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MAN, AND ABSALOM, ABSALOM!

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CHANGES IN THE NOVEL: A STRUCTURALIST COMPARISON
OF MIDDLEMARCH, THE CONFIDENCE-MAN,
AND ABSALOM, ABSALOM!

by

SARAH HOLLAND HOLDEN

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Between mid-nineteenth century and early twentieth-century, the
British and American novel changed drastically. Briefly, nineteenth-
century novels most often have an omniscient narration and fully-de-
veloped, realistic characters. The novel is organized by the temporal
progression of events in those characters' lives. One sees a concern
for moral issues, and the reader is expected to compare and apply the
novel's world to his own society. Language is clear and direct; be-
cause words are representative, their meaning is not subject to ques-
tion and decision. The omniscient narration and clear language give
the reader little control in deciding the novel's meaning; his role is
more to be receptive than directive. By contrast, twentieth-century
novels show various narrative techniques, and the question of a nar-
rator's reliability becomes important. For the most part, temporal
sequence does not determine structural sequence, but rather a spatial
form is preferred. Language becomes a potent tool, for words are
symbolic and multiple in meanings; the reader is the one who finally
decides their meanings. As a controlling influence the author retreats
to the background, and the reader assumes more responsibility for
interpreting and understanding the novel. One has less interest in
comparing the novel's world to his own, for one does not see moral
issues and questions of broad applicability to all people.

In order to describe the differences between nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century novels, this thesis will closely analyze three novels. George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-72) serves as the epitome of the nineteenth-century British novel; it illustrates a great Victorian novel's structure, language, and authorial role. The omniscient narration skillfully forms the novel's structure; Eliot's use of language is clear and quite expressive; and the authorial voice creates the reader's willingness to take a passive, receptive role. Herman Melville's *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade* (1857), although it precedes *Middlemarch* in time, can be seen as a transitional work in that it combines characteristics of both centuries. Its structure and use of language resemble twentieth-century novels while its narrative technique resembles the earlier novels. Also, its moral values are not clear; one cannot be certain of Melville's stance on the issues he raises. Lack of moral certainty and/or lack of interest in moral issues is characteristic of twentieth-century novels. To pick one novel which epitomizes all early twentieth-century novels would be impossible; but William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) provides a number of their distinctive features. Faulkner uses a number of narrators; the structure is spatial rather than temporal, as the reader must construct the sequence of events; words create their own meanings, are symbolic, rather than being representative of one concept or thing. *Absalom, Absalom!*'s meaning must be created by the reader rather than being expressed directly by the author.
In trying to define the novel's change, one's purpose should not be to set up narrow categories but rather to provide an approach which takes into account each century's complexity. Eliot and Faulkner, for example, have very different assumptions about their art; if a reader is not to misinterpret or dismiss either one's artistry, he has to be aware of their different values and techniques. An approach which focuses on the reader's experience allows diversity yet provides a means for comparison. One way to compare novels is to ask how an attentive reader reacts to each, and how an author elicited that particular reaction. One often finds it difficult to say with any certainty what an author intended to say, so that the better approach is to try to define what a reader thinks the author is saying, what kinds of decisions the reader makes about the novel's meaning.

Describing a reader's experience involves studying a novel's structure, its language and style, and finally the reader's attitude toward the characters and the author. Several structuralist theories are useful in these studies. First, the distinction between paradigmatic and syntagmatic structure gives the reader a special responsibility. Paradigmatic structures point to meanings implied but not directly expressed. Robert Scholes explains Ferdinand de Saussure's terminology in this way:

The syntagmatic element of language has to do with the positioning of a sign in any particular utterance. In a given sentence, for example, the meaning of a single word is determined partly by its position in the sentence and its relation to the other words and grammatical units of that sentence. This is the word's syntagmatic (linear, diachronic) aspect, often conceptualized as a horizontal axis along which the sentence is spread
out in its necessary order. The meaning of a single word in a sentence is also determined by its relation to some groups of words not in the actual sentence but present in a paradigmatic (or "vertical," synchronic) relationship to the actual word. A word is thus defined partly by all the words which might have filled its place but have been displaced by it. In attending to paradigmatic meaning we are aware of the synchronic aspect of this word's relationship to its language-system.\footnote{Structuralism in Literature: An Introduction (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), pp. 18-19. Subsequent citations appear in the text.}

While the author may intend to imply certain meanings, the reader has to sense the implications and fill in the details. Part of the change from nineteenth-century to twentieth-century writing techniques reflects a shift in emphasis from syntagmatic to paradigmatic structures. \textit{Middlemarch} is predominately syntagmatic in structure; most of its meanings are quite clearly expressed by the author. \textit{The Confidence-Man}, by contrast, emphasizes the paradigmatic, what is unsaid. Through the process of negation and understatement, Melville says one thing and then "unsays" it. One recognizes a multiplicity of meanings all of which contradict each other, so that one feels the impossibility of knowing what something means. The implications of \textit{Absalom, Absalom!}'s paradigmatic structure are not so dark; Quentin's and Shreve's story is true for them, which is all that matters within the novel's context. \textit{Absalom, Absalom!} emphasizes the paradigmatic to the almost total eclipse of the syntagmatic. The reader has to figure out the syntagmatic progression of the characters' lives, as well as attend to the implications of words and narrative technique.
A structuralist concept that helps the reader delineate the limits of paradigmatic and syntagmatic structures is Gerard Genette's identification of three levels in narrative discourse—histoire, récit, and narration. The histoire is the story told in its proper chronological order; novels such as Absalom, Absalom! which do not order events chronologically have histoires that differ from their récit, which is the novel's actual account. The narration is the method of telling. While the histoire and the narration are abstractions constructed by the reader, the récit is the actual sequence of words on the novel's pages. Thus the author is responsible for the récit, but the reader is responsible for the histoire and narration. In a novel such as Middlemarch the histoire is not very different from the récit, for Eliot uses a temporal order and her narration does not suggest meanings contrary to the expressed values. By contrast, Melville relates events consecutively, but his narration suggests so many multiple, symbolic meanings that the histoire differs from the récit. There is a close relationship between the reader's concept of the histoire and his awareness of the paradigmatic structure. Paradigmatic structure does not advance the story line directly but works through the reader's pondering of symbolic meanings suggested by words and events. For example, Robert Scholes discusses Ulysses as a work in which paradigmatic "possibilities are allowed to sport themselves and form syntagmatic chains of their own" (p. 188). The reader notices the paradigmatic dimension first, but then he realizes that Joyce's lists, while they interrupt the "action," at the same time further that action by
suggesting more complex syntagmatic relations. Joyce hates to "get along" with the story, but he uses paradigmatic structures which seemingly retard the story (the lists, the Greek mythological parallels, the history of English styles of writing) to enrich the syntagmatic structure of Bloom's story. The separation of histoire and récit and narration enables the reader to be aware of the boundaries between paradigmatic and syntagmatic structure.

Scholes quotes Genette's explanation of the close interaction between the three levels:

"Story and narration would not exist for us without the mediation of the récit. But, reciprocally, the récit, the narrative discourse, can be what it is only by telling a story, without which it would not be narrative . . . and only in so far as it is presented by someone, without which (like a collection of archeological documents) it would not be discourse. As narrative, it lives by its relation to the story that it tells; as discourse, it lives from its relation to the narration that it offers" (p. 165).

Thus, while one can separate the histoire, the récit, and the narration and look for paradigmatic possibilities offered by each, one should retain a sense of their close interdependence. If one does not want to "murder" by dissecting, one has to grasp a sense of the whole novel.

This is why one should closely study language, its use in a particular style, and also the value systems implicit in the novel, its moral and artistic aims. Both contribute to a more general, total view, for they involve the critical distances between reader and character and reader and author.

To sum up the theoretical background for this thesis, the reader's
experience of the novel is finally the key to understanding and appreciating the novel. Structure, use of language, and the author-reader relationship are fundamental components, but an analysis of these is rather limited unless it takes into account the reader's awareness. What changes most in the transition from nineteenth-century to twentieth-century modes of writing is the reader's responsibility, his need to make decisions about meaning. Eliot tells the reader exactly what *Middlemarch* means; Faulkner allows and expects the meaning of *Absalom, Absalom!* to be decided by the reader.

Rather than discussing the three novels separately, this thesis develops the reader's experience of each through chapters on structure, on language and style, and on the author-reader relationship. The final chapter sums up the changes found in the preceding chapters between the nineteenth-century novel and the modern novel.
CHAPTER II

STRUCTURE

The way an author structures a novel obviously affects the meanings a reader perceives. Novels with simple structures are more quickly understood, for complexity of structure creates work for the reader. But "simple" and "complex" are not adequate terms to explain differences in structure between novels. One may contrast "temporal" and "spatial" structures, but, while that is more useful, it still does not consider the way a reader may participate in the creation of structure. In that "paradigmatic" vs. "syntagmatic" structures include the spatial vs. temporal distinction yet also suggest ways in which the reader participates, they are a more inclusive and ultimately a more appropriate terminology.

When one compares syntagmatic and paradigmatic structures of Middlemarch, The Confidence-Man, and Absalom, Absalom!, one sees how structural technique changes from the nineteenth-century to the modern novel. Middlemarch's structure blends paradigmatic and syntagmatic elements with a distinct emphasis on the latter. While the reader's responsiveness to Eliot's suggestions determines the paradigmatic structure, the reader in general has less responsibility in creating the paradigmatic structure. Eliot gives clear guidelines as to the kind of analysis she expects from the reader. By contrast, The
**Confidence-Man** demands more decision-making from the reader. In order to make any sense of the syntagmatic structure, the relation of events, the reader has to interpret the symbolic meanings of these events. For example, if one does not realize that Melville parodies Emerson in the character of Mark Winsome, one misses the philosophical argument running through his conversation with the Cosmopolitan. That is a rather clear-cut example of the kind of symbolic meanings present; others are not so evident. It is the reader who recognizes the need for following up the implications of both the Con-Man's and the author's words. Melville's authorial role forms a climate of confusion, almost distrust, which makes the reader more sensitive to conflicting or paradoxical meanings. At times the reader despairs of finding any "true" meaning because he feels that Melville is playing "cat-and-mouse" with him, but he nevertheless must continue the search. Like *The Confidence-Man*, Absalom, Absalom! emphasizes paradigmatic structure, but Faulkner and the reader seem much more comfortable, less in despair, about not recognizing "the" meaning. Absalom, Absalom! accepts, even assumes, the transformational, supplemental nature of words, their interchangeability. The process of creating meanings becomes the "end," rather than finding one "true" meaning.

Thus, the analysis of the structures of these three novels shows that the nineteenth-century novel uses a predominately syntagmatic structure while the early twentieth-century novel uses a paradigmatic. The shift in structural techniques gives the reader more power in making decisions about the novel's meaning.
The Structure of Middlemarch

Various critics have commented on the inter-connectedness of the structure of Middlemarch. The four major plot strands, plus the many minor plots, are complexly interwoven to form a detailed portrayal of all levels of Middlemarch society. Eliot uses a primarily syntagmatic structure to create a realistic surface of events. She meshes the temporal events of the characters' lives to form a "web" of relationships: "I at least have so much to do in unravelling certain human lots, and seeing how they were woven and interwoven that all the light I can command must be concentrated on this particular web, and not dispersed over that tempting range of relevancies called the universe." Thus, the Dorothea-Casaubon-Ladislaw strand connects with the Lydgate-Rosamond strand; the Fred Vincy-Mary Garth strand is woven to the Bulstrode as well as the Lydgate-Rosamond. Even Ladislaw eventually becomes connected to Bulstrode. The threads of the "web" are syntagmatic relations, the necessary order of events in the characters' lives. George Levine thinks that "George Eliot saw a deterministic universe as a marvelously complex unit in which all parts are intricately related to each other, where nothing is really isolable, and where past and future are both implicit in the present." Her


beliefs lead her in Middlemarch to give any action, however seemingly insignificant, its repercussion. Causal relationships are crucial to Eliot's reality; a truly random event does not take place in Middlemarch.

The web-like structure has a thematic purpose, as Barbara Hardy points out: "Its shifting point of view is the structural equivalent for its theme of illusion, and the insistent rotation, with ironical contrast and comparison, puts each illusion in its place amongst the rest and lets the contradictions stand."\(^4\) While the quietness of the structure, its lack of insistence, diverts our attention from its "complicated artifice" (p. 11), as Barbara Hardy points out, John Harvey notes that the method of interweaving the stories "encourages interest in juxtaposition, parallelism, contrast, anticipation, recollection, and the rest."\(^5\) The implications offered by the omniscient narrator encourage the reader to "step back" and compare characters or check a generalization with his own experience; sometimes the authorial voice addresses the reader directly, asking for his assent or explaining an authorial position. These moments in the récit which stop the story and suggest reflection give a paradigmatic dimension. At first glance the syntagmatic structure is so powerful, the sense of "what happens" is so strong, that one is tempted to say that the difference between Eliot and Faulkner is that Eliot uses a


syntagmatic structure while Faulkner uses a paradigmatic. However, this would be a distortion of Eliot's art (if not of Faulkner's), because the reader (guided by Eliot) creates the paradigmatic as in Faulkner the reader creates the syntagmatic. The difference is more that Eliot's authorial voice shows the reader what he is to do, while Faulkner just creates the need for knowing the syntagmatic structure.

Besides the "web," another metaphor which is useful in talking of Middlemarch's structure is Eliot's description of the pier-glass:

Your pier-glass or extensive surface of polished steel made to be rubbed by a housemaid, will be minutely and multitudi-

nously scratched in all directions; but place now against it a lighted candle as a centre of illumination, and lo! the scratches will seem to arrange themselves in a fine series of concentric circles round that little sun. It is demonstrable that the scratches are going everywhere impartially, and it is only your candle which produces the flattering illusion of a concentric arrangement, its light falling with an exclusive optical selection. (p. 194-95)

Eliot says that the candle is the "egoism" of any character, and, indeed, when one starts examining specific characters, contrasting and comparing them, one becomes aware of the structural complexity. The "scratches" are the multitudes of experiences portrayed, while the "candle" is the voice of the omniscient narrator. Or, to look at it another way, the "scratches" are the syntagmatic structure and the "candle" is the paradigmatic structure.

Before one can study how Eliot interweaves these paradigmatic and syntagmatic structures to create the reader's perception of each character, one needs a short over-view of the larger structural units. After a short Prelude dealing with the societal limits confronting
woman, Eliot divides the novel into eight books, whose titles reflect their particular focus. Book One, "Miss Brooke," develops Dorothea's character primarily, although it also introduces directly all the major characters except Bulstrode. Book Two, "Old and Young," deals with the problems of the aged (Bulstrode, Featherstone, Casaubon, and to an extent, Farebrother) in relating to the young (Mary Garth and Fred and Dorothea) and with the problems particular to the young such as choosing a spouse (Lydgate and Rosamond) and a vocation (Ladislaw and Fred). Book Three, "Waiting for Death," applies to Featherstone's heirs, Fred's family when he was ill, and Casaubon, who has his first heart attack. Book Four, "Three Love Problems," traces Fred and Mary's problems after Featherstone's death, Lydgate and Rosamond's problems, and Dorothea and Casaubon's problems (and secondarily Dorothea and Ladislaw's attraction). Book Five, "The Dead Hand," applies directly to Dorothea; Casaubon's demand for her promise to continue his work after his death threatens her, and the codicil to his will limits her relations with Ladislaw. Indirectly, "The Dead Hand" deals with pressures to conform with tradition and convention irregardless of harmful consequences. For example, medical tradition, as well as his "spots of commonness" which lead him into marriage and debt, act as "The Dead Hand" to Lydgate. In the same way tradition acts against the Reform Bill that Ladislaw and Mr. Brookes are advocating. Mr. Featherstone's "dead hand" is still working on Fred, who has to decide what he will do now that he has no inheritance. "The Dead Hand" also
applies to Mr. Bulstrode, who is blackmailed by Raffles to conceal his past. In the last chapter of Book Five the reader learns that Ladislaw is the victim of Bulstrode's concealment of his wife's daughter and grandson. Book Six, "The Widow and the Wife," deals mainly with Dorothea's and Rosamond's lives; but in addition one finds out the full story of Mr. Bulstrode and Ladislaw learns about Casaubon's codicil. Also, he refuses Bulstrode's offer of reparation. Book Seven, "Two Temptations," develops Lydgate's temptation to gamble because of his money worries and Mr. Bulstrode's temptation to "murder" Raffles by withholding the proper care; it also deals with the town's suspicion that Lydgate helped Bulstrode kill Raffles. The final book, "Sunset and Sunrise," deals with Dorothea's generosity in pleading Lydgate's case to Rosamond, even though she believes Ladislaw and Rosamond to be lovers. Rosamond, in a gesture of generosity inspired by Dorothea, explains to her the true state of Ladislaw's feelings, which makes possible their engagement and subsequent marriage. Bulstrode, in an attempt to amend his wrongs to the Vincy's, gives the management of Stone Court to Fred, which allows him to marry Mary Garth. Eliot includes a Finale, which gives the main events in the future lives of Dorothea and Ladislaw, Fred and Mary, and Lydgate and Rosamond. The Finale focuses on the limits which society imposed on Dorothea's prospects and decisions; but the tone is hopeful rather than tragic: "the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive: for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and
me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs" (p. 613).

The division into books accentuates the movement from one plot-strand to another; the books' titles further encourage the reader to look for parallels between characters and to analyze their differences. For example, a title such as "The Widow and the Wife" points to differences between the way Dorothea views her wifely role and the way Rosamond views hers. Once the reader compares Dorothea's and Rosamond's marital roles in this way, he also thinks of comparing other marriages and other roles. The various preachers—Mr. Tyke, Mr. Farebrother, Mr. Casaubon, and Mr. Cadwallader—play their ministerial roles in different ways. From examining roles and personal traits, one sees a paradigmatic structure that increases the complexity of the syntagmatic. Having reflected on the differences between Dorothea and Rosamond, one senses more of what happens in their final scene together. Seeing parallels and oppositions develops one's sense of societal pressures on individuals as well as the ways that individuals respond to societal expectations. Fred Vincy and Will Ladislaw are similar in their having to win their wives by finding a satisfactory vocation; indeed they are similar in their inability to "settle down" in the beginning. Casaubon, Featherstone, and Bulstrode are examples of men exerting power over others, often to the detriment of everyone, including themselves. Lydgate, Farebrother, and Fred incur more debts than they can handle and try gambling to solve their problems. Farebrother and Dorothea are peacemakers even when it costs them a great
deal of anguish. Celia and Mrs. Cadwallader serve as voices of traditional wisdom, sometimes right and sometimes completely wrong; Mr. Brooke and Sir James Chettam are their male counterparts. The similarities and differences between characters, the paradigmatic relations suggested by the larger structural units, contribute to the reader's knowledge of the people of Middlemarch.

After examining the larger structural units, one can proceed to study the combination of paradigmatic and syntagmatic structures that Eliot uses to develop her characters and present their interaction. Studying a few "key" passages from the four plots will show how the structure creates the reader's attitudes towards the characters.

Dorothea, in a sense, is the most "major" of the major characters, because of her primary position and her connections with the Prelude and Finale. Miss Brooke is the "cygnet . . . reared uneasily among the ducklings in the brown pond . . . [who] never finds the living stream of fellowship with its own cary-footed kind" (p. 4). Yet Dorothea is not presented as the tragic victim of stifling social circumstances; there are no clear-cut villains and saints in the world of Middlemarch, and Dorothea suffers as much from the limitations and shortcomings of her idealistic nature as from social custom. Eliot is careful to present Dorothea in the same dispassionate, tolerant manner which is nevertheless cognizant of imperfections and inconsistencies; Dorothea gets her share of Eliot's irony.

Eliot combines direct authorial comments with comments written from the standpoint of Dorothea's perception to form the syntagmatic
structure. An example of the former is "Her mind was theoretic, and yearned by its nature after some lofty conception of the world which might frankly include the parish of Tipton and her own rule of conduct there; she was enamoured of intensity and greatness, and rash in embracing whatever seemed to her to have those aspects; likely to seek martyrdom, to make retractions, and then to incur martyrdom after all in a quarter where she had not sought it" (p. 6). An example of the latter is "She felt sure that she would have accepted the judicious Hooker, if she had been born in time to save him from that wretched mistake he made in matrimony; or John Milton when his blindness had come on; or any of the other great men whose odd habits it would have been glorious piety to endure; but an amiable handsome baronet, who said 'Exactly' to her remarks even when she expressed uncertainty,—how could he affect her as a lover? The really delightful marriage must be that where your husband was a sort of father, and could teach you even Hebrew, if you wished it" (p. 8). The tone of amused irony in these remarks, as well as the choice of "childlike" and "peculiar" to describe her views of marriage, warn the reader that Eliot is being ironic; the irony, as part of the paradigmatic structure, makes the reader realize that Dorothea is neither sensible nor experienced, and one prepares oneself for further incongruities in her character.

Besides authorial comments, Eliot uses dialogues as part of the syntagmatic structure which reveals Dorothea's idiosyncracies and strengths. Eliot is careful to give a balanced picture of strengths and weaknesses; the reader comes to trust her as an impartial judge.
A good example of dialogue occurs during and after Casaubon's first dinner at Mr. Brooks's. Dorothea impulsively says that she will give up her riding, mainly because she is annoyed with Sir James. He replies that Dorothea is "given to self-mortification," to which Celia agrees: "She likes giving up" (p. 13). Dorothea protests that if that were so she would be self-indulgent rather than self-denying; one sees that Dorothea alternates between the two states. Dorothea and Celia's conversation after dinner is very revealing of Dorothea's inclinations toward Casaubon and Celia's repugnance. Celia punctures Dorothea's inflated speech:

"Celia! He is one of the most distinguished-looking men I ever saw. He is remarkably like the portrait of Locke. He has the same deep eye-sockets."
"Had Locke those two white moles with hairs on them?"
"Oh, I daresay! when people of a certain sort looked at him," said Dorothea, walking away a little (p. 15).

Dorothea's "huffiness" when confronted with Celia's sensible assessment makes the reader inclined to agree with Celia that "Notions and scruples were like spilt needles, making one afraid of treading, or sitting down, or even eating" (p. 15).

Another "key" passage which illustrates the interplay of paradigmatic and syntagmatic structures is Chapter 20, Book Two. It serves as a fine example of how Eliot combines paradigmatic generalizations with the syntagmatic structure to give a moral breadth to Dorothea's struggles to adapt herself to her married life. Eliot begins the chapter by noting that Dorothea is "sobbing bitterly"; her exploration of the causes of this crying is a model of psychological reality.
Eliot stresses that Dorothea's mood is not exceptional—not tragic—but that this does not mitigate its intensity:

That element of tragedy which lies in the very fact of frequency, has not yet wrought itself into the coarse emotion of mankind; and perhaps our frames could hardly bear much of it. If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. As it is, the quickest of us walk about well wadded with stupidity. (p. 114)

Dorothea's unhappiness is partially explicable by the contrast between courtship and marriage: "The fact is unalterable, that a fellow-mortals with whose nature you are acquainted solely through the brief entrances and exits of a few imaginative weeks called courtship, may, when seen in the continuity of married companionship, be disclosed as something better or worse than what you have preconceived, but will certainly not appear altogether the same" (p. 115). Eliot is careful to say that Mr. Casaubon did not intend to mislead Dorothea or to create illusions about himself. Dorothea's expectations were "large vistas and wide fresh air" so that she suffers a "stifling depression" when she discovers her husband's mind to be "anterooms and winding passages which seemed to lead nowhere" (p. 115). Eliot partially answers her question about the cause of Dorothea's illusions when she says "in courtship everything is regarded as provisional and preliminary, and the smallest sample of virtue or accomplishment is taken to guarantee delightful stores which the broad leisure of marriage will reveal . . . Having once embarked on your marital voyage, it is impossible not to be aware that you make no way and that the sea is not within sight—that,
in fact, you are exploring an enclosed basin" (p. 1145). Eliot applies these generalizations specifically to Dorothea, and then continues to detail her problems: "What was fresh to her mind was worn out to his; and such capacity of thought and feeling as had ever been stimulated in him by the general life of mankind had long shrunk to a sort of dried preparation, a lifeless embellishment of knowledge" (p. 1146). From these quotes one sees how Eliot follows a very specific syntagmatic fact about Dorothea's situation with a paradigmatic generalization that broadens the situation to suggest applications to all marriages.

Furthermore, Dorothea's problem is that she is not allowed to express her feelings:

With all her yearning to know what was afar from her and to be widely benignant, she had ardour enough for what was near, to have kissed Mr. Casaubon's coat-sleeve, or to have caressed his shoe-latchet, if he would have made any other sign of acceptance than pronouncing her, with his unfailing propriety, to be of a most affectionate and truly feminine nature, indicating at the same time by politely reaching a chair for her that he regarded these manifestations as rather crude and startling. Having made his clerical toilette with due care in the morning, he was prepared only for those amenities of life which were suited to the well-adjusted stiff cravat of the period, and to a mind weighted with unpublished matter. (p. 1147)

Initially Dorothea is "troublesome" only to herself, but she gradually becomes troublesome to Casaubon. In her ignorance of Mr. Casaubon's true nature, she says the very thing most apt to wound him; she voices the fears and doubts he has about himself. Eliot moves to the general to explain why Dorothea's words are particularly irritating: "We are angered even by the full acceptance of our humiliating confessions—how much more by hearing in hard distinct syllables from the lips of a near
observer, those confused murmurs which we try to call morbid, and strive against as if they were the oncoming of numbness" (p. 149). Mr. Casaubon answers angrily, and Dorothea shows her resentment. Neither is able to resolve the argument at the time, and the chapter ends with Casaubon going to his studies. The combination of syntagmatic dialogue with paradigmatic generalizations creates a vivid portrayal of Casaubon and Dorothea's marital problems. Eliot continues to develop these in Chapter 21, and broadens the applicability further by tying in Dorothea's and Casaubon's problems to the theme of egoism.

In Chapter 21 Dorothea talks to Ladislaw and for the first time learns that her husband's studies are fruitless and misguided. When Casaubon returns, Dorothea, prompted by pity, apologizes, but Casaubon does not allow them to "kiss and make-up." He accepts the apology with the form of acceptance but without the feeling. Eliot ends the chapter by noting "Today she had begun to see that she had been under a wild illusion in expecting a response to her feeling from Mr. Casaubon, and she had felt the waking of a presentiment that there might be a sad consciousness in his life which made as great a need on his side as on her own" (p. 156). Thus, Dorothea begins to awaken from her egoism through her need to resolve the conflict with Casaubon.

Moving beyond the syntagmatic, Eliot generalizes:

We are all of us born in moral stupidity, taking the world as an udder to feed our supreme selves: Dorothea had early begun to emerge from that stupidity, but yet it had been easier to her to imagine how she would devote herself to Mr. Casaubon, and become wise and strong in his strength and wisdom, than to conceive with that distinctness which is no longer reflection but feeling--an idea wrought back to the
directness of sense, like the solidity of objects--that he had an equivalent centre of self, whence the lights and shadows must always fall with a certain difference. (p. 156-57)

In this passage Eliot shows the reader how to apply the theme of egoism to Dorothea; also by using "We," she suggests an application to all human relations.

The theme of egoism and moral stupidity is crucial to the paradigmatic structure for it suggests a criterion one can use in judging each character. Egoism is responsible for much of each character's problems in getting along with the others. Eliot sees it as part of human nature, and those characters like Dorothea and the Garths who learn to control and go beyond it are those who are most human and worthy of the reader's respect; those, like Casaubon, who cannot escape it are most deserving of pity.

At the beginning of Chapter 29, Book Three, Eliot asks "Why always Dorothea? Was her point of view the only possible one with regard to this marriage?" (p. 205). She then proceeds to develop one's sympathy for Casaubon. He, in spite of his physical infirmities, "had an intense consciousness within him, and was spiritually a-hungered like the rest of us" (p. 205). He marries for traditionally good reasons, and gets more pain than happiness for his trouble:

He had not had much foretaste of happiness in his previous life. To know intense joy without a strong bodily frame, one must have an enthusiastic soul. Mr. Casaubon had never had a strong bodily frame, and his soul was sensitive without being enthusiastic: it was too languid to thrill out of self-consciousness into passionate delight; it went on fluttering in the swampy ground where it was hatched, thinking of its wings and never flying. His experience was of that pitiable
kind which shrinks from pity, and fears most of all that it should be known: it was that proud narrow sensitiveness which has not mass enough to spare for transformation into sympathy, and quivers thread-like in small currents of self-preoccupation or at best of an egotistic scrupulosity. (p. 206)

The triviality of the "weights" Eliot lists as pressing on Mr. Casaubon's mind further deepens our pity. Finally, Eliot addresses the reader directly with her own feelings about Mr. Casaubon:

For my part I am very sorry for him. It is an uneasy lot at best, to be what we call highly taught and yet not to enjoy; to be present at this great spectacle of life and never to be liberated from a small hungry shivering self—never to be fully possessed by the glory we behold, never to have our consciousness rapturously transformed into the vividness of a thought, the ardour of a passion, the energy of an action, but always to be scholarly and uninspired, ambitious and timid, scrupulous and dimsighted. (pp. 206-207)

The instances when Eliot addresses the reader using the personal pronouns "I" or "we" establish a personal relationship between author and reader; one is expected to imagine the author conversing with him. This gives Eliot's words an immediacy and authority which a more impersonal approach cannot have. If one responds to her appeal for sympathy on Casaubon's behalf, one cannot help but be sad that his "marriage, like his religion and erudition, nay, like authorship itself, was fated to become an outward requirement, and Edward Casaubon was bent on fulfilling unimpeachably all requirements" (p. 207). Since Eliot calls him "Mr." most of the time, her using his given name "Edward" reminds us that he is as much a human being as all of us.

Despite one's sympathy for Casaubon, one has the most sympathy for Dorothea, especially when Casaubon demands her devotion even beyond his death. He asks her to "carry out my wishes... avoid doing what
I should depurate, and apply yourself to do what I should desire" (p. 350). Dorothea imagines herself "sorting what might be called shattered mummies, and fragments of a tradition which was itself a mosaic wrought from crushed ruins—sorting them as food for a theory which was already withered in the birth like an elfin child"—(p. 351). It is a measure of Dorothea's selflessness that she turns toward pitying her husband; she cannot imagine "crushing that bruised heart" (p. 352) by telling him "No," even though she is aware that she will be saying "Yes to her own doom" (p. 352). It is with a great sense of relief that the reader welcomes Mr. Casaubon's death at the moment when Dorothea comes to promise her complete devotion. The reader agrees with Tantripp when she says, "I wish every book in that library was built into a catacom for your master" (p. 353); Casaubon's selfishness, in addition to the jealousy which becomes apparent with his will's codicil, alienates him finally with the reader. This prepares for a sympathetic response to Ladislaw, who (to Dorothea's thinking) is a "creature who entered into every one's feelings, and could take the pressure of their thought instead of urging his own with iron resistance" (p. 364).

Part of the dislike some critics have for Ladislaw can be attributed to his structural role; Eliot intends him to be the opposite of Casaubon—a man of high feeling rather than of narrow intellect. Dorothea errs on the side of intellect when she marries Casaubon, and to an extent, Eliot suggests she errs on the side of feeling when she marries Ladislaw (e.g., "Certainly those determining acts of her life
[her marriages] were not ideally beautiful. They were the mixed result of young and noble impulse struggling amidst the condition of an imperfect social state, in which great feelings will often take the aspect of error, and great faith the aspect of illusion"—p. 612). Happily Ladislaw finds a vocation which suits both him and Dorothea, and, more importantly, they both love each other, so that "she never repented that she had given up position and fortune to marry Will Ladislaw" (p. 610).

Dorothea, however, is not the only major character in Middlemarch. Lydgate is certainly an attractive figure, and as Gordon S. Haight notes, 6 his vocation is an innovation. Chapter 15, Book Two, develops Lydgate's past and present in great detail. While Eliot at the beginning of the chapter says that she will not, like Fielding, bring an "arm-chair to the proscenium and chat with us in all the lusty ease of his fine English," she does give a rich syntagmatic development to Lydgate's character and personality. Lydgate is very interested in advances in medical knowledge and medical practice; he wants to do research, and he intends to be a model in his medical conduct. For example, even though he is somewhat aware of the embarrassment it may cause his colleagues, he decides not to dispense medicines. Eliot stresses that Lydgate's character is still to be made: "He was at a starting-point which makes many a man's career a fine subject for

betting, if there were any gentlemen given to that amusement who could appreciate the complicated probabilities of an arduous purpose, with all the possible thwartings and furtherings of circumstance, all the niceties of inward balance, by which a man swims and makes his point or else is carried headlong" (p. lili). Unfortunately, Lydgate's "distinguished mind is a little spotted with commonness"; his faults "lay in the complexion of his prejudices, which, in spite of noble intention and sympathy, were half of them such as are found in ordinary men of the world: that distinction of mind which belonged to his intellectual ardour, did not penetrate his feeling and judgment about furniture, or women, or the desirability of its being known (without his telling) that he was better born than other country surgeons . . . it was to be feared that neither biology nor schemes of reform would lift him above the vulgarity of feeling that there would be an incompatibility in his furniture not being of the best" (pp. lili-lI2). Furthermore, Lydgate is politically naive; he is apt to make remarks without thinking how and who they may offend. One of the first times he goes to dinner at the Vincy's (pp. lI6-lI7), he offends first Dr. Sprague and then the coroner Mr. Chichely by making general statements which they take personally. He allows his pride and circumstances to determine his vote for Tyke to be chaplain rather than Farebrother; and he is aware that in this case the "petty medium of Middlemarch had been too strong for him" (p. l39).

In Chapter 15 Eliot presents Lydgate's first affair as a warning that he is liable to a "fitful swerving of passion . . . together with
the chivalrous kindness which helped to make him morally lovable" (p. 112). Earlier still when he met Dorothea, he thought, "It is troublesome to talk to such woman. They are always wanting reasons, yet they are too ignorant to understand the merits of any question, and usually fall back on their moral sense to settle things after their own taste" (p. 69). On the contrary, when he meets Rosamond Vincy, he thinks "if falling in love had been at all in question, it would have been quite safe with a creature like this Miss Vincy, who had just the kind of intelligence one would desire in a woman—polished, refined, docile, lending itself to finish in all the delicacies of life, and enshrined in a body which expressed this with a force of demonstration that excluded the need for other evidence" (p. 121). Rosamond right away dreams of being married to Lydgate, and as Eliot later puts it, "Circumstance was almost sure to be on the side of Rosamond's idea, which had a shaping activity and looked through watchful blue eyes, whereas Lydgate's lay blind and unconcerned as a jelly-fish which gets melted without knowing it" (p. 200).

Lydgate flirts with Rosamond without thinking of the way the Middlemarch people will interpret it. It is not until Mrs. Bulstrode warns him openly that he had best not dally with a woman unless he has serious intentions that he realises that most of Middlemarch considers him almost engaged. Rosamond "did not distinguish flirtation from love, either in herself or in another" (p. 197), so that she, as much as she is able, falls in love and considers herself practically engaged. When he realises his thoughtlessness, Lydgate stops coming
to see her; but then, ironically, the one moment that Rosamond is natural, not her usual poised self, he falls in love. He is "completely mastered by the outrush of tenderness at the sudden belief that this sweet young creature depended on him for her joy...he was used to being gentle with the weak and suffering" (p. 222).

After his marriage Lydgate discovers "the terrible tenacity of this mild creature"; he is powerless over Rosamond, and she does exactly what she pleases. When he informs her of their debts and pleads with her to be economical, she says, "What can I do, Tertius," in tones that imply as much "neutrality" and helplessness as she can. Rosamond is completely egoistic: "there was but one person in Rosamond's world whom she did not regard as blameworthy, and that was the graceful creature with blond plaits and with little hands crossed before her, who had never expressed herself unbecomingly, and had always acted for the best—the best naturally being what she best liked" (p. 487). Rosamond allows Lydgate to love her, but "this was something quite distinct from loving him" (p. 477). There are only two people who are able to make Rosamond aware of their feelings: Ladislaw and, to an extent, Dorothea. Ladislaw breaks down her barriers by his anger and rightness; she is not able to justify herself. Dorothea's selflessness and generosity afford Rosamond the opportunity to amend the damage she had done to Ladislaw; she acts not out of sympathy but in order to recover her former dream-world in which she alone is blameless. Rosamond when she talks to Dorothea "was under the first great shock that had shattered her dream-world in which she had been easily confident
of herself and critical of others; and this strange unexpected manifestation of feeling in a woman whom she had approached with a shrinking aversion and dread, as one who must necessarily have a jealous hatred towards her, made her soul totter all the more with a sense that she had been walking in an unknown world . . ." (p. 583).

Rosamond comes closest to being a villain in her effects on Lydgate; but then she can no more help what she is than Mr. Casaubon could; she has no innate sensitivity for others' feelings, and her education and home-life have demanded poise and propriety but not thoughtfulness. Lydgate's illusions about her docility and his harsh words when she frustrates him are at least partially responsible for his ultimate unhappiness.

Like his sister, Fred Vincy is egoistic and thoughtless. When he is unable to pay back the debt that Mr. Garth had signed for, he thinks only that he will "seem dishonorable, and sink in the opinion of the Garths: he had not occupied himself with the inconvenience and possible injury that his breach might occasion them, for this exercise of the imagination on other people's needs is not common with hopeful young gentlemen. Indeed we are most of us brought up in the notion that the highest motive for not doing a wrong is something irrespective of the beings who would suffer the wrong" (p. 183). By moving to the general, Eliot lessens our censure of Fred, which otherwise might be rather harsh.

Mary Garth, aside from a "streak of satiric bitterness," has a fine character: "For honesty, truth-telling fairness, was Mary's
reigning virtue: she neither tried to create illusions, nor indulged in them for her own behoof, and when she was in a good mood she had humour enough in her to laugh at herself" (p. 84). This contrasts with Rosamond, who is said to have no sense of humor. Their conversation at Featherstone's (p. 86-87) shows their other differences. Rosamond's indirectness and self-satisfaction, her indifference to her brother, contrasts with Mary's directness, her concern for Fred, and her self-knowledge. Mary is quite exasperated with Rosamond's "blamelessness." Mary's refusal to accept Fred until he makes something of himself (as well as Farebrother's generosity in "bringing up" Fred at a low moment) is responsible for his achievement. Their reward is a "solid mutual happiness" (p. 608).

Mr. Bulstrode is the final major character whose actions and temperament form part of the basic network of relations. Mr. Bulstrode is a powerful, but disliked, figure in Middlemarch. His religious views lead him to be free with his advice but not his sympathy. In the scene with his brother-in-law, Mr. Vincy gets the best of him precisely because Bulstrode insists on being morally self-righteous; Eliot remarks; "a full-fed fountain will be generous with its waters even in the rain, when they are worse than useless; and a fine fount of admonition is apt to be equally irrepressible" (p. 97). In Mr. Bulstrode's past he justified dishonest means because they were leading to worthy ends. He became involved in a fencing business which was ostensibly a pawnbroker's; he justified his business as giving him
wealth to invest in religious missions. Yet, "He was simply a man whose desires had been stronger than his theoretic beliefs, and who had gradually explained the gratification of his desires into satisfactory agreement with those beliefs: If this be hypocrisy, it is a process which shows itself occasionally in us all, to whatever confession we belong, and whether we believe in the future perfection of our race or in the nearest date fixed for the end of the world; whether we regard the earth as a putrefying nidus for a saved remnant, including ourselves, or have a passionate belief in the solidarity of mankind" (p. 453). By reminding the reader that only he who is blameless can "cast the first stone," Eliot makes us reserve judgment of Bulstrode. Even though Bulstrode wishes to murder Raffles, one cannot even be sure that he, indeed, did; Eliot remarks, "And who could say that the death of Raffles had been hastened? Who knows what would have saved him?" (p. 521). Bulstrode is guilty by desire and negligence but not by preconceived intention; nevertheless all of Middlemarch believe him guilty of premeditated murder.

In examining the way Eliot develops the major characters, one sees how she uses a blend of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations to achieve a complex, realistic portrayal. The structural "web" is primarily syntagmatic, but the paradigmatic dimension is nevertheless essential to a full comprehension of the novel's meaning. Eliot intends the reader to apply the metaphor of a closely-woven fabric to his own life: "But any one watching keenly the stealthy convergence of human lots, sees a slow preparation of effects from one life on another,
which tells like a calculated irony on the indifference or the frozen
stare with which we look at our uninvited neighbour. Destiny
stands by sarcastic with our *dramatis personae* folded in her hand*'
(p. 70). The process of fully understanding the people of *Middlemarch*
should help the reader understand his own "neighbour."

The Structure of *The Confidence-Man*

In contrast to *Middlemarch*, the structure of *The Confidence-Man*
is amazingly simple on the surface. The novel begins at sunrise and
ends at midnight on the same day; and since there is no distortion of
time, event follows event in chronological order. But Melville inter-
rupts the simple chronological time of events both through his intro-
duction of "stories" told by various characters and by two chapters
in which he comments on aesthetic questions. Moreover, the choice of
April Fool's Day, and the complexity of meanings suggested by each
event layers the structure until the depth seems endless. The linear,
or syntagmatic, structure is rather simple; the paradigmatic structure
reverberates infinitely because it depends on the reader for completion.
What is implied by Melville's structure and language is quite important
in that the reader often is not sure of Melville's stance. The under-
statements and contradictions make the reader despair of finding "the"
meaning; and the reader feels that Melville is playing a game of hide-
and-seek in which the reader never finds a straightforward authorial
view. Because of the reader's discomfort, he comes to his own conclu-
sions, forming a paradigmatic structure out of the implications and
multiple meanings.

The syntagmatic structure consists of a basic pattern which is repeated again and again. The Con-Man meets or chooses his victim, composes a routine suited to the victim, and completes his con. In order to make the "confidence" and "charity" approaches work, the Con-Man does one of two things; he either bombards the person verbally--talking so quickly they cannot have time to respond--or before he needs it, he sets up another disguise by mentioning a "friend." The first approach succeeds with the country merchant, the "good" man, the miser, the charitable lady, and eventually (in an obsequious variation) with the Missourian; the second approach catches the country merchant and the miser again.

The repetition of this pattern is uninteresting by itself; that is the reason why Geoffrey Stone could think the book "in any age must seem repetitive and dull." But most critics go beyond the syntagmatic structure to the paradigmatic, which interests us both for the varied methods of the Con-Man and also for the implications of his existence. In showing the force of evil and the impossibility of judging sometimes what is evil, Melville makes his reader consider the effects of such existence on one's concept of God and man.

To understand how the reader participates in working out the paradigmatic structure, one needs first to examine the various syntagmatic guises of the Con-Man. Black Guinea's list serves as a partial index to the Con-Man's guises:

Oh yes, oh yes, dar is abroad here a werry nice, good ge'mman with a weed and a ge'mman in a grey coat and white tie, what knows all about me; and a ge'mman wid a big book, too; and a yarb-doctor; and a ge'mman in a yaller west; and a ge'mman wid a brass plate; and a ge'mman in a wiolet robe; and a ge'mman as is a sodjer; and ever so many good, kind, honest ge'mman more aboard what knows me and will speak for me God bress em; yes, and what knows me as well as dis poor old darkie knows hisself, God bress him!

The lamb-like man in the first chapter is not mentioned, nor is the Cosmopolitan, who dominates the second part of the novel. Critics have had difficulty explaining why the list is incomplete, and some even as helpful as Elizabet Foster, make the mistake of assuming that if a character is not on the list he is not the Con-Man; this applies particularly to the lamb-like man, whose differences from the other Con-Men are puzzling. His appearance and actions suggest Christ, so that he is hard to identify as the satanic Con-Man.

H. Bruce Franklin seems to me to give the best explanation for the list's incompleteness. He suggests that Melville wants to emphasize the ubiquity of the Con-Man. The fact that the list is incomplete, the phrase "ever so many good, kind, honest ge'mman more aboard what knows me and will speak for me, God bress em," along with the joke about Black Guinea's knowing himself, tip the reader to look for con-men everywhere. Franklin convincingly argues that even the Methodist and Episcopal ministers are "shape-shifting con-men." I will not summarize


all of his argument, but the main point is that the Episcopalian minister quotes words that he could not have known since he had already left when the cripple spoke them; as for the Methodist minister, he wears a white cravat, which suggests that he, in addition to the agent for the Seminole Widow and Orphan Society, is a con-man. Both wear white ties, and Black Guines mentioned a "ge'mman" wearing a gray coat and white tie. Franklin argues that most of the items on Black Guinea's list can apply to several characters if one uses alternate meanings of the words: a "weed" can be tobacco—the cigars of Charles Noble and Frank Goodman—and also an article of clothing. As Franklin points out, Black Guinea wants us to judge con-men by their external appearances—clothes they wear or articles they carry—and roles they play—"yarb-doctor" and "sodjer."

Thus in order to read The Confidence-Man perceptively, it seems that we must begin by following the words of an avatar of the Con Man. This is one big joke. Another big joke is that all these very important and equivocal words are spoken by the Con Man in a dialect. We are thus invited to look for linguistic equivocues. Before we can guess whom these words indicate we must guess what they mean. (p. 161)

Words, their meanings and implications, are crucial to the novel's structure, for the Con-Man uses words to dupe his victims.

One first meets the Confidence-Man in the guise of the deaf-mute. In quoting from I Corinthians 13, the Con-Man gives the word Charity several meanings. Biblically, the word refers to the union of good works and love for one's fellow-men; but in Chapter I the deaf-mute uses it in a way that implies an identification between the word and himself: He seems to say "I am charity." "Charity thinketh
no evil" is a direct, personal response to the import of the placard; in effect he steps on the soap-box and indicates his disapproval. At the same time, by using words from the Bible, he cites an authority for his disbelief. The next words he writes on the slate are also a response to others' actions: when his hat gets flattened, he writes, "Charity suffereth long, and is kind," indicating that he will not take revenge for the affront; and after the crowd pushes him aside, he writes, "Charity endureth all things." Like other people, however, his actions do not always reflect his words, since he moves away as he writes these last words. A. Carl Bredahl suggests that the Con-Man indicates his future method in the way he erases most of the slate while leaving the word "charity" in place: "The words written on the right-hand portion of the slate are changed at will in order to provide different characteristics of 'charity,' an absolute which remains unchanged but never divined. Similarly, during the book the confidence man, maintaining a consistent allegiance to 'charity,' alters his appearance as well as his argument in order to extort money and confidence from his victims."10 His quotation of the attributes of charity, and identification of the word with himself, become increasingly inappropriate in the light of his subsequent actions; he does not unite "good works" with loving feelings. Also, I Corinthians 13 begins, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, I am nothing"; the Con-Man speaks with "the tongues of men and angels,"

but does not have charity, which suggests that he is "nothing." In this scene Melville is giving an overt help to the reader; he is telling how one may judge whether a character is the Con-Man. When the Con-Man talks, his words do not have a "true" meaning, but rather change meanings to meet the demands of the situation; also, the Con-Man does not follow up his words with the appropriate action. The reader realizes he must look for these attributes in subsequent disguises.

Besides charity, the other "key" word used by the Con-Man is "confidence." He first uses this word while he is disguised as Black Guinea. In his subsequent disguises he uses either "charity" or "confidence," or sometimes both, depending on which he thinks will be more convincing to his audience. For instance, he first uses "charity" on the college sophomore; after that fails, he comes back in another disguise and uses "confidence" with success.

The Con-Man for the most part uses "confidence" in the sense of complete faith or trust that neither man nor nature is evil; but while he talks about confidence, he often indirectly instills distrust. A good example occurs when he, as herb-doctor, talks to the miser; he cautions the miser that some people copy his medicine, but at the same time insists that the miser have complete faith in the medicine's ability to cure. Since there is no way for the miser to know whether he is getting the authentic product (after he uses his present supply), the miser cannot help but despair.

The Con-Man's identification of "confidence" with inability to
believe evil is conflicting and paradoxical. At times his language suggests the presence of evil while ostensibly denying it. The rattle-snake discussion is a case in point. As the Con-Man describes the rattlesnake, he seems to take on its characteristics. But he refuses, after hearing Winsome's fantasy, to admit any such wish to be a rattlesnake; the snake, besides its "latent benignity" (in which he has confidence), also has "capacity for mischief" (p. 166, my emphasis). By using "mischief" instead of "evil," the Con-Man is able to argue from both sides of his mouth.

But since the Con-Man usually bases his argument for "confidence" on the inexistence of evil, the person not under his spell of words begins to suspect it because he is not really willing to say that evil does not exist. The Con-Man uses people's desire to believe the best and their fear of being misanthropic to convince them momentarily; a case in point is the speech he gives to the Missourian:

... if I wasn't afraid of prosing, I might tell another story about an old boot in a piseman's loft, contracting there between sun and oven an unseemly, dry-seasoned curl and warp. You've seen such leathery old garrotteers, haven't you? Very high, sober, solitary, philosophic, grand, old boots, indeed; but I, for my part, would rather be the piseman's trodden slipper on the ground. Talking of pisemen, humble-pie before proud-cake for me. This notion of being lone and lofty is a sad mistake. Men I hold in this respect to be like roosters; the one that betakes himself to a lone and lofty perch is the hen-pecked one, or the one that has the pip. (p. 117)

No one after hearing this would want to admit that he had no confidence.

The same kind of argument is found in the Con-Man's speech about life as a "pic-nic en costume"; since life is a picnic, the man who is sober and serious is out of place and foolish. The Missourian is able
to object that his argument by analogy is "punning with ideas as
another man may with words" (p. 107), but he is not able to refute it.
When words do not have a single meaning, one cannot use them to prove
something true or false; the Con-Man's power derives from his changing
meanings to fit the argument's requirements.

Two characters, the wooden-legged man and the country-merchant,
suggest the differences between "charity" and truth and "confidence"
and truth. As early as the Black Guinea incident, the wooden-legged
man says "charity is one thing, and truth is another"; he continues,
"To where it belongs with your charity! to heaven with it! ... here
on earth, true charity dotes, and false charity plots. Who betrays a
fool with a kiss, the charitable knave on the stand gives charitable
testimony for his comrade in the box" (p. 11). It is significant that
the Methodist minister (who frowns upon these words, probably for their
suggestion that Christ is a fool) later loses his temper and ends up
trying to teach the wooden-legged man charity by shaking him briskly.
In that his actions do not follow his beliefs, the minister is as much
a con-man as the "real" one.

The country-merchant shows his basic good sense by distinguish-
ing between "confidence" and truth:

Ah, wine is good, and confidence is good; but can wine or
confidence percolate down through all the stony strata of
hard considerations, and drop warmly and ruddily into the
cold cave of truth? Truth will not be comforted. Led
by dear charity, lured by sweet hope, fond fancy essays this
feat; but in vain, mere dreams and ideals, they explode in
your hand, leaving naught but the scorching behind. (p. 57)

The Confidence-Man can answer the country merchant only by using
another argument by analogy: "... if the conviction of a Providence, for instance, were in any way made dependent upon such variabilities as everyday events, the degree of that conviction would, in thinking minds, be subject to fluctuations akin to those of the stock-exchange during a long and uncertain war" (p. 55). Since everyone agrees that fluctuations in the stock market are bad, the idea which would produce similar fluctuations in Providence must be bad. A little later the Con-Man cites the possible ill-effects of an idea as a reason for not believing it; one should not believe in "the doctrine of future retribution as the vindication of present impunity" because "with the perverse the polemic mention of it might but provoke the shallow, though mischievous conceit, that such a doctrine was but tantamount to the one which should affirm that Providence was not now, but was going to be" (p. 56). Thus, the Con-Man thinks the better approach is to deny "present impunity" or present evil; but at the same time he tacitly admits it through using words such as "perverse" and "mischievous." The Con-Man warns the country-merchant of too much "philosophizing" or "compassionating" because he thinks that "emotional unreserve of his natural heart" will get him into trouble. However, the authorial voice later attributes the merchant’s truth vs. confidence speech to "the queer, unaccountable caprices of his natural heart" (p. 58), thus turning around the association of "natural heart" with "compassionating"; "natural heart" now becomes too much distrust rather than too much compassion.

As can be seen by these examples, the Confidence-Man is a master
of language. The Missourian recognizes this ability when he says, "Ah, you are a talking man--what I call a wordy man. You talk, talk" (p. 108). The Con-Man answers him by saying, "And with submission, sir, what is the greatest judge, bishop or prophet, but a talking man? He talks, talks. It is the peculiar vocation of a teacher to talk. What's wisdom itself but table-talk? The best wisdom in this world, and the last spoken by its teacher, did it not literally and truly come in the form of table-talk?" (p. 108). The logic of this passage is obviously faulty; while judges, bishops, prophets, and even Jesus Christ all talked, his sharing their ability does not mean that his words are as "good" as theirs. (And the man he lists do more than talk; they also act.) The Con-Man's talking is not motivated by a desire for money but is almost purely gratuitous; he likes to talk for the sake of talking. This becomes clear when the man in gray defends Black Guinea by asking why he would go to all that trouble for the sake of a few pennies. The wooden-legged man replies, "Money, you think, is the sole motive to pains and hazard, deception and deviltry, in this world. How much money did the devil make by gulling Eve?" (p. 28). If goodness exists for its own sake, then evil exists for its own sake. The wooden-legged man is as much subject to his charges as the Con-Man; the wooden-legged man has nothing to gain from instilling distrust in the crowd, and yet he does. Melville pointedly remarks, "That cripples, above all men should be companionable, or at least refrain from picking a fellow-limper to pieces, in short, should have a little sympathy in common misfortune, seemed not to occur to
the company" (pp. 8-9).

Dividing the forty-five chapters in half, the Cosmopolitan appears at the end of Chapter 23. After his appearance none of the men on Black Guinea's list show up. The Cosmopolitan presents a real puzzle for the reader, who must decide whether he is the Con-Man or whether Charlie Noble is. As Franklin puts it, "In each of the Cosmopolitan's encounters a real question arises as to who is the greater confidence man, the apparently supernatural and possibly satanic Cosmopolitan or the mundane confidence men of this world. And there are many hints that those who confront the Cosmopolitan are the shape-shifting Confidence Man of the title. They assume not only each other's physical as well as metaphysical positions, but sometimes even each other's names" (p. 164).

Besides having to penetrate disguises in order to distinguish the Con-Man of the title from ordinary human con-men, the reader must figure out how Melville's authorial role effects the paradigmatic structure. Authorial comments are part of the syntagmatic structure, but their implications move to the paradigmatic. Melville continually comments on the events, and his comments form an undercurrent which puzzles the reader as often as it informs. In trying to figure out what Melville means, the reader adds to the paradigmatic structure. For example, in Chapter 1 Melville's choice of April Fool's Day, the name of the steamer ("Fidèle"), and the reference to the sun deity hint that this is no ordinary travelogue account. Through his allusion to infamous Mississippi criminals--the "wolves"--Melville implies that
there are now many "foxes" with which to contend. The tongue-in-cheek
tone continues throughout the chapter, especially when Melville describes
the barber's "No trust" sign in contrast to the slate held by the mute.
Simultaneously, the description of the mute characterizes him as Christ-
like and innocent:

His aspect was at once gentle and jaded, and, from the moment
of seating himself, increasing in tided abstraction and dreami-
ness. Gradually overtaken by slumber, his flaxen head drooped,
his whole lamb-like figure relaxed, and, half-reclining against
the ladder's foot, lay motionless, as some sugar-snow in March,
which softly stealing down over night, with its white placidity
startles the brown farmer peering out from his threshold at
daybreak. (p. 4)

Of course, in retrospect the reader realizes the irony of the Con-Man's
being described in this way, but the irony does not negate the earlier
view; the conflicting views exist at once.

Melville's description of the Fidèle and her passengers stresses
the multiplicity: The crowd is "a piebald parliament, an Anacharis
Cloots congress of all kinds of that multiform pilgrim species, man"
(p. 6). The choice of the word "pilgrim" recalls both Hawthorne's
"The Celestial Railroad" and Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress,\(^\text{11}\) suggesting
an allegorical level of meaning. The closing words of Chapter 2 posit
a close tie between the disparate forms of nature and those of man:
"Here reigned the dashing and all-fusing spirit of the West, whose
type is the Mississippi itself, which, uniting the streams of the
most distant and opposite zones, pours them along, helter-skelter,

\(^{11}\) John W. Shroeder, "Sources and Symbols for Melville's
in one cosmopolitan and confident tide" (p. 6, my emphasis). In retrospect, this choice of words becomes both ironic and peculiarly apt.

In two chapters Melville breaks the action and comments on aesthetic questions raised by his portrayal of the Con-Man. Chapter 14 is entitled "Worth the Consideration of Those to Whom It May Prove Worth Considering"; this paradoxical title both ostensibly excuses Melville's reflections and at the same time hints that they are too deep for some people to understand. They will "prove worth considering" if the people are able to "prove" them.

At the beginning of Chapter 13 Melville had told an incident suggesting that outward appearances do not reflect inner reality; the "grave American savan" made the mistake of assuming that the fellow who looked like a "jackanapes" was so, when in actuality he was another savan. Melville says that his telling this incident was an "anticipative reminder," or a warning to readers not to make a hasty judgment of the Confidence-Man. Chapter 14's first sentence makes a quasi-aesthetic judgment: since he began the previous chapter with an incident "looking forwards, so the present must consist of one glancing backwards" (p. 58). This statement is intended to elicit conflicting responses on the part of the reader; he both thinks that Melville is talking nonsense, reasoning in a circular fashion, but on another level he sees the appropriateness of the statement. The action of the book involves a back-and-forth revolution in a circle, so that in this sense, Melville's statement directly tells one what he is about. (At the risk of seeming obvious, turning around to look "backward" involves a 180
degree change in position; if one then looks forward again, he completes a circle.)

The argument in Chapter 14 is complex. First, Melville states that readers dislike inconsistency in fictional characters; he thinks that this is not reasonable because characters in life (whom art is supposed to represent) are not consistent: "... fiction based on fact should never be contradictory to it; and is it not a fact, that, in real life, a consistent character is a rara avis?" (p. 58). To expect to be able to understand characters in a fiction when even "the acutest sage" has trouble understanding character in life is not reasonable; thus, he argues that "the author who draws a character, even though to common view incongruous in its parts, as the flying-squirrel, and, at different periods, as much at variance with itself as the butterfly is with the caterpillar into which it changes, may yet, in so doing, be not false but faithful to facts" (p. 58). The argument therefore is "as in Nature, so in Art": Nature produces the duck-billed beaver; therefore, the artist should produce characters whose consistency is not apparent. The problem is in distinguishing between "the inconsistencies of conception and those of life" (p. 59); lesser authors have inconsistencies of the former kind while good authors, the latter. Melville comes closest to a "straight," non-involved statement when he says: "Upon the whole, it might be thought, that he, who, in view of its inconsistencies, says of human nature the same that, in view of its contrasts, is said of the divine nature, that it is past finding out, thereby evinces a better appreciation of it
than he who, by always representing it in a clear light, leaves it
to be inferred that he clearly knows all about it" (p. 59). Melville
ironically comments on those "great masters" who "challenge astonish-
ment at the tangled web of some character, and then raise admiration
still greater at their satisfactory unraveling of it; in this way
throwing open, sometimes to the understanding even of school misses,
the last complications of that spirit which is affirmed by its Creator
to be fearfully and wonderfully made" (p. 59). Melville uses the
conditional tense to suggest ironic meaning or, seen from another
standpoint, to suggest that he is undecided about these aesthetic
matters; an example is "... it may prove suggestive, that all those
sallies of ingenuity, having for their end the revelation of human
nature on fixed principles, have, by the best judges, been excluded
with contempt from the ranks of the sciences—palmistry, physiognomy,
phrenology, psychology" (p. 59). To cite another example, he says
that conflicting theories of the nature of man "would ... seem some
presumption of a pretty general and pretty thorough ignorance of it"
(pp. 59-60). Melville makes the point that young readers of the works
of those "great masters" still "run risk of being too often at fault
upon actually entering the world"; if the "great masters" had given
them a "true delineation" then they should have had no trouble in
understanding human nature.

Paradoxically, Melville argues that "the grand points of human
nature are the same today they were a thousand years ago" (p. 60), but
at the same time implies that psychologists are wasting their time when
they "still cherish expectations with regard to some mode of infal-
libly discovering the heart of man" (p. 60). This apparent conflict
in his argument is continued in Chapter 14; at the end of Chapter 14
he merely stops the argument, leaving the reader in much confusion,
and says that he has apologized enough for any inconsistencies in his
characters; he ends with a joke: "so nothing remains but to turn to
our comedy, or, rather, to pass from the comedy of thought to that of
action" (p. 60). In other words, he says that his whole argument up
to this point has been a "comedy"; he will not "get serious" by return-
ing to the action but will rather continue the joke through the action.

Chapter 33 has the same kind of disclaimer for a title that
Chapter 14 had: "Which May Pass for Whatever It May Prove to Be Worth"
(p. 157). "May Prove" suggests that it will not necessarily do so;
"Pass" sounds vaguely suggestive of counterfeit currency.

Melville hypothetically answers the critic who exclaims: "How
unreal all this is! Who did ever dress or act like your cosmopolitan?"
(p. 157). Unlike his argument in Chapter 11, Melville now refuses to
recognize the validity of applying life's standards to art; the two
things are completely separate, as shown by the fact that the reader in
turning to fiction drops real life and attends to "something different":
"Yes, it is, indeed, strange that any one should clamour for the thing
he is weary of; that any one, who, for any cause, finds real life dull,
should yet demand of him who is to divert his attention from it, that
he should be true to that dullness" (p. 157). Of course, in arguing
this, Melville ignores the possibility that one who enjoys life still
might turn to art for the same kind of enjoyment. Melville then describes the ideal reader:

There is another class, and with this class we side, who sit down to a work of amusement tolerantly as they sit at a play, and with much the same expectations and feelings ... And as, in real life, the proprieties will not allow people to act out themselves with that unreserve permitted to the stage; so, in books of fictions, they look not only for more entertainment, but, at bottom, even for more reality, than real life itself can show. Thus, though they want novelty, they want nature, too; but nature unfettered, exhilarated, in effect transformed ... . It is with fiction as with religion: it should present another world, and yet one to which we feel the tie. (p. 157-58)

In light of his earlier metaphor of life-as-theater, the passage has conflicting resonances. If life is a play in some sense, then one would not approach it any differently than one does the work of art; one's expectations and feelings would not differ. His reasoning is paradoxical: He says that since life equals appearances, one wants art to equal reality, but then "reality" is actually appearances taken to their highest power: for "indulgent lovers of entertainment . . . harlequin can never appear in a coat too parti-colored, or cut capers too fantastic" (p. 158). One cannot be sure that Melville is comfortable with his argument; he ends the chapter by appealing to the reader's sympathies. He refers those readers who detect inconsistency back to Chapter 14, and does so because "to rest, though but under an imaginary censure applied to but a work of imagination, is no easy thing" (p. 158). Of course, since the earlier chapter does not decide anything, his referral of the reader is a bit ironic; one feels that Melville is playing games.

Besides dealing with an author who does not reveal his stance,
the reader must make sense of the "stories" incorporated within The Confidence-Man. These stories break the syntagmatic progression on one level, but through their paradigmatic dimension they supplement the syntagmatic relations. There are five of these stories: (1) the unsuspecting husband, (2) Goneril, (3) Colonel Moredock, (4) China Aster, and (5) Charlemont. In addition, there is one overt role-play involving "Charlie" (Egbert) and Frank (the Cosmopolitan); this role-play frames the China Aster story. It seems as though the characters feel the need to create stories or act out a drama to explain their behavior, to make sense of their situation. The fictions mirror the "facts" in curious ways; and even though the person telling the story thinks that it illustrates only one point, the reader sees more than one.

The first story is told by the wooden-legged man; the young clergyman happens to use the words "I began to suspect," which reminds the wooden-legged man of his story's punch line. Although the latter says that he is not laughing at the young clergyman, the story suggests the opposite: The cuckold begins to "suspect" (sic) only after he has received undeniable proof. Like the cuckold, the clergyman is foolish in having too much confidence. Melville mentions that he does not tell the story in the wooden-legged man's words: "Whereupon, in his porcupine way, and with sarcastic details, unpleasant to repeat, he related a story, which might, perhaps, in a good-natured version, be rendered as follows" (p. 26, my emphasis). This calls attention to the story's being a story and also to Melville's presence as author;
it hints that this story would have offended the reader in its original version, which lessens further any identification with the wooden-legged man.

Similarly, Melville calls attention to the fact that the story of Goneril and the Unfortunate Man is not given in the country merchant’s words: "But as the good merchant could, perhaps, do better justice to the man than the story, we shall venture to tell it in other words than his, though not to any other effect" (p. 50). Thus, the reader is at another remove from the story as told by the Confidence-Man in the first place; the Con-Man (in the disguise of the man with the weed) told the story to the country merchant, who tells it back to the Con-Man (as transfer agent), and then Melville tells the reader the story. One cannot know whether it is closer to the version told by the country merchant or that of the Con-Man. The irony increases when the Con-Man in his present disguise rejects the conclusions drawn by the country merchant. While the chapter’s title claims that one may gather from this story whether or not the "unfortunate" man was indeed "unfortunate," one’s decision must certainly remain conditional. If the story were true, the man would be unfortunate; but it is not—the "unfortunate man" does not even exist. On the other hand, using the Con-Man’s logic, the story cannot be "true" because it is one-sided; it does not give Goneril’s viewpoint. But then the way the story was told makes one sympathetic to the man and unsympathetic to Goneril; one does not want to accept the Con-Man’s apparently reasonable view, especially after he develops his argument in terms of the "bad" effects
philosophically of accepting the story. Moreover, in the world of the
Con-Man, words are all-important, and one does not accept Melville's
saying that he does not change the "effect" by using different words
to tell the story. By the end of the story, the reader is at a complete
loss as to what to make of it.

Several critics (Shroeder, Foster, and Pearce, among others)
have called the third story on Indian-hating and Colonel Moredock
crucial to the meaning of The Confidence-Man. Melville again has the
person telling the tale use another person's words; Charlie Noble "can
render you the judge upon the colonel almost word for word" (p. 123).
The fact that Charlie misunderstands the Con-Man's question about the
judge's "school" of philosophy shows that Charlie is not very alert
to different meanings of the same word; this suggests the possibility
that he is not telling James Hall's story "word for word," besides
pointing to his intellectual weakness. The story indeed does not
resemble James Hall's account, as Elisabeth Foster documents.12 Charlie
Noble's version improves it stylistically and at the same time makes
its tone more negative toward the Indians. The reader tends to identify
with the Con-Man, who thinks the Indians unjustly condemned. Yet the
Con-Man argues for consistency in character, which tips the reader that
the Con-Man's views are equally irrational as Charlie Noble's: "If
the man of hate, how could John Moredock be also the man of love?
Either his lone campaigns are fabulous as Hercules'; or else, those
being true, what was thrown in about his geniality is but garnish.

12 She quotes parallel passages from Hall in her edition of The
short, if ever there was such a man as Moredock, he, in my way of thinking, was either misanthrope or nothing; and his misanthropy the more intense from being focused on one race of men" (p. 136). Melville's title for this chapter shows what he had in mind: "Moot Points Touching the Late Colonel John Moredock"; he wants the reader to be unable to make up his mind.

The Confidence-Man (as Cosmopolitan) tells the next story himself; his story is about Charlemont, the "gentleman-madman." The story's plot reflects uncomfortably for Charlie Noble what has just happened; the Con-Man has momentarily unmasked Charlie so that he revealed his greedy self under the charitable role. According to the Con-Man, one should attribute madness to Charlemont's fear of being betrayed by his friends after his financial ruin. Melville ironically entitles the following chapter "In which the Cosmopolitan Strikingly Evinces the Artlessness of His Nature"; actually, the Cosmopolitan asks Charlie, "Would you, for one, turn the cold shoulder to a friend—a convivial one, say, whose penuriousness should be suddenly revealed to you?" (pp. 160-61). The question, pointing as it does to Charlie's recent denial of his "friend," naturally makes him quite uncomfortable; he leaves without much further conversation. That Melville uses "artlessness" to describe the Con-Man's nature resonates in several ways. Does he mean to oppose nature and art, so that the Con-Man is "natural?" If so, does this imply that he is more "real" (lacking art) or less real (because art is "more real" than nature)? Also, "artless" usually has the connotation "without prior design, or intention"; this
would be an ironic word to describe the Con-Man, who is most artful in his conversation.

The last story and its surrounding dialogue are the most elaborate in form and complex in meaning. The Con-Man suggests to Egbert that they each adopt roles to show how the latter would act in a practical, "real" case. He tells him that he will call him Charlie, and Egbert is to call the Cosmopolitan Frank. Naturally, this recalls the earlier incident concerning Charlie Noble and Frank Goodman; while Egbert is adopting a new role, the Cosmopolitan is still playing the earlier one. The difference—that the two are supposed to have been friends from childhood—should make it easier for this Charlie to have confidence than it had been for Charlie Noble. After Frank tries without success to make Charlie give him money, Charlie tells the story of China Aster to illustrate why he never loans money to a friend.

But Charlie cannot tell the story in his own words:

I wish I could do so in my own words, but unhappily the original story-teller here has so tyrannized over me, that it is quite impossible for me to repeat his incidents without sliding into his style. I forewarn you of this, that you may not think me so maudlin as, in some parts, the story would seem to make its narrator. It is too bad that any intellect, especially in so small a matter, should have such power to impose itself upon another, against its best exerted will, too. However, it is satisfaction to know that the main moral, to which all tends, I fully approve. (p. 177)

Melville suggests that the story—as work of art—has an autonomy which cannot be violated even by those unsympathetic to its style or those who choose to interpret it in the opposite way. Language, as structuring principle, cannot be changed, even when the psychological perspective
of the person telling the story changes. Certainly Charlie would not
give characters of a story he created the names "China Aster" and
"Orchis" and "Old Plain Talk, Old Prudence, and Old Conscience." Such
names imply an allegory, an art not likely to be used by the practical
man.

The following Chapter \( \text{II} \) ends the dialogue in a strange mingling
of reality and art. In this situation the Cosmopolitan partially comes
out looking like the "good" man; he talks of being human and of not
having "a head kept cool by the under ice of the heart" (p. 192). But
when one feels sympathy for Frank, Melville reminds him of a crucial
fact:

\[
\text{All the world's a stage,}
\text{And all the men and women merely players,}
\text{Who have their exits and their entrances,}
\text{And one man in his time plays many parts.}
\quad (p. 192)
\]

As the wooden-legged man noted earlier, "to do, is to act" (p. 27);
Frank's strong words in favor of being human reflect another role, not
some deep psychological reality. Thus, as one starts to react to the
Cosmopolitan as though he were real, one remembers that the Cosmopolitan
is also the Con-Man, and that the Missourian accused him of being
Diogenes in disguise. By saying that Charlie was "at a loss to deter-
mine where exactly the fictitious character had been dropped, and the
real one, if any, resumed" (p. 192, my emphasis), Melville reminds the
reader that the Con-Man is a character in a fiction whose words operate
as a symbol; their meaning derives from a complex and paradoxical con-
text. Who the Con-Man "is" changes in the process of the fiction; a
total meaning, if possible, must include all the attributes acquired.

Melville calls attention to the impossibility of a single reality in his titles for the last three chapters. Chapter 43's title is "Very Charming"; to give only two of the possible meanings of this phrase, it suggests the Con-Man's supernatural ability to hypnotize as well as referring to his manner, which is "charming" in the usual sense. Chapter 44 has the title "In Which the Last Three Words of the Last Chapter Are Made the Text of the Discourse, Which Will Be Sure of Receiving More or Less Attention from Those Readers Who Do Not Skip It." The last three words, "Quite an Original," refer to the Con-Man; they obliquely remind the reader of the placard in the first chapter which described an imposter who was "quite an original genius in his vocation" (p. 1). The chapter itself discusses originality of characters in fiction:

... the original character ... is like a revolving Drummond light, raying away from itself all round it--everything is lit by it, everything starts up to it (mark how it is with Hamlet), so that, in certain minds, there follows upon the adequate conception of such a character, an effect, in its way, akin to that which in Genesis attends upon the beginning of things. (p. 205)

Melville says that he is trying to prove the "impropriety of the phrase, Quite an Original, as applied by the barber's friends"; but he is disproving its applicability to the Con-Man only in that sense. His "definition" of what the phrase means applies quite well to the Confidence-Man as a character in a fiction. In a way he admits this by entitling the final chapter "The Cosmopolitan Increases in Seriousness"; as a result of the discussion on originality, the Confidence-Man has
received still another meaning, which thus has increased his "serious-
ness." Also, by pointing out that readers have the choice of skipping
a chapter (as well as the choice of paying "more or less attention"),
Melville hints that the "meaning" of this book must be constructed by
the reader in the very process of reading. It is not apparent or unam-
biguous, but is as multiple as the rays of the Drummond light.

Although The Confidence-Man was written in the nineteenth-century,
its structure resembles the twentieth-century's use of structure in that
it is more paradigmatic than syntagmatic. It demands the reader's par-
ticipation in a search for meaning. However, Melville seems uncomfortable
with the lack of true meanings; he works through understatement and nega-
tion, through unreliable narrators and characters. That the Com-Man
is satanic and supernatural shows an uneasiness with the idea that
true meanings are not to be found. For example, Melville shows that
Christianity does not offer a true meaning, but he also seems to say
that that lack of truth is tragic. The darkness, the bitterness, and
the confusion show Melville's ties to the nineteenth-century.

The Structure of Absalom, Absalom!

Without a doubt Absalom, Absalom! is a novel which calls attention
to its lack of traditional structural elements. The narrators are not
developed directly; one has little information about their personality
and feelings, and there are only two active events in the "present":
Quentin's going with Rosa Coldfield to the Sutpen mansion, and Shreve
and Quentin's conversation in their room at Harvard. Time does not
proceed in an orderly manner, but rather past, present, and future merge and interact. History, both present and past, takes on a complex meaning that can be understood only within the novel's context. Language operates strangely; words and phrases are repeated in new contexts, and meanings are inviolate and multiple.

In a sense it is precisely the lack of these traditional structural elements which determines Absalom, Absalom!'s structure; the reader feels compelled to create his own chronology, his own sense of scene--of what Sutpen's South was and Quentin's South is. Because Faulkner declines to order thoughts, time, or scene in a consecutive pattern, he asks the reader to create both the paradigmatic and syntagmatic structures in the process of reading the novel.

Many critics have seen the structure of Absalom as converging toward Sutpen, who provides the structural center. While this may be true for the first half of the book, it does not explain the shift in interest to Quentin and Shreve in the latter part. Certainly one wants to know the true Sutpen story in his first reading, and Absalom has a great deal of suspense. But Faulkner structures the novel so that the reader is never sure that he knows Sutpen's true story, and his interest is as much on Quentin and Shreve's search for understanding as it is on the Sutpen story itself.

Michael Millgate suggests:

One way of looking at the book's structure is to think of it as organised about a number of crucial moments of recognition, truth, disillusion . . . each moment presented in a kind of tableau arrested at a particular point of time and held in suspension while it is looked at, approached from all sides, inspected as if it were itself an artifact . . . . The main business of the
book then becomes the interpretation of these moments, the attempt to explain and make sense of them. Each moment is evoked again and again, and at each recurrence we seem to learn a little more about it and even to be moving towards a final clarification. Again and again, however, Faulkner stops us short of elucidation, constantly reinforcing in this way a suspense which, throughout the book, is created not so much by the withholding of narrative facts—almost all of these, indeed, are supplied in the opening chapter—as by the continual frustration of our desire to complete the pattern of motivation, of cause and effect. The movement of the book becomes almost wave-like—surging forward, falling back and then surging forward again—and it is notable that most of the chapters, including the last, end on such moments of checked resolution.

I have quoted this passage at length because it says in different words what I shall contend—that Faulkner develops the paradigmatic structure to the almost total eclipse of the syntagmatic within the récit.

Quentin and Shreve's storymaking forms the major component of the paradigmatic structure. They are interested in the paradigmatic aspect of Sutpen's story, the causes, the how and why of Sutpen's denial of Bon, of Henry's shooting Bon, of the other "crucial moments of recognition, truth, disillusion." Initially the reader wants to know the facts of Sutpen's life; but as each narrator tells Sutpen's story in a different version, the reader realizes that the facts are ultimately unknowable. As a result he shifts his interest to what Shreve and Quentin are creating "out of the rag-tag and bob-ends of old tales and talking." As Millgate puts it, "By the end of the book the importance of arriving at a satisfactory interpretation of the Sutpen story is at

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least equalled by the importance of seeing the significance which this solution will carry for Quentin himself, the extent to which it will relax or tighten the rack on which he is stretched, the particular twist it will give to the knife" (p. 153). Quentin and Shreve, indeed, Rosa and Mr. Compson, are performing an essentially literary task in their construction of the Sutpen story. This raises several questions about technique (among them the theory of genre), adding still another level to the paradigmatic structure. Moreover, one might say that the syntagmatic variations of the narrators become part of the paradigmatic structure in that the differences between Rosa's story, Mr. Compson's story, and Quentin and Shreve's story form a system of alternative meanings analogous to synonyms and antonyms in a language-system.

The syntagmatic structure emerges in the histoire, which the reader must construct for himself. This includes the reader's attempt to order events chronologically so that he knows their sequence as well as the similarities between the narrators' stories, the instances in which they agree. However, the syntagmatic structure is finally denied completion because one does not know at the novel's end what Quentin will do with his realization that he can have no peace—"Nevermore of peace. Nevermore of peace. Nevermore Nevermore Nevermore" (p. 373).

Because the differences between paradigmatic and syntagmatic structure are most apparent in time shifts and narrative voice shifts, I will focus on temporal and narrative changes by studying each chapter consecutively. While a consecutive approach carries the risk of seeming
to summarize, it is less confusing than other approaches in this case because the récit’s structure varies so much from the histoire’s.

Chapter One is the easiest chapter to follow. Narrators are clearly designated both directly—"Quentin thought"—and indirectly through italicization or dialogue. The "authorial" voice sets the scene in the first seven pages, interrupted by Quentin’s thoughts and Miss Coldfield’s explanatory remarks. Although the narration is presumed to be authorial, the perspective—the "eye-seeing"—is Quentin’s. The third-person narrator describes the scene in terms of its effects on him: "... until at last listening would renegade and hearing-sense self-confound and the long-dead object of her impotent yet indomitable frustration would appear as though by outraged recapitulation evoked, quiet inattentive and harmless, out of the hiding and dreamy and victorious dust" (pp. 7-8). Rosa’s voice "vanishes" and like magic Quentin sees Sutpen, although one does not yet know it is he. Quentin seems to watch Sutpen "abrupt" 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 olden-time Be Light" (p. 9). Then Quentin’s hearing reconciles and he seems to hear two voices of his self "talking to one another in the long silence of not-people, in not-language." Thus, in the first chapter surfaces Quentin’s inner conflict between "the Quentin Compson preparing for Harvard in the South" and the "Quentin Compson who was still too young to deserve yet to be a ghost, but nevertheless having to be one
for all that."

Rosa's story proper begins on page fourteen and continues to the end of the chapter. Quentin interrupts it only to answer her rhetorical questions with "No'me" and "Yessum." Two "authorial" comments interrupt Rosa's narrative to describe Quentin's perception of Rosa and his feeling of the unreality of time:

It should have been later than it was; it should have been late, yet the yellow slashes of mote-palpitant sunlight were latticed no higher up the impalpable wall of gloom which separated them; the sun seemed hardly to have moved. It (the talking, the telling) seemed (to him, to Quentin) to partake of that logic-and-reason-flooting quality of a dream which the sleeper knows must have occurred, still-born and complete, in a second, yet the very quality upon which it must depend to move the dreamer (verisimilitude) to credulity—horror or pleasure or amazement—depends as completely upon a formal recognition of and acceptance of elapsed and yet-elapsing time as music or a printed tale. (p. 22)

This recalls the opening authorial description, which stresses the timeless quality of the scene—the blinds have been "all closed and fastened for forty-three summers," and Miss Coldfield is wearing "the eternal black which she had worn for forty-three years now." Because nothing changes, past and present are meaningless.

"Future" events can be as much a part of the reader's present as past events; on pages twelve and thirteen, the third-person narrator breaks into Rosa's narrative to discuss Quentin's conversation with his father after his meeting with her. Although the reader can figure out the chronological time of the events in the chapter, he still does not know two crucial facts he needs to understand Miss Coldfield: why she chose Quentin, revealed at the end of Chapter Five, and what is hidden in the Sutpen house, revealed in the last chapter.
The first paragraph of Chapter II merges times; it begins, "It was a summer of wisteria" (p. 31). This recalls the opening description about the "twice-bloomed wisteria" and projects into the future when Mr. Compson's letter seems to Quentin to "carry up from Mississippi and over the long iron New England snow and into Quentin's sitting room at Harvard" (p. 31) the scent of wisteria. The phrase is repeated again in Chapter V (p. 143) by Rosa Coldfield to characterize a particular summer when she was fourteen; thus, this phrase merges Rosa's far-gone past and Quentin's more recent past with the "future," which in turn is the main "present" of the novel.

Further in the first paragraph the stress on the similarities of the two scenes, the repetition of the words "same" and "Sunday," merges Quentin's time with Sutpen's time:

It was a day of listening too--the listening, the hearing in 1909 mostly about that which he already knew, since he had been born in and breathed the same air in which the church bells had rung on that Sunday morning in 1833 and, on Sundays, heard even one of the original three bells in the same steeple where descendants of the same pigeons strutted and crooned or wheeled in short courses resembling soft fluid paint-smears on the soft summer sky. That Sunday morning in June . . . . (p. 31)

The repetition of "summer of wisteria" and the merger of Quentin's time with Sutpen's provide a paradigmatic supra-structure which rearranges the diachrony of each character's personal history.

Even the narrative voices of Chapter II add to the effect of continuity. The third-person narrator's voice tells the first half of the chapter, then merges smoothly with Mr. Compson on page 143. The time does not change; Mr. Compson picks up Sutpen's story where the
"authorial" voice drops it. If it were not for the quotation marks and the "Mr. Compson told Quentin," one would not recognize any change.

The first sentence of Chapter III--"If he threw Miss Rosa over, I wouldn't think she would want to tell anybody about it Quentin said"--mystifies the reader, who cannot imagine any man getting close enough to Miss Rosa to "throw her over." When one finds out on the same page that it is Sutpen to whom Rosa is engaged, one is really amazed. Chapter III, narrated entirely by Mr. Compson, tells Rosa's and Ellen's story; it begins to develop the Judith-Bon-Henry story. Mr. Compson points out that Rosa never really knew Sutpen until he returned home from the war, and by that time her view of him was so prejudiced that she could not then be objective: "And what she saw then was just that ogre-face of her childhood seen once and then repeated at intervals and on occasions which she could neither count nor recall, like the mask in Greek tragedy, interchangeable not only from scene to scene, but from actor to actor and behind which the events and occasions took place without chronology or sequence, leaving her actually incapable of saying how many separate times she had seen him for the reason that, waking or sleeping, the aunt had taught her to see nothing else" (p. 62). From Mr. Compson's account and from supporting "authorial" comments, one sees that Miss Rosa's view of Sutpen as "fiend blackguard and devil" (p. 15) is the structural principle which organizes her account; she uses a kind of demonology.

As the wisteria image does for time, Mr. Compson's metaphor of Ellen as a butterfly creates a paradigmatic pattern which operates
beyond the syntagmatic relations. One might compare the effect to
that of the epithet in epic; the repetition of the characterizing phrase
at the same time elevates Ellen to heroic stature and separates her
from normal human feelings and actions. A butterfly is beautiful but
non-human, and Ellen suffers by implication from the same deficiency.

Like the epithet, the butterfly metaphor is essentially static;
but, unlike the epithet, its organic nature provides for change through
the analogy of metamorphosis and finally death. Mr. Compson first
speaks of Ellen as one who "rose like the swamp-hatched butterfly,
unimpeded by weight of stomach and all the heavy organs of suffering
and experience, into a perennial bright vacuum of arrested sun" (pp.
69-70). She has escaped into "a world of pure illusion" (p. 69); the
metamorphosis brought her into "the absolute halcyon of her butterfly's
summer" (p. 74). But this summer ends: "Ellen, the butterfly, from
beneath whom without warning the very sunburned air had been withdrawn,
leaving her now with the plump hands folded on the coverlet in the
darkened room and the eyes above them probably not even suffering but
merely filled with baffled incomprehension" (p. 80). Finally, the
butterfly dies: "Ellen was dead two years now--the butterfly, the
moth caught in a gale and blown against a wall and clinging there
beating feebly, not with any particular stubborn clinging to life,
not in particular pain since it was too light to have struck hard,
nor even with very much remembrance of the bright vacuum before the
gale--" (p. 85). Ellen dies as the butterfly dies, by dissolving:
"the area of wing and body decreasing a little, the pattern of the
spots drawing a little closer together, but with no wrinkle to show" (p. 85). Rather than choosing a variety of metaphors or telling a great number of incidents in which Ellen acts, Mr. Compson chooses the one metaphor and extends it to its limits. He even continues to use it in Chapter IV (p. 126).

Chapter IV begins with a reminder of Quentin's journey: one knows from the first chapter that Rosa "dismissed him at last with his promise to return for her in the buggy" (p. 12) and from Chapter II that Quentin and his father are talking "until it would be time for Quentin to start" (p. 31); but one will not know until the end of Chapter V where and why he is going with Miss Coldfield. The "authorial" voice of the first paragraph is again written from the standpoint of Quentin's perception. However, Mr. Compson narrates the remainder of the chapter, with the exception of Bon's letter and Quentin's "vision."

Mr. Compson's narration becomes more obviously conjectural, and more strongly suggestive of Greek tragedy. He suggests an almost incestuous love between Henry and Judith and hints of a homosexual love between Henry and Bon (i.e., in saying that Bon "seduces" them both). Because he cannot explain why Sutpen forbade Judith's marriage to Bon and why Henry shot him, Mr. Compson develops the idea of an elaborate

15 Since many critics have developed and supported the idea that Mr. Compson uses Greek tragedy as a "genre," I have not included supporting passages. See the chapter on Absalom in Cleath Brooks, William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country (New Haven and London, 1963); in Olga W. Vickery, The Novels of William Faulkner (Louisiana State Press, 1964); and in David L. Hinter, The Interpreted Design as a Structural Principle in American Prose (New Haven and London, 1969).
moral dilemma faced by Henry when he finds out about Bon's octofoon "wife." But he realizes that his story really does not explain the facts:

It's just incredible. It just does not explain. Or perhaps that's it: they don't explain and we are not supposed to know. We have a few old mouth-to-mouth tales; we exhume from old trunks and boxes and drawers letters without salutation or signature, in which men and women who once lived and breathed are now merely initials or nicknames out of some now incomprehensible affection which sounds to us like Sanskrit or Choctaw; . . . you bring them together in the proportions called for, but nothing happens; you re-read, tedious and intent, poring, making sure that you have forgotten nothing, made no miscalculation; you bring them together again and again nothing happens: just the words, the symbols, the shapes themselves, shadowy inscrutable and serene, against that turgid background of a horrible and bloody mischancing of human affairs. (100-101)

Yet Mr. Compson does not let his doubts keep him from continuing the story. He "quotes" what Judith told his mother when she brought the letter from Bon; of course, one realizes that this could not be a direct quote, but one accepts it as such in the context. Judith's speech has implications for meaning in the novel. She opposes "it can't matter" to "it must matter":

You get born and you try this and you don't know why only you keep on trying it and you are born at the same time with a lot of other people, all mixed up with them, like trying to, having to, move your arms and legs with strings only the same strings are hitched to all the other arms and legs and the others all trying . . .; and it can't matter, you know that . . . and yet it must matter because you keep on trying or having to keep on trying and then all of a sudden it's all over and all you have left is a block of stone with scratches on it . . . And so maybe if you could go to someone, the stranger the better, and give them something—-a scrap of paper—-something, anything, it not to mean anything in itself and them not even to read it or keep it, not even bother to throw it away or destroy it, at least it would be something just because it would have happened . . . something that might make a mark on something that
He is determined to extract something out of their situation as he was alive then (p. 131). He is analogous to Judith's "it can't but it must". His saying that "what will be one thing, and now it is not because it is dead... what is something else again because it was not even saying that...". It is obvious that the empty stomach extracts the ultimate essence out of laughing just as the empty store of alcohol.--p. 130 and "in" with which he can write the letter.

Recognizing the possibility that one will receive very little. In the case of the empty store of polish, all he got was a good laugh (only when you recognize the possibility to extract whatever is possible from a situation while portraying the limits of non-meaning.

Judith's paradoxical acceptance is further developed through her father's right, I will never see him again; if wrong he will come or send for me; if happy I can be will, if suffer I must I can't (p. 121). Her approach is parallel to Bonis. His description of the father's imagined of her pride: "I love, I will accept no substitute, something has happened between him and my father's if my father was right, I will never see him again; if wrong he will come..."

Judith had learned what her father never knew because of his "immense" that one cannot make one's life fit a "design" and that meaning derives from the possibility of not-meaning. Applied to Faulkner's "design" of the novel, this speech points out an inherent paradox. One can skirt the border of meaning precisely by finding and...
able to extract something out of the capture of the stove polish.

After Quentin finishes reading Bon's letter, he again hears his father's voice (he had stopped "listening" although it seemed as though he could hear "without having to listen"). Quentin "sees" a vision of Henry's and Bon's confrontation at the gates, and the chapter ends by finishing what Wash Jones "started" to say at the end of Chapter III: "Air you Rosie Coldfield? Then you better come on out yon. Henry has done shot that durn French feller. Kilt him dead as a beef" (p. 133). The two chapters' ending on the same note suggests a basic structural pattern; the repetition is not quite circular but perhaps spiral, because important information is added for the reader each time the story is repeated. But in addition to the shock value for the reader, Faulkner is trying to reinforce the "neverendingness" of the story for Quentin; "peopled with garrulous outraged baffled ghosts," he has to listen to the parroting of "two separate Quentins now talking to one another in the long silence of notpeople, in notlanguage . . . ." (p. 9).

With the exception of the last page, Chapter V consists of Rosa's narration, which, one assumes, took place at the same time as Chapter I. Since the "summer of wisteria" passage shows the complexity of perception and time, I shall quote it in full:

Once there was—Do you mark how the wisteria, sun-impacted on this wall here, distills and penetrates this room as though (light-impeded) by secret and attritive progress from mote to mote of obscurity's myriad components? That is the substance of remembering—sense, sight, smell; the muscles with which we see and hear and feel—not mind, not thought: there is no such thing as memory: the brain recalls just what the muscles grope for: no more, no less: and its resultant sum is usually incorrect and false and worthy only of the name of dream . . . . Ay,
grief goes, fades; we know that—but ask the tear ducts if they have forgotten how to weep.—Once there was (they cannot have told you this either) a summer of wisteria. It was a pervading everywhere of wisteria. (I was fourteen then) as though of all springs yet to capitulate condensed into one spring, one summer: the spring and summertime which is every female's who breathed above dust, beholden of all betrayed springs held over from all irrevocable time, repercussed, bloomed again. (pp. 143–144)

The description of scene becomes a symbol for almost physical, rather than mental, perception; it suggests a resulting inability to remember completely, for the muscles' groping will produce only part of what happened. Moreover, while the phrase "summer of wisteria" is symbolic of all females' youth, it is also something more, a something that includes Quentin's perception of an afternoon spent listening to Rosa and, later, an evocation of the South itself.

At the end of Chapter V Quentin stops listening to Rosa as he had stopped listening to his father. He "sees" Henry and Judith's confrontation after Henry has killed Ben. He stops listening because "he too could not pass" the door which Rosa had not been able to pass; one who has read The Sound and the Fury suspects that the reason he cannot "pass" is his own quasi-incestuous love for his sister Caddie. He sees Henry's act as the brother killing a rival. Quentin's "vision," however, is interrupted; he again hears Miss Coldfield and realizes that she is telling him something new—that something is "hidden in the Sutpen house.

The opening of Chapter VI is a complete break in time and place; one can see Chapters VI through IX as the second half of the novel. The scene is Quentin and Shreve's sitting room at Harvard, the time
four months after Quentin's conversation with Rosa Coldfield. One finds out from Mr. Compson's letter that Rosa had died; the letter brings "with it that very September evening itself" so that Quentin again has to "listen" to the story.

In Chapters VI through VIII the question of who is narrating the story becomes increasingly problematic. In Chapter VI, just to cite one chapter, the scene at Harvard including part of Mr. Compson's letter, both narrated by the authorial voice, becomes Quentin's journey with Rosa; which merges with Sutpen's life after the war told by Shreve and Quentin and his death told by the "authorial" voice; which is followed by an "authorial" account of a hunting expedition in which Mr. Compson told Quentin about Sutpen's early life and life in the West Indies (which Sutpen told General Compson on two different occasions); which becomes the story of Judith's life after her father's death (and the life of Charles Etienne Saint-Valery Bon), narrated by Mr. Compson, General Compson, Quentin, and Shreve. One can usually distinguish the narrators if one goes back and examines the text closely, but at times it is almost impossible to determine (or just remember) who is speaking or thinking. Quentin at one point thinks of Shreve, "He sounds just like father . . . Just exactly like father if father had known as much about it the night before I went out there as he did the day I came back" (p. 181). The fact that different narrators sound the same suggests that they are interchangeable; the question of who is narrating and how he got his information becomes not important.

Chapter VII is equally as complex as Chapter VI. Quentin narrates
the first part of the chapter but includes much information about Sutpen's early life told to him by his grandfather. His account is interrupted several times by Shreve, and by a long quote from Mr. Compson (p. 278-80). Shreve tries to stop Quentin at one point and later succeeds momentarily after he says, "you wait. Let me play a while now" (p. 280); but Quentin refuses to let him "play": "There was no harm intended by Shreve and no harm taken, since Quentin did not even stop. He did not even falter, taking Shreve up in stride without comma or colon or paragraph" (p. 280). Quentin tells the remainder of the chapter but quotes his father and grandfather many times. Although the reader knows that Quentin cannot possibly quote his father and grandfather and Sutpen exactly, he is not bothered by this implausibility. As the story increases in complexity, the reader must accept Quentin's narration if he is to make any sense of the story. Furthermore, the "authorial" voice has stressed the interchangeability of narrators, so that the question becomes moot.

At one point Shreve becomes bewildered and asks Quentin how he knows all that he is telling; Shreve voices the doubts that the reader is feeling:

"Your father," Shreve said. "He seems to have got an awful lot of delayed information awful quick, after having waited forty-three years. If he knew all this, what was his reason for telling you that the trouble between Henry and Bon was the octoroon woman?" "He didn't know it then. Grandfather didn't tell him all of it either, like Sutpen never told Grandfather quite all of it."
"Then who did tell him?"
"I did." . . . "The day after we--after that night when we--"
"Oh," Shreve said. "After you and the old aunt. I see." (p. 266)

The question of who knew what and when becomes even more complicated:
"Your old man," Shreve said. "When your grandfather was telling this to him, he didn't know any more what your grandfather was talking about than your grandfather knew what the demon was talking about when the demon told it to him, did he? And when your old man told it to you, you wouldn't have known what anybody was talking about if you hadn't been out there and seen Clytie. Is that right?"

"Yes," Quentin said. (p. 274)

As one later finds out when Quentin "remembers" the journey in Chapter IX, he did not find out from Clytie (or if he did he does not tell it) but presumably from Henry; however, one gets only a snatch of their conversation. Despite Shreve's doubts, he and Quentin work together very well in recreating the Sutpen story. The authorial voice says:

That was why it did not matter to either of them which one did the talking, since it was not the talking alone which did it, performed and accomplished the overpassing, but some happy marriage of speaking and hearing wherein each before the demand, the requirement, forgave condoned and forgot the faulting of the other--faultings both in the creating of this shade whom they discussed (rather, existed in) and in the hearing and sifting and discarding the false and conserving what seemed true, or fit the preconceived--in order to overpass to love, where there might be paradox and inconsistency but nothing fault nor false. (p. 316)

Chapter VIII merges not only past time with present time but also past character with present character. While Quentin and Shreve both began to sound like Mr. Compson in Chapter VII, they now merge more completely with Henry and Bon. Such "realities" as the fact that honeysuckle and roses do not bloom in the winter do not matter to Quentin and Shreve as they experience Henry and Bon's past; they do not lose their "real" selves but become four instead of two: "... not two of them there and then either but four of them riding the two horses through the iron darkness, and that not mattering either: what
faces and what names they called themselves and were called by so long as the blood coursed—the blood, the immortal brief recent intransient blood which could hold honor above slothy unregret and love above fat and easy shame" (p. 295). The merging of personalities makes the question of who narrates even less important:

They stared—glared—at one another. It was Shreve speaking, though save for the slight difference which the intervening degrees of latitude had inculcated in them (difference not in tone or pitch but of turns of phrase and usage of words), 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; the two of them creating between them, out of the rag-tag and bob-ends of old tales and talking, people who perhaps had never existed at all anywhere, who, shadows, were shadows not of flesh and blood which had lived and died but shadows in turn of what were (to one of them at least, to Shreve) shades too, quiet as the visible murmur of their vaporizing breath. (p. 303)

As can be seen from this passage, the "authorial" voice calls attention to the "mythic" or imaginative nature of Quentin and Shreve's conversation; they are telling, in a sense, their own story, a story created by them out of the "rag-tag and bob-ends of old tales."

The question of truth is important only if they think it to be important; for example, they do not accept Mr. Compson's re-creation of a scene between Henry and Bon after a supposed visit to the octooroon. The "authorial" voice pushes this point to its limits: "In fact, Quentin did not even tell Shreve what his father had said about the visit. Perhaps Quentin himself had not been listening when Mr. Compson related it that evening at home; perhaps at that moment on the gallery in the hot September twilight Quentin took that in stride without even hearing it just as Shreve would have . . ." (p. 336). If the two do not believe
something is true, then it is not true, and they ignore it. Shreve (as the third-person narrator hints in the passage just quoted) is especially apt to do this; later in the chapter he proclaims that it must have been Henry who was wounded rather than Bon: "Because your old man was wrong here, too! He said it was Bon who was wounded, but it wasn't" (p. 344). Shreve is willing to admit that Clytie never "told" Quentin about the incest and miscegenation threats: "she didn't tell you in the actual words because even in the terror she kept the secret; nevertheless she told you, or at least all of a sudden you knew" (p. 351). When Shreve is willing to make that kind of concession, to avoid completely the question of truth vs. falsehood, he and Quentin are able to merge completely with the past. The "authorial" voice makes this clear:

Shreve ceased again. It was just as well, since he had no listener. Perhaps he was aware of it. Then suddenly he had no talker either, though possibly he was not aware of this. Because now neither of them were there. They were both in Carolina and the time was forty-six years ago, and it was not even four now but compounded each of both yet either neither, smelling the very smoke which had blown and faded away forty-six years ago from the bivouac fires burning in a pine grove, the gaunt and ragged men . . . !["(p. 351)"

The italics are the only mark of the change to Quentin and Shreve's mental "vision" of Sutpen's telling Henry about Bon's Negro blood.

After they "see" the encounter at the gates, Shreve asks for Quentin's stamp of approval of his conjecture; he guesses that Bon replaced Judith's picture with the octoroon's so that Judith would not grieve for him. (Presumably she would be too angry to grieve.)
After he receives Quentin's approval, Shreve is able to "come back" to the present; the "game" is over for him. Shreve can say, "Let's get out of this refrigerator and go to bed"; Quentin stays in a "refrigerator" that is mental, not physical, as the opening paragraphs of Chapter IX make clear. Shreve realizes that he is finally not able to understand the South (and by implication, the story they have created). Quentin replies that Shreve cannot understand because he was not born there; but Shreve answers this by asking whether Quentin understands it. Quentin says, "I don't know," switches to "Yes, of course I understand it," but then goes back to "I don't know." Quentin is still caught up with the story: "He could taste the dust. Even now, with the chill pure weight of the snow-breathed New England air on his face, he could taste and feel the dust of that breathless (rather, furnace-breathed) Mississippi September night" (p. 362).

Chapter IX describes for the first time exactly what happened when Quentin went with Miss Rosa to the Sutpen house. When Quentin talks to Henry (p. 373), the repetition of words suggests a mirror image; Quentin is seeing and talking with himself. Quentin's problem, his inability to achieve peace, becomes clearer as the chapter progresses. Shreve can talk rather flippantly about the whole matter because he achieves merely intellectual perspective. Both Shreve and Quentin are "dedicated to that best of ratiocination which after all was a good deal like Sutpen's morality and Miss Coldfield's demonizing ... saying No to Quentin's Mississippi shade who in life had acted and reacted to the minimum of logic and morality, who dying had escaped it
completely, who dead remained not only indifferent but impervious to it, somehow a thousand times more potent and alive" (p. 280). Quentin and Shreve fall into the same intellectual trap that Sutpen (in his thinking but not necessarily in his actions) fell into—the submission to a logical design when one should know from experience that logic is neither essential nor sufficient. The fact that Quentin has physical ties to the South—his memories of what he has seen, heard, and felt—makes him dissatisfied with Shreve's and his intellectualization.

Shreve senses Quentin's problem and asks him why he hates the South. Quentin's reply shows exactly how much he is bound; his denial of his ambivalence intensifies his inability to deal with it: "I don't hate it," Quentin said, quickly, at once, immediately; 'I don't hate it,' he said. I don't hate it he thought, panting in the cold air, the iron New England dark; I don't! I don't hate it! I don't hate it!" (p. 378). Thus, the novel ends without settling what Quentin will do about his ambivalence. In not completing the syntagmatic within the récit, Faulkner shows his emphasis on the paradigmatic structure. He allows the reader to decide the significance of the Sutpen story for Quentin, and its impact on his future life.

... 

Through examining how Eliot, Melville, and Faulkner use syntagmatic and paradigmatic structures, one sees how structural techniques change from the nineteenth-century to the modern novel. The shift from a predominately syntagmatic to a predominately paradigmatic structure gives the reader a larger role in creating the novel's meanings.
CHAPTER III

LANGUAGE AND STYLE

The change in the structure of twentieth-century novels as compared to nineteenth-century novels corresponds to a change in the concept of language and stylistic practice. A paradigmatic structure requires that words be used symbolically as well as referentially. Thus, in the twentieth-century words have multiple meanings, determined and changed according to context. Words no longer represent "things" or single concepts but rather indicate a number of interchangeable meanings; language creates reality rather than reflecting it. A paradigmatic structure necessarily changes stylistic practice. Nineteenth-century novelists write clearly, with a minimum of ambiguity, and directly, without using several narrators. Moreover, they develop speaking voices for their characters and, often, for the author as well. Twentieth-century authors favor complexity, ambiguity, and repetition from several viewpoints. Characters and authors have less personal manners of speaking; the authorial voice is impersonal, or even absent, and characters "sound" alike.

When one compares Middlemarch, The Confidence-Man, and Absalom, Absalom! one sees these differences. George Eliot uses a clear, direct style which develops distinct speaking voices for her characters and for herself as author. Melville, on the other hand, uses a style
remarkable for its ambiguity. The authorial voice uses understatement, negation, and indirection so that one has difficulty knowing exactly what Melville means. In addition, as shown in the second chapter, the Con-Man is a master of language who uses ambiguities in words' meanings to persuade his listeners. He is seen as someone whose words can "cast a spell" over the hearer. The complexity of language and style seen in *The Confidence-Man* increases with *Absalom, Absalom!* Faulkner employs a highly innovative and idiosyncratic syntax to immerse the reader in a process which creates meanings through repetition or accumulation of effects. Also, Faulkner does not develop distinctive speaking voices for his characters through different styles but rather through their choice of imagery. Faulkner's use of language shows how the modern novel revels in complexity of technique; style shows much more personal variation since authors no longer believe in a "standard" English.

To show how Eliot, Melville, and Faulkner differ in their use of language, one should analyze closely a number of passages. Close analysis involves paying attention to the kinds of words used; one should ask whether words are ambiguous or clear, symbolic or referential, and paradigmatic or syntagmatic. Close analysis also requires an examination of the syntax, for the way an author constructs sentences effects the meaning perceived. Does an author develop a specific syntax, a speaking voice, for each character? Does the author coin words or otherwise use innovative rather than traditional grammar? Does the writer intend to be direct and clear or highly complex and involuted?
These questions need to be answered in studying syntax. Finally, close analysis involves the larger symbolic and ironic possibilities an author's words suggest to the reader; this involves negative and positive overtones created by imagery. Through analyzing words, syntax, and imagery, one can compare more specifically the language and style of Middlemarch, The Confidence-Man, and Absalom, Absalom! Changes to be seen in these novels reflect changes between the nineteenth-century and twentieth-century novels in their concepts of language and their stylistic techniques.

The Language and Style of Middlemarch

Like other nineteenth-century novels, Middlemarch's language and style do not call attention to themselves; they are quiet but nevertheless highly artistic. Critics comment most often on George Eliot's skillfulness in expression and her clearness and directness in writing. Eliot manages to be metaphoric without being ambiguous, for she uses metaphors grounded in common human or natural experiences. Eliot's words are well-chosen, and she has a knack for picking the concrete detail that expresses most.

Eliot develops a number of distinguishable speaking voices, all of which have their particular fineness and aptness of expression. Dorothea's manner of speaking suits her character; Casaubon speaks like he thinks and acts; Brooke is a marvel of middleheadedness. Hilda Hulme says, "It seems to be part of George Eliot's larger image strategy not to allow us any opportunity to share in the difficulties of the
novel writer. She seems consciously to have intended that whatever sense of effort is produced in the reader, whatever awareness of strain and suffering, is to come exclusively from our identification with the different characters of the story."\(^{16}\) Mark Schorer argues that Eliot's "highly explicit metaphoric style" is "the most effective inner stitching in the novel, for it is this style that, in the minutest detail, externalizes a mind and shows that mind to be one . . . the style of the novel shares intimately in the method of the novel, which allows the author to be everywhere."\(^{17}\) Although the two statements seem to be contradictory on one level, they are actually supplementary. One, indeed, is not aware of Eliot's difficulties as a writer, and one relates to the characters as if they were totally responsible for what they say; but then, as shown in Chapter II, one is also aware of an authorial voice which is ready to comment, ironically or sympathetically, on each character's words or thoughts. Moreover, a distinctive feature of the authorial voice is its constant moving away from the particularities of the novel's world to a general view which includes the reader's world. As W. J. Harvey puts it, "Eliot controls our vision of her fictional world so that we see it through a series of interconnected but ever-enlarging perspectives which demand of us


greater and greater knowledge, sympathy, and insight ... 18

Because of the importance of speaking voices—author's and
characters'—perhaps the best way to begin studying Middlemarch's
language and style is to examine closely several speaking voices:
Dorothea's, Mr. Brooks's, Mrs. Cadwallader's, Rosamond's, and Mr.
Casaubon's. Derek Oldfield, in his defense of Middlemarch's language,
studies Dorothea's language before and after her marriage. He thinks
that Eliot uses three styles in presenting Dorothea: (1) the allegedly
direct authorial voice, (2) a dramatization of Dorothea's own speech,
and (3) Eliot's method of presenting Dorothea's thoughts—erlebte Rede
or le style indirct libre. Dorothea's judgments, her quoted words,
are modified by comments given by the authorial narrator, by the use
of irony, or by the use of a context which heightens or restricts her
meaning. According to Oldfield, before Dorothea's marriage, she uses
a style simple and repetitive; she usually has the confidence that
people will agree with her. After her marriage she remains affirming
and emphatic with other people; but she is hesitant with Casaubon, and
to an extent, she loses her imaginative use of analogy. Throughout the
book her disarming directness and simplicity are stable elements of
her manner of speaking. Oldfield thinks that Eliot uses "dramatic
ventriloquism" 19 or erlebte Rede to combine emotional involvement

19 "The Character of Dorothea," in Middlemarch: Critical
Approaches to the Novel, ed. Barbara Hardy (University of London,
1967), p. 84.
with ironic criticism. The technique gives the subjective voices of
the characters but at the same time seems to be the objective presenta-
tion by the author; only attentive reading shows that the author
stands apart in a passage like this:

Sir James had no idea that he should ever like to put down the
predominance of this handsome girl, in whose cleverness he
delighted. Why not? A man's mind—what there is of it—has
always the advantage of being masculine,—as the smallest birch-
tree is of a higher kind than the most soaring palm,—and even
his ignorance is of a sounder quality. Sir James might not
have originated this estimate; but a kind Providence furnishes
the limpest personality with a little gum or starch in the form
of tradition. (p. 16)

At first glance one might think that Eliot agrees that men's minds are
superior to women's; after all, if Sir James did not "originate" the
statement, then she must be responsible. It is only when one pays
attention to such phrases as "what there is of it," "ignorance is of
a sounder quality," "limpest personality," and "gum or starch" that
one sees that while Eliot may have put Sir James' feelings into words
for him, she does not share this feeling. Sir James has the same
feeling (repressed) that induces the irrepressible Mr. Brooke to say,
"there is a lightness about the feminine mind—a touch and go—music,
the fine arts, that kind of thing—they should study those up to a
certain point, woman should; but in a light way, you know" (p. 48).

At times Eliot uses more direct authorial comments to make sure
the erl terrestrial Rede is not misunderstood; Dorothea wants to learn Greek
and Latin "not entirely out of devotion to her future husband":

Those provinces of masculine knowledge seemed to her a standing-
ground from which all truth could be seen more truly. As it was,
she constantly doubted her own conclusions, because she felt her
own ignorance: how could she be confident that one-roomed cottages were not for the glory of God, when men who knew the classics appeared to conciliate indifference to the cottages with zeal for the glory? Perhaps even Hebrew might be necessary—at least the alphabet and a few roots—in order to arrive at the core of things, and judge soundly on the social duties of the Christian . . . . Miss Brooke was certainly very naive with all her alleged cleverness. Celia, whose mind had never been thought too powerful, saw the emptiness of other people's pretensions much more readily. (p. 47)

One hears Dorothea's voice in the two sentences beginning "how could she be confident" and ending "social duties of the Christian." Although the interjection "at least the alphabet and a few roots" implies ironic distance, Eliot wants to make certain the reader does not miss the irony; thus, she finishes with a direct comment on Dorothea's naïveté.

Just as Dorothea's language fits her character, Mr. Brooke's and Mrs. Cadwallader's fit theirs. Mr. Brooke repeats half of what he says and zigzags loosely from one thought to another. Yet his indecisiveness makes him broadminded; his problem is that he sees the value of all sides of a question, and as Eliot remarks, "it is a narrow mind which cannot look at a subject from various points of view" (p. 49). His candidate's speech to the Middlemarch crowd (p. 369-70) is perfectly appropriate; forgetting what Ladislaw has prepared for him, he moves from one looseassociation to another until the crowd pelts him with eggs. For all his flightiness Mr. Brooke is a sound judge of character. His conversation with Dorothea before her engagement to Casaubon shows that he knows her better than she knows herself; he foresees her marital problems:

... "I should wish to have a husband who was above me in judgment and in all knowledge."
Mr. Brooke repeated his subdued, "Ah?—I thought you had more of your opinion than most girls. I thought you liked your own opinion—liked it, you know."

"I cannot imagine myself living without some opinions, but I should wish to have good reasons for them . . . . 

"Very true. You couldn't put the thing better—couldn't put it better, beforehand, you know. But there are oddities in things" . . . "Life isn't cast in a mould—not cut out by rule and line, and that sort of thing. I never married myself . . . The fact is, I never loved any one well enough to put myself into a noose for them. It is a noose, you know. Temper, now. There is temper. And a husband likes to be master."

(p. 30, my emphasis)

Later, Dorothea tells Rosamond that Lydgate can talk to her because "he knows that I have felt how hard it is to walk always in fear of hurting another who is tied to us" (p. 583). She now understands the difficulties of marriage.

Mrs. Cadwallader has the most vivid language of all the characters. Her shrewdness and self-possession reveal themselves when she talks; when Sir James remarks that Casaubon "has got no good red blood in his body," she replies, "No. Somebody put a drop under a magnifying-glass, and it was all semi-colons and parentheses" (p. 52). Sir James, who does not know Casaubon very well, wonders, "Why does he not bring out his book, instead of marrying?" Mrs. Cadwallader explains, "Oh, he dreams footnotes, and they run away with all his brains. They say, when he was a little boy, he made an abstract of 'Hop o' my Thumb,' and he has been making abstracts ever since. Ugh!" (p. 52). Eliot remarks that the farmers and laborers "would have felt a sad lack of conversation but for the stories about what Mrs. Cadwallader said and did: a lady of immeasurably high birth, descended, as it were, from unknown earls, dim as the crowd of heroic shades—谁 pleaded poverty, pared down
prices, and cut jokes in the most companionable manner, though with a
turn of tongue that let you know who she was" (p. 38). Her prejudices
against "bad blood" lead her to judge Ladislaw negatively; she calls
him a "troublesome sprig" and reputedly says that Dorothea "might as
well marry an Italian with white mice" (p. 359). However, when she does
decide to marry him, Mrs. Cadwallader tries "to make amends" by saying,
"He is like the fine old Crichley portraits before the idiots came in"
(p. 599); at least he looks well-born even though he is not. Mrs.
Cadwallader's speech reflects upper-class opinion, but she expresses
it more forcibly and memorably.

One of the first times one hears Casaubon speak at length he says:

I have little leisure for such literature just now. I have
been using up my eyesight on old characters lately; the fact
is, I want a reader for my evenings; but I am fastidious in
voices, and I cannot endure listening to an imperfect reader.
It is a misfortune in some senses: I feed too much with the
dead . . . . (p. 13)

His "balanced sing-song neatness" contrasts favorably with Mr. Brooke's
"scrappy slovenliness," according to Dorothea's thinking. Later, Dorothea
dislikes the lack of feeling in Casaubon's speech; when she asks whether
he likes Raphael's frescoes, he says:

They are, I believe, highly esteemed. Some of them represent
the fable of Cupid and Psyche, which is probably the romantic
invention of a literary period, and cannot, I think, be reckoned
as a genuine mythical product. But if you like these wall-
paintings we can easily drive thither; and you will then, I
think, have seen the chief works of Raphael, any of which it
were a pity to omit in a visit to Rome. He is the painter
who has been held to combine the most complete grace of form
with sublimity of expression. Such at least I have gathered to
be the opinion of conscienti. (p. 146)

The only thing Casaubon speaks about enthusiastically is his work,
especially the more controversial aspects. Dorothea unwittingly
offends him by asking when he will "write the book which will make
your vast knowledge useful to the world," and Mr. Casaubon replies
"with irritation reined in by propriety":

My love . . . you may rely upon me for knowing the times and
the seasons, adapted to the different stages of a work which
is not to be measured by the facile conjectures of ignorant
onlookers. It had been easy for me to gain a temporary effect
by a mirage of baseless opinion; but it is ever the trial of
the scrupulous explorer to be saluted with the impatient scorn
of chatterers who attempt only the smallest achievements, being
indeed equipped for no other. And it were well if all such
could be admonished to discriminate judgments of which the true
subject-matter lies entirely beyond their reach, from those
of which the elements may be compassed by a narrow and super-
ficial survey. (p. 1149)

Casaubon is so sensitive to the slightest hint of criticism that he
treats Dorothea as a critic when actually she had not intended to be
critical. Casaubon's speech is precise, scrupulous, and gives the
impression of thoroughness; however, its lack of feeling reinforces
the reader's opinion that Casaubon is a misguided scholar and a cold,
reserved husband.

Rosamond is acutely sensitive to "correctness" in language. Part
of being a lady is speaking finely, and she rebukes her mother for
using the words "tetchy" and "the pick of them" (p. 73); she thinks
they are "vulgar expression[s]." Fred argues with her, "All choice of
words is slang. It marks a class." She replies, "There is correct
English: that is not slang." Fred disagrees and traps her into
criticising Homer. The reader tends to agree with Fred that Rosamond
is too "finicking" and that she should be like Mrs. Vincy—"you don't
see her objecting to everything except what she does herself. She is my notion of a pleasant woman" (p. 74). Rosamond is concerned not with expressing herself simply and clearly, but with the impression her words will have on the hearer. Fine language proves good breeding and refinement.

Eliot gives all the characters of Middlemarch a particular speaking voice. Members of the lower classes as well as Mr. Brooke's associates have distinctive voices. The conversations about Lydgate between Mr. Mawmsey, Mr. Gambit, Mr. Toller, Mr. Hackbut, and Mr. Wrench (pp. 325-326) show each to have a particular way of speaking. Later when Mr. Bulstrode comes under suspicion, Eliot records the impressions of the people frequenting Mrs. Dollop's tavern. Their dialect is as believable as the "correct English" of the middle and upper classes.

Certainly the most pervasive voice of Middlemarch is that of the omniscient narrator, whom one assumes is the author. As pointed out in Chapter II, she uses the personal "I" and compares herself to Fielding. The authorial voice is at once expressive and finely discriminating; it is characterized by the well-chosen word and the ability to condense a generalization into an aphorism.

Eliot chooses words both apt and striking: e.g., "Young women of such birth, living in a quiet country-house, and attending a village church hardly larger than a parlour, naturally regarded frippery as the ambition of a huckster's daughter" (p. 5, my emphasis). Her words are able to turn around the tone of a sentence, making it slightly
ironic: "Certainly such elements in the character of a marriageable girl tended to interfere with her lot, and hinder it [her marriage] from being decided according to custom, by good looks, vanity, and merely canine affection" (p. 6, my emphasis). Some words she coins for their descriptiveness: "the Brooke connections, though not exactly aristocratic, were unquestionably 'good': if you inquired backward for a generation or two, you would not find any yard-measuring or parcel-tying forefathers" (p. 5, my emphasis). Some words she chooses are recognizable as being le mot juste: e.g., "Across all her [Dorothea's] imaginative adornment of those whom she loved, there darted now and then a keen discernment, which was not without a scorching quality" (p. 10, my emphasis) or "This elevating thought lifted her above her annoyance at being twitted with her ignorance of political economy, that never-explained science which was thrust as an extinguisher over all her lights" (p. 13, my emphasis).

Eliot's skill in finding a concrete detail makes the meaning vivid to one's imagination: "Such a wife might awaken you some fine morning with a new scheme for the application of her income which would interfere with political economy and the keeping of saddle-horses: a man would naturally think twice before he risked himself in such fellowship" (p. 7). The syntagmatic relation between "political economy" and "the keeping of saddle-horses"--their being objects of the preposition--emphasizes the basic discrepancy between the two; their being tied together is ludicrous, but then men of Sir James Chettam's class are not known for their rationality and consistency.
It is Eliot's careful choice of detail that leads to an ironic but good-humored undercurrent to her words; as suggested in Chapter II, this undercurrent forms part of the paradigmatic structure. The words themselves are not ambiguous; they are perfectly clear and direct. But when she juxtaposes two incongruous items, one gets the sense that she is joking; for example, when she discusses what Rosamond has learned in Mrs. Lemon's school, she says that "the teaching included all that was demanded in the accomplished female—even to extras, such as the getting in and out of a carriage" (p. 71). The thought of being taught how to enter and exit from a carriage is funny, but it also indicates the narrowness of an "accomplished" woman's education. Such a statement encourages the reader to compare his society to Middlemarch's.

In studying the comments Eliot makes in the role of omniscient narrator, one comes closest to hearing her speaking voice. Her comments most often move from the particular situation to the general; they have the ring of an aphorism or a proverb. Eliot seems humorously aware of this quality when she says, "Solomon's Proverbs, I think, have omitted to say, that as the sore palate finieth grit, so an uneasy consciousness heareth innuendoes" (p. 220). Because she tries in her remarks to present the positive side of a character if the situation presents him negatively, or vice versa, one has the sense that she judges her characters fairly and impartially; the tone of her comments is usually sympathetic, balanced, and tolerant. An example is her words about Dorothea's faith in Mr. Casaubon before her marriage:
Signs are small measurable things, but interpretations are illimitable, and in girls of sweet, ardent nature, every sign is apt to conjure up wonder, hope, belief, vast as a sky, and coloured by a diffused thimbleful of matter in the shape of knowledge. They are not always too grossly deceived; for Sinbad himself may have fallen by good-luck on a true description, and wrong reasoning sometimes lands poor mortals in right conclusions: starting a long way off the true point, and proceeding by loops and zigzags, we now and then arrive just where we ought to be. Because Miss Brooke was hasty in her trust, it is not therefore clear that Mr. Casaubon was unworthy of it. (p. 18)

Eliot moves from the more distant "poor mortals" to the close, inclusive "we," bringing the reader into her generalization. The balanced clauses of the sentences' construction adds to one's impression of a balanced judgment. One can see a tolerance of errors in a statement like this: "A woman dictates before marriage in order that she may have an appetite for submission afterwards. And certainly, the mistakes that we male and female mortals make when we have our own way might fairly raise some wonder that we are so fond of it" (p. 53). To make the reader be less quick to judge Lydgate, Eliot remarks of his passion for Laure: "He had two selves within him apparently, and they must learn to accommodate each other and bear reciprocal impediments. Strange, that some of us, with quick alternate vision, see beyond our infatuations, and even while we rave on the heights, behold the wide plain where our persistent self pauses and awaits us" (p. 113).

Sometimes Eliot asks the reader's agreement not by stating something obviously true but by using a rhetorical question. When Dorothea asks Celia's apology non-verbally, Eliot remarks, "Since they could remember, there had been a mixture of criticism and awe
in the attitude of Celia's mind towards her older sister. The younger had always worn a yoke; but is there any yoked creature without its private opinions?" (p. 11). One obviously answers "No," that one can wear a "yoke" without being in total submission or agreement. Later, Celia, after informing Dorothea that she had been wrong in supposing that Sir James was courting Celia, tells her, "I thought it right to tell you, because you went on as you always do, never looking just where you are, and treading in the wrong place. That's your way, Dodo . . . ." (p. 27). Eliot at once agrees with Celia (her nickname of Dorothea is not without significance), but she does not attribute great wisdom to Celia: "Something certainly gave Celia unusual courage, and she was not sparing the sister of whom she was occasionally in awe. Who can tell what just criticisms Murr the Cat may be passing on us beings of wider speculation?" (p. 27). Neither Celia nor Dorothea are without their faults, but each sees certain things with particular clearness. The way Eliot phrases her question—and her using "Murr the Cat"—suggest that Celia is both right and wrong.

From the analysis thus far, one sees that Eliot skillfully uses standard English syntax and a careful choice of concrete words to achieve a level of clarity that is admirable. Her use of imagery is equally admirable. She uses metaphors taken mainly from natural experiences to develop a psychological reaction in the reader to each character. As Gordon S. Haight says, "Nothing reveals the quality of a literature more surely than its imagery. Our feeling toward a character in a novel is determined not only by what he does but by
the emotional overtones the words set vibrating in our minds."\(^{20}\)

In the case of Mr. Casaubon, the overtones are negative. They involve labyrinths, tombs, dryness, and enclosed spaces. Dorothea sees "reflected there [his mind] in vague labyrinthine extension every quality she herself brought"; his "great" work is "also of attractively labyrinthine effect" (p. 17). Mr. Casaubon himself says, "I feed too much on the inward sources; I live too much with the dead. My mind is something like the ghost of an ancient, wandering about the world and trying mentally to construct it as it used to be, in spite of ruin and confusing changes" (p. 13). Sir James says that Casaubon "is no better than a mummy," and Mrs. Cadwallader replies that the "great soul" which Dorothea sees is "A great bladder for dried peas to rattle in" (p. 43). Eliot describes Mr. Casaubon's "stream of feeling" as "an exceedingly shallow rill . . . As in dry, arid regions baptism by immersion could only be performed symbolically, so Mr. Casaubon found that sprinkling was the utmost approach to a plunge which his stream would afford; and he concluded that the poets had much exaggerated the force of masculine passion" (p. 46). Later Eliot notes, "Poor Mr. Casaubon had imagined that his long studious bachelorhood had stored up for him a compound interest of enjoyment, and that large drafts on his affections would not fail to be honored; for we all of us, grave or light, get our thoughts entangled in metaphors, and act fatally on the strength of

\(^{20}\) "Introduction" to *Middlemarch*, p. xviii.
them" (p. 63). After her marriage Dorothea discovers that Mr. Casaubon's "sea" is merely an "enclosed basin"; she has no chance of getting anywhere, for his mind is like "anterooms and winding passages which seemed to lead nowhere" (p. 145).

Even Lowick Manor, when Dorothea first sees it, suits Mr. Casaubon's character: "In this latter end of autumn, with a sparse remnant of yellow leaves falling slowly athwart the dark evergreens in a stillness without sunshine, the house too had an air of autumnal decline, and Mr. Casaubon, when he presented himself, had no bloom that could be thrown into relief by that background" (p. 54). Dorothea's hope is not affected by the dreariness of the house, however, and she soon after marries Casaubon.

In contrast to the scene at Lowick Manor when Dorothea and Casaubon return from their wedding journey in January, Dorothea's images are those of "life and glow." From her boudoir windows, even looking toward the "happy" side of the house along the avenue of limes, the landscape seems to have shrunk; "the very furniture in the room seemed to have shrunk since she saw it before . . . The bright fire of dry oak-boughs burning on the dogs seemed an incongruous renewal of life and glow--like the figure of Dorothea herself. She was glowing from her morning toilette as only healthful youth can glow: there was a gem-like brightness on her coiled hair and in her hazel eyes; there was warm red life in her lips; her throat had a breathing whiteness above the differing white of the fur which itself seemed to wind about her neck and cling down her blue-grey pelisse with a tenderness
gathered from her own . . . " (p. 201). The contrast between Dorothea's and Casaubon's life at Lowick is condensed symbolically in this statement: "Her blooming full-pulsed youth stood there in a moral imprisonment which made itself one with the chill, colourless, narrowed landscape, with the shrunken furniture, the never-read books, and the ghostly stag in a pale fantastic world that seemed to be vanishing from the daylight" (p. 202). Dorothea suffers from the "gentlewoman's oppressive liberty"; her sense of being trapped is attributable partially to a traditional role. Her "powerful, feminine, maternal hands" (p. 28) are not asked to do anything.

But, Dorothea releases herself from her entrapment by thinking of others rather than herself. After she decides to go again to talk with Rosamond, she looks out her window and sees

the bit of road that lay in view, with fields beyond, outside the entrance-gates. On the road there was a man with a bundle on his back and a woman carrying her baby; in the field she could see figures moving—perhaps the shepherd with his dog. Far off in the bending sky was the pearly light; and she felt the largeness of the world and the manifold waakings of men to labour and endurance. She was a part of that involuntary, palpitating life, and could neither look out on it from her luxurious shelter as a mere spectator, nor hide her eyes in selfish complaining. (p. 578)

Unlike Casaubon, Dorothea manages to escape the narrowness of egoism; she is able to feel "the largeness of the world."

Ladislaw is also associated with images of light and openness:

"The first impression on seeing Will was one of sunny brightness, which added to the uncertainty of his changing expression. Surely his very features changed their form; his jaw looked sometimes large and some-
times small; and the little ripple in his nose was a preparation for metamorphosis. When he turned his head quickly his hair seemed to shake out light, and some persons thought they saw decided genius in this coruscation" (p. 155). His smile "was delightful, unless you were angry with him beforehand: it was a gush of inward light illuminating the transparent skin as well as the eyes, and playing about every curve and line as if some Ariel were touching them with a new charm, and banishing for ever the traces of moodiness" (p. 152).

Since Eliot presents Ladislaw primarily through his conversation with Dorothea and others and through his basic character traits, she uses less imagery. In general, one might say she uses imagery more often to give negative overtones rather than positive; Casaubon and Rosamond have the most imagery associated with them.

Rosamond is the siren and enslaver; she has "that mild persistence which, as we know, enables a white soft living substance to make its way in spite of opposing rock" (p. 252). Later this becomes "her torpedo contact" (p. 483). Her favorite occupation is tatting or chainwork; when she drops a bit of chainwork, Lydgate tries to retrieve it and leaves the house an engaged man. Lydgate and Rosamond are "spinning industriously at the mutual web" (p. 253) of young love. The images of entanglement end with images of bondage; Lydgate "had chosen this fragile creature, and had taken the burthen of her life upon his arms. He must walk as he could, carrying that burden pitifully" (p. 586). However, she is not solely responsible for their failed marriage; Lydgate's temper increases the alienation between him and Rosamond,
whose self-control makes harsh words intolerable; he is "bowing his neck under the yoke like a creature who had talons, but who had Reason too, which often reduces us to meekness" (p. 435). In the Finale Eliot remarks that Lydgate never conquered his temper: "He once called her his basil plant; and when she asked for an explanation, said that basil was a plant which had flourished wonderfully on a murdered man's brains" (p. 610). Lydgate in a sense is as much responsible for his unhappiness as Rosamond; "Perhaps if he had been strong enough to persist in his determination to be the more because she was less, that evening might have had a better issue. If his energy could have borne down that check, he might still have wrought on Rosamond's vision and will. We cannot be sure that any natures, however inflexible or peculiar, will resist this effect from a more massive being than their own. They may be taken by storm and for the moment converted, becoming part of the soul which enwraps them in the armour of its movement" (p. 556).

After examining Eliot's imagery, one agrees with Mr. Haight that "The images in Middlemarch grow out of fundamental conceptions of the characters and are applied consistently like the extended metaphors of Donne, two of whose poems George Eliot quotes for epigraphs." Just as imagery reflects character, syntax and choice of words are also subordinated to development of character; indeed, as seen in the second chapter, the syntagmatic structure of Middlemarch operates according to...

21 "Introduction" to Middlemarch, p. xix.
to events in the lives of characters. Language, style, and structure are not ends in themselves but rather tools to be used in creating the novel's world. Eliot favors clearness, directness, and a syntagmatic structure because she is interested most of all in portraying characters' relations and in suggesting moral applications for the reader's own life.

The Language and Style of The Confidence-Man

Like Eliot, Melville wants the reader to be interested in the implications of The Confidence-Man for his own view of life. But the language and style of The Confidence-Man basically differ from Middle-march's; rather than quiet emphasis and overt moral application, one sees understatement, qualification, and contradiction. How the reader should apply the implications is not at all clear; indeed, one is often not sure what Melville means to imply. One might safely say that no statement in The Confidence-Man can be interpreted in a direct, straightforward way. Melville continually surprises the reader, who ends up being in utter confusion as to the meaning of a particular paragraph, or, more broadly, of a sequence of events. In discussing the second paragraph of Chapter XII, R. W. B. Lewis notes, "The whole tone, purpose and strategy of The Confidence-Man are in those sentences, with their parade of notations and counternotions, and the final flurry of phrases that modify, hesitantly contradict, and then utterly cancel one another out, leaving not a rack of positive statement behind."^{22}

Elizabeth S. Foster, in discussing Melville's revisions of Chapter XIV, says that "the style that Melville invented or evolved for the expository parts of this novel desiderates understatement, underemphasis, litotes, and complexity that looks like simplicity" (p. 321-22). According to Foster, Melville's revisions reduce metaphors and similes to those "not fanciful or decorative, but functional as an axle" (p. 322); his two objects in syntactical revision were "understatement by subordination" and "tension, tautness, strength in sentence structure."

As a consequence, "the sentences, particularly the balanced and periodic ones, uncoil like springs, with a lithe, inexorable, cool precision. But this relentless movement of the sentence is half hidden beneath the mild language, the hesitating modifications, and emerges at the period with the shock of wit. In his revisions we may see Melville with infinite pains achieving in his sentences that fine ironic contrast and tension between mild-mannered, leisurely surface and stern dialectic beneath, which is the mode of his novel" (p. 323). Melville's syntax is characterized by understatement and qualification. Yet the concern for "accuracy" in statement shown by the qualifications reflects concern for "truth." The reader's problem is that he cannot reconcile the concern for truth with the lack of "positive statement."

A good way to show the reader's problem in deciding about meaning is to examine how the Con-Man speaks in his various guises and how Melville comments on the events. Their syntax, choice of words, and imagery create an ambivalence in the reader about possible meanings. The first disguise is a case in point. Critics cannot even agree
whether the "man in cream-colors" is actually the Con-Man or whether he is intended as a contrast. That the "man in cream-colors" is the only avatar who does not speak is significant. The Confidence-Man is a symbol of the devil, or at least, he is associated with much satanic imagery. If the devil as an April Fool's joke comes aboard the Fidèle to preach Christianity to nominal Christians, then his muteness when he supposedly is most "Christ-like" is appropriate. Christ said that one knows a good man by his deeds, not his words, so that the mute's inability to talk and his readiness to act are seemingly Christ-like; also, the crowd reacts to him much as earlier people reacted to Christians. However, Melville is not straightforward, for the mute's acts are writing words on a slate, a substitution for speaking that does not really depict charitable action, although the words talk of charity. The fact that the crowd regards the mute as a simpleton and the barber who puts up a sign saying "No Trust" as a sensible businessman does not ultimately work for or against the mute; "the repute of being a simpleton" does not tell whether or not one is a simpleton—it simply indicates reputation, not actuality. The crowd judges the mute because of his "singularly innocent" appearance, which is "without a badge of authority" (p. 2): "From the shrugged shoulders, titters, whispers, wonderings of the crowd, it was plain that he was in the extremist sense of the word, a stranger" (p. 1). Of course, Christ was called a stranger also. At two points Melville suggests that the mute in some sense yields: "But, as if despairing of so difficult an adventure, wherein one, apparently a non-resistant, sought
to impose his presence upon fighting characters, the stranger now moved slowly away, yet not before altering his writing to this: "Charity endureth all things." The qualifier "apparently" as well as the fact that he moves away after he writes "Charity endureth all things" suggest that the mute may not be so Christ-like after all. After the porters hit him "accidentally or otherwise," Melville says the mute retires "as if not wholly unaffected by his reception thus far"; moreover, "From his betaking himself to this humble quarter, it was evident that, as a deck-passenger, the stranger, simple though he seemed, was not entirely ignorant of his place..." (p. 4). In other words, he is not a stranger to the boat's workings, even though he looks as if he had "come from a very long distance" (p. 4). At the end of the passage Melville calls him "lamb-like," thus again implying that he is Christ-like. The reader does not know exactly what to make of the mute; the opening episode abounds in contradictory, perhaps ironic, meanings, and one is not sure whether the mute is Christ or the devil.

Black Guinea's language is metaphorical and he uses puns. Images associated with him are those of animals; he has the "stature of a Newfoundland dog," and the drover puts "his large purple hand on the cripple's bushy wool, as if it were the curled forehead of a black steer." His name suggests guinea hen, and he calls himself "der dog widout massa." Black Guinea tells the drover he sleeps "On der floor of der good baker's oven, sar," by which he means the street pavements warmed by the sun. Instead of saying he gets cold in the
winter, he says, "dis poor old darkie shakes worry bad." Going into
the crowd, he looks like a "half-frozen black sheep nudging itself a
cozy berth in the heart of the white flock" (p. 8). Black Guinea
seems to want to be treated like an animal: He offers "a singular
temptation at once to diversion and charity, though, even more than
his crippled limbs, it put him on a canine footing . . . Still shuffling
among the crowd, now and then he would pause, throwing back his head
and opening his mouth like an elephant for tossed apples at a menagerie"
so that the people could toss pennies in his mouth. His seeming desire
to be treated as an animal creates negative connotations for the
reader, who consequently wonders about Black Guinea's authenticity.
After the wooden-legged man casts suspicions on Black Guinea's worthi-
ness for charity, Black Guinea lists men who will attest to his genuine
affliction; they "knows me as well as dis old darkie knows hisself,
God bress him."--pun intended. This list, of course, is a partial
list of the Con-Man's disguises; this in retrospect creates more
suspicions in the reader.

The Methodist minister who defends Black Guinea because he
believes in charity shows blatant inconsistency in his Christian
deportment. He ends up shaking the wooden-legged man; and while he
preaches charity--"Let us profit by the lesson; and is it not this:
that if, next to mistrusting Providence, there be aught that man should
pray against, it is against mistrusting his fellow-men," he practices
distrust. He "pray[es] against" distrust but when Black Guinea asks for
his confidence, he says, pointing to the wooden-legged man, "yonder
churl . . . is no doubt, a churlish fellow enough, and I would not wish to be like him; but that is no reason why you may not be some sort of black Jeremy Diddler" (p. 13). One sees the first evidence of Melville's religious satire against nominal Christians in the Methodist minister's hypocrisy.

The man with the weed, John Ringman, is the Con-Man's next disguise. Black Guinea picked up Mr. Roberts' business card which he dropped by accident, so that one knows John Ringman is the same character as Black Guinea (or at least that they are accomplices); thus, his saying of the cripple, "Poor fellow, I know him well," has a double meaning. When Ringman takes Roberts aside to request money, the authorial voice subtly hints of his devilish (in the form of a snake) imposture: "What might be called a writhing expression stole over him. He seemed struggling with some disastrous necessity inkept. He made one or two attempts to speak, but words seemed to choke him" (p. 17, my emphasis). Although Ringman's hitting on Roberts' brain injury and his being a mason might be lucky guesses, they also might show evidence of supernatural powers. The authorial voice ends the chapter by saying Ringman left Mr. Roberts "not wholly without self-reproach, for having momentarily indulged injurious thoughts against one who, it was evident, was possessed of a self-respect which forbade his indulging them himself" (p. 20).

In Chapter V Melville continues his somewhat ironic tone with Ringman through the use of qualifiers and subjunctive voice: "Meditation over kindness received seemed to have softened him something,
too, it may be, beyond what might, perhaps, have been looked for from one whose unwonted self-respect in the hour of need, and in the act of being aided, might have appeared to some not wholly unlike pride out of place; and pride, in any place, is seldom very feeling" (p. 20, my emphasis). Melville says that Ringman's "ruling sense of propriety" made him seem cold and thankless, for Ringman knew that benefactors are often embarrassed by "warm, earnest words, and heart-felt protestations" (p. 20); thus, one does not know whether to approve or disapprove of Ringman's coldness. Ringman becomes an embodiment of eighteenth-century sentimental optimism when he meets the college sophomore; he wants the student to substitute Acheson for Tacitus, who has "not one iota of confidence in his kind" (p. 23). The sophomore abruptly leaves, ending the chapter and this disguise.

The man in a gray coat and white tie, agent for the Seminole Widow and Orphan Asylum, has a "countenance [which] revealed little of sorrow, though much of sanctity." Two men refuse to give to his charity; one tells him he has a "face as long as my arm," then continues "Hark ye, now: there is such a thing as gravity, and in condemned felons it may be genuine; but of long faces there are three sorts; that of griefs drudge, that of the lantern-jawed man, and that of the imposter" (p. 24). One suspects the last alternative is the correct one. The man with the gray coat tries to confute the wooden-legged man, but does not succeed. It is significant that he is the means of indirectly making the young clergyman more susceptible to distrust; he tells him,
"With humane minds, the spirit of distrust works something as certain potions do; it is a spirit which may enter such minds, and yet, for a time, longer or shorter, lie in them quiescent; but only the more deplorable its ultimate activity." His "cure" is to strangle "the least symptom of distrust, of any sort, which hereafter, upon whatever provocation, may arise in you" (p. 28)—a very large order. The clergyman quickly shows how hard it is to be completely without suspicions; when the man in the gray coat solicits funds, he immediately distrusts him.

The man in gray next meets the "good" man, the man with the gold sleeve-buttons. In talking to him, he shows his optimism and his "business" sense. When the good man objects "it would appear that, according to your world-wide scheme, the pauper not less than the nabob is to contribute to the relief of pauperism, and the heathen not less than the Christian to the conversion of heathenism" the man in gray replies, "Why, that—pardon me—is quibbling. Now no philanthropist likes to be opposed with quibbling" (p. 34). At the close of the scene, Melville ironically (and yet justly) describes the Con-Man's language: "A not unsilvery tongue, too, was his, with gestures that were a Pentecost of added ones, and persuasiveness before which granite hearts might crumble into gravel" (p. 36).

The man in gray tells the "good" man that he wants to infuse the "Wall Street spirit" in charity: "In brief, the conversion of the heathen, so far, at least, as depending on human effort, would, by the World's Charity, be let out on contract. So much by bid for
converting India, so much for Borneo, so much for Africa" (p. 35). In other words, the man in gray is willing to use any means (however contrary to Christian love) for his ends: "doing good to the world once for all and having done with it" (p. 35). When the man in gray says, "I have confidence to remove obstacles, though mountains," one is reminded that the Scripture reads "though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." Also the next verse says "though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (I Corinthians 13:3). In reminding the reader of I Corinthians 13, Melville at once gives a touchstone with which to judge the Con-Man, but at the same time shows that the Scripture makes the victim easier to dupe. In his next escapade the widow is reading I Corinthians 13 when he enters. It is ironic that the Confidence-Man tells her, "Yea, you can say to me as the apostle said to the Corinthians, 'I rejoice that I have confidence in you in all things.'" The passage from which this is taken, II Corinthians 7, tells of how Paul chastised the Corinthians, who repented of their sins as a consequence; applying this to the Con-Man, one must assume that he, too, has been unworthy of confidence in the past.

The next avatar of the Con-Man is the man in a "tasseled traveling-cap," the transfer agent for the Black Rapids Coal Company, a name possibly suggestive of Hell. He transacts a little business with the collegian who formerly repulsed the man with the weed; thus while the Con-Man fails in one disguise, he succeeds in a subsequent one. The
man with the traveling-cap uses a metaphorical language to describe "the hypocritical growling of the bears, the men who depress the value of his stock: "Why, the most monstrous of all hypocrites are these bears: hypocrites by inversion; hypocrites in the simulation of things dark instead of bright; souls that thrive, less upon depression, than the fiction of depression; professors of the wicked art of manufacturing depressions; spurious Jeremiahs; Sham Heraclituses, who, the lugubrious day done, return, like sham Lazaruses among the beggars, to make merry over the gains got by their pretended soreheads--scoundrelly bears" (p. 41). The application of all these names does not help anyone understand the bears—it is just frothy talk.

He continues using colorful language in Chapter 10; he asks, "Who snowed the odes about here?" and remarks to the "little, dried-up man," "this geniality you say you feel waked in you, is a water-power in a land without mills" (p. 45). He again seems to show a very naive optimism in man's goodness: "A fresh and liberal construction would teach us to regard those four-players [the men playing cards]—indeed, this whole cabin-full of players—as playing at games in which every player plays fair, and not a player but shall win" (p. 46). One finds that hard to believe.

Chapters 12, 13, and 14 provide further examples of the ambivalence created by the Con-Man's and the author's syntax and use of words. For the most part, these chapters are narrated by the authorial voice. Chapter 12 tells the story of Goneril, not in Mr. Roberts' words but in Melville's. Chapter 13 tells of the conversation between the Con-Man
(as transfer agent) and Mr. Roberts after the latter related the story of Goneril (originally told to him by the Con-Man as the man with the weed). As discussed in Chapter II, the reader cannot decide what to make of the story or the argument which follows. Hershel Parker's note to Chapter 13 is to the point: "More than any other chapter, this illustrates Melville's consummate skill in sustaining an indirect, bland, infinitely unassertive style that allows him to blaspheme with impunity in mid-nineteenth-century America. The chapter is also the culmination of Melville's jokes which depend on the fact that the Devil appears in many disguises" (p. 53). However, one is not sure whether it is Melville, the Con-Man, or Mr. Roberts who blasphemes. Although the authorial voice describes the conversation, the Con-Man's words are his, not necessarily Melville's; the reader is inclined to agree with Mr. Roberts' speech about "Truth will not be comforted" (p. 57), but the authorial voice attributes that speech to distrust while the Con-Man attributes it to compassion. As one is not sure of the origins, one is not sure of what Mr. Roberts' words mean. Chapter 14, moreover, further confuses the reader about what the Con-Man stands for. As pointed out in Chapter II, Melville's argument about inconsistency in fictional characters ends without concluding anything; the conflicting arguments about the nature of "good" characters--and men--remain.

The man with the traveling-cap next meets with the old miser and receives his confidence and one-hundred dollars. Again the Con-Man's words are a parody of Christ's: He says, "I live not for myself; but the world will not have confidence in me, and yet confidence in me were
great gain" (p. 63). Of course, the difference is that Christ asks for belief, not confidence, and the "great gain" he offers is salvation; one cannot find a parallel passage in the Gospels, but the form of his saying seems Biblical. The miser trusts to appearances—"you look honest"—even though a "last alternating flicker of rationality" warns him that he cannot, in the dim light, see how the stranger really looks. The miser's words parody Scripture also: "I confide, I confide; help, friend, my distrust!", which suggests "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." The Con-Man parodies the arguments between theologians about whether death-bed repentance gives salvation, some allowing it and others disavowing it: "I know not whether I should accept this slack confidence . . . but an eleventh-hour confidence, a sick-bed confidence, a distempered, death-bed confidence after all" (p. 64).

The herb-doctor seems more inclined to admit the existence of evil than the other avatars had been. In fact he warns the consumptive man that he may not get the genuine product if he buys from anyone other than the herb-doctor; when the sick man protests, "You told me to have confidence, said that confidence was indispensable, and here you preach to me distrust. Ah, truth will out!", the herb-doctor replies, "From evil comes good. Distrust is a stage to confidence" (p. 71). Ironically, he tells the man that if he hears of his cure he will ascribe it not to the medicine but to "power divine," an indirect way of suggesting his medicines are useless.

As the auburn-haired gentleman notes, the herb-doctor talks "so glib, so pat, so well"; but his words do not persuade everyone, for
the Titan almost knocks him down, saying, "Profane fiddler on heart-strings! Snake!" The title of Chapter 18 is revealing: "Inquest into the True Character of the Herb-Doctor." Instead of giving his money to the woman who seems to deserve it, he does not see her (although "nearly everyone's attention was bent upon her") and gives the money to a man "with a pace that seemed the lingering memento of the lock-step of convicts." The auburn-haired gentleman calls him "an original genius," words which recall the placard of the first chapter.

It is ironic that the herb-doctor calls the beggar in Chapter 19 a "demonic unfortunate" and "a regular infernal machine." He refuses to believe the beggar's apparently true story, and does not think it proves the existence of evil: "grant, for the moment, that your experiences are as you give them; in which case I would admit that government might be thought to have more or less to do with what seems undesirable in them. But it is never to be forgotten that human government, being subordinate to the divine, must needs, therefore, in its degree, partake of the characteristics of the divine. That is, while in general efficacious to happiness, the world's law may yet, in some cases, have, to the eye of reason, an unequal operation, just as, in the same imperfect view, some inequalities may appear in the operations of heaven's law; nevertheless, to one who has a right confidence, final benignity is, in every instance, as sure with the one law as the other" (p. 84). All the qualifications add to the reader's uncertainty; one can agree that if one "has a right confidence, final benignity is, in every instance, as sure with the one law as the other," but then one
is not at all sure whether such confidence is possible. The herb-
doctor admits that both human and divine government appear unjust,
but he argues that that view is "imperfect"; one sees no reason why
"the eye of reason" should be less perfect than "a right confidence."
Both views are human concepts and thus equally liable to be wrong;
both pessimism and optimism make assumptions which cannot be proved
about man's goodness or badness.

Melville parodies Romantic philosophers when he has the herb-
doctor say that the crippled beggar can still "skip for joy" through
nature's beauty; the cripple rightly protests that he cannot skip.
The herb-doctor gives him a box of liniment, which seems a generous
act until one considers that it will in no way help the cripple's legs;
indirectly, he admits this when he says, "Believe me that, like your
crutches, confidence and hopefulness will long support a man when his
legs will not. Stick to confidence and hopefulness, then, since how
mad for the cripple to throw his crutches away" (p. 86). When the
beggar wants to buy more liniment, the herb-doctor starts to give him
more, but the beggar says, "You have borne with me like a good Christian,
and talked to me like one, and all that is enough without making me a
present of these boxes. Here is the money. I won't take nay" (p. 86,
my emphasis).

The most important character the herb-doctor talks with is Pitch
the Missourian, who distrusts nature as much as he distrusts man. His
citing evidence of nature's hardness on man--storms, diseases, poisonous
plants--is persuasive, but the herb-doctor ignores it. His sentiments
on abolitionism show his equivocation: "If by abolitionist, you mean a zealot, I am none; but if you mean a man, who, being a man, feels for all men, slaves included, and by any lawful act, opposed to nobody's interest, and therefore, rousing nobody's enmity, would willingly abolish suffering (supposing it, in its degree, to exist) from among mankind, irrespective of color, then am I what you say" (p. 97). Since it would be impossible to write a law "opposed to nobody's interest, and therefore, rousing nobody's enmity," and since he does not even admit that slaves suffer, the herb-doctor's assent is insignificant. Pitch speaks rightly when he says, "Is not that air of yours, so spiritlessly enduring and yielding, the very air of a slave?" (p. 97).

The Com-Man comes back as the Philosophical Office Man since he failed, as herb-doctor, to dupe Pitch. At one point Pitch says, "The devil is very sagacious. To judge by the event, he appears to have understood man better even than the Being who made him"; the PIO man puns "For God's sake, don't say that, sir!" (p. 105, my emphasis). Pitch accuses the man with the brass plate of punning "with ideas as another man may with words," for he argues by analogy. Arguing that spiritual qualities—goodness and beauty—must arise in a man because that man develops teeth and grows larger is not good reasoning. Physical and spiritual are too different; one depends on aging and the other must be taught and learned. Just as Pitch argued that nature was evil because some of her effects were bad for men, the PIO man argues that nature is good because some deficiencies in children—teeth, beard, etc.—are corrected in adults. It is ironic that he uses the same strategy
As Pitch did in the prior chapter. "To proceed by analogy from the physical to the moral" (p. 104) may work theoretically but not actually; if it does work, it is from some other factor than true similarity. It is true that some men develop virtue and wisdom as they grow older, but age does not cause this. The PIO man seems to be using Pitch's approach to win against him; he uses an earlier hope that Pitch expressed: "I remember saying to myself: Now, then surely, I have got to the end of the list, wholly exhausted it; I have only now to get me a boy, any boy different from those twenty-nine preceding boys, and he infallibly shall be that virtuous boy I have been seeking" (p. 101). After Pitch has begun to be swayed, the PIO man says, "If hitherto, sir, you have struck upon a peculiarly bad vein of boys, so much the more hope now of your hitting a good one" (p. 110). Pitch says that that seems reasonable because he had already thought it. Similarly, the PIO man flatters Pitch by saying that he cannot believe Pitch to be completely a misanthrope: "Ah, sir, permit me—when I behold you on this mild summer's eve, thus eccentrically clothed in the skins of wild beasts, I cannot but conclude that the equally grim and unsuitable habit of your mind is likewise but an eccentric assumption, having no basis in your genuine soul, no more than in nature herself" (p. 109). Later, Pitch tries to understand what led him to be duped, but again he fails because he continues using a faulty theory: "Fain, in his disfavor, would he make out a logical case. The doctrine of analogies recurs. Fallacious enough doctrine when wielded against one's prejudices, but in corroboration of cherished suspicions not without likelihood.
Analogically, he couples the slanting cut of the equivocator's coat-tails with the sinister cast in his eye; he weighs slyboot's sleek speech in the light imparted by the oblique import of the smooth slope of his worn boot-heels; the insinuator's undulating flunkyisms dovetail into those of the flunky beast that windeth his way on his belly" (p. 113). Pitch is again using faulty reasoning--i.e., bad appearance must mean bad person--but, ironically enough, his faulty reasoning leads him to the right conclusion. The PIO man was the devil in disguise, not as a snake this time but as a man. When one reads, "Two or three dollars the motive to so many nice wiles?", one is reminded of the wooden-legged man's words, "Money, you think, is the sole motive to pains and hazard, deception and deviltry, in this world. How much money did the devil make by gulling Eve?" (p. 28).

The Cosmopolitan is the final avatar of the Con-Man and the most puzzling. Pitch calls him "Diogenes in disguise," a true misanthrope. The title of Chapter 24, "A Philanthropist Undertakes to Convert a Misanthrope But Does Not Get Beyond Confuting Him," could be applied two ways; if the Cosmopolitan is the misanthrope, then Pitch is the philanthropist, an idea increasingly possible in light of the Cosmopolitan's subsequent words about Pitch: "His outside is but put on. Ashamed of his own goodness, he treats mankind as those strange old uncles in romances do their nephews--snapping at them all the time and yet loving them as the apple of their eye" (p. 136). But the authorial voice seems to agree with the other possibility--that Pitch is the misanthrope and the Cosmopolitan the philanthropist: "With which the
Philanthropist moved away less lightsome than he had come, leaving the discomfited misanthrope to the solitude he held so sapient" (p. 120).

Charlie Noble tells the Cosmopolitan the story of Colonel John Moredock because he thinks Pitch is similar to him. One assumes that Charlie's motive for telling the story is to flatter the Cosmopolitan, who supposedly holds opposite views, with the eventual goal of getting money from him. However, the episode remains very confusing for the reader. On one level one can read it as an elaborate allegory in which Indian-haters are devil-haters, or good Christians; the story becomes one of the failure of Christians to be Christian, a study of the impracticability of Christian life. Unfortunately, this does not fit well with the structural role of the story; if it is an allegory, does Charlie Noble know it to be that, and if not (which seems more likely), why does Melville have him tell it? The Cosmopolitan is supposedly the man of love—"Hate Indians? Why should he or anybody else hate Indians? I admire Indians" (p. 122)—but if Indians are diabolic, then naturally the Cosmopolitan, as avatar of the devil, would like them. But, if the Cosmopolitan is playing the role of Christian love while Charlie Noble, however unwittingly, is showing the necessity for Christian hate, then Melville's irony becomes deeper. John Moredock, under the terms of the allegory, fails to be a good Christian—a good devil-hater—when he is not killing Indians but is showing love for his family and friends. In other words, there is a dark side to

Christianity that tries to "kill" evil, and that leaves family and home to do so; unfortunately, however, when men try to discern what is evil, they are not always right (as in the case of the Spanish Inquisition, which Melville mentions at one point), so that sometimes so-called Christian hate is actually just hate. The positive, optimistic, traditional Christian refuses to acknowledge this dark, Old Testament side to Christianity; thus, the Cosmopolitan says, "If the man of hate, how could John Moredock be also the man of love? Either his lone campaigns are fabulous as Hercules'; or else, those being true, what was thrown in about his geniality is but garnish. In short, if ever there was such a man as Moredock, he, in my way of thinking, was either misanthrope or nothing; and his misanthropy the more intense from being focused on one race of men. Though, like suicide, man-hatred would seem peculiarly a Roman and a Grecian passion--that is, Pagan" (p. 136). By ascribing "man-hatred" to the Pagans, the Cosmopolitan denies that Christians, as Christians, can sin; he is careful always to define evil (if he admits it at all) as a lack rather than a real entity: "For misanthropy, springing from the same root with disbelief of religion, is twin with that. It springs from the same root, I say; for, set aside materialism, and what is an atheist, but one who does not, or will not, see in the universe a ruling principle of love; and what a misanthrope, but one who does not, or will not, see in man a ruling principle of kindness? Don't you see? In either case the vice consists in a want of confidence" (p. 136-37). His saying "set aside materialism" is significant, for materialism was (and is, for that
matter) the other major religion in America; also, he uses the word "vice" to describe atheism and misanthropy, which is a less damning term, so to speak, than "sin." After reading the Indian-hating episode, one is thoroughly confused as to what Melville intends it to mean. Is he for or against Indian-haters, and by implication, "good" Christians who put devil-hating above everything else in their lives? Is he satirizing a Christian's failure to be truly Christian, or Christianity itself? What does one make of a detail such as this: "It was a smiling waiter, with the smiling bottle, the cork drawn; a common quart bottle, but for the occasion fitted at bottom into a little bark basket, braided with porcupine quills, gayly tinted in the Indian fashion" (p. 139)? Perhaps this, and the fact that the Cosmopolitan asks to refill his "calumet," suggest that both Charlie and Frank are "Indians," which gives another confusing turn to the episode.

Because one is never sure exactly what is Melville's position, one finds it hard to know what exactly he is satirizing. The style hints of satire but does so in such a veiled way that one does not know where satire begins and simple circumstance stops. The Confidence-Man's language and style are perfect vehicles for hiding secret meanings, and what one finally decides about the novel depends on one's ability to penetrate the language and syntax, and, ironically enough, on one's confidence that a meaning is there; by the end of The Confidence-Man, one may very well decide that one cannot judge either what is true or what is false about its meaning. Yet the reader is
likely to feel frustrated from his inability to decide. The presence of satire and all the philosophical arguments presumes a "right" position and a "wrong" position; thus the reader feels the necessity for deciding upon a true meaning, and yet also sees the impossibility of doing so. Words and events have multiple meanings in both *The Confidence-Man* and *Absalom, Absalom!,* but the former shows a despair with this multiplicity while the latter assumes it from the start. The reader of *Absalom, Absalom!* is not frustrated but challenged because Faulkner assumes that characters—and people—can create their own truth.

**The Language and Style of *Absalom, Absalom!***

While *Absalom, Absalom!* shows the same concept of language as *The Confidence-Man,* its style differs greatly from both earlier novels in its unusual syntax. Conrad Aiken in his article "William Faulkner: The Novel as Form" talks of Faulkner working by a "process of immersion, of hypnotizing his reader into remaining immersed in his stream."24 According to Aiken, most of the time Faulkner's style is quite effective in this process of immersion. His technique parallels his "whole elaborate method of deliberately withheld meaning, of progressive and partial and delayed disclosure, which so often gives the characteristic shape to the novels themselves" (p. 136). The fluidity of Faulkner's style causes the form and idea to remain "in motion . . . until the

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dropping into place of the very last syllable" (p. 137). His innovative and idiosyncratic syntax creates this sense of fluidity, of never being finished; he adds and adds rather short appositive or adjectival elements to form incredibly long thoughts, and even when the sentence is apparently finished with a period, it seems to run into the next.

Thus, what is important to Faulkner is the sense of the moment; Aiken calls this an attempt to create a "continuum" (p. 137). Repetitiveness gives a kind of cumulative effect, which is crucial to the fullness and richness of Faulkner's style. Warren Beck calls this effect an "adumbration of the tale's whole significance and tone."²⁵ The alternation of viewpoints which repeat words and themes gives a sense of complexity and richness, for each repetition from a different viewpoint adds a slightly different meaning; the narrators repeat without being redundant.

Faulkner's ability to suspend two contradictory suggestions in the same solution, his fondness for the oxymoron, contributes to one's sense of complexity and richness. The sophistication of technique is an end in itself; it is not the means of communicating a broadly philosophical or moral message. One might compare Absalom, Absalom! to a miniature carving in ivory, intricate and seemingly useless. Any moral or didactic message, any sense of application to the "real"

world, must be created by the reader himself, if at all.

Studying closely the opening two paragraphs helps one develop a sense of the third-person narrator's style. The first sentence shows a piling up of adjectives: The afternoon is "long still hot weary dead"; the office is a "dim hot airless room"; the dust motes are compared to "flecks of the dead old dried paint itself." The sentence gives two details of Miss Coldfield's ties to tradition: She calls the room "the office because her father had called it that" and she closes the blinds "for forty-three summers because when she was a girl someone had believed that light and moving air carried heat and that dark was always cooler." In the second sentence the repetition of adjectives continues, and the repetition of appositives begins:

There was a wisteria vine blooming for the second time that summer on a wooden trellis before one window, into which sparrows came now and then in random gusts, making a dry vivid dusty sound before going away; and opposite Quentin, Miss Coldfield in the eternal black which she had worn for forty-three years now, whether for sister, father, or no husband none knew, sitting so bolt upright in the straight hard chair that was so tall for her that her legs hung straight and rigid as if she had iron shinbones and ankles, clear of the floor with that air of impotent and static rage like children's feet, and talking in that grim haggard amazed voice until at last listening would renage and hearing-sense self-confound and the long-dead object of her impotent yet indomitable frustration would appear, as though by outraged recapitulation evoked, quiet inattentive and harmless, out of the biding and dreamy and victorious dust. (pp. 7-8)

The images are vivid: the sparrows coming in "random gusts" like the wind, Miss Coldfield's rigid legs with "iron shinbones" hanging "clear of the floor with that air of impotent and static rage like children's feet." The repetition of "forty-three years" clues to the reader that
it is a significant number. Faulkner coins several words, or combines them. "No husband" is particularly apt, for Rosa did not lose a fiancé in the war but rather a potential fiancé and husband; after the war the men her age were not available for marriage. "Hearing-sense" attains a specificity that "listening" does not have; Quentin can no longer listen or even hear because the "hearing-sense" has confounded both itself and Quentin's sense of himself--both meanings are implicit in "self-confound" because of its placement. Faulkner's not using commas to separate the adjectives which equally modify the noun ("grim haggard amazed voice") makes the reading faster and smoother and puts more emphasis on the noun itself; when he finishes the sentence by putting "and" between each adjective ("biding and dreamy and victorious dust"), he slows the speed and prepares the reader for the new paragraph.

The change to a new paragraph seems a chance for the reader to "catch his breath" after the very long second sentence. It continues the images and subject of the first paragraph but intensifies them. Now smells are added to hearing: one smells the "dim coffin-smelling gloom sweet and oversweet with the twice-bloomed wisteria against the outer wall by the savage quiet September sun impacted, distilled and hyperdistilled"; Quentin can even smell "the rank smell of female old flesh long embattled in virginity;" The sparrows' noise is louder now, "the loud cloudy flutter of the sparrows like a flat lumber stick whipped by an idle boy." The image of Miss Ross's sitting in the "too tall chair" becomes that of a "crucified child." The cessation of listening and hearing is now explained almost magically: "the voice
not ceasing but vanishing into and out of the long intervals like a
stream, a trickle running from patch to patch of dried sand, and the
ghost mused with shadowy docility as if it were the voice which he
haunted where a more fortunate one would have had a house." What
happens in the intervals when the voice "vanishes" is the visual and
mental perception of the "object of her impotent yet indomitable
frustration" mentioned in the first paragraph: "Out of quiet thunder-
clap he would abruptly (man-horse-demon) upon a scene peaceful and deco-
rous as a schoolprize watercolor, 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." "Quiet thunderclap" is contradictory but
suggestive both of the abruptness with which he appears and the
contradictoriness of his nature, further emphasized by "man-horse-demon"
and by "faint sulphur-reek." Again, Faulkner gives warning of the
sentence's end; he puts commas between "grim, haggard, and tatter-ran."
Momentarily, the speed slows down; "Immobile" and "bearded" are sepa-
rated by a comma, and the awkwardness of "hand palm-lifted the horseman
sat" slows one's reading. "Bloodless paradox" is an efficient way of
suggesting that the man's appearance and companions would be more
congruent with guns, knives, and swords. The third sentence speeds up
again as "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." "Long unamaze" again combines a quality and its opposite, suspending both in a solution. The comparison of Sutpen to God, the image of the "up-palm immobile and pontific" and the juxtaposition of "Be Sutpen's Hundred" with "Be Light," suggests Sutpen's "design" as well as his will for power. Quentin's vision vanishes as his "hearing would reconcile," thus giving him back his sense of self. The second paragraph ends with an incredibly long sentence. The first part of it describes the two separate Quentins, "the Quentin Compson preparing for Harvard in the South" and the "Quentin Compson who was still too young to deserve yet to be a ghost"; the last half of the sentence gives a sample of the "notlanguage" of the "notpeople." "Notlanguage" is appropriate because the conversation is almost an echo; one voice merely adds a few details, which the first repeats. Also it occurs in the "long silence"; it is part of Quentin's mind rather than being real voices. "Notpeople" is appropriate because Quentin's two selves do not exist except within his mind, but they are real to him nevertheless. The negatives coexist with the positives; the contradictory states do not cancel each other but exist simultaneously. The passage ends being focused on Quentin: "(And died)--and died. Without regret, Miss Rosa Coldfield says--(Save by her) yes, save by her. (And by Quentin Compson) Yes. And by Quentin Compson."

The remainder of the "authorial" comments in the first chapter
and beyond amplify and extend the images of these first two paragraphs. For example, in the second paragraph the "authorial" voice says that the South is "dead since 1865 and peopled with garrulous outraged baffled ghosts" and that Quentin has to be a ghost. Later, the "authorial" voice says,

His childhood was full of them; his very body was an empty hall echoing with sonorous defeated names; he was not a being, an entity, he was a commonwealth. He was a barracks filled with stubborn backlooking ghosts still recovering, even forty-three years afterward, from the fever which had cured the disease, waking from the fever without even knowing that it had been the fever itself which they had fought against and not the sickness, looking with stubborn recalcitrance backward beyond the fever and into the disease with actual regret, weak from the fever yet free of the disease and not even aware that the freedom was that of impotence. (p. 12)

In suggesting slavery was the disease and the war the fever which had cured the disease, Faulkner comes closest to taking a moral stance, but even so the reader has to finish the analogy. The vision of Sutpen which Quentin first sees (before the reader knows it to be Sutpen) becomes more "solid" and permanent; it is extended to include his family:

Itself [Sutpen's ghost] circumambient and enclosed by its effluvium of hell, its aura of unregeneration, it mused (mused, thought, seemed to possess sentience, as if, though dispossessed of the peace—who was impervious anyhow to fatigue—which she declined to give it, it was still irrevocably outside the scope of her hurt or harm) with that quality peaceful and now harmless and not even very attentive—the ogre-shape which, as Miss Coldfield's voice went on, resolved out of itself before Quentin's eyes the two half-ogre children, the three of them forming a shadowy background for the fourth one. This was the mother, the dead sister Ellen: this Niobe without tears who had conceived to the demon in a kind of nightmare, who even while alive had moved but without life and grieved but without weeping, who
now had an air of tranquil and unwitting desolation, not as if she had either outlived the others or had died first, but as if she had never lived at all. (pp. 13-14)

When Rosa begins her narration, one sees that this picture of Ellen in a nightmare is also Rosa's image of her; and in the second chapter one sees in Mr. Compson's butterfly image the idea that Ellen had never lived a human life at all. The image of Rosa sitting like a "crucified child" later becomes Quentin's vision of "a little girl, in the prim skirts and pantalettes, the smooth prim decorous braids, of the dead time":

She seemed to stand, to lurk, behind the neat picket fence of a small grimly middleclass yard or lawn, looking out upon the whatever ogre-world of that quiet village street with that air of children born too late into their parents' lives and doomed to contemplate all human behaviour through the complex and needless follies of adults—an air Cassandralike and humorless and profoundly and sternly prophetic out of all proportion to the actual years even of a child who had never been young. (pp. 21-22)

This "vision" helps the reader understand Miss Rosa's narration because it shows her limits: "humorless," "grimly middleclass," "a child who had never been young." The sense of her being isolated, of "lurking" behind the events, and of her being "born too late" is developed through repetition in subsequent imagery.

One sees after studying a few of the images Faulkner develops through repetition how his style is incremental and cumulative. The metaphors that he chooses not to develop through repetition are also vivid and appropriate. To cite only two, he talks of keys "which no longer even fitted the locks they had been made for like old married people who no longer have anything in common, to do or to talk about,
save the same general weight of air to displace and breathe and general
oblivious biding earth to bear their weight" (p. 175). When Quentin
goes with Miss Coldfield to Sutpen's Hundred, he sees "the trees along
the road not rising soaring as trees should but squatting like huge
fowl, their leaves ruffled and heavily separate like the feathers of
panting fowls, heavy with sixty days of dust" (p. 175). Faulkner's use
of metaphor is skillful and apt.

Studying each of the other narrative voices, Rosa's, Quentin's,
Mr. Compson's, and Shreve's, will define the differences between them
and their likenesses. Rosa Coldfield narrates part of Chapter I and
all of Chapter V. Rosa's manner of speaking is not very different from
the "authorial" voice. It is in her choice of images and the feelings
behind those choices that she differs. She calls Ellen "blind romantic
fool" and later "blind woman mother fool when she no longer had either
youth or inexperience to excuse her" (p. 15); and she does not excuse
herself either: "I hold no more brief for Ellen than I do for myself.
I hold even less for myself, because I had had twenty years in which
to watch him, where Ellen had had but five" (pp. 17-18). Her bitterness
and self-flagellation do not allow her to "plead youth," "plead pro-
pinquity," "plead material necessity," or "plead myself: a young
woman emerging from a holocaust which had taken parents security and
all from her" (p. 19). She sees Sutpen as an ogre:

It was as though the sister whom I had never laid eyes on, who
before I was born had vanished into the stronghold of an ogre
or a djinn, was now to return through a dispensation of one
day only, to the world which she had quitted, and I a child
of three, waked early for the occasion, dressed and curled as
if for Christmas, for an occasion more serious than Christmas even, since now and at last this ogre or djinn had agreed for the sake of the wife and the children to come to church, to permit them at least to approach the vicinity of salvation, to at least give Ellen one chance to struggle with him for those children's souls on a battleground where she could be supported not only by Heaven but by her own family and people of her own kind . . . This is what I saw as I stood there before the church between papa and our aunt and waited for the carriage to arrive from the twelve-mile drive. 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 wild-eyed horses and of galloping and of dust. (p. 23)

After the minister asks Sutpen not to come to church, the horse races continue at Judith's instigation; Rosa comes to believe that through inheritance Judith and Henry are half-ogres, and that they need protection from themselves, not Sutpen. She finishes her narration in the first chapter by telling how Judith goes to see her father fight his slaves; Henry is "screaming and vomiting" at the sight but Judith is unperturbed: Sutpen's "own triumph had outrun him; he had builted even better in evil than even he could have hoped," for he did not even have to ask Judith to come—she came because of her own desire.

Rosa's language in Chapter V is indistinguishable from the "authorial" voice; there is the same piling up of adjectives and appositives, the same repetition:

I, self-mesmerized fool who still believed that what must be would be, could not but be, else I must deny sanity as well as breath, running, hurling myself into that inscrutable coffee-colored face, that cold implacable mindless (no, not mindless, anything
but mindless: his own clairvoyant will tempered to amoral evil's undeviating absolute by the black willing blood with which he had crossed it) replica of his own which he had created and decreed to preside upon his absence, as you might watch a wild distracted nightbound bird flutter into the brazen and fatal lamp. (p. 138)

However, some of her images are still her own; she now becomes part of the nightmare:

Ay, wake up, Rosa; wake up—-not from what was, what used to be, but from what had not, could not have ever, been; wake, Rosa— not to what should, what might have been, but to what cannot, what must not, be; wake, Rosa, from the hoping, who did believe there is a semblance to bereavement even though grief be absent; believed there would be need for you to save not love perhaps, not happiness nor peace, but what was left behind by widow—-and found that there was nothing there to save; who hoped to save her as you promised Ellen... and now too late, who would have been too late if you had come there from the womb... who came twelve miles and nineteen years to save what did not need the saving, and lost instead yourself. (p. 141)

She is unable to wake from her "dream-state in which you run without moving" until she sees Judith's lack of apparent grief; then she recognizes "that true wisdom which can comprehend that there is a might-have-been which is more true than truth, from which the dreamer, waking, says not 'Did I but dream?' but rather says, indict[s] high heaven's very self with: 'Why did I wake since waking I shall never sleep again?" (p. 143). Rosa's fury derives from this "wisdom." The "summer of wisteria" (pp. 143-144) that she had when she was fourteen allowed her to participate in Judith's engagement to Bon through her creation of a dream-world; it is destroyed when she sees Judith with no signs of grief on her face standing in the hall outside the room with Bon's body. The fact that she had never even seen Bon intensifies her despair and disbelief: "There are some things which happen to us
which the intelligence and the senses refuse just as the stomach
sometimes refuses what the palate has accepted but which digestion can-
ot compass--occurrences which stop us dead as though by some impal-
pable intervention, like a sheet of glass through which we watch all
subsequent events transpire as though in a soundless vacuum, and fade,
vanish; are gone, leaving us immobile, impotent, helpless; fixed,
until we can die" (p. 151). Bon's death is such an event for Rosa,
and later, Sutpen's insult and finally his death are such events. Rosa
momentarily changes her view of Sutpen, as shown by her agreement to
marry him; she thinks of him as "mad, yet not so mad" (p. 166); she
forgives the ogre and thinks that there is in Sutpen a "spark, some
crumb to leaven and redeem that articulated flesh, that speech sight
hearing taste and being which we call human man" (p. 166). She sees
herself as the "sun" which Sutpen blunders on after struggling through
the swamp; she can give him "airy space and scope for [his] delirium"
(p. 168). After Sutpen insults her, she reverts to thinking of him as
"the light-blinded bat-like image of his own torment cast by the fierce
demonic lantern up from beneath the earth's crust and hence in retro-
grade, reverse" (p. 171). Her fury and despair will not even accept
his death; when he dies, she says that he cannot be dead because
neither Heaven nor Hell would have him.

After the furious feelings suggested by Rosa's narrative, Mr.
Compton seems somewhat dry and analytical. Sutpen's story for him is
an intellectual problem; he does not have strong feelings about it:
He exhibits an air of amused gentility--"Years ago we in the South made
our women into ladies. Then the War came and made the ladies into ghosts. So what else can we do, being gentlemen, but listen to them being ghosts?" (p. 12). The same kind of tone can be seen in his talking about divorce: "You will notice that most divorces occur with women who were married by tobacco-chewing j. p.'s in country courthouses or by ministers waked after midnight, with their suspenders showing beneath their coattails and no collar on and a wife or spinster sister in curl papers for witness. So is it too much to believe that these women come to long for divorce from a sense not of incompleteness but of actual frustration and betrayal?" (p. 49). On the one hand, Mr. Compson shows acuity in understanding the "frustration and betrayal," but at the same time the reader feels Mr. Compson lacks real sympathy; Mr. Compson seems to derive too much pleasure with being able to recreate the scene, curl papers and all. His interest in the women derives from the intellectual and artistic possibilities they give him rather than from a genuine concern for their situation.

Mr. Compson narrates about half of Chapter II, all of Chapter III, and all of Chapter IV but Bon's letter. In addition, Quentin's recollection of his father's words is often verbatim. Mr. Compson sometimes quotes his father: e.g., "your grandfather said that his eyes looked like pieces of a broken plate and that his beard was strong as a curry-comb" (p. 45). Thus, from time to time the reader is reminded that Mr. Compson's knowledge of the Sutpens is secondhand; he has had no personal involvement, except through his father and his mother.

His lack of personal involvement allows him at once to be
somewhat objective and at the same time condemns him to incompleteness. He can develop an elaborate image of Ellen as a butterfly, but finally he does not make sense of Henry, Bon, and Judith's story: "It's just incredible. It just does not explain" (p. 100). He cannot figure out why Bon suddenly becomes determined to marry Judith and why Henry would be so offended by an octaroon mistress that he would kill Bon to prevent his marriage. Mr. Compson lacks the crucial pieces of information that make understandable the bare fact of Henry's killing Bon.

Mr. Compson uses comparisons to artists and poets to help him create his version of the Sutpen story:

It must have resembled a garden scene by the Irish poet, Wilde: the late afternoon, the dark cedars with the level sun in them, even the light exactly right and the graves, the three pieces of marble . . . looking 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; the pageant, the scene, the act, entering upon the stage--the magnolia-faced woman a little plumper now, a woman created of by and for darkness whom the artist Beardsley might have dressed, in a soft flowing gown designed not to infer bereavement or widowhood but to dress some interlude of slumberous and fatal insatiation, of passionate and inexorable hunger of the flesh, walking beneath a lace parasol and followed by a bright gigantic negress carrying a silk cushion and leading by the hand the little boy whom Beardsley might not only have dressed but drawn . . . . (p. 193)

Again, one suspects Mr. Compson of being interested in the artistic surface presented by his tableau rather than being concerned with showing real grief.

Mr. Compson's analysis seems a little too abstract; he talks of bringing together Judith, Bon, Henry, and Sutpen according to "a chemical formula exhumed along with the letters from that forgotten
chest," (p. 101) but "nothing happens: just the words, the symbols, the shapes themselves, shadowy inscrutable and serene, against that turgid background of a horrible and bloody mishandling of human affairs" (p. 101). The reader suspects that "nothing happens" because Mr. Compson does not get involved; he remains an interested observer rather than a participant. Significantly, he sees "words" and "shadows," not people, because he is not willing to dig deep enough into the past to attain the knowledge necessary to "see" them.

Shreve and Quentin in their recreation of the Sutpen story incorporate Mr. Compson's analytic approach. Shreve and Mr. Compson are most alike in that the intellectual exercise is just that—their emotions, their sense of who they are, are not involved. On the other hand, Quentin, like Rosa, has strong feelings whose conflict damages his self-identity. The South is very foreign to Shreve. When Quentin first tells him about Miss Rosa, Shreve says, "You mean she was no kin to you, no kin to you at all, that there was actually one Southern Bayard or Guinevere who was no kin to you? then what did she die for?" (p. 174). Shreve's persistence in calling Miss Rosa "Aunt Rosa" shows how hard it is for him to understand; it is almost like learning a foreign language. The reader first finds out what Sutpen's insult to Miss Rosa had been in Shreve's blunt, rather flippant words: "an ancient stiff-jointed Pyramus to her eager though untried Thisbe who could approach her in this unhidden April's compounded demonry and suggest that they breed together for a test and sample and if it was a boy they would marry" (p. 177). Yet at one point the third-person narrator
says, "His remark was not intended for flippancy nor even derogation. It was born (if from any source) of that incorrigible unsentimental sentimentality of the young which takes the form of hard and often crass levity" (p. 275). Shreve is fighting against being moved, and his weapon is a mock flippancy in tone:

This was not flippancy either. It too was just that protective coloring of levity behind which the youthful shame of being moved hid itself, out of which Quentin also spoke, the reason for Quentin's sullen bemusement, the (on both their parts) flipness, the strained clowning: the two of them, whether they knew it or not, in the cold room . . . dedicated to that best of ratiocination which after all was a good deal like Sutpen's morality and Miss Coldfield's demonizing--this room not only dedicated to it but set aside for it and suitably so since it would be here above any other place that it (the logic and the morality) could do the least amount of harm--the two of them back to back as though at the last ditch, saying No to Quentin's Mississippi shade who in life had acted and reacted to the minimum of logic and morality, who dying had escaped it completely, who had remained not only indifferent but impervious to it, somehow a thousand times more potent and alive. (p. 280)

As shown in Chapter II, Quentin and Shreve are hampered by their rational logical approach. They do not give sufficient expression to their feelings but rather try to hide them by joking.

In Shreve's narration from pp. 176-81, he gradually quits being flippant and picks up enough of the flavor of Mr. Compson's speech so that Quentin thinks, "He sounds just like father." Two parallel passages which Shreve and Quentin narrate show the initial differences between their styles of narration. Shreve says, "he didn't even need to be a demon now but just mad impotent old man who had realized at last that his dream of restoring his Sutpen's Hundred was not only vain but that what he had left of it would never support him and his
family," while Quentin thinks, "Mad impotent old man who realized at last that there must be some limit even to the capabilities of a demon for doing harm, who must have seen his situation as that of the show girl, the pony, who realizes that the principle tune she prances comes not from horn and fiddle and drum but from a clock and calendar, must have seen himself as the old wornout cannon which realizes that it can deliver just one more fierce shot and crumble to dust in its own furious blast and recoil . . ." (p. 181). Shreve's account is much more concise. He simply states the facts and does not use metaphors, perhaps because at this stage he is just learning the story; he does not have the command necessary to create analogies.

Shreve narrates almost all of Chapter VIII. He stops once to ask Quentin the name of the university town and he stops for Quentin's assent--"Does that suit you?"--which Quentin does not fully give until the end of the chapter. The omniscient narrator interrupts at several points to describe the scene or to talk of their merging with Henry and Bon. Shreve's style is simpler, more concise and less repetitive, than the "authorial" narrator's, although it is very like Mr. Compson's or even Quentin's; the third-person narrator stresses that Shreve's speaking is "in a sense both [speaking]: both thinking as one, the voice which happened to be speaking the thought only the thought become audible" (p. 303). The fact that it is Shreve speaking is important only in that it is a fulfillment of Quentin's earlier prophecy: "I am going to have to hear it all over again I am already
hearing it all over again I am listening to it all over again I shall have to never listen to anything else but this again forever so apparently not only a man never outlives his father but not even his friends or acquaintances do" (p. 277).

Shreve's account merges with the "authorial" account in two places, which are italicized to indicate the complete merger of Quentin and Shreve with Henry and Bon. The "authorial" narrator seems to tell the account of what happened the winter of '64 (pp. 346-350 and 351-58), but at the same time that he tells it, Shreve and Quentin "relive" it. The change to Shreve's voice can be seen on page 350 when he says, "And so you and the old dame, the Aunt Rosa, went out there . . . ." and again on page 358."'And he never slipped away,' Shreve said."

Shreve's final inability to understand the South can be seen in his continuing to call Miss Rosa "Aunt" throughout the last chapter. He partially understands Quentin's problem: "The South . . . The South. Jesus. No wonder you folks all outlive yourselves by years and years and years" (p. 377); but he still has to ask "Why do you hate the South?"

From the beginning Quentin is an almost unwilling participant in the Sutpen story: "But why tell me about it . . . What is it to me that the land of the earth or whatever it was got tired of him at last and turned and destroyed him? What if it did destroy her family too? It's going to turn and destroy us all someday, whether our name happens to be Sutpen or Coldfield or not" (p. 12). Quentin does not want to
listen but feels that he will continually have to listen. His memory of the sight of fireflies and the cigar smell and wisteria has a metonymic power to recreate the scene for him: "It was a summer of wisteria. The twilight was full of it and of the smell of his father's cigar as they sat on the front gallery after supper until it would be time for Quentin to start, while in the deep shaggy lawn below the veranda the fireflies blew and drifted in soft random—the odor, the scent, which five months later Mr. Compson's letter would carry up from Mississippi and over the long iron New England snow and into Quentin's sitting-room at Harvard" (p. 31). At the beginning of Chapter VI, Quentin sees his father's letter and perceives "that dead summer twilight—the wisteria, the cigar-smell, the fireflies—attenuated up from Mississippi and into this strange room" (p. 173). The images are repeated after Quentin and Shreve complete Sutpen's story: "Quentin did not answer, staring at the window; then he could not tell if it was the actual window or the window's pale rectangle upon his eyelids, though after a moment it began to emerge. It began to take shape in its same curious, light, gravity-defying attitude—the once-folded sheet out of the wisteria Mississippi summer, the cigar smell, the random blowing of the fireflies" (p. 377). Through metonymy Quentin's memory of physical sensations has the ability to "sum up" for him, to symbolize, the whole Sutpen story. Similarly, his memory recreates his sensation of his visit to Sutpen's Hundred:

He could taste the dust. Even now, with the chill pure weight of the snow-breathed New England air on his face, he could taste
and feel the dust of that breathless (rather, furnace-breathed) Mississippi September night. He could even smell the old woman in the buggy beside him, smell the dusty camphor-reeking shawl and even the airless black cotton umbrella in which (he would not discover until they had reached the house) she had concealed a hatchet and a flashlight. He could smell the horse; he could hear the dry plaint of the light wheels in the weightless perpetual dust and he seemed to feel the dust itself move sluggish and dry across his sweating flesh just as he seemed to hear the single profound suspiration of the parched earth's agony rising toward the imponderable and aloof stars. (p. 362)

Quentin's knowledge of the Sutpen story will always be more complete than Shreve's, for he has experienced physically the atmosphere—the dust—of Sutpen's Hundred.

Quentin narrates almost all of Chapter VII. He tells what Sutpen told his grandfather about his early life, and of Sutpen's ambition to create and carry through his "design." Quentin's style is very like Mr. Compson's, but he seems driven to tell the story. At one point Shreve says, "Dont say it's just me that sounds like your old man" and Quentin thinks

Yes. Maybe we are both Father. Maybe nothing ever happens once and is finished. Maybe happen is never once but like ripples maybe on water after the pebble sinks, the ripples moving on, spreading, the pool attached by a narrow umbilical water-cord to the next pool which the first pool feeds, has fed, did feed, let this second pool contain a different temperature of water, a different molecularity of having seen, felt, remembered, reflect in a different tone the infinite unchanging sky, it doesn't matter: that pebble's watery echo whose fall it did not even see moves across its surface too at the original ripple-space, to the old ineradicable rhythm . . . Yes we are both Father. Or maybe Father and I are both Shreve, maybe it took Father and me both to make Shreve or Shreve and me both to make Father or maybe Thomas Sutpen to make all of us. (pp. 261-62).

Telling the story is preferable to listening, for Quentin can retain
his sense of being in control, in command, if he tells. When Shreve tries to interrupt, Quentin says in a "tense suffused restrained" voice, "Wait, I tell you! . . . I am telling" (p. 277). But even though he succeeds in brushing Shreve off, on the next page his father takes over, as shown by the italics and the direct "Mr. Compson said" (p. 278). Quentin's sense of the endless repercussions of a happening gives rise to his despair that he will have "Nevermore of peace" (p. 373); he feels that he will never be able to forget his own participation in the Sutpen story--his meeting Henry Sutpen: "walking or sleeping it was the same and would be the same forever as long as he lived" (p. 373). He cannot exorcise the ghosts, and he is too sophisticated to think like Thomas Sutpen 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" (p. 263).

Quentin's going with Rosa to Sutpen's Hundred makes him feel responsible, in a sense, for Clytie's and Henry's deaths and ultimately, for Miss Coldfield's, since "she went to bed because it was all finished now, there was nothing left now." Whether or not his feeling is rational does not matter; Quentin feels permanently contaminated by his participation in the Sutpen story and by the ties he sees between his life and Judith's and Henry's. However, the reader comes to his own conclusions about why Quentin love-hates the South; Faulkner does not go beyond making that conflict apparent. If one did not read the Genealogy or The Sound and the Fury, one would not even know that
Quentin committed suicide subsequent to the time of this book.

Thus, it is the reader who makes the final decision about the significance of Sutpen's story to Quentin. Throughout the novel Faulkner's syntax postpones decisions about meaning and creates the sense of never being finished. The repetition of words and images by the different narrators builds incrementally a composite meaning formed by the reader. While one narrator's viewpoint may be more limited than another's, that does not make it false; the reader, mimicking Shreve and Quentin, chooses those details which seem most true to him. The complexity of style and the innovative use of language are goals which Faulkner achieves; moral questions and the application of the novel's world to the reader's world must remain implicit.

... 

When one compares Middlemarch, The Confidence-Man, and Absalom, Absalom!, one sees the changes in style and the concept of language between nineteenth-century novels and early twentieth-century novels. While words are referential for George Eliot, they are symbolic for Faulkner; words are transformational in that their meaning changes from context to context. In twentieth-century novels the reader must be aware of a multiplicity of meanings.
CHAPTER IV

THE AUTHOR-READER RELATIONSHIP

Because of changes in structure, the concept of language, and style which occurred between the nineteenth-century and the twentieth-century, the author-reader relationship of modern novels differs from that of nineteenth-century novels. The shift from syntagmatic to paradigmatic structure, the shift from referential to symbolic words, and the shift from omniscient narrator to multiple, limited narrators create a greater role for the reader in determining meanings. Moreover, while nineteenth-century novels express moral values to be applied to the reader's world, twentieth-century novels leave moral applications to the reader; one does not see in Absalom, Absalom! the development of a moral contrast between bad and good which one sees in the egoism vs. selflessness of Middlemarch. Also, the way Faulkner artistically develops a "good" character, for instance Quentin, differs from the way Eliot develops Dorothea or Lydgate; artistic values of the twentieth-century are different from those of the nineteenth-century.

To show the differences in moral and artistic goals, one must identify the values implicit in each novel: What is it that makes a "good" character "good," artistically and morally, or a "bad" character "bad"? Does one care about the characters? Do they seem like "real" people, or if they do not, does that matter? In showing the implicit
and explicit functions of a novel, one outlines the critical distance between reader and character and reader and author. This general view supplements the more narrow analysis of structural and stylistic differences.

As mentioned in Chapter I, Genette's separation of narrative discourse into three levels—histoire, récit, and narration—is useful in talking of critical distance between reader and character and reader and author. Genette further refines his theory to show how the three levels work together. Robert Scholes gives a good summary:

In examining the relations among these three dimensions of fiction, Genette considers three aspects of narrative discourse, which are based (loosely) on three qualities of the verb in language: tense, mood, and voice. Under the heading of tense, he considers the temporal relations between story and récit—the gaps, re-arrangements, and rhythmical devices of the récit through which we perceive the story . . . . The moods of a fictional work involve questions of distance and perspective, scene and narrative . . . . Like tense, mood is a function of the relationship between story and récit, but more concerned with perspectives than with events. Voice involves the third level of fiction, narration, and its relationship with the other two: primarily the situation of the narrator with respect to the events narrated (story) and to the discourse, but also with respect to the audience he is addressing, which may be the "reader" if the narrator is "outside" the story, or a character if he is "inside." (p. 165-66)

Scholes goes on to say, "Genette's separation of voice and mode [sic] breaks the question of point-of-view in half, and in a very fruitful way. There is a great difference between the question of mood (Who sees?) and the question of voice (Who speaks?), and this difference is perpetually obscured by our traditional way of designating fictional viewpoint either according to speech (first person, etc.) or according to vision (limited, omniscient, etc.). In the study of narration we
need to attend to both the question of perspective (whose vision, how limited, when shifted) and the question of voice (whose expression, how adequate, how reliable)" (p. 166-67). As Scholes suggests, the question of voice also involves a consideration of "tone," and the question of mood involves a consideration of whether the perspective is limited or extended. According to Scholes, it is possible for a narrative to be spoken and seen by a character but heightened by an external or authorial narrator; e.g., Proust heightens the voice and eyes of Marcel, so that the narrative is both limited and extended and the voice is both Marcel's and Proust's.

The relations of tense, mood, and voice provide a framework for examining the author-reader relationships of Middlemarch, The Confidence-Man, and Absalom, Absalom! Tense points to structural effects, the way a novel is ordered, as well as differences in time between story and récit. Mood indicates "who sees," but it also indicates function. Just as a verb's mood shows whether it is expressed as a fact, command, wish, or possibility, a novel's mood indicates its implicit and explicit functions. Artistic and moral values become evident when one examines mood. Finally, voice deals with questions of language, how something is expressed, and with questions of narration--who speaks. From analyzing differences among the tense, mood, and voice of Middlemarch, The Confidence-Man, and Absalom, Absalom!, one sees how the author-reader relationship changes between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
The Author-Reader Relationship in Middlemarch

To determine the nature of the author-reader relationship in Middlemarch, one should examine its tense, mood, and voice. Moreover, one needs to define the implicit and explicit values to be seen.

The story and récit are relatively close in Middlemarch. One is not aware of dramatic shifts in time. The events portrayed occur consecutively over the period of about two years. However, one is aware that the author is writing a good many years later; she refers from time to time to differences between her own society and Middlemarch's. For example, she says that Dorothea's income "seemed wealth to provincial families, still discussing Mr. Peel's late conduct on the Catholic Question, innocent of future gold-fields, and of that glorious plutocracy which has so nobly exalted the necessities of genteel life" (p. 6). Later she remarks, "In those days the world in general was more ignorant of good and evil by forty years than it is at present. Travellers did not often carry full information on Christian art either in their heads or their pockets; and even the most brilliant English critic of the day mistook the flower-flushed tomb of the ascended Virgin for an ornamental vase due to the painter's fancy. Romanticism, which has helped to fill some dull blanks with love and knowledge, had not yet penetrated the times with its leaven and entered into everybody's food . . . ." (pp. 139-40). Eliot makes it clear just how much time ("forty years") has elapsed since the events of the story; but one does not take seriously her tongue-in-cheek
remarks about the earlier benighted society. The instances she gives are too superficial to show any basic differences in human nature, and the only advantage of her society is the quantity of time which has passed; she says not that her society is more knowledgeable about recognizing "good and evil" but that it has had forty years more "good and evil" to distinguish. From her comparisons of her society to Middlemarch's, one gets a vivid sense of authorial time, the time of the writing; thus, Eliot's use of tense reinforces the authorial presence, making it still more personal.

Eliot keeps one's awareness of changes in time to a minimum. When she moves from one plot-strand to another, she has to backtrack in time, but she minimizes one's sense of change. For example, she makes most changes during the chapter or at its close rather than at the beginning of a new chapter. She ends Chapter 10 in this way: "Miss Brooke, however, was not again seen by either of these gentlemen under her maiden name. Not long after that dinner-party she had become Mrs. Casaubon, and was on her way to Rome" (p. 69). By ending like this, she can pick up Dorothea's story after her arrival in Rome without any great gap in time. The closely-woven plot does not call attention to time shifts.

Indeed, one's sense of the multiplicity and pervasiveness of connections presents the reader with a problem in his attitude toward the author. One questions the likelihood of both Raffles' and Ladislaw's ties with Bulstrode, especially Ladislaw's. The coincidence of circumstances bothers a reader who believes in a certain randomness
in events. Yet one ends by accepting such coincidences because of the reasonable mood which Eliot employs. *Middlemarch*’s mood calls for a sense of the author’s continual presence; Eliot’s perspective is the perspective, and one usually receives her statements as indications of fact rather than possibility. However, as shown in Chapter III, in the dialogues between characters and in the erlebt Rede, Eliot also presents the limited perspectives of the respective characters, and sometimes these limited perspectives seem to conflict with the authorial perspective. Good examples can be found in Dorothea and Ladislaw’s conversations; one is not quite sure whether Eliot is presenting ironically their romantic, somewhat sentimental views or whether she is being perfectly straightforward:

"You are a poem—and that is to be the best part of a poet—what makes up the poet’s consciousness in his best moods," said Will, showing such originality as we all share with the morning and the springtime and other endless renewals.

"I am very glad to hear it," said Dorothea, laughing out her words in a birdlike modulation, and looking at Will with playful gratitude in her eyes. "What very kind things you say to me!" (p. 166)

When Eliot almost immediately says of Will, "If he never said a cutting word about Mr. Casaubon again and left off receiving favours from him, it would clearly be permissible to hate him the more," one thinks that she must have been ironic about Will’s earlier words when she said he "showed such originality as we all share with the morning and the springtime . . ." (p. 166). She seems to make Dorothea aware of Ladislaw’s "silliness" (e.g., "playful gratitude"), which makes Eliot seem ironic about him but not about Dorothea. Their relations do not
satisfy the reader; Ladislaw does not seem mature, hard-working, and selfless, so that he does not seem the proper husband for Dorothea. Her ardent nature and idealism are tempered by a strong sense of duty and a sensitivity to others’ needs; Ladislaw, by contrast, likes to do as he wishes, and his idealism and public service finally depend on Dorothea’s presence for fruition: “But it is given to us sometimes even in our everyday life to witness the saving influence of a noble nature, the divine efficacy of rescue that may lie in a self-subduing act of fellowship” (p. 588). By making Ladislaw so passive, so dependent on Dorothea’s selflessness and good-will, Eliot intends (presumably) to heighten one’s respect for Dorothea without lessening his respect for Ladislaw. Unfortunately, most readers are accustomed to men of action and passion who exert more control over their lives, and Ladislaw’s dependency grates on their sense of what a man should be. To say this of one’s hero hardly fits the reader’s expectations:

We are on a perilous margin when we begin to look passively at our future selves, and see our own figures led with dull consent into insipid misdoing and shabby achievement. Poor Lydgate was inwardly groaning on that margin, and Will was arriving at it. It seemed to him this evening as if the cruelty of his outburst to Rosamond had made an obligation for him, and he dreaded the obligation: he dreaded Lydgate’s unsuspecting goodwill: he dreaded his own distaste for his spoiled life, which would leave him in motiveless levity. (p. 574)

The fact that Ladislaw and Dorothea end up living on her income until he is able to establish a constituency further irritates the reader’s prejudices; heroes are not supposed to “sponge” off their wives. However, as mentioned in Chapter II, Ladislaw’s nature is intended to
contrast with Casaubon's iron control; his susceptibility to others' feelings, his lack of manipulative behavior, is positive in that it proves him less egoistical. Furthermore, despite possible discrepancies in authorial tone, one is so confident in Eliot's fairness and thoroughness in depicting character that one wants to believe in Ladislaw; as mentioned in Chapter III, Eliot presents both positive and negative aspects of each character's personality, so that one believes her to be an objective observer.

Despite one's misgivings about Ladislaw, one finally accepts him for several reasons. First, he has very positive aspects to his character: his sense of humor, his love of children, and his gallantry toward Henrietta Noble. More importantly, Eliot says that Dorothea and he love each other, and that they remain happily married; and one is finally willing to give her the benefit of the doubt. Dorothea is supposed to hate money and like "giving up" so that her sacrifices in a way contribute to her happiness and mitigate Ladislaw's dependency on her. Eliot remains firmly in control; it is her perspective which constitutes the mood, and one does not continue to question her good judgment.

Perhaps it is Eliot's mastery of voice which makes the reader willing to accept discrepancies in tone. As shown in Chapter III, her authorial voice skillfully uses words and syntax to develop her characters. Through her generalizations and appeals to the reader, she creates a personal voice which blends irony, tolerance, and what one might call concern. One cares for Middlemarch's characters because
Eliot so obviously cares for them. Her development of different speaking voices for the various characters does them justice, one feels; and her voice, however pervasive, has more than adequate expression. Eliot guides the reader in applying moral implications to his own life. Although her generalizations delay somewhat the progress of the story and thus form a paradigmatic dimension, she is careful always to return the focus back to Middlemarch. Also, as suggested in Chapter II, when the paradigmatic structure suggests parallels or contrasts between characters, she guides the reader in developing those parallels or contrasts through imagery, through larger structural units such as book titles, and through direct authorial comments. Thus, the authorial voice guides the reader and leaves few questions unanswered.

After reading Middlemarch, one feels that Eliot values human beings in all their complexity of relations. She upholds idealism, selflessness, and hard-working, practical efforts for human good; but her idealism does not make her hate those who remain egoistical and narrow. Her artistic aim is to recreate what she sees to be "real"; and in comparing her "real" world to one's own, one believes that she has succeeded.

While one concurs with Eliot's assessment of human beings, one has little responsibility in forming that assessment; the portrait of English society before the Reform Bill is virtually complete. One need only respond to Eliot's implications, suggestions, and directions.
The author controls the tense, the mood, and the voice so that her meanings are clear.

The Author-Reader Relationship in *The Confidence-Man*

Unlike *Middlemarch*, *The Confidence-Man* is a novel which a reader has difficulty understanding. Its tense, mood, and voice are so designed to require the reader's decision but also to inhibit his ability to decide. The experience of reading the novel is that of being at cross-purposes, stuck in the middle of a paradox.

*The Confidence-Man*'s tense creates some difficulty for the reader. Although the action occurs on a single day and in consecutive order, the reader sees a gap between *histoire* and *récit*; the stories told by various characters and the chapters told by the authorial voice dealing with aesthetic questions break the action, separating *récit* from *histoire*. As shown in Chapter II, the stories and the chapters on aesthetics complicate the paradigmatic structure by offering conflicting meanings. For instance, the reader cannot decide the validity of the story of Goneril both because it is too far removed from the original teller and because the qualifying words and subjunctive tense contradict the apparent statements. The whole story becomes conjecture. Similarly, the chapters in which Melville discusses artistic technique and purpose conclude nothing. They do not tell the reader what Melville is trying to do; they seem to defend but end up refusing to do so. The arguments contradict and negate each
other, and the reasoning is circular. Moreover, the long dialogues between the Con-Man and other characters--Pitch, Charlie Noble, Winsome, and Egbert--focus one's attention on possible symbolic, philosophical meanings rather than the bare events. In trying to analyze the meanings of these conversations, the reader creates quite a difference between histoire and récit. The difficulty in interpreting events, in deciding what they mean, results in confusion and indecision. One recognizes that the novel is symbolic, and often satiric, but one is not quite sure of what.

That it is the reader who decides about the novel's meaning can be gathered from the diversity of critical interpretations. For example, H. Bruce Franklin in The Wake of the Gods gives an interesting explanation of the structure of The Confidence-Man. He thinks that Melville had in mind Hindu theology when he wrote the novel; he quotes many contemporary articles discussing Hindu practices, including controversy about the Hindu vernal celebration similar to April Fool's Day. This celebration had masquerades in which various gods were represented. Mr. Franklin builds the bulk of his argument on the idea that the Confidence-Man is both Christ and Satan; each is an avatar of Vishnu or Siva;

In the strictest sense, avatar means a descent of Vishnu, and each of Vishnu's avatāras has its own significance. In Melville's parody of comparative mythology in Moby Dick, he evinces a detailed knowledge of all the principal avatars and of the significance of the minor avatars. To comprehend The Confidence-Man, one must share part of this knowledge. For Vishnu's avatars coherently order the ambiguities of Black Guinea's list of avatars.  

26 (Stanford, 1963; 1966), p. 178. Subsequent citations are in the text.
The Hindu Trinity, consisting of Brahm, Vishnu, and Siva the Destroyer, resolves the conflict between good and evil. Franklin thinks, "Melville made the shape-shifting struggles and the ultimate identity of Vishnu and Siva into the central structural fact of The Confidence-Man. Confidence and distrust, tame animals and wild animals, love and hate—all become indistinguishable in a universe in which black is only another appearance of white" (p. 187). Franklin suggests that the Cosmopolitan is analogous to Buddha, the only avatar of Vishnu to appear in this age. The Hindus think Buddha "willfully obscured the Vedas in order to destroy all who followed his teachings. For them, Vishnu as Buddha extinguished the light of Vishnu" (p. 186). While one may not agree with Franklin that Melville intended to show all gods—Hindu, Christian, or Buddha—to be the Confidence-Man, one can profit from his discussion of the various avatars. Mr. Franklin's argument does not replace more traditional theories, but rather serves as a supplementary reading because it depends on an assumption that the reader knows Hindu theology and custom. Even if one can accept the idea that Melville intended such symbolism, one cannot accept it as being the only symbolism. It is an alternate meaning in a book replete with possible meanings.

The Confidence-Man's mood also adds to the reader's sense of multiple meanings. Since the omniscient, authorial narrator describes the events, his perspective is that of the novel. However, since one is not sure what Melville means even when he addresses the reader
directly, one cannot be sure of his good intentions. In fact, one sometimes has the uncomfortable feeling that Melville is playing games at the reader's expense. The only changes in perspective occur when other characters or the Con-Man tell stories. The viewpoint is not at all clear in these stories. The Indian-hater story is a good example, as shown in Chapter III. Charlie Noble tells the story, but he emphasizes that the words and views are not his but Judge Hall's; since the reader has no idea what kind of man Judge Hall is, he cannot know whether the story is true or not. One has no idea of the authorial attitude to the story. One is particularly frustrated by the lack of guidance from the author precisely because he addresses the reader directly, presumably with the idea of answering his questions. The authorial presence implies a help and guidance which are not carried out. One has the form of the nineteenth-century, authorial view; but in reality the authorial view does not meet the reader's expectations.

Just as the mood adds to the reader's uncertainty, the voice is also confusing. In general, the narrative voices are utterly unreliable. Melville includes a great deal of dialogue between characters, but their words do not mean anything, for one is not sure of the motivations or prejudices of the characters. As previously mentioned, when the Con-Man speaks, he uses the same words but with different effects; he changes words' meaning according to the situation. The question of authorial tone is also important. On the one hand, one sees a despair with the lack of true meanings; but on the other hand,
one feels a dark comic spirit which thinks man gets what he deserves. The Con-Man takes advantage of the gullible, for the most part; and one does not feel too sorry for his victims. Indeed, one sometimes feels that the characters' gullibility is a mark in their favor. The characters who do not give the Con-Man money—the Titan, Winsome, and Eggbert—are cold and almost inhuman. The presumed bad—being gullible—turns out to be good, and the presumed good—being prudent—turns out to be bad.

The story, thus, is spoken by unreliable narrators for uncertain (and in some cases) unscrupulous purposes to the increasing confusion of the reader. The reader comes to suspect everything. One cannot trust the authorial voice because it contradicts or qualifies itself; one is not certain of the authorial attitude to the Confidence-Man and the men with whom he converses. One cannot ascertain positive authorial values; one recognizes satire against Emersonian optimism and "Christian" practices, and one sees that Melville believes evil to be an innate human characteristic; but one does not know what he considers to be good.

Finally, The Confidence-Man is a novel designed to elicit conflicting, ambivalent responses from the reader. One cannot decide what it means because one sees the "truth" of a number of meanings, some of which are conflicting. Melville seems to combine characteristics of both the nineteenth-century and the twentieth-century in the author-reader relationship. One sees a nineteenth-century concern
with moral issues, but an inability to give a nineteenth-century moral
guidance. The lack of certainty fits more closely with twentieth-
century practice. The presence of a direct authorial voice seems
nineteenth-century, but the actual words and their implications seem
twentieth-century.

The Author-Reader Relationship in Absalom, Absalom!

As shown in Chapters II and III, analysis of structure and
style involves paying attention to particularities; one must answer
questions of detail. When one tries to define the author-reader
relationship of a particular novel, one has to attend to questions of
a more general character. Thus, to define the relationship between
Faulkner and his reader, one needs to answer general questions in-
volving the novel’s voice, the mood or perspective, and the tense.

When a reader starts Absalom, Absalom!, he realizes that one
of the first questions he must answer involves the narrative voices.
One sees that the story will be told from various viewpoints—Rosa’s,
the "authorial" third-person, Mr. Compson’s, and finally Quentin’s
and Shreve’s. One needs to decide the competencies of these nar-
rators, in what ways they are or are not reliable. One recognizes
that Rosa’s view of Sutpen as demon limits her recollection of details
and colors her perception of his motivations and actions; her preju-
dice makes her willing to accept events without looking into their
causes. Thus, she is not interested in finding out why Sutpen forbids
Judith's marriage to Bon; the apparent lack of reason, the arbitrariness and injustice, is to her way of thinking just part of his evil nature. When Rosa changes her mind about Sutpen after the war and sees him more favorably as mad rather than demonic, she is willing to let her new emotional inclinations lead her to accept his proposal; again she does not question his motivations for doing so until he insults her, thus showing her that his motivations had been "evil."

Because she does not look for reasonable motives (e.g., that Sutpen wanted a male to carry on his name), she reverts back to thinking that his behavior is due to some inhuman evil in his nature: "But I forgave him . . . Why shouldn't I? I had nothing to forgive; I had not lost him because I never owned him: a certain segment of rotten mud walked into my life, spoke that to me which I had never heard before and never shall again, and then walked out; that was all . . . . Because he was not articulated in this world. He was a walking shadow" (p. 171).

By contrast, Mr. Compson is very much interested in cause and effect, for he tries always to see rational behavior; and when he does not know the reasons for an event, he tries to invent them. Thus, he hypothesizes the moral objections which Henry supposedly has to Bon's "marriage" to the octaroon. The reader recognizes this as hypothesis which does not prove to be true to the Sutpen story.

Mr. Compson is of limited competency as a narrator primarily because he does not have enough factual information; his rational approach is the same which Shreve and Quentin use.
However, Shreve and Quentin's story, while searching for rational motives, allows for irrationality in behavior—Henry's prejudice against miscegenation (and, secondarily, incest), which is strong enough to make him kill Bon and also Bon's desire to be recognized as a son, which makes him determined to marry. Yet finally Shreve and Quentin's reliability lies not in their rational approach but in the imaginative merger of personalities recounted by the "authorial" or "third-person" narrator.

The third-person narrator is impersonal. Faulkner does not use "I" or "you" or "we" constructions to address the reader, and his tone is far from chatty, or even vaguely personal. In the few instances when he uses "you" (e.g., p. 294), it is a substitute for "one." The reader may, for convenience's sake, think of the third-person narrator as authorial, but one recognizes immediately that it is Faulkner-as-artist speaking rather than Faulkner-as-man. The third-person narrator restricts his comments to description of physical scene or analysis of the psychological states of the other narrators; he does not go beyond the novel's world to that of the reader. One sees no awareness of audience. His lack of direct comment on the novel's world leaves a great deal of freedom to the reader; the reader decides whether to apply his experience of the novel to his own life and his own society, and if he does so, he also decides how.

Another question raised by the novel's narration concerns the novel's structure. One must answer why the novel breaks up the syntagmatic structure, so that the reader must almost totally construct
it, at the same time it develops the paradigmatic structure quite fully. Also, why does the reader so often get a narrator's reaction to an event before the reader knows what happened? For example, one knows how Rosa feels and what she does when Sutpen "insults" her before one knows what the insult was; one knows Quentin's reaction to going to Sutpen's Hundred before one knows what happened when he went. Partially, one may explain the emphasis on paradigmatic structure by a historical reaction among modern authors against the omniscient narrator; like other modern authors, Faulkner was experimenting with how to tell a story without seeming to tell it, how to present it through various viewpoints rather than through an all-knowing author. But the question of structure goes beyond Faulkner's interest in formal techniques. Absalom, Absalom! demands a reader's attention to detail; if one is to make sense of the Sutpen story, one must read alertly and form a composite picture from the various narrators' stories. Again, the reader has final decision-making powers.

Furthermore, the syntax of each narrator poses a problem for the reader. If one uses different narrators, why do the narrators stress that they often sound the same, that their speaking voices are, for the most part, interchangeable? There is a tension between the differences in their speaking voices--most often seen in the images they use and their approach to ordering experience--and their sameness of style. The tension, to an extent, endorses Quentin's view of the fluidity of experience, its endlessness: "Maybe nothing ever happens once and is finished. Maybe happen is never once but like ripples
maybe on water after the pebble sinks . . ." (p. 261). Quentin and
Shreve and Mr. Compson and Rosa sound alike because they are reacting
to the same causal event; Sutpen, Judith, Henry, and Bon are a col-
lective "pebble" thrown in the narrators' adjacent "pools." Certainly,
the style suggests the complexity of any person's experience, the
difficulty of fitting it into words and sentences and well-ordered
paragraphs; it suggests the on-going-ness of a person's perception and
thinking.

Questions of distance and perspective include questioning one's
sense of time. The "on-going-ness" of Quentin's perception and think-
ing contributes to one's sense that the time is "now." The authorial
voice specifically gives dates (e.g., "this September afternoon in
1909 and that Sunday morning in June in 1833"), but he merges past
time with present so that the edges become blurred; the present seems
past and the past seems the present: "It was a day of listening too--
the listening, the hearing in 1909 mostly about that which he already
knew, since he had been born in and still breathed the same air in
which the church bells had rung on that Sunday morning in 1833 and,
on Sundays, heard even one of the original three bells in the same
steeple where descendants of the same pigeons strutted and crooned
or wheeled in short courses resembling soft fluid paint-smears on
the soft summer sky" (p. 31). Because there are no sharp delinea-
tions between past, present, and even future, one feels the immediacy
of time; Faulkner immerses the reader in the continuing process of
the novel.
Besides the question of time, one's distance from the novel depends on the author's attitude toward his characters as well as the reader's identification with them. Faulkner seems to combine objectivity toward his characters with a degree of sympathy; this is the way he describes Rosa Coldfield waiting for Quentin: "It [the house] too was somehow smaller than its actual size—it was of two stories—unpainted and a little shabby, yet with an air, a quality of grim endurance as though like her it had been created to fit into and complement a world in all ways a little smaller than the one in which it found itself. There in the gloom of the shuttered hallway whose air was even hotter than outside, as if there were prisoned in it like in a tomb all the suspiration of slow heat-laden time which had recurred during the forty-five years, the small figure in black which did not even rustle, the wan triangle of lace at wrists and throat, the dim face looking at him with an expression speculative, urgent and intent, waited to invite him in" (pp. 10-11). The reader feels that Faulkner fairly assesses each character's self; he portrays both good and bad qualities, and he gives a sense of each character's uniqueness.

The reader identifies most closely with Quentin, for the novel is most clearly about his problems. In a way Quentin and Shreve are "friends" of the reader or "model" readers. They try to solve the same problems that the reader has to solve in order to understand the Sutpen story. Quentin is trying to make sense of his own past—regional, ancestral, and racial—and Shreve participates both because of curiosity about the South and because he wants to learn how and
whether that understanding process is possible. Partially, Quentin's problem is one of understanding fully another person—Sutpen or Henry or Bon or Judith; to do so, he searches for their motivations, values, and failings. Moreover, Quentin's own sense of self is tied up with these people; he needs to understand them in order to understand his self. The reader perceives these problems to be of wide applicability, although Faulkner does not try to apply them outside the novel. Any adult—or person becoming an adult—goes through a process of trying to understand those people most crucial in his past and present—his parents, his heroes, his spouse. One constantly has to assess what makes other people (or even oneself) act as they do; and one often has to admit failure to understand as Quentin finally does.

Another component forming the reader's perspective is credibility—whether the novel's plot and characters are believable. Partially, this depends on the reader's sense of the author's aims and values as well as his expectations of what a novel should "do." However, it also includes comparisons to the "real" world inhabited by the reader. *Absalom, Absalom* has a strong realism in physical description; one sees, feels, tastes, and smells what Quentin experiences. Most of the imagery is concrete, even earthy: "Because that's what a Southern lady is. Not the fact that, penniless and with no prospect of ever being otherwise and knowing that all who know her know this, yet moving with a parasol and a private chamber pot and three trunks into your home and into the room where your wife
uses the hand-embroidered linen, she not only takes command of all
the servants... but goes into the kitchen and dispossesses the
cook and seasons the very food you are going to eat to suit her
own palate" (p. 86). The repetition of images further increases
one's sense of reality; the cumulative effect is more real than a
single image would be.

The mood of *Absalom, Absalom!* is a mixture of reality and sym-
bolism, or what might be called a sense of dream. One senses per-
ceptual reality strongly; but the predominance of the paradigmatic
structure emphasizes a psychological and symbolic reality that
resembles a dream: "See how the sleeping outflung hand, touching the
beside candle, remembers pain, springs back and free while mind and
brain sleep on and only make of this adjacent heat some trashy myth
of reality's escape: or that same sleeping hand, in sensuous marriage
with some dulcet surface, is transformed by the same sleeping brain
and mind into that same figment--stuff warped out of all experience.
Ay, grief goes, fades; we know that--but ask the tear ducts if they
have forgotten to weep" (p. 143). Rosa's dream-state which is truer
than "reality" is analogous to Quentin and Shreve's final rendering
of the Sutpen story; both are paradoxically beyond criteria of truth
and realism. Whether they are true or real is insignificant; what
matters is that Rosa and Shreve and Quentin believe them to be real
and true.

Thus, although Faulkner does not openly give one his moral and
aesthetic values, one tentatively can identify several propensities.
He seems to endorse a kind of irrationality; Sutpen fails because of his "cookbook" morality, Quentin and Shreve are limited by that "best of ratiocination" and Rosa serves in a sense as the cause of Quentin's ultimate knowledge because she acts out of her emotional dream-state. Quentin's internal conflict, his sense of being trapped, arises because he denies his irrational hate for all the Sutpen story has made him experience. He wants to limit his experience to what his mind can understand; the Sutpen story—as symbol of his Southern upbringing—makes him aware of a physical and emotional reality which he cannot accept: "He lay still and rigid on his back with the cold New England night on his face and the blood running warm in his rigid body and limbs, breathing hard but slow, his eyes wide open upon the window, thinking 'Nevermore of peace. Nevermore of peace. Nevermore Nevermore Nevermore.'" (p. 373). When Quentin says, "I am older at twenty than a lot of people who have died" (p. 377), he is speaking of the quality of his experience. Mr. Compson finishes his letter about Rosa's death: "The weather was beautiful though cold and they had to use picks to break the earth for the grave yet in one of the deeper clods I saw a redworm doubtless alive when the clod was thrown up though by afternoon it was frozen again" (p. 377). This image serves as a symbol of Quentin's state. Earlier Faulkner describes Quentin's shaking with a "mental" cold—"And now, although he was warm and though while he had sat in the cold room he merely shook faintly and steadily, now he began to jerk all over, violently and uncontrollably until he could even hear the bed" (p. 360). Quentin's conflict can be seen in the
paradox of warm blood but shaking limbs, and finally warm blood but
rigid limbs (p. 373). The redworm frozen in the exposed earth is a
concrete image of Quentin's ambivalence about his past: He is frozen
in a conflict which he cannot resolve; he has been "dug up" into an
overwhelming environment which he cannot escape. In his depiction of
Quentin as a failure, Faulkner seems to be indirectly endorsing a
complexity and fullness of experience, a reality which includes mental,
physical, and emotional processes. However, it is the reader who must
perceive this reality and work out its shape and form. The paradigmatic
possibilities are suggestive, but the reader is the one who must respond.

... 

In contrast to Absalom, Absalom!, Middlemarch serves as an
element of a novel in which authorial control works to produce a
complex picture of human beings and their relations. The Confidence-
Man, on the other hand, is a novel whose meaning depends on the reader's
understanding. However, Melville makes it very hard, if not impossible,
for a reader to know what The Confidence-Man means; the reader does not
trust the authorial voice, for it seems to conclude nothing and to offer
very little guidance. Absalom, Absalom!'s meaning is determined by
the reader, but the reader does not have the difficulty he has with
The Confidence-Man. The third-person, "authorial" narrator is imper-
sonal and reports without directly commenting. However, the reader
comes to decisions about meaning in the very process of fitting puzzle
pieces together. One decides which parts of each narrator's story
make sense; moreover, through the repetition of words and imagery, the reader forms symbolic meanings. The paradigmatic structure, the innovative syntax, and the new concept of language all place decision-making in the hands of the reader.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

As the comparisons of Middlemarch, The Confidence-Man, and Absalom, Absalom! have shown, the novel changed drastically between the middle of the nineteenth-century and the early years of the twentieth. Novels of the nineteenth-century are different from those of the twentieth-century in structure, concept of language and style, and author-reader relationships.

Summarizing characteristics of each novel will make the changes clearer. In analyzing Middlemarch's structure, language and style, and author-reader relationship, one sees that it is a great Victorian novel. Eliot develops the major characters using a blend of syntagmatic and paradigmatic structures to achieve a complex, realistic portrayal. The structural "web" is primarily syntagmatic, but the paradigmatic dimension is nevertheless essential to a full comprehension of the novel's meaning. Eliot directs the reader in seeing and applying the paradigmatic. Her authorial generalizations show how events of the novel are to be applied to broader moral concerns. Furthermore, the titles of the eight books encourage the reader to look for parallels and differences between characters. Seeing the similarities and differences between characters develops one's sense of societal pressures on individuals as well as the ways that
individuals respond to societal expectations. The reader sees a
paradigmatic dimension in the parallels and contrasts between characters;
this paradigmatic structure increases the complexity of the syntagmatic
structure.

In addition to its structure, *Middlemarch*'s style reflects
nineteenth-century writing practices. Eliot uses a clear, expressive
style which develops distinct speaking voices for her characters and
for herself as author. She manages to be metaphorical without being
ambiguous, for she uses metaphors grounded in common human or natural
experiences. Her words are well-chosen, and she has a knack for pick-
ing the concrete detail that expresses most. Eliot's style combines
the particular with a constant application to the general; the com-
bination of erlebte Rede and authorial statement allows her to
comment continuously on the novel's characters and events. In addi-
tion, she uses dialogue to give the characters' own speech, and yet
she also places the dialogue in a context which either ironically
restricts it or sympathetically heightens it. Moreover, Eliot uses
imagery to give negative or positive shades to character. Thus,
language, syntax, and imagery combine to create vivid, realistic
portraits of people; Eliot subordinates technique to developing
characters; she is most interested in presenting fairly and accurately
the complexity of human beings and their relationships.

The author-reader relationship of *Middlemarch* is close and
personal. Eliot speaks of her own feelings and her own society; she
develops a consistent, distinctive authorial voice. The reader is
confident in Eliot's judgments, for she presents a balanced picture of her characters' strengths and weaknesses. Because of Eliot's thoroughness in depicting character, the reader has little responsibility in judging the characters. Moreover, since Eliot so often speaks directly on moral issues or generalizes from the particular experience, one has little to do in applying the novel's world to his own society; one need only respond to Eliot's suggestions and implications. Eliot makes clear her artistic and moral values, and the reader sees that she does a good job in carrying out both.

In contrast to Middlemarch, The Confidence-Man combines characteristics of both nineteenth-century and twentieth-century writing practices. Its structure and use of language resemble twentieth-century novels while its narrative technique resembles more closely nineteenth-century novels. Also, its moral values are not clear; one cannot be certain of Melville's stance on the issues he raises. In that lack of moral certainty and/or lack of interest in moral issues is characteristic of twentieth-century novels, The Confidence-Man further illustrates twentieth-century practices.

Like Middlemarch, the structure of The Confidence-Man includes both syntagmatic and paradigmatic components, but, in contrast to Middlemarch, the paradigmatic predominates. The syntagmatic structure is rather simple. The novel begins and ends on the same day, and event follows event in chronological order. However, the paradigmatic structure is decidedly complicated. Melville interrupts the chronological time of events both through his introduction of stories told by
various characters and by two chapters in which he comments on aesthetic matters. The stories and the chapters on aesthetic questions confuse the reader, for they do not conclude anything. The stories' narration is often questionable, for they are told by someone other than the original teller, often having gone through several retellings. The chapters on aesthetics reason circularly and qualify any positive statement so that it has no impact. The understatements and contradictions make the reader despair of finding "the" meaning; and the reader feels that Melville is playing a game of hide-and-seek in which the reader never wins. No straightforward authorial views can be found.

The concept of language shown in The Confidence-Man is distinctly twentieth-century. Words are symbolic rather than referential. They have multiple meanings created through use in different contexts. The authorial voice and the different voices of the Con-Man confuse the reader; their words, syntax, and imagery create ambivalence about possible meanings. The reader cannot decide what is meant; certain statements seem satirical, but the reader is not sure what is being satirized. Moreover, the frequent puns create double meanings; and the meanings of words like "confidence" and "charity" change from situation to situation. The language and style are perfect vehicles for hiding secret meanings; and what one finally decides about the novel depends on one's ability to penetrate the language and syntax, and, ironically enough, on one's confidence that a meaning is there; by the end of The Confidence-Man, one may very well decide that one
cannot judge either what is true or what is false about its meaning.

Yet the reader is likely to feel frustrated from his inability to decide. The presence of satire and all the philosophical arguments presumes a right position and a wrong position; thus, the reader feels the necessity for deciding upon a true meaning, and yet also sees the impossibility of doing so. Similarly, the concern for accuracy in statement shown by the qualifications seemingly reflects concern for truth, but the qualifications vitiate the statements made. Melville seems uncomfortable with the lack of true meanings; he works through understatement and negation, through unreliable narrators and characters. That the Con-Man is often satanic and supernatural suggests an uneasiness with the idea that true meanings are not to be found. The darkness and confusion show Melville's ties to the nineteenth-century. Eliot develops clear moral values; Melville cannot do that, but he shows his discomfort with his lack of moral certainties.

Because of the reader's difficulties in understanding The Confidence-Man, the author-reader relationship is not close or congenial. The reader suspects Melville of playing games; he feels that Melville asks him to decide about meaning but makes it impossible for him to do so. Yet for all his frustration, the reader also feels a kind of black comedy in the lack of meaning. One rather enjoys the feeling that Melville is satirizing all the popular canons of his time—Christianity, optimism, and materialism. In the gullibility of the Con-Man's victims, one sees a dark side to human nature that gets exactly what it deserves. This kind of comedy creates an
emotional ambivalence in the reader; he does not know whether Melville intends him to laugh or cry, and he certainly does both.

In that Melville addresses the reader directly, he shows a nineteenth-century authorial presence; his presence in this way is precisely what frustrates the reader. The reader expects a nineteenth-century author who guides and directs; instead, the authorial voice confuses him.

In contrast to *Middlemarch* and *The Confidence-Man*, *Absalom, Absalom!* does not have an authorial voice or an omniscient narration. Its structure is almost totally paradigmatic. It calls attention to its lack of traditional structural elements. The narrators are not developed directly; one has little information about their personality and feelings. There are only two events in the usual sense of the word: Quentin's going to the Sutpen mansion, and Shreve and Quentin's conversation in their room at Harvard. Time does not proceed in an orderly manner, but rather past, present, and future merge and interact.

Because the reader feels compelled to create his own chronology, he creates the syntagmatic structure. Initially the reader wants to know the facts of Sutpen's life; but as each narrator tells Sutpen's story in a different version, the reader realizes that the facts are ultimately unknowable. As a result, the reader shifts his interest to Quentin and Shreve's storytelling, which is the major component of the paradigmatic structure. The novel ends without completing the syntagmatic structure because the reader does not know what Quentin will do about his ambivalence; in not completing the syntagmatic within
the recit, Faulkner shows his emphasis on the paradigmatic. He allows the reader to decide what the Sutpen story will mean for Quentin's future. By not ordering thoughts, time, or scene in a consecutive pattern, Faulkner asks the reader to create both the paradigmatic and syntagmatic structures in the process of reading the novel.

The language and style of *Absalom, Absalom!* also contribute to the need for reader participation. Throughout the novel Faulkner's innovative syntax postpones decisions about meaning and creates the sense of never being finished. The repetition of words and images by the different narrators creates a composite meaning formed by the reader as he compares the different versions. While words are referential in nineteenth-century novels, they are symbolic in twentieth-century novels; words are transformational in that their meaning changes from context to context. The cumulative effect of Faulkner's style is richness and complexity; the sophistication of technique is an end in itself. As *Absalom, Absalom!* shows, the twentieth-century novel revels in complexity of technique; thus, style shows much more individual variation between authors.

In contrast to the two earlier novels, *Absalom, Absalom!* does not have an authorial voice. The third-person narrator is impersonal; Faulkner does not address the reader directly. The third-person narrator restricts his comments to description of physical scene or analysis of the psychological states of the other narrators. He does not seem aware of an audience; he does not go beyond the novel's world to that of the reader. Because the third-person narrator does
not compare the novel's world to a "real" world, the reader is the one who decides whether to apply his experience of the novel to his own life. Absalom, Absalom! shows no evidence of its author being interested in moral implications. Rather, Faulkner seems interested in how characters (or people) come to create their own sense of what is true and real; the way the mind orders and interprets present sense experiences and memories of the past concerns him.

From the analysis of structure, language and style, and the author-reader relationship, one sees how the novel changes between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. First, the novel shifts from a syntagmatic to a paradigmatic structure. If one examines a number of modern novels, one sees their emphasis on the paradigmatic. As mentioned in Chapter I, Robert Scholes sees James Joyce's Ulysses as a work in which paradigmatic possibilities often break the action. Other Faulkner novels such as The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying also emphasize paradigmatic structure. The implications of words and events, the interpretations which a reader makes, are of primary importance in novels having no direct authorial comment.

The change from omniscient narration to narration by various characters or by an outside observer also gives more responsibility to the reader. The reader must judge the reliability of the narrators and form his own sense of the novel's meaning. Henry James's The Golden Bowl, The Ambassadors, and The Wings of the Dove--to mention only three--show reliance on the reader's ability to distinguish viewpoints and decide about a narrator's accuracy. Joseph Conrad's Lord Jim
requires that one assess Marlowe as a narrator. The kind of interest
Faulkner has in the mind perceiving and ordering reality, as seen
through his development of Quentin, can also be seen in James's work,
in Joyce's, and in Virginia Woolf's.

The shift in concept of language from the nineteenth to the twen-
tieth century can also be seen in other modern novels. Ulysses and
Finnegan's Wake, in addition to other Faulkner novels, show words to
be symbolic and transformational. The change in stylistic technique
from a rather standard syntax to an innovative syntax can be seen in
Gertrude Stein's Three Lives, in Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse,
and, of course, in Joyce's work. One sees a love of technique and
interest in style.

The author-reader relationship of early twentieth-century novels
requires more participation from the reader; the author as a controlling
influence retreats, and the reader takes responsibility for interpreting
the novel. Conrad, Ford, James, and Joyce all rely on the reader to
interpret their work. One does not see interest in directing the
reader to moral applications; the reader decides whether to apply the
novel's world to his own.

To sum up, one sees a shift from authorial responsibility to
reader responsibility between the nineteenth and early twentieth
centuries. The shift from syntagmatic to paradigmatic structure, the
shift in language and stylistic practice, and the shift in the author-
reader relationship contribute to the need for a reader's participation.
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