intention and reality illuminates a major aspect of the grotesque.

In the above story, as in all the others mentioned, the dry, matter-of-fact tone used by the narrator makes the macabre incident seem even more appalling.

As to Flannery O'Connor's first novel, Wise Blood, it is not only one of the most grotesque works to be found in Southern literature but also one of the best illustrations of the macabre-grotesque. Rejecting his grandfather's orthodox Christianity with its emphasis upon sin, guilt and hell, Haze Motes, an eighteen-year-old country boy comes to town to convince himself of the soundness of his own atheism. He buys an old, run-down Essex and standing on the hood of the car, he starts delivering his message of a Church Without Christ. Hearing Haze speaking of the need for a new Jesus, his only disciple, Enoch Emery, succeeds in stealing a mummy from a museum and triumphantly turns the shrunken corpse over to his master. To Enoch's great con-
sternation, Haze throws "the new jesus" out of the window and announces his decision to start preaching in another town where he will be more appreciated. Before leaving town, however, Haze is determined to get rid of a man by the name of Solace Layfield, who is impersonating him as a preacher. In a very grim and macabre scene Haze first rams the other man's car so that it lands in a ditch, then, ordering Solace to take off the suit that resembles his own, he starts pursuing the fleeing man in the Essex.

The Prophet began to run in earnest. He tore off his shirt and unbuckled his belt and ran out of his trousers. He began grabbing for his feet as if he would take off his shoes too, but before he could get at them, the Essex knocked him flat and ran over him. Haze drove about twenty feet and stopped the car and then began to back it. He backed it over the body and then stopped and got out. The Essex stood half over the other Prophet as if it were pleased to guard what it had finally brought down. The man didn't look so much like Haze, lying on the ground on his face without his hat or suit on. A lot of blood was coming out of him and forming a puddle around his head. He was motionless all but for one finger that moved up and down in front of his face as if he were marking time with it. . . . "Two things I can't stand," Haze said, "--a man that ain't true and one that mocks what is. You shouldn't ever have tampered with me if you didn't want what you got." (p. 204)

Driving out of town the next day, Haze is stopped by a patrolman. Learning that he has no license and seeing the poor condition of his car, the patrolman forces Haze to drive the Essex up to the top of a steep hill, from where he sends the car crashing down the embankment. "'Them that don't have a car, don't need a license,'" the policeman states flatly.

Crushed by the loss of his most beloved possession, Haze returns to the city, buys a sack of lime and blinds himself. In spite of "the mess he had made in his eye sockets" and the torture he imposes on himself by walking around with split glass in his shoes and barbed wire around his chest--which makes his landlady suspect that he believes in Christ after all--she falls in love with him (p. 213). She suggests that they marry, but when Haze responds by walking out on her, she reports him to the police for having failed to pay his rent. Two officers find him in a ditch and bring him back to the landlady. Only after they have left, does she discover that he has been beaten to death.
The work lends itself to symbolic interpretations. A very plausible view, substantiated by the author's own words, is the one put forward by Reichnitz that the mummy is a "central thematic symbol" which, together with the coffin image in the story, signifies "the death-in-life of existence without God" (pp. 37, 45). Once Haze has committed the murder of Layfield--a sort of self-murder--and got rid of the Essex--his substitute for Christ--he is prepared to make that immense sacrifice: to deprive himself of his eye-sight in order to start leading a "life-in-death" existence. In his world of darkness he ironically enough comes to see the light and achieves "a grotesque kind of saint-hood."52

The macabre is thus employed to develop the theme of Haze's way to salvation and to bring out traits of character, but what makes Wise Blood such a grotesque story and Haze such a grotesque person is the combination with the ludicrous. Haze actually cuts such a morbid and ridiculous figure that the portrayal of him becomes little more than a caricature. More important, however, is perhaps the fact that the novel is so full of incongruous happenings that the serious message is lost. What "saves" the work is the author's "tight objective prose moving tersely along, relieved by occasional flarings of grim humor and irony which would not be funny at all except for their juxta-position with so many bizarre events," and her extraordinary ability to reproduce the spoken idiom.53

Flannery O'Connor's second novel, The Violent Bear It Away, opens on a macabre note:

Francis Marion Tarwater's great-uncle had been dead for only half a day when the boy got too drunk to finish digging his grave and a Negro named Buford Munson... had to finish it and drag the body from the breakfast table where it was still sitting and bury it in a decent and Christian way. (p. 3)

The scene at the kitchen table, where Tarwater calmly goes on eating his breakfast in front of his dead uncle, is also macabre. "In a kind of sullen embarrassment as if he were in the presence of a new personality," the boy finally says, "'Just hold your horses. I already told you I would do it right!'" (p. 11). The idea underlying Tarwater's decision "to dig the grave under the fig tree because the old man would be good for the figs" must likewise be described as macabre (p. 22). The same holds true of
the flashback the reader gets of his great-uncle trying out the coffin he has made. When the old man climbs into it and lies on his back, nothing of him can be seen except his stomach which rises above the edge "like over-leavened bread"--a sight that causes Tarwater to remark, "It's too much of you for the box. . . I'll have to sit on the lid to press you down or wait until you rot a little" (pp. 13-14). In all these instances the macabre is interspersed with humour, much of it resulting, as Sullivan points out, from the disparity between the circumstances as described and "our ordinary attitude towards dying."55 He goes on to say, "By presenting death as a natural and even desirable experience, it furthers Miss O'Connor's general effort to bring spiritual enlightenment to a largely faithless world."56

More sinister than the above scenes is the macabre episode that occurs after Tarwater has left the country and joined his uncle Rayber, a schoolteacher and atheist, and his idiot son, Bishop, in the city. At first Tarwater is torn between the teachings of his great-uncle, who raised him to be a prophet, and his own determination to free himself of everything connected with the past, but gradually Rayber's cynicism and attempts to mould him into an image of himself turn the scale in the old man's favour: when alone with Bishop in a boat out on a lake, Tarwater cannot resist the temptation to baptize him. No sooner, however, does the boy realize that he has, in fact, carried out his great-uncle's most ardent wish than the demoniac side of his nature forces him to drown his little cousin. Rayber, whose misgivings are confirmed as soon as he hears Bishop cry out,

knew then with an instinct as sure as the dull mechanical beat of his heart . . . that he [Tarwater] was headed for everything the old man had prepared him for, that he moved off now through the black forest toward a violent encounter with his fate. (p. 203)

Thus the macabre scene in which Bishop is at once baptized and drowned serves both to disclose Tarwater's symbolic settlement with the past and the course he is to follow in the future.57 The author's own comments on the story elucidate her use of the macabre-grotesque:

When I write a novel in which the central action is a baptism, I am very well aware that for a majority of my readers, baptism is a meaningless rite, and so in my novel I have to see that his baptism carries enough awe
and mystery to jar the reader into some kind of emo-
tional recognition of its significance. To this end
I have to bend the whole novel--its language, its
structure, its action. I have to make the reader feel,
in his bones if nowhere else, that something is going
on here that counts. Distortion in this case is an in-
strument; exaggeration has a purpose, and the whole
structure of the story or novel has been made what it
is because of belief. This is not the kind of distor-
tion that destroys; it is the kind that reveals, or
should reveal.

As in the other works by Flannery O'Connor that have been exam-
ined here, the macabre-grotesque is consequently not used for
its own sake but is intended to shock the readers into believ-
ing.

The Macabre-Grotesque Used
to Reveal the Dignity
and Depravity of Man

Like Flannery O'Connor, Eudora Welty shows a definite pre-
dilection for the grotesque. Her novels and short stories are
full of grotesque characters and incidents but they are seldom
of a macabre-grotesque nature. One exception is the ending of
"Clytie," the story of a pitiable old spinster who lives to-
gether with a tyrannical sister, an alcoholic brother and a
paralytic father in a forbidding house in a small town (see p.
20). Clytie's pastime is to watch faces--in the hope of discov-
ering some outer sign of a need for contact corresponding to her
own. One day when bending over the rain barrel to fetch some
water, Clytie sees something vaguely familiar--"the face she had
been looking for, and from which she had been separated" (p.
177). It was not a pretty sight: the eyes were large and greedy-
looking, "the nose ugly and discoloured as if from weeping," the
lips pursed up from disuse of speech and the hair wild and di-
shevelled (ibid.). "Too late, she recognized the face" (ibid.).
Then as her sister's demanding voice was heard, "'Clytie!
Clytie! The water!'" she panicked and instinctively put her head
into the barrel, "into the kind, featureless depth, and held it
there (p. 178). Interpreting this scene, Ruth Vande Kieft
writes:

What does her action mean? First of all, that she sees
the ghastly disparity between what she once was and
ought to have been (the loving, laughing creature of
her youth) and what she has become (ugly, warped, in-
verted). Also, perhaps, she realizes that the only love
in that house, if not in that town, was the love she
made: there was no one then to embrace, no nature to plunge into but her own, no love possible but narcissistic love, no reality but her own reality, no knowledge possible but the knowledge of death, which is the immersion into oblivion. It is another pointless joke in a pointless universe.

Dealing, as it does, with human isolation, lost youth and lost identity, the story is indeed both macabre and tragic. Yet it is not devoid of comic aspects. In the above scene the comic lies in the incongruity of the situation; in the closing paragraph, which Ruth Vande Kieft considers "one of the most grim jokes Miss Welty has ever perpetrated," it lies in the horrific, yet farcical, sight the author conjures up:

When Old Lethy found her, she had fallen forward into the barrel, with her poor ladylike black-stockinged legs up-ended and hung apart like a pair of tongs. (p. 178)

The comedy encountered in "Clytie," like that found in such stories as "The Burning" and "Flowers for Marjorie," corresponds closely, Ruth Vande Kieft claims, with the kind Wylie Sypher speaks of in "Our New Sense of the Comic," He says:

... the direst calamities that befall man seem to prove that human life at its depths is inherently absurd. The comic and tragic views of life no longer exclude each other. ... The comic and the tragic touch one another at the absolute point of infinity--at the extremes of human experience. ... We have, in short, been forced to admit that the absurd is more than ever inherent in human existence: that is, the irrational, the inexplicable, the surprising, the nonsensical--in other words, the comic."

At the same time as the author uses the grotesque, including the macabre, to present the themes mentioned above, she employs it to reveal both the dignity and depravity of man. The true grotesques of the story: the members of Clytie's family are all depraved, even so-called normal people in the town seem to lack her dignity and sensitivity.

Another example of a macabre-grotesque situation in Eudora Welty touching upon the same subject might be given, although this particular one is not described with any of the gory details that one usually associates with the macabre. The situation that suggests itself is the one in "The Burning," where a Negro servant, Delilah, helps the two sisters Miss Theo and Miss Myra to hang themselves after their home has been burnt down by General Sherman's men. No sooner have the two women fallen "like emblems of the ruined South" than Delilah starts stripping
them of their clothes and belongings.\textsuperscript{66} She is next seen strutting away in Miss Myra's shoes in the direction of "the liberating army."\textsuperscript{67}

Regardless of other comic elements the scene might contain, this little remark about the shoes, which is in glaring contrast to the sinister description of the hanging, suffices to relieve the pathos that has been created and to make the story truly macabre-grotesque.

The theme of man's dignity as opposed to his depravity is personified on one hand by Miss Theo and Miss Myra, who would rather take their lives than go on living in humiliation in a defeated South, and on the other hand by Delilah, who does not hesitate to deprive her former mistresses of their belongings, whereby she reveals her depravity but also a sort of practical determination.

In this category of stories one might also include Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" (see p. 20). It is the intricately told tale of a Miss Grierson, descended from a distinguished old family, who after many years of spinsterhood gets involved in a love affair with a simple worker from the North by the name of Homer Barron.

About a year after the strange courtship has begun, Miss Emily purchases some rat poison. A malicious rumour immediately has it that she intends to kill herself out of disappointment that Homer Barron will not marry her. Nothing of this sort happens, however. One day the Northerner is gone, and Miss Emily continues to live alone in her big, decaying house with only a Negro servant to help her. As the years pass, less and less is seen of her; finally she does not leave the house at all. When at last she dies--an obese old woman with iron-grey hair--the whole town comes to the funeral: "the men through a sort of respectful affection for a fallen monument, the women mostly out of curiosity to see the inside of her house" (p. 433). It is then that Miss Emily's great secret is revealed. Behind a locked door on the top floor in a room "decked and furnished as for a bridal" the corpse of Homer Barron is found (p. 443).

For a long while we just stood there, looking down at the profound and fleshless grin. The body had apparently once lain in the attitude of an embrace, but now the long sleep that outlasts love, that conquers even
the grimace of love, had cuckolded him. What was left
of him, rotted beneath what was left of the nightshirt,
had become inextricable from the bed in which he lay;
and upon him and upon the pillow beside him lay that
even coating of the patient and biding dust.

Then we noticed that in the second pillow was the
indentation of a head. One of us lifted something from
it, and leaning forward, that faint and invisible dust
dry and acrid in the nostrils, we saw a long strand of
iron-grey hair. (pp. 443-44)

There have been many interpretations of Faulkner's story,
not least of its ending. Whether this indicates that Miss Emily
committed the grotesque act of necrophilia or simply lay beside
Homer Barron in bed or, as one critic believes, placed a lock of
her hair on the pillow next to his as a gesture of grief, the
very fact that she murdered her lover presumptively with rat
poison and kept him hidden in the house all those years, makes
the story both macabre and spinechilling. At the same time, it
is indeed grotesque for the comic element which according to
Thomson is such an essential part of this phenomenon--is by no
means lacking. As Nikolaus Happel has pointed out in an analysis
of the story

Komik spricht aus dem Verhalten der Stadtbevölkerung,
besonders dem der 'ladies' und 'old people': Das
Geschehen um Miss Emily vermag die Frauen vollkommen
in seinen Bann zu ziehen. Es lässt ihren Charakter in
seiner ganzen Begrenztheit und Erstarrung und ihre
Besessenheit offenbar werden.

Happel is also aware of the tension resulting from opposing
elements which is the hallmark of the truly grotesque:
Ein starkes Spannungsmoment ergibt sich durch das Auf­
treten des Komischen, denn dieses steht hier in Ver­
bindung zum Tragischen und Makabren. Das ist einmal der
'smell', den man um das Haus von Miss Emily wahrnehmen
cann und dessen Ursprung zunächst geheimnisvoll bleibt.

The suspicion that most readers probably entertain—that the
smell derives from Miss Emily's having done away with her lover
is not confirmed until the very end of the story when the door
to the sealed room is broken down and what is left of Homer
Barron is found. It is then that one recalls the mayor's remark
about the smell when it was first detected and discussed:
"'Dammit, sir, . . . will you accuse a lady to her face of smell­
ing bad?"' and realizes how very comical and ironic the question
is now that the truth about the 'lady' is known (p. 436). There
is also a great deal of comedy in the description of the attempt
to extinguish the smell where the people involved behave in a very animal-like fashion, slinking, sniffing, creeping, out of consideration for Miss Emily. The purchase of the arsenic and the druggist's precaution to mark the box "For rats" likewise take on an amusing, ambiguous meaning when one thinks one knows the use to which the poison was put.

As to the characterization of Miss Emily, she must like Clytie in Eudora Welty's story, be said to suffer from dementia although to a lesser degree. Like Clytie, she also displays a remarkable dignity, which contrasts with the depravity of those around her, only in Miss Emily's case, this dignity, damaged by her relationship with Homer, must be restored through a crime. Finally, she too—in spite of her misdeed—emerges as a tragic, pitiable character; the very title, "A Rose for Emily," reveals that the author's sympathy lies on her side.

Faulkner's Joanna Burden in *Light in August* is also a woman who is unable to live without a sense of dignity. Like Miss Emily, she therefore decides to kill her lover rather than continue a sordid affair; he, however, succeeds in killing her first. In the gruesome scene which describes Joanna after Christmas has cut her throat, "laying on her side, facing one way" with her head "turned clean around like she was looking behind her," the macabre does not only produce the effect of stark realism but also has the symbolic function of showing that Joanna never could sever the links with the past (pp. 70-71).

The Macabre-Grotesque Used to Depict the Folly of Man

Several writers of Southern fiction have used the macabre-grotesque to depict the folly of man. The best example of this usage is perhaps Faulkner's novel *As I Lay Dying*. It is the story of Anse Bundren's efforts to bring his dead wife to her longed-for resting place in Jefferson, Mississippi, with the help of his five children. The journey, which is full of mishaps and adversities, is related episodically by different members and acquaintances of the family, enabling the reader to get a good insight into the psyche of each person.

The novel abounds in macabre incidents. While Addie Bundren is dying, she is propped up in her bed so that she may
have a good view of her oldest son, Cash, making her coffin—something which all except her favourite son, Jewel, find quite in order. When she finally dies, her youngest son, Vardaman, is so upset that his mind seems to become deranged. The morning after her death the boy is found on the floor by the coffin like a felled steer, and the top of the box bored clean full of holes and Cash's new auger broke off in the last one. When they had taken the lid off they found that two of them had bored on into her face. (p. 60)

Whereas this undoubtedly strikes the reader as a both macabre and grotesque incident, the Bundrens seem to view the destruction with composure. The only time that Anse appears to find something macabre is when Darl—whose latent madness later breaks out and causes him to be taken to the state asylum—during the trip starts laughing at his brother Jewel's antics on his horse. "'I don't expect you to have no respect for me,'" Anse says reproachfully. "'But with your own ma not cold in her coffin yet'" (p. 82).

When Cash, on the other hand, breaks his leg in his desperate attempt to prevent his mother's body from being swept away by the floods in the crossing of the swollen river, it seems natural to all that he should be placed on top of the coffin. Nor does the smell of the corpse, that becomes increasingly foul as the journey is prolonged by all the misfortunes that befall them, seem to bother the family too much. Only outsiders react: in Mottson they are practically thrown out of town by the marshal who accuses them of "endangering the public health" (p. 162). The buzzards, too, react—they increase in number and become more and more annoying.

After a great many worrying incidents, including Darl's setting fire to a barn, Cash almost losing his leg on account of Anse's stinginess and Dewey Dell being seduced, Addie Bundren is finally buried in her family grave in Jefferson. The very next day Anse appears with a new set of teeth and a new wife. There is nothing like killing several birds with one stone.

The macabre comedy in As I Lay Dying is quite reminiscent of the kind of macabre humour one encounters in Caldwell's Tobacco Road. Admittedly, Caldwell fires with coarser ammunition but then his poor whites—like Faulkner's undoubtedly inspired by actual people—are more destitute and uncultivated than Anse
and his family. Both writers, however, treat their characters with a tolerance that seems to be characteristic of Southern fiction—no matter how ignorant and egocentric and ludicrous they might appear, they always possess some redeeming quality. The satire never becomes malicious, the irony never bitter. *As I Lay Dying* is an exposure of the folly of man but one marked by humourous resignation.

Another story where the macabre-grotesque is used to depict human fatuity is Eudora Welty's "*Flowers for Marjorie.*" Here Howard, the young husband, who has been out of work for a year and seems unable to find a new job, grows increasingly desperate at the thought of his beloved Marjorie, the baby she is expecting and himself all starving to death. One day when he comes home and sees his wife sitting there so complacent, so "safe and hopeful in pregnancy," he is suddenly overcome by rage and picks up a butcher's knife and stabs her to death (p. 199).

Though it is a gruesome scene—"there was blood everywhere; her lap was like a bowl"—, it is described in such strangely tender terms that the macabre impression is diminished (p. 200). As in "*Clytie*" the comical lies in the incongruity that is revealed, the absurdity of killing a person that one loves and in Howard's frantic attempt to forget that Marjorie is dead by going on a spree. The irony with which this is related underlines the tragedy of the story; on one occasion Howard sees a gadget in a shop window: "a bulb attached to a long tube" and on the sign next to it, "Palpitator--the Imitation Heart. Show her you Love her," a beggar sings "Let Me Call You Sweetheart,"

Howard hits the jack-pot in a bar, and, most ironic of all, he becomes the tenth millionth person to enter Radio City and is presented with a bunch of red roses and the key to the city (pp. 201, 203). However, when he returns home to the one-room flat bringing the fragrant flowers, Marjorie is as dead as ever.

Then Howard knew for a fact that everything had stopped. It was just as he had feared, just as he had dreamed. He had had a dream to come true. (p. 207)

In "*Flowers for Marjorie*" the death of Marjorie is the crux of the entire plot. However, as has been shown, the macabre-grotesque also ties in with the characterization of Howard and the imagery mentioned. Whether the story is based on a real incident during the days of the Depression or not, it gives the
impression of being very plausible—a fact which, in turn, increases the impact of the macabre-grotesque.

Another macabre story, "The White Rooster," by William Goyen may also be discussed in this part of the chapter, dealing as it does with the rash act of a foolish old man. Here the stray rooster serves a purpose similar to that of the stray bull in Flannery O'Connor's story "Greenleaf": it annoys and torments a woman until she resolves that it has to die—a decision that brings about her own death instead. Whereas it is the bull itself that kills Mrs. May, however, Mrs. Samuels in Goyen's story is killed by her father-in-law who, not without cause, senses that once the rooster is dispatched, it will be his turn next. While his daughter-in-law is watching the bird and waiting to spring the trap that has been set for it, Grandpa Samuels sneaks up on her in his wheelchair.

When he got to the threshold of the trap and lifted his yellow claw to make the final step, Grandpa Samuels was so close to Mrs. Samuels that he could hear her passionate breath drawn in a kind of lust-panting. And when her heart must have said, "Let go!" to her fingers, . . . Grandpa Samuels struck at the top of her spine . . . with a hunting knife he had kept for many years. There was no sound, only the sudden sliding of the cord as it made a dip and hung loose in Marcy Samuels' limp hand. (p. 13)

Here the comic lies in the irony that one potential killer is murdered by another killer and in the surprise of the stealthy assault, which is the culmination of intimidation tactics practiced for years. Feeling liberated at last, Grandpa Samuels gives free vent to his emotions in a grotesque scene that is a mixture of the macabre—considering what has just happened—the frightening and the comic.

He howled with laughter and rumbled like a run-away carriage through room and room, sometimes coughing in paroxysms. He rolled here and there in every room, destroying everything he could reach, he threw up pots and pans in the kitchen, was in the flour and sugar like a whirlwind, overturned chairs and ripped the upholstery in the living room until the stuffing flew in the air; and covered with straw and flour, white like a demented ghost, he flayed the bedroom wallpaper into hanging shreds; coughing and howling, he lashed and wrecked and razed until he thought he was bringing the very house down upon himself. (p. 14)

This episode, in turn, is very reminiscent of the post-office scene in Eudora Welty's story "Asphodel" which will be
described in the following chapter (see p. 124). Here--as there--the fit of madness ends in death:

In Grandpa's room Watson found the wheel chair with his father's wild dead body in it, his life stopped by some desperate struggle. There had obviously been a fierce spasm of coughing, for the big artery in his neck had burst and was still bubbling blood like a little red spring. (p. 14)

Again there is irony at work: Grandpa Samuels' longed-for freedom is very shortlived indeed.

As to the function of the grotesque in "The White Rooster", it is connected to both plot and characterization. In a wider sense it serves to dramatize the theme of the battle between the sexes. The white rooster is more than the pawn in the game; Grandpa Samuels subconsciously identifies with it and Marcy, too, sees it as an extension of her father-in-law--another nuisance that keeps her from enjoying life. Goyen's narration of the fight between the old man and the young woman echoes the so-called tall-tale but, as Robert Phillips convincingly argues, it is also an allegory: a modern version of the Biblical story of Samson and Delilah. Grandpa Samuels, who does not only have a name that is reminiscent of Samson's, constitutes "the figure of the incapacitated male at the mercy of a female in league with the Philistines." For as Samson deteriorates physically after meeting Delilah, Grandpa Samuels' vitality diminishes when he is thrown upon the mercy of his daughter-in-law and, like Samson, who ends up having his eyes put out, Grandpa Samuels ends up being confined to a wheel-chair. However, just as Samson revenges himself on his enemies by bringing down the temple on them, Grandpa Samuels takes his vengeance out on Marcy by stabbing her to death and demolishing her home "until he thought he was bringing the very house down upon himself" (p. 14).
NOTES TO CHAPTER III

1 This definition is based on The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English, 5th ed., s.v. 'macabre' and A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles (Oxford, 1888-1933), s.v. 'macabre'. As mentioned in the latter work, Macabré is probably a popular corruption of OF Macabé = Maccabaeus or possibly "the name of the artist who painted the picture which suggested the first poem on the subject."

2 Mildred Haun, The Hawk's Done Gone (Indianapolis, 1940).

3 Ibid., p. 371.


5 The subject matter is reminiscent of another grotesque piece of writing, namely, Swift's "A Modest Proposal," British Pamphleteers, vol. 1, edited by George Orwell and Reginald Reynolds (London, 1948), pp. 227-35. First published in 1729. Since Mildred Haun's story, however, does not seem to contain any satire that could possibly diminish the feeling of horror and repulsion, her tale probably impresses the reader of today as being even more gruesome and shocking than Swift's.


7 The only other macabre-grotesque scenes found in Capote are those occurring in his non-fictional works.

8 Erskine Caldwell, The Bastard and Poor Fool (London, 1963). First published in 1930. (Subsequent quotations are from this edition and page numbers are given in the text.)


10 Ibid., p. 85.

11 Robert D. Jacobs, "The Humor of Tobacco Road," The Comic Imagination in American Literature, ed. Louis D. Rubin, Jr. (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1973), p. 286. One need only go back to Mark Twain to find the same type of humour as can be seen by the following dialogue between Huckleberry Finn and Aunt Sally after Huck has witnessed a steamboat explosion:
"Good gracious! anybody hurt?"
"No'm. Killed a nigger."
"Well, it's lucky; because sometimes people do get hurt."

13 Ibid., p. 88.
14 Ibid.
15 Evelyn Waugh, The Loved One (Boston, 1948).
16 Cf. Thomson, p. 47.
18 Ibid., p. 144.
19 Erskine Caldwell, Trouble in July (New York, 1940).
20 Erskine Caldwell, Tobacco Road (London: Pan Books, 1958; reprint ed., 1965). (Subsequent quotations are from this edition and page numbers are given in the text.)
21 The last statement by Thomson might seem to be a contradiction to what was said in the first chapter regarding Blount, that is, if the comic element is very slight "the use of the term 'grotesque' may be debatable" (p. 21). One must, however, bear in mind that it is much easier to judge whether a character in a novel is comic than it is to pick out the comic elements in a short scene or passage. As Thomson says, "Whereas the reasons for the horrifying or frightening qualities of a text are usually obvious, the source of its comic effect may not be so clear. This is likely to be the case with those instances of the grotesque which are particularly brutal and hideous" (p. 54).
22 Jacobs, p. 288.
25 Steig, p. 259.
27 Ibid., p. 24. Other lynching scenes are found in Trouble in July and the afore-mentioned story "Kneel to the Rising Sun," but since there are no comic aspects attached to these, they can
hardly be referred to as macabre-grotesque.


29 Ibid., p. 151.


31 According to Caldwell's publishing firm The New American Library, more than 64 million copies of his books had been published in 34 countries by the end of 1961.

32 This is not surprising in view of her statement, "I'm a born Catholic and death has always been brother to my imagination. I can't imagine a story that does not end in it or in its foreshadowings." As quoted by Stanley E. Hyman in "Flannery O'Connor," The University of Minnesota Pamphlets on Writers 54 (Minneapolis, 1966), p. 45.


35 Sullivan, p. 343.


37 Ibid., 33-34.

38 In "Flannery O'Connor's View Of God and Man," *Studies in Short Fiction* 1 (Spring 1964), p. 201, Ted Spivey claims that The Misfit states "one of the basic ideas in Miss O'Connor's work: whether one is a criminal or a respectable citizen, without Jesus he can only commit evil."

39 Here the present author agrees with the interpretation put forward by Finger in his dissertation, p. 131.

40 Hyman, p. 17; In an article entitled "Flannery O'Connor's Wise Blood," *Critique* 2:2 (1958-59), p. 9, Caroline Gordon states, "In Miss O'Connor's vision of modern man . . . all her characters are 'displaced persons,' not merely the people in the story of that name. They are 'off center,' out of place, because they are victims of a rejection of the Scheme of Redemption."

41 Hyman, p. 18.

42 As Ollye Snow has observed, the very structure of this part of the story, where the General undergoes his struggle with death, turns into a grotesque chaos, "an artistic jumble that innovates a battle within itself" (p. 295).


44 Carter W. Martin, *The True Country*. *Themes in the Fic-
tion of Flannery O'Connor (Nashville, 1969), pp. 75-76.


46 As will be recalled, Mrs. May says, for instance, "I'll die when I get good and ready" (p. 34).

47 Gossett, p. 84.


50 Muller, p. 17.

51 O'Connor, Mystery and Manners, p. 72.


54 The title of the novel derives from Matt. 11:12.

55 Sullivan, p. 344.

56 Ibid.

57 Gossett, p. 91.

58 O'Connor, Mystery and Manners, p. 162.


60 Ibid.


62 Ibid., pp. 193-95.

63 Finger, p. 46.

64 Another story by Eudora Welty that also deals with dignity versus depravity is "Keela, the Outcast Indian Maiden"—A Curtain of Green and Other Stories (New York, 1970), pp. 74-88—which Robert Penn Warren has described as "a macabre comedy" in "The Love and Separateness in Miss Welty," Kenyon Review 6 (1944), p. 246. Briefly put, it describes the atrocious treatment of a Negro dwarf by the name of Little Lee Roy. Kidnapped and taken to a circus, he is forced to appear as the monster "Keela" and eat live chickens. From Robert Van Gelder's "An Interview with Eudora Welty," Writers and Writing, p. 289, we learn that the story is based upon an actual happening, being "too horrible to make up." Since the subject, however, strictly
speaking is more repulsive than macabre, it will be dealt with in connection with the discussion of that form of the grotesque (see p. 122).


66 Gossett, p. 108.


69 Nikolaus Happel, "William Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily,'" Die neueren Sprachen (1962), p. 398 (The comic arises from the behaviour of the town-dwellers, especially that of the ladies and the old people: what happens around Miss Emily induces the women to become completely spellbound. It reveals their character in its total limitation and rigidity and their obsession--my trans.).

70 Ibid., p. 400 (An instance of strong tension results from the appearance of the comic, for here it is connected with the tragic and the macabre. It is the smell, which one becomes aware of around Miss Emily's house and the origin of which remains secret to begin with--my trans.).


72 William Goyen, "The White Rooster," The Collected Stories of William Goyen (Garden City, New York, 1975), pp. 3-14. (Subsequent quotations are from this edition and page numbers are given in the text.)

73 Welty, "Asphodel," The Wide Net and Other Stories (New York, 1941), pp. 95-113. (Subsequent quotations are from this edition and page numbers are given in the text.)

74 This interpretation, which Robert Phillips suggests in his article "Samuels and Samson: Theme and Legend in 'The White Rooster,'" Studies in Short Fiction 6 (Spring 1969), p. 331, seems more feasible than that of Louise Gossett who sees the story as a clash between generations.

75 Phillips, p. 332.

76 Ibid., p. 333. This phrase, more than anything else, convinces Phillips that Goyen "consciously or subconsciously" had the story of Samson and Delilah (Judges 16:30) in mind when he wrote "The White Rooster."
CHAPTER FOUR

THE REPULSIVE- AND/OR FRIGHTENING-GROTESQUE

After the treatment of the macabre-grotesque, the forms of the grotesque that are predominantly frightening and repulsive will be considered. As will become evident, these qualities frequently overlap; that is, one finds in Southern fiction many grotesque characters and situations that are simultaneously both frightening and repellent.

Since it seems logical to start with the visible grotesque, some examples will first be given of physically deformed characters who arouse both fear and repulsion. As mentioned before, Southern literature also abounds in mentally disturbed characters whose effect upon the reader is similar to that of the physically afflicted. Here a differentiation will be made between those whose insanity breaks out gradually and those who are mentally deranged from birth. A physical combined with a mental handicap tends to produce a special grotesqueness as examples will show. Characters whose sexual behaviour deviates from what is commonly agreed to be normal might also seem grotesque to the average reader and will be treated separately, as will a few grotesques who fall outside the above categories.

The second part of the chapter will be devoted to grotesque characters who are solely frightening. In the third and final section, examples will be given of situations that arouse both repulsion and fear at the same time.

Repulsive/Frightening-Grotesque Characters

Repulsion/fear due to physical deformity

In his work The Ludicrous Demon Lee Byron Jennings writes:

The sight of a radically deformed person calls forth a peculiar kind of fear; it is not a rational fear inspired by the presence of a real danger, but something more profound and more primitive than the fear of wild beasts or strangers. It is the same fear that we experience in a nightmare upon imagining that we are being
pursued by a bogey or demon.

But the sight of a deformed person also arouses another feeling, almost as primitive, but more closely bound to conscious, reflective processes; namely, the feeling of amusement. This tendency is quite in contrast to our humane feelings toward the person and our sympathy for his handicap; but it is basic, and we can often sense its presence beneath, and prior to, more "civilized" attitudes. The comic urge involved here has little to do with wit, . . . it rather approaches the coarse laughter aroused by the vulgar, bestial, and cruel and the guilty pleasure with which morbid or obscene things may sometimes be regarded. An element of wonderment at the unheard-of may also enter the picture; but the outstanding feature is a feeling of sovereignty over the object; we regard it from a superior position and with an amused contempt at its ridiculousness.

Jennings is no doubt right in saying that a physically deformed person tends to arouse both fear and amusement in the beholder. Often, however, it seems that one experiences repulsion at the same time as fear when confronted with such a person, whether in real life or in literature.  

Aversion, coupled with fear, is thus presumably the reader's first reaction to the hunchback in Carson McCullers's story The Ballad of the Sad Café, who appears out of nowhere one day, claims kinship with Miss Amelia, turns her general store into a café, and becomes her beloved. In case there should be any doubt that Cousin Lymon, as he calls himself, is not "radically deformed," this is how the author describes him:

He was scarcely more than four feet tall and he wore a rugged, rusty coat that reached only to his knees. His crooked little legs seemed too thin to carry the weight of his great warped chest and the hump that sat on his shoulders. He had a very large head, with deep-set blue eyes and a sharp little mouth. (p. 11)

His behaviour—a factor which must also be taken into account—is no less grotesque than his appearance. In the beginning it is primarily comic-repulsive. He walks in a droll manner with a "stiff little strut," he has a funny way of examining people from the waist down and then shaking his head "as though in his opinion what he had seen did not amount to much," he imitates the facial expressions of people who take snuff, only his "snuff" consists of a sugar and cocoa mixture, and he curries favour with those he cares for by wiggling "his large pale ears" (pp. 24, 59). In his attempt to ingratiate himself with Miss Amelia's ex-husband, to whom he soon transfers his affection, he even executes a grotesque little dance.
He fluttered his eyelids, so that they were like pale, trapped moths in his sockets. He scraped his feet around on the ground, waved his hands about, and finally began doing a little trotlike dance. In the last gloomy light of the winter afternoon he resembled the child of a swamphaunt. (p. 60)

The above passage undoutedly proves Jennings's statement that the various "aspects of the grotesque situation are increased by the factor of motion." One's impression of the ludicrous in the situation is particularly enhanced by Cousin Lymon's strange dancing performance.

Although the hunchback thinks of all kinds of tricks to attract attention, they fail to have the desired effect on Marvin Macy. At times he therefore gives up; perching "himself on the banister of the front porch much as a sick bird huddles on a telephone wire," he openly displays his grief (p. 63). Like the metaphors in the description of the dance, this image, too, conjures up a vision of a ludicrous character. At the same time, it effects the substitution of pity for repulsion.

Cousin Lymon is not altogether harmless, however, for, as is revealed at an early stage, he excels in boasting and lying and is "a great mischief-maker" and "busybody" (pp. 48-49). Whatever pity one may have felt for the dwarf is driven out altogether with the introduction of another metaphor that suddenly transforms him into a frightening-repulsive character. As will be recalled, the mounting tension between Miss Amelia and her ex-husband, who has returned to avenge himself on her, finally results in a regular fight.

. . . the counter on which Cousin Lymon stood was at least twelve feet from the fighters in the centre of the café. Yet at the instant Miss Amelia grasped the throat of Marvin Macy the hunchback sprang forward and sailed through the air as though he had grown hawk wings. He landed on the broad back of Miss Amelia and clutched at her neck with clawed little fingers. (p. 80)

The outcome of Cousin Lymon's intrusion is that Miss Amelia loses the fight. The frightening dimension which the comparison to a ferocious bird imparts to the dwarf is then reinforced by all the monstrous things that he and Marvin Macy do to Miss Amelia; before leaving town, they wreck the café and the still, steal her favourite keepsakes and attempt to poison her. Here then is a case where a grotesque undergoes a radical change in his behaviour: from having been predominantly comic-repulsive,
the hunchback turns into a frightening-repulsive figure.

It probably seems incredible to most readers that a tall, good-looking and intelligent woman like Miss Amelia would fall in love with such a pitiful little creature as the hunchback. Yet, it is simply the idea which the author sought to convey in The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter taken here to an extreme. There are no rules in the game of love, she alleges; even the most grotesque character can become the object of somebody's attachment. It is a very optimistic message that at least partly contrasts with her usual emphasis on the spiritual isolation of the individual.

Another character whose physical appearance is such that it arouses fear, repulsion and amusement is found in William Goyen's "The Grasshopper's Burden." The title refers to a poor schoolboy by the name of George Kurunus whose face resembles that of a grasshopper and whose deformed body brings to mind "a wounded insect." (p. 68)

It was said that if he ever fell down he could never get up unless somebody helped him, but just lie there scrambling and waving his arms and legs, like a bug on its back, and muttering. His little withered left arm was folded like a plucked bird's wing and its bleached and shriveled hand, looking as though it had been too long in water, was bent over and it hung limp like a dead fowl's neck and dangling head. (pp. 68-69)

In addition to this malformation George walks by shuffling his feet along and sounds "like a little puffing train" (p. 69). Nor can he talk without stuttering.

Quella, who attends the same school as George and is going to be Royal Princess at the May Fete, feels repelled and afraid at the sight of George although she always laughs at him when in the company of others. One day when she enters the auditorium, which is being used for festival practice, there is George sitting on the King's Throne like a crazy king . . . . On his head was the silver crown and in his ruined hand the silver wand. He was into everything, . . . he was a disturbance in this world of school and in her own world. (p. 73)

Suddenly Quella imagines that the auditorium is on fire and runs out into the yard. When she looks back at the building, she fancies that she sees George, trapped at one of the windows with tears running down his cheeks, and for the first time her heart goes out to him. Then all the normal and nice-looking
children start marching into the building
that held him like an appetite or a desire that would
surely, one day, get them every one. (p. 74)

Probably it is this last quotation which has led Jay Paul
and Louise Gossett to draw the conclusion that George Kurunus
stands for or is connected with death. This does not seem to
tally with the wave of sympathy that overcomes Quella when she
imagines that George is in danger or her ardent wish to save him.
A more likely interpretation is offered by Robert Phillips who
sees George as the artist who

must crown himself in this world, must "create his own
glory, in the face of opposition and conformity. The
grasshopper's burden is that he must be considered a
plague rather than a useful part of life."^8

Thus the author uses the grotesque, as personified by
George Kurunus, to depict the isolation, the exposure and the
vulnerability of the artist, whose hopes centre on the future
when his accomplishments will defeat all his critics.

Cousin Lymon and George Kurunus are just two of the very
many physically deformed grotesques in Southern fiction who
arouse both fear and aversion in the reader. Quite a number of
them, however, seem to be predominantly comic in their gro-
tesqueness and have therefore been treated in the part of the
thesis that deals with such characters (see pp. 137-40). Others
play a minor role but nevertheless imbue the reader with repul-
sion/fear and a feeling of the ludicrous. This is, for instance,
the case with Sue Emma's children in Goyen's The House of Breath,
who are described as "little slobbering freaks with watermelon
heads," and, like the hairy child in Caldwell's The Bastard, ap-
parently illustrate the saying that the sins of the fathers are
visited upon the children (p. 118). Angela Lee, a minor charac-
ter mentioned in Capote's Other Voices, Other Rooms, who in her
old age suddenly starts growing a long yellow beard "strong as
wire," is another such grotesque (p. 70). She seems, however, to
have no function other than to make the story seem more bizarre
and sensational. Miss Wisteria, the little midget with the "kew-
pie-doll lips" and "rabbity teeth," who appears in the same
novel, is of more importance for the development of the action
but is, on the other hand, treated with so much sympathy that
the reader never conceives of her as particularly repulsive or
frightening (pp. 106-7).

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Repulsion/fear due to mental disorder

Another large group of grotesques in Southern literature consists of characters who are mentally deranged. As in the case of the physically deformed, such people induce feelings of fear and repulsion intermingled with amusement—those who have encountered a village idiot would undoubtedly bear this out. There is, however, one essential difference. Whereas the physically deformed do not constitute a real threat, as Jennings rightly points out (see p. 86), the mentally deranged can—and frequently do—appear frightening. When they become so menacing that we feel ill at ease, then, we can presumably no longer see anything amusing in their behaviour.

A look at the literary output of the South during the last fifty years reveals that the whole range of mental disturbances is represented from slight feeble-mindedness and neurotic behaviour to graver abnormal tendencies, lunacy and complete idiocy. In addition to the type of character who is afflicted from birth, some of which will be treated shortly, there are those who start out as sane and end up demented. Antonapoulos in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* is a good example of the latter.

Antonapoulos is one of Carson McCullers's most repulsive characters. Unlike many grotesques of his kind, he seems at first too harmless to be menacing—he simply appears to be a very loathsome figure with certain comical traits. As the story proceeds, however, he, too, displays a frightening side.

In contrast to Flannery O'Connor who, as we shall see, resorts extensively to depreciatory imagery to turn, for instance, Haze Motes into a repulsive character, Carson McCullers uses almost exclusively adjectives and verbal expressions with a pejorative meaning to portray Antonapoulos. As to the Greek's external appearance, he is described as being obese, with a round and oily face, fat or plump hands, plump little feet, a fat stomach and huge buttocks (italics mine). Even his pink tongue is fat. His facial expression is dreamy behind half-closed eyelids, his smile flaccid or gentle, stupid and he communicates with vague, fumbling signs. As opposed to his friend Singer, who is soberly and immaculately attired, the Greek dresses sloppily in shapeless clothes. By nature, Antonapoulos is lazy and childish; proud and pleased when everything goes his way, fretful, angry
or sulky when disappointed. Sometimes he is sly and joking.

Being indolent, the Greek shuns work; instead he loves to eat which he does slowly and with relish. After a meal he likes to lie back on his sofa and lick over each one of his teeth. He also loves to drink—which he frequently does to excess—and he can always be bribed, for instance, to play chess or at least to look on drowsily if given some liquor. Another of his pleasures is to sleep which he does in a large double bed (in contrast to Singer's narrow cot). In addition, he has "a certain solitary secret pleasure" at which one can only guess (p. 8).

Throughout the story, Antonapoulos is described as the direct opposite of Singer to illustrate the author's belief that "the most outlandish people can be the stimulus for love." Among all the adjectives and verbal expressions which are listed here to reveal Antonapoulos' character only the words 'gentle', 'joking', 'proud' and 'pleased' have a favourable association, the rest do not. Yet strangely enough, one does not get the feeling that the portrayal of Antonapoulos is a mere caricature. This is probably due to Carson McCullers's clever method of letting her readers also see the Greek through the eyes of his best friend. To Singer, Antonapoulos is attractive, wise and kind. The negative impression is thus somewhat modified; yet for most readers the lasting impression of Antonapoulos is probably that of a rather revolting figure.

One may then ask what the comic features are that together with his repulsiveness make Antonapoulos a grotesque character. Above all there is his childish nature that causes him to behave in a way that seems comical to a mature person. It reveals itself, for instance, in his refusal to play with the white chess pieces, his childish delight in having his picture taken every payday, his tendency to smuggle home with him little delicacies from his cousin's shop, the way he so openly shows whether he is pleased or displeased. After his illness all the barriers seem to break down. His tendency to steal turns into downright kleptomania, he shows still more openly his displeasure or disgust by pushing people, pointing at them and making obscene gestures; he even urinates in public. Such abnormal behaviour appalls us, but at the same time, because of its forbidden nature, it strikes us rather amusing. Even Antonapoulos'
physical appearance seems comical: for instance, the way he sits propped up in his bed in the asylum in his 'scarlet dressing-gown and green silk pyjamas,' under which "the great pulpy folds of his abdomen" can be seen, resembling a big fat Buddha who now and then nods graciously and bestows signs of benediction upon those who please him (pp. 193-94). Both physically and mentally, then, the Greek has all the characteristics of a true grotesque.

Antonapoulos is one example of a Southern fictional character who eventually loses his mind. Another of Carson McCullers's characters who goes mad--Alison Langdon--will be discussed in the part of the chapter dealing with repulsive/frightening-grotesque situations (see p. 125). Uncle Daniel in Eudora Welty's The Ponder Heart and others of his kind will be treated under the comic-grotesque (see pp.

Other characters, like Faulkner's Quentin and Styron's Peyton Loftis, also end up deranged and take their own lives, Quentin by drowning himself and Peyton by jumping naked out of a window of a New York building. The grotesqueness of Quentin has already been dealt with in the second chapter (see pp. 27-28). Since Peyton Loftis bears such a striking resemblance to him, both as regards background and family relationships and the inability to "cope with the apparent ugliness and desolation of love"--a matter which Carol Lindstrom Luedtke has elucidated in an article entitled "The Sound and the Fury and Lie Down in Darkness: Some Comparisons"--it seems unnecessary to discuss Peyton's grotesque characteristics as well. Instead it is probably more profitable to discuss the alleged grotesqueness of another Faulknerian character who goes insane, namely, Darl in As I Lay Dying.

As will be recalled, Darl's madness breaks out on the adventurous trip to Jefferson. Even before this happens, however, everyone is aware that he is different: he has a queer way of looking at you "like he had got into the inside of you, someway" (p. 96); he also seems endowed with a sixth sense: he knows, for instance, that Addie's favourite son, Jewel, is illegitimate and that Dewey Dell is pregnant. He also has a frightening way of bursting into wild laughter when it is most untimely. As might be expected of someone who is not in his right mind, Darl reveals certain grotesque features, including a comical way of
tantalizing Jewel of whom he is very jealous. Yet, he never
gives rise to that tension between amusement and, say, fear that
Thomson rightly regards as the natural reaction to the grotesque.
He seems too tragic to be laughed at. That Faulkner himself did
not see Darl as a real grotesque is substantiated by the fact
that he uses him as his mouthpiece to condemn man's ignorance
and insensitivity.

Less disputable than the grotesqueness of Darl is undoubt-
edly that of two other mentally disturbed characters created by
Faulkner: Mrs. Gant and her daughter in "Zilphia Gant."¹⁴ Since
the story has only recently been made available to the general
public, a brief summary of its contents seems justified.

When Mrs. Gant learns that her husband has abandoned her
for another woman, she resolutely avenges herself by shooting
them both. Somehow escaping detection, she then moves with her
daughter, Zilphia, to another town where for the next twenty-
three years she keeps the girl virtually imprisoned in the small
back room of her dressmaking shop. Both the mother's mad deter-
mination that no man shall ever touch her daughter and her mor-
bid suspicion that this might already have happened—which in
due time leads her to make regular physical examinations of the
girl—turn her into a frightening, ludicrous character. Matters
are brought to a crisis when Zilphia falls in love with and se-
cretly marries the first man who crosses her path: a painter who
is fixing up the house. When Mrs. Gant, who, has ironi-
cally taken on the looks of a "gaunt, manlike woman," becomes aware of
the situation, she immediately locks Zilphia into her room and
starts keeping watch day and night with a shotgun (p. 376). Fi-
nally the young man leaves the town without his bride. Shortly
afterwards Mrs. Gant dies.

Desperately trying to make up for lost time, Zilphia now
in, what Ferguson calls, "a most bizarre series of imaginings
and events" works herself "through a cycle that begins with con-
ception and culminates in motherhood" (p. 51). In a scene that
makes her appear both repulsive and comical, she imagines, for
instance, that she loses her virginity:

She would think about Christ, whispering "Mary did it
without a man. She did it;" or, rousing, furious, her
hands clenched at her sides, the covers flung back and
her opened thighs tossing, she would violate her ineradi-
cable virginity again and again with something evoked out of the darkness immemorial and philoprogenitive: "I will conceive! I'll make myself conceive!" (p. 379)

Then she learns that the painter has found a new wife and, from then on, all she can think of is their relationship and way of life.

Sometimes at night she would become one of the two of them, entering their bodies in turn and crucified anew by her ubiquity, participating in ecstasies the more racking for being vicarious and transcendent of the actual flesh. (p. 380)

Through a private detective she has hired, she is informed that the woman is pregnant; then that she has given birth to a daughter but has herself died. Shortly thereafter Zilphia is told that the husband has been killed in an accident. On hearing this Zilphia leaves the town, and when she returns three years later it is "in mourning, with a plain gold band and a child" (p. 381).

Ferguson claims that "no matter how grotesque her behaviour in achieving this end, . . . Zilphia retains her dignity simply by refusing to accept defeat," and places her among Faulkner's noble grotesques (p. 52). It can perhaps be debated whether Zilphia does not instead belong to the ignoble ones--those created for the sake of sensation.

Be that as it may, it is quite strange that Ferguson hardly mentions Mrs. Gant at all, considering her obvious mental and physical grotesqueness. What is even more remarkable, however, is that he seems to have missed the whole point of the story when he ends by speaking of Zilphia's fulfilment of her dream. For what Faulkner apparently wishes to stress is the ironic fact that history is about to repeat itself: not only does Zilphia carry on her mother's work--she even dresses like her--but by all indications she is going to bring up her child in the very same way she was once brought up herself. This naturally adds to her grotesqueness.

. . . she fixed a day nursery in the room behind the shop. The window was barred, so she need not worry about the child. "It's a nice pleasant room," she said. "Why, I grew up there, myself." (p. 381)

As Ferguson mentions, Zilphia has a great deal in common with Miss Emily, both nourishing "the same womanly, human desires for love, a husband and a family" (p. 50). One might add that in her erotic behaviour, Zilphia is also reminiscent of
In contrast to the characters discussed above, Popeye, the protagonist of Faulkner's *Sanctuary*, represents a group of mental grotesques who are afflicted from birth. In Popeye's case, his abnormal state of mind is the result of his father's syphilitic condition—a fact that is only revealed to the reader at the very end of the novel.

Popeye is probably Faulkner's most revolting character and also one of his most frightening. According to Professor Green, teacher, lawyer and literary critic, and, like Faulkner once was, a resident of Oxford, Mississippi, the portrait of Popeye is based upon the life of a real person, a Memphis gangster by the name of Neil Karens Pumphrey. This man, nicknamed "Popeye," committed so many crimes that he had almost as bad a reputation as Al Capone. The fictional Popeye is no less frightening: in addition to killing several people in cold blood, he rapes a university student and keeps her imprisoned for a long time in a brothel to prevent her from giving evidence against him in a murder case. The sadism with which he rapes her—being impotent he uses a corncob—underlines the frightening and repulsive sides of his character, at the same time as the incident endows him with an air of the ridiculous and strengthens one's impression of him as a grotesque. A flashback reveals him as a full-fledged sadist whilst he was still a child. At a party held in his honour, Popeye disappears. The search leads to the bathroom.

The bathroom was empty. The window was open. It gave onto a lower roof, from which a drain-pipe descended to the ground. But Popeye was gone. On the floor lay a wicker cage in which two lovebirds lived; beside it lay the birds themselves and the bloody scissors with which he had cut them up alive.

Three months later, at the instigation of a neighbor of his mother, Popeye was arrested and sent to a home for incorrigible children. He had cut up a half-grown kitten the same way. (p. 183)

Popeye's appalling conduct throughout the novel, for instance, the vicarious pleasure he takes in watching Temple Drake—the co-ed he has abducted—make love to the man he has supplied her with, adds further to one's aversion for him and one's impression of him as a grotesque. As such he frequently cuts a droll and sorry figure. Thus this little gangster, who is so
anxious to appear tough, is frightened almost out of his wits by a pouncing owl; on another occasion he shoots dead a harmless dog that just wanted to sniff at him. As one of his cronies says, he is even "skeered of his own shadow" (p. 12). He is also pathetic in his relationship with Temple Drake, both in his inability to court her properly, which leads to his trying to buy her affection with expensive gifts, and in his jealousy that finally drives him to have her lover disposed of.

Faulkner's description of Popeye's external appearance becomes a manifestation of his inner nature:

... a man of under size, his hands in his coat pockets, a cigarette slanted from his chin... His face had a queer, bloodless color, as though seen by electric light; against the sunny silence, in his slanted straw hat and his slightly akimbo arms, he had that vicious depthless quality of stamped tin. (p. 1)

Time and again the author endows his main character with inanimate or mechanical characteristics to indicate that he is incomplete as a human being:

Across the spring Popeye appeared to contemplate him with two knobs of soft black rubber. (p. 1) (This image is repeated on the two following pages.)

... he had no chin at all. His face just went away, like the face of a wax doll set too near a hot fire and forgotten. (p. 2)

Ahead of him Popeye walked, his tight suit and stiff hat all angles, like a modernistic lampshade. (p. 3)

Suddenly she felt herself lifted bodily aside, Popeye's small arms light and rigid as aluminum. (p. 139)

Another way Faulkner has of reducing Popeye as a human being and bringing out the non-human side of his nature is to liken him to an animal, usually a feline.

... with Popeye crouching against him, clawing at his pocket and hissing through his teeth like a cat. (p. 3)

... I could see his eyes, like a cat. (p. 95)

"So Popeye goes on upstairs on them cat feet of his..." (p. 123)

but also, for instance, to a horse:

... she saw him crouching beside the bed, his face wrung above his absent chin, his bluish lips protruding as though he were blowing upon hot soup, making a high whinnying sound like a horse. (p. 93)

The expressions "absent chin," "bluish lips" and the comparison
of Popeye to a neighing horse lead one to visualize a grotesque creature who is ludicrous, frightening and, above all, repulsive.

There is even a repugnant smell about Popeye.

He smells black, Benbow thought; he smells like that black stuff that ran out of Bovary's mouth and down upon her bridal veil when they raised her head. (p. 3)

Other features that contribute to the portrait of a grotesque are Popeye's "nasty little cold hands" that make Temple think of "alive ice," his cold, unpleasant voice and his coarse language that is entirely in keeping with his character (p. 128). "Make your whore lay off of me, Jack" is a typical Popeye remark (p. 29). He calls everyone "Jack," including his executor. His last words are, "Fix my hair, Jack" (p. 187).

The most striking thing about the description of Popeye, however, is the constant mention of his lighting or smoking a cigarette. Phrases like "the cigarette curling across his face" are repeated over and over again, sometimes twice on the same page (p. 5). This phenomenon, as well as the recurring description of his straw hat "cocked over one eye" make of Popeye a rather stereotyped character (p. 123). Whether this was intentional or not is hard to say, but in view of the fact that Faulkner was imitating a certain type of hardboiled fiction, it seems quite possible that it was.

Although Temple Drake is not mentally disturbed—just depraved—it seems appropriate to discuss her here in connection with Popeye. Like her seducer, Temple Drake is presented in a very stereotyped manner. She is portrayed as a "match-thin," child-like creature—the word "child" is repeated over and over in the descriptions of her (p. 41). When not powdering her nose, she is either cringing and moaning or staring in front of her with the glassy expression of a sleepwalker or a drug-addict. The author especially focuses his attention on her eyes which are described as "open but unseen," "calm and empty as two holes," etc. and on her immobile face which like Popeye's often resembles a mask (pp. 140, 40).

The face did not turn, the eyes did not wake; to the woman beside the road it was like a small, dead-colored mask drawn past her on a string and then away. (p. 60)

Like Popeye, Temple moves in a comical, mechanical or puppet-like fashion.
It [Temple's head] turned on to an excruciating degree, though no other muscle moved, like one of those papier-mâché Easter toys filled with candy, and became motionless in that reverted position. (p. 40)

When she acts at all, it is in an uninhibited, even vulgar, way.

When he touched her she sprang like a bow, hurling herself upon him, her mouth gaped and ugly like that of a dying fish as she writhed her loins against him. (p. 141)

The comparison to a gaping fish makes the girl seem both revolting and comical.

Like her kidnapper, then, Temple Drake emerges as a grotesque. Being partly a victim—partly it is her own provocative-ness that gets her into trouble—she is perhaps more pathetic and less ludicrous than he. Nor is she frightening, physically speaking. She is, however, frightening on another, psychological level as is shown by the fact that she indirectly, through her heartlessness, brings about the deaths of several men. In his portrayal of Popeye Faulkner uses the grotesque as a means to depict a villain; in his portrayal of Temple Drake—this "vain and vicious—hothouse rose of Southern womanhood," as Joseph Warren Beach has called her—the author resorts to the grotesque to show that aristocrats "are as capable of villainy as are villains." 16

Although Popeye—partly due to the stereotyped manner in which he has been portrayed—has not met with the same kind reception as many of Faulkner's other protagonists, he is far more interesting and engaging than some of the mental grotesques one comes across in Caldwell's works. The characters who most readily come to mind in this context are Graham in Miss Mamma Aimee and Shep Barlow in Trouble in July. 17

Graham, the demented son of Miss Aimee is a repulsive-looking young man with bloated cheeks and a fat stomach that reveals his fondness for good food and sweets. He is ill-mannered, quick-tempered and very dangerous when angry. At the age of twenty he rapes a six-year-old Negro girl in the most vicious manner. Ten years later, in a fit of jealousy, he shoots his mother and also attempts to kill the parson whom he finds in her bedroom. The gun misfires, however, and the clergyman escapes unharmed. To console himself Graham consumes a whole box of chocolates.

As should be evident from this account, Graham is both
repulsive and frightening. He is also ludicrous in his childish jealousy and in the infantile way in which he tries to compensate for failures by stuffing himself with sweets.

Whereas the grotesqueness of Graham seems to have been invented purely for the sake of entertainment, that of Shep Barlow can perhaps be seen as part of a social protest. Shep is the father of the "raped" girl in the novel who instigates the whole action against Sonny by her false accusation. Strange to say, Shep is even more frightening than Miss Aimee's son. For whereas Graham is driven to his atrocious crimes by certain comprehensible passions, Shep Barlow seems to kill people for no valid reason whatsoever; at least one can hardly reckon the breaking of his rake or the drawing of water from his well without permission as crimes that deserve such retribution. At the inquiry that eventually takes place--Shep Barlow is, by the way, the only white man in Caldwell's stories who is ever brought into court for killing a Negro--he is declared an imbecile.

Besides being extremely frightening, however, Shep Barlow gives proof of certain comical characteristics, for instance, in the macabre episode involving his wife in the well (see p. 53). For this reason and the general folly of his actions, Shep Barlow might be considered grotesque.

Repulsion/fear due to physical and mental deformity

As Louise Gossett points out, a grotesque character always represents a "distance from the norm." This is particularly true if the character is both physically and mentally afflicted. Such is the case with Joel's paralytic father, Edward Sansom in Capote's Other Voices, Other Rooms. He has a vocabulary of approximately one dozen words and is described as a man with a lolling head, a "grey skeleton face," and eyes which "like windows in summer" are "seldom shut, always open and staring, even in sleep" (pp. 95, 70). If the boy's feeling towards him is not altogether one of aversion, it is definitely not very far from it. His stomach feels upset after having fed his father his breakfast "mouthful by mouthful" (p. 94), and as Joel reads aloud to him, he thinks:

Certainly this Mr Sansom was not his father. This Mr Sansom was nobody but a pair of crazy eyes. (p. 95)

The comic element comes forth in passages such as the fol-
Finishing off the beautiful lady and lovely man, who were left honeymooning in Bermuda, Joel went on to a recipe for banana custard pie: it was all the same to Mr Sansom, romance or recipe, he gave each of them staring unequaled attention. (p. 94)

The grotesqueness of Edward Sansom plays a very important role in the novel. He is one of the many weird people Joel meets at Skully's Landing. However, whereas Joel gradually comes to accept and even like the majority of them, he can obviously never reconcile himself to the thought that Edward Sansom is his father, and that is why he turns to Randolph. If his father had been anything like the man Joel had pictured, the frightening aspects of the new world he encounters, including its strange inhabitants, would most likely have lost their significance.

Another character who stands out amongst the crowd, both mentally and physically, is Princis Lester in Goyen's story "Zamour, or a Tale of Inheritance." Princis leaves the secure world of Red River County and her two kind but oddly bearded sisters and elopes to Houston with a railroad man, taking with her only her cat, Zamour. City life makes no difference to Princis, however; she goes on living the same way as always and, to her husband's great sorrow, also persists in keeping her maiden status. Not being "a waiting man," he finally gives up and moves to a boarding-house (p. 189). In the meantime, Princis becomes more and more of a recluse, "a curio left behind by a diminishing race" (p. 183). After learning of her husband's death, she never leaves the house at all but stays indoors waiting for his pension.

It was so long, her waiting. . . . Every morning as soon as the click of the shut-off alarm sounded in Mr. Simpson's clock, she would rise in a nervous haste and rush to her waiting place and begin to wait. Sometimes she fell asleep in the chair, waiting, forgetting everything but the waiting, and wake in the morning still in the chair; and go on waiting there. The chair took her shape, as if it were her body. . . .

One afternoon of the long time a rain storm began, and a neighbor knocked on her door to try to tell her there would be a Gulf hurricane in that night. When Princis spied the neighbor through the curtains she did not break her connection with the chair but sat firmly clasped by it and would not answer nor listen, seeing that it was no one bringing the pension. But the neighbor knocked and knocked until Princis went to pull back the curtain and glare at the woman to say "Give me my
pension!" and Princis saw the woman draw back in some kind of astonishment and run away into the Neighborhood. "The Neighborhood is trying to keep the pension from us," Princis told Zamour. (pp. 194-95)

In the awful night that follows, a tornado tears Princis's roof away, the rain floods her house, causing Zamour to go wild, and Princis herself discovers in a cracked mirror that she, too, has grown a beard. All this proves too much for her; she becomes more distraught than ever and is eventually moved to the Home in Red River County. When the pension finally comes through, she neither needs it nor understands the meaning of it. Ironically, oil is later discovered on the land of the old homestead and her heir becomes a very wealthy man.

Although Princis is not a forbidding character, her physical and mental abnormality nevertheless turns her into a grotesque. As such she imbues the reader with at least a slight feeling of discomfort, which the author's compassionate portrayal cannot quite eradicate. It stems, on the one hand, from a certain repulsion evoked by her bearded face and, on the other hand, by her erratic behaviour. Coupled with this is that amusement one usually experiences when one finds oneself in a superior position. "There is no laughter without superior adaptation, genuine or feigned," Ludovici claims in The Secret of Laughter where he attempts to prove that our tendency to laugh or "show teeth" originates in a primitive, animalistic behaviour. 27

The story contains one noteworthy grotesque metaphor: "the chair took her shape, as if it were her body" (p. 194). This fusion of the animate with the inanimate constitutes the very earliest form of the grotesque, as mentioned in the introductory chapter (see p. 1).

Another example of a character who is both physically and mentally deformed is Benjy Compson in The Sound and the Fury. The reader first becomes acquainted with him through the inner monologue that Faulkner has so ingeniously devised for him as a means of communication, for Benjy is, not only an idiot but also a mute. This monologue constitutes the first part of the novel and leaves one with the impression of a very innocent, defenceless and pathetic character.

As Moffitt Cecil points out in his article "A Rhetoric for
Benjy," the physical confrontation with Benjy, so to say, constitutes something of a shock.\textsuperscript{22} It does not occur until in the fourth part of the novel, and this is how Faulkner describes him:

\ldots Luster entered, followed by a big man who appeared to have been shaped of some substance whose particles would not or did not cohere to one another or to the frame which supported it. His skin was dead-looking and hairless; dropsical too, he moved with a shambling gait like a trained bear. \ldots His eyes were clear, of the pale sweet blue of cornflowers, his thick mouth hung open, drooling a little.\textsuperscript{(p. 244)}

As can be seen, Benjy's appearance is very grotesque. The fact that the various parts of his body do not seem to fit together makes him look both frightening and ludicrous as does his bloated condition. The frightening aspect is further underlined by the statement that his skin is "dead-looking and hairless"; perhaps one also feels somewhat repelled. In any case, "his thick mouth" and his drooling make him a repulsive sight. There is also something comical about the way he drools and the way he walks—"like a trained bear."\textsuperscript{23} As Cecil says, "only the clear eyes 'of the pale sweet blue of cornflowers' give a hint of the hopelessly encumbered sensibility and the guideless conscience which languish within."\textsuperscript{24}

Nevertheless, the reader has already formed a mental picture of Benjy, and the grotesque physical picture that the author draws of him towards the end of the book does not alter that first impression of a very likeable and pitiable person. Nor does this seem to have been Faulkner's purpose to judge by the following statement in an interview: "The only emotion I can have for Benjy is grief and pity for all mankind."\textsuperscript{25} Although first conceived as a product of Southern degeneracy, Benjy, then, emerges not so much as a grotesque but as a symbol of human suffering.

Repulsion/fear due to a deviating sexual behaviour

In Southern fiction there is also a fairly large group of characters whose deviating sexual behaviour in combination with other qualities makes them grotesque. One of the best examples of such a case is Tarwater's seducer in Flannery O'Connor's \textit{Wise Blood}, the driver of the lavender and cream-coloured car. After inducing Tarwater to taste a drugged beverage that makes him swoon, the man takes advantage of the situation. When he drives
off, leaving the boy unconscious by the roadside, "his delicate skin and acquired a faint pink tint as if he had refreshed himself on blood" (p. 231). It is this vampire image, more than anything else, that makes the man appear so grotesque in that it adds a ludicrous touch to his frightening and repulsive behaviour. As to the function of the scene as a whole, the author explains, "It is the violation in the woods that brings home to Tarwater the real nature of his rejection. I couldn't have brought off the final vision without it." 26

Other suitable examples are Randolph in Other Voices, Other Rooms and Captain Penderton and Private Williams in Reflections In a Golden Eye. 27

Truman Capote's most repulsive character, Randolph, in Other Voices, Other Rooms is seldom frightening in the physical sense of the word. Only in the company of Amy does he sometimes appear fearsome to Joel, such as the time he slaps her across the mouth to keep her from revealing a secret or the time the boy sees the two of them standing together "fused like Siamese twins," resembling "a kind of freak animal, half-man half-woman" (p. 68). Instead, Randolph is frightening in another, more subtle way, namely, in his psychological undermining of Joel's resistance. His exposition in defence of homosexuality—which many critics have taken to be Capote's own credo—might serve as an example:

The brain may take advice, but not the heart, and love, having no geography, knows no boundaries: weight [sic] and sink it deep, no matter, it will rise and find the surface: and why not? any love is natural and beautiful that lies within a person's nature; only hypocrites would hold a man responsible for what he loves, emotional illiterates and those of righteous envy, who in their agitated concern, mistake so frequently the arrow pointing to heaven for the one that leads to hell. (p. 82)

Otherwise, Randolph is primarily repugnant—just how repugnant depends naturally on one's attitude towards homosexuality and transvestism.

As far as externals go, Randolph is, admittedly, not as unattractively portrayed as some of the other characters discussed so far. Here is a description of his features:

As he puckered his lips to blow a smoke ring, the pattern of his talcumed face was suddenly complete: it seemed composed now of nothing but circles: though not fat, it was round as a coin, smooth and hairless; two
discs of rough pink colored his cheeks, and his nose had a broken look, as if once punched by a strong angry fist; curly, very blond, his fine hair fell in childish yellow ringlets across his forehead, and his wide-set, womanly eyes were like sky-blue marbles. (p. 46)

To judge from this, Randolph is not bad-looking but his features are unmistakably feminine as evidenced by such words as "hairless," "yellow ringlets," "womanly eyes." This femininity, which he underlines by using talcum and rouge and dressing in a rather effeminate way--at times he even impersonates a certain white-haired lady--is not limited to his outward appearance; his entire behaviour reveals his womanishness as can be seen by the following remarks:

"Don't tell me!" cried Randolph, and giggled in the prim, suffocated manner of an old maid. (p. 45)

Randolph inched nearer to Joel on the loveseat. Over his pyjamas he wore a seersucker kimono with butterfly sleeves, and his plumpish feet were encased in a pair of tooled-leather sandals: his exposed toenails had a manicured gloss. Up close, he had a delicate lemon scent, and his hairless face looked not much older than Joel's. Staring straight ahead he groped for Joel's hand, and hooked their fingers together. (p. 50)

Like Antonapoulos, to whom he bears a strong resemblance, Randolph is also unbecomingly fat ("Randolph, clutching the bed-post, heaved to his feet: the kimono swung out, exposing pink substantial thighs" (p. 69).) Likewise he is indolent (such words as "languid(ly)" and "weary" are repeatedly used to describe him), and he, too, is fond of liquor and sometimes drinks to excess. Whereas Antonapoulos, however, is a relatively uncomplicated person of less than average intelligence, Randolph is "faceted as a fly's eye" (p. 117), a complex, depraved character with wit and artistic ability whose perverse nature not only reveals itself in his homosexuality, his transvestism and such odd interests as dolls and dead birds but also, as Finger points out, in the very way he expresses himself:

... when I die, if indeed I haven't already, then let me be dead drunk and curled, as in my mother's womb, in the warm blood of darkness. (pp. 77-78)

or

... with the garbage of loneliness stuffed down us until our guts burst bleeding green, we go screaming round the world, dying in our rented rooms, nightmare hotels, eternal homes of the transient heart. (p. 83)
Thus a number of inner and outer characteristics contribute to the grotesqueness of Randolph. Of these, particularly his effeminacy and deviating sexual behaviour make him stand out as a grotesque and hold him up to ridicule. The comic impression is reinforced by the incongruous in his situation—the fact that this man, familiar with the ways of the world, chooses to live in a god-forsaken, dilapidated place like Skully's Landing—as well as by his pathetic attempts to locate Pepé, the prize-fighter with whom he has been in love, by writing to him care of the postmaster in every conceivable town and village.

The grotesque as represented by Randolph has been interpreted in many different ways. Louise Gossett writes:

In treating the grotesqueness and violence of sexual deviation Capote joins other young Americans like Gore Vidal and Frederic Buechner who have experimented with this theme... The theme is symptomatic of the hatred of the self and the consequent urge to destroy which has accompanied the disruptions of the twentieth century. Because homosexuality engenders a violence which negates the values held by a healthy society, it has served to express a profound rejection of tradition and order.

Giving a more general view of Randolph, Ihab Hassan sees him as "the prototype of the evil magician" and, similarly, John Aldridge regards him as "a sort of power of universal evil to which the will-less individual is hypnotically compelled to give up his soul, as Joel is compelled to give up his manhood." Nona Balakian, on the other hand, feels that the grotesque, as personified, for instance, by Randolph, helps to emphasize Capote's message that love should be allowed in any form. Be that as it may, the whole story hinges on the perverse character of Randolph and his grotesque world from which Joel first tries to flee but then, after the trip to the Cloud Hotel, comes to realize has something to offer him after all. Whether Randolph becomes a mother substitute, as Marvin Mengeling states, or a father substitute—and lover—as Craig Goad and other critics assert, is probably not so important. The main thing, the author seems to be trying to say, is that one must try to establish one's identity—as Joel eventually does with the help of Randolph—and to find someone to love and be loved by. In this respect Capote reveals a certain affinity with Carson McCullers.

Whereas The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter in the present
author's estimation contains but one truly grotesque character, namely, Antonapoulos, Carson McCullers's Reflections in a Golden Eye seems to deal almost exclusively with people who fall into this category. Of these especially Captain Penderton and, to a lesser extent, Private Williams stand out as repulsive/frightening grotesques due very much to a sexual behaviour that diverges from the norm.

While Carson McCullers never reveals the exact nature of the relationship between Singer and Antonapoulos, she explicitly states that Captain Penderton has "a sad penchant for becoming enamoured of his wife's lovers" (p. 16). A possible clue as to why the Captain is homosexual is also given: he was brought up by "five old-maid aunts" (p. 91). (His sexual indifference to women explains in turn Leonora Penderton's need to turn to other men for love. "Four nights after her wedding," the author discloses, "she was still a virgin, and on the fifth night her status was changed only enough to leave her somewhat puzzled" (p. 23).) Private Williams, too, has been warped by his upbringing—in his case, in a household consisting only of men.

From his father, who ran a one mule farm and preached on Sunday at a Holiness church, he had learned that women carried in them a deadly and catching disease which made men blind, crippled, and doomed to hell. In the army he also heard much talk of this bad sickness... Private Williams had never willingly touched, or looked at, or spoken to a female since he was eight years old. (p. 26)

Once his eyes are opened to the beauty of Leonora Penderton, however, he changes insofar that he evidently derives a certain pleasure from observing her in secret, hence the nightly visits to her bedroom to watch her sleep. Ironically, Captain Penderton has no idea that Private Williams has such an innocent motive and, when he catches him, resolutely shoots the young man whom he takes to be a new lover.

The Captain is a weak, cowardly person; after killing the sergeant he collapses against the wall, looking like a "broken and dissipated monk" in his black dressing gown (p. 160). Yet he possesses certain frightening qualities: the incident in which he pushes a kitten through the slot of a mailbox reveals him to be a sadist, as does the episode involving the savage beating of Firebird. Just as he cannot cope with his wife, he cannot cope with her horse; the fact that he stakes his life on riding it
reveals a masochistic trait as well. He is also capable of a hatred that takes on frightening proportions. Strangely intermixed with love, it is directed against Private Williams whose animal radiation at once fascinates and repels the Captain.

As in the case of Randolph in Other Voices, Other Rooms, the Captain's outer appearance and conduct heighten the repulsion that his homosexuality may evoke in the average reader: his hands are white and fattish, his face is strained, and his eyes are "of a glassy blue" (p. 9). His behaviour is frequently described as "nervous" and "finicky" and his voice "high-pitched and arrogant" (pp. 9, 83). As his mental condition approaches a state of dissolution--his preoccupation with Private Williams even results in a blackout during a lecture--he undergoes a radical physical change. This transition is accelerated by his use of drugs and alcohol: his teeth go bad, he gets "bruise-like circles beneath his eyes," his complexion becomes yellow, and he develops a tic in his left eye that gives "his drawn face a strangely paralyzed expression" (p. 137). In other words, he turns into a ludicrous, pathetic character who seems incapable of controlling either his body or his mind. In a moment of lucidity the Captain himself becomes aware of his pitiful condition: he sees himself as presenting "a distorted doll-like image, mean of countenance and grotesque in form" (p. 144).

Although an incarnation of manly beauty and apparent virility, Private Williams, too, manifests himself as a grotesque. This impression is brought about by his asexuality, his peeping Tom tendencies, his abnormal relations with his barrack-room mates, and his strange habit of removing all his clothes and prancing around naked on his horse when alone in the woods. Particularly the latter practice makes him the subject of ridicule.

Another sign of the soldier's grotesque nature is that he has never "been known to laugh, to become angry, or to suffer in any way"--information which undoubtedly makes him seem inhuman (p. 7). Admittedly, the statement is partly contradicted by the author's revelation later on that Private Williams "in a fit of fury" once killed a Negro and concealed his body in a stone-pit (p. 116). This, however, makes him no less grotesque. The very fact that he murdered a man on account of such a trifling matter as a wheelbarrow of manure and then never felt any remorse what-
soever, taken together with the above-mentioned circumstances that he is, for instance, incapable of laughing, betray that, like Captain Penderton, Private Williams is not only grotesque in a repulsive but also in a frightening way.33

As several critics have pointed out, Carson McCullers evidently uses the grotesque in Reflections in a Golden Eye to show that certain characters are insufficient as human beings. Neither Captain Penderton, nor Private Williams—nor, for instance, Alison Langdon—are fitted to cope with reality in all its aspects. More or less aware of their own shortcomings, they withdraw into their "inside rooms" to nurse their inhibitions and egos—conduct which precludes the possibility of ever experiencing any real love.34 And without love, the author seems to say, one's life is incomplete and meaningless; like the Captain one feels "adrift, cut off from all human influence," "isolated from all other persons" (pp. 149-50).35

Repulsion/fear arising from other causes

There are also characters who appear grotesque without being physically or mentally deformed or revealing any deviating sexual tendencies. Flannery O'Connor's protagonist in Wise Blood might serve as an example of this category—provided that he is considered sane.

As mentioned in the second chapter (see pp. 26, 27), Haze is both frightening and repulsive. This impression is partly produced with the aid of diminution, that is to say,

... any kind of speech which tends, either by the force of low or vulgar imagery, or by other suggestion, to depress an object below its usually accepted status. Diminution may be accomplished in a variety of ways. A similarity may be drawn between an object and one which is universally acknowledged to be inferior; the comparison results, of course, in the primary object absorbing the contemptibility of the secondary object. Diminution may also be effected by dwelling upon certain physical characteristics of a person and then, by synecdoche, equating the whole object with that one part. Diminution may be expressed in innumerable other forms; it may appear as direct abuse, irony, litotes, and so on.36

Using animal imagery, the author equips Haze with "a nose like a shrike's bill" and a face that is "sour and frog-like" (pp. 10, 86); drawing comparisons with inanimate objects, she likens him to a puppet held, in one instance, "by a rope caught in the
middle of his back and attached to the train ceiling," in another, "as if by an invisible hand" (pp. 12, 84). All these images make him seem grotesque or, more precisely, non-human, ugly and ludicrous. To an even greater extent, however, this impression is created by the description of Haze's revolting "religious" fanaticism, his savage murder of his double, Solace Layfield, and his gruesome act of blinding himself with lime.

If one feels any pity for Haze at all, it is because one senses that his life has been staked out for him from the very beginning. (The bullet hole and puppet parables suggest this; the former foreshadowing his self-mutilation, the latter indicating God's constant grip on him.) Just as Tarwater could not rid himself of his great-uncle's teachings, Haze cannot escape the influence of his religious heritage even if he symbolically throws away the glasses his mother used for Bible reading and claims that there is no Christ. He is, as Lawson says, "in his creator's eyes, an exemplification of the deadly effect that Southern fundamentalism can have upon the soul, warping and terrorizing it so completely with its perversion of Christian doctrine that the soul in rebellion rejects entirely the idea of orthodox Christianity" (p. 254). To depict this influence also grotesque images are conjured up: Haze's preaching grandfather is described as "a waspish old man who had ridden over three counties with Jesus hidden in his head like a stinger," and when his mother passes away and is placed in her coffin, Haze has nightmares about her, seeing her "like a huge bat, dart from the closing, fly out of there." (pp. 20, 27).

All the people that Haze comes in contact with seem grotesque in one way or another. The steward in the restaurant car of the train moves "like a crow, darting from table to table," three female diners are "dressed like parrots," their hands are "red-speared at the tips," and one of these bird-women scrutinizes Haze with her small eyes and "bold game-hen expression" (pp. 15-16). Yet another co-passenger has "fox-colored hair" and "pear-shaped legs" that do not quite reach the floor (pp. 11, 9). According to Reichnitz, these strange apparitions are due to Haze's "faulty perception"--they become extensions of his own grotesque self--an interpretation of the grotesque that seems quite appropriate in this particular work where the theme is
sight opposed to blindness (p. iii).

If the people on the train appear strange, the ones Haze meets in Taulkinham seem even more so—perhaps a result of the author's conception of the city as a frightening and hostile place. There is, for instance, Mrs. Leonora Watts, the prostitute with "The friendliest bed in town!" whose address Haze finds scribbled on the wall of a men's lavatory (p. 30). She is a huge woman with green teeth and a grin "as curved and sharp as the blade of a sickle" (p. 60). At the most she is dressed in a pink nightgown. In revolt against his Puritan upbringing Haze spends several nights with her.

Before long, however, Haze is persuaded to take up housekeeping with the daughter of a "blind" preacher, Sabbath Lily Hawks, who promises to teach him to like being "filthy" like herself (p. 169). Sabbath seems even more repulsive than Mrs. Watts. She is an unattractive girl with "a long face," "a short sharp nose," eyes like "two chips of green bottle glass" and "the disposition of a yellow jacket" (pp. 39, 42, 215). She takes a comical delight in telling perverse stories and is also in other respects so morally depraved as to appear totally grotesque.

Other odd characters that Haze encounters are Sabbath's father, Asa Hawks, the former radio preacher Onnie Jay Holy and Haze's consumptive impersonator, Solace Layfield, who all have one thing in common: they are fakes trying to make a profit out of religion by appealing to the emotions of credulous people. Their insincerity and ungodliness are reflected in the grotesqueness of their outward appearances. Asa Hawks, for instance, is tall and cadaverous-looking with a scared face and "the expression of a grinning mandrill" (p. 39), and Onnie Jay is described as follows:

The man was plumpish, and he had curly blond hair that was cut with showy sideburns. He wore a black suit with a silver stripe in it and a wide-brimmed white hat pushed onto the back of his head, and he had on tight-fitting black pointed shoes and no socks. He looked like an ex-preacher turned cowboy, or an ex-cowboy turned mortician. He was not handsome but under his smile, there was an honest look fitted into his face like a set of false teeth. (pp. 147-48)

The "showy sideburns," the flashy suit, the cowboy hat on this man who probably never sat on a horse and, above all, the gro-
tesque image of the false teeth sum up perfectly the character of this sleek, materialistic hypocrite.

In addition to the characters already mentioned, the author endows many minor ones with animal features. A demented boy Haze sees when he is buying the Essex has a face "like a thin picked eagle's," a zoo attendant has the look of "a dried-up spider," a woman is seen carrying "a cat-faced baby," and another one has "bright flea eyes" (pp. 69, 97, 148, 55). All these images are grotesque—they shock or repel us at the same time as they amuse us by the very absurdity of the comparison. According to Lawson, they are meant to convince us "of the savagery and rapacity of all human behaviour in the world" that the author depicts (p. 271).

Like Flannery O'Connor in Wise Blood, Capote uses a great deal of grotesque imagery in Other Voices, Other Rooms, especially to draw quick, telling portraits of minor characters. In examining, for instance, the way Capote describes Amy, one finds that the author resorts both to animal imagery and mechanical or other imagery with a belittling effect to depict her as a repulsive-frightening grotesque. Thus Amy is portrayed as a small woman with "tooth-pick legs," a "starched face" with eyes "like two raisins" and mouse-coloured hair with a strand of grey resembling "a streak of lightning" (pp. 29, 68, 26, 31). Her voice, which normally has a tired, affected tone "like the deflating whoosh of a toy balloon," is once compared to that of "an old screech owl" (pp. 28, 31). Besides being likened to a mouse and an owl, Amy is also compared to a turtle on one of the occasions when she feels sorry for herself and cries ("Amy's neck dipped turtlewise into shoulders timidly contracting" (p. 102)). The overall impression of her is that she looks "like a kind of wax machine, a life-sized doll" (p. 68)—similes which call to mind Bergson's theory about the comical effect of the mechanical.

Other characters, too, are described as repulsive/frightening with the help of grotesque imagery. Miss Roberta, the owner of R. V. Lacey's Princely Place at Noon City, has long hairy "ape-like arms" and "a wart on her chin" sprouting "a single antenna-like hair," Jesus Fever, the handy-man at Skully's Landing, is a "gnomish little Negro who turns "with the staccabo move-
ments of a mechanical doll" (pp. 16, 19). Zoo, his daughter and the cook of the house, moves with the agility of a "supple black cat," she is "darker than the charred stove" and the length of her neck makes her resemble "a freak, a human giraffe" (p. 33). She has eyes "like wild foxgrapes, or two discs of black porcelain" and a scar resembling "a necklace of purple wire," the sight of which affects Joel so unpleasantly that he instinctively runs away from the house (pp. 34-35, 43). The grotesque in these characters is evidently used, as Finger suggests, "to trace the movement in the novel from the familiar to the unfamiliar" (p. 86). With the exception of Amy, who strikes Joel as unprepossessing and frightening from the very first morning when he wakes up at Skully's Landing and finds her in his room about to kill a blue-jay with a poker, and who continues to have this effect on him, these characters, however, no longer frighten and repel Joel as soon as he gets to know them. Thus it happens that a grotesque not only changes in character in the course of the story, as does Cousin Lymon, but also that he ceases to be grotesque altogether.

Carson McCullers, too, makes use of grotesque imagery but very sparingly in comparison with Flannery O'Connor and Capote. She employs it, for instance, to reveal the repulsive side of Miss Amelia's ex-husband, Marvin Macy. After having described his voice as "wet and slimy," she aptly follows the thought through by saying that the tunes he sang "glided slowly from his throat like eels" (p. 74). This simile probably suffices to convince the reader of the man's repulsiveness.

Otherwise, Marvin Macy is the personification of malevolence. Like Popeye, he reveals himself as a sadist while still a boy; he chops off the tails of squirrels "just to please his fancy" and, as a tangible proof of his evil nature, he carries with him "the dried and salted ear of a man he had killed in a razor fight" (p. 35). He does not hesitate to tempt despondent people with marijuana nor to take advantage of the many girls who fall for his exceedingly good looks by seducing them and then, when the disgrace is obvious, deserting them. Eventually he is convicted of robbery and murder and sent to prison from where he returns to avenge himself on Miss Amelia in the aforementioned manner (see p. 88).
Most critics, including Reichnitz and Finger, judge Marvin Macy to be a grotesque like the other participants in the triangular drama. Actually, he is almost exclusively repulsive and frightening, the only amusing thing about him being his childish attachment to the dried ear and the fact that, like a machine, he never sweats. This almost complete lack of contradictory qualities in his psychological make-up results in a response that is devoid of that tension on which Thomson insists. One can therefore question the classification of Marvin Macy as a true grotesque.

Frightening-Grotesque Characters

So far the discussion has centred around characters who for some reason or other can be considered repulsive/frightening grotesques. In addition, there are many characters in Southern fiction who do not primarily arouse repugnance in the readers but fear. Caldwell, for instance, has created quite a few types who are extremely frightening. Not all of these are grotesques, by any means, although the critics tend to view them as such. Upon close examination one finds that Negro haters like John in The Bastard, who kills a coloured man for eating on the job; Mrs. Calhoun in Trouble in July, who tries to make people sign a petition to ship all Negroes back to Africa; Oscar Dent in the same novel, who brags that he has killed more blacks than he can count but always in "self-defence"; Troy Pickett in Summertime Island, who has made it a sport to run down "niggers" in the streets and rape "li'l yaller gals"; Tom Denny, one of the main participants in the lynching described in "Saturday Afternoon," and the monstrous white landowners Arch Gunnard in "Kneel to the Rising Sun," Luther Bollick in "The People v. Abe Lathan, Colored" and Lee Crossman in "The End of Christy Tucker"--to mention the most memorable ones--hardly fit in with Thomson's definition of real grotesques. There is, in fact, very little that is comic about these characters apart from the irony with which they are all treated.

The same holds true for Nobby, the frightening good-for-nothing in This Very Earth who ends up killing his wife when she refuses to become a prostitute in order to finance his gambling and drinking. It also applies to Gene Morgan in The Bastard
who not only shares his friend John Hunter's feelings about "coons" and assists him in the murder of the Negro but has so many horrific crimes on his conscience that it can probably be claimed that he is Caldwell's most appalling creature.

The only character in the author's variegated portrait gallery who--without being physically or mentally deformed--is both frightening and ludicrous, and thereby qualifies as a real grotesque, seems to be Semon Dye in Journeyman. This itinerant preacher who picks out Clay Horay's house to stay in during his revivalist campaign in Rocky Comfort, is very reminiscent of Sinclair Lewis's Elmer Gantry. Like him, Semon Dye is an enormous hypocrite who threatens the villagers with all the torments of hell for their wicked living while at the same time committing every conceivable sin himself: in a crooked crap game he cheats his host out of a watch, his almost new automobile and even his young bride; he is also a vast consumer of home-brewed liquor, he encourages one woman to prostitute herself and share the profits with him and lures others to forget their wifely duties in order to be "saved" by him.

He is, to be sure, even more fearsome than Sinclair Lewis's famous preacher for he is not just frightening in a psychological sense--as evidenced, for instance, by his ability to bring his entire audience to a revolting religious-sexual ecstasy using mass hypnosis--but also physically. Thus he actually forces Clay Horay at gunpoint to stake his young bride in the crap game; on another occasion he even pulls the trigger and wounds a Negro worker who has come looking for his wife, for in addition to all his other vices, Semon Dye is a full-fledged racist. Like Elmer Gantry, however, he is comical in his immense self-righteousness and constant references to the Lord as some kind of personal friend or partner ("We want you in heaven. We need you there" (p. 146); "I ought to go to Florida. The Lord's been talking to me about going down there" (p. 73).) Like Lewis's protagonist, Semon Dye also possesses a certain mysterious charm. This is seen in his ability to induce both men and women to take an immediate liking to him, and admit--even when they have been thoroughly cheated by him--that they are sorry to see him leave.

Like Caldwell, Faulkner has created a number of physically
and/or psychologically frightening characters who have been labelled grotesque by critics and scholars. In the afore-mentioned dissertation entitled "Six Grotesques in Three Faulkner Novels" (see p. 46), Edward Clark, for instance, attempts to prove the grotesqueness of Quentin Compson and his brother Jason in The Sound and the Fury, of Joe Christmas, Joanna Burden and Gail Hightower in Light in August and of Colonel Sutpen in Absalom, Absalom! Basing his argumentation on the passage in Winesburg, Ohio already quoted (see p. 31), he also touches upon the grotesqueness of Percy Grimm, Doc Hines and Simon McEachern who appear in Light in August.

A close examination of these characters indicates, however, that with the exception of Quentin Compson, who has already been discussed in connection with Spiegel's theory (see pp. 27-28), and Gail Hightower, who will be treated in the chapter on the comic-grotesque (see p. 168), none of them seem to be sufficiently comic to be called a typical grotesque according to Thomson's norms. Possibly, Jason could qualify as a candidate. For besides being avaricious to the point of being frightening, in what Clark calls an "insatiable quest for the golden fleece"—he would undoubtedly not hesitate to put his own idiot brother on display if he could make it a lucrative affair—as well as being possessed by a morbid desire to torment others, Jason frequently appears in the light of a fool (p. 44). One might, for instance, recall his many comical and unsuccessful attempts to track down his niece, the ironic descriptions of his failures on the cotton market, his keeping up of appearances and, above all, the ludicrous situation that arises when he finds that he has been robbed of all the money that he himself has accumulated through underhand methods.

As to Joanna Burden, the spinster with whom Joe Christmas has a relationship lasting over three years, her grotesqueness seems even more debatable than Jason's, limited as it is to a certain period of time. As her name indicates, Joanna has put on a burden; like her father and grandfather she is devoting her life to the education and elevation of the Negro. The very fact that Christmas presumably has Negro blood in him makes him all the more attractive to the sexually starved woman. Before long, they are involved in a love affair that, to use Clark's descrip-
tion, becomes "an extended rage of grotesque lust" (p. 140). It is during this stage of their relationship that Joanna exhibits a combination of frightening, repulsive and ludicrous qualities that temporarily turns her into a true grotesque. She is comical in her inventiveness--like leaving a note in a hollow fence post ordering Christmas to climb in through a particular window if he wants to see her--and in her games of hide-and-seek:

... he would have to seek her about the dark house until he found her, hidden, in closets, in empty rooms, waiting, panting, her eyes in the dark glowing like the eyes of cats. (p. 195)

Her behaviour is, however, not only ludicrous but also frightening and repulsive:

Now and then she appointed trysts beneath certain shrubs about the grounds, where he would find her naked, or with her clothing half torn to ribbons upon her, in the wild throes of nymphomania, her body gleaming in the slow shifting from one to another of such formally erotic attitudes and gestures as a Beardsley of the time of Petronius might have drawn. She would be wild then, in the close, breathing halfdark without walls, with her wild hair, each strand of which would seem to come alive like octopus tentacles, and her wild hands and her breathing: 'Negro! Negro! Negro!' (p. 195)

Even later, when the greatest ecstasy has subsided, she evokes a droll and pathetic impression when the apparent tension is revealed between, on one hand, her sexual desire and, on the other, her moral misgivings and wish to be saved.

'Dont make me have to pray yet. Dear God, let me be damned a little longer, a little while... Not yet, dear God. Not yet, dear God.' (pp. 198-99)

She is also grotesque and pathetic in her feigned pregnancy and in the way she deteriorates physically, growing fat and grey-haired like Miss Emily.

Gradually, the lusts of the flesh ebb altogether, and a period follows during which Joanna with fanatical zeal tries to persuade Christmas to enroll in a school for coloured people and make it known to all that he is a Negro. When he refuses, she attempts to shoot him, only he kills her first. During this last phase of their relationship, Joanna is mainly frightening in her fanaticism. Thus a reservation must be made against Clark's statement that

Joanna Burden's attempts to live according to her truth, composed of distorted values translated into personal
obsessions, render her a full-fledged grotesque

(p. 146)

Clark's opinion that Joe Christmas himself is a real grotesque must also be challenged. Again Clark points to certain "truths" or factors which have supposedly brought about the grotesqueness of this character: "his hatred of women and the physical desires they represent, his racial dilemma, and his abhorrence of religion" (p. 117). One must agree with Clark that Christmas is very much a victim of society and that his horrifying behaviour is basically the result of an unfortunate upbringing and other deplorable circumstances. Only occasionally, however, does an act of violence on his part combine with the comic to become grotesque in the sense used by the present author. This is, for instance, the case when Christmas invades a Negro church and spreads fear and terror among the worshippers through the whiteness of his skin and his antireligious conduct. Otherwise, Christmas is predominantly frightening, tragic and pitiful.

Although, as stated before, a fanatical person always seems somewhat ludicrous in the eyes of those who do not share his views, Christmas's foster father, Simon McEachern, does not either prove to be sufficiently comic to be called a grotesque. In his dogmatic belief in Scotch Presbyterianism as the one and only saving faith and in the justice of the cruelty with which he treats his foster son for rebelling against his religious ideas, he emerges mainly as an exceedingly frightening character. Clark's assertion that Simon McEachern's "undeviating and legalistic adherence to . . . his truths, renders him a grotesque," must therefore be refuted (p. 101).

The same thing applies to the two frightening characters who are instrumental in bringing about Christmas's death, his grandfather Doc Hines and the young soldier Percy Grimm. Both are racists and believe in the supremacy of the white race. It is in this capacity that Doc Hines once took it upon himself to punish his daughter for her moral slip by shooting her dark-skinned seducer while letting the girl herself die in childbirth and then rejecting her son--"the teeth and fangs of evil"--by placing him in an orphanage (p. 290). When Doc Hines some thirty years later learns that Christmas has been captured for the mur-
der of a white woman, he considers it his holy duty to gather a lynching mob and rid the earth of the "pollution" and the "abomination" that his grandson constitutes (p. 290). Christmas escapes, however, but is soon traced to Hightower's house where he is shot and castrated by Percy Grimm in the macabre scene described above (see p. 59). Whereas the act is undoubtedly grotesque, Clark's statement that Grimm himself becomes a grotesque when his "sadism and his belief in his racial superiority supersede his concept of law and order," does not constitute a satisfactory explanation (p. 132). In contrast to Clark, Ferguson brings out the comic element that is such an essential part of the grotesque according to Thomson, saying: Grimm's "movement is mechanical, emptied of any human impetus" (p. 138), and refers to Faulkner's own comparison of Grimm to a chessman who moves with "swift, blind obedience to whatever Player moved him on the Board" (p. 347). Grimm is indeed like a marionette in his humourless efficiency. The question is if the comical aspect—which simultaneously reinforces the sinister impression—suffices to turn him into a grotesque by Thomson's standard. Probably not.

As to Grimm's kindred spirit Doc Hines, he is if possible even more fanatical and frightening, possessed as he also is by an almost inconceivable religious fervour. It is only in his ludicrous, imaginary discussion with his God—who strangely enough also hates Negroes—that he stands out as a true grotesque. Like Joanna Burden, then, he might also be said to be partially grotesque.

Thomas Sutpen, whom John Bradbury sees as the representative of "a whole generation of prewar upstart challengers to the settled old Southern families, the pre-Snopes," likewise falls short of becoming a real grotesque. He lacks that comical characteristic that together with the fanaticism that he displays in trying to realize his great dream—a large plantation, a stately home, slaves, a representative wife and a male heir—would have rendered him grotesque. The only ludicrous thing about him is the naïveté with which he thinks he can cast off wives, disown children and treat others with impunity in the most abominable way. Clark's assertion that "he emerges a grotesque," must also therefore be questioned (p. 178).
One fearful Faulknerian character, however, whose grotesqueness has never been disputed, is Ab Snopes, the progenitor of the Snopeses, who, once they have got a hold, spread like vermin in Yoknapatawpha County. Ab makes his first major appearance in a story called "Barn Burning" and there he already stands out as an incarnation of the Evil One. To overcome his fear of Ab, and all that he stands for, Faulkner resorts to meiosis or diminution, that is, the device of belittling an object or person by means of words (see p. 109). As a sort of defence mechanism, the author thus endows Ab with clawlike hands and a "stiff and implacable limp" (p. 10). There is also something sinister about the rest of Ab's figure. Clothed in a black frockcoat with "iron folds," it gives the impression of having been "cut ruthlessly from tin, depthless, as though, sidewise to the sun, it would cast no shadow" (pp. 8, 10)—a description which brings to mind "the old superstition about the Devil's illusory materiality." Both Ab's unconcerned trampling through the horse droppings, resulting in the ugly smears on Major de Spain's rug and the "water-cloudy scoriations" remaining after the enforced washing of it, can be linked to Satan (p. 14); as William Stein points out, Luther frequently speaks of "the fecal tastes of the Devil," and the spots can be said to symbolize "the fires of hell." However, the most important proof of Ab's affiliation with the powers of darkness is his strange fascination with fire, an element which "spoke to some deep mainspring of his . . . being" (p. 7). Furthermore, his pyromaniac "exercises" always spring from some slight abuse, to which he reacts with rapacious fierceness in "his ferocious conviction in the rightness of his own actions" (p. 7). This violence, coupled with the cruelty he displays towards his family makes him diabolical.

That Ab is of the Devil's party therefore seems quite obvious, but what is there that is comical about him, that warrants his being called a grotesque? The explanation lies apparently in the absurdity of his behaviour and in the forbidden nature of his actions: somehow, one takes a vicarious pleasure in the daring way in which he takes justice into his own hands, whilst at the same time the compulsiveness that drives him gives him an air of ludicrousness.

Eudora Welty, too, has created a very frightening charac-
The protagonist in "Where is the Voice Coming From?" is all the more frightening because the concept grew out of an actual event—the murder of Medgar Evers. The author herself states:

When the murder was committed, it suddenly crossed my consciousness that I knew what was in that man's mind because I'd lived all my life where it happened. It was the strangest feeling of horror and compulsion all in one. I tried to write from the interior of my own South and that's why I dared to put it in the first person.

What makes the narrator of the story such a grotesque figure is the joking, unconcerned tone in which he describes how he succeeded in shooting Roland Summers, a coloured man active in the Civil Rights movement.

I ain't ask no Governor Barnett to give me one thing. Unless he wants to give me a pat on the back for the trouble I took this morning. But he don't have to if he don't want to. I done what I done for my own pure D-satisfaction. (p. 24)

It was mighty green where I skint over the yard getting back. That nigge r wife of his, she wanted nice grass! I bet my wife would hate to pay her water bill. . . . And there's my brother-in-law's truck, still waiting with the door open. "No Riders"--that didn't mean me.

There wasn't a thing I been able to think of since would have made it to go any nicer. Except a chair to my back while I was putting in my waiting. (ibid.)

To this comes the frightening fact that the murderer did not even know his victim, having only seen his picture. The contempt and hatred permeating the whole account heighten the impact:

I says, 'Roland? . . . Now I'm alive and you ain't. We ain't never know, never going to be equals and you know why? One of us is dead. What about that, Roland?' I said. (ibid.)

It's a hatred so strong that the white man willingly risks the electric chair, " . . . and what that amounts to", he nonchalantly thinks to himself, "is something hotter than yesterday and today put together" (p. 25). Coupled with this man's hatred, however, is an urgent need to assert himself in a society where he has evidently felt rejected, but where he now after "proving his worth" moves with more self-confidence:

. . . I advise 'em to go careful. Ain't it about time us taxpayers starts to calling the moves? Starts to telling the teachers and the preachers and the judges
of our so-called courts how far they can go? (ibid.)

In this story, then, as in several others, Eudora Welty "exposes some of the dangers latent in the Southern emphasis on individualism." 51

As to the question "Where Is the Voice Coming From?" the author's emphasis on the heat in the murderer's environment, and the last words of the story seem to indicate that the voice is coming from some infernal region far removed from our world. Yet Miss Welty emphasizes the specificities of her setting and her plot closely parallels an actual murder . . . , to make clear that the hell she is portraying is one that exists in America now, frequently, but not exclusively, in the South. 52

So far, grotesque characters have been discussed who are either repulsive/frightening or merely frightening. In conclusion, attention might be drawn to some situations in Southern fiction that arouse repulsion and fear at the same time as they are comical enough to be referred to as grotesque.

**Repulsive/Frightening-Grotesque Situations**

Under the heading "Repulsion/fear due to physical deformity" attention was focused on the dwarf in The Ballad of the Sad Café. In Eudora Welty's short story "Keela, the Outcast Indian Maiden"--which as mentioned in the third chapter is based on an actual incident--the reader meets with an entirely different kind of dwarf although he, too, evokes repulsion and horror (see p. 84). It is, however, not so much the Negro himself, whose name is Little Lee Roy, who arouses these feelings as his act in the carnival where, dressed like an Indian maiden, he is forced to eat live chickens.

"They'd throw it this chicken, and it would reach out an' grab it. Would sort of rub over the chicken's neck with its thumb an' press on it good, an' then it would bite its head off. . . .

It skint back the feathers and stuff from the neck and sucked the blood. But ever'body said it was still alive. . . .

Then it would pull the feathers out easy and neat-like, awful fast, an' growl the whole time, kind of moan, an' then it would commence to eat all the white meat.

. . . When it come to the chicken's heart, it would eat that too, real fast, and the heart would still be jumpin'." (pp. 77-78)

In addition to the repugnance and horror that this scene
creates, there is something rather comical about it. It stems partly from the incredibility of the act of eating live chickens and partly from the faked atmosphere created by the false Indian girl, who in carrying out her orders does everything to convince the spectators of her wild nature by shaking the bars of the cage in which she is kept and growling like a beast.

The man putting on this grotesque performance is, of course, also grotesque—a physical and mental cripple—but one treated with a great deal of sympathy and pity. Although a person, such as Little Lee Roy—the author apparently tries to say—is not only doomed to look like a grotesque but is also forced to behave like one, he can still have inner qualities that make him superior as a human being to many so-called normal people. Eudora Welty has created another memorable scene that might be termed repulsive/frightening-grotesque. It is the one in "Moon Lake" where Easter's unconscious body has been brought out of the water and attempts are made by Loch to revive her. The body itself seems, as Reichnitz points out, "a grotesque fusion of animal and vegetable elements" (p. 223).

She was arm to arm and leg to leg in a long fold, wrong-colored and pressed together as unopen leaves are. Her breasts, too, faced together. Out of the water, Easter's hair was darkened, and lay over her face in long fern shapes. . . . Her side fell slack as a dead rabbit's in the woods, with the flowers of her orphan dress all running together in some antic of their own. (p. 128)

The dramatic and gruesome scene is given a comical touch when Miss Lizzie, the girls' respectable supervisor, orders Loch to stop when his attempts to bring Easter back to life through artificial respiration appear too intimate to her. Loch, however, continues his efforts; gradually the onlookers become bored and their imagination starts wandering. What if something extraordinary happened? Easter's "secret voice, if soundless then possibly visible, might work out of her terrible mouth like a vine, preening and sprung with flowers. Or a snake would come out." (p. 133). Again the author mixes animal and vegetable imagery in a way that calls to mind the dictionary definition of the grotesque in art cited earlier: "decorative painting or sculpture with fantastic interweaving or human and animal forms with foliage" (see p. 1). This time the effect of the grotesque is, as
Reichnitz suggests, one of mild satire and "expresses the girls' desire to escape the painful reality of the moment" (p. 224). Easter finally regains consciousness, and the scene again takes on a ludicrous aspect as Mrs. Gruenwald in a cheerful girl scout manner starts singing, "'Pa-a-ack-up your troubles in your old kit bag / And smile, smile, smile!'" (p. 136)

The post-office episode in Eudora Welty's story "Asphodel" can also be mentioned in this particular discussion of grotesque situations. When Miss Sabina, the former Southern belle, who has lost her beauty, her three children and her husband to another woman, enters the little post-office and demands, "'Give me my letter,'" she is told as usual that there is no post for her. This time, however, she will not accept the fact that there is no one who cares enough for her to write to her. She therefore turns to each one of the three women, who later recall the incident, and who all stand there with letters in their hands, and demands, "'Give me that!'" Contemptuously adding, "'Your lovers!'" she tears the letters apart. Then she forces an entrance into the inner part of the post-office where she commences to wreck everything in sight.

"She dragged the sacks about, and the wastebaskets, and the contents she scattered like snow. Even the ink pad she flung against the wall, and it left a purple mark like a grape stain that will never wear off."

"She was possessed then, before our eyes, as she could never have been possessed. She raged. She rocked from side, to side, she danced. Miss Sabina's arms moved like a harvester's in the field, to destroy all that was in the little room. In her frenzy she tore all the letters to pieces, and even put bits in her mouth and appeared to eat them."

"Then she stood still in the little room. She had finished. We had not yet moved when she lay toppled on the floor, her wig fallen from her head and her face awry like a mask."

"'A stroke!' That is what we said, because we did not know how to put a name to the end of her life." (p. 108)

This scene bears all the hallmarks of the genuinely grotesque. There is Miss Sabina herself striking the spectators with awe and terror through her mad behaviour which culminates in her repulsive/frightening, yet ludicrous attempt to eat up bits of the torn letters. Her grotesque dancing and rocking movements increase both the comedy and the horror of the situation, as Jennings has theorized. Then there is also the use of gro-
tesque imagery: the comparison of Miss Sabina to a harvester, whose arms move with mechanical precision, and the likening of her face to a distorted mask.

As to the function of the grotesque, Eudora Welty here seems to use it in the same way as it is so often employed by Carson McCullers: to point out the occasionally disastrous effects of a loveless life spent in spiritual isolation.

Carson McCullers, too, has described a singular incident that fits in here. It is the scene in Reflections in a Golden Eye where Alison Langdon in a moment of despair attempts to kill herself with the garden shears but, finding them too dull, confines herself to cutting off her nipples.

They found Mrs. Langdon unconscious and she had cut off the tender nipples of her breasts with the garden shears. (p. 40)

What makes this episode so grotesque, not only repulsive/frightening but also ludicrous, is the unheard-of in the situation and the choice of "weapon," or, to quote Reichnitz, "the combination of the horribly brutal act and the garden shears, a tool which summons up visions of perhaps an eighteenth-century morning dress of pastel color, a sun bonnet, a flower basket" (p. 137).

What contributes even more, however, to the grotesque impression is the very structure of the quoted sentence "... and she had cut ... ." As Reichnitz points out,

it comes without warning, without any emphasis whatsoever. The equanimity of tone, gained in part by the use of the simplest of conjunctions, is maddening. The mutilation is given all the lack of weight of an afterthought. The implication is that in the world here being exhibited, such horror is commonplace. (p. 138)

The frighteningly impassive voice of the narrator, Reichnitz explains, reveals above all the attitude that life is completely meaningless. To his mind, this view is in turn slightly modified by the word "tender" which--whilst increasing the feeling of horror--also suggests "the possibility of meaning and resolution" (ibid.).

The above observations seem both correct and interesting, particularly Reichnitz's viewpoint that even an author's sentence structure can bring about a grotesque effect.

Finally a scene might be mentioned, the real purport of which has undoubtedly repelled many a reader and critic.
is the one in *The Hamlet* where Faulkner describes how the feeble-minded Ike Snopes commits sodomy with Jack Houston's cow—the only creature he is ever given the opportunity to love.57

The incident, which is described in a "rhetoric that would be appropriate for one of the great lovers of the legend" such as "Zeus for Io," does not lack comical touches.58 Thus, in his devotion to the cow Ike drinks out of the same water-hole as she and eats the same food and, like any male with seduction in mind, he gently tries to persuade her that "this violent violation of her maiden's delicacy is no shame, since such is the very iron imperishable warp of the fabric of love" (p. 174). Also, unknown to Ike, the businessminded Lump Snopes has seized the opportunity to make money by selling tickets to a number of fellow bumpkins, who in fascination watch the performance through a hole in the barn wall. However, as Jacobs puts it,

the cow loses her dimension as Io when Jack Houston, her owner, catches the idiot in flagrante delicto and shouts at her, "Git on home, you damn whore."59

Here then is a delightful mixture of bawdy humour, satire, irony and pathos.

The mock-heroic style used by Faulkner in this episode has been severely criticized, for instance by Beach, who sarcastically remarks that the author

was tempted to put on his silver-shoe buckles and embroidered waistcoat to follow the idiot and the cow through the woods and pastures and back to the dung-hill and the stall.60

The present author is, however, inclined to agree with Ruel Foster and Harry Campbell that by using highly embellished language Faulkner succeeded in creating an ironical distance to the subject matter, an irony "intended in part to express pity for the idiot."61 After quoting the closing passage of the scene, Nancy Norris similarly observes:

The tone is so peaceful that Faulkner's use of an idiot to perform the act may have been a way of absolving Ike from responsibility for what, were he "normal" would have been "forbidden."62

Although the very act, then, remains grotesque, Ike himself as Spiegel puts it, "transcends his grotesquery" (p. 429). Like Benjy, whom he resembles with his moaning, his drooling and his clumsiness, he is treated with so much pity and empathy that one eventually ceases to think of him as a grotesque.
The situations discussed so far in this chapter have been isolated examples of the grotesque. In Capote's "A Tree of Night" the entire story might be said to be grotesque. Here the repulsive and the frightening are intermingled with a third possible aspect, the eerie. As will be recalled, a college girl by the name of Kay is on her way home from an uncle's funeral. On the train she is forced to share a compartment with a strange couple: an odd-looking deaf-mute, who earns a mere pittance by letting himself be buried alive in enactments of the story of Lazarus, and his intoxicated, overpowering wife, who assists him at the shows and resembles a freak with her small body and huge head, heavy make-up and dyed, red "corkscrew curls" (p. 208). When the woman leaves the compartment for a moment, the man suddenly reaches out and touches Kay's cheek which causes her to react with pity but, above all, disgust. His obscene gestures when he later starts fondling a love charm he is trying to sell her also arouse repulsion in Kay, whereas his wife mainly fills her with fear. Thus, when the woman insists that Kay taste her cheap gin and remain where she is, Kay's fear compels her to obey.

An eerie tone pervades the entire story and reminds one of Kayser's statement: "Das Groteske ist die entfremdete Welt" (see p. 6). The ending is particularly nightmarish:

As Kay watched, the man's face seemed to change form and recede before her like a moon-shaped rock sliding downward under a surface of water. A warm laziness relaxed her. She was dimly conscious of it when the woman took away her purse, and when she gently pulled the raincoat like a shroud above her head. (p. 216)

The critics seem to agree that Kay's confrontation with the two grotesques serves to reveal to her parts of her subconscious; the mute, for instance, reminds Kay of her childhood fear of tales of the wizard. She also becomes aware of how void of love her life has been. As to the significance of the story, opinions differ. The present author is inclined to agree with Aldridge when he states:

... the devices are used to give shock value to material which is without inherent dramatic or symbolic value. We know nothing about the girl beyond the fact that she becomes the victim of some hallucinatory intrigue; and we know nothing about the perpetrators of the intrigue beyond the fact that they are grotesque. But to have the sort of visceral reaction to the story
which we are compelled to have if we are to have any reaction at all, these two facts are all we need to know. The girl's plight becomes a substitute for a fully motivated, truly meaningful experience; and the grotesqueness of the couple becomes a substitute for an incisive portrayal of a truly meaningful criminality.

As can be inferred from what Aldridge writes, the grotesque in "A Tree of Night" is primarily used to create spine-chilling effects and provide momentary escape.
NOTES TO CHAPTER IV


2In contrast to Philip Thomson, who in The Grotesque repeatedly speaks of the repellent as a possible part of the grotesque, Jennings asserts that the grotesque is made up solely of a "combination of fearsome and ludicrous qualities," p. 10.

3Jennings, p. 19.

4Jennings considers dancing a characteristic activity of the grotesque object since it is "most calculated to call forth fear alongside amusement" (ibid.). Perhaps an even better example of this phenomenon is the "monkeyshine dance" that a demented young Negro, Blue Boy, (in Caldwell's story by the same name) is forced to perform for the amusement of his white master and his guests. It also fits in perfectly with Jennings's description: "The kind of dance that produces this effect is, of course, one devoid of all grace and beauty (for beauty, harmony, and pleasing proportion are, in general, alien to the grotesque). It is rather characterized by awkward, hopping, mechanical movement and strange contortions" (p. 20).

5McCullers, The Ballad, p. 33.


10The italicized words and phrases are quoted from pp. 7-11, 194.

11McCullers, The Ballad, p. 33.

12Peyton Loftis is one of the main characters in William Styron's Lie Down in Darkness (Indianapolis, 1951).

13Carol Lindstrom Luedtke, "The Sound and the Fury and Lie
Down in Darkness: Some Comparisons," Literatur in Wissenschaft und Unterricht 4 (1971), p. 46. The article also shows how other "members of . . . the Compson and the Loftis families deviate from the normal in similar directions." Like Benjy, "Maudie Loftis . . . is physically and mentally retarded. . . . Both Caroline Compson and Helen Loftis are incurable hypocondriacs. . . . both are cruel and self-righteous women, . . . . characterized by their inability to love and by their lack of self-sacrifice." Both Jason Compson and Milton Loftis, their husbands, have allowed themselves to be dominated by their tyrannical wives resulting in the disintegration of the family unit and the ultimate degeneracy of the family itself (pp. 45-49).

14 William Faulkner, "Miss Zilphia Gant," Uncollected Stories of William Faulkner, ed. Joseph Blotner (New York, 1979), pp. 368-81. (Subsequent quotations are from this edition and page numbers are given in the text.)


16 Joseph W. Beach, American Fiction 1920-40 (New York, 1960), p. 131; Gossett, p. 35, This statement also applies to Temple's escort Gowan Stevens. He, too, has some grotesque characteristics but since the only ludicrous thing about him is his belief that the distinguishing quality of a gentleman is his ability to hold his liquor, he does not seem to qualify as a true grotesque. In "Faulkner's Humor," Comic Imagination, p. 313, Jacobs expresses a similar opinion when he states: "Thus the comedy of Sanctuary serves a satiric purpose in Faulkner's indictment of contemporary life.

D.J. in Truman Capote's story "The Headless Hawk," The Grass Harp, pp. 175-95, bears a certain resemblance to Temple Drake, for instance, in her tendency to walk around "trance-eyed, undisturbed as a sleepwalker" (p. 177). Her whole expression is, in fact, "dazed" and "anxious"; she talks in a trance and she seems "only now and then aware of the present" (p. 188). The reason for this strange behaviour is her fear of a certain Mr. De stronelli, a monstrous character, who--it turns out--is but a figment of her imagination, yet very real to her. It is the fear, Finger asserts, that turns her into a psychological grotesque. Finger does not mention any comical attributes but D. J.'s mechanical reflexes and her absentmindedness should, according to Bergson, give her an air of the ridiculous and thus satisfy even Thomson's demand for conflicting elements. Yet, strangely enough, D. J. does not give rise to any real tension, probably because she is not very convincing as a character.

17 Erskine Caldwell, Miss Mamma Aimee (New York, 1967); A somewhat poorer example of the same type of literary grotesque is Maureen in The Last Night of Summer (London, 1963) who in a fit of jealousy almost kills her husband with a bottle at the same time as she assures him that she loves him.

18 Gossett, p. 134.

19 According to Peter Hays, The Limping Hero: Grotesques in Literature (New York, 1971), pp. 88-89, "Edward Sansom's physical paralysis symbolizes the state of all in Skully's Landing:
the wasted lives of Zoo and Jesus Fever; of homosexual, transvestite Randolph; of Randolph's sister Amy, who marries and spends her life caring for Sansom, the man her brother shot."


23. Other repulsive and/or frightening features about Benjy are his moaning and bellowing and his uncleanness.

24. Cecil, p. 35.


27. The dwarf in The Ballad of the Sad Café, who has already been discussed, could also have been treated here due to his overt infatuation with Marvin Macy. As to Ike Snopes in Faulkner's The Hamlet, who commits sodomy with a cow, this incident will be dealt with under "Repulsive/Frightening-Grotesque Situations."

28. Vincent in the above-mentioned story "The Headless Hawk" is rather reminiscent of Randolph both in his homosexual tendencies and in his view of love, but his identification with the headless figure reclining on top of a vaudeville trunk in the picture in his flat and his weird dream-world indicate an abnormal psyche, the full understanding of which probably requires the skill of a psychiatrist. However, since Vincent reveals no comic traits to speak of, either in appearance or behaviour, it would seem that he falls outside this discussion though, e.g., Finger would not agree (Finger, p. 73).


33. One of Faulkner's minor characters, Byron Snopes in Sartoris (London, 1964) bears an interesting resemblance to Private Williams in that he, too, is passionately in love with a woman whom he never dares to face directly; instead he confines
himself to writing crude anonymous letters. Like the sergeant, he gets a vicarious pleasure out of spying on his beloved at night and on one occasion even steals into her bedroom. As in the case of Private Williams, Byron Snopes is also depicted in animal terms, in Faulkner, however, to emphasize the grotesque, non-human side of his nature:

Then he sped to the door and stopped again, crouching panting and snarling with indecision. (pp. 197-98)

The same Byron Snopes is mentioned again in The Town (London, 1967) as the father of the four snake-like children who for a while are entrusted to Flem. However, so monstrous is their behaviour, which includes such pastimes as the dismembering and, presumably, consumption of Mrs. Mildrington's pedigree Pekinese and tying up and almost setting fire to a relative, who makes the mistake of playing cowboys and Indians with them, that Flem resolutely sends them back. Ferguson rightly places these junior members of the Snopes tribe among Faulkner's ignoble grotesques (p. 148-51).

The expression "inside room" is taken from The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter where Carson McCullers speaks of Mick Kelly as having two rooms, one inside room and one outside room (p. 145).

Considering that Reflections in a Golden Eye is regarded as one of the most grotesque of Carson McCullers's works, it is surprising to find that the novel contains very little grotesque imagery. When the author employs imagery at all, it is usually for purposes other than to produce grotesque effects. Thus Private Williams is frequently likened to an animal both in appearance and in behaviour but not, as in the case of, say, Popeye, to underline any negative affinity with such creatures but to show how well attuned he is to nature. One of the few grotesque metaphors used in the story is the one where the Captain after his ride on Firebird is likened to "a broken doll that had been thrown away" (p. 90). This image recurs at the end of the novel when Captain Penderton sees himself as "a distorted doll" (p. 144). Here, too, we find the monk simile which both serves to underline the fact that the Captain is a physically broken man and to bring out—in the appropriate comparison to a recluse—that he is a spiritually isolated person.

John M. Bullitt, Jonathan Swift and the Anatomy of Satire (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1953), pp. 45-46; (The term 'titotes' used by Bullitt means an "understatement often ironical," according to the COD.) To the present author's knowledge, no Southern writer has made as much use of diminution as Flannery O'Connor.

Henri Bergson, for example, feels that there is hardly anything more laughable than "a person who gives the impression of being a thing" or who acts automatically. This view is expressed in his essay "Laughter" included in the afore-mentioned work Comedy, edited by Wylie Sypher, pp. 97, 155.

Bergson, pp. 66-67.

Erskine Caldwell, Summertime Island (Cleveland, Ohio, 1968); All the stories mentioned appear in The Complete Stories of Erskine Caldwell (New York, 1953).
40 Erskine Caldwell, This Very Earth (New York, 1948).


42 Sinclair Lewis, Elmer Gantry (New York, 1927).

43 In "Laughter," p. 155, Bergson states: "It is not uncommon for a comic character to condemn in general terms a certain line of conduct and immediately afterwards afford an example of it himself."

44 Ferguson's explanation that Christmas "tries to beat the odds, and it is this assertion of his humanity that turns him grotesque," must likewise be rejected for the same reason (p. 53).


48 Ibid., p. 732.

49 Eudora Welty, "Where Is the Voice Coming From?" New Yorker, 6 July 1963, pp. 24-25 (Subsequent quotations are from this issue and page numbers are given in the text.)

50 Kuehl, p. 86.


52 Ibid.

53 Steve, the ex-barker at the carnival, around whose sense of guilt for having participated in the inhuman treatment of Little Lee Roy much of the story centres, and Max, Steve's companion on the trip to see the Negro, have likewise been described as grotesque, robot-like creatures who have also in a sense been dehumanized (pp. 182-86). It is true that both Steve and Max have certain mechanical qualities about them but this seems to be the only factor that makes them amusing. Max might appear frightening in his indifference but actually he is merely incapable of grasping things—he is stupid but kind. As to Steve, who, according to Alfred Appel, Jr., A Season of Dreams. The Fiction of Eudora Welty (Baton Rouge, 1965), p. 146, "may be said to represent the South that was burdened with the 'curse' of slavery," it is not he himself who is frightening—he is mainly pathetic—but rather the deplorable mental state to which he has been reduced. In other words, there seem to be no conflicting elements to speak of in either character that can produce that clash of feelings which is the hallmark of the grotesque.
54 Eudora Welty, "Moon Lake," The Golden Apples (New York, 1949), pp. 99-138. (Subsequent quotations are from this edition and page numbers are given in the text.)

55 Jennings, p. 19.

56 Ferguson, for instance, dismisses it as "a comically grisly, gruesome story of perverse emotions" (p. 145).


59 Ibid., p. 310.

60 Beach, p. 157.


64 In contrast to what many people believe, eeriness is not an essential part of the grotesque, according to Thomson (p. 5).

65 Aldridge, pp. 249-50.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE COMIC-GROTESQUE

The most commonly occurring form of the grotesque in Southern fiction is that which is generally referred to as the comic-grotesque or grotesque-comic. Both expressions are somewhat misleading in that the comic, according to most modern critics and scholars, is already inherent in the term 'grotesque'. In contrast to the macabre- and the repulsive/frightening-grotesque, however, where the comic often constitutes a relatively small part, the comic-grotesque, as it will be called here, designates a form of the grotesque where the comic element is felt to predominate.

The natural reaction to something comic is to laugh. Without taking up the difficult question of what laughter actually is, which Wylie Sypher claims no one has yet been able to answer in a satisfactory way, we could perhaps agree with Thomson that there are different kinds of laughter (p. 53). The laughter one usually engages in is what the psychologists have called 'free' laughter. In the case of the grotesque, the presence of another type of laughter, the so-called defensive laughter, "with which a person seeks to ward off emotional shock or distress," makes matters more complicated (p. 53). As Thomson goes on to explain, the laughter caused by the grotesque is, in fact, never 'free' or undisturbed; the simultaneous perception of the comic as well as the other side of the grotesque--its horrifying, disgusting or frightening aspect--confuses the reaction. Thus one may well laugh at the grotesque in a nervous or uncertain way but it is because one's perception of the comic is countered and balanced by perception of something incompatible with this. (p. 54)

A good example of a story that gives rise to the sort of grotesque laughter described above, and where the comic-grotesque is used both extensively and effectively, is afforded by Eudora Welty's "A Visit of Charity." The title of the story is ironic and refers to a visit paid by a little girl to two old
women in an Old People's Home in order to earn some extra points as a scout. The girl's name is Marian, which means "one who follows or serves the Virgin Mary," and this constitutes another ironic factor for, as mentioned, Marian is far from being prompted by any altruistic motive; thus she becomes an "agent by which charity is satirized." The very setting is partially grotesque—in hospitable, frightening and unreal—largely due to the manly, robotlike reception nurse. This nurse almost shoves Marian into a room where two old women reside, one of whom snatches the flower pot she brings right out of her hand.

"Flowers!" screamed the old woman. "Stinkweeds," said the other old woman sharply. She had a bunched white forehead and red eyes like a sheep. Now she turned them toward Marian. The fogginess seemed to rise in her throat again, and she bleated, "Who--are--you?"

To her surprise, Marian could not remember her name. "I'm a Campfire Girl," she said finally. "Watch out for the germs," said the old woman like a sheep, not addressing anyone. "One came out last month to see us," said the first old woman.

A sheep or a germ? wondered Marian dreamily, holding onto the chair.

"Did not! cried the other old woman. "Did so! Read to us out of the Bible, and we enjoyed it! screamed the first.

"Who enjoyed it!" said the woman in bed. Her mouth was unexpectedly small and sorrowful, like a pet's. "We enjoyed it," insisted the other. "You enjoyed it--I enjoyed it."

"We all enjoyed it," said Marian, without realizing that she had said a word. (pp. 223-24)

As can be seen, the two women stand out as genuine grotesques; Jo Bradham even sees in them a Swiftian grotesqueness. They are mercilessly reduced as human beings, likened to a rapacious bird and a bleating sheep respectively. There is also a mechanical quality about them, as is evident from the repetitious dialogue, which heightens their grotesqueness. Thus, through the mode of the grotesque, Eudora Welty turns these women into objects of derision and amusement, at the same time as she emphasizes the frightening aspect of their senility—a state most people, at least subconsciously, contemplate with fear and disquiet.

Marian, too, becomes a grotesque but on a small scale. Her lack of identity—the fact that she cannot even remember her name—makes her both droll and off-putting. It is also possible the
reader identifies with her, that she becomes a sort of extension of one's own bad conscience as regards relationships with old people, be it one particular geriatric or old people in general; if so, she serves to increase one's uneasiness. The combination of all the emotions the reader experiences through this story, brings about that "unfree" laughter to which Thomson refers.

"Limping Heroes"

To find the first comic-grotesques in literature one has to go back to ancient times.

In Greece and Rome comedy was gradually transmuted from religious Mystery to theatrical Mime. So when comedy lost its appearance of being what originally it was, a fertility celebration, the characters tended to become grotesques, and the comedian continued using many of the stock masks tragedy had discarded.

One of the things that one laughed at as early as in ancient Greece, probably with less restraint than we do today, was the sight of a deformed person. Peter Hays has spent years collecting "limping heroes"—literary protagonists crippled in a visible or figurative sense—tracing them as far back as to Greek mythology. "For writers who describe an era of disappointment, depression, despair, even self-disgust...," Hays remarks, "a maimed individual has been a particularly apt symbol."

Many of his examples from Southern fiction are comic-grotesques. One who actually does limp is Rufus in Flannery O'Connor's story "The Lame Shall Enter First" (see p. 26). That this fourteen-year-old, highly intelligent boy is of the devil's party is, as Hays claims, indicated both by his name Rufus, meaning red, and by his clubfoot, "a common analogue to the Devil's cloven hoof." As if out to prove the veracity of his own statement that Satan has him in his power, Rufus takes a fiendish pleasure in lying, stealing, vandalizing and, not least, tormenting Sheppard, the social worker who is trying so hard to save him but finally gives up in exasperation (p. 151). In these respects, Rufus is frightening. He is, however, not completely devoid of good qualities. For one thing, he encourages Sheppard's son, Norton, who is so sadly neglected by his father, and at long last he also succeeds in opening Sheppard's eyes to his own egocentricity and false evaluations. Above all, however, Rufus is a very comic character as evidenced both by his conversations
with Norton and with his benefactor. Being a bright youth, Rufus sees through Sheppard's "pygmalionesque" interest in him, constantly pulls his leg and speaks of him with great contempt.11 "'God, kid,'" he says to Norton, "'how do you stand it? . . . He thinks he's Jesus Christ!'" (p. 133) Much of the comedy of the story lies in the irony that Rufus does not want any of the help he is offered. Preferring to remain the outcast, he rejects the orthopedic shoe which will counteract his limp, proudly quoting the words of the Bible: "'The lame shall enter first;'" he shows no interest in the telescope Sheppard buys, nor does he want to stay at Sheppard's house and become part of the household (p. 155). The climax is reached when Rufus is brought back to Sheppard's house by two policemen and makes the preposterous accusation that Sheppard has made immoral suggestions to him (p. 154).

That Rufus is portrayed as a grotesque can be sensed from one's ambivalent response to him. Set up as a contrast to Sheppard, he makes one realize that not only goodness but also evil is relative and that "sometimes the characters who are physically whole turn out to be more spiritually flawed than their physically deformed counterparts."12 Like another of Flannery O'Connor's criminals—the Misfit—Rufus is, in fact, seeking God.13

Joy—or Hulga as she prefers to call herself—in "Good Country People" is also a "limper"; as a sign of her "maimed soul" the author has provided her with an artificial leg.14 In addition to an unattractive appearance ("bloated . . . and squint-eyed"), Hulga displays a maliciousness that reaches its climax when she decides to seduce a young Bible salesman (p. 165). However, much to her dismay, things take a surprising turn. The Bible salesman lures Hulga up to the hayloft and makes her take off her artificial leg. Then he reveals that one of his Bibles actually contains a flask of whiskey, a deck of cards and a box of condoms. Completely taken aback, Hulga exclaims, "'You're a fine Christian! You're just like them all—say one thing and do another!'" (p. 181). To this the young man indignantly replies,

"I hope you don't think . . . that I believe in that crap! I may sell Bibles but I know which end is up and I wasn't born yesterday and I know where I'm going!"
And resolutely packing her leg into his valise, he starts climbing down the ladder with his trophy.

When all of him had passed but his head, he turned and regarded her with a look that no longer had any admiration in it. "I've gotten a lot of interesting things," he said. "One time I got a woman's glass eye this way. . . . And I tell you another thing, Hulga," he said, . . . "you ain't so smart. I been believing in nothing ever since I was born!" and then the toast-colored hat disappeared down the hole and the girl was left, sitting on the straw in the dusty sunlight. (p. 182)

The scene is truly comic-grotesque. The comical manifests itself particularly in the two discoveries that the book that looks like a Bible is not a Bible at all and that the honest-looking young salesman is nothing but a fraud. The idea of sex and drinking in connection with religion and the theft of such eerie things as a glass eye and an artificial leg convert all that is familiar into that estranged world Kayser speaks of and create a tension that makes the situation grotesque. 15

The story also illustrates Flannery O'Connor's belief that those who look upon themselves as very clever are not so clever after all for in their hubris they are blind to the ways of God and are stumbling on "the primrose path" to hell. 16 On the theft of her leg, however, Hulga's "deeper affliction" is suddenly revealed to her, and this awareness together with the many humiliations she must now suffer are likely to prepare her for salvation. 17

Another physically deformed member of Flannery O'Connor's "fictional family," Mr. Shiftlet in "The Life You Save May Be Your Own," has an afflicted arm that serves as a clue to his "inner deformity of spirit." 18 Like Rufus, he turns out to be a character endowed with contradictory qualities. At first sight, he may fool the reader, as he fools Mrs. Crater, into thinking that he is something of a godsend, a Christ figure. This impression is created not only by Mr. Shiftlet's own statements—for instance, that his disabled arm is well compensated for by his "moral intelligence"—but also by his kindness towards Mrs. Crater's deaf and dumb daughter, Lucynell, whom he tries to teach to speak, and all the repair work he does on the farm (p. 58). This feeling is reinforced by such metaphors as "his figure
formed a crooked cross" and "he had an expression of serious modesty on his face as if he had just raised the dead" (pp. 54, 60). Finally the comic-grotesque situation occurs where Mr. Shiftlet, who has married Lucynell for where the sake of an old dilapidated car, abandons his poor sleeping bride in a road-side restaurant. Pointing to Lucynell, Mr. Shiftlet tells the waiter to feed her when she wakes up and fabricates a convenient un-truth:

"Hitch-hiker, . . . . I can't wait. I got to make Tuscaloosa." (p. 64)

Then, if not before, one fully understands that the word "crooked" in the metaphor quoted above is an adjective that serves as a warning to the reader, a term which aptly describes the warped condition of Mr. Shiftlet's own character, and one also realizes that his name is an unusually suitable one. 19

As Henry Taylor points out, the heartless action described above does not tally with Mr. Shiftlet's indignation at the behaviour of the ungrateful hitch-hiker he later actually picks up and his seemingly sincere prayer,

"Oh Lord! . . . . Break forth and wash the slime from this earth!" (p. 66)

It is possible that Mr. Shiftlet himself is not quite aware of the wrong he has done. 20 In any case, the ending is entirely in keeping with the author's aim that when

the fiction writer . . . finishes there always has to be left over that sense of Mystery which cannot be accounted for by any human formula. 21

Mr. Shiftlet's mysterious and puzzling behaviour also adds to the tension created by this comic-grotesque character. What fate the author herself had in mind for him becomes evident from a letter to John Hawkes in which she writes, "I can fancy a character like . . . Mr. Shiftlet as being unredeemable." 22

Flem Snopes in Faulkner's trilogy The Hamlet, The Town, The Mansion is likewise a "limper" but in a less obvious way; his disability lies in his being impotent. 23 By giving Flem such a handicap, Faulkner makes use of what psychologists have called "grotesque-comic sublimation." 24 To quote Lawson,

. . . this theory proposes that the mind will create an image which symbolizes its anxieties, that it then attempts to laugh into impotence. Such an action by the mind suggests one of Kayser's interpretations of the grotesque: "AN ATTEMPT TO INVOKE AND SUBDUE THE DEMONIC
ASPECTS OF THE WORLD." The significant aspect of this theory is that of impotence; the threatening figure is harmless in its potential, even though superficially it appears all powerful. As Annie Reich points out, "The grotesque-comic is characterized by a special form of disguise, that is by particular disfigurement and deformation of the object." (p. 232)

In addition to reducing Flem's manliness by making him impotent, Faulkner frequently employs diminution to degrade him. Thus Faulkner describes Flem's face as looking "as blank as a pan of uncooked dough," and twice his eyes are said to be "the color of stagnant water" (pp. 22, 51). As in the case of Popeye, Faulkner also stresses Flem's inhumanity by resorting to animal imagery: Flem's nose is depicted as "a tiny predatory nose like the beak of a small hawk," and once, in the company of Eula Warner, he is portrayed as a "froglike creature which barely reached her shoulder" (pp. 51, 147). As Lawson points out, even the pronoun "which" serves to place him on a scale below the human (p. 234).

Besides using a great deal of grotesque imagery to belittle Flem, Faulkner endows him with the annoying habit of perpetually chewing. As Lawson aptly puts it, this makes him resemble "some kind of monstrous machine, always demanding more, more, until he threatens to consume all of the old order of Yoknapatawpha County" (p. 237). Only on a few occasions does Flem actually stop chewing, namely, when he is extremely surprised or outsmarted, the last instance being when he faces Mink's gun. Another such characteristic that makes Flem seem repulsive is his constant spitting, a habit which he abandons only when he has become a prominent man.

In fact, Flem undergoes a very interesting development. In The Hamlet he appears as a true grotesque: comic and repulsive in appearance and mannerisms, ludicrous in his unmanliness, frightening in his materialism and lack of feeling for others--his grotesqueness being, as already indicated, a product of the author's own fear of what Flem represents: "the passionless commercial spirit." To judge from the succeeding parts of the trilogy Faulkner later learnt to cope with his fear; Flem gradually becomes more human, and his grotesqueness much less frightening. There are even times when the reader is induced to feel a certain sympathy for this character who tries so hard to get on
an equal footing with the wealthy family into which he has mar-
ried.

Mentally Disturbed Comic-Grotesques

As opposed to the characters that have just been discussed, there are a great many comic-grotesques in Southern literature whose "limping", to use Hays's term, applies solely or primarily to the mental plane. A figure that readily comes to mind in this connection is Singleton in Flannery O'Connor's story "The Partridge Festival." 27

Singleton is a madman, a character that has always been closely associated with the grotesque. What has placed him in the asylum is the fact that he shot down a handful of prominent Partridge citizens to avenge himself on those who put him in stocks, subjected him to a mock trial and locked him up in a privy together with a goat for not buying "an Azalea Festival Badge" (p. 422). Calhoun, a young intellectual, and a girl of like mind, find the town's treatment of Singleton outrageous and are full of admiration for this man "who is willing to suffer for the right to be himself" (p. 423). Together they set off for the mental hospital to extend their sympathy to Singleton. The irony of the story is, however, that once Calhoun and the girl have been confronted with "the scapegoat," they soon realize what practically all of Partridge knows, that the man is really insane (p. 431).

Two burly attendants entered with Singleton spider-like between them. He was holding his feet high up off the floor so that the attendants had to carry him. It was from him the curses were coming. (p. 442)

The unflattering description of Singleton continues with the grotesque imagery shifting from insects to reptiles. After screaming to Calhoun, "'Whadaya want with me? . . . My time is valuable,'" he catches sight of the girl and "for one instant his eyes remained absolutely still like the eyes of a tree toad that has sighted its prey" (p. 442).

"Lemme sit with her," Singleton said and jerked his arm away from the attendant, who caught it again at once. "She knows what she wants."

"Let him sit with her," the blond attendant said, "she's his niece."

"No," the bald one said, "keep ahold to him. He's liable to pull off his frock. You know him."

But the other one had already let one of his wrists
loose and Singleton was leaning outward toward Mary Elizabeth, straining away from the attendant who held him. The girl's eyes were glazed. The old man began to make suggestive noises through his teeth.

"Now now, dad," the idle attendant said.

"It's not every girl gets a chance at me," Singleton said. "Listen here, sister, I'm well-fixed. There's nobody in Partridge I can't skin. I own the place as well as this hotel." His hand grasped toward her knee.

The girl gave a small stifled cry.

"And I got others elsewhere," he panted. "You and me are two of a kind. We ain't in their class. You're a queen. I'll put you on a float!" and at that moment he got his wrist free and lunged toward her but both attendants sprang after him instantly. As Mary Elizabeth crouched against Calhoun, the old man jumped nimbly over the sofa and began to speed around the room. The attendants, their arms and legs held wide apart to catch him, tried to close in on him from either side. They almost had him when he kicked off his shoes and leaped between them onto the table, sending the empty vase shattering to the floor. "Look girl!" he shrielled and began to pull the hospital gown over his head. (p. 443)

As these excerpts reveal, Singleton is both delightfully comic and frightening—a true grotesque. In his doctoral dissertation Ralph Ciancio offers this explanation as to why a mad person imbues us with such fear:

The madman... is incomprehensible; "he is not in touch with this world," we commonly say of him, the implication being that he abides by the communications of another world, some alien territory above or below. Since we do not know what makes him run, he frightens us—not so much the madman as such but rather whatever inscrutable force it is that controls and disconnects him from us. This force intrudes on our safety through the madman, and he goes to contribute to the estrangement of the world.

As to the function of the grotesque in this story, the author's own comment on Singleton may be useful. In a letter to John Hawkes she writes:

... I look on him as another comic instance of the diabolical... Fallen spirits are of course still spirits, and I suppose the Devil teaches most of the lessons that lead to self-knowledge.

In other words, the grotesque as personified by Singleton is used for didactic purposes, to drive home to Calhoun and his young companion the truth of the proverb "Pride goes before a fall" and the frequent veracity of the saying "Old folks know best."

Another mentally disturbed character, Eudora Welty's Uncle Daniel in The Ponder Heart, suffers from a generosity that takes
He gives away everything imaginable: money, land, buildings, animals, even his own cemetery lot. Ruth Vande Kieft describes him in the following terms: "The incongruity of his nature is that this out-sized heart has no balancing counterpart of rational and moral intelligence." It is this rather frightening lack of common sense, which actually leads to his being committed to a mental hospital, together with his preposterous behaviour—observed, for instance, when he succeeds in getting "Grandpa" locked up in the asylum in his stead or when he upsets the whole legal procedure during the trial by handing out bundles of notes in the court-room—that turn Uncle Daniel into a grotesque. As in "Clytie," "Petrified Man" and in the story about Lily Daw and the three ladies (see pp. 72, 159-60), the main character is, however, only the apparent grotesque; the grasping and sanctimonious townspeople prove to be the true grotesques. As Seymour Gross asserts, "Nowhere in Miss Welty does the comic spirit make such a shambles of the assumptions of society as in The Ponder Heart."

The function of the grotesque in this novel seems to be twofold: to amuse the reader and to give him food for thought. The same holds true of Eudora Welty's story "Why I Live at the P. O." where Sister, a postmistress suffering from a persecution mania, is the incarnation of the grotesque. Her complex manifests itself in the slandering of her "twelve months . . . younger . . . spoiled" sister, Stella Rondo, whom she accuses of stealing her boy friend and turning the rest of the family against her, and results in Sister's moving all her belongings to the little post-office of which she is in charge (p. 89). She puts on a brave front but one realizes that she is very hurt. "Sister," Reichnitz states, "sees herself as forever victim. The rigidity with which she maintains this role accounts for most of the comedy" (p. 177). Her comments on her family are amusing and caustic. Besides Stella Rondo, the household consists of Mama, who "weighs two hundred pounds and has real tiny feet," Uncle Rondo, who celebrates the Fourth of July by getting drunk and dressing up "in one of Stella Rondo's flesh-colored kimonos," Papa-Daddy, Sister's grandfather, who "is about a million years old and's got this long-long beard" and a tendency to sulk, and Shirley T., Stella Rondo's daughter, whose "adoption" gives rise
to the quarrel (pp. 98, 93, 91). However, these comic remarks can hardly hide Sister's envy and resentment.

The story is a portrait of a mind . . . in which the world has become a welter of confused, violent, and threatening activity, all of which is totally incomprehensible to the narrator. . . . Her Sister's attempt to create meaning is a complete failure, and her world is grotesque. It is grotesque because it remains disjointed. Recognizing this adds a frightful dimension to the comedy. (pp. 178, 180)

When Reichnitz speaks of Sister's comical-chaotic-frightening world as "grotesque because it remains disjointed" (italics mine), he puts his finger on the very meaning of the grotesque. One need only add that as the reader's reaction to the story is also divided all aspects of Thomson's definition: the unresolved clash of incompatibles in work and response have been covered.

Various Eccentrics, Including the Indolent

The majority of the comic-grotesques display aberrations and eccentricities of a less severe kind. Caldwell has created many such characters. Among the principal ones to appear in novels are Aimee, who suffers from the unusual mania of avenging herself on people she does not like by moving their furniture about; Annette, who only reluctantly abandons her teddy bear when she marries; Medora Earnshaw, who follows every whim, no matter how preposterous, and bribes men that interest her with expensive cars; and Maud Douhlt, who frequently gets drunk on Dr. Munday's stomach tonic and has a strange tendency to lose her nightgown.

A fairly large proportion of these eccentrics is made up of people whose extreme laziness, in combination with other qualities, renders them grotesque. In Caldwell one meets such figures as Lazy Bones, who takes an age to answer a question; Vic, who would rather take a nap than prevent his wife from seducing a stranger; Tom Rhodes, whose favourite pastime is to sit peeping through a hole in his shed; Chism Crockett, who detests farming and dreams of being one of the "city folks". Related to these are such major characters as Ty Ty in God's Little Acre, who wastes the little energy he can conjure up in futilely digging for gold, and the Lester family in Tobacco Road, who almost outdo each other in laziness. Of Ada's and Jeeter's twelve children nine have left the area, but the parents have never
bothered to find out where they live or how they are doing. Jeeter believes there might be letters from some of them at the post-office in Fuller but although he has been to town hundreds of times since that thought first occurred to him, he has "not yet got around to making inquiry there" (p. 61). Nor has he brought himself to having Ellie May operated on for her harelip, which he has been thinking of ever since she was born. Everything is constantly postponed.

There were always well-developed plans in Jeeter's mind for the things he intended doing, but somehow he never got around to doing them. One day led to the next, and it was much more easy to say he would wait until tomorrow. (p. 55)

The inertia of the Lesters is even reflected in the condition of their house:

... the roof sagged in the centre where the supporting rafters had been carelessly put together. Most of the shingles had rotted, and after every wind-storm pieces of them were scattered in all directions about the yard. When the roof leaked, the Lesters moved from one corner of the room to another ... The house had never been painted. (p. 12)

Eventually the house catches fire and Jeeter and his wife perish in the flames. The end of the novel describes how Dude drives away in the once beautiful car, happily tooting its horn at regular intervals.

His final words are that he thinks he will grow a crop of cotton, "like Pa was always talking about doing," but from what we have seen of the Lesters, Dude will no more plant the cotton than Jeeter had done. He will drive the car until it will no longer move, and then he will sit in his cabin waiting for something to happen.

Whereas Lazy Bones, Vic, Tom Rhodes and perhaps Chism Crockett can be looked upon as products of the author's whimsy, one may suspect that the Lesters and Ty Ty and his family have their counterparts in the South that Caldwell knew, even though they appear in a somewhat exaggerated form. As mentioned earlier in connection with the macabre, the grotesque here serves the function of bringing people's attention to the hard lot and social destitution of the Southern poor white farmer (see p. 54). The utter hopelessness of his situation leads to an apathy which shows itself in a laziness of abnormal proportions.

Among Faulkner's characters Eula Warner in particular, as
she appears in *The Hamlet*, strikes the reader as grotesquely lazy. Her refusal to walk starts in early childhood and results in her being forever carried or pushed around in a little cart. When this is no longer possible, she takes to sitting in chairs, showing no interest whatsoever in playing with toys or romping around with other children.

She simply did not move at all of her own volition, save to and from the table and to and from the bed. . . . She might as well still have been a foetus. It was as if only half of her had been born, that mentality and body had somehow become either completely separated or hopelessly involved; that either only one of them had ever emerged, or that one had emerged, itself not accompanied by, but rather pregnant with, the other. (pp. 95-96)

When the time comes for her to attend school, she flatly refuses to walk the short distance to the school building; finally her brother, Jody, undertakes to bring her there on horseback. Once at school, she just sits at her desk learning nothing.

Being prematurely developed with "too much of leg, too much of breast, too much of buttock; too much of mammalian female meat," her only interest is the opposite sex for which she has a great attraction (p. 100). "'She's just like a dog!'' Jody complains. "'Soon as she passes anything in long pants she begins to give off something. You can smell it! You can smell it ten feet away!'" (p. 99). Even emotionally, however, Eula refuses to assert herself as her teacher, Labove, is acutely aware. Realizing that Eula has not bothered to mention to Jody that he has attempted to seduce her, Labove observes, "'she doesn't even know anything happened that was worth mentioning!'" (p. 126). As will be recalled, Eula is later seduced and made pregnant by another young man. To avoid a scandal, she is then hastily married off to Flem Snopes, the manager of her father's shop—an arrangement that does not seem to affect her very much one way or another.

Thus, in more respects than one, Eula stands out as a grotesque. "By joining her listless, stupid character with her mock image as a sex symbol, Faulkner creates in Eula an unbelievable mixture of the absurd and repulsive," Ferguson states (p. 140). The reason why Faulkner invented this "whimsical" grotesque, Ferguson claims, is that the author simply wanted to divert his readers. 40 The Eula who appears in *The Hamlet* is therefore
classed by this scholar as an "ignoble grotesque"—a character who fails to fulfill "any basic literary function beyond mere shock and sensation" (p. 125).

That Faulkner created Eula for the sake of diversion seems plausible enough, but, as another commentator indicates, the ulterior motive was probably more than a mere wish to cause "shock and sensation":

Faulkner uses the technique of mythic enlargement copiously in The Hamlet. Eula is more splendid than anything in Life, Flem is more despicable; and the result of this technique is to create a sense of the inscrutability of fate operating even in the high jinks of country bumpkins. Eula is no Helen of Troy, except in her irresistible attraction; certainly Flem Snopes is no Menelaus... but by allowing us to hear the reverberation of these mighty names through the cotton patches and tenant shacks of rural Mississippi, Faulkner gives his grim comedy a cosmic dimension. This is not merely Frenchman's Bend; it is the world.

However, Eula undergoes an amazing change. In The Town and The Mansion she emerges as a totally different character, a person who thinks and feels and acts. The transition is so sudden that the reader finds it somewhat difficult to accept, and Faulkner's own explanation does not seem altogether convincing:

"Well, I would like to think the reason is because she is older. I would like to think that all people learn a little more. Also, she had that child... she knew this child must be defended and protected." 42

Nevertheless, Eula cannot be considered a grotesque in these two parts of the trilogy.

**Comic-Grotesque Pursuers of Love**

Another group of comic-grotesques consists of characters engaged in a pursuit of love that for some reason or another appears abnormal and ludicrous.

One writer who excels in creating lovesick comic-grotesques is Caldwell. With few exceptions, such as Pluto, the big-bellied lazy man with eyes "like watermelon seeds," who yearns both for Ty Ty's daughter and daughter-in-law, the majority of them are women: Darling Jill, Maud, Claudelle English, Miss Willie, Connie—the list of characters grotesquely swayed by their passions can be made even more extensive. Perhaps the most memorable of them all is Ellie May in Tobacco Road. The man-mad Ellie May does not hesitate to try to seduce her own
brother-in-law when he comes to her home, nor does she hesitate to attempt this in broad daylight and in full view of others. Curiously enough, Ellie May's family see nothing extraordinary about her sliding on her bare bottom across the yard towards Lov while squealing like a pig; instead they apparently look upon it as a natural way for a girl to act who has always been so unattractive that no man has even considered seducing her. Although they are intrigued spectators, their main concern is to grab the sack of turnips Lov is holding, as soon as he becomes sufficiently interested in Ellie May to loosen his grip--a matter which increases the comedy of the situation.

Many critics have contemptuously dismissed Caldwell's characters as simple caricatures. There is, however, an essential difference between caricature and the grotesque, the latter being a more appropriate way of describing someone like Ellie May. Thomson explains the difference as follows:

Caricature may be briefly defined as the ludicrous exaggeration of characteristic or peculiar features. A major distinction from the grotesque as we have sought to describe it at once becomes clear: in caricature there need be no suggestion of the confusion of heterogeneous and incompatible elements, no sense of the intrusion of alien elements. The difference can be felt plainly in one's reaction. One laughs at a caricature because a recognizable or typical person or characteristic is distorted (or stylized) in a ridiculous and amusing way--that is, a peculiar feature is exaggerated to the point of abnormality. It is a straightforward, uncomplicated reaction to something which has a straightforward function and clearly discernible intention, whereas one's reaction to the grotesque is essentially divided and problematic. (p. 38)

In the case of Ellie May, most readers probably find both the girl and the situation predominantly comic. At the same time, however, as one laughs at Ellie May's antics--her sliding, her squealing, etc.--one can hardly help finding her repulsive, perhaps even a little frightening, in her uncouth behaviour and overt interest in sex. This reaction is also reinforced by her appearance, for Ellie May is harelipped and very ugly to look at.

Michael Steig, who unlike Thomson, does not consider repulsion in itself a proper opposing element to the comic but, like Jennings, insists on the fearsome, goes to great lengths to explain in psychological terms why a character who might seem
only ludicrous can still qualify as a grotesque. As an example he uses Dickens's Mrs. Gamp who "embodies those impulses which were officially taboo in Victorian culture, . . . sex, . . . unrestrained eating and drinking, and, above all, narcissistic self-absorption." Steig goes on to say,

Mrs. Gamp is subjected to caricature-like techniques, but . . . they are unabashedly comic, though they . . . function in a dual way. First of all, Mrs. Gamp, through her disconnected speech, immense ugliness, lack of rational intelligence, uncouthness, and selfishness, is made ludicrous, almost contemptible, so that the possibility of our conscious identification with the compelling but forbidden drives she embodies is minimized. But at the same time, a contrary process seems to arise from the same attributes; our inhibitions are lulled to sleep by Mrs. Gamp's ludicrousness, . . . which makes possible on a preconscious level the same identification that it appears to the conscience or superego to prevent.

What Steig says of Mrs. Gamp also applies to Ellie May and many of Caldwell's other comic characters that one intuitively feels are grotesque--if one exchanges some of the proclivities mentioned. As regards Ellie May, there is a remarkable similarity between her and Mrs. Gamp; only Mrs. Gamp's gluttony and speech disorder seem to have no counterpart in the girl.

In Robert Penn Warren's The Cave one meets another lustful character who fulfills all the requirements of a grotesque, namely, Jack Harrick. Here is the narrator's own vivid description of him:

Yeah, Ole Jack, he was a heller. He was ring-tail. Hardworking between times and made that anvil sing, but then he tuk over the ridge, he was shore Hell's own unquenchable boy-chap. Yeah, a pearl-handle in his hipocket--.38 on a .44 frame--and one button of his fly unbuttoned to save time and didn't give a durn which he might git ag-gervated to use fust, pistol or pecker. I'm a-telling you, strong man, when they met him they give him the high side of a hill track and fust on the creek log, and wasn't no woman under age fer putting on the calico cap didn't swaller sweet spit and look back over her shoulder when she passed him on the big road, her married or not and hit Sunday.

As can be seen by this portrayal, Jack Harrick is not only frightening in his eagerness to use a gun but also somewhat repulsive and ludicrous in his eagerness to seduce women. The description, however, is coloured by the narrator's apparent admiration for Harrick and wish to be a lady-killer like him.
Faulkner, too, has created "a grotesque woman chaser"—Jones in Soldiers' Pay. This man, whose only interests in life are food, sleep and women, and who nourishes the vain hope of staying young forever, is described with the help of so many grotesque similes and metaphors that he could serve as a case-book example of the grotesque. As in the case of Popeye, Faulkner likens Jones to various animals so as to belittle him and turn him into a contemptible character. Thus he is repeatedly compared to a fat and arrogant cat and to a yellow-eyed goat (pp. 80, 83, 222, 225). Even lower creatures than these are used; on two occasions Jones is said to resemble a worm (pp. 220, 284); on another he is described as a snake with a yellow, expressionless look and as an octopus with long tentacles (pp. 219, 207). As if this was not sufficient to make Jones appear ludicrous and repulsive, and even slightly frightening, Faulkner describes him as a phlegmatic, clumsy figure with baggy clothes, whose "obscene eyes" show no emotion, and whose behaviour is unmistakably effeminate (pp. 230, 89, 222).

Addison Bross asserts that Faulkner was influenced by Beardsley—the foremost graphic artist of the so-called Decadent Movement in England—and that this influence is especially marked in Soldiers' Pay. According to Bross, Jones is a typical Beardsleyan character, "a lustful satyr," who bears a close resemblance to the exceptionally grotesque and ogling satyrs presented by the artist in the erotic novel Under the Hill. Besides being a satyr, Bross claims, "Jones has antecedents in the many fat, moon-faced, baggy-clothed creatures in Beardsley's drawings. Beardsley frequently associated lust with fat and ugly creatures." However that may be, Ferguson rightly places Jones among Faulkner's ignoble grotesques, that is, characters who have "no apparent function except to arouse emotional reaction: to startle, shock, terrify or, simply, amuse" (p. 124).

In this group of grotesque pursuers of love it also seems appropriate to place Miss Amelia, the protagonist of The Ballad of the Sad Café, who undoubtedly creates that tension in response which Thomson sees as the sign of the truly grotesque. She is primarily comic but has a certain frightening element in her character as well. Her very appearance is simultaneously a source of amusement and a source of awe: she is six feet two and
built like a man, with strong hairy thighs; she also dresses like the opposite sex—her favourite attire being overalls and boots. Her behaviour is likewise very masculine and has the same effect as her appearance: she smokes a pipe, she loves to box and she performs work that demands the strength of a man, or that is usually associated with men, such as running a still. What particularly makes her stand out as a ludicrous character is the object of her love—the ugly little hunchback Cousin Lymon, whose physical make-up constitutes such a startling contrast to her own—as well as the way she expresses her affection for the dwarf by doting on him and carrying him around on her shoulders.

Another matter that adds to the comical impression of Miss Amelia is her squinting. Whereas her frightening aspects disappear almost totally as she deteriorates physically, and the loss of her beloved makes her seem more pathetic than ludicrous, only the squint increases and takes on symbolic significance.

... those grey eyes—slowly day by day they were more crossed, and it was as though they sought each other out to exchange a little glance of grief and lonely recognition. (p. 83)

While the general grotesqueness displayed by Miss Amelia constitutes an essential part of the story and helps prove Carson McCullers's theory of love, the physical singularity described in the above quotation can be said to serve as a literary symbol of that "life of perpetual solitary confinement" to which the author feels that man is doomed and which can only be alleviated by ephemeral experiences of love. 56

Whereas Miss Amelia is prompted to foolish behaviour because of love, Parker in Flannery O'Connor's story "Parker's Back" is incited by a strange mixture of love and hate. 57 The object of these mingled feelings is Parker's homely wife, whose personality is neatly wrapped up in the sentence: "the skin on her face was thin and drawn as tight as the skin of an onion and her eyes were grey and sharp like the points of two icepicks" (p. 179). Sarah Ruth, as she is called, refuses to see anything extraordinary about all the tattoos that cover Parker's body—a panther, a lion, serpents, eagles, hawks and, among all these ferocious animals, Elizabeth II and Prince Philip. To impress his wife Parker therefore decides to have a tattoo made on his
back which will outdo all the others and be bound to please her, religious as she is--the face of Christ. It fails to have the desired effect, however; Sarah Ruth chases him out of the house with a broomstick for what she considers blasphemy.

That Parker is conceived of as a grotesque figure can be seen by the metaphors used to described him; he is an insignificant-looking man, "as ordinary as a loaf of bread," who somehow melts into his surroundings (p. 182).

He stayed in the navy five years and seemed a natural part of the grey mechanical ship, except for his eyes which were the same pale slate-colour as the ocean. (p. 183)

His way of asserting himself, the collecting of more and more startling tattoos, becomes a mania and makes him frightening and ludicrous at the same time. Yet, the author does not condemn him; there is a definite sympathy extended towards him. As Preston Browning, Jr. convincingly argues, Parker's unrest and dissatisfaction can, in fact, be taken to symbolize the dilemma of modern man, who vaguely feels that something is amiss and starts searching for an identity and a meaning in life. While the average person of today seldom succeeds in finding the formula for happiness due to his fixation on external things, but is doomed to an "ever-frustrated quest," the author holds out hope for Parker. From having been wooden and indifferent, Parker is metamorphosed by what he sees at the fair. His change "has overtones of a classic religious conversion" ("it was as if a blind boy had been turned . . . in a different direction" (p. 182).), and once he is able to "acknowledge his name, his identity is confirmed." Under the "all-demanding" eyes of the Christ he has tattooed on his back, he might even some day walk in the footsteps of his namesake, the prophet Obadiah Elihue (p. 195).

His search for love, then, becomes a search for divine love.

Another very comic grotesque character created by Flannery O'Connor, who bears a certain resemblance to Parker, is Enoch in Wise Blood. He, too, might be placed among the grotesque pursuers of love if love is interpreted in a general sense. Let down by Haze Motes, whose only disciple he was, Enoch's desperate attempt to gain attention and make someone take an interest in him finally leads to his stealing a gorilla suit. The transfiguration that Enoch undergoes, once he has arrayed himself in
this disguise, is remarkable and gives rise to a very funny scene:

Then it began to growl and beat its chest; it jumped up and down and flung its arms and thrust its head forward. The growls were thin and uncertain at first but they grew louder after a second. ... No gorilla in existence, whether in the jungles of Africa or California, or in New York City in the finest apartment in the world, was happier at that moment than this one. (pp. 197-98)

The frightening effect that Enoch-Gonga has on his surroundings is not long in making itself felt. A young man who sits embracing a girl in a wooded area

turned his neck just in time to see the gorilla standing a few feet away, hideous and black, with its hand extended. He eased his arm from around the woman and disappeared silently into the woods. She, as soon as she turned her eyes, fled screaming down the highway. (p. 198)

Enoch is evidently envisaged as a comic figure, perhaps as a counterweight to the protagonist of the story, but his irrational behaviour renders him somewhat frightening as well—Flannery O'Connor herself describes him as "a moron and chiefly a comic character"—and it is this duality that turns him into a true grotesque. As is so often the case in Southern fiction, however, the grotesqueness is modified by pity. There is no doubt that one feels sorry for this innocent, friendless buffoon who is such an utter failure. Hence it is debatable whether Kenneth Burke is right when he claims that the grotesque is not humorous if one is in sympathy with it. In the present author's opinion, the reader sympathizes with Enoch in spite of his comic-grotesque antics, just as one can love a person in spite of certain bad qualities or even because of them.

Comic-Grotesque Intellectuals and "Cultural Grotesques"

Definitely more normal than the above characters, but nevertheless grotesque, are the many intellectuals who appear so frequently in Flannery O'Connor's fiction. Some of these, like Wesley in "Greenleaf," pass by without the reader taking much notice; others make a deeper impression. Such is the case with the college-educated Ashbury in "The Enduring Chill," who believes himself to be dying and pictures the disastrous effects
this will have on his mother, when, almost to his dismay, he finds out that he has only contracted a minor disease. The same holds true of Julian in "Everything That Rises Must Converge," whose mother's death plunges him "into the world of guilt and sorrow" (p. 23) where neither his schooling nor his complicity are of any real use to him, and of Calhoun in "The Partridge Festival," another belligerent college graduate, who likewise sees his usual self-assurance vanish into thin air when confronted with grim reality--this time in the shape of a madman (see p. 142). All three characters are so egocentric and so inflated by their own imagined importance that they appear both frightening and comical, an effect that is also produced by their tendency to look down upon everyone with a lower IQ, no matter how worldly-wise.

Even more memorable are perhaps Sheppard, the social worker, in "The Lame Shall Enter First," which has just been discussed (see p. 137), and Rayber, the schoolteacher in The Violent Bear It Away. Sheppard and Rayber are fictional kinsmen. Both are atheists and pride themselves on being enlightened people, both are widowers with an only son whom they have given up trying to educate, and as Sheppard attempts to "save" Rufus by adjusting him to what he considers a normal way of life, so Rayber does his best to "save" Tarwater by turning him away from God. Flannery O'Connor has herself described Sheppard as "the empty man who fills up his emptiness with good works," a description that could just as well be applied to Rayber if good is placed in inverted commas. Because these characters do have the intellectual capacity to understand that they are wrong in their irreligious thinking, the author makes them targets of a merciless satire, showing how their atheistic attitude reflects itself in a frightening insensitivity and lack of empathy towards others that all too easily lead to disaster. At the same time, their inability to cope with reality creates a ludicrous impression. One might, for instance, recall Sheppard's vain attempt to force the orthopedic shoe on Rufus and Rayber's futile efforts to make Tarwater wear the clothes he has bought for the boy.

That the author has a lower opinion of Rayber than of Sheppard can be seen in her effort to make Rayber appear more
grotesque than Sheppard by magnifying the frightening side of his nature. This effect is achieved by using the same device as in Wise Blood: Rayber is made to seem mechanized, dehumanized. As outer, visible signs of his faulty perception, he is equipped with a pair of glasses and a hearing aid. That Rayber functions as an automaton is emphasized again and again:

Rayber heard his own heart, magnified by the hearing aid, suddenly begin to pound like the works of a gigantic machine in his chest. (p. 106)

The hearing aid also gives rise to amusing snatches of conversation. Fascinated by the strange apparatus, Tarwater asks, "'What you wired for? . . . Does you head light up?'" (p. 103). Later after getting to know the schoolteacher better, he explains to somebody,

"My other uncle knows everything . . . but that don't keep him from being a fool. He can't do anything. All he can do is figure it out. He's got this wired head." (p. 212)

Rayber, then, emerges as more grotesque than Sheppard. Yet the purpose in depicting the grotesqueness in both men is the same: to strike a blow at atheism which to the author was the most deplorable of all conditions.68

Related to these intellectual grotesques, who "have deliberately rejected God in preference to the gods of the modern world," are the many smug, bigotted "cultural grotesques," as Muller calls them (see p.45), who are so completely a part of the physical world that they simply cannot comprehend the spiritual world—they either ignore its existence or misinterpret its meaning.69

Most of Flannery O'Connor's women belong to this category of "secular grotesques."70 Within this assemblage, in turn, many of the characters bear such a strong resemblance to each other that they can readily be divided into different groups. The most obviously grotesque of these is the one made up of the female farmhands Mrs. Shortley, Mrs. Pritchard, Mrs. Freeman and Mrs. Greenleaf.71 Mrs. Shortley is described in the following unflattering terms:

She stood on two tremendous legs, with the grand self-confidence of a mountain, and rose, up narrowing bulges of granite, to two icy blue points of light that pierced forward, surveying everything. (p. 185)

With such seemingly simple strokes Flannery O'Connor conjures up
the picture of a physically unattractive woman ("two tremendous legs," "bulges of granite"), a cold-hearted know-all ("icy-blue," "pierced," "surveying everything") who is fully convinced of her own splendid qualities ("the grand self-confidence of a mountain"). The portrait, which is made more complete as the story proceeds, is both comic and frightening. The same holds true of the other three characters mentioned who have one notable thing in common: their predilection for morbidity and disaster. Of Mrs. Pritchard one learns that she loves "calamitous stories" and will "go thirty miles for the satisfaction of seeing anybody laid away" (p. 125), while Mrs. Freeman has "a special fondness for the details of secret infections, hidden deformities, assaults upon children. Of diseases, she preferred the lingering or incurable" (pp. 163-64). Mrs. Greenleaf reacts to morbidity and calamities in a very special way:

	Every day she cut all the morbid stories out of the newspaper—the accounts of women who had been raped and criminals who had escaped and children who had been burned and of train wrecks and plane crashes and the divorces of movie stars. She took these to the woods and dug a hole and buried them and then she fell on the ground over them and mumbled and groaned for an hour or so, moving her huge arms back and forth under her and out again and finally just lying down flat. (pp. 28-29)

Both the scope of Mrs. Greenleaf's moral indignation and the resultant "prayer healing" described above make her seem laughable and frightening (p. 28). Her action also exemplifies Jennings's theory that the grotesque impression is heightened by the object being set in motion.72

As in the case of Mrs. Shortley, the author describes the physical appearance of the other three women with the help of diminution. Thus Mrs. Greenleaf is depicted as a "huge human mound" with "small eyes, the colour of two field peas" and the expression of a bulldog (p. 29); Mrs. Pritchard is portrayed as a large woman with "a shelf of stomach" and eyes resembling a weasel's (p. 125); Mrs. Freeman, finally, is likened to an enormous machine. She has "beady steel-pointed eyes" and three expressions" neutral, forward, and reverse (pp. 163, 159).

	Her forward expression was steady and driving like the advance of a heavy truck. Her eyes never swerved to left or right but turned as the story turned as if they followed a yellow line down the center of it. (p. 159)
The author's own negative attitude towards the poor in spirit is also revealed in the portrayal of another group of females: the widowed farm-owners who employ the Shortleys, the Pritchards, the Freemans and the Greenleafs. These women, too, emerge as grotesques, although on a smaller scale. The high opinion they hold of themselves and their efficiency render them both comic and frightening while their strange fondness for proverbial expressions accentuates their ludicrousness. The satirical portraits of Mrs. May and Mrs. McIntyre are particularly comic-grotesque. Both pride themselves on being good Christian women whose kindness towards others seldom or never pays off. In reality they are only nominal Christians, imbued with prejudices and full of condescension towards Negroes, poor whites and, in Mrs. McIntyre's case, foreigners. Just as Mrs. May feels that the Greenleaf boys should be forever thankful to her for giving them her sons' discarded clothes and their father a job in the first place, Mrs. McIntyre feels that the Guizacs "should be grateful for anything they could get" and consider themselves "lucky . . . to escape from over there and come to a place like this . . . their farm" (p. 187).

Three other widows, the Grandmother, Julian's mother and Mrs. Turpin, who have all been mentioned earlier (see pp. 23, 60, 65), bear a close likeness to this group as far as their general attitude towards life and towards other people is concerned. One of the Grandmother's prime concerns is to appear lady-like in the eyes of others which is why she dresses with such care before the car trip. "In case of an accident, anyone seeing her dead on the highway would know at once that she was a lady" (p. 13). Julian's mother also prides herself on being "somebody". She never fails to remind her son that his great-grandfather was a former governor of the state and the owner of two hundred slaves, and her favourite saying is, "if you know who you are, you can go anywhere" (p. 9). The spiritual indigence that these two women reveal, and which the author mercilessly ridicules, makes them grotesque. In the case of Julian's mother, her inner grotesqueness is underlined by her physical unattractiveness—her "dumpy figure" crowned by an atrocious hat that is ugly beyond description (p. 8).

Mrs. Turpin is likewise very class-conscious and considers
herself lucky not to have been born a "nigger" or "white trash" (p. 166). It is not until a mad girl at the doctor's surgery calls her "an old wart hog" and tells her to "go back to hell" that she starts taking a closer look at herself and the life she is leading and becomes aware of "her festering sores of conceit and patronizing charity" (p. 170). Her vision of the suffering that lies ahead of her, and other kindred spirits, seems to foreshadow a possible redemption. The others all meet with tragic ends as befits the author's attitude to this kind of pretender.

Eudora Welty has also created self-righteous women of the type found in Flannery O'Connor's fiction. In the story about the half-witted girl Lily Daw there are no less than three of them, Mrs. Watts, Mrs. Carson and Aimee Slocum. In the name of Christian charity, these women think of every conceivable trick to lure away poor Lily to the Ellisville Institute for the Feeble-Minded, where she will be safely out of the reach of young men, including the xylophone player she plans to marry.

"... we'll give you lots of gorgeous things if you'll only go to Ellisville instead of getting married."
"What will you give me?" asked Lily.
"I'll give you a pair of hemstitched pillowcases," said Mrs. Carson.
"I'll give you a big caramel cake," said Mrs. Watts.
"I'll give you a souvenir from Jackson--a little toy bank," said Aimee Slocum. "Now will you go?"
"No," said Lily. (pp. 12-13)

Additional promises of "a pretty little Bible" and "a pink crêpe de Chine brassière with adjustable shoulder straps" likewise fail to have the desired effect (p. 13). Nor does Lily seem to relish the prospect of learning basket-weaving at the Institute. In desperation Mrs. Carson tries a new tactic:

"We've all asked God, Lily, ... and God seemed to tell us--Mr. Carson, too--that the place where you ought to be, so as to be happy, was Ellisville." (p. 13)

No sooner has Lily been persuaded to leave for the Institute than the xylophone player turns up, asking for his bride-to-be. Realizing that the young man is not "after Lily's body alone," as they had feared, the three women suddenly change their minds and pull Lily off the train at the last moment (p. 12).

"We're taking you to get married," said Mrs. Watts.
"But I don't want to git married," said Lily, begin-
ning to whimper. "I'm going to Ellisville."
"Hush, and we'll all have some ice-cream cones later," whispered Mrs. Carson. (p. 19)

To make certain that the young man will not have second thoughts Mrs. Carson calls for her husband, the Baptist preacher, to marry the couple right away.

Here, as in "Clytie" and "Keela, the Outcast Indian Maiden," the author amuses herself by turning the tables completely: after the confrontation with the three supposedly normal women, the reader feels that the feeble-minded Lily is less grotesque than they are. Although the young girl can be said to behave in an odd, erratic manner, there is nothing malicious or underhand about her; her delightful naïvité and frankness make her, above all, a comic character. Mrs. Watts, Mrs. Carson and Aimee Slocum, on the other hand, do not only turn out to be smug and hypocritical but also completely heartless in their treatment of the poor girl. The sympathy one feels for Lily reduces her grotesqueness to practically nothing while the three women become grotesque in her stead--comic in their purblind vision and perverted interest in sex and frightening in their strong belief in their own goodness and infallibility. In an O'Connor story, their lack of true charity would most likely have caused them to meet with an uncanny end; in Welty's story their grotesqueness serves once more to exemplify the theme of the dignity of the mentally afflicted versus the depravity of the sane.

No less comic, but possibly more frightening, are the women one encounters in Eudora Welty's "Petrified Man." The title of the story refers to a person in a freak show in whom, as Leota tells her beauty parlour customer,

"... ever'thing ever since he was nine years old, when it goes through his digestion, see, somehow Mrs. Pike says it goes to his joints and has been turning to stone." (p. 41)

Before long, the reader realizes, however, that the Petrified Man, the pygmies and all the other strange creatures displayed in the travelling show are no more freakish and grotesque than Leota, her customer Mrs. Fletcher and Leota's friend Mrs. Pike. Not only are the latter "petrified" in their own rigid thinking and set ways but their entire outlook on life and treatment of others are monstrous and inhuman. Their husbands whom they treat in a contemptuous and superior manner, become the particu-
lar butts of their vulgar remarks. This process of dehumanization has been going on so long, as Ruth Vande Kieft points out, that the men, too, have been "turned to stone (in effect rendered impotent)--by the women."\textsuperscript{77} "Petrified Man," then, is a title with many levels of meaning.

To reinforce the grotesqueness of the women the beauty parlour is turned into something of a torture chamber. After "pressing into Mrs. Fletcher's scalp with strong red-nailed fingers," Leota dashed the comb through the air, and paused dramatically as a cloud of Mrs. Fletcher's hennaed hair floated out of the lavender teeth like a small storm cloud.

"Hair fallin'." (p. 33)

"Bet it was that last perm'nent you gave me that did it," Mrs. Fletcher said cruelly. "Remember you cooked me fourteen minutes." (p. 34)

Mrs. Fletcher could only sputter and let the curling fluid roll into her ear. (p. 38)

... Leota was almost choking her with the cloth, pinning it so tight, ... . She paddled her hands in the air until Leota wearily loosened her. (p. 46)

"After as well as during the treatment, the women are made to look horribly ugly, big-headed, like a collection of Medusas--and the serpents' tongues are in their mouths," Vande Kieft explains.\textsuperscript{78} In other words, "Petrified Man" is a good illustration --Eudora Welty's best according to most critics-- of the topic of man's depravity to which the author so often returns. Here too, as Appel states, she displays her "most brilliant use of the grotesque."\textsuperscript{79}

Like Flannery O'Connor and Eudora Welty, Faulkner has made use of the grotesque to reveal his contempt for insincere, perverted people. One example is Cora Tull in \textit{As I Lay Dying}. Ferguson rightly speaks of her "exaggerated, hollow pietism," which "makes her religious commitment a joke," calling it "a cover-up, a mask, a means by which she can be conveniently blind to her own shortcomings" (p. 104). It is this blindness, this complete unawareness that she, too, is a sinful creature, coupled with an almost unbelievable feeling of superiority and lack of empathy that makes her both ludicrous and frightening and creates her grotesqueness. It is frightening how presumptuously she takes it upon herself to judge and condemn other people's behaviour:

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Anse's, Jewel's, Addie's, etc., and how confidently she expresses her belief in her own salvation in the words of the hymn: "I am bounding toward my God and my reward" (p. 73). More comic is perhaps her efforts to turn herself into a kind of martyr who, in visiting the dying Addie, is forced to neglect her "own family and duties so that somebody would be with her Addie in her last moments and she would not have to face the Great Unknown without one familiar face to give her courage" (pp. 20-21). The remark that follows: "Not that I deserve credit for it: I will expect the same for myself," betrays that her ulterior motive is, in effect, quite egoistic, and heightens the comical effect (p. 21). The impression of Cora as a comic-grotesque is further strengthened by Mr. Tull's revealing reflections on his wife's domineering nature:

I reckon if there's ere a man or woman anywhere that He could turn it all over to and go away with His mind at rest, it would be Cora. And I reckon she would make a few changes, no matter how He was running it. And I reckon they would be for man's good. Leastways, we would have to like them. Leastways, we might as well go on and make like we did. (p. 60)

By making Cora "a mere parrot of religious clinches sic and utterings," as Ferguson expresses it, Faulkner rejects "the tendency of man to become more absorbed in the trappings than in the spirit or substance of religion" (p. 105). In the Japanese interviews in 1955, Faulkner touches on this, saying

... sometimes Christianity gets pretty debased...

I think that the trouble with Christianity is that we've never tried it yet, but we must use it--it's a nice glib tongue but we have never really tried Christianity.

As Ferguson says, Cora's grotesqueness can be taken as a partial expression of this imputation (p. 106).

Anse in As I Lay Dying is another of Faulkner's sanctimonious comic-grotesques who frequently takes the Lord's name in his mouth. Like Cora, he has a very high opinion of himself although he perhaps expresses it in a less overbearing way: he regards himself as an extremely hard-working, god-fearing man who has always made great sacrifices for his family.

In reality, Anse is a very selfish man who is even loath to spend a few dollars on a doctor's fee to save his wife's life. When Addie consequently dies, he lets everyone know that he sees it as his holy duty to carry out her wish to be buried in
Jefferson when, actually, his real motive for going there is to get himself a new set of teeth. "'God's will be done,'" he says humbly. "'Now I can get them teeth'" (p. 44). Anse's egocentricity is also highlighted later when his stinginess almost causes Cash to lose a leg or when he appropriates Dewey Dell's money to buy the teeth. Anse's want of true love for his family is revealed not least by the ease with which he parts from Darl when the latter is taken to the lunatic asylum. However, like Cora, Anse himself never doubts that there is a reward for him "above."

Contemplating all the trials he has had to face on his way to Jefferson, he says, "'I am the chosen of the Lord, for who He loveth, so doeth He chastiseth,'" adding "'But I be durn if He don't take some curious ways to show it, seems like!'" (p. 85).

Anse's ingenuous lack of self-knowledge and concern for others constitutes a frightening streak in his nature. Basically, however, Anse is a comic character, who does not only look very foolish in his all too small, ill-fitting clothes but also acts and reasons like a fool. Yet, his grotesqueness is toned down by a certain disarming charm which originates partly in his incorrigible optimism and determination. The final, highly amusing scene illustrates the sanguine and the captivating, as well as the droll sides of Anse's character. No sooner has Anse returned the spades he borrowed to dig a grave for Addie, than he appears before the children with a "duck-shaped woman all dressed up, with them kind of hard-looking pop eyes like she was daring ere a man to say nothing" (p. 208).

'It's Cash and Jewel and Vardaman and Dewey Dell,' pa says, kind of hangdog and proud too, with his teeth and all, even if he wouldn't look at us. 'Meet Mrs Bundren,' he says. (p. 208)

Commenting on this scene, Gossett aptly observes, "The distance between the expected behavior and the actual behavior makes the occasion humorously grotesque."81

Religious Comic-Grotesques

The religious hypocrisy displayed by the majority of the characters in the above group becomes even more marked among the comic-grotesques who are actually in the Church's employ.

In contrast to the rather sinister "spiritual grotesques" created by Flannery O'Connor (see pp. 68-72), those populating
Goyen's *Savata, My Fair Sister* are all frivolously comic. The portrait gallery in Goyen's work is, however, reminiscent of that in *Wise Blood*. The novel swarms with characters dealing in religion, including a child preacher and a sleek, glib-tongued performer paralleling Onnie Jay; here, too, one finds a fake blind man, prostitutes and physically deformed people. One minor difference is that Goyen's milieu seems less dismal than Flannery O'Connor's. A more significant one is that his grotesques, as these characters must practically all be called, are treated with a tolerance that Flannery O'Connor rarely displays.

The most complicated of the characters is the protagonist, a Negro Jew by the name of Ruby Drew. She narrates how she and her former employer, Prince o'Light, succeed in rescuing her sister, Savata, from a sinful way of life and how Savata is trained and ordained a bishop in the church they start. Ruby also describes how that establishment—the Light of the World Holiness Church—first flourishes and then rapidly declines.

Ruby Drew is primarily comic as is brought out by her apposite remarks, her keen observations and the hilarious way in which she makes use of phrases and arguments picked up from her opponents. Although the narrator naturally tries to put herself in a favourable light, one soon realizes that she has another, somewhat frightening side to her nature which, together with the comic trait, turn her into a grotesque. Besides revealing a complacency and a self-praise that tend to make her quite overbearing, this "God's Scout doing God's work," as she calls herself, constantly assumes a martyr-like "Thank you, Jesus"-attitude (pp. 101, 143). She seems to take a delight in confessing certain faults and vices, such as her weakness for Prince o'Light, her feminine vanity and the "blessed deception" she often resorts to "so as to startle up flabby Christians out of their lackadaisical sloth" while she is completely blind to other undesirable propensities such as her own ambition to lead the church (p. 100). The following excerpt describing her and Savata's reversed roles unmasks much of Ruby's true nature:

Oh how the Mighty had fallen—all around me. Now I rose up. I could have made Savata my fair sister eat crow and plenty of it, but I kept God's mercy and suggested with charity, as becomes a Bishop, that Savata take over my house-cleaning jobs for a while until she could get herself straight. That could be her penance.
I figured that while she was on her knees in her repentance she might as well bend over and move around a little with a mopping rag in her hand; and while she was walking the floor studying her sins 'twould do her no harm to push a vacuum cleaner ahead of herself....

Well, she did it, thank you. She assumed my jobs. Dressed in a plain cleaning woman's garment, she scrubbed and she scoured.... Her poor hands were red and rough and her bones ached. I admired her--but it was dangerous to do too much admiring with Savata. She'd come back on you, taking advantage of your admirations, in the end. I couldn't trust her any more.

I went forward in my humble church, (pp. 143-44)

Ruby's sister, Savata, is another grotesque described in comic terms. What Savata might lack in wits, she makes up for in good looks. While Ruby is dark and said to resemble "a sack of potatoes with varicose veins," Savata is blond and beautiful with an enormous power of attraction (p. 75). As a former nightclub artist, she can also sing and act. All these qualities are useful when Savata is ordained a Bishop of LOWHC, in a ceremony that makes "Aida look like a summer camp show" (p. 57). However, like Ruby, Savata has a dual nature; her weakness for elegant clothes, furs and jewellery gains the upper hand over her spiritual interests. Encouraged by her new shrewd business manager, Canaan Johnson, and the crowds that throng to see her, she starts behaving like a star, has her name put up in lights outside the church, spends her days having massages and hair-do's, appearing on the radio and giving interviews. Only occasionally does she go around "in a limousine blessing the poor in tenements" (p. 63). The frightening thing about Savata, then, is that she allows herself to become warped by power and that she unscrupulously exploits other people's credulity and religious needs in order to rise in rank. Both Ruby Drew and Prince o'Light try in vain to make Savata change her ways and stop her from turning the church service into a night club show, but it is not until Canaan Johnson vanishes with the church funds and Savata's jewellery that the whole bubble bursts with the result that Savata has a nervous breakdown.

To the very last Prince o'Light has faith in Savata and defends her against Ruby Drew, having once himself "wallowed" "in the Sea of Flesh" and been "the Devil's own son" (p. 32). He, too, is a grotesque character, a sort of Elmer Gantry, whose very open-heartedness creates suspicion and lays him open to
ridicule. Recalling his sinful youth, he says,

I was cock of the walk—tailor-made suits, silken shirts, silken neckties, ruby stick pin, diamond cuff-links and shoes of softest suede. (ibid.)

"That fruit," Savata disdainfully calls him, seeing only the repulsive side of him (p. 89). In outward appearance he is tall and handsome with but a single flaw: one eye is smaller than the other. Prince o'Light, however, regards the difference in size as "a mark of distinction, . . . one saw evil, one saw good; the balance of the mortal world hung in his head" (p. 20). Eventually he, too, disappears; Ruby Drew learns that he has started to drink and has "gone bankrupt of soul and pocket" (p. 143). Presumably he no longer takes "exercises to induce continence" (p. 13).

Both Ruby Drew and Savata—and to a lesser extent Prince o'Light—create that tension in response that is ultimately produced by the grotesque.

Goyen himself has described Savata, My Fair Sister as "a little story of love and fun and small sadesses," the function of which is to cause the reader "to be amused by the comic adventures of the characters in it."83 Although stressing that the novel was not written with any serious didactic purpose in mind, the author does admit that he is "poking a little fun at some kinds of religious groups"; this then can be taken as one of the motives for the grotesque element.84 The other is a general exposure of human foibles, but one that is devoid of malice.

Another religious comic-grotesque, presumably created for the sake of amusement, is Sister Bessie in Tobacco Road. A former prostitute, later the respectable wife of Brother Rice, Sister Bessie carries on her husband's good work after his death. Her preaching brings her to Jeeter's house where she meets and falls in love with Dude. The fact that she is twenty-five years older than the boy does not prevent her from deciding to marry him on the grounds that the Lord has told her, "Sister Bessie, Dude Lester is the man I want you to mate" (p. 72). As for Dude, the thought of the new automobile Sister Bessie has promised to buy with her late husband's insurance money allows him to overcome his fear of the woman and consent.

One of the funniest scenes in Tobacco Road occurs when Sister Bessie, Dude and Jeeter go to Augusta in the new car—
which is already half ruined from being run without oil and crashed into a wagon—and spend the night in a hotel. Being poor, they can only afford one room where there is but one bed. The hotel owner, however, has recognized Bessie and soon suggests that she sleep in another room. To her surprise, she finds a man in the bed. After a while she is asked to move again. The next morning she describes her nocturnal adventures to Dude and Jeeter:

"I reckon the hotel was pretty full last night, . . . Every once in a while somebody came and called me to another room. Every room I went to there was somebody sleeping in the bed. Looked like nobody knowed where my bed was. They was always tellin' me to sleep in a new one. I didn't sleep none, except about an hour just a while ago. There sure is a lot of men stay­ing there." (p. 130)

As this quotation reveals, and as other passages confirm, Sister Bessie is extremely naïve and simple-minded. She not only cuts a ludicrous figure, however; she is also quite repulsive-looking and gives people the shudders due to the fact that she has no nose, only two holes instead. The way this character is projected paves the way for the identification of which Steig speaks. As in the case of Mrs. Gamp, . . . her comic attributes allow the reader a kind of "victory" over the superego, by making it unnecessary for us to take her seriously on the conscious level, while allowing us to identify with her without being fully aware that we do so.

Whereas Goyen and Caldwell portray the shortcomings of their religious grotesques in a very light-hearted manner, Faulkner is more severe in his criticism of those who are in the service of the Church and prove to be two-faced in their worship. The best example of such a grotesque who is painted as a comic character is probably Whitfield in As I Lay Dying. As will be recalled, Whitfield's love affair with Addie has resulted in the birth of Jewel. Whereas Addie feels no remorse but rather sees her moral lapse as a sweet revenge on Anse, Whitfield is constantly beset with feelings of guilt. When he learns that Addie is dying, he prays to the Lord that she will not betray their secret, pleading, "Let me not have also the sin of her broken vow upon my soul" (p. 141). Then, after wrestling "thigh to thigh with Satan," he sets off to face his "Gethsemane": confessing to Addie's husband, "Anse, I have sinned. Do with me as
you will" (p. 142). When he finally arrives at the home of the Bundrens, however, he learns that Addie has already died and that her family have left for Jefferson to have her buried. Immensely relieved that he has escaped a disgrace that seemed inevitable, he asks Anse's forgiveness in his absence and expresses his confidence that the Lord will be merciful and "accept the will for the deed"--just as "He in His infinite wisdom... restrained the tale from her dying lips as she lay surrounded by those who loved and trusted her" (ibid.). Light of heart, he then enters "the house of bereavement" (ibid.). "'God's grace upon this house,'" he says (ibid.).

Ferguson describes Whitfield as

a comic preacher whose fanciful religious vision serves merely as an escape from accepting responsibility for the consequences of his action

and claims that it is

this gap between his hypocritical, righteous-sounding rhetoric and real intent behind his actions that accounts for his grotesqueness. (p. 45)

All this is plausible but the first quotation seems to clash with Ferguson's statement earlier on that Whitfield "has a strong sense of piety" when, in actual fact, his sense of piety is very warped (ibid.).

What prevents Whitfield from becoming solely a pathetic, clownish figure, whose hypocrisy renders him simultaneously ludicrous and frightening, as do his high-flown phrases, his religious extacy and not least his tendency to identify with Christ, is the predicament he finds himself in as a minister. As Faulkner himself has explained:

he had to live in public the life which the ignorant fanatic people of the isolated and rural South demand of a man of God, when actually he was just a man like any of them.

When one understands this dilemma, which explains much of Whitfield's grotesqueness, the minister undoubtedly becomes more convincing as a character.

The hypocrisy displayed by Whitfield is overshadowed by that of another of Faulkner's religious grotesques, Gail Hightower, in Light in August. For whereas Whitfield's pastoral work constitutes a calling, Hightower's only interest in being a minister in Jefferson is that this office gives him the oppor-
tunity to live in a place where he can hear the reverberations of history and use the pulpit as a forum for his expositions on the glories of the Civil War. His obsession with that epoch—especially the valorous deeds of his grandfather, whom he worships to the point of idolatry—is both comic and frightening.

It was as if he couldn't get religion and that galloping cavalry and his dead grandfather shot from the galloping horse untangled from each other, even in the pulpit. (p. 48)

The frightening part of Hightower's preoccupation with the glorious past of the South is that it results in a complete neglect of duty, not only to the congregation but, above all, to his wife whom his indifference and lack of feeling drive to promiscuous living, insanity and finally suicide. His fixation also leads to an unhealthy seclusion, symbolized by his very name, that reaches its climax when at long last he is dismissed from his ministry and isolates himself, with his strange visions, in a town house. As Clark states, this voluntary recluse "invites comparison to Emily Grierson of 'A Rose for Emily' in that they both cling so tenaciously to the past that they deny the present, become death-in-life figures. In each case their physical characteristics dramatize their decay" (p. 159).

The comic element which greatly alleviates the frightening and tragic impression Hightower creates is found in the above-mentioned ability for the man to become so completely carried away by the daring exploits of his grandfather and the events of the Civil War that he forgets all about time and place:

They the congregation would look at him and wonder if he even knew that she his wife was not there, if he had not even forgot that he ever had a wife, up there in the pulpit with his hands flying around him and the dogma he was supposed to preach all full of galloping cavalry and defeat and glory just as when he tried to tell them on the street about the galloping horses, it in turn would get all mixed up with absolution and choirs of martial seraphim. (p. 48)

and by way of another example:

when the church ladies would go to call Hightower would meet them alone, in his shirt sleeves and without any collar, in a flurry, and for a time it would seem as though he could not even think what they had come for and what he ought to do. (pp. 48-49)

Such systematic absentmindedness is, according to Bergson, "the most comical thing imaginable." Much of the comedy in those
parts of the novel that deal with Hightower therefore lies in
the satire permeating the author's characterization of him. It
also comes out in the ironic fact that Hightower, who is so pre-
occupied with the heroic deeds of others, is himself ludicrously
afraid of reality and totally incapable of coping with it. When
he does get a chance to do something for another person, that is,
to save Christmas's life by letting it be known that the young
man was with him at the time of Joanna Burden's murder, he
flatly refuses to perjure himself. Only when it is too late,
when Grimm and his men burst into the house intent upon killing
the fugitive, does he feel his responsibility awaken within him
and, in a voice that can barely be heard in the midst of all the
commotion, he tries to gain their attention.

'Men! . . . listen to me. He was here that night. He
was with me the night of the murder. I swear to God-
(p. 349)
As might be expected, Hightower's "clownish attempt at being
sacrificially involved in saving Christmas from a violent death," as Ferguson puts it, is of no avail (p. 63). "Has every preacher
and old maid in Jefferson taken their pants down to the yellow-
bellied son of a bitch?" Grimm snaps, flings Hightower aside,
and proceeds to fire his gun in Christmas's direction (p. 349).
Besides speaking of Hightower's clownish behaviour, Ferguson
considers his "lack of courage" to be a further factor which
"turns him into a grotesque, . . . who can make only a gesture
at confronting the real demands of existence" (p. 62). As has
been shown, Hightower's clownishness and cowardice are not the
only qualities that bring about his grotesqueness but they do
play a significant part.
NOTES TO CHAPTER V

1Sypher, p. 201.


3In his article "'A Visit of Charity': Menippean Satire," Studies in Short Fiction 1:4 (Summer 1964), Jo A. Bradham states that the story "relies on the basic irony between title and action to create much of its effect," p. 263.

4Bradham, p. 260. The story satirizes organized charity which "is shown to be a mockery of Christian charity," p. 260. In addition to this attack on a particular philosophy, the story contains, according to Bradham, other essential elements which are typical of Menippean satire: "grotesque exaggeration; caricature; dramatic exchange, which borders on the trial; animal and mechanical diminution; and a temporary change of worlds by which a traveler gains a new perspective," p. 258.

5Bradham, p. 263.

6Sypher, p. 240.


8Hays, The Limping Hero.

9Ibid., p. 192.

10Ibid., p. 97.

11Ibid.


14O'Connor, The Habit of Being, p. 171. Here the author speaks of Hulga's "maimed soul."

15Kayser, Das Groteske, p. 198.

16William Shakespeare, Hamlet, act 1, sc. 3, line 50.

17O'Connor, Mystery and Manners, p. 99; Hays, p. 96.

18The expression is used by Joan Brittain in the article "The Fictional Family of Flannery O'Connor," Renascence 19 (Fall...
Some critics have also classified Lucynell as a grotesque because of her physical and mental state. Considering the sympathy with which the author has portrayed her, this designation seems incorrect. Like such characters as Bishop (The Violent Bear It Away) and Benjy (The Sound and the Fury), Lucynell remains "in the innocent realm of childhood"—an expression used by Thelma Shinn in her article "Flannery O'Connor and the Violence of Grace," Contemporary Literature 9 (Winter 1968), p. 61.

The fact that Shiftlet uses the same phrase when telling the hitchhiker about his mother that the boy in the restaurant had used of Lucynell, seems to indicate, however, that the girl is on his mind, while the outburst indicates that he probably has a bad conscience.

Reichnitz's Freudian explanation of the ending appears quite far-fetched (pp. 64-66). He says, for instance:

After the marriage, he [Shiftlet] is prompted to leave her, both as an act of vengeance—a substitute mother, Lucynell must be punished as the agent provocateur of his castration [the loss of his arm]—-and as an act of propitiation to the father figure within himself. (p. 65)

O'Connor, Mystery and Manners, p. 153.

O'Connor, The Habit of Being, p. 350. Muller's interpretation that Mr. Shiftlet's awareness of the wrong he has done will eventually save him, does not seem to be in keeping with the author's intention judging by this statement.

William Faulkner, The Mansion (London, 1969). The references in this section are to The Hamlet, which was mentioned in the previous chapter.

Annie Reich, for instance, uses the expression in an article called "The Structure of the Grotesque-Comic Sublimation," The Yearbook of Psychoanalysis 6 (1950), pp. 194-207. As for his relationship to the Snopes, Faulkner once stated: "Of the Snopes, I'm terrified... They have been in--alive and have been in motion, I have hated them and laughed at them and been afraid of them for thirty years now" (Blotner and Gwynn, pp. 197, 201).

Lawson's footnotes read as follows: Kayser, p. 188 (Lawson refers to the translation by Weisstein); Annie Reich, "The Structure of the Grotesque-Comic Sublimation," The Yearbook of Psychoanalysis, VI (1950), 202.


Flannery O'Connor, The Complete Stories (New York, 1971), pp. 421-44. (Subsequent quotations are from this edition and page numbers are indicated in the text.)

Ralph Ciancio, "The Grotesque in Modern American Fiction: An Existential Theory" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of
In Goyen's story "The Letter in the Cedarchest," Collected Stories, pp. 15-36, the reader meets another woman suffering from a persecution complex: Little Pidgeon. Although she is "no longer accountable to herself" (p. 23), she belongs to those mentally retarded people whose grotesqueness is almost totally nullified thanks to the author's sympathetic characterization. Goyen's portrayal of Little Pidgeon contains none of the satire behind Eudora Welty's description of Sister.

The many similarities in style, theme and characterization between Eudora Welty's "Why I Live at the P. O." and Capote's "My Side of the Matter," The Grass Harp, pp. 196-205, can hardly be accidental. Although Capote claims that he never read any of the works of his Southern fellow writers, he has presumably amused himself by working out a parody which makes Eudora Welty's story appear only mildly grotesque by comparison.

Aimee appears in Miss Mamma Aimee, Anette in All Night Long (New York, 1942), Medora in The Earnshaw Neighborhood (London, 1971) and Maud Douhit in Tragic Ground (New York, 1944).


Whereas Jacobs feels that Tobacco Road was a failure as a social novel, the Lesters being "too degenerate for the reader to believe in" (p. 293), Robert Cantwell in an article entitled "Caldwell's Characters: Why Don't They Leave?" Georgia Review 11 (Fall 1957), p. 252, states that "as a social document, Tobacco Road was a highly effective instrument in the various projects of soil conservation and social welfare of the time."

Ferguson calls Eula "a whimsically created grotesque," p. 142.


Joseph L. Blotner and Frederick L. Gwynn, Faulkner in
As opposed to the many oversexed characters created by Caldwell, Katie Mangrum in Miss Mamma Aimee has no interest in sex whatsoever and keeps a sturdy curtain-rod in the bed between her and her husband. Pearl in Tobacco Road and Madge in The Weather Shelter (New York, 1969) also refuse to fulfil their conjugal duties but then Pearl is hardly more than a child and Madge is a lesbian.

Caldwell, God's Little Acre, p. 29; Darling Jill also appears in God's Little Acre, Claudelle English in the novel of the same name (Boston, 1955), Miss Willie in "August Afternoon," We Are the Living, Connie in Miss Mamma Aimee.

According to Jacobs, "The Humor of Tobacco Road," p. 292, this unabashed interest in sex, displayed by the rest of the family as well, "is an ancient humorous device, familiar since the fabliaux, the bawdy tales told in the Middle Ages." He adds, "when people behave like subhuman creatures, we may be appalled, but if no harm is done, the reaction is usually laughter."

In contrast to the other writers treated here, Caldwell seldom makes use of the device of letting an outer deformity mirror an inner one. With the exception of Ellie May, who is hare-lipped, and Sister Bessie, whose looks are marred by an underdeveloped nose, his characters are usually quite good-looking people whose grotesqueness lies on another plane. Nor does Caldwell use any grotesque imagery to speak of; the few similes one does encounter in his works are, like his language on the whole, simple and straightforward and not very derogatory. In Tobacco Road, for instance, Jeeter is described as having "mule-like determination" and Mother Lester is said to look "like an old scarecrow" (pp. 12, 17).

Steig, p. 259.
Ibid., pp. 259-60.
Ibid., p. 19.
William Faulkner, Soldiers' Pay (New York, 1926). (Subsequent quotations are from this edition and page numbers are given in the text.); Bradbury, p. 51.
Ibid., p. 7; Aubrey Beardsley, Under the Hill (London, 1903).
Bross, p. 7.
In Faulkner's second novel, Mosquitoes (New York, 1927), the reader meets with a ladies' man of a different kind: Ernest Talliaferro. Finding himself a widower at thirty-eight, Talliaferro sets out in eager pursuit of love to make up for his
cheerless youth and his not too successful marriage. Somehow misled by his own sexual urge, which he calls his "most dominating compulsion," he imagines himself to be quite attractive to women (p. 9). He is also convinced that his work—dealing in women's underwear—has made him an expert on female psychology. To his great dismay, however, all his attempts to find happiness, including his bullying women into loving him, are abortive. Like Jones, Talliaferro cuts a comic and pathetic figure, but he has none of Jones's repulsive or frightening traits. To call this rather amiable man a grotesque, as Ferguson does, seems to be an exaggeration. In any case, the characterization of Talliaferro does not satisfy Thomson's demand for an "unresolved clash of incompatibles in work and response" (p. 27).

Horace Benbow in Sartoris, another character involved in the search for love, is also classified as a grotesque by Ferguson. His motivation is that Benbow "turns grotesque because his romantic fantasies interfere with the possibilities for active involvement and render him merely an amusingly ineffectual lover" (p. 22). Ferguson is no doubt right in calling Benbow ludicrous and seeing him as "akin to the comic-pathetic hero of the dark comedy," but just as Talliaferro fails short of creating that tension between opposing elements of which Thomson speaks, Benbow displays no frightening or repulsive side to his character that can serve as an antithesis to his ludicrousness (p. 23).

Two other pursuers of love, Harry Wilbourne and Charlotte Rittenmeyer in Wild Palms (New York, 1939), are likewise described as comic-grotesque by Ferguson. Calling them "a comical Romeo and Juliet, a ridiculous Adam and Eve," Ferguson claims that they become grotesque "in their humorously pathetic quest for love through excessive romantic indulgence" (p. 72). It is true that the couple's vain search for the perfect love affair, the perpetual honeymoon, has its humorous sides but the designation comic-grotesque is in both cases a misnomer. Harry is, if not "a burlesqued Don Juan"—"Don Juan" has, after all become applicable to a man with a very wide interest in the opposite sex and Harry is only interested in one woman—at least quite hilarious in his inaptitude and clumsiness as a lover and in "his romantic notions" (pp. 72-73). There is, however, nothing repulsive or frightening in his nature that can warrant his being called a grotesque; he is merely comic and pathetic. Charlotte, on the other hand, is rather frightening in her sexual compulsion and belongs more to the company of such Faulknerian creations as Joanna Burden and Zilphia Gant. Hers is a destructive love for, as William Van O'Connor states, it "is at the expense of her husband, her children, her own life, and Wilbourne's career and peace of mind. She is not in love with Wilbourne, she is in love with love. . . . In a sense, Wilbourne is her victim." William Faulkner, University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers, no. 3 (Minneapolis, rev. reprint ed., 1965), p. 33.

In this connection, a remark might also be made about a professional in the field of love: Miss Reba, the Memphis brothel owner who appears in several amusing episodes in Faulkner's works. Ferguson emphasizes Miss Reba's constant upholding of a "comic pretense of propriety and social reputation against the reality of an illegal, immoral trade" (p. 134). In addition, he describes her as a "human, tender, warm-hearted eccentric bawd" and as a lady with "charm and grace" who gives a motherly im-
pression (ibid.). All of this seems feasible enough, only neither the first statement nor the qualities enumerated above add up to her being a grotesque, as Ferguson claims, whether "ignoble" or otherwise. Miss Reba is mainly comic, and she does not arouse "those mixed reactions of fear and amusement, laughter and pain in the observer" upon which Ferguson himself insists in the abstract (p. iii).

56 Oliver Evans, "The Theme of Spiritual Isolation in Carson McCullers," South: Modern Southern Literature in Its Cultural Setting, eds. Louis D. Rubin, Jr. and Robert D. Jacobs (Garden City, New York, 1961), p. 345. In the particular love affair described in The Ballad, Miss Amelia's masculinity makes it natural for her to take on the role of the lover. To go as far as Robert Phillips who in his Freudian interpretation—in "Painful Love: Carson McCullers' Parable," Southwest Review 51 (Winter 1966)—sees Miss Amelia's "elongated," manlike body as a phallic symbol and Cousin Lymon's "small, round-backed" figure as symbolic of the "female organ," is probably to misinterpret the author's intentions (p. 82). In any case, it can hardly have been her aim to produce "a caricature of the grotesque and the absurd—a deliberate exaggeration of malformations and perversion beyond belief" (p. 85). Carson McCullers's own credo on love, set forth in The Ballad, pp. 33-34, seems to contradict this interpretation.


59 Ibid., pp. 526, 533.

60 Sarah Ruth, on the other hand, can be seen as an incarnation of Southern fundamentalism, whose God is "stern and vengeful" and "so ready to condemn, so reluctant to forgive" (Browning, p. 533). Of her Flannery O'Connor says in a letter, "Sarah Ruth was the heretic—the notion that you can worship in pure spirit" (The Habit of Being, p. 594).

61 O'Connor, Mystery and Manners, p. 116.

62 Kenneth Burke, Attitudes Toward History (Los Altos, 1959), p. 58. Burke expresses here an opinion similar to that of Bergson who has claimed that "laughter has no greater foe than emotion" (p. 63 ).

63 This notion is also supported by George Meredith who has stated that a person's talent for comedy is measured by his "being able to detect the ridicule of them you love without loving them less" (as quoted by Sypher, xiv-xv).

64 Hulga Hopewell may be said to belong to both this group and the group of "limping heroes."

Both characters have previously been mentioned in the chapter on the macabre-grotesque (see pp. 67, 71).

O'Connor, The Habit of Being, p. 491. That good is not to be taken literally even in Sheppard's case is seen from another statement where the author says of "The Lame Shall Enter First" that "the story is about a man who thought he was good and thought he was doing good when he wasn't" (p. 490).

Some critics and scholars regard Mr. Compson in The Sound and the Fury as one of these intellectual grotesques. Ferguson, for instance, classifies him as such and speaks of his "cynical despair" which "reflects an alcoholic's wryly humorous, total disillusionment with life and society," p. 29. Mr. Compson's philosophy of life is indeed permeated with grim humor. Yet, this circumstance does not seem to make Quentin's father comical enough to arouse that tension in response that a grotesque character, according to Thomson, ought to create.

Shinn, p. 62.

Ibid.

Mrs. Shortley and Mrs. Freeman appear in the afore-mentioned stories "The Displaced Person" and "Good Country People" respectively; Mrs. Pritchard appears in "A Circle in the Fire," Good Man, pp. 125-46, and Mrs. Greenleaf in "Greenleaf," Everything That Rises, pp. 24-47. In contrast to Thelma Shinn, the present author does not consider their husbands grotesque. Mr. Shortley, for instance, seems primarily frightening, Mr. Greenleaf comic.

This is perhaps proved even more by the following quotation: "She swayed back and forth on her hands and knees and groaned, 'Jesus, Jesus ... Oh Jesus, stab me in the heart!' Mrs. Greenleaf shrieked. 'Jesus, stab me in the heart!' and she fell back flat in the dirt, a huge human mound, her legs and arms spread out as if she were trying to wrap them around the earth," pp. 29-30.

The same opinion is put forward by Thelma Shinn, p. 62.

Hays, p. 96.


Vande Kieft, p. 72.

Ibid., p. 73

Appel, p. 93.

Blotner and Gwynn, p. 132.

Gossett, p. 34.
In the afore-mentioned article, Thelma Shinn speaks of Flannery O'Connor's "spiritual grotesques," who "seem to consider God 'a physical affliction to be "gotten rid of," as fast as possible,'" p. 61; William Goyen, Savata, My Fair Sister (London, 1963). (Subsequent quotations are from this edition and page numbers are indicated in the text.)

According to a letter to the present author dated August 9, 1981.

Ibid.; There is certainly an abundance of odd communions in the South. Larry Finger goes so far as to state that "religion in the South is itself a distortion of classical Christianity," p. 18.

Steig, p. 259; Thomson, too, speaks of the "delight in seeing taboos flouted, the sense of momentary release from inhibitions," as a response to certain forms of the grotesque, p. 56. In connection with Sister Bessie's grotesqueries, it might also be mentioned that one critic, Mikhail Bakhtin, regards the grotesque as a primarily physical phenomenon, "referring always to the body and bodily excesses and celebrating these in an uninhibited outrageous but essentially joyous fashion" (as stated by Thomson, p. 56). As Thomson correctly points out, Bakhtin's view contains a kernel of truth, yet, it is undoubtedly too narrow—the physical is only one of the several aspects of the grotesque.

Another religious grotesque created by Caldwell is Preacher Clough in Jenny by Nature (New York, 1961) whose immense hypocrissy renders him both comic and frightening.

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CHAPTER SIX
THE GROTESQUE IN NEW WRITERS OF THE SIXTIES

Since the external circumstances as they foster the grotesque in creative writing touched on in the introductory chapter, have not changed to any appreciable extent, it is not surprising to find that this literary phenomenon has prevailed in recent decades.

The South is still in a state of transition. Economically, the region has experienced a period of rapid growth due to the availability of relatively cheap labour and the lack of strong unions.1 With this economic boom has come an increase in the population and number of industries, as well as a greater urbanization.2 However, the financial benefits have not fallen to the lot of the average Southerner. The percentage of people below the so-called poverty level is still much higher in the South than elsewhere in the country according to The U.S. Fact Book of 1978, and no less than eleven of the Southern states are at the bottom of the list as regards income per capita.3

The reason the South is still such a poor region in comparison with the rest of the country—in spite of the heavy northward emigration of destitute blacks in the sixties—can partly be explained by the fact that the South has remained the most rural region in the United States.4 This rurality has been beneficial to at least one occupational group: the Southern writers. In an interview printed in Counterpoint Caldwell explains:

In an isolated community people are individuals. This individuality stands out, it's there for the writer to grab. Because a writer needs individuals, not prototypes, both to stir him and to give him material that makes stories, the writer in the South has an advantage. You can find uniqueness, wonder what makes a person what he is, why he talks as he does, what his social attitudes are, his religious attitudes. These differences, these elements of uniqueness, flourish in isolated regions. To me that's why there has been and is so much material in
Socio-politically, the situation for coloured people is undergoing a change for the better—a few have even succeeded in obtaining high political positions—but it is a slow process and the day of complete racial equality is not yet in sight.\(^5\) One alarming factor is that such a movement as the Ku Klux Klan is once more gaining ground. As late as June, 1981 Roger Handly, one of the leaders of this organization, declared that he considers a racial war inevitable.

In this war many Niggers and Jews are going to die. Others will be executed after the white people have gained the victory. The rest we intend to deport to Africa and Israel.\(^7\)

The violence, so closely affiliated with the grotesque, shows no sign of decreasing. All attempts to interfere with the ordinary citizen's right to purchase guns and other weapons have foundered on the reluctance of top politicians to make themselves unpopular by voting for some sort of arms control. Therefore it is perhaps not surprising to find that Southern states have the highest incidence of murder and non-negligent manslaughter. In 1976, Alabama headed the list with 15.1 such killings per 100,000 inhabitants, followed by Georgia with 13.9, Louisiana with 13.2, Mississippi with 12.5, South Carolina with 11.6, North Carolina with 11.1 and Tennessee with 11.0, thus outdoing New York State (10.9) and Illinois (10.3) which contain such crime-ridden cities as New York City and Chicago.\(^8\)

Another factor touched upon before that naturally remains unchanged is the climate. Explaining why his novel The Last Night of Summer was set in the Mississippi delta, Caldwell, for one, supports the idea that there is a correlation between hot weather and violent conduct:

You might say this particular story could have happened anywhere, yet in my own mind it could only happen where it did . . . . It had to take place in this one particular region, where the people I wanted in the book really are, where this story could be created out of individual lives, where the conflict could arise. In the delta region the heat can be almost unbearable, sometimes, and emotional breaks in people seem to grow naturally from the pressures that build up in them during a really bad heat wave. Toward the end of summer, when the heat breaks in a really wild night of thunderstorms, emotions break wide open, too. All these elements to me could take place in just one locality, and The Last Night
of Summer had to happen in the Mississippi delta. Regardless of what generates the violent deeds, the spirit of violence, which, to all appearances, prevails in the South, has not unexpectedly found expression in its fiction.

The more recent works of Caldwell, Goyen and Eudora Welty written in the grotesque vein have already been discussed in Chapters III-V. Three of the other writers treated in this study died in the sixties: Faulkner in 1962, Flannery O'Connor in 1964 and Carson McCullers in 1967. Although the void they left will be hard to fill, a number of new writers, whose débuts have attracted much attention, hold out hope for the future of Southern literature. Amongst these are Harper Lee, whose first novel, To Kill a Mockingbird (1960), won its author the Pulitzer Prize and Joan Williams, whose initial work, The Morning and the Evening (1961), brought her the $10,000 John P. Marquand Award. There are also quite a few new talented short story writers who have contributed to such anthologies as Southern Writing in the Sixties. Another Southern writer, John Kennedy Toole, recently received the Pulitzer Prize posthumously for his highly commended work A Confederacy of Dunces. All three novels may be said to illustrate the grotesque, and in the anthology mentioned the majority of the stories contain grotesque elements. A look at the relevant material reveals that certain themes crystallize: one that ties in with the violence spoken of before is racism; other common topics are eccentricity and abnormality and religious fanaticism. Apart from Toole's novel, which will be examined separately and at some length at the end of the chapter, the afore-mentioned works will be treated under the above thematic headings.

Racism

One of the several stories in Southern Writing in the Sixties that deals with the problem of whites versus Negroes is Thomas McNair's "The Liberal Imagination," where the reader encounters both an intellectual grotesque and a macabre-grotesque situation. Kermit, a university professor, who has "probed, fought, plunged, and seared his way to the bottom of every moral, political, or literary problem he could get half a mind around" is being visited at home by one of his admiring students when there is a knock at the door (p. 54). A coloured man asks for Dr
Keller, and when he learns that he is speaking to him, he whips out a gun, points it at Kermit and shouts, "You been with my Lulleen!" (p. 60). Without being the least bit ruffled, Kermit calmly admits that this is so and begins to explain things logically:

'You should certainly be the one to appreciate individual freedom. Your people haven't had much of it in this country. . . . I've written papers on the way the Negro is mistreated around here, . . . I've helped conduct sit-ins, been down to the police station, been spit on, been called names by the people of my own race, been branded, discriminated against by my associates . . . .'

ending with,

'Well, you can see how I feel, and that I wasn't taking advantage of your wife because of her color.' (pp. 63-65)

Then suddenly, just as Kermit has asked his wife to heat the coffee, the bullet hits him and he slumps to the floor, his leg shaking against the foot of the student, "as if arguing with the fan for his attention" (p. 65).

Here with the mildly satiric-grotesque description of Kermit, the author apparently makes fun of a person who goes so far in his attempt to prove how liberal and unprejudiced he is that he does not hesitate to have an extra-marital affair with a coloured woman, and, what is worse, expects her husband to appreciate or even be proud of the fact that he, a white professor, makes no difference between Negroes and people of his own race. Kermit's argumentation is both comical and frightening; comical because it is so naïve in view of the situation, and frightening because it reveals that, while claiming to be so eager to establish equality, he actually adopts a very superior attitude towards the Negro, and also that he does not realize himself how exaggerated he is in his fight for the liberation of coloured people. The portrayal of Kermit is convincing; undoubtedly he has many counterparts among intellectuals in real life. The ending itself is both macabre—considering the deadly outcome—and comical because of the unexpectedness and irony of the events.

The racial question also crops up in George Garrett's "Texarcana Was a Crazy Town." Here a young man makes an attempt to leave army life, but after a short time as a civilian he finds the outside world so violent and upsetting that he returns to his old military camp where conditions, ironically, are much more
peaceful. After some comic-grotesque experiences in connection with the various jobs he tries, his disillusionment with civilian life comes to a head when he gets into a fight over a poor Negro called Peanuts, a "tall and skinny and kind of funny-looking" man with large hands "and feet about half a block long" (p. 99). Peanuts is not very clever, but he is good-natured, and the protagonist cannot stand to see how the Negro is forever made fun of, lured to drink whiskey until he reels, etc. When he learns that some whites have even gone so far as to beat up Peanuts so badly that he has to be hospitalized, he takes it out on one of those who applaud this action, beating him until he is unable to move.

When he asked me was I going to kill him, all of a sudden I knew what I was doing. I knew what had happened to me and I knew I wasn't a damn bit better than those guys that beat up Peanuts or Delma or Pete or anybody else. I was so sick of myself I felt like I was going to puke. (p. 106)

After this lesson, the main character of the story abandons the "freedom" of the civilian world and returns to his old outfit--before it is too late. Only then does the reader learn for the first time that his best friend in the Army is a coloured man.

In this tale the grotesque constitutes an essential part of "an account of moral change, a fall from innocence into knowledge"--the sort of story Garrett is most fond of telling. The theme is not solely Southern. "However," as another commentator remarks, "the particular instances of evil that Garrett points to are ones prevalent in the region, and his emphasis on the idea that violence begets violence is one which is extremely significant for the contemporary South."

Another, more extensive, work that portrays racial violence is Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird. It is a story about life in a small Southern town, where the peace and quiet is broken when a young white girl, Mayella, accuses a coloured man named Tom Robinson of rape. The happenings are seen through the eyes of a little girl, Scout Finch, whose father, Atticus, becomes counsel for the defence. The grotesques in this novel are not only the Ewells, the family described as "white trash," to whom Mayella belongs, but also the many town-dwellers who condemn Tom beforehand and try to take justice into their own hands.
Atticus manages to prevent a lynching but in the end, indirectly, racists drive the innocent man to his death.

Atticus had used every tool available to free men to save Tom Robinson, but in the secret courts of men's hearts Atticus had no case. Tom was a dead man the minute Mayella Ewell opened her mouth and screamed. (p. 244)

However, the racial hatred displayed in this story does not end with the death of Tom Robinson. The wounded pride of Mayella's father--the fact that Atticus questioned his, a white man's, word while accepting that of a "nigger"--leads even as far as an abortive attempt to murder the lawyer's children. In Edgar Schuster's analysis of this novel, he sums up his view of the author's treatment of the racial issue in the following way:

The achievement of Harper Lee is not that she has written another novel about race prejudice, but rather that she has placed race prejudice in a perspective which allows us to see it as an aspect of a larger thing; as something that arises from phantom contacts, from fear and lack of knowledge; and finally as something that disappears with the kind of knowledge or "education" that one gains through learning what people are really like when you "finally see them."20

Eccentricity and Abnormality

In *To Kill a Mockingbird* there is also another grotesque, on whom much of the story pivots, namely, Boo Radley--a mysterious man, said to live in the dilapidated house close to the Finches but never seen. It is rumoured that his father--a religious fanatic--has kept him imprisoned there ever since he was convicted of disorderly conduct as a teenager. Rumour also has it that Boo once tried to stab his father with a pair of scissors. Although Scout, her brother, Jem, and their friend Dill never succeed in their game of "making Boo Radley come out" (p. 7), the Radley home remains a place that both fascinates them (not least after finding little gifts wrapped up in tin foil in the knot-hole of a big oak on the lot) and frightens them (especially after Mr. Radley threatens to shoot anyone who trespasses).

When Scout finally does meet Boo Radley--on the night he saves her and Jem from being killed by Mayella's father, the initial sight of him gives her quite a start:

He had been standing against the wall when I came into the room, his arms folded across his chest. As I pointed he brought his arms down and pressed the palms of his
hands against the wall. They were white hands, sickly white hands that had never seen the sun, . . . . His face was as white as his hands . . . . His cheeks were thin to hollowness; his mouth was wide; there were shallow, almost delicate indentations at his temples, and his grey eyes were so colorless I thought he was blind. His hair was dead and thin, almost feathery on top of his head.

When I pointed to him his palms slipped slightly, leaving greasy sweat streaks on the wall, and he hooked his thumbs in his belt. A strange small spasm shook him, as if he heard fingernails scrape slate, but as I gazed at him in wonder the tension slowly drained from his face. His lips parted in a timid smile, and our neighbor's image blurred with my sudden tears.

"Hey, Boo," I said. (p. 273)

That night Scout walks Boo Radley home. She is never to see him again.

In this novel we meet a person whose appearance is very grotesque and whose behaviour is partially so. However, in contrast to those whose more extreme grotesqueness grows out of a deplorable lack of love for their fellowmen, regardless of creed or colour, Boo Radley, is described so tenderly that his anomalies become acceptable.

As opposed to the rather frightening impression created by Boo Radley, the main characters in William Harrison's "A Cook's Tale" draw attention to themselves by their eccentricity. The story centres around a mismatched couple: a Swede, who works as a cook at the university hospital and is obsessed by books, and his wife, Bertha, who is completely unsympathetic to her husband's hobby and is described in the following negative way:

She wore her rolled socks like drooping flags of surrender. Having never bothered since the first years of their marriage with stays or supports, her body puffed under a cotton dress like bread overloaded with yeast. (p. 211)

Whereas Bertha has an outer appearance that can be labelled grotesque, her husband is grotesque in his bibliomania; not only is his interest in books primarily aroused by intriguing titles and jackets, but his passion leads him to spend all the household savings on cratefuls of books which he can read only with the utmost difficulty. Discouraged, not by the fact that Bertha leaves him whenever he makes such a purchase, but by the realization that he will never be able to get through all those books and become a learned man like the scholars he sees at the university library, he finally stacks the books away in the back of the closet. He takes to drinking and becomes infatuated with a
female dishwasher who tells him he smells of vegetable soup. Nevertheless, she allows him to make love to her, but all the while his mind wanders and he finds himself thinking of Thoreau, Santayana and Whitman.

Here, as is so often the case in Southern fiction, the characterization of the protagonist is coloured by pity; one finds the cook amusing and somewhat frightening in his obsession with books, but one cannot help feeling sorry for him. The function of the grotesque seems to be to present within the framework of the short story a tale of human fate, which both entertains and gives rise to reflection.

Whereas the southernness of William Harrison's tale lies principally in the author's treatment of his subject matter, Sylvia Wilkinson's story "Dummy" has a definite Southern setting and characterization. Here one is confronted with both eccentricity and abnormality. The former is illustrated by Ramona's grandmother, Miss Liz, whose mismatched eyes, square build and feet that resemble wooden lumps give her a grotesque appearance. One of her eccentric habits is to put her dress on top of her night-gown and then beat her chest with a large powder puff so that she almost chokes with the dust. Then there is Dummy, "somebody's bastard," who looks partly like an old man, has "fingernails like bright yellow kernels of corn" and is forever twisting and turning his head (p. 202). Dummy cannot talk, only squeak or grunt like a pig, an animal which he also resembles in his uncleanness and repugnant odour.

In a dream Ramona sees Dummy with two heads, one sad-looking, clean head and one happy-looking, dirty head. The most likely interpretation of this seems to be that it is better to be happy and dirty than unhappy and clean. The didactic point of the grotesque in the story as a whole is, apparently, that we must be tolerant of those whose looks and behaviour are out of the ordinary, whether they are slightly abnormal, like Miss Liz, or very abnormal, like Dummy. As might be recalled, Spiegel considers this attitude of forbearance one of the main characteristics of Southern grotesque literature (p. 433).

In Joan Williams' The Morning and the Evening another seriously afflicted male is depicted. Jake, the protagonist of the book, brings to mind two Faulknerian characters: Benjy in
The Sound and the Fury and Ike in The Hamlet (see pp. 125, 155). Like these two, Jake is mentally retarded; people usually refer to him as "the looney" or "the idiot." Like Benjy, Jake cannot speak, only produce inarticulate sounds; like him he also moans and drools. Like Ike, he prefers the company of a cow, Sarah Jane, to that of human beings, feeling that she is the only one who understands him. To an even greater extent than Benjy and Ike, however, Jake can be said to transcend his grotesqueness due to the tenderness and sympathy with which he is portrayed.

The story focuses on Jake's relationship with his mother, who looks upon him as a punishment for her one marital infidelity, yet loves him very much; on Jake's bewilderment when she dies ("She had not answered him all morning."), on his awkward attempts to manage without her and on the attitudes of the townsfolk towards him. Although Jake cannot escape some teasing, the latter are quite friendly towards him. One evening, however, a girl named Ruth Edna impulsively kisses Jake and frightens him so much that he seems to run amuck. It is then that some townspeople, fearing that he might hurt their children, decide that he should be put into a mental institution. After a month a kind-hearted couple succeed in getting him released and take him back to his cabin, but by that time Jake is no longer his old self. Shortly after this Jake's home catches fire and he is burnt to death. Although the "tragedy becomes illumination" to some people in the town, as one critic asserts, it is probably an illumination of short duration. What the novel is all about, it seems, is rather "simple human inadequacy," or to put it differently, "the failure of human responsibility not through vindictiveness but through indifference." In this respect The Morning and the Evening differs markedly from the many stories by other Southern writers, notably Eudora Welty, where the grotesqueness of the apparent grotesque is overshadowed by that of the so-called normal people.

Religious Fanaticism

In Southern Writing in the Sixties the story that perhaps best illustrates the Southern grotesque is Guy Owen's "The Flim-Flam Man and the Tent Meeting," where the author pokes fun at "such cliches sic of Southern literature as illicit sex, fundamentalist religion, moonshine liquor, 'testifying of sin' and
The story describes a revivalist meeting held by the Reverend Doakus, alias Dynamite Doakus, somewhere in the backwoods of "the corn and tobacco country . . . where the owls roost with the chickens" (p. 10). The tent is filled with expectant people; besides the narrator and his companion, Mr. Jones, also known as the Flim-Flam Man, the crowd consists mainly of old men and women as well as a few young girls. Doakus, dressed for the occasion "in a loud checked coat and a blazing tie," begins by telling a few jokes "to show that he was a regular sort" (p. 15). The organist proceeds to play some popular hymns, and the crowd is urged to put their souls into the singing so as to "wake up the Devil and make him mad as fire" (ibid.). Preparing himself for action, Brother Dynamite throws off his coat, loosens his tie and starts flinging "himself all over the place" (p. 16). Waving his arms "like a windmill gone crazy" and jumping "off and on the platform like a goat," he then commences to deliver his message (ibid.). Though he is just "a simple instrument of the Lord's," he assures them he has never failed to put the devil to flight (ibid.). "Amen!" someone shouts. Encouraged by this, Doakus raises his voice and begins "cavorting and prancing about" even more, condemning all the sins he can think of from drinking to communism (ibid.).

Then Doakus evidently considers the crowd ripe for soliciting "tithes and offerings," which, he claims, is the only thing he does not like about being a minister. After telling a "sob story" about how his poor wife and five little children might be evicted from their house because of overdue rent, he forces everybody to come up and put his contribution into his hand; needless to say, you "couldn't walk up there, with the light shining right on you, and hand him a measly dime" (p. 17).

After that things begin to get really lively.

To tell the truth as the narrator comments . . . I could of set the damn tent on fire, and they wouldn't of took note of it. . . . a scattering up front had already sprawled out face down trembling. They was working their legs and bowed up in knots, and popping their teeth, and quaking like a mule passing briars in a thunderstorm. . . . A handful was setting bolt upright, their noses flared out like spooked mules and their eyes bulging, and jabbering in some kind of language I couldn't make heads nor tails of. . . .
And old Dynamite, why he... was spitting out words so fast you'd of thought he was an auctioneer asking for bids on Beulah Land. (p. 18)

Suddenly he exclaims, "I'm going to heaven, you all. Watch old Dynamite go through them pearly gates. Look out, Peter, here I come!" (p. 18). And while the crowd sings "Halleluyah," he starts climbing the tent pole, pausing now and then to "bulge his eyes out and blow, kind of like a treed possum" (p. 19). At one point he slips and claims that "old Satan is dragging him down," but at long last he succeeds in reaching the top—"Oh, I tell you, it was lively, lively" (ibid.).

With its gross exaggerations, dialect speech, burlesque and bawdy incidents and its merciless exposure of human weaknesses, this story is written in the same vein as the tall-tales produced by such humourists of the Old Southwest as George W. Harris and Mark Twain. As can be seen, it contains much grotesquery as regards character as well as situation, not least in the form of imagery. Most grotesque of all is the revivalist himself, Brother Doakus, a veritable Elmer Gantry type, not uncommon in the South. Ludicrous in his volubility, his religious mumbo-jumbo, his acrobatic antics and his false modesty; frightening in his ability to sway the crowd and his ruthless exploitation of people under the cloak of religion; and quite repulsive-looking with his sweaty "onionhead," bulging eyes and flashy outfit, Doakus has all the qualifications of a genuine grotesque (p. 12). As such, he far outstrips the other trickster in the story, Mr. Jones, who takes the opportunity to sell out his whole supply of "bottled corn" to the thirsty farmers stumbling out of the tent (p. 21). The tent meeting itself, at which the mass-hypnotized participants behave in the most incredible way, is also extremely grotesque, turning, as it does, into a kind of religious orgy.

In Robert Sorell's "Charlie Billy" the reader meets with a religious bigot of an entirely different kind, the truly frightening type. By means of one short paragraph:

In a land where God is real and the Devil is almost his equal, it can be understood why a sixteen-year-old boy will kill his father. (p. 162)

the author ingeniously evokes the Southern setting and arouses interest in the motive for the parricide. The parent referred to is Charlie Billy's father, Mr. Fletcher, a tall, bearded zealot, always dressed in black, who considers himself an expert on sin.
Having withdrawn from the local Baptist Church, whose members he accuses of being "in league with the Devil," he devotes all his spare time to reading the Bible and seeing to it that everyone in his household is kept well disciplined (p. 163).

All that can bring joy or diversion is banned. One day Charlie Billy's brother Johnny finds a shrike's nest, which he subsequently sneaks away to look at now and then. His father, however, finds out and to show the boy what happens to him who idles his time away, he brings home the birds all "squeezed until there was nothing left but the beaks, the blue-grey feathers, and the claws" (p. 167). Johnny can neither forgive nor forget this. As a rule, however, it is Charlie Billy, a retarded little boy, who is the butt of his father's anger and abuse. Considering him a curse on the family, Mr. Fletcher spitefully calls him, "'Thou spawn of Sodom,'" and seizes every opportunity to imprecate and hurt him (p. 169). Whenever Charlie Billy, for instance, returns home from the barn, which he finds warm and cozy, he is falsely accused of having been "'bumping the cow'" and is maltreated by his father despite Johnny's attempts to intervene (ibid.).

One evening when Charlie Billy is standing in front of the fireplace, he suddenly starts "pleasuring himself" (p. 175). When Mr. Fletcher looks up from his Bible and sees this, he flies into rage, screaming, "'Putrefaction of the flesh, Hell's fires, damnation, the be-fouled condition of the temporal world,'" while he knocks the boy down and starts hitting him (ibid.). This time, however, Johnny is determined to stop his father, who now turns on him instead, swinging his belt at him. Somehow Johnny succeeds in getting his father down on his knees. Now Charlie Billy becomes frightened and pleads that they stop, only to be told by his father, "'Go sodomize your cow'" (p. 176). In his exasperation, Charlie Billy goes out into the barn, where he kills first the cow and then himself with a pitch-fork. Unable to take anymore, Johnny then shoots his father. The story ends with Johnny's pathetic attempts to "nurse" his dead father.

In the present author's opinion, Mr. Fletcher is too frightening a character to be described as a true grotesque. The comical effect that his incredible religious fanaticism and immense self-righteousness may have upon the reader can by no
means counterbalance the fear he inspires. Like Faulkner's Doc Hines, he is perhaps best classified as partially grotesque (see p. 118). Regardless of the extent of his grotesqueness, however, his portrayal seems to serve the purpose of drawing attention to the injurious consequences that can result from too fanatic a study and too literal an interpretation of the Bible.  

The ending can more definitely be classed as grotesque—or, to be more precise, macabre-grotesque—considering Johnny's watch over his father's corpse and the rather comical remarks he makes in his deranged condition.

**Grotesqueness en masse**

There are several reasons why Joan Kennedy Toole's *A Confederacy of Dunces* will be dealt with at more length than the other works in this chapter. One is that the novel is very topical—although written in the sixties, it was not published until 1980 and it is now being translated into other languages having been hailed as a literary masterpiece. The second and main reason, is that, containing as it does most of the forms of the mode, it constitutes an excellent example of the grotesque. Of these forms the comic-grotesque predominates; the novel virtually teems with comic-grotesque figures and episodes of all kinds.

Besides Ignatius, the unforgettable protagonist of the book, the reader meets, for instance, Miss Trixie, the old spinster working for Levy Pants, where Ignatius manages to get himself employed. Because it is falsely presumed that Miss Trixie could not bear retirement, she has been kept on at the firm until she has grown into a kind of grotesque fixture. Having copied "figures inaccurately into the Levy ledgers for almost half a century," Miss Trixie is now of less use than ever (p. 56); she spends most of her time snoring over her disorderly desk and the rest in the lavatory. Befuddled as she is, she has trouble keeping her few fellow workers apart mistaking, for example, Ignatius for Gloria. Sometimes she also comes to work wearing, besides her beloved sneakers, a "tattered nightgown and flannel robe" or goes to church with her green visor on instead of her hat (p. 94).

Everything about Miss Trixie is old, not to say ancient,
except her brand new set of shiny teeth which stand out grotesquely against her wrinkled, octogenarian face and flap precariously while she talks. They are a gift from the boss's wife, Mrs. Levy, who has studied psychology and also taught Miss Trixie to repeat, at regular intervals, the self-boosting phrase, "I am a very attractive woman"—a statement which no doubt reinforces the impression of grotesqueness (p. 234).

In the French quarter of New Orleans, the city's "Sodom and Gomorrah," as Ignatius calls it, he runs across quite a few other characters who can best be described as grotesque (p. 181). The most memorable of these is Dorian, a homosexual, whose "dear family out... in the wheat" send him large sums of money as long as he keeps away from the homestead in Nebraska (p. 266). Ignatius's attempt to organize Dorian and his gay friends into a political movement fails when the gathering gets out of hand and turns into a wild party.

Miss Lana Lee, the unscrupulous proprietor of the Night of Joy, who earns a substantial extra income by selling pictures of herself, posing as a scantily dressed intellectual, is another of these grotesque figures with whom Ignatius happens to get involved. Even more memorable is Jones, the slovenly janitor of the Night of Joy, who would like to blow up his place of work with a "nucular bum" (p. 300), and whose "jeremiads," one critic asserts, "contain the most devastating linguistic comedy beheld for many a long day." Since there is nothing especially frightening or repulsive about Jones, however, he can hardly be classed as a grotesque—he is probably best described as a burlesque character.

All these characters are, however, overshadowed by Ignatius himself. His appearance alone is grotesque in the extreme, ludicrous and repellent at the same time. He has a "fleshy balloon of a head," unkempt hair, haughty-looking blue and yellow eyes, and large ears with bristles sticking out "on either side like turn signals indicating two directions at once" (p. 1). A "bushy black moustache" accentuates a large mouth, in the corners of which can be seen remainders of potato chips (ibid.). Now and then he displays "a flabby pink tongue" (p. 18). Furthermore, he has "huge paws," "a bloated stomach," a "gargantuan rump" and enormous feet (pp. 5, 7). Due to his weight, which increases all
the time because of his ravenous appetite, Ignatius moves about in an "elephantine fashion" (p. 2).

This "great monster," "big ape" or "fat freak"—to quote some of the epithets he is given—draws further attention to his person by his conspicuous dress (pp. 49, 293, 300). Outdoors he is always attired in a green hunting cap with ear flaps and a visor, an old muffler, a warm plaid shirt and roomy tweed trousers; at home, he usually strolls around in a commodious red flannel night gown. In his own opinion the way he dresses is very sensible and suggests "a rich inner life" (p. 2).

Ignatius's manners are quite revolting. He is forever snorting and belching; occasionally, he also breaks wind. He can never eat or drink anything without making loud noises. In spite of the fact that he spends a great deal of his time soaking in the bath-tub, Ignatius smells of old tea bags, as does his room. "'Well, what do you expect?'" he asks his mother who finds the smell quite offensive.

"The human body, when confined, produces certain odors which we tend to forget in this age of deodorants and other perversions. Actually, I find the atmosphere of this room rather comforting. Schiller needed the scent of apples rotting in his desk in order to write. I, too, have my needs." (p. 41)

Ignatius's contemptuous and arrogant treatment of others is also grotesque, in this case, simultaneously comic and frightening. Although he is not "especially anxious to mingle," Ignatius nevertheless comes in contact with quite a few people, none of whom escape his criticism (p. 16). Taxidrivers are invariably given "a variety of instructions upon speed, direction, and shifting," and a group of female artists Ignatius encounters are told that they "'must learn how to handle a brush'" and urged to "'all get together and paint someone's house for a start'" (pp. 66, 210), and a policeman who makes the mistake of taking Ignatius for a vagrant is rebuked in no uncertain terms:

"Is it the part of the police department to harass me when this city is a flagrant vice capital of the civilized world? . . . This city is famous for its gamblers, prostitutes, exhibitionists, anti-Christians, alcoholics, sodomites, drug addicts, fetishists, onanists, pornographers, frauds, jades, litterbugs, and lesbians, all of whom are only too well protected by graft. If you have a moment, I shall endeavor to discuss the crime problem with you, but don't make the mistake of bothering me." (p. 3)
Similarly, the bartender at the Night of Joy--"this vile pigsty," as Ignatius calls it--is accused of "highway robbery" and told, "You will hear from our attorneys" (pp. 255, 20), and an even stronger threat is directed anonymously to a Dr. Talc, whom Ignatius had as a teacher during his nine years at college:

Your total ignorance of that which you profess to teach merits the death penalty. (p. 110)

Another of his notes turns up on the campus a long time after Ignatius has left and proves most embarrassing to Dr. Talc who is purported to have "underdeveloped testicles" and to be "misleading and perverting the young" (p. 294). The thought of eventually having to explain things to the administration causes the poor man the utmost distress.

Prospective or actual employers are by no means exempt from Ignatius's censure; he usually finds the people in charge "soulless," "meaningless" or "hostile" and sees it as his duty to point out "the inadequacies of the places" of work (pp. 10, 52). The most severe of his attacks is that on Mr. Gonzales, the office manager of Levy Pants. This takes place when Ignatius, carried away by a diffuse desire to help the factory workers, leads the storming of the office and brusquely admonishes him: "'Oh, shut up your little pussymouth, you mongoloid'" (p. 123).

However, the person who is most often the target of Ignatius's scorn and abuse is his loving mother. According to her son, she is a failure in more respects than one.

"Mother doesn't cook . . . . She burns." (p. 19)

or

"I noticed this morning that the lint in the hallway is forming into spheres almost as large as baseballs." (p. 155)

Nor does she know how to dress. "'Only you would wear bowling shoes to your child's sickbed,'" Ignatius complains on one occasion (p. 293). Besides being, in Ignatius's eyes, "too limited to comprehend" things and totally incapable of arriving at important decisions (pp. 42-43), she is also thoughtless, insufficiently "interested in the traumas that have created" her son's "world-view," and too often follows her compulsion to invade his sanctuary whereby she slows down the progress of his valuable work (p. 16). In addition, she drinks and squanders the household funds. "'Had I known how close we were to total penury, my
nerves would have given out long ago," Ignatius grumbles (p. 44).

Yet another trait that adds to the grotesque impression of Ignatius is his abnormal concern about the state of his health, which manifests itself in his hypochondria and fixation on his so-called "pyloric valve," and sometimes even causes him to break out in bumps and rashes. He is also afraid of most things: afraid of contracting germs "that would speed to his brain and transform him into a mongoloid," afraid of becoming constipated or having his ankles give way, afraid of getting car-sick or having a hemorrhage and afraid of catching colds, which is one reason he gives for not wanting to become a hot dog vendor and work outdoors (p. 283).

"What?" Ignatius bellowed. "Out in the rain and snow all day long?"
"It don't snow here."
"It has on rare occasions. It probably would again as soon as I trudged out with one of these wagons. I would probably be found in some gutter, icicles dangling from all of my orifices, alley cats pawing over me to draw the warmth from my last breath. No, thank you, sir." (p. 135)

Ignatius is probably one of the laziest characters ever described in literature. Having, as he admits, "a mental block against working," he likes to spend his days watching Yogi Bear and similar TV programmes and reading everything from Boetius to Batman (p. 45). When the spirit moves him, he also works on "a monumental indictment against . . . society," which, when completed and edited, will show "literate men the disaster course that history had been taking for the past four centuries" (pp. 46, 26). Considering the rate of writing--about six paragraphs a month--and the fact that his wise words are scattered on papers thrown all over the floor, this project will most likely take a lifetime to realize. His evenings are usually spent at some cinema where he sits right up front, well stocked up with large quantities of popcorn, driving the rest of the film-goers crazy with his constant loud remarks of the type, "'What degenerate produced this abortion?'" (p. 49)

When hard circumstances finally force him to contribute to the support of the family, Ignatius reluctantly sets out to acquire a job, and at long last finds himself, almost against his will, employed by Levy Pants (his idea of an ideal job being to
have his mother drive him around in the car while he tosses newspapers out of the window). His work consists mainly of filing correspondence and, to his supervisor's great delight, he turns out to be extremely efficient at it. What Mr. Gonzales does not know, is that Ignatius simply throws all papers that are to be filed into the waste-paper basket and devotes his time to more interesting things. When he is dismissed after the afore-mentioned incitement of the workers, he is in no way downcast but undauntedly tells his mother, "My excellence confused them" (p. 125).

His employment at Paradise Vendors is likewise of short duration due to the fact that he consumes more hot dogs than he sells. At times it also happens that the prospective customer does not live up to Ignatius's standard. One young boy is told:

"My conscience will not let me sell you one. Just look at your loathsome complexion. You are a growing boy whose system needs to be surfeited with vegetables and orange juice and whole wheat bread and spinach and such. I, for one, will not contribute to the debauchery of a minor." (p. 140)

Having no profit to show, Ignatius later makes up a hair-raising story about how he was attacked by "a member of the vast teen-age underground" who held a rusty pistol to his head and robbed him of all the hot dogs. When his employer seems to doubt his words, Ignatius goes on to explain:

"Perhaps he was very hungry. Perhaps some vitamin deficiency in his growing body was screaming for appeasement. The human desire for food and sex is relatively equal. If there are armed rapes, why should there not be armed hot dog thefts? I see nothing unusual in the matter. . . .

I awaked to find the lid of the cart open. Of course no one would help me up. My white smock stamped me as a vendor, an untouchable." (pp. 142-43)

Ignatius's vivid imagination also comes in handy when dealing with his mother. After being scratched by a cat, which he has tried to stuff into the bun compartment of his cart in the hope of taking it home for a pet, he offers this explanation:

"I had a rather apocalyptic battle with a starving prostitute. . . . Had it not been for my superior brawn, she would have sacked my wagon. Finally she limped away from the fray, her glad rags askew." (p. 183)

More frightening than his imaginary ailments, his laziness and his invention of falsehoods is his extreme egoism. Very
jealous of his mother's friends, whom he refers to as "cohorts from the Mafia" and such like (p. 101), he is utterly upset when he learns that a certain Mr. Clyde has been courting his mother. "What?" Ignatius thundered. "Do you mean to tell me that you have been permitting some old man to paw all over you?" (p. 311)

Realizing that his mother is even contemplating remarriage, Ignatius warns her:

"Do you seriously think that Claud roué want marriage? . . . You'll be dragged from one reeking motel to another. You'll end up a suicide." (p. 312)

This selfish desire to keep his mother for himself and have her go on waiting on him hand and foot is expressed in a comical way and constitutes still another grotesque feature of Ignatius's psychological make-up.

All the people with whom Ignatius comes into contact sooner or later arrive at the conclusion that he is very neurotic or that he is, in fact, mad. Even his mother is finally made to see that he is in need of a rest at some asylum. However, whilst Mrs. Reilly is making the final plans to have her son committed, Ignatius's old girl friend, Myrna Minkoff, who, to judge by her letters, is also in need of psychiatric treatment, appears on the scene and saves him, at least temporarily, from this impending fate.

The novel abounds in grotesque imagery, much of it pertaining to Ignatius. Dressed in the white smock of a hot dog vendor, he is, for instance, likened to "a dinosaur egg about to hatch" (p. 137), and in the picture appearing in the paper after his adventure at the Night of Joy, he is seen lying "in the gutter like a washed-up whale" (p. 296). These metaphors have the effect of emphasizing the comic and the repulsive sides of his character, in other words, his grotesqueness; just as his vivid language, characterized by his constant recourse to hyperbole and his snobbish use of high-faluting expressions, highlights the comic and the frightening. In addition to the already cited snatches of conversation--see, for instance, Ignatius's excuse for not wanting to become a hot dog vendor on page 195--an excerpt from his diary might suffice to illustrate his delightful mode of expression and the abundance of chimera:

As I was wearing the soles of my desert boots down to a mere sliver of crepe rubber on the old flagstone
banquettes of the French Quarter in my fevered attempt
to wrest a living from an unthinking and uncaring
society, I was hailed by a cherished old acquaintance
(deviate). After a few minutes of conversation in which
I established most easily my moral superiority over this
degenerate, I found myself pondering once more the crises
of our times. My mentality, uncontrollable and wanton as
always, whispered to me a scheme so magnificent and daring
that I shrank from the very thought of what I was hearing.
"Stop," I cried imploringly to my god-like mind. "This is
madness." But still I listened to the counsel of my brain.
It was offering me the opportunity to Save the World
Through Degeneracy. There on the worn stones of the Quar­
ter I enlisted the aid of this wilted flower of a human
in gathering his associates in foppery together behind a
banner of brotherhood. (p. 231)

It is presumed that most readers find Ignatius an exceed­
ingly grotesque character. As such, he is both repulsive and
frightening. The dominant impression he makes, however, is that
of a comic-grotesque. Despite all his high-flown phrases and ar­
rogant behaviour, he also emerges as a tragic figure. The reason
for this is probably that there is such a discrepancy between
the self-confident, able young man he pretends to be and the in­
secure person and utter failure he in reality is. Perhaps, as
Walker Percy suggests in his foreword, the sadness the reader
experiences also comes from "the tragedy attending the book it­
self" (p. vii). In any case, Ignatius is a misfit in the world
in which he is forced to live, a madhouse world which he regards
with the greatest contempt.33 His revolt against the atrocities
of the modern age, so aptly conveyed by means of the grotesque,
might well have been the author's own. As one critic states,
however, "Underneath the grotesqueries one senses a generous and
humble acceptance of human foolishness and imperfections."34

To judge by the works written in the sixties--those pre­
sented in this chapter as well as those dealt with earlier--the
grotesque is still an attractive mode among Southern writers. It
is also interesting to note that all the forms mentioned in this
study occur and that the comic-grotesque still predominates. In
examining the comic-grotesque, it also becomes apparent that the
same types of grotesques discernible before reappear. There are
"limping heroes," such as the Flim-Flam Man; mentally disturbed
grotesques, such as Ignatius; various eccentrics, such as Miss
Trixe and Miss Liz; comic-grotesque pursuers of love, such as
the Swede in "The Cook's Tale;" comic-grotesque intellectuals,
such as Kermit; and, not least, religious grotesques, such as "Old Doakus."

Whether or not the grotesque will continue to thrive in Southern literature, is unquestionably dependent on the continued existence of Southern distinctiveness. Professor Degler, to whose book *Place Over Time* many references have been made in this study, takes an optimistic view of the continuity of Southern distinctiveness:

Experience warns us that those who would bury the distinctive South, either by writing an epitaph or by saying Farewell to the South, as Robert Coles has recently done, may well find themselves in the position of those who prematurely announced the death of the most famous southern novelist.  

Be Professor Degler right or wrong, a cursory glance at the fiction published after 1970 reveals that Shirley Ann Grau, Walker Percy, Anne Tyler, Lisa Alther and, not least, Jayne Anne Phillips, to mention but a few of the Souther writers in vogue during recent years, are by no means unfamiliar with the grotesque. To elucidate this, however, would require the space of another dissertation.
NOTES TO CHAPTER SIX

1Degler, pp. 126, 17.


3Ibid., p. 458.

4Degler, p. 43.


6Most blacks still live in the South (Degler, p. 126).


9Newquist, p. 69. See also p. 130, note 17.

10The following works written by these authors in the sixties have already been mentioned: (By Caldwell) Close to Home (p. 58), The Earnshaw Neighborhood (p. 145), Jenny by Nature (p. 178), The Last Night of Summer (p. 130), Miss Mamma Aimee (pp. 145, 99), We Are the Living (p. 145), The Weather Shelter (p. 174); (By Goyen) Savata, My Fair Sister (p. 164), The Collected Stories of William Goyen (pp. 79, 89, 101); (By Eudora Welty) "Where is the Voice Coming From?" (p. 121).

11As for Capote, he has ever since the publication of In Cold Blood devoted himself to the writing of non-fiction.


13John W. Corrington and Miller Williams, eds., Southern Writing in the Sixties (Baton Rouge, 1966). (Subsequent quotations are from this edition and page numbers are given in the text.).

14John Kennedy Toole, A Confederacy of Dunces (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1981). (Subsequent quotations are from this edition and page numbers are given in the text.) The book was finished in 1969, but it was not until 1980 that a publisher could be found who was willing to print it. In the meantime, John Kennedy Toole committed suicide, driven to it by what he presumed was his failure as a writer.

15The stories discussed here are the ones that best illus-
trate the Southern grotesque.


23. The above episode is part of a novel called *A Killing Frost*. Fred Chappell has written a commentary to this work in *Hollins Critic* 8 (April 1971), pp. 1-10, but nothing that applies specifically to "Dummy."


27. In Caldwell's *In the Shadow of the Steeple* (London, 1967) there are some interesting and relevant comments made by his father, the Reverend Ira Caldwell, on the state of the Church in the South. Thus Ira Caldwell, who is a Presbyterian himself, expresses his fear that the South is "being engulfed by primitive religious practices" (p. 64). We are also given an explanation for the abundance of preachers of all kinds: "There are numerous
theological seminaries, Bible and religious institutes in the South . . . and they are graduating hundreds of ministers and evangelists every year upon completion of courses requiring attendance from four years to two weeks" (p. 94).


29 As to Charlie Billy, he belongs in the same category as such feeble-minded characters as Bishop Rayber, Benny Compson and Lucynell Crater. His innocence and the warmth and pity with which he is described, outweigh by far whatever grotesque elements might be accredited him due to his mental retardment.


31 To what degree the reader feels not only amused by also repelled depends no doubt on his own attitude towards people whose sexual behaviour is deviant.


33 As Paul Gray states in his review of the book in Time, 2 June 1980, p. 64, the protagonist's "ruling passion is his utter contempt for modern age."


Fred Chappell's story "Prodigious Words," Southern Writing, pp. 66-77, offers so many similarities to Toole's A Confederacy of Dunces that it could almost be taken as a partial outline of the novel. Like Ignatius, Chappell's main character, Bader Thorn, is an eccentric, nervous, hypochondrial young man who lives with his mother who supports him. He, too, has delusions of grandeur and feels that it is beneath his dignity to work like ordinary people. Instead, like Ignatius, he devotes a good part of his time to writing but, whereas Ignatius hopes to elevate his countrymen's cultural taste through his literary efforts, Bader is bent on poisoning American culture with his pen. Both Ignatius and Bader are avid moviegoers and, just as Ignatius claims he is "working on something with wonderful movie possibilities" (p. 100), Bader has some interesting ideas regarding movies, especially Westerns:

'Could show a movie with a regular plot and all, but have a half-hour scene of a guy cleaning out the hero's stall, thirty minutes of some guy shoveling horse manure. Or I thought of having the cavalry come to the rescue all right, but when they got over the hill they'd all be nekkid and their faces painted and holler war-whoops. They'd ride up and pee on the fire so that the hero wouldn't burn at the stake.' (p. 68)
Both characters also write essays on their home towns. The exact content of Ignatius's composition on New Orleans remains unknown, but Bader starts:

'Here is Withers, a smoky industrial town which truly stinks. . . . if you do drive through Withers, you can count on staying at least fifteen minutes longer than you had planned, and you will have seen, if not all the sights, at least a great many of them.' (pp. 76-77)

The ironic, arrogant tone is quite reminiscent of the one Ignatius uses.

Their mothers also resemble each other. Besides being single parents who have a weakness for alcohol, they both have red hair, they both disapprove of their sons' friends and they express themselves in a similar manner, especially after Mrs. Reilly has picked up "beery courage" (p. 21).

Toole's work, being a novel, naturally presents much fuller portraits of its characters. However, from what one gets to know about Bader at least, he too emerges as a grotesque, but on a smaller scale than Ignatius.

35Degler, p. 2.

36The first three writers actually made their débuts before 1970.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The word 'grotesque' derives from the Italian grotte, meaning caves. It was first used about the subterranean paintings with strangely mixed motifs from the animal kingdom and vegetable life found during the excavations in Rome some five hundred years ago. Initially, the word was applied solely to visual art, but from the beginning of the 18th century it was employed fairly frequently as a literary term, usually to indicate something exaggerated, absurd and ugly. Friedrich Schlegel in Germany, Victor Hugo in France and John Ruskin in England were the first to see anything really commendable in the grotesque. These days, many critics and writers consider the mode of the grotesque a very appropriate means of jolting us into an awareness of the world around us—a world where man, according to Beckett, is an almost helpless cripple, who strives to make his way in an absurd universe. When it comes to a definition of the grotesque, however, there has never been and probably never will be complete agreement. Philip Thomson belongs to those who insist that the truly grotesque should contain a comic element in addition to something frightening, repulsive, etc., and that this combination should bring about "an unresolved clash in work and response."

Since this opinion coincides with that of the present author, Thomson's theory has been used as a point of departure for this study of the Southern grotesque.

As to the question of why the mode of the grotesque is so common in Southern fiction, the answer seems to lie in the distinctiveness of the South. This distinctiveness has, in brief, been brought about by historical factors (e.g., the defeat of the Confederacy in the Civil War); geographical conditions (e.g., the climate that made the plantation system possible which, in turn, gave rise to the racial problem between blacks and whites); sociological factors (e.g., the homogeneity of the white citizens, which has aggravated the racial conflict and increased violence in general); and economic circumstances (e.g. the com-
parative poverty and isolation of the rural South, which has led to a low level of education, inbreeding and abnormality). To this can be added the turmoil in which the South has found itself as a result of its attempt to catch up with the rest of the United States and to cope with the changes taking place in the world at large. The South, then, has become a good breeding ground for the grotesque; the Southerner's love of a good tale and his innate ability to tell one has presumably achieved the rest.

After this introductory survey of the grotesque in general and the Southern grotesque in particular, various critical approaches to the latter were scrutinized. An examination was first made of the hypothesis of Alan Spiegel—apparently the only critic who has formulated a theory pertaining exclusively to this phenomenon. Spiegel defines the Southern grotesque as a type of character who is either physically or mentally deformed. Such a theory must necessarily become too all-embracing, as his examples confirm. In the present author's opinion, the conception of the grotesque in Southern fiction cannot be limited to characters—setting, imagery, etc., must also be taken into account; nor does mere deformity suffice as a criterion of the grotesque—a comic element must be attached to it.

It was found that only one of five American Ph.D. candidates whose dissertations deal specifically with the Southern grotesque, Robert Ferguson, considers the comic an essential component of the grotesque. Unfortunately, Ferguson failed to carry out the aims he himself set up in the introduction to his thesis. As a result, he finds an incredibly large number of grotesques in Faulkner, who is the subject of his study.

Next, three forms of the grotesque were scrutinized: the macabre-grotesque (Chapter III), the repulsive/frightening-grotesque (Chapter IV) and the comic-grotesque (Chapter V). As to the first type, the word 'macabre' today often carries the concept of gruesome yet funny, but in this dissertation 'macabre' has been used in its original sense, that is, meaning something associated with death. It was shown that the macabre-grotesque is seldom used for its own sake but that it relates to theme, plot, characterization, etc. Furthermore, the authors usually have an ulterior motive when they make use of this mode. For
example, when Caldwell is not simply out to amuse, which is often
the case, he uses the macabre-grotesque as a means of directing
attention to the hard lot of poor white share-croppers and
farmers in the South in the hope of ameliorating their condi-
tions. He also uses it to show that he takes a firm stand against
the lynching, mutilation and maltreatment of Negroes, evidently
to good effect. To an even greater extent than Caldwell,
Flannery O'Connor makes use of the macabre-grotesque, pre-
occupied as she is with the idea of death. Her aim in using it is
invariably to convey a religious message, her central theme be-
ing the redemption of man. Eudora Welty, on the other hand, em-
ploys the macabre-grotesque to reveal the dignity and depravity
of man—a subject that interests Faulkner as well. Both writers
also use it to depict the folly of man, as does Goyen. As re-
gards Capote, only one macabre-grotesque scene was found in his
works, not counting his non-fiction. There seems to be no in-
stance of it at all in Carson McCullers.

After the macabre-grotesque the frightening and repulsive
aspects of the grotesque in both character and situation were
examined. It appeared that Faulkner created more repulsive/
frightening grotesques than any of the other writers considered
here, especially characters who evoke fear and/or repulsion be-
cause of a mental affliction. After Faulkner comes Flannery
O'Connor, whose protagonist Haze Motes is the very epitome of
the repugnant/frightening-grotesque. Carson McCullers takes only
a third place but seems to be the writer who has created the
largest number of grotesque characters whose sexual behaviour
deviates from the norm.

Caldwell has no doubt invented more characters who imbue
the reader solely with fear than any other writer considered in
this dissertation but, with one exception, they are seldom comic
enough to be labelled grotesque. Instead Faulkner also tops the
list when it comes to this kind of grotesque. His characters are,
however, often so complex and nuanced that they are not easily
dismissed as mere grotesques.

From this overview of repulsive/frightening grotesques in
Southern fiction it was observed moreover that a grotesque
character may change not only from one category to another, but
furthermore that a character may cease to be grotesque altogether,
either because he comes to be viewed differently by those around him or because the author treats him with so much sympathy that, figuratively speaking, he loses or transcends his grotesqueness in the eyes of the reader.

The chapter entitled "The Comic-Grotesque" deals with different groups of grotesque characters who are predominantly comic: physical and mental grotesques, real eccentrics and grotesque pursuers of love, intellectual grotesques and other spiritually deficient laity and clergy. It was found, first of all, that the comic-grotesque is by far the most common form of the grotesque in Southern fiction, due perhaps to the tradition of humorous writing handed down to the present generation of writers; secondly, that no one has used it as much as Flannery O'Connor. It is likewise interesting to note that whereas the comic-grotesque also seems to be a favourite mode in Caldwell, Eudora Welty and Goyen, Capote has only one example of it—a parody of a story by Eudora Welty—and Carson McCullers none. Faulkner, on the other hand, has created many comic-grotesques but they are outnumbered by the array of repulsive/frightening characters in his fiction. All in all, however, when it comes to grotesque writing, Faulkner is more versatile than any other Southern author in that he makes frequent use of all the variants of the grotesque.

The motives mentioned above that seem to have prompted Flannery O'Connor, Eudora Welty, Caldwell, Goyen and Faulkner to write their stories, remain very much the same regardless of the form of the grotesque being used. All five are critics of society, but, as has been shown, their criticism manifests itself in quite different ways. Flannery O'Connor attacks man's indifference to and mendacity in spiritual matters. Frequently portraying modern man as a grotesque figure, she reveals, as Farnham says, "the beauty of virtue by showing the ugliness of its absence." Satire and irony are among her principal tools.

Eudora Welty's world is a much broader one, full of human infirmities of all kinds and described with fine wit and insight. She, too, makes use of satire but it is seldom as biting as Flannery O'Connor's and never as malicious. With a few exceptions, her grotesques are depicted in a most affirmative and compassionate manner. The author's frequent use of myth gives
her stories an added dimension.

Faulkner's grotesques embody two altogether different views of man: the pessimistic one that man is to a large extent a product of his past and a victim of circumstances and the optimistic one that man has an almost incredible ability to rise above his limitations. Not only is Faulkner the Southern writer who uses the grotesque in the most complex way, but in dealing with it he also proves to have the widest range of social criticism. He has, for instance, used it to reveal his fear of Snopesism, to express his detestation of intolerance, ignorance and hypocrisy and to show his abhorrence of mob violence and senseless violence in general. Most of all, however, he is concerned with man himself, frequently using the grotesque as Flannery O'Connor does: to show what man ought not to be, by showing what he actually is. At times he also employs the grotesque simply to add zest to a story.

Goyen uses the grotesque no more gratuitously than Faulkner. Frequently he employs it to lament by-gone days when integrity and ideals still reigned, when people still had time to communicate and when the land had not yet been marred by encroaching industry. In the present author's opinion, he is at his best when he does not drift too far into sentimental retrospection but proves his dramatic ability, as in "The White Rooster" or combines his gift for telling stories with his sense of humour, as in Savata, My Fair Sister. Like Eudora Welty, he is much less severe in his criticism of society than Flannery O'Connor but seems to have an even tenderer relationship with his characters than she does. Comparing Goyen to Caldwell and Faulkner, Louise Gossett rightly points out that the grotesque and abnormal aspects of Goyen's world are the outcome of his emotional make-up, not the result of a social hypothesis, as is the case with Caldwell, or of a concept of fate as in Faulkner.

Carson McCullers and Capote both use the grotesque to convey their views on love. The theme of "dispossessed love" coupled with spiritual isolation runs all through Carson McCullers's fiction as a continuous thread. The only optimistic aspect of her ideas on love is that no person is too outlandish to become the object of someone's love. Capote, too, in his "nocturnal mood" frequently deals with thwarted love and with people incap-
able of loving—not in order to condemn them, however, but to convey his message that man should be accepted for what he is.

In the final chapter attention was focused on novels and short stories written by new talented Southern writers in the period 1960-70. To judge from these selections, the preoccupation with grotesque characters and happenings does not seem to have declined markedly in Southern fiction. This, in turn, might be seen as a sign that the United States has not yet assimilated the South to such an extent that it has lost its distinctiveness—that distinctiveness from which so many contributory factors to the fostering of the grotesque are believed to emanate.

As will be recalled, certain objections were raised to Spiegel's sweeping statement that the Southern grotesque consists of a deformed character who appears so regularly that he has become a sort of convention. Even if one insists that this character display a ludicrous or comic trait in addition to his deformity, as Thomson does and as has been done in this dissertation, which eliminates quite a few so-called grotesques, it nevertheless turns out that Spiegel is not far wrong: the grotesque character is indeed very frequent in Southern fiction. Literally or figuratively crippled, he stands out as an appropriate symbol of modern man and assumes many shapes: we have met the puppet (e.g., Haze Motes), the automaton (e.g., Rayber), the madman (e.g., Singleton), the freak (e.g., Cousin Lyman), the monster (e.g., Gene Morgan) and the sex maniac (e.g., Popeye) to mention some of the more extreme variants. In less palpable forms, he was found to be eccentric (like Eula), neurotic (like Ignatius), bewildered (like Tarwater), lacking in identity (like Parker), pharaesical (like Cora), oversexed (like Ellie May) or emotionally stunted (like Captain Penderton).

What makes him Southern, however, is the Southern setting in which he is placed. Many of the writers treated here have emphasized the importance of place, notably Eudora Welty, who has written a whole essay on the subject, and who feels that fiction is completely tied up with place, and that place to a great extent is what makes the characters real.

Another factor, besides the setting, which contributes to making the grotesque specifically Southern, is, as we have seen, the compassion with which a Southern writer of the grotesque
tends to view his characters. A possible definition of the Southern grotesque may therefore be: By the Southern grotesque is generally meant a deformed or warped character, placed in an unmistakably Southern setting, whose physical or mental make-up or behaviour is such that it creates a sustained tension in both work and response. He is usually portrayed with compassion. The phenomenon of the Southern grotesque can also pertain to situation, setting, imagery, style or mood.
NOTES TO SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION


2 This opinion is also put forth by Louise Gossett, p. 132.

3 Ibid., p. 138.
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