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Structuralism and the Modern Novel

by

Mark Stacy Scheid

A Thesis Submitted
In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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May 1972
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To Mary
Chapter 1

Structuralism and the Theory of the Novel

Structuralism is a term which seems to defy a simple definition. It draws on concepts from fields as dissimilar as pure mathematics and literary criticism. Its seminal works were published in a variety of different languages, and some of the most important were not available in English translation until a few years ago. While these difficulties have not prevented structuralism from gaining a growing following and an even wider "sphere of influence," some misconceptions have arisen because the very scope of structuralism renders it liable to popular error. It has, as Jean Piaget suggests, taken on its meaning as much at cocktail parties as at colloquia.

Structuralism is a method which is becoming a philosophy, as perhaps any comprehensive epistemological approach must. Before we can arrive at the practical applications of structuralism to literary exegesis we must first examine the philosophical backgrounds and the diverse applications of structuralist principles as a whole. The first section of this chapter will attempt to define the principles by which structuralism operates and its function as an explicatory tool; the second will examine structuralist literary criticism; and the third will develop a structuralist theory of the modern novel.
One traditional and logical way of defining a concept is by contrasting it with its opposite. When the concept is structuralism, however, the task is difficult—not because there are too few antitheses to it, but because there are too many. The scope of structuralism is so broad that it counters present tendencies in a number of fields: in linguistics, structuralism represents a departure from the diachronic study of isolated linguistic phenomena; in anthropology, from formal descriptive ethnography; in psychology, from various atomistic tendencies to reduce wholes to their prior elements. To define structuralism in opposition to all these would involve the confusion attendant upon any attempt to mix various unlike schools of thought.  

Recognition of this difficulty brings us to a primary characteristic of structuralism: it is deliberately eclectic. It draws from and operates on all human social phenomena, including social sciences and the humanities. Because the operation of the structuring mechanism is considered to be innate, all forms of social expression, whether they are clothing fashions, works of art or kinship patterns, are seen as types of "languages," all of which conform to the same structures. Similarly, all intellectual concepts are viewed as sharing the same basic structures; hence a structuralist insight will often be supported by evidence from a number of different fields of knowledge. It is, in effect, as if the "paradigm of discovery" which Thomas Kuhn believes
operates unchanged throughout scientific history also operates synchronically, cutting across the traditional boundaries of fields of knowledge. That structuralism is, first and foremost, a method, not a philosophy, is a point that its major exponents are at pains to make. But a number of its major premises derive directly from the philosophical viewpoints of its practitioners. The most important single operative concept (though by no means the most innovative) is the structuralist concern with dialectic. As is the case of several structuralist principles, the structuralist concern with dialectic can be traced to both philosophy and methodology.

To the extent that structuralism is European in origin and a product of predominantly French intellectual circles, it may be expected to bear the signs of having developed in a predominantly Marxist philosophical atmosphere. The two structuralists who have furnished the most extensive and systematic applications of structuralist principles are Roman Jakobson in linguistics and Claude Lévi-Strauss in anthropology. Both men are philosophically Marxist: Jakobson held a high position in the Linguistic Circles of Prague and Moscow after the 1918 revolution; Lévi-Strauss, in his first book, Triste Tropiques, speaks of Marxism, geology and psychoanalysis as his "trois maîtresses." It seems likely that the emphasis on Hegelomarxist dialectic in structuralism comes in part from the philosophical predisposition of its major practitioners.

The predisposition is tested and confirmed by Levi-Strauss' field work and the studies in genetic epistemology of Jean Piaget, a structural psychologist.
Man's innate tendency to dialectize (or in some structuralist writing, to perceive in terms of binary opposition) is the subject of the first volume of Lévi-Strauss' Mythologiques, Le Cru et le cuit (The Raw and the Cooked). Here he discusses not only the way that societies are structured in "true" binary oppositions, when two classes are mutually exclusive and exhaustive (as in the categories "married" and "not married"), but also the tendency for artificial binary oppositions to be formed which are neither formally exclusive nor exhaustive, but which do apparently indicate an innate tendency to dichotomize even those things which are more alike than different. The title of The Raw and the Cooked is one example of this type of mental process, in which food is regarded as occupying certain social roles corresponding to the manner in which it is prepared; Lévi-Strauss finds a number of other similar oppositions in the primitive society he is studying: sun/moon; fire/water; ant eater/jaguar.  

Piaget's contributions to the study of structuralist dialectic will be treated at length later in this chapter.

Both the structuralist concerns of eclecticism and dialectic are based upon the concept of the innateness of the structure-forming faculty in man. Lévi-Strauss locates the structuring capacity even deeper than the deep structures which are the precursors of the empirically-observable structures of surface expressions.
Piaget places the structuring capacity midway between the nervous system and conscious behavior, because, he asserts, "psychology is first of all a biology." The work of Noam Chomsky in linguistics arrives at a similar affirmation of innate structuralism:

If it is really true that the grammars of natural language are not only complex and abstract, but also very limited in their variety . . . we must again put in question the problem of knowing whether they are actually the product of culture, which seems to be generally believed . . .

Chomsky's statement implies that not only the capability to acquire language, but the structures that language will take, are genetically determined. This leads us to the next aspect of structuralism we will consider, the study of unconscious systems.

Lévi-Strauss sees the same limited choice of structural repertory, genetically determined, that Chomsky implies. Because these choices are genetic, they are not approachable through direct empirical study; instead, they must be inferred from the systems they form. Following the lead of
Ferdinand de Saussure in structural linguistics, Lévi-Strauss focuses on unconscious structures rather than conscious ones. Apparently he does so because he feels that unconscious structures are less likely to be adulterated by deliberate efforts to change or improve them. Second, the unconscious structures are by no means inferior as keys to the society, since all forms of social behavior constitute "languages"; a participant in tribal behavioral forms need no more be aware of the structure of those forms than the native speaker of a language need be aware of the grammatical rules of that language.  

The structuralists again follow the lead of structural linguistics in developing the concept of transformation. The relationships upon which the structuralists operate are not those which are usually chosen in studies of structure. The ordinary way of studying relationships is to group like objects together for comparison, but structuralism proceeds from the assumption that structures can be brought together not in spite of, but by virtue of, their differences. In this approach there is no norm for a group; all members are equal variants; the emphasis rests on the transformation of structures within the group. To illustrate the difference between traditional methods and structuralism, Michael Lane proposes a simple example: we are given three structures:

1) A is to B as C is to D
2) A is to X as C is to D
3) A is to B as C is to Y
In a traditional methodological approach, Lane suggests, a "basic structure" would be sought—since A and C are present in all structures, they might be seen as constants, with B, X, D and Y all forming "variants of different statistical probability." Or A, B, C and D might be seen as part of the structure and X and Y as variants. Both approaches involve the elimination of some parts of the structure as deviant. The structuralist method, on the other hand, would see all the various elements as equal and capable of being studied according to the laws of transformation:

"A is to B" is transformed into "A is to X"
"C is to D" is transformed into "C is to Y"

The value of the structuralist approach in such an instance is obvious, not as a replacement for, but as an adjunct to, more traditional analytical methods. If it is true, as structuralism argues, that things take on their fullest values only when contrasted with their opposites, so structuralism reaches its fullest value only when used in apposition to those methods which, in some sense, it is trying to replace.

Given the conscious eclecticicism of structuralism, it is not surprising that there has been an effort to discover the basic structures which underlie all human systemizing. The concept of the innate tendency of man to dialectize, as we have seen, is one such structuralist belief. Beyond this concept, which cannot of course be claimed as a structuralist innovation, there
are other fields in which separate efforts to discover the structural bases of
different disciplines have reached strikingly similar conclusions. Perhaps the
best example concerns the structural mathematicians who write under the
pseudonym of Nikolas Bourbaki, and who have been attempting to reduce
mathematics to its central systematic source. Instead of one source, they
discovered three "mother structures" from which all mathematical operations
derive: an algebraic structure, a structure of ordering, and a topological
structure.¹⁶ Working in the field of structural psychology, Piaget independently
discovered the same structures as stages in the epistemological growth of a
child.¹⁷ These findings seem to indicate that there exist common structures
which may be found in all human "languages" (if the term "language" is
given its structuralist extension), but as yet, only mathematics and psychology
have been found to correspond at this level. Whether or not a common
structure can be found for all human activity, the reduction of all systems
to their most basic forms is one of structuralism's fundamental operative
criteria.

A final structuralist concept is also traceable to the theories of the
structural linguists. Saussure in his Cours de linguistique générale (1916)
divided language into two parts: langue and parole. Langue is the total
system of a language, the rules and conventions by which it operates.
Parole is any individual utterance in a language.¹⁸ Together, they make
up the totality of langue. Because of the temporal or momentary nature of parole, it is subject to change through time, and all the pre-Saussurean linguistic studies, which had concentrated on the study of parole, were of necessity tied to a historical, or diachronic, point of view. But langue, upon which Saussure focused, is by nature ahistorical or synchronic; its emphasis on structure cuts across time lines. Saussure’s studies thus focus on relationships across moments in time, rather than through time. This emphasis on synchronic analysis may be seen in all structuralist works.

Naturally, synchronism is not a major new idea in disciplines without a traditional focus on historical development—mathematics, for example. But in the social sciences, structuralism’s synchronic approach seems to deny the contributions of Darwinism and its effects on anthropology, sociology and history itself. It does not in fact do so. As is evident in Lévi-Strauss’ anthropology and Thomas Kuhn’s history of ideas, time is a dimension no less (but no more) important than any other which might be considered part of a system. History itself, the most diachronic of disciplines, is seen as the “specific mode of development of a particular system,” whose synchronic structure must be fully known before its diachronic progression can have meaning.

The basic points of structuralism may be rather easily summed up: structuralism is concerned with innate, transformational relationships, reduced to their basic dialectic, synchronic forms. It presupposes a "wholeness" in
the system studied, and serves as "a certain way of studying language problems and the problems of languages." 22

Structuralism's critics have, in all this, found a good deal to disagree with, both in the philosophical background and in the methodological assumptions. Structuralism's disregard of the importance of history as well as its tendency to let methodology become ideology has been attacked. 23 Both these objections have to do primarily with the misuse of structuralist principles, and can be charged against overenthusiastic supporters of structuralism rather than the structuralist method itself. There are other, more important, objections, which find fault with the assumptions which underlie the method, and these are more difficult to dismiss.

The first objection is to the structuralist tendency to see "all patterns of human behavior as codes, with the characteristics of language." 24 As yet, this assumption, initiated by Lévi-Strauss and Jakobson and carried to its fullest development by Roland Barthes, has received no systematic defense. Most structuralists seem to feel that it needs none, and that the success of structuralist approaches presupposing this condition are proof enough that it must be valid.

The second objection is to the structuralist assumption of man's innate structuring ability. 25 Again, the structuralist "defense" of this theory comes partly from the success of the structuralist method itself, but it also receives
strong empirical support from the previously-mentioned studies of Piaget in genetic epistemology. 26

The third objection is to what is seen as the fundamental structuralist belief that relations can be reduced to binary oppositions; this can be done, the critics contend, only at the expense of imposing false, distorted categories on reality. 27 To this charge the structuralists would reply, first, that any methodology distorts—only reality mirrors reality—and second, that the main concern of structuralism, in any case, is to concentrate on man’s innate tendency to dialectize—whether or not such an operation distorts reality is beside the point.

Finally, of course, the defense of structuralism, if any defense is to be made, lies in the evaluation of it as a pragmatic method. When applied to a cultural system or artifact, does it increase understanding of it? The example which follows is an abridgement of a structural analysis of the stoplight by Edmund Leach, in many ways the most pragmatic of the structural anthropologists (and, as is obvious in his choice of topic, one who is able to view structuralism with a certain whimsical detachment).

The color spectrum, Leach begins, is a continuum, running from violet at one end to red at the other. There is no natural point at which red stops and yellow begins, or yellow stops and blue begins, although the wave lengths change continually as the colors change, from long at the red end to
short at the violet end. The color spectrum is also a continuum in terms of luminosity or brightness, with both ends of the spectrum being relatively dark and the middle, yellow, being the brightest. Mental perception of color comes in response to variations of sensory input both in light and dark and in long and short wavelengths. The discrimination of the human brain (the innate structuring capacity) segments the sensory perception so that we perceive red, yellow and green as different colors. This ordering mechanism of the brain is such that anyone can be taught to feel that red is the opposite of green in the same way that white is the opposite of black. If the binary opposition involves a sense of "plus" and "minus," as it does in the stoplight, a given culture will consistently make red the "minus" pole--it is treated as a danger sign probably because of its association with blood.

Therefore, in our traffic lights, red and green are conceived of as opposites, "stop" and "go." If, however, we want a color to signify "about to stop," "about to go," we choose the color yellow, because it lies midway between red and green on the spectrum. The system red-yellow-green has become a transformation of the system stop-caution-go. Leach then details the steps involved in the same way that a structuralist anthropologist would go about noting the important steps in a cultural system he was studying:

a) The color spectrum exists in nature as a continuum.
b) The human brain interprets this continuum as if it consisted of discontinuous segments.
c) The human brain searches for an appropriate representation of a binary opposition plus/minus and selects red and green as a binary pair.

d) Having set up this polar opposition, the human brain is dissatisfied with the resulting discontinuity and searches for an intermediate position: not plus/not minus.

e) It then goes back to the original natural continuum and chooses yellow as the intermediate signal because the brain is able to perceive yellow as a discontinuous intermediate segment lying between red and green.

f) Thus the final cultural product—the three-color traffic signal—is a simplified imitation of a phenomenon of nature—the color spectrum—as apprehended by the human brain.28

Finally, the structure of the traffic light and the cultural situation of which it is a transformation may be diagrammed in terms of a pair of dialectical axes:

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WAVE LENGTH (movement)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SHORT (move) → SHORT (move)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIGH (change) ← HIGH (change)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LONG (don't move) → LONG (don't move)</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LUMINOSITY (continuity)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LOW (no change)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIGH (change)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOW (no change)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YELLOW (caution)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GREEN (go)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RED (stop)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GREEN (go)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RED (stop)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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From Leach’s analysis it appears that the structuralist method, at least when it is in
the hands of a skillful practitioner, lives up to the promise of structuralist theory.

In this section I have attempted to give a broad overview, in theory and
practice, of structuralist methods as applied to a wide field of knowledge. It
remains to look at the specific applications of structuralist theory to the field of
literary criticism.

II.

Structuralism’s emergence from a cloistered academic environment to
the world of fashionable philosophy has been dated from the appearance in
1962 of Claude Lévi-Strauss’ *La Pensée sauvage*, which devoted a chapter to
the refutation of Jean-Paul Sartre’s insistence on the importance of history in his
*Critique de la raison dialectique* (1960). But structuralism has been slow to gain
wide acceptance in England and America, although, as we will see shortly, there
are a handful of influential critics who are popularizing some of its approaches.
The reason for this slow, and often grudging, acceptance is primarily that struc-
turalism, European in origin, has been formulated according to European modes
of criticism, which are on occasion quite different from those established by
Anglo-American practice.

The first basic difference occurs in the philosophical background of
literary criticism in Europe. Writing in France, Roland Barthes addresses his
literary essays to a predominantly left-wing or neo-Marxist intellectual society; he therefore takes for granted a philosophical world view that must be consciously supplied by the Anglo-American reader. 30 Second, continental literature, especially French, has for a number of years considered the question, "Is the novel dead?" settled in the affirmative. Consequently, critical attention focuses on the more avant-garde experimenters like Borges, Beckett and Robbe-Grillet. Works of fiction which have a realistic base, like a good many of the critical successes in this country, are considered "barely noteworthy products of a retarded or reactionary consciousness." 31 Admittedly, the literary critics of this country focus some attention on the innovative prose writers in America; there are critical articles on Barthelme, Coover and Barth, but no one has yet based an esthetic on them as the French have on their continental equivalents.

Finally, there is the question of what makes a formal essay "good." Here once again there is a difference between the continental tradition and the Anglo-American one. The national stereotype of the French as lovers of logical order is true where intellectual arguments are concerned. To the English or American reader with an empiricist bias, who judges a theory not by its logical consistency but by how well it sorts with the facts, a French writer in full cry may appear to be traversing immense vistas of his subject matter, touching only on a few points which support his contention, borne up solely by the paroxysm of creation. The very words chosen by many French writers echo on a minor scale their concern
with logical consistency and flair, at the expense of meaning if need be. Thus some Anglo-American critics might be put off by a Barthesian title like Writing Degree Zero, or his definition of Racine's "accessibility" as "the very being of literature, carried to its paroxysm." In the face of the continental structuralists' tendency to describe the ineffable with ineffable terms, structuralist principles have had their greatest effect on English and American critical thinking indirectly, through mediators such as Edmund Leach, who cheerfully admits, "Lévi-Strauss often manages to give me ideas even when I don't really know what he is saying." Before we can discuss the mediation of structuralist literary criticism in America, however, we must turn to its birth and development on the continent from the broader applications of general structuralism.

Given the broad scope of structuralism, it is not surprising that a structuralist school of literary criticism has developed; art is as much of a product of man's innate structuring capacity as any of the unconscious social systems studied by structural anthropologists. Lévi-Strauss has himself ventured into the field of criticism, first with a structuralist analysis of primitive art in Structural Anthropology (1958). In 1962 he co-authored with Roman Jakobson a study of Baudelaire's "Les Chats." In his preface to the article, Lévi-Strauss felt obliged to clarify his concept of the status of literature. His statement reveals the paradoxical flexibility of the dialectic:
Admittedly the Author of this preliminary note has at one time described the myth as being in opposition to the poetic work (see C. Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie structurale*, p. 232), but those who have reproached him for this have not taken into account the fact that the very notion of opposition implies that the two forms were originally conceived of as complementary terms, forming a part of the same classification.  

Lévi-Strauss' statement serves to illuminate one of the basic problems in analyzing structuralist literary criticism. Myth, by its very nature, is ahistorical or synchronic: all myths are organized along the same structural lines regardless of the society which produced them. All "mediate a discontinuity—death, winter, paradise lost, temps perdu," according to Geoffrey Hartman.  

But literature has been seen by some structuralist critics as more closely tied to the society which produced it—the inherent supposition has been historicist: in order to discover what *Great Expectations* means, the first step is to discover what it meant to Victorian England. This conflict between synchronic structuralist theory and diachronic structuralist practice is predominant in the works of Northrop Frye and Geoffrey Hartman.

Criticism which can be called "structuralist" originated long before modern structuralism. Hartman suggests Bishop Hurd as the first structuralist critic in English; his *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762) attempted to explain Spencer's *Faerie Queene* by relating it to the conventions of an earlier English society.  

Hartman similarly sees C. L. Barber (*Shakespeare's Festive...*
Comedy, 1959) as an unrecognized early structuralist because of his efforts to derive Shakespeare's comedic systems from local mediations of mythic traditions, the May Games and the Lord of Misrule. Implicit in Hartman's definition of structuralism, however, is the belief that structuralist criticism inherently concerns itself with discovering the way in which literature mediates existing social structures. Such an approach is not structuralist but historicist; Hartman has neglected the fact that structuralism is always predisposed to synchronism.

A better case for a native empiricist structural approach could be made for Joseph Frank's The Widening Gyre. Frank explicitly rejects the concept of time as the controlling structure of a work of art in favor of "spatial form" in which differences between past and present are destroyed in the fusion of the two. When Frank discovers social structure paralleled by novelistic structure, as for example in the country fair scene in Madame Bovary, he sees the spatial hierarchy as structured by the presence of the ironic author rather than by the conventions of nineteenth-century French society. In this, of course, Frank announces his fundamental affiliation with New Criticism, in spite of Allen Tate's disclaimer in the introduction.

If we return to the history of structuralism, we can begin to determine the source of Hartman's misconception that structuralism is necessarily historical. The critical school which has been most influential in Europe and America in spreading awareness of structuralism, has been, paradoxically, one which
ignores some of structuralism's basic tenets. The followers of this school of
literary criticism, who have been called variously the "Geneva School" or
the "geneticists," focus on a work of literature in an attempt to analyze the
authorial consciousness which manifests itself within it. Consequently, literature
is seen as an act of awareness: of the self, of external reality and of the
linguistic structures which express that awareness. If a work of art is an
object, it is a "living" one, and it serves as a window through which the
author can be discerned. The goal of the genetic critic is to reproduce in
himself the author's experience as he creates the work, conscious of his own
subjectivity, the world of physical reality, and the conflict between these
inner and outer worlds.

The leader of the Geneva School, and its most influential writer, is
Georges Poulet, who traces in his two most important books the concerns of
the geneticists. The Interior Distance takes as its point of departure Poulet's
own consciousness of the structure of the creative process expressed in the
title and goes on to focus on the similar process in the minds of writers from
Marivaux to Mallarmé. Deriving from The Interior Distance a focus on
cognitive process, and from his first book, Studies in Human Time, a diachronic
approach, Poulet fused the two in his third book, The Metamorphosis of the
Circle. Taking a potentially synchronic concept, the theme of the alternation
of the circle and the point in literature, Poulet derives a diachronic progression,
a "metamorphosis." Once again he focuses on the artistic cogito of a number of writers and discovers that each partook of a similar period consciousness. Hartman compares his approach to Lovejoy's in The Great Chain of Being: where Lovejoy studied the Renaissance attempt to reconcile a paradox in the idea of God, Poulet studies a similar antinomy in the relationship of space and time and the efforts of individual writers to reconcile the two. Finally, Poulet's approach yields a "subtle and expanded Great Chain of Inner Being." There is little reason to doubt that Poulet is a brilliant and original critic, but the insights he achieves and the methodology he uses have little to do with structuralism, although he is usually referred to as one of the leading structuralists.

The concepts of the Geneva School have had considerable impact in this country, influencing the criticism of J. Hillis Miller, Paul Brodtkorb and Geoffrey Hartman, among others. Miller's The Disappearance of God traces the effects of the cataclysm of his title on the minds of nineteenth-century authors; his Poets of Reality discerns a tendency to confront contemporary social reality in writers from Conrad to W. C. Williams. Brodtkorb's Ishmael's White World replaces Poulet's "interior distance" with the more formally structured psychological methods of the French phenomenologists, but arrives at a geneticist end: Ishmael's cognitive structure of the world is a displacement of Melville's. Hartman illustrates his concern with perceptive
cognition in his first book, *The Unmediated Vision* (1954), and goes on to a full-fledged geneticist approach in *Wordsworth's Poetry* (1964), in which the poems are used as a key to unlock the inner workings of the poet's mind, and finally, to reveal the Romantic zeitgeist through Wordsworth's eyes. 49

To go down the list of the critics who have been influenced by the Geneva School is to call the roll of the brightest and most interesting young American critics presently writing. Given such a background, it is no wonder that Hartman feels that structuralism has as one of its central themes an historical revelation. But as we have seen, structuralism relegates history to a more minor role than the geneticists would have it play; it prefers to focus on the work of art itself, and in so doing, finds itself in accord with the New Criticism, once again in contrast to geneticism.

Some of its supporters have tried to reconcile the Geneva School with the tenets of New Criticism, but are themselves aware that they have succeeded only in yoking them together rather than fusing them into an organic whole. Earl Wasserman, writing in "New Criticism and the Intentional Mind," 50 suggests such a union, with the object being a hermeneutic capable of viewing both the author and his poem. His concept of such a union is a very mechanical one however: he advocates

... a series of oscillations from literary text to authorial mind and back again until, ideally, we have both the structure of that mind and the organic poem existing in it. 51
Wasserman's approach is similar to that advocated by his colleague, J. Hillis Miller, whose "systole and diastole of criticism," first announced in the introduction to The Disappearance of God, is nothing but a comprehensive, alternating reading which moves from level to level of interpretation. The critical union is again mechanical, rather than dialectical.

The two critics who come the closest to being true structuralists are Northrop Frye and Roland Barthes. At first glance, this seems surprising, for, in some ways, two critics could hardly be more dissimilar, and Frye is not even a follower of structuralism. I think it can be shown, however, that Frye and Barthes differ mostly in their subject matter and relatively little in their attitude toward criticism.

Frye's Anatomy of Criticism (1957) is well-known, and I need not comment at length on the content of his work. This analysis will be confined primarily to a study of his system-making. The most obvious attribute of Frye's criticism, and the one which announces his affinities with structuralism, is precisely his emphasis on system. His "categorical criticism" is a rejection of the "mystery-religion without a gospel,"\(^5\) which he saw as the then current state of criticism—it is, finally, a democratizing approach which potentially makes art available to all men instead of only to academic "insiders," echoing structuralism's emphasis on the equal validity of all permutations of a system.
To begin at the most synoptic level, Frye, like the structuralists, conceives of all literature as part of a total form (paralleling Piaget's concept of "wholeness"). This total form is made up of a number of smaller systems, each of them myth-archetypes, which in turn are reducible to a variety of manifestations of the archetype, from which they differ in proportion to the distance they have been "displaced" from the original archetype. Frye refuses to follow the lead of the Geneva School and ground the basic mythos from which his system originates in a definable relationship of art to society; myth is, he implies, by its very nature applicable to, and derivable from, all human society: it is synchronic and not diachronic.

Frye's archetypal systems, although founded in nature as one would expect from their mythic element, are easily reducible to a purer structuralist dialectic; Frye himself comes close to such a reduction when he connects his theories of mode, symbol, myth and rhetoric with the cycle of the seasons—a structuralist would recognize that Frye is describing a system of transformations grouped around the two dialectical axes of the seasonal year. It is in his mythic preoccupation, however, that Frye differs most basically from structuralism. Frye sees myth as prior to all literature, which is displaced myth; structuralism sees both myth and literature as distinct outgrowths from a common source, the innate structuring capacity of man. Hence it is that Lévi-Strauss sees myth and literature as apposite, and intrinsically related because of that appositeness.
Because of its scope Frye's theory serves as a good example of a synoptic structuralist analysis. For a model of a structuralist approach to a particular body of work, we must turn to Roland Barthes. Barthes claims no affiliation with a literary group, and really has no deep roots in structuralist theory. The reader of his criticism may feel that Barthes is a practitioner first and a theorist second. His early *Writing Degree Zero* (1953), an answer to Sartre's *What is Literature?*, establishes what seems to be a basic theory closely related to myth criticism by calling for a "myth of écriture"; on closer inspection, however, it becomes obvious that Barthes wants to invent that un-mythic myth to justify his predilection for what American critics call "close reading." Recently Barthes has turned from examination of literature to a more broadly based study of extra-linguistic languages. For the purposes of this study, however, the best example of Barthes' work is his *On Racine* (1960).

Barthes focuses on the works of a writer not to discern the figure of the author in the shadows, but to illuminate the works themselves. Because of his structuralist bias, he is concerned with system-building as much as with the finished systems; the first long section of his book is consequently devoted to "Racinian Man." Barthes describes himself as entering into the world of Racine's plays and observing the inhabitants as they interact; although the terms he uses are psychoanalytic, he is aware that the result is really a structural Racinian anthropology. Barthes first defines the relational structures
he discovers in Racine's world, using behavioral categories such as "transgressions," "the fear of signs" and "logos and praxis," and then goes on to discuss the plays, illustrating the manner in which each partakes of the Racinian systems he has described. The final sections of the book deal with "Racine Spoken" (a drama review) and "History or Literature?" In the last essay Barthes raises to the level of theory his belief that a writer on literature cannot be both a historian and a critic; he must choose either to write literary history or to write about the literature. In On Racine, it is obvious that Barthes has chosen the latter course.

Frye's Anatomy of Criticism is a model of a synoptic structuralist approach, and Barthes' On Racine almost its equal as an example of a structuralist approach to a body of work. I would like to emulate both works, while restricting the focus to individual novels, in the structuralist theory of the modern novel outlined in the following section.

III.

The most basic level at which structuralism can function is the level of epistemology, the manner in which the world is systemized so that it may be understood. At this level, all structuralist approaches to different academic fields resolve themselves into one basic structural system, differing only in the subject matter it treats: physics, anthropology, mathematics, etc. The existence
of this system makes it possible for structuralists to go outside their own fields
for corroborative evidence of their theories, and leads ultimately to the struc-
turalist awareness of the innateness of the structuring capacity. Given this
general concord, it is not surprising that studies have been devoted to the
structuring capacity itself, divorced as far as possible from the content which
is the focus of most other structural approaches. The most widely influential
of these studies are those carried out by Jean Piaget, a structural psychologist.
The main theoretical results of his studies are developed in his book, Genetic

Starting from the biological concept that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny,
Piaget proposes to discover the historical development of epistemological constructs
by studying those of the child. He arrives at the common structural conclusion
that structure transcends field limitations, and that in particular, the three basic
perceptual modes of the child parallel exactly the three basic "mother structures"
to which the Bourbaki mathematicians have reduced all mathematical operations.
But for the purposes of this essay, his most important discoveries concern the
manner in which modes of perception are derived.

Piaget finds that knowledge is abstracted in two ways. The first way,
which he calls "simple abstraction," is the manner in which knowledge can be
derived from an object itself. The example Piaget gives of the operation of
simple abstraction clarifies his definition: a child can pick up objects, weigh
them in his hand, and infer that they have different weights, and that usually large objects weigh more than small ones.

The second form Piaget calls "reflective abstraction"; it is based on the awareness of action upon an object. To illustrate reflective abstraction, Piaget recounts the manner in which a friend became interested in mathematics:

When he was a small child, he was counting pebbles one day; he lined them up in a row, counted them from left to right, and got ten. Then, just for fun, he counted them from right to left to see what number he would get, and was astonished that he got ten again. He put the pebbles in a circle and counted them, and once again there were ten... He discovered here what is known in mathematics as commutativity, that is, the sum is independent of the order.61

Piaget goes on to assert that commutativity is not a property of the pebbles, but rather of the relationship among them, and that it was necessary for the child to rearrange them before it became evident to him that they remained the same.62 (An adult, it is implied, could do the operation "in his head," but he would still be acting on the objects by arranging them mentally.) Knowledge in this case comes from the child's actions, and not from the objects involved.

Piaget notes that the difference between simple abstraction and reflective abstraction also marks the difference between the physical sciences, which are generally object- and description-oriented, and mathematics and logic, which are relationship-oriented.63 The implications of his epistemological theory are
greater than this implies, however; Piaget’s concepts are strikingly similar to inductive and deductive logical forms, and also (curiously enough) seem to echo the critical dichotomy between the empiricist bias of most Anglo-American criticism and the relativist modes of the French.

The critical apparatus which will be developed from Piaget’s studies in epistemology will be used to analyze the modern novel. There are at least three epistemological levels involved in any novel. The initial one is the author’s view of the world and the way in which it is structured. From this the novel itself is derived, although in the process of creation the author’s world view is likely to become altered by the act of creation, while at the same time he finds himself unable to say exactly what he wants to say. To this unintentional distancing between the novelist and his creation is added a further, planned separation: the writer must create characters to people his fictional world and each of the major characters must have an epistemological structure which can account for his actions and attitudes. This is the second of the epistemological levels in the novel, that existing in the work itself. And finally, there is a third level, that of the reader, who must balance and collate his epistemological world view with the world view which is embodied in the work.

The interactions of these levels of epistemology are further complicated by the frequent presence of an omniscient narrator who hovers between the real
author (with whom he shares the telling of the story) and the book itself, from which he draws his existence. He too has an epistemological viewpoint, which may be as boldly announced as that of Fielding's narrator in Tom Jones or Trollope's in Barchester Towers, or as subdued as Flaubert's in Madame Bovary.

The epistemology of the author is the focus of the Geneva School and its followers; some of the hazards of seeking the author in the work have been suggested in the preceding paragraphs: both intentional and unintentional distancing keep the author's world view partially excluded from his work. The other end of the novel process, the epistemology of the reader, is a subject which quickly becomes a hall of mirrors, ultimately tautological. While the author's epistemology is finally unreachable because of its uniqueness, the epistemological response of the reader could take an infinite variety of forms, as many forms, in fact, as there are readers. The epistemological structures of the work itself, however, can be studied easily, given the right tools, and they will be the focus of this analysis.

In the following discussion of the novel, the epistemological structures will be divided into two types, "external" and "internal." Each type may be divided into a binary pair. It will become clear from the development of these systems that the structure of the modern novel is a dialectic in which the poles are themselves dialectical, and that such a structure, a dialectic of dialectics, is well-suited for structuralist study. It is as if the structure
of the modern novel were a river composed of two tributary streams, each of
which is made up of two smaller streams:

![Diagram showing the structure of modern novels]

The external epistemological structure of the novel may be differentiated
from the internal largely in terms of content. External structures deal with the
relationships which develop among the characters. Since these relationships are
determined by the fictional society in which the author has placed his characters,
the external structure may be said in part to connote the "world view of the
novel" itself. While such a phrase is helpful in defining external structure in
contrast to internal structure (which is concerned with the world view of a
character), it should be remembered that the two epistemological structures
work in close organic relationship, and that both, besides being structural con-
cepts, are also ways of presenting world views: each is, at the level of the
work itself, an authorial technique.
The two branches of the external epistemological structure of the novel may be called, to borrow a concept from Poulet, "center-perspective" and "circle-perspective." These terms arise because the structure of the modern novel is resolvable, in terms of its epistemological relationships, into the form of a circle around a center point with the radii of the circle representing the paths of the epistemological structuring processes; the focus of a novel is thus either inward toward the center of a series of events or outward from a central perspective.

The center-perspective novel is structured around the perceptions of a central character, whose epistemology informs that of the book as a whole. The movement of epistemological structuring is outward from the center:

The periphery of the circle in this type is generated by the epistemological responses of the central character to the characters and events around him—"generated" because those characters and events have no ontological basis in the book until included in the central character's epistemological structure. This is the form taken by all first-person narratives and a number of third-person interior monologues: Huckleberry Finn, Henry Esmond, The Good Soldier and Notes from Underground are all center-perspective novels. In all novels of this type, the central
character is defined by his epistemological structuring rather than by his concept of himself, which can be, as we will see, more distorted than any of the other character's views of him.

The inverse of the center-perspective is the circle-perspective novel—it is structured around a central character or event as perceived by the other characters in the book. The reader's point of view on the world of the novel changes constantly as the novel changes viewpoints, and in many novels of this type, the reader becomes the inverse of an omniscient narrator, putting together the various interpretations in order to achieve a final cohesive epistemological understanding of the central character, which is greater than that of any of the book's other characters. Thus in the novel diagrammed below, the narrator sequence might take form ABCD (or any permutation thereof) as one after another of the narrators discusses the central object, X:

![Diagram of circle-perspective structure]

The narrative itself would of course follow the same sequence and would consist of a series of views of the central object, modified by the epistemological structure of the viewer: \(X_a, X_b, X_c, \text{ etc.}\) None of the characters can convey "X" because none sees the central object in toto. The reader's job is to come as close as he can to X by the additive
process of combining and collating the various narrative perspectives on X, but finally it is as impossible to make $X_a$ plus $X_b$ plus $X_c$, and so on, equal X as it is to make a polygon of an infinite number of sides equal a circle. The reader must be satisfied to approximate the truth, similar to the compromise the writer makes when he verbalizes his ideas.

Structurally, the movement of the circle-perspective novel is directed inward; to return to the geometrical metaphor with which we began, it is as if the center of a circle is being deduced from an inspection of its circumference. The central character of this type of novel is closely akin to the "touchstone" character in some early novels like Joseph Andrews. The famous scene in which Joseph Andrews, beaten and stripped, is commented upon by the passengers of a coach is almost a paradigm of the circle-perspective novel; the difference is that Fielding has already told us what to think of Joseph Andrews, and the passengers' remarks only let us judge them instead. Henry James' The Awkward Age was designed to be a circle-perspective novel:

I remember that in sketching my project for the conductors of the periodical I have named I drew on a sheet of paper --and possibly with an effect of the cabalistic, it now comes over me, that even anxious amplification may have but vainly attenuated--the neat figure of a circle consisting of a number of rounds disposed at equal distance about a central object. The central object was my situation, my subject in itself, to which the thing would owe its title, and the small rounds represented so many distinct lamps, as I liked to call them, the function of each of which would be to light with all due intensity one of its aspects.
Thus far we have been concerned with the external epistemological structures of the novel; we turn now to a consideration of the internal branch of the dialectic. It is internal in two senses: first because it deals with the characters themselves, not the relationship among them; second, because it deals with the modes of personal epistemological systemizing of the characters. Like the external structure, the internal structure of the modern novel is itself dialectical, and this epistemological dialectic, as will be shown, takes the form suggested by Piaget’s studies in genetic epistemology: when a character in a modern novel elaborates an epistemological approach to a situation, he does so either through the process of simple abstraction and inductive logic, or reflective abstraction and deductive logic.

In the first type, a character begins by rather objectively gathering incremental information, which he uses to construct an epistemological system, which then defines his relationship to the situation. This might be called the "scientific approach" (with an implication of dehumanization); however, as Piaget demonstrates, such a term would be a misnomer, because simple abstraction is prior to science, and in reality is an innate epistemological system which science has adopted for its own. A good example of the use of this form of epistemological process is the procedure by which Pamela decides that Squire B— is a bounder. Pamela is one of the few novels in which the protagonist’s epistemological processes are objectified, here in the form of letters to her
parents—the reader can follow her state of mind daily as she is slowly convinced by facts and the logical conclusion to which they point. In *The Great Gatsby*, Nick Carraway's avowed predilection to "reserve judgement" is in part an attempt to use this logical method as a shield to keep him from having to construct an epistemological system which he feels instinctively will be distasteful—the thought that one favorable bit of evidence will come in to counter the unpleasant world view he might be forced to formulate is a "matter of infinite hope." 65

The other branch of the interior dialectic is the mode of reflective abstraction and deductive logic. Typically, a character who uses this mode of epistemological structuring begins with an epistemological system already well-established (although it may not be grounded in reality), and then proceeds to respond to a given situation by interpreting (or distorting) any subsequent information in the light of his system. Lambert Strether of *The Ambassadors*, Robert Cohn of *The Sun Also Rises*, John Dowell of *The Good Soldier*—all face the consequences of failing to make their epistemological systems conform to reality, and the fate of each depends upon his ability to fall back on another: Strether can do so, Cohn and Dowell cannot. Charles Kinbote of *Pale Fire*, on the other hand, disregards reality and yet triumphs because of that very indomitable ignorance which leads him to do so.
The four novels to be analyzed define all the possible permutations of internal and external epistemological structuring: Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* and Woolf's *The Waves* are circle-perspective novels, Donleavy's *The Ginger Man* and Nabokov's *Lolita* are center-perspective. The characters in *The Waves* and *The Ginger Man* use the simple abstraction mode of epistemological structuring; those in *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Lolita* reflective abstraction. Within the four novels, therefore, is an example of each possible type of exterior-interior epistemological interaction: *Absalom, Absalom!* is circle-perspective and deductive/reflective; *The Waves* is circle-perspective and inductive/simple; *The Ginger Man* is center-perspective and inductive/simple; *Lolita* is center-perspective and deductive/reflective. This may be clearer if, following structuralist practice, the relationship is diagrammed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUTER EPISTEMOLOGICAL STRUCTURES</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Circle-perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inductive logic/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple abstraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INNER EPISTEMOLOGICAL STRUCTURES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deductive logic/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective abstraction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The proscriptive nature of the diagram is not intended to indicate that all modern novels can be pigeon-holed in one of the four categories; many novels will not fit entirely in any one. The novels used were chosen to be polar, with the assumption that if the extremes of the dialectical epistemological systems could be structured, those less extreme examples would also fit within the structure.

A structural analysis of the modern novel cannot be content with only a synoptic view, of course. It may be asserted that the extent to which the modern novel is modern may be gauged in part in epistemological terms. In all the epistemological modes described, the character's purpose is to achieve some sense of harmony with the world by structuring its chaos and bringing it to order. A character in the modern novel is successful precisely to the extent that he feels himself to be; his aim is not to build a model which accurately represents reality, but to reduce his Angst by asserting that he can understand and order the world. To use Hartman's terms, each character in a modern novel is attempting to invent a myth which can mediate whatever discontinuity he is faced with. The modern novel does not have scenes in which the protagonist is welcomed back into society having "seen the light" as in Tom Jones; even Jay Gatsby's fantastic system satisfies him completely as long as he maintains his faith in it; his mistake finally is that he fails to make reality assume the subordinate role which he has provided for it in his system.
As structuralist studies in anthropology and linguistics lead us to expect, the epistemological systems which are developed in the modern novel are dialectical. This dialectic is produced by the character's innate tendency to perceive in binary oppositions. (It is not suggested that the modern authors deliberately choose to make their characters dialectize, but rather that novels, like any other cultural product, manifest man's innate structuring process both microcosmically and macrocosmically.) A character's success in ordering the chaos of reality thus resolves into his ability to mediate the innate dialectic of his world view.

But the term "mediation" has its own dialectic meaning: it is a logical reconciliation of two opposites, a Hegelian synthesis, as well as a bridge connecting two concepts which can be joined only by an act of imaginative creation. The first process is denotative and may be compared to the operation of a metaphysical conceit, the tenor and vehicle of which appear at first to be very unlike, but then are shown to be very similar when the poet's logic is followed. The second process is connotative, a following of a "poetic logic" which can be seen in some of Shakespeare's images, in which the connections made between the tenor and vehicle seem right and yet are anti-logical, "too subtle for the intellect," in Yeats' phrase.

In the epistemological mediations of the characters in the modern novel, both forms of mediation are used. Some epistemological structures are capable
of being reconciled by logical processes, some only by a creative fictive act, the imaginative invention of a synthesis. Indeed, in the modern novel, those characters who form a successful ordering of the world's chaos are nearly always those who also form fictive syntheses, who help the author "tell the tale" which mediates a discontinuity, the source of which is the dialectic inherent in the world of the novel.

Bernard in The Waves is perhaps the best example of this; as a writer, a professional mediator, he is experienced enough with the process of creative synthesis that he alone of the six characters in the novel achieves a sufficiently expansive world view to make his "summing up" comprehensive. Shreve and Quentin in Absalom, Absalom! combine to produce the most convincing interpretation of the Sutpen legend, but Shreve is ultimately more convincing than Quentin because the Southerner is incapable of resolving his inner conflict about the South. The Ginger Man focuses on Sebastian Dangerfield's inability to mediate his dialectical world view, and the novel accordingly lacks a central perspective, alternating narratively between first and third person, and tonally, between poem and drama. Humbert Humbert's mediation in Lolita is so pervasive that he creates a fictional world in which only his game-oriented epistemology will work; the reader is forced to adopt it to understand the novel. In each of these works, the symbiotic relationship between the world of the novel
and the characters' attempts to achieve narrative and epistemological mediation will be examined in light of the theory of structuralist epistemology outlined above.
Chapter II

Absalom, Absalom!

Absalom, Absalom! is a circle-perspective novel. It consists entirely of a series of epistemological approaches to a central series of events, Thomas Sutpen's failure to found a dynasty in Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi, in the years before and immediately following the Civil War. The four narrators of the story, Rosa Coldfield, Mr. Compson, Quentin Compson and Shreve McCannon, all obviously consider Sutpen's story to be more important than the mere sensational account of multiple murder and banishment which it appears to be. The characters who narrate the story do so because they sense that Sutpen's life parallels the life of the South itself, and that by reconstructing imaginatively the events surrounding Sutpen's downfall they will arrive at an understanding of the burden of Southern history.

To understand the narrators' compulsion to come to terms with the Old South is to understand the innate human concern with the past which shaped them and yet remains temps perdu. The first narrator is Rosa Coldfield, who has seen Sutpen in the flesh, who had ir fact been proposed to by him and who is thus directly concerned with coming to an understanding of what his life meant. The second narrator is Mr. Compson, Quentin's father, whose father was Sutpen's closest friend—his need to understand Sutpen broadens the
symbolic level of the narrative in proportion to his distance from Sutpen in time. His account is also more objective because of that distancing. With Quentin and Shreve's recasting of the Sutpen legend we arrive at the most objective level--both are removed from Sutpen in terms of space as well as time: they recreate Sutpen's life in December, 1909, forty years after his death, in their room at Harvard, far removed from the scene of his doomed attempt. Shreve is even more distant from the importance of Southern history than Quentin--his home is in Canada; he didn't grow up among the "ghosts" with which Quentin is surrounded.

The metaphor of Sutpen as the South is inadequate to explain Shreve's interest in the story. To do so we must in turn see the South metaphorically as the symbol of *temps perdu* itself, as a sort of American Atlantis. Only then can we arrive at an understanding of the narrative levels of the book, for *Absalom, Absalom!* is a story of discontinuity on both the literal and the symbolic level. All the narrators are faced with a series of facts concerning Sutpen's rise and fall, among which the most evocative are that in 1860 Sutpen refused to allow Charles Bon to marry Judith Sutpen, and that Henry Sutpen, Judith's brother, killed Bon at the gates of Sutpen's Hundred five years later. All the narrative efforts in the book center around attempts to discover the causes and effects of the two events; they are attempts to mediate fictionally the factual discontinuity, and so inevitably become myths.¹ The dates of
these two central events point up the symbolic level of the discontinuity, marking as they do the temporal boundaries of the Confederate States of America (which becomes, as the symbolic extension of Sutpen, the emblem of discontinuity in the novel.)

So in one sense at least, the narrators are driven to formalize the Sutpen legend because of an innate human need to come to terms with their past—to try to understand what they are by determining what their forebears were—in the same way that Lévi-Strauss sees the Oedipus legends as centered equally around both contemporarily-operative kinship systems and the origin of man, autochthonous or not. All myths, by extension, are both synchronic and diachronic in scope; it is as if man were compelled by his innate structuring mechanism to recapitulate phylogeny not only physically in utero, but mentally as well in his epistemological structures.

The need to come to terms with the past is not the only pressure impelling the narrators to recount Sutpen's legend—there is also the basic need to order existence to find the solution to the epistemological problem of Sutpen's life, not because each narrator sees himself as historically part of Sutpen's world, but rather the reverse: that Sutpen is part of the narrator's world. If his story is chaotic, then the narrator is impelled to order it, in much the same manner that, according to Lévi-Strauss, cultures create artificial oppositions when none exist in reality, because by so doing they order their world. The
narrators of the Sutpen legend create artificial categories of good and bad characters, inventing reasons to do so because no known reasons exist. The operation of this human structuring device is synchronic, cutting across time boundaries, while the structuring process mentioned earlier, the need to react to Sutpen's life because it is part of the past, is diachronic by its very nature and its concern with history.

The union of synchronic and diachronic modes which marks the epistemological structuring of the legend by the various narrators is also evident in the style in which the legend is written. Even though each of the four narrators of the Sutpen story has his own unique point of view, the style of the legend itself does not change from one narrator to another, but remains highly ornate, complex and rhetorical. Thus Quentin answers Miss Rosa in his own laconic voice ("Yessum"; "Nome") but tells the legend to Shreve in its own style:

"--said how he must have stood there on the front gallery that afternoon and waited for Henry and the friend Henry had been writing home about all fall to come up the drive, and that maybe after Henry wrote the name in the first letter Sutpen told himself it couldn't be, that there was a limit even to irony beyond which it became either just vicious but not fatal horseplay or harmless coincidence..." (266-267)³

Miss Rosa speaks to Quentin in the voice of a Southern spinster:

So maybe you will enter the literary profession as so many Southern gentlemen and gentlewomen too
are doing now and maybe some day you will remember this and write about it. You will be married then I expect and perhaps your wife will want a new gown or a new chair for the house and you can write this and submit it to the magazines.

(9-10)

The style she uses to describe her infatuation with love, however, is the style of the legend:

---that fond dear constant violation of privacy, that stultification of the burgeoning and incorrigible I which is the meed and due of all mammalian meat, became not mistress, not beloved, but more than even love; I became all polymath love's androgynous advocate.

(146)

Even Shreve's dismissals of Miss Rosa as "the old dame" and Sutpen as "the demon" soon become "that protective coloring of levity behind which the youthful shame of being moved hid itself" (280). He loses even that, when, swept up into the legend, he recreates Bon's fatherless world:

... hence no man had a father, no one personal Porto Rico or Haiti, but all mother faces which ever bred swooping down at those almost calculable moments out of some obscure ancient general affronting and out-raging which the actual living articulate meat had not even suffered but merely inherited; all boy flesh that walked and breathed stemming from that one ambiguous eluded dark fatherhead and so brothered perennial and ubiquitous everywhere under the sun--

(299)

Quentin and Shreve later underline the legend's stylistic unity, each by noting how much the other's narration sounds like Mr. Compson's (181, 261). Even
Bon's letter to Judith, not properly part of the legend itself, but rather of the material of which the legend is made, is written in the characteristic style of the legend:

We have waited long enough. You will notice how I do not insult you either by saying I have waited long enough. And therefore, since I do not insult you by saying that only I have waited, I do not add, expect me. Because I cannot say when to expect me. Because what WAS is one thing, and now it is not because it is dead, it died in 1861, and therefore what IS—(There. They have started firing again. Which—to mention it—is redundancy too, like the breathing and the need of ammunition. Because sometimes I think it has never stopped. It hasn't stopped of course; I dont mean that. I mean, there has never been any more of it, that there was that one fusillade four years ago which sounded once and then was arrested, mesmerized raised muzzle by raised muzzle, in the frozen attitude of its own aghast amazement and never repeated and it now only the loud aghast echo jarred by the dropped musket of a weary sentry or by the fall of the spent body itself. . . .)

(131)

The fact that the legend is a legend, and therefore is concerned with "what WAS," is the diachronic part of the dialectic, while the fact that the legend's style is unaltered as it passes from narrator to narrator is its synchronic part. This fusion of diachronic with synchronic is part of Faulkner's theme of the relationship of history to society (on the narrators' level) and the equally important relationship of history to art on the level of Faulkner himself.

On a deeper stylistic plane this unification of past and present is echoed by the way in which the style of the legend is marked by each narrator's
search for the right word. Such a search is evident in Bon's letter to Judith; it is present throughout the novel and rises to its highest pitch during Quentin's visit to Sutpen's Hundred, the climax of his search for the historical Sutpen:

--and he thought, "What? What is it now? It's not shock. And it never has been fear. Can it be triumph?" ... So when he came back down the stairs ( ... he remembered how he thought, "Maybe my face looks like hers did, but it's not triumph"). ... (370-371)

The stylistic search for the right word parallels the form of the book as a whole. Quentin doesn't find the right word in the scene above; if it is to be found, the reader must find it, just as the reader in many circle-perspective novels (including Absalom, Absalom) is the site of the final synthesis of epistemological systems into the one best one. By engaging the reader in the search for the right word and the right viewpoint, Faulkner is giving direct proof of the validity of the contention, developed in his novel, that the past and the present are one. The narrators' (and the reader's) search for the right word makes the legend a matter of immediate concern in the present. The reader is finally forced to become the mediator through whom the past is made immanent.

Walter Slatoff has discussed Faulkner's stylistic tendency to oxymoron, a rhetorical trope which asserts a paradoxical union of two opposite concepts. According to Slatoff, the union of Faulkner's oxymorons is not fusion, but a "holding in suspension"; the purpose is "not to force the reader to grasp a reality of unity beneath an apparent contradiction, but to leave him with the
tension of the contradiction itself. The form Faulkner's oxymorons take most often in the legend is concerned with motion versus immobility: the mesmerized muzzles in Bon's letter; Sutpen's family arriving at church in a still tornado; Wash Jones' image of Sutpen riding against the sky. Thematically this is reflected in Sutpen's "movement" throughout the book: time after time he implements his design only to discover that he has made no real progress at all. He fails to start his dynasty with Bon's mother, with Ellen, with Rosa and finally with Milly. The ultimate outcome of all his efforts to establish his line is the final heir to Sutpen's Hundred; the oxymoronic emblem of his failure: Jim Bond, the "nigger Sutpen" (378).

On the narrative level the unresolved dialectic of the oxymoron informs the characteristic structure of the Sutpen legend; it is the verbal parallel of the action of each of the narrators. Each fails to depict Sutpen fully because each tries to fit him to the Procrustean bed of form—the narrative genre each uses is too limited to give more than one side of Sutpen's character.

Even though some of the narrators' epistemological viewpoints have been taking shape over a number of years, each tells his story in 1909. The view of the Southern past that each takes is tempered by his modern perspective; the South that was is seen in light of the South that is, to use Bon's terms. The historical retrospective of the epistemological system each narrator uses is paralleled by a similar retrospective logical system: each narrator builds his
concept of Sutpen _a priori_ and then attempts to mold Sutpen's character to fit the system. This does not occur so much because of a deliberate attempt to pervert on the part of the narrators, but because each is unconsciously seeking an epistemological genre in which to cast the tale. For Rosa Coldfield, the form most appropriate for the legend is the Gothic, and Sutpen is accordingly seen as a "demon." Mr. Compson makes Sutpen the protagonist of a Greek tragedy. For Quentin and Shreve, the narrative forms of the chivalric romance and the tall tale serve to present Sutpen's story.

The epistemological system which Rosa Coldfield uses to explain the Sutpen legend was the first to be noticed by Faulkner critics. It is indeed, difficult to overlook it. She opens the book at its highest pitch by describing Sutpen as a creature come straight from hell, breeding devil's progeny on his wife, forbidding his daughter's happiness "without rhyme or reason," bringing God's wrath on the South by his very existence there, and tumbling all that surrounded him back into hell with his fall. For Miss Rosa, Sutpen does not have a past like other men; the description she gives to Quentin of the founding of Sutpen's Hundred stresses the supernatural and demonic nature of her vision of Sutpen:

Out of a quiet thunderclap he would abrupt (man-horse-demon) upon a scene peaceful and decorous as a schoolprize water color, faint sulphur-reek still in hair clothes and beard, with grouped behind him his band of wild niggers like beasts half tamed to walk
upright like men, in attitudes wild and reposed, and manacled among them the French architect with his air grim, haggard, and tatter-ran. Immobile, bearded and hand palm-lifted the horseman sat; behind him the wild blacks and the captive architect huddled quietly, carrying in bloodless paradox the shovels and picks and axes of peaceful conquest. Then in the long unamaze Quentin seemed to watch them overrun suddenly the hundred square miles of tranquil and astonished earth and drag house and formal gardens violently out of the soundless Nothing and clap them down like cards upon a table beneath the up-palm immobile and pontific, creating the Sutpen's Hundred, the Be Sutpen's Hundred like the oldentime Be Light.

(8-9)

For Rosa Coldfield, Sutpen's actions take the form they do because of his innately evil nature. Just as he has no background, so he has no motivations for his actions except pure malignity. Her explanation of Sutpen's action in turning Bon away from the door of Sutpen's Hundred is that it is inexplicable; her determination to see Sutpen in the light she has chosen extends even to her description of Sutpen's racing to church, surely intended by Faulkner to be humorous:

And though I must have seen Ellen and the children before this, this is the vision of my first sight of them which I shall carry to my grave: a glimpse like the forefront of a tornado, of the carriage and Ellen's high white face within it and the two replicas of his face in miniature flanking her, and on the front seat the face and teeth of the wild negro who was driving, and he, his face exactly like the negro's save for the teeth (this because of his beard, doubtless)---all in a thunder and a fury of wildeyed horses and of galloping and of dust.

(23)
The *a priori* logic which Rosa uses in constructing her epistemological system can be seen in her description of her first visit to Sutpen's Hundred:

> I had been inside it before too, of course, but even when I saw it for the first time that I could remember I seemed already to know how it was going to look just as I seemed to know how Ellen and Judith and Henry would look before I saw them for the time which I always remember as being the first.  

(26)

As will be the case with every narrator of *Absalom, Absalom!*, Rosa Coldfield's narration tells as much about herself as it does about Sutpen because of her deductive, *a priori* method. Her reaction to Sutpen is one of both attraction and repulsion. The ambivalence of Rosa's attitude both foreshadows the novel's ultimate inconclusiveness and reveals a basic character trait of Rosa herself, who is caught between her own suppressed romanticism and the dominating Puritanism which her father left to her along with the symbolic name Coldfield.

Her Puritanism can be seen in the antipathy she feels toward Sutpen. She is dismayed and repelled (on one level at least) by the very dynamism with which Sutpen operates; she is shocked by his flouting of social conventions and denies that he could ever have been a gentleman: "marrying ten thousand Ellens could not have made him one," and then adds, even more shocked by this, "not that he wanted to be one, or even be taken for one" (16). Finally, Sutpen's proposal that he and Rosa mate, and marry if they produce a male
child, is enough to kill her (or rather, Rosa feels that such a suggestion should be enough to kill a lady, and so symbolically dies):

... my life was destined to end on an afternoon in April forty-three years ago, since anyone who even had as little to call living as I had had up to that time would not call what I have had since living.

(18)

But Rosa's Puritanism is constantly under siege from her repressed romanticism; it is in fact, in its more violent aspects, a sublimation of powerful romantic impulses. Rosa is so fascinated by Sutpen himself that her entire account is focused on him; the children, Judith and Henry, who occupy the center of the story for Mr. Compson, Shreve and Quentin, are reduced to mere reproductions of the demon, "two replicas of his face in miniature" (23). Her reaction against her father's hypertrophied Puritanism expresses itself the night he nails himself in the attic after his store is looted by passing Southern troops; she writes the first of a lifelong series of poems dedicated to the glory of the Confederate Armies. Finally, it is Rosa more than Ellen who is the "blind romantic fool"; who accedes to Sutpen's proposal of marriage knowing what she does about his treatment of Ellen; who admits

Yes. I sat there and listened to his voice and told myself, "Why, he is mad. He will decree this marriage for tonight and perform his own ceremony, himself both groom and minister; pronounce his own wild benediction on it with the very bedward candle in his hand: and I mad too, for I will acquiesce, succumb; abet him and plunge down." No, I hold no brief, ask no pity.

(165)
Rosa's ambivalence toward Sutpen is made especially significant by the fact that she is herself very much like Sutpen. First, both are anxious to establish their own identity. Sutpen does so by building his dynasty, becoming the largest landowner in Yoknapatawpha County and marrying Ellen, of all the ladies in Jefferson the one most able to make him "respectable" because of her father's position in the church. Rosa's attempts to define her selfhood are frustrated by her inability to reject either Puritanism or romanticism; whenever she makes a decision on one principle the other side of her nature tortures her with misgivings. A good example of this occurs when Sutpen decides he will marry her to try to start his dynasty anew. Rosa is first attracted to him when she believes that he has noticed her as a person; that possibility attracts her because it promises that someone at least recognizes her selfhood:

And then one afternoon (I was in the garden with a hoe, where the path came up from the stable lot) I looked up and saw him looking at me. He had seen me for twenty years, but now he was looking at me; he stood there in the path looking at me, in the middle of the afternoon.

(162)

Even then her Puritan upbringing will not let her accept her chance at life; when Sutpen proposes that they mate and marry if they prove successful, Rosa is outraged because of the denial of selfhood implicit in Sutpen's treatment of her as a "bitch dog or a cow or mare" (168), but it is her Puritanism to which she turns at her romanticism's defeat. Just as her father nailed himself in the
attic, she returns to her house in Jefferson and shuts herself up, denying the
world which has offended her. Even then she cannot find peace, because her
romanticism will not let her forget that she has denied life, and has therefore
been dead since that day in 1869 when she closed the door on the world.

Both Sutpen's and Rosa's dreams are finally unrealized, and both place
the blame on a scapegoat. For Sutpen, as we will see later, it is the "monkey
nigger," for Rosa, Sutpen himself.8 It is because Rosa is so close to Sutpen
that her account of him contains a core of truth, but ironically, she fails to
realize her similarity.

With the addition of Mr. Compson's classical tragedy to Rosa's tale of
Gothic horror, the legend begins to attain some depth of perspective. Mr.
Compson counters Rosa's depiction of Sutpen's unmotivated malignity with a
picture of Sutpen as a protagonist in a classical tragedy, a man with the usual
human aspirations and attitudes who is doomed to fail because of his "tragic
flaw."

In his narration, there are a number of thematic suggestions of the
parallel Mr. Compson draws between the South and the classical world, and in
particular between Sutpen and classical heroes. The Sutpen family is compared
implicitly to the house of Atreus--Sutpen the engenderer of an "ancient curse"
(204) which dooms his descendants; his half-Negro daughter Clytemnestra serv-
ing through her race as the ultimate killer of his dream; his son Henry compared
to an Orestes pursued by the Furies for forty years. Mr. Compson compounds the images of Sutpen's fall by suggesting that Sutpen had intended to name Clytie, Cassandra, a change which parallels Sutpen to Cassandra's father, Priam, the king of the doomed city of Troy.

The theme of Greek tragedy developed by Mr. Compson is intensified by a series of images which relate to play production. The citizens of Jefferson are depicted as a Greek chorus:

the stranger's name went back and forth among the places of business and of idleness and among the residences in steady strophe and antistrophe:

(32)

The gravestones in the Sutpen family cemetery look
as though they had been cleaned and polished and arranged by scene shifters who with the passing of twilight would return and strike them and carry them, hollow fragile and without weight, back to the warehouse until they should be needed again. . . .

(193)

The most important element in Mr. Compson's view of the Sutpen legend as Greek tragedy comes in the power of "Fate, destiny, retribution, irony--the stage manager, call him what you will," who, while Sutpen was "still playing the scene to the audience," was "already striking the set and dragging on the synthetic and spurious shapes and shadows of the next one" (72-73).

Mr. Compson's epistemological structuring is in many ways a direct dialectical antithesis to Miss Rosa's. He has access to information which she
does not have (that the picture found on Bon's body is not of Judith but of Bon's octaroon mistress and their son), and this minor difference is the key to his antithetical approach. Miss Rosa's view of Sutpen's life has been largely from the same perspective as that of the citizens of Jefferson. Although technically part of the family, she and her father visit Sutpen's Hundred only on those occasions when Sutpen is not there; she never even sees Bon alive or dead. Consequently her insights, like those of the townspeople, are largely exterior: the paradigmatic instance of this is the view she has of Henry from the yard of her house in town as he rides through on his way to college,

Miss Rosa . . . standing there with a shawl over her head like she might have been fifty instead of fifteen, looking after her nephew and saying, "Why . . . he's shaved."

(73)

Because of her lack of insight into the residents of Sutpen's Hundred, her account is largely phenomenological: Sutpen "abrupts" on the landscape, Sutpen's Hundred materializes like Milton's Pandæmonium.

Mr. Compson's account begins with his rejection of Jefferson's attitude toward Sutpen, which is, of course, also a rejection of Miss Rosa's phenomenological approach. The townspeople are seen as mystified gossipers whispering his name among themselves (32); Mr. Compson obviously delights in recounting the day when "civil virtue came to a boil: the sheriff and the town go to arrest
Sutpen on general principles, but are cowed into trailing after him as he goes to
get engaged, flowers in hand ("the final gratuitous insult" [47]).

Similarly, Mr. Compson rejects Rosa's phenomenological approach by
looking for the motives behind the actions of the Sutpen family. His account of
the Sutpen legend draws (again like Greek tragedy) on the most basic motives of
man. Prompted by his knowledge of the identity of the portrait Bon carried, he
decides that Sutpen prohibited Bon's marriage to Judith, and Henry enforced
the prohibition, because of Bon's previous marriage. In a lengthy imaginative
re-creation of Bon and Henry's trip to New Orleans after Sutpen's rejection of
Bon, Mr. Compson's characteristic search for motives leads him to reject race
(the fact that Bon's morganatic wife was octaroon) as the key to Henry's final
murder of Bon, because such a relationship could not have shocked Henry, who
had grown up in a society which condoned racial interbreeding and who had
besides a Negro half-sister of his own (109). It is, Mr. Compson decides,
the "fact of the ceremony" itself which Henry cannot accept. In deciding
this, Mr. Compson is accusing Henry of failing to live up to the dynamic
rejection of society which the elder Sutpen embodies. Henry has become part
of the Jefferson ethic; he is content to make judgements based solely on the
sense of propriety. It is in this attribution of Henry's motivations that Mr.
Compson completes his narrative rejection of Miss Rosa's epistemology; the basis
for Henry's actions stem from the most prominent trait of Rosa's personality: it
is, he says, "destructive Puritanism" which causes Henry Sutpen to kill Charles Bon.

The final half of the novel is concerned with the recasting of the Sutpen legend by Quentin Compson and Shreve McCannon in the light of new information: Bon was Sutpen's son, hence Henry and Judith's half brother; and Bon was part Negro. As was the case with the earlier narrations, the restructuring of the Sutpen legend tells as much about the narrators as it does about Sutpen. Quentin's and Shreve's narrations share common themes: both are concerned with the Bon-Judith-Henry triangle more than with Sutpen himself, and paralleling this interest, both invest the story with a schoolboy romanticism which simultaneously makes the characters more human (in a reaction to the hyperbolic inflation of Miss Rosa and Mr. Compson) and injects a sense of adolescent fantasizing which recalls the dreamy romance-weaving of Miss Rosa's youth. The closeness of the two narrators results in a complete fusion of narration at times:

it might have been either of them and was in a sense both: both thinking as one, the voice which happened to be speaking the thought only the thinking become audible, vocal...

(303)

In spite of the similarities, Quentin's and Shreve's narratives are distinguishable. Quentin's narrative structure has been described as a chivalric romance: Charles Bon as the "tragic Lancelot nearing thirty" (320) and Henry
paying service both to Bon as knight and to Judith as lady; the relationships among the three paralleling the war between love and friendship described in Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale*.

For Quentin, Henry occupies the center of the story because Quentin identifies himself with him. Like Quentin, Henry Sutpen is born into a world which he feels is not of his making; neither ever adjusts to it. Both look up to their sisters, who have accommodated themselves to the world. It is Judith who inherits Sutpen's attitude toward life, who inspires the coachman to race to the church; it is she who watches with interest Sutpen's fights in the stable, while Henry screams and vomits (29-30). When Henry goes to college, he immediately becomes a satellite of Charles Bon, envying his sophistication and worldliness, aping Bon, in Quentin and Shreve's re-creation, as well as he can, learning from him how to lounge about a bedroom in a gown and slippers such as women wore, in a faint though unmistakable effluvium of scent such as women used, smoking a cigar almost as a woman might smoke it, yet withal such an air of indolent and lethal assurance that only the most reckless man would have gratuitously drawn the comparison. . . .

(317)

In both his attitude toward Judith and his involvement with Bon, Henry is the inheritor of the Southern tradition just as he is the inheritor of Sutpen's Hundred: the one commands his service because she is a lady, the other his respect because he can teach him to be a gentleman.
Henry's story compels Quentin in part because of the burden of Southern history which Henry bears, and which Quentin himself feels, as an inhabitant of "the deep South dead since 1865 and peopled with garrulous outraged baffled ghosts" (9). As a Southerner, Quentin is an inheritor just as Henry is, and Quentin is faced with Henry's dilemma: he must either reject his inheritance or his beliefs.

Henry's dilemma is resolved not once, but twice: first when he defies his father and rides off with Bon in December, 1860; second when he kills Bon to prevent his marriage to Judith. In both instances Henry rejects Sutpen's Hundred: for the first action, he is disinherited; for the second he must exile himself to escape prosecution. But the beliefs he chooses in preference to his inheritance are diametrically opposed in the two cases. His love for Bon leads him to deny the social conventions which his father cites as the reason Bon can't marry Judith—that Bon is Judith's half-brother. But it is those very social conventions which finally lead Henry to kill Bon at the gates of Sutpen's Hundred, after he has found out that Bon is part Negro—his love for his sister leads him to a final ironic affirmation of the social conventions on which the South was built.

The love for Judith which causes Henry to kill Bon is the second feature which Quentin finds to identify himself with Henry. The theme of incest attracts Quentin because, as is made clear in The Sound and the Fury,
he is attracted to his sister Caddy in much the same way that Henry is attracted to Judith. Quentin sees a personal level underlying Henry's killing of Bon; it is simultaneously a chivalric gesture protecting Judith's honor and the elimination of his chief rival. It is for this reason that Quentin cannot follow Miss Rosa's story farther than the confrontation at the gates of Sutpen's Hundred and the imagined dialogue immediately following:

Now you can't marry him.
Why can't I marry him?
Because he's dead.
Dead?
Yes. I killed him.
He (Quentin) couldn't pass that. He was not even listening to her... . .

(172)

Shreve McCannon, Quentin's Harvard roommate, plays Bon to Quentin's Henry. Like Bon, Shreve is an outsider, cut off from the Southern social milieu: Shreve is Canadian; Bon a native of Haiti, brought up in a New Orleans atmosphere which Faulkner shows as another world from rural Mississippi. Because he is an outsider, Shreve can make a game of the re-creation of Sutpen's legend--"let me play a while now," he says--and he views the South with a combination of incredulity and awe:

Jesus, the South is fine, isn't it. It's better than the theatre, isn't it. It's better than Ben Hur, isn't it. No wonder you have to come away now and then, isn't it.

(217)
This mixture of feelings results in Shreve's narration being cast in the mode of the
tall tale, a genre which allows scope for a cynical, humorous deflation of the
characters coupled with a real, often amazed, respect.

Shreve discusses Quentin's Southern heritage in terms which undercut
the points of view of Miss Rosa and Mr. Compson, and simultaneously reveal
himself as an outsider who "cant understand it":

What is it? something you live in and breathe in
like air? a kind of vacuum filled with wraithlike
and indomitable anger and pride and glory at and
in happenings that occurred and ceased fifty years
ago? a kind of entailed birthright father and son
and father and son of never forgiving General Sherman,
so that for evermore as long as your childrens' children
produce children you wont be anything but a descendant
of a long line of colonels killed in Pickett's charge at
Manassas?

(361)

Shreve's attitude toward Sutpen parallels the debunking he gives the South;
Miss Rosa's demon and Mr. Compson's Agamemnon becomes a "furious lecherous
wreck" (184), a

Faustus who appeared suddenly one Sunday with two
pistols and twenty subsidiary demons and skulldugged
a hundred miles of land out of a poor ignorant Indian
and built the biggest house on it you ever saw and
went away with six wagons and came back with the
crystal tapestries and the Wedgwood chairs to furnish
it and nobody knew if he had robbed another steamboat
or had just dug up a little more of the old loot, who
hid horns and tail beneath human raiment and a beaver
hat. . . .

(178)
Sutpen's proposal to Rosa shows him as an "ancient stiff-jointed Pyramus to her eager though untried Thisbe" (177). In Shreve's reconstruction, even Sutpen's funeral is slapstick:

the young mules bolted and turned the wagon over and tumbled him, saber plumes and all, into a ditch from which the daughter extricated him and fetched him back to the cedar grove and read the service herself.

(186)

Like Quentin, however, Shreve cannot resist the pull of the legend; his identification with Bon is as strong as Quentin's empathic union with Henry. In his narration, Bon comes to life; instead of a figure to be idolized and aped, he develops a complete inner life of his own. Shreve focuses on Bon's waiting for Sutpen to claim him as his son, or just to recognize his existence:

He would just have to write "I am your father. Burn this" and I would do it. Or if not that, a sheet, a scrap of paper with the one word "Charles" in his hand, and I would know what he meant and he would not even have to ask me to burn it. Or a lock of his hair or a paring from his finger nail and I would know them because I believe now that I have known what his hair and his finger nails would look like all my life, could choose that lock and that paring out of a thousand.

(326)

But Sutpen never makes that concession and Shreve depicts Bon's struggle to maintain his equilibrium, thinking, "My God, I am young, young, and I didn't even know it; they didn't even tell me, that I was young..." (321).

Shreve's zeal to develop Bon's character leads him to contradict the earlier
narrators not just on interpretative matters but on facts; for Shreve, it is Bon who heroically rescues a wounded Henry at Shiloh, not the other way around (344); he is sure the picture frame contains the octaroon's picture because Bon decided, "it will be the only way I will have to say to her, I was no good; do not grieve for me" (359).

With Shreve's fourth perspective on the Sutpen legend the wheel of historical interpretation has come full circle. Miss Rosa was contemporary with Sutpen and her account, focused primarily on Sutpen, is the most incomplete factually and the least convincing logically (although in many ways the most evocative). Mr. Compson is second-generation; he has more information than Miss Rosa (but still doesn't know several key facts) and his view of the Sutpen legend as classical tragedy is more believable than Rosa's Gothic horrorizing. Quentin has all the available facts of the Sutpen story, but, like the earlier narrators, is too caught up in Southern history to take a detached view of it; his preoccupation with Henry's relationship with Judith illustrates the nature of his ties to the South, and his narrative mode of the chivalric romance echoes the ante-bellum South's fascination with the romantic tradition (even Sutpen's horse is "named out of Scott" [80]). Paradoxically, it is Shreve McCannon, so far removed from Southern tradition that he is a little lazy on battles of the Civil War, who can create in many ways the most convincing interpretation of the Sutpen legend--an interpretation which in effect rehumanizes
all the characters by removing them from the mythic stature all the Southern narrators had given them. But Shreve goes too far in his debunking; his South is a carnival, "better than Ben Hur." The final historical perspective is the one which exists in the reader's mind after balancing and collating the various narratives; it is, Faulkner says, the "fourteenth way of looking at a blackbird" which approximates historical truth.₁⁴

Structurally speaking, Sutpen's story can be divided into a pair of dialectical opposites, in the light of which his question to General Compson "Where did I go wrong?" can be answered. On the factual level of the story, the choices offered are between humanity and society, and on the narrative level between history and myth. These two levels are related, if not strictly parallel, as we will see—linked by two series of related images which have their focus in the story itself and are created as part of the narrative surface.

The story which Sutpen tells General Compson of his own origins and "the design" (220-275) is archetypal. Initially born and raised in the mountains of western Virginia, where men are judged on their own abilities and where the land belonged to anybody and everybody and so the man who would go to the trouble and work to fence off a piece of it and say "This is mine" was crazy; and as for objects, nobody had any more of them than you did because everybody had just what he was strong enough or energetic enough to take and keep. . . .

(221)
Sutpen undergoes a symbolic fall from innocence with the family's descent to the Virginia Tidewater where slavery and property-oriented class distinction exist. It is in the Tidewater that young Sutpen is denied admittance to the front door of the plantation house by the "monkey nigger," an action which starts him on his "design" and which also delineates the recurrent image of the novel, that of human contact offered, but denied for reasons of class consciousness. The story Sutpen tells General Compson is "historical" in the sense that it seems to be true, but because of his manner of recounting it, his life assumes mythic proportions. It is as if his habitual swagger had carried over into his autobiography, or perhaps it is just that Sutpen, like Jay Gatsby, "sprang from his Platonic conception of himself" and so is larger than life.

The initial approach of his narration is understatement; but the result is paradoxically to emphasize the superhuman qualities of Sutpen himself. Sutpen "goes to the West Indies" in much the same way that Rosa's demonizing had him "abrupt" in Jefferson; the hearer is left to reconstruct the events imaginatively (239). The same process contributes to the mythic stature of Sutpen when he "subdues" the native rebellion:

That was how he told it: he went out and subdued them, and when he returned he and the girl became engaged to marry and Grandfather saying "Wait wait" sure enough now, saying, "But you didn't even know her; you told me that when the siege began you didn't even know her name" and he looked at Grandfather and said, "Yes. But you see, it took me some time
to recover." Not how he did it. He didn't tell that either, that of no moment to the story either; he just put the musket down and had someone unbar the door and then bar it behind him, and walked out into the darkness and subdued them, maybe by yelling louder, maybe by standing, bearing more than they believed any bones and flesh could or should.

(254)

It is because of the inhuman aspect in Sutpen that he assumes mythic proportions; he is a man about whom "history" cannot be written because he is archetypal. This loss of human perspective on the narrative level is paralleled by Sutpen's own shortcomings as a human being: his design contains no allowance for the human element; he believed that the ingredients of morality were like the ingredients of pie or cake and once you had measured them and balanced them and mixed them and put them into the oven it was all finished and nothing but pie or cake could come out.

(263)

It is for this reason that, regardless of narrator, the legend is consistently recounted through images of bookkeeping, banking, gambling and commercial activity. The most thorough development of this theme comes in the New Orleans lawyer, credited by Quentin and Shreve (and admitted by Faulkner to be "probably true enough")16 who sums up the entire design:

1859. Two children. Say 1860, 20 years. Increase 200% times intrinsic val. yearly plus liquid assets plus credit earned. Approx'te val. 1860, 100,000. Query: bigamy threat, Yes or No. Possible No. Incest threat: Credible Yes and the hand going back
before it put down the period, lining out the Credible, writing in Certain, underlining it.
(310)

Sutpen's mistake is that he refuses to consider humanity apart from social values. If his early life is lived in a state of "innocence," as General Compson claims, in one sense his innocence ends when the "monkey nigger" closes the door of the Tidewater plantation in his face. It is this act which first makes him aware that people can be judged by class instead of as individuals, and his design is developed with that in mind: "So to combat them you have got to have what they have that made them do what the man did. You got to have land and niggers and a fine house to combat them with" (238). From this early act comes the most pervasive image in the book, a shut door symbolizing a rejection of human values in favor of social ones. Sutpen turns his first wife away because of her racial taint, then Charles Bon. Clytie keeps Wash Jones away from the front door of Sutpen's Hundred even in Sutpen's absence; and Sutpen denies Jones' granddaughter Milly even a place in the stable after she bears his last child. Mr. Coldfield retires to his attic and nails the door shut, just as his daughter Rosa locks herself away in the house after Sutpen's insult.

As mentioned earlier, when Henry adopts the Southern social standards, he shoots Bon at the gates of Sutpen's Hundred, and then breaks down the door of his sister's room to announce that he has killed him (172). It is then,
ironically, society which closes the gates of Sutpen's Hundred to Henry who cannot return because of his guilt.

Jones believes that once Sutpen has fathered a child by his grand-daughter Milly, the Southern social values are suspended: "he has got a holt of old Sutpen at last where Sutpen will either have to tear meat or squeal" (287). But Sutpen's remark to Milly that if only she were a horse she could have a place in the stable shows him that he is wrong, and he kills Sutpen as he leaves the cabin in an ironic reversal of the theme of the blocked door.

The final image of the closed door is also ironic, for the result of Sutpen's design is Clytie's attempt to stop Rosa and Quentin from discovering Henry who is hiding at Sutpen's Hundred. Once again the confrontation is on racial lines. "Don't you go up there, Rosie," Clytie says, echoing the words she had used forty-four years before when Rosa went up to see the dead Charles Bon (138). In both instances Clytie tries to stop her physically. Earlier Rosa had answered, "Take your hands off me, nigger!" (140); in 1909 she merely strikes her down (369). Clytie blocks the door successfully for the last time three months later, burning Sutpen's Hundred to the ground to prevent Rosa from taking Henry to Jefferson in an ambulance (374-376).

The image of the blocked door is destructive; it is the symbol of an acceptance of Southern social values over human values. In the sense that Sutpen is symbolic, the entire South has based its society on such racial
rules. Each Southerner in *Absalom, Absalom!* is faced with Sutpen's choice: one must deny humanity or Southern society. Henry accepts the dicta which society has taught him, and kills Bon to prevent miscegenation. Judith, on the other hand, denies the design by adopting Charles Etienne Bon and attempts to bring him up as a white heir to Sutpen's Hundred. By the end of the novel Quentin Compson is faced with the decision when Shreve asks him why he hates the South; he replies:

"I dont hate it," . . . quickly, at once, immediately;
"I dont hate it," . . . I dont hate it, he thought,
panting in the cold air, the iron New England dark;
I dont. I dont! I dont hate it! I dont hate it!

(378)

According to Olga Vickery, Quentin's denial that he hates the South is tantamount to an acceptance of Sutpen's design, for it implies that he accepts the South figuratively, not literally; that he accepts the wisteria and the magnolia and the class lines of the aristocracy and denies that centuries of suffering have arisen from the stereotypes. However, Quentin's reaction seems too hurried and unconsidered to be taken at face value as the definitive statement of his feelings about the South; it is more likely that his opinion of the South is, like most other things in the novel, in a state of flux. Shreve's question lends support to this view, for he accepts that Quentin does hate the South, and he has been more perceptive than Quentin about Southern matters throughout the evening.
But Shreve's question has a wider epistemological import. Throughout Absalom, Absalom! consistent emphasis has been placed on the importance of mediation as the resolution of a dialectic. The use of oxymoron and the search for the right word display this on the stylistic level. Each of the narrators tries to bridge the gaps in the chain of facts he has about Sutpen with a narrative creation, and the creative synthesis of Quentin and Shreve is achieved as a fusion of another dialectic, formed by Rosa's phenomenology and Mr. Compson's analytic approach.

The theme of dialogue as dialectic, implicit in the contrast between Miss Rosa's and Mr. Compson's version, has been present from the first pages of the novel. It may be seen in the

```
two separate Quentins now talking to one another in the long silence of notpeople, in notlanguage, like this: It seems that this demon--his name was Sutpen--(Colonel Sutpen)--Colonel Sutpen. Who came out of nowhere and without warning upon the land with a band of strange niggers and built a plantation--(Tore violently a plantation, Miss Rosa Coldfield says)--tore violently. (9)
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It occurs again in the question-and-answer session held between Quentin and Mr. Compson in the Sutpen graveyard (189-191). One of the novel's high points comes when Quentin meets Henry in the ruined mansion; the dialogue fuses the question-and-answer form of the graveyard scene with the past/present motif implicit in the confrontation of a figure from the legend by one of the legend's creators:
And you are--?
Henry Sutpen.
And you have been here--?
Four years.
And you came home--?
To die. Yes.
To die?
Yes. To die.
And you have been here--?
Four years.
And you are--?
Henry Sutpen.

The dialectic is strengthened by the almost-Nabokovian mirror-like structure of the dialogue between Quentin and the man he sees as his double from the past.

But this scene is not the culmination of the theme of dialectic as dialogue. Appropriately, that comes in the final narrative mediation which Quentin and Shreve achieve. Shreve's movement from ironic detachment to active participation in the re-creation of the Sutpen legend has been described earlier. As he becomes more involved in the legend, he and Quentin alternate, each taking the other "up in stride without comma or colon or paragraph" (280), until finally there is no alternation:

... for all the two of them, Shreve and Quentin, knew he had stopped, since for all the two of them knew he had never begun, since it did not matter (and possibly neither of them conscious of the distinction) which one had been doing the talking.

(333-334)

With this fusion comes a synthesis of the historical dialectic as well:

So that now it was not two but four of them riding the two horses through the dark over the frozen
December ruts of that Christmas Eve: four of them and then just two—Charles-Shreve and Quentin-Henry. . . .

(334)

All this prepares for the final synthesis, the recreation of Sutpen’s revelation to Henry that Bon is part Negro—a scene which is, as Donald Kartiganer points out, not narrated but a mutual mental creation which transcends even the verbal unity of the previous narration. 18

The narrative synthesis of Quentin and Shreve’s recasting of the Sutpen legend dissolves immediately after they decide that Bon is Negro. The lines on which they split apart are the lines which separate Bon and Henry: the Southern heritage, and what Kartiganer calls “the gate of Bon’s blackness, which can neither be forgiven nor condoned.” 19 Absalom, Absalom! thus ends with a return to unresolved dialectic, and Shreve taunts Quentin about the South: “So it takes two niggers to get rid of one Sutpen, dont it?” (378). The style also returns to the dialectical mode with Shreve’s reference to Jim Bond, the “nigger Sutpen,” and the paradoxical logic of his peroration:

. . . I think that in time the Jim Bonds are going to conquer the western hemisphere. Of course it won’t quite be in our time and of course as they spread toward the poles they will bleach out again like the rabbits and the birds do, so they won’t show up so sharp against the snow. But it will still be Jim Bond; and so in a few thousand years, I who regard you will also have sprung from the loins of African kings.

(378)
Quentin's answer to Shreve's question is thus more than the automatic response of a Southerner, it is also a desperate attempt to convince himself that an epistemological approach can be found which will enable him to understand the good and bad, both of which exist in the figure of Sutpen, and, by extension, in the South itself. In spite of the evidence of the previous failures of Rosa's and Mr. Compson's approaches and finally even the breakdown of his momentary union with Shreve, Quentin still believes that a final synthesis is possible; his denial that he hates the South is a rejection of the closed epistemology which such a feeling implies.

If a final synthesis can exist, it must be formed in the mind of the reader. Just as the search for the right word at the stylistic level and the quest for the "real" motivation behind a given action forces the reader to supply the final interpretation so the novel as a whole not only presents four incomplete definitions of Sutpen's life but demands a final solution, a final epistemological structuring, on the part of the reader.

The process by which this final epistemological structuring occurs need not be a conscious one, any more than Miss Rosa makes a conscious decision to cast Sutpen in the role of Gothic monster; the style and structure of the novel, in fact, is designed to produce an unconscious structuring. The process Faulkner uses to achieve this may be called "negative connotation";
it is a variation of the connotative pole of narrative mediatory dialectic
developed in the first chapter of this study.

Throughout Absalom, Absalom!, Faulkner defines objects by negation
on the levels of both style and plot. Quentin’s interior dialogue occurs between
"notpeople" speaking "notlanguage"; similarly, as we have seen, all the narrative
efforts are finally "not truth" because they fail to convey Sutpen in toto. But
the use of negation in the first case merely obviates the denotative aspects of
the words "people" and "languages", while the connotative elements remain.
The reader realizes that there cannot literally be people inside Quentin’s head,
but the connotations of the words still carry over: the "people" are "like"
people; the "language" is "like" language. The process by which this con-
nection occurs to the reader is not a conscious one; there is no point at which
he asks, "If it isn’t language, what is it?" Instead, he instinctively recognizes
that (to return to structuralist terms), dialectical apposites are related by their
very appositeness—the connotations of "language" in this case.

A similar process is at work on the level of epistemology. We are
given a series of epistemological approaches to the Sutpen legend, and we are
shown that all ultimately fail to convey the totality of Sutpen. But how do we
know this? We know it because negative connotation is also in operation here:
the denial of the four epistemological approaches has nevertheless left us with
a knowledge of Sutpen which transcends the sum of the four—Sutpen has been
conveyed through a process of denying the validity of the conveyance, the narrative structure of each narrator. As with the stylistic example above, this process is not a conscious one. It was suggested earlier that *Absalom, Absalom!* demands a final structuring; it might be better to assert that, through the process of negative connotation, it does not merely passively demand, but actively produces one—the reader who makes a conscious attempt to recreate the "real" Sutpen will be faced with a fait accompli.

The epistemological structures of *Absalom, Absalom!* thus transcend those of the ordinary novel. In the final analysis, the novel is not about Sutpen, but about the process by which the narrators interpret Sutpen's life and the epistemological structures each builds in an attempt to reconcile himself with the past which has shaped him. Even more important, the reader is drawn into the novel not only as observer, but as participant: the right word, the "true" motivation for an action, and finally the Sutpen legend itself depend upon him for their existence.
Chapter III

The Waves

Like Absalom, Absalom!, Virginia Woolf's The Waves is a circle-perspective novel: it consists of a series of characters' responses to a central series of events. Beyond this common structure, the two novels are very dissimilar. Absalom, Absalom! is open-ended, depending finally upon the reader for a solution; it is a novel about process, and its narrative mode is itself process. The Waves, on the other hand, is closed. What may be called the "solution" of the book (in the sense of the ultimate epistemological synthesis) is given by omniscient narration in the prefaces to the chapters. In The Waves process is always contained within a closed form: growth is always part of a cycle; movement of any type always takes the repetitive form implied in the title. In a sense, The Waves is oriented more toward pure epistemology because it does not have a central focus as evocative as the Sutpen legend; instead the center of the novel is occupied by the world itself, and specifically by the representative of the world, Percival.

The Waves is an attempt to suggest the entire range of possible epistemological outlooks. Considered as a dialectic, epistemology is divided into the poles of complete objectivity and complete subjectivity. The first requires a
character to be only perceived, the second requires him to be only perceiving. Virginia Woolf has introduced two characters into _The Waves_ who come extremely close to these two poles.

The omniscient narrator who recounts the preface to each chapter serves as the practical pole of subjective epistemology for the novel. He sees, in an overview, the basic cyclical movement of the six main characters in the book and reduces their epistemological movements into their most elemental components. Like all omniscient narrators, he is never perceived himself, but is always perceiving. At the other end of the epistemological spectrum is Percival. As his name is perhaps intended to imply, he exists only to the extent that he is perceived; he is close to being total object. Because as object he has no characteristics of his own, he serves the characters in the novel as an epistemological factotum: each sees in Percival what his epistemological training predisposes him to see; whatever is looked for will be found. The six characters of the novel exist between the boundaries of the omniscient narrator’s subjectivity and Percival’s objectivity. Each perceives the world in his own characteristic way, and each is perceived by the others; each character, therefore, is both subject and object.

As we will see, the six characters in _The Waves_ can be ordered into two dialectics. Jinny, Rhoda and Susan are concerned with life itself; Neville, Louis and Bernard with the problem of the mediation of life through language.
The two dialectics are structuralist transformations of each other; their relationship is defined by the relationship of language to reality. The girls' dialectic of life has as its poles Jinny's active tactile pursuit and Susan's passive earth-like acceptance. Rhoda's epistemological approach lies between the two, but it is not a mediation: her inability to chose between the poles and the consequent instability of her life is symbolized in her leitmotif of a flower floating in a basin of water, an image which implicitly contrasts with Jinny's leitmotif, a growing flower, and with Susan's, the earth. The male dialectic has as its pole: Neville's denotative use of words and Bernard's connotation; Louis, like Rhoda, lies between the two, and, because of his ambivalent position, cannot create a workable epistemology.

If The Waves is considered as a circle-perspective novel, the circumference of the circle is made up of the six main characters, all grouped around the central object, Percival. The omniscient narrator of the prologues is a structural anomaly; he exists outside the circle entirely, and views a different world. The process by which he does so, however, is a transformation of the processes by which the six characters perceive their world, and, as a result, his presence in the book is a constant antithesis to the book's circular-perspective structure. Finally, as we will see, his role is absorbed by Bernard, who thus mediates the dialectic between the world of the characters and the narrative world view.
What may be called the "world view of the novel" is given in the chapter prologues. Because these are presented by an omniscient narrator, they are in one sense an epistemological structuring of that unseen consciousness, and as such they may be examined to determine their characteristic structure and imagery. But, structurally, the prologues are more important to the novel than the other epistemologies. The world view of the prologues is a systematization of the world to which the characters respond; the epistemology of the prologues is to the epistemology of the characters as Saussure's langue is to parole, or as Bourbaki's "mother structure" is to a mathematical operation which arises from it. The prologues serve to define an ontological basis from which the characters' epistemological structures are derived through inductive logic and simple abstraction.

The chapter prologues, taken as a whole, describe the passage of a "mythic" day, from dawn before the first chapter to full nightfall just before Bernard's "summing up." Symbolically, the prologues parallel the growth, maturity, decline and death of the six characters; the early prologues therefore precede children's adventures with descriptions of morning while late afternoon reflects the characters when they are past their prime. The correspondences between the prologues and the chapters which follow them are even more elaborate than this, however. Just as the children become more and more aware of the environment around them, so the descriptions in the first prologues
gradually become more and more specific and detailed. The first prologue moves from the sea before sunrise to a house in the full rays of the early morning; as it does so, it recapitulates the evolutionary movement which has resulted in man, but it stops short—the only living creatures in the first prologue are the birds. This phylogenetic movement in the first prologue is paralleled by the exactly similar ontogenetic movement in the first chapter—ontogeny has not yet run its course; youth has not yet come to manhood. The second prologue, in the wavelike motion which informs the novel, again starts in the sea and follows the same course as the first, but, because the first had preceded it, it carries "farther up the beach": the sun, higher now, reaches into the house, and illumines personal human objects—chairs, tables, tablecloths, plates and silverware. Again, this movement is followed by growing awareness on the part of the six characters, but significantly, the children's growing consciousness is no longer directed completely at mere objects. Instead, they are developing an awareness of themselves and those around them as having an inner life, a selfhood, as well as an outer appearance.

At the same time that the temporal progression is occurring in the prologues, a parallel spatial progression emphasizes the growing world view of the six characters. The first prologue, as we have seen, is restricted to a very limited focus: one house on a beach. But the scope of the "noon" prologue has expanded to include more of England ("Through atoms of grey-blue air the
sun struck at English fields and lit up marshes and pools..." [149]), and there are suggestions of even greater scope: "dark-green jungle trees," "steamers thudding slowly over the sea" (148). The spatial comprehensiveness is appropriate in this prologue, for Percival, the object of the perceptions of all six characters, has just left for India in the preceding chapter. The party with Percival is literally the high point in the lives of the characters; the sun begins its decline with his death, which is reported in the first sentence of the chapter following the "noon" prologue (151). In the final prologues the diurnal and spatial cycles are augmented by a seasonal one: while the first prologue described the light of the sun on the transparent green leaves in the garden (8), the sun declines over a distinctly autumnal landscape: "Now the corn was cut. Now only a brisk stubble was left of all its flowing and waving" (207). The last prologue is devoted to the return of darkness to the earth (236-237). The last line ends the book in the undifferentiated chaos of the sea and simultaneously parallels the beginning paragraph, suggesting that the book itself partakes of the cyclical motions of nature, time, and the movement of a breaking wave: up the beach, then back toward the sea.

In scientific terms, waves are formed by the interaction of two physical properties, stasis and dynamism. In the movement of a wave form on a body of water two types of movement are developed: the apparent motion of the wave form, which is linear and non-repetitive; and the cyclical movement of each
particle of water as the wave form acts upon it, impelling it down to form the
trough, lifting it up to the crest and returning it to the position it occupied
before the wave form caught it. In terms of the waves in the novel the
characters act the part of water particles, while the wave forms which pick
each up in turn are experiences common to all. Each character exists, in a
very real sense, in Whitman's "ocean of Life." This fact accounts for the
large number of experiences the characters share: a similar childhood, education,
Percival's party, Percival himself, a ride in a train compartment, a reaction to
The City, dinner at Hampton Court, and so forth. It also explains the move-
ment of the "doors go on opening" motif from Jinny to Rhoda to Neville: as
a part of the life process (indeed, as an emblem of it) this fragment of the
larger wave form picks up three human particles in succession. In the light
of this movement, the last line of the novel, "The waves broke on the shore,"
is appropriate for it represents the destruction of the ordering wave form, and
thus the passing of the life-giving process from the book as well as from the
characters.

While each character in the novel shares with the others the general
life pattern, each character is also unique, and his reaction to and perception
of his existence is tempered by his epistemological approach to life. Typically,
each character seeks to define himself as self, and each therefore consciously or
unconsciously adopts some inner trait or outward appearance which distinguishes
himself from the others. In his development of his epistemological structure, each character also works through inductive logic and simple abstraction: a world view is built up by a cumulative process in which the childhood experiences foreshadow the completed structure and the general is abstracted from the particular.

Jinny's epistemological approach is concerned primarily with a definition of her selfhood in terms of her relationship to others. Bernard calls her distinguishing characteristic "love" (256); he is not entirely correct, though, for Jinny defines herself through any contact with an exterior object. It is more accurate to call her contacts sensual, for her mode of perception is always tactile and physical rather than visual or cerebral.

In Jinny, as in all the characters in The Waves, the early impressions foreshadow her later, more fully developed epistemological approach. Her first sensations are tactile: "The back of my hand burns... but the palm is clammy and damp with dew" (10); "I burn, I shiver... out of this sun, into this shadow" (11). Her early visual images reinforce her tactile ones, being concerned with the sensory stimulation of bright colors. "A crimson tassel, covered with gold threads" (9) prefigures her later definition of herself in a red dress in contradistinction to Miss Lambert's "opaque" dress (34). Thematic echoes of her concern with heat and wetness also appear: "Bubbles form on the floor of the saucepan... they rise, quicker and quicker in a silver chain to the top"
(11). Both her sensuality and her desire to define herself by relationships are present in her actions when she surprises Louis with a kiss:

"And I dashed in here, seeing you green as a bush, like a branch, very still, Louis, with your eyes fixed. 'Is he dead?' I thought, and kissed you, with my heart jumping under my pink frock like the leaves, which go on moving, though there is nothing to move them. Now I smell geraniums; I smell earth mould. I dance. I ripple. I am thrown over you like a net of light. I lie quivering flung over you."

(13)

This act serves both as prolepsis to her later sexual adventurousness and as the central catalytic event of the early chapters—it divides the group and brings the world of childhood innocence to an end. The act also relates Jinny to nature: dancing leaves are followed immediately by Jinny's own dance.

This parallel is referred to often in the following chapters (42, 45-6, 102, 124, 126), and reinforces Jinny's desire to assert selfhood through sensation. Thus she reacts against a mirror which shows only her head; she is herself unable to mirror nature's dance without her body.

"I hate the small looking-glass on the stairs," said Jinny. "It shows our heads only; it cuts off our heads. . . . So I skip up the stairs . . . to the next landing, where the long glass hangs, and I see myself entire. I see my body and head in one now; for even in this serge frock they are one, my body and my head. Look, when I move my head I ripple all down my narrow body; even my thin legs ripple like a stalk in the wind. . . . I leap like one of those flames that run between the cracks of the earth; I move, I dance; I never cease to move and
to dance. I move like the leaf that moved in the 
hedge as a child and frightened me. . . . "
(41-42)

The culmination of all Jinny's themes occurs, appropriately, at the dance she 
attends. There her sexuality manifests itself in a social situation; in keeping 
with her closeness to nature, she literally "flowers."

"This is the prelude, this is the beginning. . . . Our 
odies communicate. This is my calling. This is my 
world. All is decided and ready; the servants, standing 
here, and again here, take my name, my fresh, my 
unknown name, and toss it before me. I enter.

"Here are gilt chairs in the empty, the expectant 
rooms, and flowers, stiller, statelier, than flowers that 
grow, spread green, spread white, against the walls. . . . 
I am arch, gay, languid, melancholy by turns. I am 
rooted, but I flow. . . . I flutter. I ripple. I stream 
like a plant in the river, flowing this way, flowing that 
way, but rooted, so that he may come to me."
(101-102)

Her reaction to Percival, who serves as avatar and objective correlative to all 
the major characters in the novel is again characteristic: she reacts in the 
prescribed mode of a lady of society: "'Here is Percival,' said Jinny. 'He 
has not dressed!' " (122). It is Rhoda who confirms our suspicion that Jinny's 
relationship with Percival is more personal; she sees Jinny asking Bernard 
after Percival's death "Did he love me?" "More than he loved Susan?" (161).

In many ways Rhoda is the antithesis of Jinny. Her characteristic 
epistemological approach is to withdraw within herself and to seek out objects
in the outside world with which she can identify and thereby assert her own stability and inner integrity. Instead of seeking tactile confirmation of identity like Jinny, Rhoda looks for empathic union with an outside object which appears to have the "reality" which she lacks herself. To engage in the kind of sensual identification that Jinny does requires an inner strength which Rhoda doesn't have: "I left Louis; I feared embraces" (204-205).

Rhoda's early impressionistic reactions to the outside world emphasize her weakness; her impressions return again and again to symbols of isolation. In the first few pages she sees "islands of light" (9), a snail (10), and "one [bird] . . . by the bedroom window alone," the last left of a flock which sang in chorus (11). Rhoda's symbolic leitmotif is the petal floating in a basin, an image which contains Rhoda's isolation and fragility, and which also makes a significant contrast with Jinny, who is also described as a flower, but as one firmly rooted, blooming, full of vibrant life.

"I have picked all the fallen petals and made them swim. . . . And now I will rock the brown basin from side to side so that my ships may ride the waves. Some will founder. Some will dash themselves against the cliffs. One sails alone. That is my ship. It sails into icy caverns where the sea-bear barks and stalactites swing green chains. The waves rise; their crests curl; look at the lights on the mastheads. They have scattered, they have foundered, all except my ship which mounts the wave and sweeps before the gale and reaches the islands where the parrots chatter. . . ."

(18-19)
Because Rhoda's faith in her selfhood is so poorly grounded and tenuous, her attempts to define herself through outside objects often leads to her being overpowered by them. This happens, for example, when she cannot solve a problem in mathematics:

"The figures mean nothing now... Look, the loop of the figure is beginning to fill with time; it holds the world in it. I begin to draw a figure and the world is looped in it, and I myself am outside the loop; which I now join--so--and seal up, and make entire. The world is entire, and I am outside of it, crying, 'Oh, save me, from being blown forever outside the loop of time!'"

(21-22)

Occasionally, when Rhoda is threatened by loss of selfhood, she can reassert her relationship to the world, as Jinny does, by touch. Unlike Jinny, however, Rhoda relies on inanimate objects:

"As I fold up my frock and my chemise," said Rhoda, "so I put off my hopeless desire to be Susan, to be Jinny. But I will stretch my toes so that they touch the rail at the end of the bed; I will assure myself, touching the rail, of something hard. Now I cannot sink; cannot altogether fall through the thin sheet now."

(27)

Even though Rhoda gains support from the firmness and stability of the bed, she is almost overpowered by it—regardless of the fact that it is inanimate, it is obviously stronger than she; she clings to it.

As Rhoda grows older her ability to rely on inanimate objects becomes less useful, because the structure of society forces her to participate in inter-
personal relationships. Her initial response to this problem is to attempt empathic union with people whom she admires—she copies Susan and Jinny—but this approach fails because it alienates them: "Both despise me for copying what they do" (43).

Rhoda continues to take what comfort she can from the shielding effect of inanimate objects—she hides behind the pillars in the restaurant at Hampton Court (120)—but a new leitmotif has begun to symbolize her growing knowledge that existence implies constant exposure to new, potentially shattering, experience. The theme first appears at the dance which Jinny and Rhoda attend. As it does for Jinny, "the door goes on opening," but for Rhoda this continuance of existence is frightening—the inanimate object merely conceals the ravening animate reality which negates her selfhood:

"The door opens; the tiger leaps. The door opens; terror rushes in; terror upon terror, pursuing me. . . . here the door opens and people come; they come toward me."

(105)

Rhoda's ability to identify is becoming impaired; her social roles set her off from nature: "I see out of the window . . . some unembarassed cat, not drowned in light, not trapped in silk, free to pause, to stretch, and to move again" (105). The failure of Rhoda's empathic union is underscored by her inability to act when she is faced with a situation which is a literal manifestation of her symbolic existence as flower in a bowl of water:
"... in the middle, cadaverous, awful, lay the
grey puddle in the courtyard, when, holding an
envelope in my hand, I carried a message. I came
to the puddle. I could not cross it. Identity failed
me. We are nothing, I said, and fell."

(64)

Percival is the ultimate object of Rhoda's empathic union. It is he who realizes
her exotic dreams of romantic lands by going to India. Appropriately, Rhoda's
monologue after Percival's death begins with an echo of her inability to cross
the puddle and ends with her throwing a bouquet into the ocean, an act which,
with her leitmotif of a petal floating in a basin, symbolizes the possibility of
empathic union which Percival's existence had suggested, and the end of that
possibility with his death (158-164).

Like Jinny and Rhoda, Susan defines herself by her relationship to
exterior objects; unlike them, however, the process of definition does not
appear to be a conscious one. She is aware of it at times (131, 150), but
for her there is no apparent impulse to force the identity between herself and
the world; it comes unbidden, and she merely recognizes it as something natural
within herself. It is of course fitting that her awareness of identity should be
so innate, for she is identified with the world itself, and, by extension, nature.

Susan's early impressions are given over for the most part to symbols
of nature's life, beginning with the sunrise and going on to plant, insect,
animal and human life (9-10). Her metaphors serve to suggest the essential
similarity of all life: "The leaves are gathered round the window like pointed ears" (9). Another introduces one of Susan's dominant themes, that of circular or round objects which suggest nature's cycles and the world's globe: "A caterpillar is curled in a green ring" (9). Similarly, when she is faced with something unpleasant, her instinctive reaction is to roll it into a ball, thus putting it into a shape which she unconsciously prefers because it reminds her of the world and the pleasant world of nature.

"I saw her kiss him. I saw them, Jinny and Louis, kissing. Now I will wrap my agony inside my pocket-handkerchief. It shall be screwed tight into a ball. I will go to the beech wood alone. . . ."

(13)

". . . each night I tear off the old day from the calendar, and screw it tight into a ball. I do this vindictively, while Betty and Clara are on their knees. I do not pray. I revenge myself upon the day. I wreak my spite upon its image."

(40)

Susan's making spheres of her problems symbolizes her movement to accept and internalize them, for she sees herself as natura naturans, and ultimately, as the earth itself:

"I shall never have anything but natural happiness. It will almost content me. I shall go to bed tired. I shall lie like a field bearing crops in rotation; in the summer heat will dance over me; in the winter I shall be cracked with the cold. But heat and cold will follow each other naturally without my willing or unwilling."

(131-132)
"I think sometimes . . . I am not a woman, but the light that falls on this gate, on this ground. I am the seasons, I think sometimes, January, May, November; the mud, the mist, the dawn."

(98)

When Susan internalizes an unpleasantness, she speaks of it as a stone in her side, again implying the parallel between herself and the earth. Just as she buries hated things in the ground,

"I will make images of all the things I hate most and bury them in the ground. This shiny pebble is Madame Carlo, and I will bury her deep because of her fawning and ingratiating manners, because of the sixpence she gave me for keeping my knuckles flat when I played my scales. I buried her sixpence. I would bury the whole school; the gymnasium; the classroom; the dining-room . . . and the chapel . . . "

(44)

so she turns them to stone when she internalizes them:

"In eight days' time I shall get out of the train and stand on the platform at six-twenty-five. Then my freedom will unfurl . . . I shall there unfold and take out whatever it is I have made here; something hard. For something has grown in me here, through the winters and summers, on staircases, in bedrooms . . . So gradually I shall turn over the hard thing that has grown here in my side."

(53-54)

By this process of internalization, Susan is able to accommodate herself to the unpleasant things in the world by burying them.

Neville's epistemological approach attempts to find a personal reconcilation with the flux and chaos of life which seems to deny the importance
of his selfhood. Neville seeks reassurance through objects characterized by order and fixity. His initial statements bear this out; even when the objects he sees are fluid or alive, no movement is taking place ("I see a globe . . . hanging down in a drop against the enormous flanks of some hill" [9]; "The birds' eyes are bright in the tunnel between the leaves" [9]).

Neville is strongly attracted to words, because grammar promises a structuring principle by which chaos can be ordered:

"Each tense," said Neville, "means differently. There is an order in this world; there are distinctions, there are differences in this world, upon whose verge I step. For this is only a beginning."

(21)

In his focus on the ordering power of words, Neville introduces the mediatory tool by which the novel's dialectic can be resolved. The final mediation will not be accomplished by Neville, however; the language theme is another use of the wave structure—it passes from Neville to Louis and finally to Bernard, for whom it becomes a real mediatory tool. Although Neville is the first of the six characters to discover the value of language as a structuring device, it does not function for him as it will for Bernard because he emphasizes the denotative pole of the language dialectic: he is concerned with the "differences in this world." Just as anthropology has moved from the emphasis on the cultural differences of ethnography to the structuralist emphasis on similarity, so in The Waves the theme of language moves toward the connotative pole as it
passes from Neville to Louis to Bernard. Structurally, The Waves thus echoes the mediating power of connotation developed in Absalom, Absalom.

It is because of Neville's concern with words that his leitmotif, the "immitigable tree," stems not from direct experience but from a conversation which he overhears:

"... I will ... recover ... what I felt when I heard about the dead man through the swing-door last night when the cook was shoving in and out the dampers. He was found with his throat cut. The apple-tree leaves became fixed in the sky; the moon glared; I was unable to lift my foot up the stair. He was found in the gutter. His blood gurgled down the gutter. His jowl was as white as a dead codfish. I shall call this stricture, this rigidity, 'death among the apple trees' for ever. There were the floating, pale-grey clouds; and the immitigable tree; the implacable tree with its greaved silver bark. The ripple of my life was unavailing. I was unable to pass by. There was an obstacle. 'I cannot surmount this unintelligible obstacle,' I said. And the others passed on. But we are doomed, all of us by the apple trees, by the immitigable tree which we cannot pass."

(24-25)

"Death among the apple trees" is a static fusion of life and death; symbolically it serves as Neville's fall from innocence and the beginning of his understanding that to impose stasis on life, as he wanted to do, is to produce death. Influenced by his experience of "death among the apple trees," he sees, for the remainder of his life, a slow qualification of his epistemological approach. His desire for order becomes more and more directed toward a controlled movement, and less and less concerned with death-producing stasis. Significantly, the first suggestion
of his attraction to Percival comes as a result of a gesture Percival makes--
movement, instead of stasis, draws his attention:

"Now I will lean sideways as if to scratch my thigh. So I shall see Percival. There he sits, upright among the smaller fry. . . . But look—he flicks his hand to the back of his neck. For such gestures one falls hopelessly in love for a lifetime. Dalton, Jones, Edgar and Bateman flick their hands to the backs of their necks likewise. But they do not succeed."

(35-36)

As Neville's attraction to Percival increases, it is paralleled by his developing epistemological approach. The threat of death implicit in his former static view becomes transmuted into a ritual dissolution of selfhood:

"To whom can I expose the urgency of my own passion? . . . There is nobody—here among these grey arches, and moaning pigeons, and cheerful games and tradition and emulation, all so skilfully organised to prevent feeling alone. Yet I am struck still as I walk by sudden premonitions of what is to come. Yesterday, passing the open door leading into the private garden, I saw Fenwick with his mallet raised. The steam from the tea-urn rose in the middle of the lawn. There were banks of blue flowers. Then suddenly descended upon me the obscure, the mystic sense of adoration, of completeness that triumphed over chaos. Nobody saw my poised and intent figure as I stood at the open door. Nobody guessed the need I had to offer my being to one god; and perish, and disappear. His mallet descended; the vision broke."

(51-52)

The apotheosis of Percival as Order comes for Neville at the party before Percival's trip to India. With his arrival, Neville's world begins its ordered functioning:
"Now," said Neville, "my tree flowers. My heart rises. All oppression is relieved. All impediment is removed. The reign of chaos is over. He has imposed order. Knives cut again."

(122)

Even though he is the most affected by Percival's death, Neville's epistemological ability to find order in the world around remains even though the symbol of that ability is gone. In old age, he remains the most reconciled to the state of the world:

"I no longer need a room now," said Neville, "or walls and firelight. I am no longer young. I pass Jinny's house without envy, and smile at the young man who arranges his tie a little nervously on the doorstep. Let the dapper young man ring the bell; let him find her. I shall find her if I want her, if not, I pass on. The old corrosion has lost its bite—envy, intrigue and bitterness have been washed out. . . . Now I could swear that I like people pouring profusely out of the Tube when the day's work is done, unanimous, indiscriminate, uncounted. I have picked my own fruit. I look dispassionately."

(196)

In many ways, Louis's epistemological problems are different from those of the other five characters. His search is not for some way to assert his own identity in the undifferentiated society of the world; instead, he is painfully aware of his alienation from the society which surrounds him:

"I will not conjugate the verb," said Louis, "until Bernard has said it. My father is a banker in Brisbane and I speak with an Australian accent. I will wait and copy Bernard. He is English. They are all English. . . . Jinny and Susan,
Bernard and Neville bind themselves into a thong with which to lash me. They laugh at my neatness, at my Australian accent. I will try now to imitate Bernard softly lisping Latin."

(19-20)

Louis's attempts to find an epistemological approach which will serve him adequately are always hampered by his knowledge that any adopted epistemology inevitably fails to confront all reality. His life is a manifestation of Bernard's later insight:

"Let a man get up and say, 'Behold, this is the truth,' and instantly I perceive a sandy cat filching a piece of fish in the background. Look, you have forgotten the cat, I say."

(187)

For Louis, reality constantly intrudes itself upon his attempts to adopt an epistemological approach. Just as he copies Bernard's pronunciation of Latin, so he tries to copy the epistemological approaches of the other characters in the novel. His earliest attempt to accommodate himself to the world is, like Susan's, through nature. But his attempt is shattered by Jinny's intrusion:

"But let me be unseen. I am green as a yew tree in the shade of the hedge. My hair is made of leaves. I am rooted to the middle of the earth. My body is a stalk. I press the stalk. A drop oozes from the hole at the mouth and slowly, thickly, grows larger and larger. Now something pink passes the eyehole. Now an eyebeam is slid through the chink. Its beam strikes me. I am a boy in a grey flannel suit. She has found me. I am struck on the nape of the neck. She has kissed me. All is shattered."

(12-13)
While Jinny's sensual approach to the world can disrupt Louis's quest for order through nature, it can't offer him a viable substitute. Louis's later love affair with Rhoda fails, and his Cockney mistress embarrasses him (202).

Like Neville, Louis has a fundamental need for order: he is conscious of the steady tolling of the bell (11); he notices the orderly procession of the schoolboys two by two into the chapel (34), and the parallel ordering of the boys going off to play cricket, four by four (47). As he does for Neville, Percival serves Louis as the inspiration and avatar of order:

"Now grass and trees, the travelling air blowing empty spaces in the blue which they then recover, shaking the leaves which then replace themselves, and our ring here, sitting, with our arms binding our knees, hint at some other order, and better, which makes a reason everlastingly. This I see for a second, and shall try tonight to fix in words, to forge in a ring of steel, though Percival destroys it, as he blunders off, crushing the grasses, with the small fry trotting subservient after him. Yet it is Percival I need; for it is Percival who inspires poetry."

(40)

Because the transition from Neville's denotative concept of language to Bernard's connotative concept has not been completed, Louis fails to order his world because he tries to "fix" it. The circle made up of the boys around Louis is symbolically broken by Percival, in the same way that any attempt to impose stasis on life fails; Louis's attempts to order reality through language by "forging a ring of steel" is doomed to the same failure the narrators of Absalom, Absalom! faced.
Louis also has much in common with Rhoda. Besides their affair and their similar techniques of copying the others, both share a common impetus toward the exotic. Rhoda's "islands where the parrots chatter" (19) are matched by Louis's recurring vision of the Nile, which becomes early in the book one of Louis's two leitmotifs.

Louis's life is torn between reality and the possibility of imaginative, artistic escape. All his epistemological searchings are attempts to reconcile the two:

"I will achieve in my life--Heaven grant that it be not long--some gigantic amalgamation between the two discrepancies so hideously apparent to me. Out of my suffering I will do it."

(53)

The theme of reality is represented by the first of Louis's leitmotifs, that of the sound of the waves beating on the shore, which Louis interprets as the "great beast on the beach stamp[ing]!" (10). When Louis's dreams begin to exceed reality, then the sound of the beast's foot brings Louis back to himself. When a false order has been imposed on the world, reality asserts itself, as when Louis graduates from public school, aware that it has not given him all the answers:

"Blessings be on all traditions, on all safeguards and circumscriptions! I am most grateful to you men in black gowns, and you, dead, for your leading, for your guardianship; yet after all, the problem remains. The differences
are not yet solved. . . . The bird flies; the flower
dances; but I hear always the sullen thud of the waves;
and the chained beast stamps on the beach. It stamps
and stamps."

(58)

Like the reality motif, which occurs twice in the early impressions
(9, 10), the Nile theme begins early and continues throughout the novel.

"Down there my eyes are the lidless eyes of a stone
figure in a desert by the Nile. I see women passing
with red pitchers to the river; I see camels swaying and
men in turbans."

(12)

The importance of the two themes in Louis's life is made explicit when he leaves
the academic life for commerce. Just as the two had been part of his early
development, so they accompany him on the "first day of [his] new life":

"Now we are off," said Louis. "Now I hang suspended
without attachments. We are nowhere. . . . I go vaguely,
to make money vaguely. . . . This is the first day of a new
life, another spoke of the rising wheel. . . . I force myself
to state, if only in one line of unwritten poetry, this moment;
to mark this inch in the long, long history that began in
Egypt, in the time of the Pharaohs, when women carried red
pitchers to the Nile. . . . I am the ghost of Louis, an
ephemeral passer-by, in whose mind dreams have power, and
garden sounds when in the early morning petals float on
fathomless depths, and the birds sing. I dash and sprinkle
myself with the bright waters of childhood. Its thin veil
quivers. But the chained beast stamps and stamps on the
shore."

(65-67)

The conflict of his two drives prevents Louis from achieving any reconciliation
with the world. Although he becomes a successful man in commerce, he still
lives in an attic garret as a token of his thwarted movement toward the exotic life of a writer. Both his lovers, Rhoda and his Cockney mistress, fail to give him a successfully avant-garde life. His entire life is summed up in his attempt to read poetry to reassert his artistic spirit in coexistence with his commercial interests:

"But I still return, I still come back to my attic, hang up my hat and resume in solitude that curious attempt which I have made since I brought down my fist on my master's grained oak door. I open a little book. I read one poem. One poem is enough.

O western wind...

O western wind, you are at enmity with my mahogany table and spats, and also, alas, with the vulgarity of my mistress, the little actress, who has never been able to speak English correctly--"

(200)

Louis lies midway between Neville and Bernard on the connotation/denotation dialectic; he is pulled simultaneously toward Neville's static ordering and Bernard's linguistic mediation. The result is that he fails to achieve a unified epistemological approach; as he defines the poles, they are incompatible: language cannot be static.

Bernard's existence is marked by his preference for the products of his imagination rather than real objects. He is therefore dogged throughout his life by a tendency to awkwardness and conflicts with reality. While in his childhood, Bernard's experience of reality could be pleasant since he had no need
to take care of himself, and he could take pleasure in the sensuality of the real world:

"Mrs. Constable, girt in a bath-towel, takes her lemon-coloured sponge and soaks it in water; it turns chocolate-brown; it drips; and holding it high above me, shivering beneath her, she squeezes it. Water pours down the runnel of my spine. Bright arrows of sensation shoot on either side. I am covered with warm flesh."

(26)

As Bernard grows older, and has to fend for himself, however, he becomes so caught up in the world of the imagination that he has difficulty dealing with the real world. He loses his ticket for the train (69), spills cinders from the stove onto the floor and has to rely on "Mrs. Moffat [to] come and sweep it all up" (18), and according to Neville, "fill[s] the pot so that when you put the lid on the tea spills over" (78). As he ages, Bernard evolves a new leitmotif for his conflict with reality. In response to Neville's statement that all time and an infinite variety of pleasant occupations lie before the six, Bernard says, "For you ... but yesterday I walked bang into a pillar box. Yesterday I became engaged" (142). This means, ultimately, that it is the world of reality which causes Bernard to age:

"I ... am now nothing but what you see—an elderly man, rather heavy, grey above the ears, who (I see myself in the glass) leans one elbow on the table, and holds in his left hand a glass of old brandy. That is the blow you have dealt me. I have walked bang into the pillar-box. I reel
from side to side. I put my hands to my head. My hat is off—I have dropped my stick. I have made an awful ass of myself and am justly laughed at by any passer-by."

(292)

In his effort to exist in the face of hostile reality, Bernard becomes a fantasist, and invents worlds through words. The earliest signs of his inventive verbal imagination come in the first pages of the novel: he alone of the six children goes beyond mere description to synesthesia: "Now the cock crows like a spurt of hard, red water in the white tide..."(10). When Susan is hurt by the real world in which Jinny kisses Louis, Bernard soothes her by creating the world of Elvedon (17), an act which encapsulates his entire life, and which serves as his leitmotif for the remainder of the novel.

Bernard's ability to create an alternate reality depends upon his awareness of the flux of life, or (to return to the controlling symbol of the book) the never-ceasing waves of the ocean. His belief in the narrative powers of the process of "assimilation" deny that life is static in contrast to Louis and Neville, who "feel the presence of other people as a separating wall" (67). His powers as a writer increase with his ability to assume the epistemological approaches of others; he develops "the sensibility of a woman" with "the logical sobriety of a man" (76). The act of becoming a writer is thus a matter of multiplying the number of dialectics in which one can operate; the ultimate goal is to achieve a simultaneous subjectivity and objectivity, very like a Faulknerian
oxymoron, to be both empathic and cold (77). The culmination of Bernard's epistemological approach is evident in the final chapter.

The last chapter of The Waves consists of Bernard's "summing up." In the course of it Bernard recapitulates the entire novel, from the earliest beginnings of the six characters to the time at which he is speaking, and onward to end with their common fate, death. Bernard becomes, through his summing up, all the characters at once: for him, the epistemological experience is universalized to become life itself—he takes over from Percival the role of avatar of experience:

"Yes, ever since old Mrs. Constable lifted her sponge and pouring warm water over me covered me with flesh I have been sensitive, perciipient. Here on my brow is the kiss Jinny gave Louis. My eyes fill with Susan's tears. I see far away, quivering like a gold thread, the pillar Rhoda saw, and feel the rush of the wind of her flight when she leapt."

(289)

Having thus internalized the other characters, Bernard becomes their champion in much the same way that Percival was. But Percival was, in some sense, a failure—his death in India produces only sadness and the feeling of loss. Only in Bernard is the sadness alloyed with joy, for his son is born just before the news of Percival's death reaches him. This event prefigures Bernard's later role, for his final act is to strike back against death and to reaffirm the possibility of life. His act is the logical culmination of his lifelong struggle against
reality; it is the act for which he has always been in unconscious preparation. His ability to create enables him to invest his hopeless struggle with an optimism and a promise of final rebirth that Percival's death could not have; in his last act, Bernard transcends even Percival in becoming the embodiment of the ability of human epistemology to negate reality:

"What enemy do we now perceive advancing against us, you whom I ride now, as we stand pawing this stretch of pavement? It is death. Death is the enemy. It is death against whom I ride with my spear couched and my hair flying back like a young man's, like Percival's, when he galloped in India. I strike spurs into my horse. Against you I will fling myself, unvanquished and unyielding, O Death!"

(297)

The Waves is devoted, even more than Absalom, Absalom!, to a consideration of epistemology: it has no real plot, no tale of murder and banishment at the center. In a sense, its center is its surface, epistemology itself. The Waves is as difficult to "interpret" as Imagist poetry; it is what it says. A study of the book becomes a description of epistemological modes and the distinction between them, in much the same way that descriptive ethnography is dedicated to emphasizing differences between societies. Structuralist anthropology counters the descriptive method by stressing the basic structures which underlie all society, and structuralist criticism shares that basic emphasis. Some of the similarities of the epistemological structures of the six protagonists have been mentioned already; the most important remains to be discussed.
The basic function of epistemology, like that of myth, is to mediate discontinuity. In The Waves the initial discontinuity is that between character and world; each of the protagonists develops his own epistemological bridge, as we have seen. But a more fundamental discontinuity is present in the novel. The cycles which form part of the wave structure are, like all cycles, innately discontinuous: day yields to night, summer to winter, life to death. The test of a character's epistemology in The Waves is the extent to which it can mediate these discontinuities. The five characters who attempt to arrive at an accommodation with reality fail to solve their epistemological problems because to accept reality and its cycles is to perpetuate discontinuity. Only Bernard is able to achieve a workable epistemological overview, seen in his "summing up." Bernard keeps reality at bay because he is a writer, a mythmaker, a professional mediator. His "summing up" suggests in its scope and insight that his epistemological approach has approximated that of the omniscient narrator of the prologues; Bernard has, in fact, fused the narrative level of the prologues with the level of the characters, thus mediating the novel's central discontinuity.

Bernard's ability to synthesize the world's dissimilar elements into a workable epistemology makes him the only character who can challenge the final discontinuity, death. Because he is a writer, the syntheses he creates
will not be destroyed with his death; once he has set his fictional systems in motion, they will continue to operate forever. If *Absalom, Absalom!* is finally about the reader's epistemology, Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* is dedicated to the mediating power of the writer.
Chapter IV

The Ginger Man

The epistemological approach of Sebastian Dangerfield, the protagonist of J. P. Donleavy's *The Ginger Man*, defines the novel in a number of ways. Dangerfield structures his world view through simple abstraction and inductive logic, a movement from the particular to the general paralleled in the book itself: the ginger man becomes all men; Ireland becomes the world. More important, however, is the innate dialectic inherent in Dangerfield's epistemological structuring: the personal dialectic which Dangerfield develops is reflected in the dialectical structures, modes and rhetoric of the novel. This emphasis on dialectic is of course very close to Lévi-Strauss' discussion of the innate human tendency to perceive in binary oppositions, and we might expect the book to develop a synthetic world view through the process of narrative mediation.

But the world of *The Ginger Man* is one in which dialectic is degraded to dichotomy. No synthesis exists either for Dangerfield or for the novel, because the mediating ability of myth (and finally literature itself) does not function. In both *Absalom, Absalom!* and *The Waves*, the characters' search for order ultimately takes the form of a quest for a literary mediation: the
narrators of Sutpen's life seek a literary form, a genre, in which Sutpen can be set; Bernard comes to understand the world of *The Waves* because he is a writer. The same concept of literature as epistemological mediation exists in *The Ginger Man*, but it exists only in potentio. Like *The Waves*, *The Ginger Man* has a recurrent structure, which is suggested in its title. Dangerfield's epistemological approach hinges on his attempts to deny in part the world of reality by asserting that he is a gingerbread man in a fairy tale. The tension between the worlds of reality and fantasy is never mediated in the book—one polar position is never stated without its opposite undercutting it; rhetorically speaking, *The Ginger Man* is paradigmatically ironic.

For the novel as a whole, this irony results in the denial of the ability of literature to mediate the discontinuities of existence. Dangerfield is in need of a structure which will allow him to reconcile his ambivalent attitude toward the world, but he is simultaneously aware that no mediation is available. He is familiar with the mediatory powers of myth and literature—his awareness is part of the reason he consciously chooses to refer to himself as "the ginger man." But his character is similar to those of Louis and Rhoda in *The Waves*: caught between the poles of the dialectic, he is immobilized. As in *The Waves* and *Absalom, Absalom!* where the epistemological structures of the novel parallel those of the characters, *The Ginger Man* shares Dangerfield's inability to mediate. As we will see, the novel alternates between first and third person,
between poetry and drama, between myth and realism. Because the movement
of the novel is outward from the center, all these dichotomies have their origin
in the character of Dangerfield himself, and our analysis must begin with him.

The "ginger man" is a man who is in conflict with society, but who
is at the same time attracted to the material benefits which society can offer.
Like his namesake in the fairy tale, he runs from his pursuers, who want him
to be put to the use for which he was intended, to accept his role in society.
That role is death, literally for the ginger man of the fairy tale, and sym-
bolically for Sebastian Dangerfield--both will lose their identity by being
absorbed into the maw of society.

The development of Dangerfield's basic outlook occurs in three stages.
He is initially repulsed by society's inhumanity and crass materialism but at
the same time wants to partake of the material benefits society can offer.
Dangerfield then reacts against society, at first more or less ineffectually,
finally reaching the point where his protests are sufficient to disrupt society,
if not to make it correct itself.

The first scene concerned with Dangerfield's progress toward disruption
is a flashback from a Dublin pub to a bar in Baltimore on New Year's Eve,
where he meets a girl who resembles the later Dangerfield in many ways--she
is a college student who is not part of the college crowd, and she enunciates
the ambivalent attitude toward society which Sebastian will later take.
But after a while you get to hate everyone and everybody and you get very bitter inside because you haven't money and clothes and wealthy boyfriends asking you out to smart places and even though you know that really all of it is false, it somehow manages to seep in and you find yourself resenting the fact that all you have is a good brain and you're smarter than they are ... and then in the end you're faced with the blunt truth that they will get married and you won't and that they are going to hate their marriages but then they will have tea parties and cocktails and bridge while their husbands are sleeping with other men.

(125)\(^1\)

This scene also sets the tone for Dangerfield's empathic union with the downtrodden, which includes all Dangerfield's friends and ultimately Ireland as a whole. The scene thus implies Dangerfield's ambivalence, for throughout the book Ireland is at the same time a country he pities, whose impotently, church-ridden people never have a chance at life, and a society which he envies, fears and hates: "Near here is the Bank of Ireland. So great and round and granite. Outside it a whore and a beggar" (243).

The only relief for Dangerfield's pent-up emotions is for him to strike out against society—the flashback is followed by his attempt to wreck the Dublin pub. But ironically, when an incident paralleling his own rebellion occurs at a restaurant where he is having a meal, Dangerfield views it much the same way that society views his depredations:

And just as I was laying knife to a sausage there was a scream. The pantry curtain flew open. The waitress
scurrying out, a white plate breaking on her head, and chased by a steamy faced girl, her hair, congealed tresses scattered round her head. She was yelling that she would commit murder, that she couldn't stand it any more in this hot hole. Crying and telling them all to leave her alone. She went on breaking dishes. And selfishly, I worried for fear she would destroy my sweet. I did feel that my supper had been ruined with the indignity that was in it. But she calmed down and they gave her five minutes off to be getting this rebellion out of her head. Only for my meal, I was all tenderness for her working skin and the red blotches on her legs. But there must be discipline.

Typically, when Dangerfield is enjoying the benefits which society can offer--food in this case--he is more inclined to look upon rebellion as bad.

Most of the time, however, Dangerfield is not in any position to enjoy the benefits of society, and therefore he can be delighted by the sight of one man, able to disrupt society by his actions, and effective where the cook's revolt was ineffectual. Dangerfield had devoted most of his life to this sort of protest, and he dances for joy at the sight of it:

When they came out the traffic was stopped. Heads out of the cars and hanking horns. Down the street a huge hulking man lay himself down in the road and went to sleep. Some said he had drink taken. Others that he was listening to see if he could hear the pulse of the city. Sebastian danced and yelped. Newsboys in the crowd asked him what he was doing. Dog dance, sonny.

(280)
The man in the street is obviously intended to be a counterpart of one side of Dangerfield's dialectical personality, just as the college girl in Baltimore was the embodiment of a different side—the unnamed man shares Dangerfield's size and proclivity for drink, as well as his disregard for convention.  

The novel as a whole reflects Dangerfield's ambivalent attitude toward society. Imagistic patterns, rhetorical sequences and even human relationships are presented in terms of unresolved polarities which echo his basic inability to adopt one side or the other.

The role of Sebastian Dangerfield as the ginger man is responsible for the novel's action on its broadest level: a ginger man in society, like the one in the fairy tale, must above all avoid capture. Two diametrically opposed courses are available to keep Dangerfield safe from the hands of society: hiding or running. The first offers the consolation of being securely behind a wall, although there is always the fear that the place of sanctuary will become a trap; the second offers release through kinetic motion, but greatly increases the chances of discovery.

_The Ginger Man_ opens at Dangerfield's rented house in Balscaddoon which offers him security: it is situated at the top of a steep hill; the front of the house has only one green door "set in a concrete wall" (11). His second house also suggests security: it is located in The Rock (47). But both houses turn into traps—the Dangerfields leave the first house because the
garden and turf shed, undermined by wave action, fall into the ocean, paralleling the fate of the previous renter, who "fell off the cliff there one night and was washed up three months later on the Isle of Man" (19). The house, Dangerfield suggests, "has a history of death" (19). They leave the house in The Rock because Sebastian is behind in his rent; Egbert Skully, the landlord, has become "the gombeen man" (from the Gaelic for usurer)—the emblem of the society which pursues Dangerfield. Dangerfield's wife Marion mentions Sebastian's proclivity for hiding in the house: "All I have to do is to say Skully and you're off up the stairs like a frightened rabbit, and don't think I can't hear you crawling under the bed either" (59). Instead of a sanctuary, the house becomes a trap; the front door is broken and won't close to keep people out. Worse, Dangerfield has signed a three-year lease.

The sanctuaries Dangerfield chooses are either on high ground, like the house in Balscaddoon, or partly subterranean like the house in The Rock or Chris's apartment, a refuge of which he is especially fond:

I am lost in love with this room. Because it's an oasis of hiding with no door knocks for me. And the building looks sound. Want to have something solid to put the back to. When your back goes to the wall it is sensible to see that the wall is well founded and not given to collapse.

(76)

Tony Malarkey's "Catacombs," also partly subterranean, are further fortified with wooden beams so strong that two policemen fail to break the door down,
a contrivance for which Dangerfield expresses his professional admiration (275). When circumstances force him to inhabit a house in a poorly defended position (the house in The Geary), Dangerfield takes elaborate security precautions, fantasizes heavy doors (228), and dreams of hiding in a loaf of bread, warm and secure:

I want a big loaf. Big enough to get inside. Safety. Miss Frost, take my clothes off and put me in a big loaf of bread. A touch of gold on the crust. Float my ears and eyes. Do that, put me in there and save me.

(225)

It is ironic that with this fantasy of security Dangerfield comes very close to becoming a gingerbread man in reality. The sanctuary has again turned into a trap, just as the one secure aspect of the house in The Geary--its location on a dead-end street--makes it possible for Skully to trap Sebastian in the house. Dangerfield's sanctuaries of last resort are the Dublin pubs, where he can hide in drink from his pursuers, just as his friends, and Ireland in general, hide from their enemies.

When, as inevitably happens, he is discovered by Skully, and his places of refuge become traps, Dangerfield flees--just as he does after he has wrecked a pub because the bartender declined to serve him, thus denying him alcoholic escape. In the first of his flights, after the pub brawl, he steals a bicycle and rides it through Dublin until he arrives at Chris's apartment,
a safe hiding place. His second flight occurs after Skully finds him in his
house in The Geary; with Skully watching the front door he slips out the back
and takes the mail boat to London, where he remains for the rest of the novel.

There is, however, as little security in flight as there is in hiding.
The Ginger Man is replete with examples of the futility of flight, the impossi-
bility of escape or the attainment of goals through travel. Dangerfield's fellow
American and friend, Kenneth O'Keefe, serves as the best example of this
theme. Like Dangerfield, O'Keefe has fled the United States in order to seek
greener fields abroad. Like one aspect of Dangerfield's dual character,
O'Keefe is pictured as being little more than the sum of his appetites:

"Kenneth, do you think you're sexually frustrated
and maladjusted?"
"I do."
"You'll find opportunities in this fine land."
"Yeah, lots, for unnatural connections with farm
animals. Jesus, the only time I can forget about it
is when I'm hungry. When I eat I go mad."
(14)

Unlike the ginger man, as the above quotation indicates, O'Keefe is a total
failure in his efforts to lose his virginity. Frustrated by his girlfriend at
Harvard, he sails to Ireland. Unsuccessful there, he flies to Paris to teach
and to try his luck with French girls. He returns in failure to Dublin, having
not only lost his nerve with a prostitute, but also having botched his chances
for a homosexual encounter with one of his students. When his dreams of
establishing himself in the Irish countryside as a French chef (with a comely and compliant kitchen staff) are exploded, he turns himself into the American consulate for deportation back to the United States. In London, Dangerfield receives a letter from O'Keefe, who expresses his renewed disgust for the States and his hopes of returning to the British Isles.

O'Keefe is thus a man who is constantly in motion—he never appears in the novel without having just arrived from somewhere and on his way somewhere else. All his hurry, however, only leads him in a circle; and, as the fact that he has only one good eye implies, his perspective on the world is more limited than Dangerfield's (although he does serve to illustrate one side of Dangerfield's personality). He is, finally, paralleled to the one-eyed cat in the attic of the house in Balscadden—able to move about enough to follow Dangerfield from one room to another, but trapped always inside the attic. Clearly, flight in The Ginger Man is as futile as staying put.

Dangerfield's fear of getting caught also impels him toward disguises. These not only serve to keep him from being recognized in the street, but also furnish outward evidence of his own inner uncertainty about who he really is. At one point in the novel he refuses to take his daughter to the park without his sunglasses; in the ensuing dialogue we discover that he is wearing his wife's sweater as well (59). In fact, Dangerfield is rarely mentioned as wearing clothes which belong to him; most of his wardrobe is supplied by his friends. From Miss Frost he obtains a scarf and a blouse which he wears; and when he later visits Malarkey, he wears a "female mackintosh closed with a baby's big pin" (279). In an effort to change his appearance in his flight through London after wrecking the pub, he forces a local resident to give him his hat and coat, only to discover that they are much too small for him, and that, instead of serving as a disguise, the new garments serve to identify him: "That's him all right. He's got me coat and hat. That's him" (129).
Just as Dangerfield shares some of the character traits of his friends, so he is outfitted on occasion by them—he receives bow ties from O'Keefe and an entire suit from Clocklan when he arrives in London. When Clocklan first sees him in London, he describes Dangerfield as not being dressed in real clothes: "What are you wearing at all? Bloody ould sacks and newspapers" (326). Ironically, when Dangerfield forsakes all disguise and simply wants to look his best in the new suit Clocklan has given him, he achieves his most effective disguise:

Down the brown stone steps and this transformation
must make the taxi man confused. Parson my saying
so sir, but you don't look like the man who went in.
I'm not except for my underwear.

(329)

Clothing in The Ginger Man, then, is another way of demonstrating the fundamental duality of all of Dangerfield's world. Even the smallest details of clothing insist on the existence of polarity: in London, Dangerfield wears a Cossack hat into the American Embassy (322).

When he makes the rounds of the bars in London he does so in a kangaroo suit which MacDoon has borrowed from the Abbey Theatre. The suit symbolizes the animalistic side of his nature, and, in a larger sense, its theatrie origin is a reminder of Dangerfield's predilection for role-playing. Sebastian is concerned not only with keeping his identity secret from others, but also in discovering it himself. Accordingly, he assumes a variety of roles in the novel—he is variously husband, father, scholar, thief, and so on; and in all his roles he is an enthusiastic participant in sense experience. He looks at himself in a mirror, flexes his muscles, probes his navel, sniffs his armpits—all experiential attempts to learn about himself. But he fails to find a role which can combine the physical, sensate Sebastian Dangerfield with the mental, intellectual one. These latter roles are mere shams: he never attends classes at Trinity, and dreads the day of exams when his name will be posted on the failed list; his religious leanings run to blasphemy, sophistry and superstition.
Like his friend O'Keefe, he is unable to decide what he wants from life; and so he is reduced to an undirected, random existence, searching for creature comforts but unable to compromise himself enough to work for them. Marion accurately describes Dangerfield's and O'Keefe's existence when O'Keefe sends a postcard from Paris reading, "WE HAVE THE FANGS OF ANIMALS": "That's what he is, a detestable animal" (60).

Dangerfield's association with animals functions both as a liberating agent and as a source of embarrassment to him. On one hand, he revels in animalistic sex, prefers sheep's head to other food, and tours London bars while dressed in a kangaroo suit. His highest expressions of inexpressible gaiety or lust are his "dog dance" and his "goat dance"; the highest refinement of his attempt to avoid capture by flight is his so-called spider walk:

"You see, every two steps you bring the right foot across from behind and skip. Enables one to turn around without stopping and go in the opposite direction."

(215)

On the other hand, his animalism is a disadvantage—-it infuriates his wife at times, and it is the cause of his misnamed daughter Felicity. When he is about to indulge his animalistic nature with Mary (whose animalism is a match for his own), he is abruptly reminded of possible consequences of sharing a place with other animals:
We lay in the remnants of coal. And a pile of turf. I happen to know that dogs and cats prefer coal and turf. And I don't relish finding myself sitting in it.

(181)

Dangerfield also reveals his association with animals in the "faint animal squeaks" (276) he makes when amused or surprised. These animal sounds form part of a larger pattern of verbal imagery which reaches back to Dangerfield's search for identity—he often fleshes out his disguise with rhetoric appropriate to the role he is playing, whether it is a rich barrister or Jesus' boon companion. The relationship of words to role-playing is made explicit when Dangerfield and O'Keefe entertain a restaurant full of Dubliners with their talk:

And they were cocking their white ears to hear that bearded man go on about such fantastic things with that awful accent of his and who is that man with his haughty ways and country voice, flicking his fingers exquisitely and rolling his head back to belch laughter.

(244-245)

Dangerfield refers to the people as "our last night audience . . . after this the curtain comes down," and when they leave the restaurant it breaks out in applause:

They finished their coffee and stood up. The lights in the room grew brighter. Everyone stopped talking. In the silence, the two walked across the lounge . . . . As they neared the door all faces were on them. All on their feet clapping. Shouting out of their mouths bravo. The lights brighter and clapping swarming up from their hands louder.

(246)
Diametrically opposed to the role-playing and disguises of The Ginger Man is the eye symbolism in the novel. Eyes can pierce Dangerfield's disguise, or alternately, they can function as organs of perception, which enable him to understand himself. It is in this latter sense that O'Keefe's lack of one eye is symbolic. To be able to see clearly (as much to see his enemies first as to gain insights to himself), Dangerfield surrounds himself with totemic objects relating to sight: his house in Balscaddon is fitted with a large brass telescope; his favorite food is sheep's eyes; he invites Miss Frost to share a drink with him in "a very interesting house, The Three Eyes" (198). To the extent that the eyes are sense organs, they are an integral part of Dangerfield's discovery of himself through sense experience: with Marion, Chris, and Mary, and especially with Miss Frost, eyes are closely related to sex:

They preoccupied their eyes. Oh the eyes.
Yes eyes.
No eyes.

... O the eyes.
O aye,
The eyes.

"Miss Frost, may I sleep in your bedroom?"
(202-203)

Ultimately, eyes become the most pervasive symbol of society in the novel: "they" seem to be always watching, trying to catch Dangerfield out. Thus he cowers in a pub after O'Keefe has drawn a crowd, asking, "For God's
sake, Kenneth, what's the matter with you. Do you want to have me spotted?"
(216). When he escapes from the house in the Geary by leaping the fence into his neighbor's back yard, he looks to see if he's observed before his feet hit the ground:

A loud crash of glass as his feet passed through the top of a cold frame. For Christ's sake, twisted Jesus. Looking at the back of this house for eyes. Whoo, woman looking at me from the window. What to do? Smile, by God, smile at all costs.  
(269)

Dangerfield's acute sense of the constant gaze of Irish society culminates in the novel's "spy" theme. Dangerfield wearing his Cossack hat in the American Embassy in London is asked if he's a spy; Lilly Frost is sure that the Church has set watchers on the house which she and Dangerfield occupy:

"I've seen people watching."
"When?"
"For a long time from across the street."
"Strollers."
"O spies, Mr. Dangerfield. I know."
(228)

Egbert Skully is, of course, the most prominent spy figure in the novel, functioning again as a symbol of society. At one point Dangerfield is spying out the window at Skully trying to spy through the door (268). Given the importance of Dangerfield's need for concealment and his horror of alien eyes, it is not surprising that his most traumatic experience occurs in Chapter Ten when he travels in a packed third class train compartment from Dublin to the Rock with his penis exposed.
The "eye" theme of the novel is structured, as we have seen, in terms of a self/other dialectic; eyes, as symbols of perception, serve Dangerfield both as a means of discovering himself and as the emblem of a spying society from which the ginger man must hide. Dangerfield's other epistemological dialectics follow the self/other theme, echoing his search for himself. The novel also reflects Dangerfield's dialectic, creating a world of unmediated dichotomy. As we will see, The Ginger Man partakes not only of Dangerfield's alternation between literature and reality but also seems to be in search of its own identity as a novel, raising once again the question of the possibility of mediation in the world of The Ginger Man.

The prose of The Ginger Man has a lyric quality which relies heavily on the evocation of sensory images. At the lowest level of structure, the sentence is not the only basic unit; it alternates with the imagistic fragment and the metaphor, and this alternation gives the novel a sense of realistic combined with romantic perspective corresponding to Dangerfield's world view. The novel opens with a lyric evocation of spring but moves immediately to O'Keefe's prosaic description of the first bath he's had in two months. The chapters often close with lyric fragments which suggest both imagistically and typographically that they are meant to be read as poems. This constant alternation between genres reflects the fact that Dangerfield partakes (in part at least) of the traditional Irish attitude toward life—that it can be borne more
easily if interpreted through song. Bits and fragments of Irish ballads run through the book: O'Keefe sings "In this sad room / In this dark gloom / We live like beasts" (19). But the mere fact that the words are sung removes the bitterness from them, if not the truth. Dangerfield incites the London pub to fight by insulting them in doggerel verse (300). Ultimately poetry and song serve as a means of viewing reality by removing some of its sting.

Other parts of the novel consist entirely of dialogue, exactly as if Donleavy were writing a play. (The fact that he was able to transfer whole scenes from his book to the stage without altering a line indicates the pervasiveness of the dramatic approach.) Obviously, the book is being pulled in two directions, and this dual approach—the novel as poem versus the novel as play—parallels Dangerfield's polarized ambiance, and echoes his alternation between the romantic and the real.

Just as Dangerfield tries on a number of roles in order to discover his real self, so The Ginger Man alternates from first person point of view to third person omniscient, almost as if Donleavy were attempting to get a sense of the scope of his novel and his protagonist by viewing them from several sides. Logically the first person approach allows Donleavy to depict his character from the inside, while the reader shares in his fears or triumphs. The third person approach enables the author to give some sense of perspective to Dangerfield, although this perspective never belittles the character, even when it
mocks him as it does at the start of Chapter Fourteen: "By the use of delusive enticements, Sebastian dug in at 11, Golden Vale Park" (141).

Finally the mediatory ambivalence which we have seen in the style and form of The Ginger Man extends to the levels of literature and myth, echoing once again the ironic tension of Dangerfield's world view: The Ginger Man is quasi-Joycean in its approach and quasi-mythic in its themes. As has be pointed out, the novel is an elaboration of the general through the specific: Dublin is the world, and the ginger man is mankind. However, Donleavy does not make this the culmination of his work, but instead refuses, like Dangerfield, to take a stand. The novel achieves its ambivalent approach, not by describing first a local scene in a realistic manner and then moving to a scene with mythic overtones, but rather by establishing a tone which treats the mythic view as germane to the specific situation, while at the same time laughing at itself for doing so. The tone is so ambiguous that the reader is never sure where he stands--is it the relevant myth, or the local realistic situation, which is being mocked in the comparison?

The most important writer about Dublin on a mythic scale is Joyce, and Donleavy makes use of Joycean characters and situations. Dangerfield's initials recall Stephen Dedalus, but whereas Stephen assumes some identity with Stephen Protomartyr, Dangerfield is a comic St. Sebastian, suffering the "arrows of outrageous fortune, looking for an Irene to bind his wounds."
A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man ends with Stephen's flight from the stifling atmosphere of Ireland and his determination to "forge in the smithy of his soul the uncreated conscience of his race"; Donleavy follows Dangerfield's flight to London, where Sebastian acts with as little conscience as ever. Like Stephen, Sebastian is a student at Trinity College, Dublin, while his friend Percy Clocklan, who makes his living as a washroom attendant in Iveagh House, is a graduate of Clongowes Wood, where Stephen spent his public school days. Even such a minor Joycean theme as Leopold Bloom's preoccupation with the Mystic East is parodied by Dangerfield's enthusiasm for Russian Orthodoxy and Cossack hats at the height of the Cold War. O'Keefe suspects Dangerfield is crazy: "Have you gone Asiatic?" (11).

Dangerfield also enacts more general mythology, playing the roles of the Fisher King and the Corn God, rejuvenating the old world with the vitality of the new:

I think I am their father. Roaming the laneways, giving comfort, telling them to lead better lives, and not to let the children see the bull serving the cow. I anoint their silver streams, sing laments from the round towers. I bring seed from Iowa and reblood their pastures. I am. I know I am Custodian of the Book of Kells. Ringer of the Great Bell, Lord King of Tara, "Prince of the West and Heir to the Arran Islands." I tell you, you silly bunch of bastards, that I'm the father who sweetens the hay and lays the moist earth and potash to the roots and story-teller of all the mouths. I'm out of the Viking ships, I am the
fertilizer of royalty everywhere. And Tinker King
who dances the goat dance on the Sugar Loaf and
fox-trots in the streets of Chirciveen. Sebastian,
the eternal tourist, Dangerfield.

(80)

But he is always aware that his role as holy fertilizer and rejuvenator is a farce;
he is even more afraid of the trap of fatherhood than he is of Skully.

If Dangerfield has connections with the myth of Dionysius (as is suggested
by the quotation above, as well as his appetites for drink and sex), his wife
Marion serves as his Apollonian counterpart with her strict espousal of order
and upright morality. The fruit of this relationship with Nietschean overtones
is their daughter Felicity, whose name serves as an ironic counterpoint to the
fact that for Dangerfield, at least, her birth was a tragedy: fatherhood is an
inescapable trap; Hegelian synthesis is an ironic joke.

Donleavy also uses Christian myth: Dangerfield is aware of the mixture
of truth and humor of referring to Clocklan's Catacombs as "A cellar of the
damned for sure." (162); he is only half serious in the connection he makes
when he leaves Ireland "on this crucifixion Friday" (285). Dangerfield's first
flight through the Dublin streets is brought about because he wrecks a pub from
which he had been expelled: Kelley's Garden Paradise.

The novel's overriding myth, that of the ginger man, has less irony
in its application to Dangerfield, for it concerns life and death: the ginger
man runs and hides because capture means he will be eaten. The Irish landlord
Egbert Skully who pursues Dangerfield throughout the book is malevolent not only because he is the "gombeen man," but because his last name serves Dangerfield as a memento mori, reminding him that to come into society's power is death. In the dialectic world of The Ginger Man, Dangerfield feels compelled to balance Skully's threat with two totemic heads of benevolent aspect: the sheep's head, which serves his corporeal needs; and his spiritual protection, the Blessed Oliver Plunkett, who is described as a sort of benevolent death's head:

A decapitated, two hundred and sixty year old head.
Made me feel hushed. Gray, pink and battered and a glint of dead, bared teeth in the candle light. Char-women told me to touch it, touch it now, sir, for it's great for luck. I put my finger, afeared, in the mouldy nose hole, for you can't have too much luck these days. (51-52)

When Dangerfield comes to London, MacDoon gives him a replica of the head (292). Again the gesture is partly ironic because Oliver Plunkett made the same journey from Dublin to London on his way to being hanged, drawn and quartered for complicity in the Popish Plot.

Like The Waves and Absalom, Absalom!, The Ginger Man thus mirrors the character's world view in the world of the novel. Just as Dangerfield is unable to mediate the dialectic of his existence by finding a role which fits without confining him, so the novel alternates between its own structural and generic dialectics. Dangerfield is aware of the dichotomies in the world of the novel; his epistemological process of inductive logic and simple abstraction
enables him to identify them. His failure comes because of his inability to move between the specific and the general, to mediate between reality and myth. To perform such a mediation is, as we have seen, one of the functions of literature; *The Ginger Man* thus becomes an artistic anomaly: as a novel, its content is by definition mediation; but its form echoes Dangerfield's failure to mediate.

Mediation implies closure: the synthesis of a dialectic; the imaginative creation of a bridge between two seemingly antithetical concepts. In *The Ginger Man* the novel's attempts at closure parallel Dangerfield's attempts at epistemological synthesis; both are undercut by irony. The last lines of each chapter in *The Ginger Man* illustrate this: typically each chapter ends with a few verse-like final lines. The form implies that this ends the chapter with a conclusive final statement, like the couplet of a sonnet. But the contents of the verse are usually just a continuation of the previous prose content, not a conclusion. The tension between the openness of dichotomy and the closure of synthesis is heightened by the manner in which the content of the verse chapter-endings fail to live up to the promise of the form. The paradigm of this failure of mediation is given at the end of Chapter Sixteen:

There was a man
Who made a boat
To sail away
And it sank.

(187)
The theme of the failure of mediation has serious consequences for the novel as a novel. Beginning in spring and ending in December, *The Ginger Man* fails to consider the discontinuity which must be mediated before the cycle can begin anew, and in so doing reflects once again Dangerfield's unresolved dichotomy.

For Dangerfield, the question of life is the question of death--he is never able to think of one without the other: "What is it that makes my heart die? Is it all my little Dangerfields popping out of wombs all over the world?" (314). As he walks to Mary's London flat, to father a child on Christmas day, Dangerfield has a vision combining nearly all the novel's themes and ending it in an apocalypse of unresolution:

> On a winter night I heard horses on a country road, beating sparks out of the stones. I knew they were running away and would be crossing the fields where the pounding would come up into my ears. And I said they are running out to death which is with some soul and their eycs are mad and teeth out.
> God's mercy on the wild
> Ginger Man.

(347)

It is characteristic that the answer which Dangerfield makes to death is an ironic prayer to a God he doesn't believe in. Once again the novel has echoed Dangerfield's epistemological approach by failing to come to a real conclusion.
But the end of the novel has another significance. As in *Absalom, Absalom!*, the denial of the viability of mediation paradoxically has produced a mediation: the reader understands Dangerfield and the novel in spite of the lack of a novelistic conclusion. This mediation is accomplished by the structure of the world of the novel: Dangerfield can see only dichotomy in it, and, because no synthesis exists in the novel, the reader cannot improve on his inability to synthesize; both, therefore, share a common view which unites them. It is this lack of synthetic mediation in the world of the novel which paradoxically allows the reader to understand the main character. Like Faulkner's oxymoronic style in *Absalom, Absalom!*, *The Ginger Man* thus mediates by demanding a final solution through negative connotation; just as the narrators of the Sutpen legend are compelled to structure it because of their innate need to order their world, so *The Ginger Man* impells the reader to structure it because of its very lack of structure—the reader becomes the artistic mediator.
Chapter V

Lolita

Like *The Ginger Man*, *Lolita* relies on the presence of the reader, but because the modes of epistemological structuring of the protagonists of the two books are diametrically opposed, the role of the reader is significantly different. *Lolita* is a center-perspective novel: the world of the book exists to the extent it is seen through Humbert's eyes. Humbert creates his world in another sense as well, for he is not only its observer, but its narrator. The novel, subtitled "The Confessions of a White Widowed Male," purports to be Humbert's account of his life. Humbert makes no secret of the fact that his epistemological approach is fictional: in addition to the deliberately falsified names of the characters (Humbert himself, for example [280]), there are constant reminders in the text that it is being fictionalized. Humbert sometimes stops his narration and addresses the reader before continuing his tale, even claiming at one point that his own existence depends upon the reader's awareness of the fiction: "Imagine me; I shall not exist unless you imagine me" (119).

*Lolita* insists on its fictiveness because Humbert is consciously performing an act of mediation. Since he is writing a memoir he is mediating in the
same deductive manner that the narrators of *Absalom, Absalom!* do: he is creating a myth of his past from the point of view of the present. The underlying dialectic theory of his mediation is given in an article he publishes in the *Cantrip Review* in which he suggested among other things that seemed original and important to that splendid review's benevolent readers, a theory of perceptual time based on the circulation of the blood and conceptually depending (to fill up this nutshell) on the mind's being conscious not only of matter but also of its own self, thus creating a continuous spanning of two points (the storable future and the stored past).

(237)

The problem he has reconciling the two is a paradigm of artistic creation. Because Humbert is a writer, like Bernard, he, too, is a professional mediator; his subject matter is *temps perdu* itself. Humbert's attempts to mediate the conflict between the past and the present turn on the dialectic of innocence and experience; initially, he is (in spite of his perversion) "innocent" in that he is operating in the world under false assumptions, being tricked by Quilty without even knowing it. When in prison, he is experienced—he knows who tricked him, how and why. His account of his period of innocence is modified by his later knowledge; accordingly, he gives clues to Quilty's guilt throughout the novel, challenging the reader to guess his identity.

In his attempt to mediate his past fictionally, Humbert is faced with another dialectic to resolve. His past can be recreated either through photography
or memory. The former is static and synchronic and gives an exact denotative reproduction of past reality as it looked at the time. Memory is fluid and diachronic, constantly changing and altering perspective. It may fail to re-capture accurately the exact events of the past, but it is reliable as far as the connotation of the events—the feeling or impression they leave. This dichotomy marks the difference between Humbert's memory of Annabel and Lolita:

There are two kinds of visual memory: one when you skillfully recreate an image in the laboratory of your mind, with your eyes open (and then I see Annabel in such general terms as: "honey-colored skin," "thin arms," "brown bobbed hair," "long lashes," "big bright mouth"); and the other when you instantly evoke, with shut eyes, on the dark insides of your eyelids, the objective, absolutely optical replica of a beloved face, a little ghost in natural colors (and this is how I see Lolita).

(14)

Humbert later claims to have a "photographic memory" which enables him to reproduce more or less verbatim the diary Charlotte destroyed (40). The entire book is bracketed between his first critical article, which is concerned with Keats' relation to A Remembrance of Things Past, and his final article in the Cantrip Review, "Mimir and Memory" (237). The incident which sets off the chain of ideas which leads Humbert to write the last-named article combines the "memory theme" with the doppelgänger motif, which will be discussed later. Humbert and Rita awake to find a "complete amnesiac" asleep on their hotel
bed. The connection between Humbert and his amnesiac alter-ego is made explicit when the stranger is named, "tastelessly," according to Humbert, "Jack Humbertson" by the hospital staff.

Most of the remaining references to memory as a means of recalling the past also refer to memory's antithesis, a photographic record of past events. One of the first such passages, which links film to the doppelgänger motif occurs when Humbert and Lolita are on the couch: "... pity no film has recorded the curious pattern, the monogrammic linkage of our simultaneous or overlapping moves" (55). Humbert's concern with photography can be either with snapshots ("If I close my eyes I see but an immobilized fraction of her, a cinematographic still, a sudden smooth neither loveliness, as with one knee up under her tartan skirt she sits tying her shoe" [43]), or with home movies ("That I could have had all her strokes, all her enchantments, immortalized in segments of celluloid, makes me moan today with frustration" [212]). Just following the Jack Humbertson episode, photography plays a role in strengthening the parallel between Humbert and the amnesiac. Humbert goes to the office of the Briceland Gazette to search for a picture of himself which had been taken when he was a, "The Enchanted Hunters" with Lolita in August, 1947:

As I made my way through a constellation of fixed people in one corner of the lobby, there came a blinding flash—and beaming Dr. Braddock, two orchid-ornamentalized matrons, the small girl in white, and presumably the bared teeth of Humbert
Humbert sidling between the bridelike lassie and the enchanted cleric, were immortalized—insofar as the texture and print of small-town newspapers can be considered immortal.

(117-118)

He discovers, however, while searching for his lost past in the Briceland newspaper office five years later, that he had not in fact been immortalized at all: "—and, ah, at last, a little figure in white, and Dr. Braddock in black, but whatever spectral shoulder was brushing against his ample form—nothing of myself could I make out" (239). The dialectic which is made up of memory and photography is only part of a whole pattern of dialectic which Humbert uses in recreating his lost past.

Humbert's tendency to dialectize is, as we have seen, part of his need to mediate his experience and is thus directed outward toward the narration of the novel. It is also, as we will see, a structural echo of the dialectical problem which lies at the base of his perversion and his epistemological solution. The narrative means which Humbert uses to describe the world around him can be divided loosely into three major related image patterns: mirrors, dopplegängers, and Hegelian triads.

For Humbert the image in a mirror can be either misleading illusion or revealing truth. Illusion can contribute, at times, to a "rich flavor of hell" in his "one-sided diminutive romances":
It happened for instance that from my balcony I would notice a lighted window across the street and what looked like a nymphet in the act of undressing before a co-operative mirror. Thus isolated, thus removed, the vision acquired an especially keen charm that made me race with all speed toward my lone gratification. But abruptly, fiendishly, the tender pattern of nudity I had adored would be transformed into the disgusting lamp-lit bare arm of a man in his underclothes reading his paper by the open window in the hot, damp, hopeless summer night.

(21-22)

On the other hand, however, the mirror in Lolita can serve as the source of ultimate reality; it is sometimes "the mirror you break your nose against" (205). An example of a mirror revealing a reality instead of an illusion occurs when Humbert is with Monique, the prostitute who reminds him of a nymphet: Monique sees "what I noticed in the mirror reflecting our small Eden—the dreadful grimace of clenched-teeth tenderness that distorted my mouth..." (23-24). A similar instance occurs much later in the novel, and the mirror again serves as a means of revealing a reality which would not have otherwise been revealed:

There was the day when having withdrawn the functional promise I had made her on the eve (whatever she had set her funny little heart on—a roller rink with some special plastic floor or a movie matinee to which she wanted to go alone), I happened to glimpse from the bathroom, through a chance combination of mirror aslant and door ajar, a look on her face... that look I cannot exactly describe... an expression of helplessness so perfect that it seemed to grade into one of rather comfortable inanity just because this was the very limit of injustice and frustration... (258)
More common, however, are the instances in which mirrors are used
neither to reveal a hitherto unexpected aspect of reality nor to deceive. Nearly
all of the remaining mirror images are thematic with regard to Humbert and Lolita,
and most follow the Humbert-Lo love theme. The first such occurs the first time
that Humbert meets Dolores: "All I know is that while the Haze woman and I went
down the steps into the breathless garden, my knees were like reflections of knees
in rippling water, and my lips were like sand..." (39). The mirror occurs again
when Humbert and Lo are alone for the first time in Charlotte's bedroom, and
Humbert is removing a cinder from Lo's eye: "For a moment we were both in the
same warm green bath of the mirror that reflected the top of a poplar with us in
the sky" (42). This last scene foreshadows the mirror imagery which will occur in
Room 342 of "The Enchanted Hunters":

There was a double bed, a mirror, a double bed in the
mirror, a closet door with mirror, a bathroom door ditto,
a blue-dark window, a reflected bed there, the same in
the closet mirror, two chairs, a glass-topped table, two
bedtables, a double bed: a big panel bed, to be exact,
with a Tuscan rose chenille spread, and two frilled, pink-
shaded nightlamps, left and right. (110)

Finally, of course, there is the last mirror image in the book, which occurs after
Humbert has killed Quilty and he chooses to drive on the "queer mirror side of
the road." According to Andrew Field, "Humbert drives without fear on the
left-hand side of the road not, as some have thought, because he is 'beyond
the law,' but because he has no more to fear from his sinister double."...
Our consideration of the mirror image thus leads directly into the consideration of the second prominent mirror theme in *Lolita*—the *doppelgänger* motif. A number of minor variations on this theme run throughout the book. The "342" number on the Haze house in Ramsdale is the same as the room in "The Enchanted Hunters" Humbert and Lo share; it is the number of motels Humbert says he has searched for clues to solve Lolita's disappearance (226); and it is, perhaps, the basis for Quilty's constantly changing license numbers on the Aztec Red convertible. Other non-organic objects such as cars can have their doubles—the double of Humbert's blue Melmoth is sought by the police while Humbert and Lo are driving toward Briceland:

... a highway patrol car drew up alongside.
Florid and beetlebrowed, its driver stared at me:
"Happen to see a blue sedan, same make as yours,
pass you before the junction?" ...
The cop (what shadow of us was he after?)
gave the little colleen his best smile and went into
a U-turn.

(105)

Quilty's Aztec Red convertible also has its double: "In a street in Wace, on its outskirts ... Oh, I am sure it was not a delusion. In a street of Wace, I had glimpsed the Aztec Red convertible, or else its identical twin" (207).

Lolita herself has her *doppelgänger*, in addition to her obvious parallel to Annabel Leigh. Humbert's first wife dies in childbirth, just as Lolita will; once in California, Humbert writes that he
glanced around, and noticed Lo in white shorts receding through the speckled shadow of a garden path in the company of a tall man who carried two tennis rackets. I sprang after them, but as I was crashing through the shrubbery, I saw, in an alternate vision, as if life's course constantly branched, Lo, in slacks, and her companion, in shorts, trudging up and down a small weedy area, and beating bushes with their rackets in listless search for their last lost ball.

(149)

In Wace, Lolita generates her own dopplegänger in an attempt to trick Humbert, telling him that her momentary disappearance was caused when she "met a former girl friend":

"Yes? Whom?"
"A Beardsley girl."
"Good. I know every name in your group. Alice Adams?"
"This girl was not in my group."
"Good. I have a complete student list with me. Her name please."
"She was not in my school. She is just a town girl in Beardsley."
"Good. I have the Beardsley directory with me too. We'll look up all the Browns."
"I only know her first name."
"Mary or Jane?"
"No--Dolly, like me."
"So that's the dead end" (the mirror you break your nose against).

(205)

There are a few minor dopplegängers related to Humbert. Gaston Godin's friend, Harold D. Doublename, recalls Humbert's own double name, as does that of the psychiatrist who writes the introduction to the book,
John Ray, Jr. (JR, jr). Toward the end of the book, Humbert, who has often been compared to movie actors, glimpses a gesture on a drive-in screen which parallels the mission he is upon:

While searching for night lodgings, I passed a drive-in. In a selenian glow, truly mystical in its contrast with the moonless and massive night, on a gigantic screen slanting away among dark drowsy fields, a thin phantom raised a gun, both he and his arm reduced to tremulous dishwater by the oblique angle of that receding world, --and the next moment a row of trees shut off the gesticulation.

(267)

But of course the most significant treatment of the doppelgänger motif is that which connects Humbert and Quilty.

Humbert is first compared to Quilty when he writes in his diary, "... I am said to resemble some crooner or actor chap on whom Lo has a crush" (42). When Humbert describes, "in a flippant vein, the delightful little toothbrush mustache I had not quite decided to grow," Charlotte replies, "with a sidelong gleam of motherly mockery, directed at Lo ... : 'Better don't, if someone is not to go absolutely dotty' " (46). The full meaning of Lo's reaction to Humbert's proposed mustache does not become clear until over one hundred fifty pages later, when it is first mentioned that Quilty has a "small dark mustache" (199). Humbert himself does not notice any similarity between himself and the picture of Quilty above Lo's bed: "The resemblance was slight" (65). The double motif is brought back, after a long
absence, when Lolita's nurse, Mary Lore, is waylaid by Humbert who is trying to discover the identity of Lo's abductor: "'He is your brother,' she whispered at last" (227). As Humbert nears Pavor Manor, on his way to kill Quilty, the doppelgänger motif becomes more and more pronounced. Humbert practices his marksmanship upon an old gray sweater, and later puts it on, bullet holes and all (243, 256). When Humbert finally sees his enemy in his ancestral home, he notices another resemblance between the two of them: "Gray-faced, baggy-eyed, fluffily disheveled in a scanty balding way, but still perfectly recognizable, he swept by me in a purple bathrobe, very like one I had" (268). As Field points out, when Humbert finally confronts his foe, Quilty sets out to confuse the distinction between the two of them in Humbert's mind. His first question to Humbert is apparently obvious, but actually it functions as a subtle challenge of identity: "Now who are you?" (269). 4 When he is accused by Humbert of having kidnapped Lolita, he denies it, and implies that, in truth, it was Humbert, not he, who had made off with her: "'I did not!' he cried. 'You're all wet. I saved her from a beastly pervert. . . . I'm not responsible for the rapes of others. Absurd!' " (271). When a sudden lunge by Quilty knocks the gun from Humbert's hand, the two are described as one in the ensuing struggle: "I felt suffocated as he rolled over me. I rolled over him. We rolled over me. They rolled over him. We rolled over us" (272). In the end, Quilty, in an attempt to save his life, assumes that Humbert is exactly
like himself, and can be bribed—Quilty offers his house, his playmates, and the royalties from his next play. But Nabokov himself has said, "There are no 'real' doubles in my novels," and Humbert is not bribable because, unlike Quilty, he was in love with Lolita, and intends to wreak retribution on the one who deprived him of her. As mentioned earlier, it is Humbert's murder of Quilty which allows him to drive with impunity on the "queer mirror side" of the road; he has no more to fear from his sinister double.

This narrative dialectic structure constitutes what may be considered the "world of the novel." It is simultaneously a depiction of the world Humbert lives in and his epistemological structuring of that world: the world exists as seen. It is within this world that Humbert's problem exists, and if a solution is to be found, it must take into account the dialectical nature of the world as Humbert sees it.

Throughout Lolita, Humbert Humbert is at odds with time. It is time which has inexorably swept onward after his childhood sweetheart, Annabel Leigh, suffers an untimely death and leaves him only with the desire for a physical relationship with pre-adolescent girls, but removing him each year farther and farther from the possibility of legally consummating his desire. Humbert is left with two alternatives: he can either render time powerless by suspending its effects, or he can attempt to rid himself of his passion.
Throughout *Lolita* he attempts to resolve his dilemma through both solutions at once, and it is only at the end that he succeeds, curiously enough, in both.

Early in the book, Humbert tries a number of approaches to his problem, hoping each will be the key to end his misery. He seeks at first, to rationalize his lust by demonstrating that the acts he seeks to perform were acceptable once:

> Here are some brides of ten compelled to seat themselves on the fascinum, the virile ivory in the temples of classical scholarship. Marriage and cohabitation before the age of puberty are still not uncommon in certain East Indian provinces. Lepcha old men of eighty copulate with girls of eight, and nobody minds. After all, Dante fell madly in love with his Beatrice when she was nine, a sparkling girleen, painted and lovely...and this was in 1274, in Florence. ...
> (20-21)

But again, his attempts fail because of space and time: if such things are possible in contemporary society, it is only in remote locales; if they were acceptable in Europe, it was only is the distant past. Thus when in a succeeding sentence Humbert finds he can almost tactilly visualize the locale of the start of Petrarch and Laura's relationship ("in the beautiful plain as descried from the hills of Vaucluse" [21]), Humbert reveals his total failure to come to terms with space and time: Laura was eighteen, not twelve as Humbert insists, when she met Petrarch; the meeting did not occur in Vaucluse at all, but in Avignon.
To mediate the discontinuity between his desires and society's laws, Humbert attempts to discover or create an artificial synthesis of nymphet and adult woman. He first turns to Monique because she is a "delinquent nymphet shining through the matter-of-fact young whore." "Only a few years earlier," muses Humbert, "I might have seen her coming home from school!" (24). But the synthesis is incomplete as in most of his women, and he shies away from a lengthy relationship with her: "A cold I caught from her led me to cancel a fourth assignment, nor was I sorry to break an emotional series that threatened to burden me with heart-rending fantasies and peter out in dull disappointment" (24).

Similarly, the hope of a successful synthesis in Valeria leads Humbert to marry her:

She looked fluffy and frolicsome, dressed à la gamine, showed a generous amount of smooth leg, knew how to stress the white of a bare instep by the black of a velvet slipper, and pouted, and dimpled, and romped, and dirndled, and shook her short curly blond hair in the cutest and tritest fashion imaginable. (26)

Humbert soon discovers that he has been deceived, "and presently, instead of a pale little gutter girl, Humbert Humbert had on his hands a large, puffy, shortlegged, big-breasted and practically brainless baba" (27).
After his marriage to Charlotte, Humbert is able to "perform his nightly duty" only by imagining that his new wife is the synthesis he had longed for:

... at Lolita's age, Lotte had been as desirable a school girl as her daughter was, and as Lolita's daughter would be some day. I had my wife unearth ... a thirty-year-old album, so that I might see how Lotte had looked as a child; and even though the light was wrong and the dresses graceless, I was able to make out a dim first version of Lolita's outline, legs, cheekbone, bobbed nose. Lottelita, Lolitchen.

(72)

Humbert even looks for nympancy in Rita, a casual pick-up he meets after Lolita's desertion, who serves primarily as a pal to him: "The oddly pre-pubescent curve of her back, her ricey skin, her slow langorous columbine kisses kept me from mischief" (236).

Humbert's attempts at synthesis fail in all these cases, and it is not until the end of the novel that he is able to complete the fusion which is implicit in his time-space definition of nymphets:

Now I wish to introduce the following idea. Between the age limits of nine and fourteen there occur maidens who, to certain bewitched travelers, twice or many times older than they, reveal their true nature which is not human, but nymptic (that is, demonic); and these chosen creatures I propose to designate as "nymphets."

It will be marked that I substitute time terms for spatial ones. In fact, I would have the reader see "nine" and "fourteen" as the boundaries—the mirrory beaches and rosy rocks—of an enchanted island haunted by those nymphets of mine and surrounded by a vast misty sea.

(18)
Humbert fails in all the early attempts because he has not yet found a satisfactory epistemological approach to the world of the novel. Although he has discovered the key which will lead him to a complete synthesis of time and space, of desire and possibility, he takes the entire novel to turn it in the lock.

The epistemological key Humbert discovers is to approach the world of the novel through games. As it must be to operate successfully in terms of the dialectical world of Lolita, the game approach is a synthesis of two dialectical apposites, each of which Humbert can use to overcome his problem, to mediate his temporal–spatial discontinuity. As mentioned before, one way Humbert can do this is to annihilate time: "games" can accomplish this because they furnish an opportunity for Humbert to participate in a child's activity. On the other hand, games also can be seen in an adult sense, as a stylized battle against an opponent, as in chess or tennis, thus allowing Humbert to use games in his efforts to defeat his perversion. In this sense the game is played initially by Humbert against himself (his full name is one indicator of his dual nature), but later against his alter-ego Quilty, the personification of his lust. Humbert's games are paralleled, as we will see later, by Humbert's (and Nabokov's) games with the reader, constructed through the use of parody, false foreshadowing and word games. The world of the novel may be approached only through game-oriented epistemology.
Early in the book, Humbert delineates the concept of youth-oriented games as part of his need to eradicate time, by becoming a child's playmate and thus to gain access to her physically: "A shipwreck. An atoll. Alone with a drowned passenger's shivering child. Darling, this is only a game" (21). A few lines later, Humbert writes his own solution to his time problem in the form of a prayer: "Ah, leave me alone in my pubescent park, in my mossy garden. Let them play around me forever. Never grow up" (22).

Echoing this motif is the theme of sexual activity as a child's game. Just as Humbert "evoked the child while caressing the mother" (72) to make love to Charlotte, so he had earlier had his first wife, Valeria, wear, "before I touched her, a girl's plain nightshirt that I had managed to filch from the linen closet of an orphanage" (27). Humbert and Annabel's initial essay into sex is echoed by Jean Farlow's account of seeing "two children, male and female, at sunset, right here, making love" (83) on the shores of Hour Glass Lake, and Miss Pratt's concern over Lolita's apparent failure to develop any interest in "sex play" (179). Prior to Humbert's success with Lolita at "The Enchanted Hunters" in Briceland, she had been (as he discovers later) making love to Charlie Holmes, the son of the director of Camp Q (126-127). Although overtones of the sex-as-childhood game recur throughout the book (usually referring to Lolita by a nickname, Dolly, which emphasizes her role as plaything, as in Quilty's "I had no fun with your Dolly. I am practically
impotent, to tell the melancholy truth" [271]), the definitive statement of the theme occurs, appropriately enough, when Humbert is first seduced by Lo:

Suffice it to say that not a trace of modesty did I perceive in this beautiful hardly formed young girl whom modern co-education, juvenile mores, the campfire racket and so forth had utterly and hopelessly depraved. She saw the stark act merely as part of a youngster's furtive world, unknown to adults. What adults did for purposes of procreation was no business of hers.

(123)

Accordingly, when Humbert is writing his "confession" in prison, he is acutely aware of her absence, and, after making an innocuous pun, cries "Oh, my Lolita. I have only words to play with!" (32).

Even more important to the game theme is the concept of a game as an ordered campaign against an opponent. Implicit, perhaps, in an early account of Humbert's use of Lolita as plaything ("pity no film has recorded the curious pattern, the monogrammic linkage of our simultaneous or overlapping moves" [55]), it is the epistemological approach which Humbert's mind seems most naturally inclined to take. He cannot resist treating his psychotherapy as a contest between himself and the psychiatrist:

I discovered that there was an endless source of robust enjoyment in trifling with psychiatrists: cunningly leading them on; never letting them see that you know all the tricks of the trade; inventing for them elaborate dreams, pure classics in style (which make them, the dream-extortionists, dream and wake up shrieking); teasing them with fake "primal scenes"; and never
allowing them the slightest glimpse of one's real sexual predicament... The sport was so excellent, its results—in my case—so ruddy that I stayed on for a whole month after I was quite well... And then I added another week just for the pleasure of taking on a powerful newcomer... known for his knack of making patients believe they had witnessed their own conception.

(34)

When Humbert regards a window of the house he and Lo inhabit in Beardsley, his game-oriented mind puts its own stamp on it:

One of the latticed squares in a small cob-webby casement window at the turn of the staircase was glazed with ruby, and that raw wound among the unstained rectangles and its asymmetrical position—a knight's move from the top—always strangely disturbed me.

(175)

His fascination with chess is described both in his games with Valeria's father and with Gaston Godin, a French émigré who also teaches at Beardsley College. In the games with Godin the division between game and reality breaks down—in some cases for Humbert himself, in some cases for his opponent, who is one of Humbert's doubles in the book: Humbert describes the manner in which Gaston would pore over the chess board, oblivious to all sound, until the sound of Lolita's bare feet practicing dance steps in the living room would intrude—"only then did my pale, pompous, morose opponent rub his head or cheek as if confusing those distant thuds with the awful stabs of my formidable Queen" (166). The identification of Lolita with queen recurs later in another game
which foreshadows Quilty's "capture" of her. Humbert is in the act of "mopping up" Gaston's king's side when the telephone rings; he receives the news that Lolita has been deceiving him as to her whereabouts (she has in fact been meeting Quilty, although he doesn't find this out). He is so unsettled his game is affected:

... I noticed through the film of my general distress that he could collect my queen; he noticed it too, but thinking it might be a trap on the part of his tricky opponent, he demurred for quite a minute... --dying to take that juicy queen and not daring--and all of a sudden he swooped down upon it (who knows if it did not teach him later audacities?)...

(185)

Still later, Humbert refers once again to his games with Gaston, and this time they openly display his epistemological approach:

I suppose I am especially susceptible to the magic of games. In my chess sessions with Gaston, I saw the board as a square pool of limpid water with rare shells and stratagems rosily visible upon the smooth tessalated bottom, which to my confused adversary was all ooze and squid-cloud.

(213)

This last quotation is especially significant, because it comes in the middle of one of Humbert's discourses on the other important game in Lolita, tennis. Unlike chess, which is exclusively opponent-oriented (and which therefore is the exclusive domain of adults in the book), tennis functions as another synthesis, since it may be both a form of juvenile game and a stylized battle, depending upon whether one "plays to win" or not.
Tennis played as a juvenile game is related to the sex-as-play theme.

It is one of the topics discussed by young Humbert and Annabel at the Hotel Mirana (14); Humbert still cherishes a memory of Annabel on the tennis court:

> On this or that hotel court I would drill Lo, and try to relive the days when in a hot gale, a daze of dust, and queer lassitude, I fed ball after ball to gay, innocent, elegant Annabel (gleam of bracelet, pleated white skirt, black velvet hair band).

(148)

Ironically, and somewhat more grotesquely, the parallel between juvenile sex and juvenile tennis is made even more explicit:

> On especially tropical afternoons, in the sticky closeness of the siesta, I liked the cool feel of armchair leather against my massive nakedness as I held her in my lap. There she would be, a typical kid picking her nose while engrossed in the lighter sections of a newspaper, as indifferent to my ecstasy as if it were something she had sat upon, a shoe, a doll, the handle of a tennis racket, and was too indolent to remove.

(151)

Because Lolita is still a child, her approach to tennis is not the point-conscious one as adult would take. The report of Lolita's progress in Beardsley School which Humbert receives from Miss Pratt informs us that "Dolly's tennis form is excellent to superb, even better than Linda Hall's, but concentration and point-accumulation are just 'poor to fair' " (178). Later Humbert elaborates on Lolita's tennis game, depicting her as always "rather vague about the score," engaging instead in a rhythmic recreation:
As ... Electra Gold, a marvelous young coach, said to me once while I sat on a pulsating hard bench watching Dolores Haze toying with Linda Hall (and being beaten by her): "Dolly has a magnet in the center of her racket guts, but why the heck is she so polite?" ... Despite her small stature, she covered the one thousand and fifty three square feet of her half of the court with wonderful ease, once she had entered into the rhythm of a rally and as long as she could direct that rhythm; but any abrupt attack, or sudden change of tactics on her adversary’s part, left her helpless.

(211-212)

Immediately following this description, Humbert relates the manner in which his still unidentified opponent outwits him in order to spend time playing tennis with Lolita. Later that same day Humbert meets his adversary again, in a scene which makes manifest the synthesis of the two definitions of the word "game":

In the middle of a trim turfed terrace I found her at last—she had run out before I was ready. Oh Lolita! There she was playing with a damned dog, not me. . . . there was an ecstasy, a madness about her frolics that was too much of a glad thing. . . . I put a gentle hand to my chest as I surveyed the situation. . . . One of the bathers had left the pool and, half-concealed by the peacocked shade of trees, stood quite still, holding the ends of the towel around his neck and following Lolita with his amber eyes. . . . [He] noticed me from afar and working the towel on his nape walked back with false insouciance to the pool. And as if the sun had gone out of the game, Lo slackened and slowly got up ignoring the ball that the terrier placed before her.

(216-217)
The tableau presented in this scene serves as a spatial rendering of the entire novel, with Quilty and Humbert face to face across a clearing while the prize the winner will carry home, Lolita, frolics between them.

Quilty starts playing his games with Humbert when he first meets him on the porch of "The Enchanted Hunters" in Briceland. Quilty (a nympholept like Humbert) has noticed Lolita and recognized her from his visits to his uncle, a neighbor of the Hazes in Ramsdale. When Humbert steps out for a breath of fresh air, Quilty, concealed by the dark, starts to quiz him in a manner which will characterize his approach throughout the entire book: he makes Humbert think he has been detected, and simultaneously think he must be imagining it, for logic tells him that it is nearly impossible.

"Where the devil did you get her?"
"I beg your pardon."
"I said: the weather is getting better."
"Seems so."
"Who's the lassie?"
"My daughter."
"You lie--she's not."
"I beg your pardon?"
"I said: July was hot. Where's her mother?"
"Dead."

(117)

Quilty does not encounter either Humbert or Lolita again until the two take up residence in Beardsley. Here, while directing the Beardsley School production of his play The Enchanted Hunters he meets Lolita, who is playing the
lead, and begins his affair with her. When Humbert and Lo leave Beardsley, Quilty follows them and continues to play upon Humbert's guilt until Humbert begins to mistrust his own sanity:

As happens with me at periods of electrical disturbance and crepitating lightnings, I had hallucinations. Maybe they were more than hallucinations. I do not know what she or he, or both had put into my liquor but one night I felt sure somebody was tapping on the door of our cabin, and I flung it open, and noticed two things—that I was stark naked and that, white-glistening in the rain-dripping darkness there stood a man holding before his face the mask of Jutting Chin, a grotesque sleuth in the funnies. He emitted a muffled guffaw and scurried away, and I reeled back into the room, and fell asleep again, and am not sure even to this day that the visit was not a drug-provoked dream: I have thoroughly studied Trapp's type of humor and this might have been a plausible sample. Oh, crude and absolutely ruthless! ... Did I see next morning two urchins rummaging in a garbage can and trying on Jutting Chin? I wonder. It may all have been a coincidence—due to atmospheric conditions, I suppose.

(198)

At the same time that he is exploiting Humbert's guilt and playing upon his fears, Quilty is preparing for the second round of his game with Humbert.

As he follows Humbert and Lo across the country he leaves a trail of clues for Humbert to find after Lolita and Quilty have tricked him and gotten away. When the "abduction" takes place according to plan at Elphinstone, Humbert begins to seek the identity of Lolita's lover, but again, Quilty is too good a player for him and Humbert is led on, encouraged and soundly defeated:
No detective could discover the clues Trapp had tuned to my mind and manner. I could not hope, of course, he would ever leave his correct name and address; but I did hope he might slip on the glaze of his own subtlety, by daring, say, to introduce a richer and more personal shot of color than was strictly necessary, or by revealing too much through a qualitative sum of quantitative parts which revealed too little. In one thing he succeeded: he succeeded in thoroughly enmeshing me and my thrashing anguish in his diabolical game. With infinite skill, he swayed and staggered, and regained an impossible balance, always leaving me with the sportive hope—if I may use such a term in speaking of betrayal, fury, desolation, horror and hate—that he might give himself away next time. He never did—though coming damn close to it.

(227)

Defeated by Quilty again, Humbert must wait two years until Lolita writes him before he can discover the name of his adversary. When Humbert journeys to Parkington, where Quilty resides in Pavor Manor, the game theme occurs again; Humbert even thinks ironically of Quilty as his "playmate" (268).

When Humbert confronts Quilty their usual roles are reversed: Humbert knows who Quilty is, but Quilty does not yet recognize Humbert. Enjoying the situation, Humbert plays a few identity games with Quilty to even the score a little, then reminds Quilty of Lolita and asserts his own responsibility for her in a phrase which is both ironic and accurate: "She was my child, Quilty" (270). Quilty immediately becomes aware that he is up against his old opponent:
In the state he was in he could not really be taken aback by anything, but his blustering manner was not quite convincing. A sort of wary inkling kindled his eyes into a semblance of life. They were immediately dulled again.

(270)

Quilty responds to the fact that he is at a disadvantage and in danger of losing the game by pretending that no game is being played between himself and Humbert; following Humbert's statement about Lolita, Quilty implicitly denies that he and Humbert are opponents by asserting they are allies: "I'm very fond of children myself . . . and fathers are among my best friends" (270).

When Humbert displays the weapon he intends to use, Quilty pretends that the situation concerns barter instead of murder:

He saw the little dark weapon lying in my palm as if I were offering it to him.
"Say!" he drawled (now imitating the underworld numbskull of the movies), "that's a swell little gun you've got there. What d'you want for her?"

(270)

For Humbert, Quilty's death will not be a successful conclusion to the game unless Quilty comes to a full understanding of the reason he is being killed. Characteristically, Humbert is frustrated by Quilty's refusal to acknowledge that he is about to lose. As might be expected in a novel in which games are the key to epistemology, Humbert's attempts to get Quilty to recognize his role as opponent take the form of appeals to him to think, to experience, and to perceive:
"Guilty," I said. "I want you to concentrate. You are going to die in a moment. The hereafter for all we know may be an eternal state of excruciating insanity. . . . Concentrate. Try to understand what is happening to you."

(270)

In the final scene with Quilty, Humbert returns to the game motif again and again. When he and Quilty struggle over the gun, Humbert makes them into a cowman and a sheepman in an obligatory scene from a Western (272). The poem which Humbert has Quilty read contains a line with a reference to tennis terminology, and according to Field, to chess terminology as well: 8 "because you took advantage of my disadvantage. . . ." (273).

The novel's final synthesis is reached only after Quilty's death has made Humbert the winner of the game. Just as Quilty symbolically represented Humbert's perversion, so it has now been exorcized.

With a graceful movement, I turned off the road, and after two or three big bounces, rode up a grassy slope, among surprised cows, and there I came to a gentle rocking stop. A kind of thoughtful Hegelian synthesis linking up two dead women.

(279)

The "two dead women" are Annabel and Charlotte, and the synthesis they form is Lolita, who is no longer quite nymphet. For the first time, however, it doesn't matter to Humbert that she could not be a nymphet all her life because he is in love with her. But with that realization, Humbert understands that by winning he has lost, that by loving Lolita he has only made his self-
recriminations more bitter. Parked on the grassy slope awaiting arrest, he returns to the game theme, now aware that he has made Lolita share his fate; he remembers stopping on a ridge not long after Lo’s disappearance, and looking out over the valley:

... I grew aware of melodious unity of sounds rising like vapor from a small mining town that lay at my feet, in a fold of the valley. ... And soon I realized that all these sounds were of one nature, that no other sounds but these came from the streets of the transparent town, with the women at home and the men away. Reader! What I heard was but the melody of children at play, nothing but that ... --one could hear now and then, as if released, an almost articulate spurt of vivid laughter, or the crack of a bat, or the clatter of a toy wagon, but it was all really too far for the eye to distinguish any movement in the lightly etched streets. I stood listening to that musical vibration from my lofty slope, to those flashes of separate cries with a kind of demure murmur for background, and then I knew that the hopelessly poignant thing was not Lolita’s absence from my side, but the absence of her voice from that concord.

(280)

Because the world of the novel is dialectical and game-oriented, the reader must recreate Humbert’s epistemological approach in order to understand it; Quilty is as much Nabokov’s double as he is Humbert’s, and Nabokov shares a considerable number of Quilty’s game-playing predilections. Quilty likes to include his name in his work as a sort of Hitchcockian signature; his play The Enchanted Hunters contains the lines "Ne manque pas de dire à ton amant, Chimène, comme le lac est beau car il faut qu’il t’y mène." In writing
of the play Mona Dahl repeats "Lucky beau! Qu'il t'y--what a tongue twister" (204). Similarly, Nabokov hides his signature deep in the text: we are told twice that Quilty co-authored a play called The Lady Who Loved Lightning with Vivian Darkbloom; Vivian Darkbloom is an anagram of Vladimir Nabokov. The part played by Mona Dahl in The Enchanted Hunters is simultaneously representative of both Quilty and, in a wider sense, Nabokov himself: "... a seventh Hunter (in a green cap, the fool) was a Young Poet, and he insisted, much to Diana's annoyance that she and the entertainment provided (dancing nymphs, and elves, and monsters) were his, the Poet's invention" (184).

Nabokov continues his games with the reader by parodying in the course of the book a number of authors. Poe is touched on in obvious ways (Annabel Leigh, "Lenore") and in less obvious ways (Quilty's mansion, Pavor Manor, is a burlesque of the House of Usher). Innumerable nineteenth century authors from Conrad and Dostoyevsky to Poe, Stevenson and E. T. A. Hoffman are alluded to in the mock double theme.

The structure of the book also works to mislead the reader. Divided into two parts, the novel (which was first published by Olympia Press) leads the seeker for erotic thrills on from page to page in the first part, building up to a climax when Humbert is seduced by Lolita--but at that point in the text, Humbert as narrator disappoints his prurient readers: "But really these are irrelevant matters; I am not concerned with so-called 'sex' at all. Anybody
can imagine those elements of animality" (123). The second half of the book has little to do with explicit sex.

*Lolita* is also a parody of a murder mystery. The reader knows from almost the first page that the narrator is a murderer; whom will he kill? Nabokov plants several clues to help the careful reader lead himself down the primrose path to false conclusions. Humbert admits his brutality early in the book, as he describes his treatment of Valeria, his first wife. When this is combined with his inability to govern Charlotte the same way and his simultaneous need to keep Lolita near him at all costs, the reader begins to suspect that he will act out his day-dreams. "The natural solution was to destroy Mrs. Humbert. But how?" (79). The answer comes on a visit to Hour Glass Lake—Humbert and Charlotte swim out toward the middle alone, "I knew that all I had to do was to drop back, take a deep breath, then grab her by the ankle and rapidly dive with my captive corpse." The time is right, opportunity and inclination coexist, the reader is ready. . . . "But what d'ye know, folks—'I just could not make myself do it!'" (81).

Humbert also leads the reader to expect another murder: very early in the book the *Carmen* theme is introduced, and with it the possibility that Humbert will follow the opera and kill Lolita. After he gives us a brief taste of the lyrics of Lolita's favorite song, "Little Carmen," which ends "And the gun I killed you with, O my Carmen, / The gun I am holding now," Humbert
adds parenthetically, "(Drew his .32 automatic, I guess, and put a bullet through his moll's eye)" (59). Humbert continues to refer to the song and to his own .32 automatic throughout the book, and the references to the opera increase sharply just before Lolita is "kidnapped" from the hospital at Elphinstone (218, 222). Immediately afterward Humbert starts off on his search, gun in pocket. When, after two years, he finds Lolita again their dialogue is interspersed with lines from the last act of the opera as the scene builds up to a climax:

> Carmencita, lui demandais-je ... "One last word,"
> I said in my horrible careful English, "are you quite, quite sure that ... you will not come to live with me? ..."
> "No," she said smiling, "no."
> "It would have made all the difference," said Humbert Humbert.
> Then I pulled out my automatic—I mean, this is the kind of a fool thing a reader might suppose I did. It never even occurred to me to do it. (255)

This quotation serves to illustrate the paradigmatic effect of Humbert's games with the reader. The novel's parodic structure, its false leads and misleading clues, make the reader like Sebastian Dangerfield in The Ginger Man: he is aware that the world of the novel must be structured to be understood, but finds that each structure he makes fails (as when he expects that Lolita and Charlotte will be murdered by Humbert).
The point of Humbert's authorial games is to force the reader to participate in the same epistemological structuring that Humbert himself had created; it is a means of making the reader realize that he too shares an identity with psychopathic, perverted, tortured Humbert Humbert. Aware that his plea for the reader to "Imagine me. I shall not exist unless you imagine me," may not persuade, Humbert forces the reader to recreate him by structuring the world of the novel in such a way that the reader can understand it only by mirroring Humbert's own dialectical, game-oriented epistemology.
Conclusion

Two distinct conclusions arise from the interaction of the theory of structuralist epistemology with the novels selected for treatment. The first conclusion points inward toward the literary works themselves; the second is directed outward toward an evaluation of the theory.

A study of the epistemological structures of the modern novel reveals them to be dialectical, and this supports the suggestions of Lévi-Strauss and other structuralists that man's innate structuring capacity leads him to dialectize. In turn, the earlier assertion that "a character's purpose is to achieve some sense of harmony in the world by structuring its chaos and bringing it to order" can be refined in the light of the novels considered. When combined with the dialectical epistemology of the modern novel it becomes apparent that the ability to bring the world to order is the ability to resolve the dialectic, to "mediate its discontinuity" in Hartman's terms. Because of this emphasis on mediation, the characters with the most successful epistemology are those who help the narrator tell the tale.

This fact leads to a final dialectical structure of the modern novel. Absalom, Absalom! and The Ginger Man rely on the reader for a final epistemological structuring. Lolita and The Waves present the final epistemological structuring in the novel itself; the reader's job is to understand it in order to
understand the novel. Thus the final dialectical structure of the modern novel is focused on the reader’s role in relationship to the work: this role can, as in *Absalom, Absalom!* and *The Ginger Man*, produce an epistemological structure elicited by the work through the process of connotation; or the reader can adopt the structure denotatively spelled out by a character, as in *The Waves* and *Lolita*. The connection thus established between the epistemological structures of the novel and the demands the novel makes on the reader reinforces the structuralist belief in an innate human structuring capacity, and so leads us back to a consideration of structuralist epistemology as a critical tool.

As a theoretical approach to literature, structuralist epistemology focuses on the literary work. Its conclusions can be verified easily by anyone with access to the literary text, and knowledge of the author’s era or the reader’s cognitive process is unnecessary. Because the structuralist critic approaches the novel as an entity, he does not distort the work by forcing an arbitrary distinction between form and content. Structuralist epistemology detects an overall structure in the novel, by which a specific work may be examined not only internally but externally in terms of its relationship to others of its genre. Its greatest asset is its flexibility; it can operate in conjunction with a number of different critical approaches without impairing their effectiveness. Many of the insights into the novels treated were obtained by critics using other approaches; structuralist epistemology reinforces and structures them. Because of this flexibility, it is, as is proper for a critical theory: a tool, not a dogma.
NOTES

Chapter I

1 Jean Piaget, Structuralism (New York, 1970), p. 3.

2 Piaget, Structuralism, p. 4.

3 Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (Chicago, 1970).


5 Quoted by Lane, p. 30.

6 Claude Lévi-Strauss, The Raw and the Cooked (New York, 1969); Lane, p. 16.

7 Lane, p. 15.

8 After Lane, p. 15.

9 Piaget, Structuralism, p. 138.


11 Lane, p. 29.

12 Lane, p. 32.

13 Lane, p. 32.
14. Lane, p. 35.

15. Lane, p. 35.


20. Lane, p. 17.


22. Ehrmann, p. ix.

23. Lane, p. 18.

24. Lane, p. 18.

25. Lane, p. 18.

26. See Note 16 above.

27. Lane, p. 18.


29. Ehrmann, p. viii.

31. Sontag, p. xiii.


34. Lévi-Strauss, introductory statement to Jakobson and Lévi-Strauss, "Charles Baudelaire's 'Les Chats.'" in Lane, pp. 202-221.


38. "Historicist" is used here as roughly equivalent to "old historist" used by Wesley Morris; cf. his Toward a New Historicism (Princeton, 1972).


41. Frank, pp. vii-viii.


43. Lawall, p. 3.


46 Hartman, p. 52.


51 Wasserman, p. 10.


53 See Note 34 above.

54 See Hartman, Beyond Formalism, pp. 7-23; 33-34.

55 Barthes, Writing Degree Zero, p. xvii.

56 English trans. 1964; see Note 32 above.

57 Barthes, On Racine, p. viii.

58 See Note 7 above.

59 See Note 16 above.

60 Piaget, Genetic Epistemology, p. 57.


The usual example is the comparison of the lovers to the feet of a compass in John Donne's "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning."

For example the image series in the first four lines of Sonnet #73:

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.

The distinction which can be drawn between the two poles of the denotative/connotative dialectic seems to be very similar to a much more extensive series of dialectic based on the concept of similarity and contiguity: metonomy/metaphor; system/syntax, etc. Leach in Claude Lévi-Strauss has an excellent review of this dialectic series, spanning Frazer's homeopathic/contagious magic and Barthes' *Elements of Semiology* (Leach, pp. 45-52).

Chapter II

1 "Myth" here is used in the broad sense implied in Geoffrey Hartmann, *Beyond Formalism* (New Haven, 1970).


5 Slatoff, 177-78.


11 Levins, p. 43.

12 William Faulkner (New York, 1929).

13 Levins, p. 45.


17. Vickery, p. 93.


20. It may be objected that, given the theoretical limitations imposed in the first chapter, this study exceeds its scope in approaching the epistemology of the reader. The theory developed in the first chapter did not exclude the reader when elicited by the text; it was merely intended to indicate that what would be attempted here was a structuralist analysis of the novel, not of the theory of perception or cognition.

Chapter III


2. All page numbers are from Virginia Woolf, The Waves (New York, 1931).

Chapter IV

1. This and all other quotations from The Ginger Man (Dell: New York, 1965).


Sherman, p. 217.


Chapter V

This and all page numbers are from Vladimir Nabokov, Lolita (Berkley Medallion: New York, 1966).


Field, p. 347.


Proffer, p. 27.


Field, p. 327.
LIST OF WORKS CITED


