THE INFLUENCE OF FAULKNER ON SIMON AND BUTOR
ABSTRACT

Name: Hazel Redfern Weldon

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Summary:

This thesis explores the influence of William Faulkner on the French New Novelists, and particularly the effect of his work on Claude Simon and Michel Butor. I begin with an appraisal of the reception given to Faulkner's work by the French critics. Then I attempt to discover the extent of his direct influence on Simon and Butor, and the extent to which the two French writers have modified and adapted his methods. The analysis illustrates the transmission of a powerful personal literary influence from one culture to a very different culture.

The main aspects I consider of this influence are the use of interior monologue, the role of memory, and the fragmentation of time. For documentation and source material I have compared La Route des Flandres by Claude Simon and L'Emploi du Temps by Michel Butor with Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom! because of striking similarities in theme and structure.
The Influence of Faulkner on Claude Simon and Michel Butor

- by -

Hazel Weldon

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Chapter 1

Review of French Critical Literature on Faulkner

In the nineteen thirties French critics classed Faulkner with many other American writers, like Hemingway, Dos Passos, Fitzgerald and Steinbeck, as merely one of several interesting specimens of the post-war generation. Over the years, though, his stature in France has grown in a quite remarkable way, so that he has now come to be numbered with the great international figures such as Proust, Kafka and Joyce. Like them, Faulkner is recognized as a major innovator in technique and content, one of the guides who has shown how to revitalize the novel as a literary form.

In France at the present time novelists like Nathalie Sarraute, Claude Simon, Alain Robbe-Grillet and Michel Butor are responding to the challenge of these leaders to break away from established patterns in literature. Grouped together as the creators of "le nouveau roman", they have in common chiefly an experimental attitude to writing. They value Faulkner as a pioneer who risked failure in order to make each novel correspond in form to the particular vision of reality presented. His freedom from conventional methods of telling a story has encouraged them to reject the
organization of events into a chronological plot and the revelation of character in action. These elements, which were traditionally the backbone of the novel, appear to the New Novelists as outmoded mechanical contrivances. They belong to a theory of the novel which reflects outdated philosophical ideas no longer relevant to the modern situation of man.

The dominant philosophy in Western Europe today is phenomenology, and to a very large extent the New Novelists adopt the tenets of phenomenologists concerning the nature of man's experience. Basic ideas from the philosophy of Edmund Husserl are exploited by these novelists. Man's knowledge of the world comes through his perceptions; objects reveal themselves to the individual consciousness, which gives them meaning. Husserl's critique of knowledge began with the study of these objects in consciousness as intentions of consciousness, that is, as meanings. He attempted to develop a rigorous science of the essential structures of consciousness. The method of phenomenology is to suspend belief in the reality of objects while reflecting upon the act of consciousness in giving meaning to the data of experience. Novelists of today who take as their subject the way a consciousness deals with
perceptions, and gives them meaning, are applying the phenomenological method to fictional experience.

It is not surprising that these novelists have studied the work of Joyce and Faulkner for techniques of revealing the contents of an inner consciousness through interior monologue. Although interior monologue had been used before, notably by Dujardin in *Les Lauriers sont coupés* in 1887, it was not until the publication of *Ulysses* in 1922 that the enormous potentiality of stream-of-consciousness writing became apparent. Faulkner's explorations of the possibilities of this technique were experiments aimed at the fullest possible expression of an inner reality. His influence on the New Novelists is due to their realization that this inner reality was for Faulkner, as it is for them, not a psychological state, but the meaning of the world bestowed upon it by an individual consciousness.

I have chosen as the subject matter of this thesis the influence of Faulkner on Claude Simon and Michel Butor. These two writers seem to me to accept Faulkner as a guide to methods of revealing the way an individual consciousness deals with the impressions it receives. Also both of them resemble Faulkner in opposing cosmic time, which
destroys the past, to interior time, which preserves past experience in the memory of an individual.

In order to assess the influence of Faulkner on Butor and Simon it is useful to trace briefly the changing attitudes in France to the work of the American writer. The credit for introducing Faulkner to the French goes to Maurice Edgar Coindreau. Before any translations of Faulkner appeared, Coindreau wrote an article about him in La Nouvelle Revue Francaise, in June, 1931. At this time the publishing company of Gallimard had decided to postpone publication of Coindreau's translation of *As I Lay Dying* until they had brought out Raimbault and Delgove's translation of *Sanctuary*, because its sensational theme would attract a larger public. Coindreau was aware that the more discriminating French readers might reject Faulkner because of distasteful themes and violence in his novels. In this first article on Faulkner, Coindreau set out to capture the intellectuals as well as devotees of "le roman noir" by calling attention to Faulkner's

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technique, his use of images and symbols, and his successful evocation of a mood charged with mystery and hallucination. It is interesting to note that Coindreau was the first to link Faulkner's preoccupation with sex and death to his underlying puritanism, which was the source of disgust with the world. ³ A recognizable moral viewpoint made sense of the apparently gratuitous horror. Also Coindreau attempted to forestall impatience with Faulkner's difficult style by explaining the special place given in the novels to inarticulate people who cannot express their feeling directly. The art of Faulkner is to reveal these emotions indirectly.

After the appearance of Tandis que j'agonise in 1934, further efforts by Coindreau to smooth the way for Faulkner in France include his review of the American edition of Light in August in La Nouvelle Revue Francaise of August, 1933, ⁴ and the preface to his own translation of this novel. This preface, "Le puritanisme de William Faulkner," appeared first in

³ Coindreau, "Faulkner tel que je l'ai connu," Preuves, (Feb. 1963) 144, 9-14. Coindreau gives the text of a letter from Faulkner written April 13, 1932. In this letter Faulkner acknowledges the fact that this puritanism had not been apparent to him until Coindreau pointed it out.

⁴ NRF, (August 1933), 41, 302-305.
Here Coindreau developed the ideas presented in his first article on Faulkner in 1931. He explained in more detail that puritanism is the source of Faulkner's idealism and also of his hatred of sexual relations. Violence in the novels is unleashed when men realize they have lost the innocence and idealism of their childhood. Coindreau also discussed the subjective approach to reality and time, which results from the personal accounts of events by witnesses instead of objective relation of the story by the author. Similarly, the use of interior monologue takes the reader further into subjective reality by giving access to the impressions events have left in the minds of the main characters.

Coindreau's translation of *The Sound and the Fury* appeared in 1938 with his preface, which introduces the reader to this difficult novel by telling the story briefly. In his attempt to clarify themes, Coindreau simplifies plot and motivation. For instance, Jason's hatred of his niece is presented as the central theme of the novel, and Quentin's suicide is explained as the result of personal

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jealousy when Caddy married. The four parts of the novel are compared to movements of a demoniac symphony. Difficulties in the way of comprehension, due to Faulkner's style, are shown to result from his deliberate attempt to create mood rather than chronological plot. Coindreau points out that his translation makes some sections a little clearer than the original English because the precision of the French language had led him, inevitably, to clarify the text.  

André Malraux' "Préface" to Sanctuaire was published in La Nouvelle Revue Française on November 1, 1933. Its influence was so great that almost every French critic who discusses Sanctuary quotes Malraux' statement "C'est l'intrusion de la tragédie grecque dans le roman policier." He compared the novelist to a tragic poet who expresses what obsesses him, not to exorcise the obsession, (the obsessional object will reappear in his next work), but to change its nature; for, by expressing it with other elements, he makes the obsession enter the relative universe of things he has

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conceived and dominated." The characters in Faulkner's work, however, are crushed by their obsessions, which are their inescapable destiny. By associating the irremediable, one of Faulkner's favourite words, with the obsessional and the concept of Greek Destiny at the same time, Malraux paved the way for further comparisons of Faulkner's stories with ancient myth.

A similar approach can be seen in Valéry Larbaud's preface to Tandis que j'agonise. The story is interpreted as a modern version of an ancient rite. Addie, the queen who must be buried with pomp, Anse (King Ulysses), the princes (their male offspring) and in particular Cash "le très habile charpentier, boiteux comme Héphaistos," Dewey Dell the princess, and the chorus (neighbours led by Vernon and Cora Tull) all play roles in an Homeric epic to which French readers can relate though the setting is unfamiliar. It is the human truth of the characters Larbaud emphasizes rather than the exotic Southern milieu. He notes that the language of interior monologue is heightened prose with Biblical overtones. Tentatively he suggests it might be defended as

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9 Valéry Larbaud, "Préface à Tandis que j'agonise," (Paris, 1934).
realistic, despite the "poor white" status of the Bundrens, because the Bible was familiar to them as members of a Protestant sect.

This reading of Larbaud's contrasts sharply with an interpretation by the novelist, Eugène Dabit who, in 1933, had written a novel, called Un mort tout neuf, inspired by As I Lay Dying. When Dabit reviewed the French translation of As I Lay Dying in Europe on September 18, 1934, he stressed the realism in Faulkner's depiction of primitive people and primitive instincts. A brief quotation will demonstrate, though, that he felt something more powerful than simple realism in the juxtaposition of opposites in this novel:

This realism is pitiless, violent, on a large scale, occasionally comic, with deep blacks, sulphurous yellows, bright reds. Its main object is to present men in their daily existence, to tell us of their work, to show us their defects and their passions. But all this is offered us pell-mell, in a way which cannot but surprise us, with outbursts of lyricism, punctuated with accents of grating irony, with nothing attenuated, soft-pedaled or polished. It appears that one of the preoccupations of William Faulkner is to present us tragedies in the raw, without preparation, to use his characters somewhat as symbols and to give his landscape, smells and lights the same importance as his characters, everything being blended
Another introduction to Faulkner's work, from the viewpoint of a psychologist, was provided by Maurice Le Breton. In *Etudes Anglaises*, in 1937, he discussed the comparative psychology of characters in *Soldier's Pay*, *As I Lay Dying*, *The Sound and the Fury*, and *Absalom, Absalom*. Since he was concerned with these novels as English literature, Le Breton does not mention that two of them were not yet translated. *Soldier's Pay* was translated by Maxime Gaucher in 1948 and published by Gallimard with the title *Monnaie de Singe*. *Absalom, Absalom!* translated by R.N. Raimbault, was published by Gallimard in 1953. Le Breton believed the interior monologues of *As I Lay Dying* achieved a disintellectualisation of the consciousness. *The Sound and the Fury* went too far by allowing chaotic mental states to confuse presentation of reality without providing the reader with a norm for perspective. However, in *Absalom, Absalom!* the technique was successful because the reader could try to discover the real meaning of events, in the past through the memories of normal people. In this

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novel the reader is presented with various interpretations of the story by characters whose knowledge of the facts is incomplete. When all the facts are revealed the reader is able to judge the true meaning of the whole.

The next major development in French criticism of Faulkner began with the review by Jean-Paul Sartre of Sartoris, which had been translated in 1937. Published in February, 1938, in La Nouvelle Revue Francaise, this article drew other critics into serious discussion of the theoretical basis of Faulkner's art. Sartre felt that this novel was interesting because it revealed the early groping for a technique which was brought to perfection in Light in August. In Sartoris, imperfections made it possible to see that part of the effect of doomed characters, acting in response to some obscure necessity, depends upon the trick of withholding vital information. Because the reader is kept ignorant of the springs of action in characters, while the author knows perfectly well why they do, the author is guilty of "disloyalty" to his reader. By his silence on important events in the personal life of

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or the family history of a character, Faulkner manages to make actions which result directly from these past events appear to be irrational and inexplicable. He deliberately casts an aura of magic around actions in the present by suppressing the causes which led up to them. Sartre was ready to accept the characters in Light in August who act from a blind compulsion to destroy and be destroyed in turn, but the faulty technique of Sartoris had revealed to him the mechanics of an art whose validity he now questioned.

In June and July, 1939, Sartre's article on The Sound and the Fury appeared in La Nouvelle Revue Française. Concerning himself chiefly with Faulkner's metaphysics of time, Sartre compared him with Proust because both writers deprive their characters of liberty to act by cutting off the possibility of a future. Here, as in his review of Sartoris, it was the view of Sartre that once we understand that the characters are completely motivated by choices already made in their own past, or that of their family, we realize that they are not using reason or will to decide their course of action. This time it was not the technique but the philosophy

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of Faulkner which troubled Sartre.

The subtitle of this article "La temporalité chez Faulkner" and the quotations from Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* indicate that Sartre was applying existential judgments to the novel. The surprising fact is that he mistook Faulkner's static man, in the person of Quentin, for the author himself. His famous description of Faulkner as a man sitting backwards in an open car, and seeing the territory already traversed looming up from all sides, does not really apply to the author but to Quentin. It is a description based on the distinction Heidegger draws between the authentic man's resoluteness and capacity to look to the future and the inauthentic man's lostness in time.

The reviews of *Sartoris* and *The Sound and the Fury* helped to make Faulkner popular with intellectuals in France, especially after the Second World War, when critics were greatly influenced by the opinions of Sartre. A succession of critical studies of Faulkner dealt with his philosophical ideas and with his use of interior monologue to reveal the psychology of his characters. In 1946 Sartre's friend and colleague, Jean Pouillon, wrote *Temps et Roman*, in which a chapter was devoted to Faulkner's concept of time and destiny. Themes briefly dealt with by Coindreau, Malraux
and Sartre were developed into a theory of the art of Faulkner. In 1948 Claude Edmonde Magny continued to search for the philosophical implications in Faulkner's novels in _L'Age du Roman Américain_.

Beginning with a study of the close relationship between American novelistic and cinematic techniques, Mme. Magny pointed out that the camera, which might be considered objective because it records what is there, is in fact subjective because it records objects and events from one viewpoint only, the spectator's. In Faulkner's novels she saw the influence of cinematic technique in his use of a single viewpoint, like a camera eye, to describe events. No explanation is given by the author of the significance to the narrator of those events because Faulkner wishes to recreate the feeling of experience as it is being lived, by an individual with a partial, and sometimes with a completely distorted, view of reality.

Mme. Magny discussed time in Faulkner from two aspects: interior time which gives past events vastly more importance than present experience in the consciousness of characters,

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and metaphysical time, which is the author's setting for his characters, a time before Redemption where men live without hope. For them the past was a time of action, when their own destiny was decided. They remember, and are conscious of a burden of sin and guilt which they cannot escape. The metaphysical time is related to Faulkner's puritanism, and his belief that the world is lost and given over to violence and destruction.

Another important study of Faulkner's characters as they apprehend the real world was begun in Jean-Jacques Mayoux' "Le Temps et la Destinée chez William Faulkner" in 1948. This article gave special attention to characters who rebel against their fate and refuse to accept defeat. Various ways of protesting were outlined, for example, the rejection of modern living by indomitable old ladies. More tragic protests were shown to be those of weaker people, like Quentin, who die rather than fight for their ideals. A second article by Mayoux in 1952, "La Création du réel chez William Faulkner," dealt with Faulkner's description of revealing gestures and physical appearances. Mayoux observed that the physical
reality described is a concrete manifestation of inner reality. "The power of Faulkner comes from his being a man for whom finally nothing exists beyond the interior world."  

At the same time that the philosophy of Faulkner was being interpreted by the critics I have mentioned, a number of others were emphasizing his regionalism. Two articles by American critics in *La Revue Internationale* in 1946 and 1947 gave impetus to this interpretation. Malcolm Cowley's was a translation of the "Introduction" to his anthology *The Portable Faulkner*, showing how Faulkner created a myth of the South. Robert Penn Warren's drew attention to the opposition between Southern virtues which Faulkner wished to preserve and the sins of the South which Faulkner believed must be expiated. Liberty to act depended upon expiation of the sins which drew upon the South a curse of fatality. Warren suggested that technique by which the novelist weaves these themes into the fabric of stories, and particularly his use of symbols, should be studied more closely.  

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A few years later Michel Mohrt, who edited the first French anthology of Faulkner in 1956, continued the study of Faulkner as regionalist in a chapter of Le Nouveau Roman Américain (1955). The first part was concerned with the myth of the South and the relationship of modern Southerners to this myth. Characters who had withdrawn from active participation in life were symbols of a disappearing tradition. Faulkner's hatred of those who brought ruin to the South by exploiting the land or by rejecting the traditional morality of the great families resulted in portraits of demon-possessed characters who seem destined to violence. At times the violence of nature appears to be revenge against man, particularly in Wild Palms and Old Man. A note at the end of the chapter is titled "Une Fable: 'Nouveau Testament' de Faulkner." It refers to the theory of Mme. Magny that the early novels were set in a time before Redemption. Mohrt points out that now, in A Fable we have the appearance of a Christ figure, a Redeemer. He comments on the fact that here Faulkner does not attempt to be realistic. This story is frankly symbolic, yet Mohrt shows that the theory that suffering redeems man can be

traced back to the early novels where the capacity of the Negro to suffer and endure is integrated realistically into the action. A line runs from martyred blacks and defeated whites in Faulkner's literature of the South to the Corporal in A Fable.

After the publication of Descends, Moise, in 1955, an article by Hubert Juin, "L'univers clos de William Faulkner" appeared in Esprit, November, 1956. Juin continued to treat Faulkner as a regionalist but related the problems faced by Southerners to the problems faced by humanity everywhere. He also commented on the modern trend in Faulkner, as in Proust and Joyce, to involve the reader in a thoughtful consideration of facts presented through the limited vision of a narrator.

In 1957 and 1959 La Revue des Lettres Modernes published special editions devoted to articles on Faulkner. The first presented American views, which gave a much broader outlook on themes and literary style than the French reader could have had before. While the second also had several articles by Americans, it gave as well the opinions of three

French critics, Roger Asselineau, Maurice Le Breton and 21 Cyrille Arnavon.

"Faulkner, moraliste puritain" by Asselineau, built upon the base of criticism by Coindreau, Malraux and Sartre. There was an effort to give unity to Faulkner's work by showing that the violence in early novels and the positive assertion of values in later stories are both related to his puritanism. Asselineau quoted the list of virtues by which men will endure found in Go Down Moses and Faulkner's Nobel Prize acceptance speech. Le Breton in "Le thème de la Vie et de la Mort dans As I Lay Dying" compared this novel with The Sound and the Fury because both deal essentially with problems of the self. The major characters of As I Lay Dying were analyzed with reference to their search for self-definition.

One of the very few French critics to discuss Faulkner's attitude to Negroes, Arnavon, criticized the way Southern history is presented in the novel Absalom, Absalom!

Maurice Le Breton, "Le thème de la Vie et de la Mort dans As I Lay Dying," RLM 40-42, 292-308.
His article, "Absalon, Absalon! et l'Histoire", confused the viewpoint of the author with that of the chief narrator, Quentin Compson. Arnavon believed that Faulkner wanted to discover the causes of the defeat of the South, but could not accept the idea that the chief cause was the enslavement of the Negro. Consequently, the French critic thought Faulkner, in this book, went over the same facts many times but still did not grasp their meaning. This style of telling a story led to "reification" of the past as certain scenes became fixed in the reader's mind. Arnavon compared this technique to that of an ancient bard who preserves the myths of history but does not analyze them. His complaint against Faulkner was that he missed an opportunity to point out past mistakes as well as to appreciate some improvements time had brought to the South. More confident than most French critics in his analysis of Faulkner's style, Arnavon was amused by the baroque rhetoric, which he considered natural to the author, but shaped to some extent by the reading of Conrad's literary English. Joyce and Stein, he believed, were the writers who taught Faulkner the discontinuous and oblique method of telling a story.

One article in this special edition was on difficulties in translating Faulkner into French. It was a chapter
from *Faulkner en France* by an American, S.D. Woodworth. This book, published in 1959, traced the influence of Faulkner on French literature from 1931 to 1952. Besides giving brief summaries of the major critical articles which appeared, Woodworth discussed particular French novels of this period which borrowed themes or stylistic novelties from Faulkner. An excellent bibliography at the end of the book listed reviews and criticisms of Faulkner published in France up to 1959. 22

A natural question to ask at this point is whether the French and American views of Faulkner are similar. In 1960 an article by Percy G. Adams "The Franco-American Faulkner" pointed out certain marked differences. 23 Some are due to the fact that the French were ready to accept as realistic the picture of America presented by Faulkner, while Americans knew from experience what was sensational and unrealistic in his work. This probably accounted for the higher value placed on *Pylon* and *Sanctuary* by French critics than American. Also, the conception of Faulkner as a regionalist persisted in France longer than in America. Techniques and language were


never as thoroughly analyzed by French critics as they had been by American, while humour in Faulkner was almost completely ignored in France, as well as the many portraits of Negroes. Other differences were due to the direction given in each country by major critics. For instance, Sartre's conception of time in the novels dominated French criticism while the quite different theory of Olga Vickery remained unknown. Her theory was that the characters are aware of the future but that some refuse to take their place in it. Methods of explaining the psychology of characters differed in the two countries also. Several American critics referred to theories of Freud and Jung to throw light on abnormal psychological states while French critics did not.

During the 1950's novelists who were trying to break away from the traditional novel form frequently mentioned Faulkner in critical articles and books. Their interest in him was aroused by the critical acclaim, but they are more concerned with his techniques to obtain certain effects than with his subject matter or his characters. Nathalie Sarraute, for example, cites Faulkner briefly in l'Ere du Soupçon, revealing the new attitude to this work. Like many of the novelists of this decade, she rejects plot and character study, but looks for revelations of the inarticulate substrata
of consciousness. Those who succeed in exploring subterranean human psychology are Dostoievski, Kafka, and Faulkner.\textsuperscript{24}

The second point Mme. Sarraute makes in relating Faulkner to the revolt against the conventional novel is that he demands co-operation from the reader. She mentions the confusion caused by the fact that there are two different Quentins in \textit{The Sound and the Fury}. The effort to understand which one is meant draws the reader into creative reconstruction of the novel.

Alain Robbe-Grillet mentions Faulkner as a forerunner of the modern novel, in which plot is losing importance, in his collected volume of criticism, \textit{Pour un Nouveau Roman} (1957). He remarks that:

\begin{quote}
Proust's and Faulkner's books are, in fact, full of stories, but with Proust they dissolve and are recombined to form a mental architecture of time, while the development of Faulkner's themes with their multiple associations causes such confusion in chronology that no sooner has something been revealed by the narrative than it seems to be buried again, or drowned.\textsuperscript{25}
\end{quote}


In 1956 Michel Butor wrote "Les Relations de Parenté dans L'Ours de William Faulkner," which was published in Les Lettres Nouvelles, May, 1956. What impresses Butor is the careful building, through many novels, of a tradition of the South by which characters know their place in a family, a region, and a history. The reader himself is not treated as an outsider who must be told the facts about the characters. Instead he is plunged into an existing situation and slowly gathers information from conversations and interior monologues. The tradition itself is the heritage of modern Southerners and Faulkner has clarified its meaning so that they may understand their history. His purpose is to allow them, through understanding, to free themselves from the fatality of the South.

Claude Simon has expressed admiration of Faulkner in interviews but has not written about his work. The influence of Faulkner on Claude Simon and Michel Butor cannot be assessed by what they have said about him but by a critical evaluation of that influence in their own novels.

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An excellent review of the work of some New Novelists was written for *Esprit* in 1958 by Olivier de Magny. Of particular interest are his ideas on Claude Simon and Michel Butor. Simon's *Le Vent* he described as a search for truth behind appearances and Butor's *L'Emploi du Temps* as a novel in the process of becoming as the narrator searches for meaning in experience. In both he saw the influence of Faulkner and he singled out *Absalom, Absalom!* as the novel which fits perfectly Butor's conception of the way a novel should be written:

William Faulkner in basing *Absalom, Absalom!* on a question, develops his novel exactly like the posing of a question, writes a novel which puts the novel to the question. In *Absalom, Absalom!* the thrust, the prolific organic growth of a drama is restored to us through the search for its meaning by the novelist and his characters. Faulkner appears really to be the initiator of what Michel Butor calls the novel as research.\(^27\)

W.M. Frohock in "Faulkner and the 'Roman Nouveau': An Interim Report" which was published in *The Bucknell Review* in 1962 stressed the fact that the new novel usually makes no attempt to differentiate one character from another by

characteristic patterns of speech. The traditional novel had usually paid great attention to conversation as a means of revealing the personality, but, since the new novel rejects the idea that character revelation is a useful function of the novel, the use of characteristic language is rejected as an outmoded novelistic technique. Instead the reader is confronted with the internal, unspoken feelings of a person given in the form of interior monologue. In Faulkner these novelists found a model showing how to express unspoken feelings through the device of a poetic Voice (italicized by Frohock) of the subconscious.

Frohock mentioned Claude Simon and Michel Butor particularly as influenced by Faulkner. Claude Simon read Faulkner in English, and his novels l'Herbe and Le Vent show the influence in obsessed characters and their sense of doom. The Voice of Simon reads much like Faulkner's in sentences which run into many pages. Also, Simon withholds information so that the reader must puzzle over meaning. Although characters from one novel reappear in others, Simon has not placed them in a setting which could compare with Yoknapatawpha County. Frohock saw a clear indication of Faulkner's influence upon Butor's style in the long aperiodic sentences and paragraphs which may begin and end within a sentence. The liberties Butor took with normal French syntax
reveal that he followed the example of Faulkner, the incorrigible experimenter.

John K. Simon's doctoral thesis "The Glance of the Idiot: a thematic study of Faulkner and Modern French Fiction" (1963) is the most exhaustive treatment to date of the connection between Faulkner and the 'nouveau roman.'

The two elements which furnished Simon's point of departure, flood and the idiot figure, are not symbols of regional decadence but of the human condition as man faces the possible cataclysmic end of civilization. Apocalyptic scenes in As I Lay Dying, Wild Palms and Old Man show violence in nature drawing humans, animals and inanimate matter back toward original chaos. This sense of universal decomposition is similar to that of Malraux and Sartre. At the human level the vision closest to matter is the idiot's which is pre-historic and pre-conceptual.

Simon's thesis proposed a relation between the apocalyptic landscape of contemporary fiction and the mind of

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the idiot. Characters in Faulkner who cannot withstand fatality are related to their counterparts, in the novels of Robbe-Grillet, Claude Simon and Butor, who are defeated by the inhuman, objective world. The anguish of modern man, who doubts the significance of objects and thoughts, was viewed by Simon as nostalgia for the idiot consciousness which bridges the gap between the objective existence of things and the mind in isolation.

Simon traced the crisis of consciousness in French literature from Flaubert to the 'nouveau roman.' Flaubert began the trend towards exposition of the writer's problems in creating fiction from his own observation of reality. The modern writer continues to draw the reader's attention to the process of creation which results in the novel. Some techniques which bring the reader close to the creative author are the use of present and imperfect tenses rather than the passé simple, and the use of first person accounts of events rather than telling the story in the third person from an omniscient viewpoint. Similarly the integration of an extended commentary on the writing of fiction into some modern novels is a new kind of realism which focuses attention on the creative process. New Novelists demand that each reader co-operate in this creative
process by recreating the novel's meaning for himself from his own experience. In the work of Faulkner writers found an example of how to involve the reader in this type of re-construction. Faulkner's use of interior monologue presented the reader with the problem of discovering meaning in broken fragments of remembered experience. Also Faulkner's persistent experiments with new forms encouraged modern authors to attempt a fusion of form and content in prose creations which expand the definition of fiction.
Chapter 2
Faulkner and the New Novel

French criticism of Faulkner between 1931 and 1959 reflects the gradual shift in emphasis upon negative aspects of modern life in his early fiction to positive values, presented as vital to survival, in later works. The later novels have served chiefly to clarify issues in the more starkly pessimistic major works. A startling combination of violence with puritan sexual morality was first explained by Coindreau in terms of Faulkner's personal inheritance of puritan values in conflict with the materialistic values of society. Gradually the more general theme of the constraining effect of an unchanging system upon living and changing human beings began to emerge as one of Faulkner's main subjects. Gradually also it became apparent that the American South was a microcosm of the Western World. The devastated South after the Civil War could be equated with post-war Europe. Faulkner had discovered in his early fiction the way to demonstrate the effects of the disintegration of a social structure and the rise of an industrial society which reifies human beings.

Another element, which at first shocked the French, was the chaos of minds revealed in the interior monologues of idiots or deeply disturbed characters. In time this came
to be accepted, like the violence, as the symbol of human disorientation in a hostile world. Similarly the inability of some of Faulkner's characters to express their thoughts and feelings now appears as an artistic exaggeration of the isolation from others which complements modern man's alienation.

It is interesting also to trace the changing attitude to Faulkner's habit of suppressing essential facts of a story until almost the end of the novel. This struck Sartre as a dishonest trick, but Mme. Magny and Mayoux, among others, explained that the facts were unimportant to Faulkner. It was the mental state of anguish he wished to present as vividly as possible. Explanations of the events which led to this state of mind were secondary. The New Novelists have accepted this analysis but they have viewed Faulkner's suppression of facts from a slightly different angle also. They emphasize the puzzle aspect of his novels which invited the reader to recreate a situation from facts as they are revealed. By the use of some devices of the detective story in serious fiction Faulkner is able to reproduce the enigmatic quality of real life. In real life a situation may baffle us because we do not know all the facts or because our personal bias prevents us from understanding their meaning. Faulkner slowly reveals
the facts to be judged objectively by the reader through the chaotic monologues of people who relive in memory events that for some reason block their progress to a realistic assessment of their present situation.

The New Novelists have learned this technique of plunging the reader into a flowing stream of experience which includes flash-backs and imagined events. From this inextricable tangle the reader is not expected to reconstruct a story but to recapture the sensation of living within another person's private world of experience. Explanations of this private world are provided solely by the involved protagonist, not by the author. The quest for meaning within a confused experience is the most significant link between Faulkner and the New Novelists.

The difficulty of understanding many of these novels is due to the fact that the reality represented fictionally is quite different from the reality in the traditional novel. Guided by the philosophy of phenomenology, the New Novelist rejects the idea that the world can be described as an objective reality. In his Encyclopédia du Nouveau Roman subtitled "La Crise du Roman Français et le Nouveau Réalisme" Pierre Astier relates the method of New Novelists to the philosophical method of phenomenologists. Descriptions of objects in the
novel conform to the precept of Husserl that things must first be described, not explained or analyzed. However, the objective world cannot be known except through the subjective consciousness of a perceiver. To describe things as they are perceived by an individual consciousness is in effect to reveal the perceiver.

The novelist, then, takes one person's consciousness of the objective world as his field of study in order to reveal the human being in his real situation vis-à-vis the world. This subjective consciousness of objects is a fluid, perpetually changing reality. To express this in language which truly renders the discontinuous flow of mental images the New Novelists transformed literary style. Traditional literary French imposes a clarity upon the idea expressed by logically constructed sentences with unambiguous meaning. As Coindreau and others found in translating Faulkner, the problem of reconstructing a state of mind in which the meaning of experience is still being sought frequently demands a fractured sentence structure, with connecting links suppressed.

Spoken French has been used to a great extent in modern novels but it can only be used realistically to convey thought which has been formulated into speech. The language of interior monologue in James Joyce and Faulkner provided
models of approach to the problem of expressing thoughts and feelings before they are spoken. Because the level of reality is deeper than the one normally expressed in conversation, both writers developed a style which conveys the immediacy of experience and the effect an experience has upon the consciousness of a character. Since the interior monologue is the unspoken form which reveals the contents of a character's mind these writers feel justified in translating feelings into 'special' prose which evokes a mental state in all its complexity and depth. However, among the modern French novelists only Claude Simon has imitated the rhetorical style of Faulkner. Most of them have simply taken the example of Joyce, Faulkner, Hemingway and others, to break away from the French literary style in their own fashion.

The question of content in the novel revolves around the problem of the replacement of an omniscient author by the limited consciousness of a narrator. This problem is essentially that substitution of a subjective vision of the world for the objective world the traditional novelist claimed to present places the reader on shifting sand, compared with the hard ground of the conventional novel. A subjective vision of reality may distort the truth and leave the reader puzzled about what really happened. In Faulkner the subjective may
be modified by having some sections related by the author, or by giving several different subjective accounts which amplify each other. The reader can in either case puzzle over what really happened and come to an answer which satisfies him. This element of puzzle is stressed by French critics of Faulkner as one of the links between him and the 'nouveau roman.'

The reason the New Novelists prefer a puzzle story to straight narrative is that they wish to present the reader with a problem which will reproduce the creative mental state of an author in the mind of the reader. Presenting the reader with an object which will stimulate his own creative faculties fulfills the modern requirement that literature be dynamic and produce a reaction in the real life of the reader. The writer withdraws from active life and perception of new objects to reflect upon his past experience. This is then re-modeled into an imagined story related by a narrator. The reader uses the writer's ordering of past experience into a pattern of objects, perceived by the narrator in the novel, as a puzzle which will reveal its meaning when the reader reflects upon the pattern.

In the work of Faulkner the New Novelists found experiments in the presentation of objects-in-consciousness. The
most striking instance of this technique was the interior monologue of Benjy in The Sound and the Fury because it presented the reader with the perceptions of a person as nearly mindless as it is possible to be. Objects are perceived but they do not acquire the meaning ordinary people assign to them automatically. In the first scene two men are described as hitting, moving a red flag, calling "caddie", then going across the pasture. When he hears the word caddie Benjy moans. It is some time before the meaning of this scene becomes clear to the reader. Two men are playing on a golf-course which had formerly been the pasture of the Compson's large estate. The pasture was sold to pay for Benjy's sister's wedding and to send his older brother Quentin to Harvard. Benjy loved to play in the pasture but is reconciled to its loss because he can watch the red flag. When the men call the caddie, Benjy moans because Caddy, his loving sister, went away many years before. Although he does not remember Caddy, hearing the name spoken recalls his loss.

Certain new experiences are repetitions of old ones and plunge Benjy into involuntary memory. Then every detail of the past experience is relived as though it were present time. Conversations from the past are repeated exactly as they occurred, providing the reader with an objective source of
information about the Compson family. To the modern novelists the importance of Benjy's section is in the study of a world of sensations as opposed to a world of acquired meanings. Also in this section personal time is completely unrelated to cosmic time. Benjy is static in a moving and changing world. He can relive past events but is mentally incapable of using them constructively. His lostness in time is as important to writers of phemonological novels as his perception of a world to which meaning has not been assigned.

Next in importance is Quentin's section because his alienation in the modern world is not described from outside but takes shape in the way he perceives the world. To give one example: his picture of Harvard on the day he intends to drown himself is a composite of a series of events which have brought him there, and which will end, for him, this day:

Let us sell Benjy's pasture so that Quentin may go to Harvard and I may knock my bones together and together. I will be dead in. Was it one year Caddy said. Shreve has a bottle in his trunk. Sir I will not need Shreve's I have sold Benjy's pasture and I can be dead in Harvard Caddy said in the caverns and the grottoes of the sea tumbling peacefully to the wavering tides because Harvard is such a fine sound forty acres is no high price for a fine sound. A fine dead sound we will swap Benjy's pasture for a fine dead sound.¹

Also associated in his mind with the loss of the pasture is Caddy's wedding and another series of events which led to her dishonour. It is this series of events which culminated in his decision to commit suicide.

His understanding of the meaning of the past events is clear. Condensed into a few pages of remembered conversation we find a realization of the snobbishness of his mother in sending him to Harvard, of the decline of his family into poverty and the hypocrisy of a wedding arranged to legalize the pregnancy of Caddy. Quentin is affected by past unhappiness with a nausea that makes him see the present in a pattern of disgust and despair.

Two elements in this section have a special link with the 'nouveau roman'. The journey by streetcar through the streets of Boston and the walk through the Italian section near the river are comparable to many such journeys through the labyrinth of a city in modern novels. The other element is the reference to reflecting water and to mirrors. In The Sound and the Fury the mirror in the Compson home reflects the innocent world of childhood and the water is like pieces of broken mirror reflecting Quentin's inability to adapt to its loss.
The impact of *As I Lay Dying* is similar to that of *The Sound and the Fury*, but modified by an ironic humour. Again the loss of a person reveals the latent disorder of a family. Addie the mother was the central figure around whom her children and husband were organized. Her death forces them to attempt to define their own nature in order to resist both hostile forces in nature and the ridicule of neighbours. Because her sons Cash and Jewel have inherited her need to relate to the objective world and other people through deeds not words, they are able to express themselves in action. Her son Darl inherited her strong desire for union with others, which was always frustrated. She had found out through living that human beings were isolated from one another and that words could not communicate the bitterness of that isolation. Darl attempts to transcend the limits of an isolated consciousness through his intuitive understanding of others. Like Benjy in *The Sound and the Fury*, he knows the secrets others are trying to hide. He pays for this gift by his inability to achieve a distinct idea of his own personality. Eventually he is judged by his family to be mad because, as Cash knows, he has come too close to revealing the hidden forces of disintegration which threaten the personality of everyone from within.

In *Absalom, Absalom!* the need for self-definition is expanded to include the necessity of understanding the
historical situation into which one is born. One representative figure has been chosen to illustrate this history and several different ways of telling the story result from the attempts of various narrators to relate the facts about one man. Each narrator has a slightly different set of facts to work with and the meaning he gives to those facts reflects his personal interest in the story. There is an indication in the first pages of the novel that the story of the protagonist will reveal the causes of the defeat of the South in the American Civil War. Each narrator stresses those facts which appear to him causally related to the downfall of the protagonist and the defeat of the South. The reader gets a composite picture which allows him to reflect upon the various interpretations as well as on the facts while he decides the meaning of the whole. Each version of the story is significant because new facts are revealed about the story and about the consciousness of each narrator.

By writing the novel as the telling of a story by different narrators, Faulkner demonstrates the method of composition which satisfies the conditions of a phenomenologist. In the words of Husserl, quoted by John Sturrock in The French New Novel, "I, the transcendental phenomenologist have objects . . . as a theme for my universal descriptions: solely as the
intentional correlates of modes of consciousness of them"
(Cartesian Meditations, p. 37).²

In the case of Quentin Compson, chief narrator of Absalom, Absalom! the objects perceived are first of all, the lady who is telling him a story from the past about the Sutpen family, and the room in which they sit. These objects are described from the viewpoint of a third person, but before the end of the novel we realize that the narrator has been Quentin himself, looking back several months later and describing this scene to Shreve his friend. The evidence for this is in Chapter VI of Absalom, Absalom! When Shreve first appears in the novel, entering the room where Quentin is reading a letter from his father, we find that he has already been told the story as we have read it in response to his demand, "Tell about the South."³

It is quite clear at this point that Quentin had decided that the best way to tell the truth about the South was by means of this particular story of the Sutpen family. The


story means something to Quentin who has reflected upon it between the experience of hearing it and relating it to Shreve. His mind has arranged the facts given to him in a pattern of despair from which he cannot extricate himself. To himself he does not appear as a modern man but as a ghost from the past who is lost in the present. The shuttered room in which the novel begins is a symbol of withdrawal from participation in the present to allow images from the past to occupy the mind. Miss Rosa Coldfield talks to Quentin and her voice revives the past in patches "like a stream, a trickle running from patch to patch of dried sand" (AA p. 8.). Between the patches are large areas of the past which remain to be revealed. The first chapter sets the mood of a story in which violence and defeat in the past overshadow the lives of the first two narrators. Thomas Sutpen is established as the protagonist and we see him through Miss Rosa's eyes as a Gothic demon. Later, less implacable witnesses will modify the picture to some extent. Her horror and outrage at the violence he apparently called upon himself are mirrored in her repulsion from the fact of his physical contacts with Negroes. The two horrors converge in her mind and the suspicion is planted in the reader's that miscegenation will play a rôle in the tragedy.

The second chapter gives a more objective witness
the chance to relate Sutpen to the community in which he lived. From the facts revealed, another facet of Sutpen's wickedness comes into view. Sutpen could not understand the complicated sense of honour which governed the actions of old Southern families. Dishonest dealings and wild behaviour marked him as an outsider, not a gentleman. Yet the community eventually condoned the evil he represented and shared the burden of his guilt. Later in the novel Quentin's father, Mr. Compson, extends his rôle from narrator to author of an imagined episode. He reveals the sinful ways of Old New Orleans in a story about octoroon women enslaved yet kept in luxury. The episode has the double purpose of demonstrating Mr. Compson's erotic preoccupations and of adding to the burdens of guilt which will call down retribution on the Old South.

As the complicated Sutpen story widens and deepens around the central violence the reader is taken again to a place of withdrawal. In the sixth chapter Quentin and his friend Shreve are at Harvard, far from the problems of the South, and far from the past when the events related by Quentin took place. They think about the story and its meaning, "... in the cold room ... dedicated to that best of ratio-cination ... --this room not only dedicated to it but set aside for it and suitably so ..." (AA p.280).
The design of Sutpen, to establish himself in the land and found a family is a pattern of rational behaviour common in the history of man. Here it is shown by Quentin and Shreve to be flawed by the absence of love. Identifying themselves with the sons of Sutpen, they relive in their imagination the tragic story of brothers divided by racial barriers. For Quentin certain aspects of the story are like doors shut in his face, preventing him from going beyond involvement to understanding. The responses of Quentin to situations he is reliving in imagination are formulated in language which reveals raw emotion. For him, the problems of the South are not far away and long ago, but here and now, still unresolved. The book is Faulkner's creative response to the fact that, for modern Southerners, the problems must be faced so that effective living can go on in the present.

Some of Faulkner's themes are very close to those explored by Sartre and other existentialists. An objective world transformed by disgust reflects the nausea of the perceiver in _La Nausée_ and _The Sound and the Fury_. _As I Lay Dying_ exposes the urge to death or reification by rigid definitions of the self and others, which closes the door to dynamic life. The need for continual revision of possibilities and assertion of position values is implicit in Faulkner's portraits of people lost in the past. The New
Novelists have been influenced greatly by the Sartrean concept of the human being, asserting his freedom by conscious choice of action for which he accepts responsibility. They have been much quicker than Sartre himself to see that Faulkner illustrates in his novels the 'lostness' of static man, unable to move on in time because he is trapped by past decisions.
Chapter 3

The Novel as the Labyrinth of Memory:

*La Route des Flandres*

Although the influence of Faulkner could be traced in several novels by Claude Simon, I have chosen to study *La Route des Flandres* in detail because of its striking resemblance to *Absalom, Absalom!*. First of all the style is very obviously Faulknerian. The sentences run on for pages, describing remembered experience with a profusion of detail. The use of the imperfect tense is comparable to Faulkner's use of present participles to record events exactly as they were happening. By means of this stylistic device the feeling of a reality still in the process of becoming is achieved by both writers. It is in fact reality remembered as though relived, with the outcome still unknown to the narrator.

Similarities can also be seen in their conception of the novel as a means of preserving the past. Both writers use the novel to transcribe the reality of interior time, which preserves past experience. Like Faulkner, Simon is painfully aware that cosmic time destroys the individual and society. The human memory is a reservoir of one individual's experience preserved totally, available to the reflective consciousness when something in the present triggers involuntary memory.
In both *Absalom, Absalom!* and *La Route des Flandres* the use made of personal memories is not to establish an individual identity within the flux of experience. Both novels are narrated by young men who try to find in the past clues to the disintegration of a social structure, whose ruins they inherit in the present. The creation of a novel about this effort to understand imposes an order upon the chaos of experience. Malraux said of the obsessional in the preface to *Sanctuary* that it enters into the relative universe of things conceived and dominated. So in *Absalom, Absalom!* and *La Route des Flandres* we could say that the dissolution of a way of life enters into the realm of things conceived and dominated. In an interview with Claude Sarraute published in *Le Monde*, October 8, 1960, Claude Simon explained that his experiences in the Second World War had provided the theme. His recollection of those experiences one particular night after the War was fragmentary and not in chronological order. He did not attempt to fill in the gaps, but gave the memories as they came. However, the individual events witnessed called up memories from his civilian life which complemented or clashed with his experiences in war. These appear as contiguous in the mind of the narrator, and the various levels of memory are part of one ceaseless flow in his consciousness, as he explains:
I was haunted by two things: the discontinuity, the fragmentary aspect of the emotions one has experienced and which are never connected one to another, and also their contiguity in the consciousness. My sentence tries to translate this contiguity. The use of the present participle allows me to place myself outside of conventional time. When one says: he went to a certain place, the idea of an action that had a beginning and an end is given. But there is neither beginning nor end in the memory ... ¹

His desire to transcribe the reality of lived experience is demonstrated by the statement of Simon when he received the Prix de l'Express for La Route des Flandres:

I waited almost twenty years before deciding to write The Flanders Road. I was afraid not only of false images that would misrepresent my subject to the reader, but more importantly of false images I myself might have acquired or retained, having, as everyone else, a mind burdened with prejudices, with commonly held assumptions, with preconceived ideas and viewpoints, which would have distorted my portrayal of reality.²

In his total vision of reality, we must however take into account that the reading of Faulkner's novels has to a certain extent formulated his outlook and therefore some typically


²Claude Simon, The Flanders Road, translated by Richard Howard, George Braziller, (New York, 1961), Jacket. Subsequent reference to this edition will appear in the text as FR.
Faulknerian attitudes have become Simon's own. First in importance is the place given to chaos as it is reflected in a consciousness. The impact of Benjy's monologue in The Sound and the Fury on literature had been to open the door for transcription directly into the novel of chaotic experience.

In La Route des Flandres the reader plunges directly into the stream of consciousness of a dragoon who is experiencing the total chaos caused by defeat in war. Although we find out later that he is remembering the experience in peacetime, the initial effect is to capture for the reader a feeling of human disorientation in the face of disaster.

The novel begins with the description of a scene from the point of view of Georges, the chief narrator. His conversation with Captain de Reixach, his superior officer and distant cousin, recalls the conventions of a social structure which separates officers and men, nobles and commoners. The Captain is invested with a magic quality which makes him both more and less than human, reminding the reader of Faulkner's similar treatment of Sutpen. The narrator mockingly attributes de Reixach's pride to his supposed descent from, "His Cousin the Virgin" and "Mohammed into the bargain" (FR p. 8). This is reminiscent of Quentin's vision of Sutpen," ... creating the Sutpen's Hundred, the Be Sutpen's Hundred like the olden-time
All around the officer and the dragoon is the frozen mud which waits to absorb into itself all ordered structures, both living things and civilizations. Georges witnesses the death of his Captain and is convinced that the Captain chose to die. To Georges it appears that the Captain's action of drawing his sword and charging when a burst of gunfire came from behind a hedge was paradoxically both the reflex action of a trained swordsman and a deliberate suicide.

The complex situation of Captain de Reixach in that moment when a reflex action became voluntary acceptance of death is explored in one enormously long sentence. First there is the fact of his training in the traditions of the Saumur military academy. An officer is taught to advance under attack, not to retreat. Secondly defeat, which is now a fact of life for the French army, absolves him from responsibility for his men, for the Saumur gave no instructions for the conduct of an officer in defeat. De Reixach is free to follow his desire for release in death while observing the tradition that an officer advances under attack. The personal reasons for this suicide are that the world he lived in has collapsed around him. Already the traditional dignity of his
family had been undermined by his marriage to a flighty girl. When she betrayed him with his groom Iglésia, he no longer desired to live.

Since death is the natural fate of all, the voluntary acceptance of fate by suicide is a symbol of acceptance of life as the process of going towards death. Death dominates La Route des Flandres as the quotation from Leonardo da Vinci, "I thought I was learning how to live, I was learning how to die," indicates at the beginning of the first section. Because war provides the ideal conditions for the study of life-going-towards-death, Simon is able to demonstrate realistically various aspects of his main theme.

In the first few pages Simon places in the consciousness of his narrator a series of associated ideas which are firmly connected with the suicide of the Captain. To understand the reason why Georges interprets this death in battle as a suicide will require an examination of these ideas. The Captain symbolizes for Georges the organized society of France. Before the war this society had become unable to renew itself by adapting to changed conditions. A static social structure and its corruption from within was reflected in the army defending it. Military defeat was inevitable and it brought about the collapse of a whole world. This association of
ideas is strikingly similar to that found in the first pages of *Absalom, Absalom!*, where the downfall and violent end of Sutpen are related to the defeat of the South in the Civil War. There is an obvious parallel between the uses Simon and Faulkner make of a family history to trace the disintegration of a civilization.

Faulkner's method of exploring the causes which led to the failure of Sutpen's design seems to have been copied by Simon to investigate the death of de Reixach. In both books the narrators experience a chaotic present and look for its causes in the past. The story of Sutpen, which Quentin knew vaguely as a boy, contains important clues to his inability to decide upon a meaningful course of action in the present. As a young man at college he examines the story in the light of new information which has come to him. A pattern of defeat emerges which imprisons him as the representative of a past-oriented society:

He was a barracks filled with stubborn back-looking 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 (AA p. 12).
In a similar way Georges, who has been brought up to respect the traditions of the de Reixach family by his mother, tries to find, in the stories his mother told him, clues to the disastrous present. He remembers the portraits of long dead members of the family, and in particular the picture of one who may also have been a suicide:

...that portrait which all during his childhood he had looked at with a kind of uneasiness, timidity, because he (that distant progenitor, sire) had in his forehead a red hole from which the blood ran down in a long undulating rivulet starting at the temple, following the curve of the cheek and dripping onto the lapel of the royal-blue hunting coat as if--to illustrate, perpetuate the stormy legend with which the character was surrounded--he had been portrayed bloodstained by the shot which ended his days, standing there, impassive, equine and decorous at the heart of a permanent aura of mystery and violent death... (FR, p. 57).

Memory of the accounts of his mother is mingled with purely imagined events that may have contributed to the downfall of a family. Since in both novels the narrator's consciousness is going over facts stored in the memory and called to mind in no chronological order, we do not get a straight narrative. Memory and imagination are co-operating to shape a timeless structure from data already given to the consciousness. Often the same events are recalled but interpreted in new ways as the narrator speculates on their meaning. Like
Quentin, Georges is able to use a friend as a sounding-board for his theories about the past. Just as Shreve in *Absalom, Absalom!* begins as confidant and eventually joins in the reconstruction of the past, so Blum in *La Route des Flandres* listens at first and urges Georges to tell him more, then contributes his own version of the story. Skeptical at first about Georges' knowledge of the Captain and his wife, he gradually participates by inventing lurid details about the private lives of both Captain de Reixach and his ancestor. His joking is similar to Shreve's and, like Quentin, Georges tries to make his friend see the story as a serious demonstration of abandonment to despair:

> And perhaps it wasn't even the dishonour, the sudden revelation of his incapacity (after all perhaps he wasn't absolutely a fool--how could anyone tell,--perhaps it wasn't impossible to imagine that his orders weren't stupid but the best, the most pertinent, even inspired--but again how could anyone tell since none of them ever reached its destination,); probably something else: a kind of void a hole. Bottomless. Absolute. (FR, p. 217).

Although more fully a partner in the actual experiences of Georges than Shreve is in Quentin's, Blum is still like the Canadian Shreve, an outsider. Blum, a Jew, is outside the traditional French society into which Georges was born. His family belongs to the international race of traders whose
efforts to return to normal living after the horrors of war will be comparable to the effort of the peasants to restore the land to productivity. These people suffer in the catastrophic wars which recur as the inevitable product of a hardening of society into rigid structures.

Herded as prisoners into a cattle car after the defeat in Flanders, the two men talk about the Captain, his wife Corinne and her scandalous affair with her husband's groom, Iglésia. Then Georges' erotic fancies about beautiful women and race-horses dissolve into the memory of a dead horse covered with mud on the Flanders road. It is a symbol to Georges of the inevitable return of all living things to the earth. At the same time he remembers the rain falling, "... it too monotonous, infinite and black, and not falling but like the night itself uniting in its depths men and horses, adding mingling its imperceptible patter to that enormous patient and dangerous murmur of thousands of horses on the roads,...." (FR, p. 29). The rain, the sound of horses' feet and the sight of the dead horse recur many times in George's memory. Like the closing of a door in Absalom, Absalom! they come to the mind of the narrator frequently, because they are an essential part of the pattern imposed upon reality by his own
consciousness. In both novels the narrator survives to the end of the book but is incapable of truly living in the present. The pattern of defeat and death has become fixed in the minds of both Georges and Quentin. In the case of Georges we are suddenly plugged into his present as he realizes in the middle of what appeared to be a long conversation with Blum, that it is not to Blum that he is talking. He is in bed with Corinne, who cannot establish any contact with him except the physical. She refuses to accept as valid the picture he has created of her in conversations with Blum and Iglésia during the long years of captivity. He has thought of her as an object and in so doing has alienated himself from the living reality. She protests vigorously but he soon ceases to hear her voice and returns in memory to the moment when Blum was shoved into the cattle car. The cyclical pattern which has already been established by the return of memory to certain fixed scenes is underlined by Georges' comments as the chapter closes, "But I've already seen this somewhere. I know this. But when, And where was it, ..." (FR, p. 102). Themes from the first chapter which will be taken up again in the second and third are the suicide of de Reixach, the infidelity of his wife Corinne with Iglésia, as well as the imagined adultery of the wife of de Reixach the ancestor. The central image of a horse is combined once again with the theme of death and with
erotic fancies.

The second chapter begins with a quotation from Martin Luther which treats the sexual relationship as a ridiculous method of procreation. We are reminded of Faulkner's attitude to sex. Deprived of women for years the two men have erotic yearnings for the peasant woman they met before de Reixach was killed. In this novel the breakdown of sexual morality in the erotic fancies of these men and in the speculation about incest and sodomy is related to the breakdown of a whole society, brought about by war.

Simon's way of expressing his outrage at the horror of war owes much to the method of Faulkner in his novel about war, *A Fable*. Unflinching descriptions of the ghastly scenes of destruction and the maiming of human beings lead, in both books, to the impression that people are sacrificed to a machine that nothing can stop. The interesting likeness of these novels, in my opinion, is in the couterpoint of the theme of war and the theme of the land and its peasants.

In *A Fable*, the peasant woman Marthe's attitude to the farm, as a means of continuing to live after all hope has died, is similar to the endurance shown by peasants in *La Route des Flandres*. Musing on her husband's determination to
restore the farm, Marthe thinks of the work it will require:

He was right: it was the farm, the land which was immune even to the blast and sear of war. It would take work of course, it might even take years of work, but the four of them were capable of work. More: the palliation and their luck was the work they faced, since work is the only anesthetic to which grief is vulnerable. More still: restoring the land would not only palliate the grief, the minuscule integer of the farm would affirm that he had not died for nothing and that it was not for an outrage that they had grieved, but for simple grief: the only alternative to which was nothing, and between grief and nothing only the coward takes nothing.3

A similar passage from Simon's novel describes Georges' memory of peasant soldiers beside a dying horse:

sitting in a half circle on wheelbarrows or buckets, telling each other in their monotonous plaintive and clumsy voices their habitual stories of harvests that the bad weather spoiled before they could be brought in, the price of wheat or beets recipes for making cows calve or of Herculean exploits calculated in the number of bales of straw, of sacks of grain carried and of fields tilled, while in the lantern's glimmer the head of the horse lying on its side seemed to grow longer, assuming an apocalyptic, terrifying look... (FR, p.129)

Peasants in Simon's novel play an important rôle because he sees their relationship with the land as an unchanging one in a world of violent change.

However, the theme of sex persists and Iglésia who is also at the camp is urged by Georges and Blum to tell them about his relationship with Corinne. Because Iglésia is a jockey the story of a horse race and his conquest of Corinne become entangled. Eventually in the minds of Georges and Blum she is reduced to a mare and a whore. There is a parallel between the reification of Corinne due to the alienation of these prisoners from normal life, and the reification of people by Sutpen. From using people as merely objects to fit into his design, Sutpen eventually descends to considering Milly, his new daughter's mother, as less important to him than the mare who produced a colt.

The presentation of Corinne in this chapter is from the point of view of Iglésia to whom horses are the most important thing in the world.

...which was doubtless why he talked about her the way horse dealers talk about their animals or mountain climbers about mountains, his manner both coarse and deferential, crude and delicate, his voice when he described her expressing a kind of vaguely scandalized stupefaction, but vaguely admiring and reproving at the same time... (PR, p. 141).

The long story of the horse-race and the jockey in this chapter naturally are reminiscent of the interpolation in A Fable of a long section about a groom and a horse race. In both cases the relief provided from the sombre story is probably the main reason for its inclusion. The story itself appears to
be more naturally integrated into the novel than it does in A Fable.

In this chapter also the memory of Georges brings into focus the story he has heard from his mother Sabine about the de Reixach ancestor in a portrait at home. Her story about his accidental death while cleaning a pistol provides the basis of speculation by Georges and Blum that he may also have been a suicide. Like Quentin and Shreve confronted with the basic story of Henry's unexplained murder of Bon, Georges and Blum invent from a few facts a number of possible explanations. From the theories come more erotic fancies but in addition the serious theme of an attack upon accepted ideas. By placing the de Reixach ancestor at another crucial point in history, the time of the Convention in France and the subsequent invasion of Spain by France under Napoleon, Simon is able to portray the ancestor as a disillusioned man:

standing there, in that setting of a period print, stripping himself, tearing off, rejecting, repudiating those clothes, that ambitious and gaudy uniform which had now probably become for him the symbol of something he had believed in and now no longer saw any sense in (the blue frock-coat with the high collar and the gold-embroidered lapels, the two-cornered hat, the ostrich feathers: the pathetic and grotesque costume lying there, a crumpled mausoleum of
what (not power, honors, glory, but the idyllic bosky dells, the idyllic and sentimental reign of Reason and Virtue) his readings had given him a glimpse of); and something inside himself finally disintegrating... (FR, p. 205).

The defeat in Spain was an example of the pernicious effects of bringing the order of a philosophical system to bear on the confused experience of reality, according to the interpretation Georges puts upon it. The ideas which gave a society its goals deteriorate into traditions of little meaning to those who inherit them or are forced to accept them.

Juxtaposed with the images of death which recur, like the dead horse, as symbols of a dead order of society, are images of death in life. In death the Captain, the "idiot" Wack, and the horse all bear a resemblance to one another in George's memory. At one point in the book Georges himself, hiding in a ditch, cannot really tell whether he is alive or dead. The earth is ready to swallow him up in mud just as it was ready to disintegrate the structure of the dead horse. At another point Georges experiences the sensation of death in life when he cannot move because he is too drunk. In this state his consciousness of things is at a minimum, and also his ability to reflect on the significance of events. It
is apparent that this "idiot" consciousness is the basic material of a novel for Simon. Only a fraction away from the total unconsciousness of death, it records the passing moment of experience and preserves action as it is occurring. In this state Georges was the unreflecting consciousness which preserves for memory to interpret, "absolutely motionless, a kind of ghostly and transparent double of myself," (FR p. 209). Later the reflective consciousness will examine the facts. Wavering between the unreflecting consciousness of things and the fully developed consciousness which gives meaning is the narrator, caught in a circular labyrinth of remembered facts and unable to escape.

The mirror in which Georges sees himself in the present, in the hotel room with Corinne, recalls three other mirrors from the past. In those reflected segments of experience the three chapters of the novel take shape. Each chapter brings into focus certain aspects of the same set of facts. As in Absalom, Absalom! the whole story is given in capsule form in the first few pages of the novel. All the rest of the novel elaborates and comments on the basic facts.

Section Three is prefaced by a quotation from Malcolm de Chazal:
Sensual pleasure, volupté, is the embrace of a dead body by two living beings. The "corpse" in this case is time murdered for a time and made consubstantial to the sense of touch.

His experience has been so completely destructive of the normal values that, as Corinne points out to him, love is no longer possible to him, only sensual pleasure. Georges thinks she may be right. War has destroyed the personal relationships between people as well as the orderly social structure:

Then maybe she was right after all maybe she was telling the truth maybe I was still talking to him, exchanging with a little Jew dead years ago boasts gossip obscenities words sounds just to keep us awake to deceive ourselves into thinking we were awake to encourage each other, Blum saying now: But maybe that gun wasn't even loaded maybe he didn't even know how to use it. People like making everything into a tragedy a drama a novel (FR, p. 283).

The sexual act transforms him into a beast in his own eyes, and draws her into a fleeting union with him, "...we were like a single legendary creature with several heads several limbs lying in the darkness," (FR, p. 298). (Unfortunately the translator has used the word 'legendary' instead of Simon's own word 'apocalyptic' which summarizes the whole vision of destruction in the novel.) But this unity is only the illusion of a respite at the sensual level from the solitary
consciousness of man trying to understand his experience. Between one person and another, as between the experience and the understanding of it, there will always be an infinitesimal distance like a thin film.

In this last section there is a recapitulation of Simon's ideas about time, sex and women which are very close to Faulkner's. Simon presents cosmic time as cyclical. Civilizations come into being, are destroyed in time and rebuilt by man. For each individual man the cycle of life becomes an inevitable repetition of sex, procreation and death. Within man himself, however, there is a different sense of time, an interior time which preserves the past. A quotation from Faulkner could apply equally to his use and to Simon's of interior time to find some meaning within this flux of experience:

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... (AA, p. 261).
The confusion by Georges and Blum of the stories of de Reixach the ancestor and the Captain de Reixach produces the same feeling of recurrence in time. The mind jumps back and forth in time, reliving the past, inventing episodes and creating a circular unity out of dispersed fragments.

Women are seen by Simon as incomprehensible to man. Corinne is presented as a child-woman in the stories told by Iglésia:

And Iglésia told how the first time he had seen her he had taken her from a distance for a child, a girl de Reixach might have taken out of boarding school on Sundays and dressed up as a woman out of fatherly weakness (which would have explained that indefinable sensation of uneasiness you felt at first, he explained in his own way, as at the sight of something vaguely, indefinably monstrous, embarrassing, like those children dressed up, travestied in clothes copied from grownups', like sacrilegious and disturbing parodies of adults, prejudicial both to childhood and to the human condition) ... (FR, p. 139,140).

The same attitude is seen most strikingly in Faulkner's description of Temple Drake and little Belle in Sanctuary. It can also be seen in his representation of the young Judith Sutpen in that state where, though still visible, young girls appear as though seen through glass and where even the voice cannot reach them; where they...
exist...in a pearly lambence without shadows
and themselves partaking of it; in nebulous
suspension held, strange and unpredictable, even
their very shapes fluid and delicate and without
substance; not in themselves floating and seeking
but merely waiting, parasitic and potent and serene,
drawing to themselves without effort the post-
genitive upon and about which to shape, flow into
back, breast; bosom, flank, thigh. (AA, p. 67).

For Simon as for Faulkner women are usually vaguely
threatening, conspiring with time to destroy the creations of
men. The book ends with the idea that the war itself is an in-
strument of time, the destroyer. The narrator sees himself
frozen in time in a static image of the war:

somehow stagnant, somehow peaceful around us, the
sporadic cannon fire landing in the deserted or-
chards with a muffled monumental and hollow sound
like a door flapping in the wind in an empty house,
the whole landscape empty uninhabited under the
motionless sky, the world stopped frozen crumbling
collapsing gradually disintegrating in fragments
like an abandoned building, unusable, left to the
incoherent, casual, impersonal and des-ructive
work of time. (FR, p. 320).
Chapter 4

The Novel as Research:

*L'Emploi du Temps*

The connection between Faulkner and Michel Butor is of a completely different nature from that between Faulkner and Claude Simon. Butor does not copy Faulkner's style or his choice of words, although his freedom from the conventional sentence structure of French may well be due to Faulkner's influence. The chief similarity between Faulkner and Butor is that their readers require a gift for hermeneutic. Both writers present the situation of a man in the modern world as a chaos to be explored before its meaning can be sought. Because the experience related appears at first to be meaningless, the reader feels baffled. As clues are given, either in the personal memory of a narrator or in stories from the past, the reader participates in the search for meaning in present experience. In my interpretation of Butor's *L'Emploi du Temps* I have been guided by George Raillard's article, "*L'Exemple*" published with the novel in the edition of 1966 by the Union Générale d'Éditions. 1

Butor's second novel, *L'Emploi du Temps* has a

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special relationship with *Absalom, Absalom!* because both novels record the efforts of a narrator to liberate himself from the spell of a region. Prompted by his own feeling of alienation within his environment, the narrator begins to examine fragments of past experience for clues to his state of mind. Because they have not yet been organized, these elements give an accurate picture of the baffling puzzle that reality presents to consciousness. The need for guides leads to examination of the ways other people have organized the facts at their disposal into patterns that satisfy the human desire for order.

Contradictions between one interpretation and another lead the narrator to examine the facts himself. Research brings to light new facts and reveals deficiencies in the former guides. Both Quentin Compson in *Absalom, Absalom!* and Jacques Revel in *L'Emploi du Temps* begin to emerge as personalities making their own distinctive contribution to an understanding of their environment. It is therefore particularly striking that a similar defeat awaits them towards the end of each novel.

Quentin's discovery of facts about the South has not been accomplished without a painful revelation of facts
about himself. The guilt of the South involves Quentin as modern representative of his country and heir of its history. More dramatically, his whole revision of the facts has been influenced by his heritage and contains within it the seeds of his own destruction. As though it were a Fate he could not escape, the South has waited to trap and silence him.

Revel has a similar destiny in L'Emploi du Temps, although he comes to the English city of Bleston as a complete stranger. His knowledge of the city cannot be more than superficial until he becomes involved in its secret desire for its own destruction. As he progresses from his status as alien to self-styled prince of the city, he becomes guilty of its crimes. The vengeance of Bleston on Revel for expressing the ambiguity of its nature is to reduce him to a ghost, wandering between the double visions of reality he has evoked to symbolize its inner conflict.

Despite the vivid depiction of place in Absalom, Absalom! and L'Emploi du Temps, these are not regionalist novels. The South and Bleston are representative areas of the modern world. Within this world the human consciousness must come to grips with reality. Neither the South nor an industrial city like Bleston can be fully known or explained by one
person. But a record of the way he deals with its multiple facets, to form an idea of the whole, tells a great deal about the narrator himself.

Since Revel shares with Quentin a sense of alienation in the modern world, they have some basic attitudes that can be compared. Butor's method of demonstrating alienation is very similar to Faulkner's in *The Sound and the Fury*. In Quentin's section of this novel he is placed in the city of Boston, far from his home in the South. Preoccupied with the thought of his imminent suicide as an escape from time, he sees around him justification for his hatred of the changes time inevitably brings. Particularly revealing in his walk with a little Italian girl, whose apparent lostness keeps reminding him of his "lost" sister Caddy. His description of the child implies that she already has that "affinity for evil" Quentin ascribes to women. His attempt to bring her home is a parody of his ineffectual efforts to deter Caddy from sexual adventures which have taken her out of his world. As he wanders with the little girl in the poverty-ridden area, Quentin transfers the decay of his world to the scene around him.

She moved along just under my elbow. We went on. The houses all seemed empty. Not a soul in sight.
A sort of breathlessness that empty houses have. Yet they couldn't all be empty. All the different rooms, if you could just slice the walls away all of a sudden Madam, your daughter, if you please. No. Madam, for God's sake, your daughter.

A lane turned from the road. I entered it and after a while I slowed to a fast walk. The lane went between back premises—unpainted houses with more of those gay and startling coloured garments on lines, a barn broken-backed, decaying quietly among rank orchard trees, unpruned and weed-choked, pink and white and murmurous with sunlight and with bees. I looked back. The entrance to the lane was empty. I slowed still more, my shadow pacing me, dragging its head through the weeds that hid the fence. (SF p. 163-165).

Wandering in the streets of a foreign city Revel also transfers his feeling of being homeless and rootless to the scene itself.

I went on between the two rows, which reproduced indefinitely, in a way that could only satisfy a very insensitive eye, some original undoubtedly intended for quite a different landscape, for different vegetation, for a different sky, for solitude, for a background of hills and a screen of great trees. On the flat horizon, on either side, tall chimneys stood idle.

I walked away for nearly two miles past an uninterrupted succession of "retreats" as regular as the divisions on a yard-measure, all silent, with no sign of life save their smoke, frail cosy erections, frail refuges against the dark powers of the town, frail kennels for comfort-loving dogs,
Images of the world as an alien place are reflections in the eye of a narrator obsessed with his own isolation. Butor and Faulkner both use reflections in water and mirrors to call attention to the distortion of reality implicit in a personal viewpoint. Quentin's shattered present is compared with the security of childhood in a striking image which suggests that his lost world was itself an illusion.

I could smell the curves of the river beyond the dusk and I saw the last light supine and tranquil upon tideflats like pieces of broken mirror, then beyond them lights began in the pale clear air, trembling a little like butterflies hovering a long way off. Benjamin the child of. How he used to sit before that mirror. Refuge unfailing in which conflict tempered silenced reconciled (SF, p. 211).

In L'Emploi du Temps, we are alerted to the fact that the narrator reflects a personal vision by Revel's first glimpse of Bleston from the train through "the dark window-pane covered on the outside with raindrops, a myriad tiny mirrors each reflecting a quivering particle of the feeble

light that drizzled down from the grimy ceiling" (PT, p. 9).
From the window he sees the double name, Bleston Hamilton Station, whose significance is gradually revealed in the novel. Bleston is the real world, while Hamilton is every tempting illusion that distracts the mind. One of Revel's illusions is that he can find security in the family circle of his new friends, the Bailey sisters. A spherical mirror in their home reflects the presence of Revel, but in reality he is excluded from their circle by his fear of the uncharted paths of direct, unselfconscious commitment to life. Rather than choose one sister he wavers between them, until both are lost to him.

It was at the end of April; Lucien was still undecided between the two sisters; I had a clear field, but I was too befogged, too paralyzed to will or wish -- embarrassed, moreover, by my feelings towards Ann, who had once been so indispensable to me, to whom I had almost declared my love, and from whom I had surreptitiously drifted (PT, p. 180).

This curious projection of his own inability to choose onto his friend Lucien is a clue to Revel's idea of the real world as a place where the necessity of choice between confusing doubles confronts others as well as himself.

His inability to distinguish between these double
appearances of objects and people in Bleston leads to a temporary loss of reason. In a fit of panic he burns the map of the city, but he soon realizes that, to master his environment and assert his own identity within it, he must use reason and patience.

Then I decided to write in order to get things straight, to cure myself, to explain to myself what had happened to me in this hateful town . . . I decided to erect around me this rampart of written lines, feeling how deeply tainted I must already be to have come to such a stupid pass and to be so distressed about it, feeling how completely Bleston had outwitted my pitiful vigilance and how, in a few months of loathsome caresses, its slow poison had oozed into my brain (PT, p. 180-181).

The journal he writes is begun first of all as a record of the personal memories which remain of the past seven months. Like Quentin in The Sound and the Fury, Revel is totally preoccupied with rescuing a private past which time threatens to destroy. He attempts to restore events to their historical sequence, hoping that meaning will emerge from simple recall. On May the nineteenth his entry specifically identifies this method of dealing with the past as research:

This is where my real research begins; for I will not rest content with this vague abridgment, I will not let myself be cheated of that past which, I well know, is not an empty past, since I can assess
the distance that divides me from the man I was when I arrived, not only the extent to which I have been bogged down and bewildered and blinded but also the gains I have made in some spheres, my progress in the knowledge of this town and its inhabitants, of its horror and its moments of beauty; for I must regain control of all those events which I feel swarming within me, falling into shape despite the mist that threatens to obliterate them, I must summon them before me one by one in their right order, so as to rescue them before they have completely foundered in that great morass of slimy dust, I must rescue my own territories foot by foot from the encroaching weeds that disfigure them, from the scummy waters that are rotting them and preventing them from producing anything but this brittle, sooty vegetation (PT, p. 36).

Towards the end of May he realizes that he has only dealt so far with events of October. The method itself has a serious flaw, for important events are happening now and threaten to sink into oblivion before he can record them. Also, his perspective on past events changes every day so that trivial, unrecorded details may suddenly emerge from memory as portents of dramatic events in the present. This failure of a method of research reminds the reader of similar unsuccessful attempts to arrive at the truth in Absalom.

Absalom!

It is obvious that Revel needs a guide, so that his explorations in Bleston may acquire direction. At the end of
October he buys a detective novel, The Bleston Murder, which becomes his first guide to the secret of the city. With the introduction of a story about fratricide, the similarity of L'Emploi du Temps to Absalom, Absalom! becomes increasingly apparent.

If we examine the structure of the first section of Butor's novel, we realize that it constitutes a trial of the traditional style of writing novels. A straight linear story is told in a manner carefully calculated to fail. Because Revel is ignorant of the outcome of events, Butor is able to show the narrator losing his way by recording trivial details. The method of omniscient authors, who choose details to illustrate a predetermined theme, cannot work for a narrator who is searching for a theme. Butorassociates the linear method of telling a story from a fixed point with Cartesian philosophy. An oblique reference to the Cartesian method occurs when Revel tries to escape from Bleston to Hamilton. It portends the trial of a new method of research in the second section of the novel.

I have never again attempted to escape from it by walking straight ahead, knowing only too well that my strength would fail and the moment of respite lapse long before I could reach the landscape I dreamed of, long before my liberation, before I could be sure of having escaped; for I became aware, that day, that Bleston is not a city.
bounded by walls or avenues, standing out clearly against a background of fields, but like a lamp in the mist it forms the centre of a halo whose hazy fringes intermingle with those of other towns. (PT, p. 33-34).

The second section, called "Portents" begins with a dramatic jump into Revel's present. He has just betrayed the real name of the author of The Bleston Murder to the Bailey sisters. Since this story was a fictional account of an unsolved murder in Bleston, the author's solution of the mystery might expose him to danger. The pseudonym J.C. Hamilton was the protective cover of George Burton, who has become Revel's new friend. Aware that the disclosure was irrational, Revel begins to search for an explanation of his guilty action. The irrational element in Revel's character begins to appear as a necessary flaw, which will reveal the inadequacy of logic to explain human behaviour.

In "Portents," Revel records his use of two signposts on the route to understanding Bleston and his own character. The Murderer's Window, to which he was guided by The Bleston Murder contains a vital clue to the mystery of Bleston. A reinterpretation of the legend of Cain and Abel in stained glass by Renaissance French artists symbolizes the Judaeo-Christian heritage of Western man. Although misunderstood in the present, it is the mythic representation of our
lives as workers and artists, perpetually destroying the old as we create the new. A new interpretation of this legend may lead to a Renaissance of the human spirit in the present.

The second signpost is the legend of Theseus in the Harvey Tapestries by an eighteenth-century French artist. It symbolizes the heritage of Greek culture which has come to us in literature and art through the centuries. Revel's choice of Theseus as his model has been portended by his initial feeling that he is lost in the labyrinth of Bleston. Hidden within the story of heroic exploits is Theseus' guilty act of negligence, which leads to the death of his father. Slowly Revel comes to understand the necessity of this act, irrational as it seems, to the accomplishment of Theseus' destiny. Eventually, it clarifies the meaning of his own irrational betrayal of his friend.

Both the Murderer's Window and the Harvey Tapestries are static images used by Butor to arrest the motion of life so that it can be examined. Faulkner's well-known use of static images for the same purpose can be seen in his choice of Sutpen's story, frozen in time, to explain the living South. Each narrator of the story to Quentin brings it to life from the particular aspect which interests him. Miss Rosa sees Sutpen as a demon and she tells a story of Gothic
horror, with an inexplicable deed of violence at its centre. Quentin's grandfather is a puritan gentleman and he sees the downfall of Sutpen as a punishment for leaving the narrow path of puritan morality. Mr. Compson, Quentin's father, is a classical scholar, and his version of the story compares the house of Sutpen with the mythic House of Atreus. Later his interest in sex leads Mr. Compson to invent an episode, illustrating the sexual relations between white men and black women. Like all the details in Absalom, Absalom! it is a valid contribution to the aim of the whole, which is to tell what it is like to live in the South.

The sympathetic identification of Quentin and Shreve with Henry and Bon brings the characters of the story to life with poetic imagination. They transcend the present and past to fuse with their counterparts in a timeless moment.

So that now it was not two but four of them riding the two horses through the dark over the frozen December ruts of that Christmas Eve: four of them and then just two—Charles-Shreve and Quentin-Henry . . . (AA, p. 334).

In L'Emploi du Temps, there is only one narrator, but the friends of Revel help him to remake the story of Cain into a modern legend of the struggle between old and new. "Portents" shows them beginning to take sides in the battle
which will come to a climax in the next section.

One important discovery by Revel leads to his rejection of the Bleston Murder as a guide to the city. The New Cathedral, slandered by J.C. Hamilton to glorify the Old, is equal to its predecessor in the excellence of its art.

Strange blindness on the part of one so amazingly lucid and keen-witted! For even I, so new to Bleston, had recognized something very far from mere plagiarism in this bizarre edifice, I had been made forcibly aware of a mind of astonishing audacity at work, violently distorting traditional themes, ornaments and details, achieving thus an imperfect, one might almost say a crippled work of art, but a profoundly imaginative one, instinct with secret seminal force, poignantly striving towards freer and happier creation; "a distorted shadow indeed", as J.C. Hamilton says, but what he failed to see was the rare value of this distortion. (PT, p.111-112).

James Jenkins, Revel's first friend in Bleston, is the sculptor's grandson and can clarify the message of the New Cathedral. It is a celebration in art of the modern scientific classification of all living things. Only gradually do we realize that J.C. Hamilton was not denouncing a distorted reflection of the Old Cathedral. As a realist in fiction, imitating life by taking realistic details from a factual story, he has a personal interest in denouncing any distortion of reality in art. The New Cathedral represents artistically the distortion
of reality implicit in the order imposed by science on the great buzzing confusion of the world. Since the human mind only dominates this confusion by an artificially imposed order, distortion is vital to progress in knowledge.

It is significant that the least successful part of the New Cathedral is the representation of the various races of Man. Science does not give a complete picture of the complex nature of human beings. Fiction can help man to understand himself by organizing the experiences of real life into a meaningful pattern. It can only succeed by a frank acceptance of the distortion this implies. Any novelist who claims to be telling a story exactly as it happened in real life is a fraud. Since this is what J.C. Hamilton claims to do in The Bleston Murder, the New Cathedral is a condemnation of his art.

The structure of "Portents" has demonstrated a new method of research into the meaning of Revel's experience in Bleston. As lived experience in the present reveals the hidden significance of past events, Revel begins to mingle past and present in his journal. June's events are illuminated by discoveries made in November. As the novel proceeds, the number of months dealt with increases in orderly fashion from one in May to five in September. The rapid switching from one time to another becomes so complex that the reader feels he is in a
labyrinth of times. Like Absalom, Absalom, this novel repeatedly returns to examine the same events in a new light, demanding a concentrated effort to unravel the sequence. A dialectic of past and present leads to a synthesis, whose virtue is in its particular adaptability to revision. As new events occur, new combinations with remembered moments can reveal a direction and meaning to life, where there was formerly only a chaotic flux of impressions. This continual revision of the narrator's knowledge about the world and himself identifies the novel as a working model of the phenomenological method. It is open-ended, showing the narrator still unsure of the meaning of his experience, for the critique of knowledge must continue with the reader.

The third section, "The Accident," polarizes the forces of the old and the new in Bleston. Revel's memory of his betrayal of George Burton to James Jenkins takes the struggle between old and new into the world of ideas. The past event which illuminates this betrayal is Revel's intuition, in December, that the Old Cathedral and the New were the two poles of an immense magnet which disturbs the trajectory of all human atoms in its neighbourhood, according to the stuff they are made of and the energy with which they are charged -- James Jenkins and his mother, for instance, on the one hand, and on the other J.C. Hamilton whose real name I had not yet discovered (FT, p. 163).
Revel feels that he is impelled by forces beyond his control to bring the struggle to a climax. This occurs on July the eleventh, when George Burton is almost killed by a car, driven by an unknown person. The significance of this event to Revel is underlined by the account given of a visit to the Harvey Tapestries, where in the eleventh panel, Theseus is pictured slaying the Minotaur. But Revel realizes that the "accident" has made a hopeless confusion of the mythic pattern. Doubt and guilt torment him, for he believes that James has tried to kill George Burton in revenge for the insults to the New Cathedral in *The Bleston Murder*. His own part in the affair is to have achieved, by guilty betrayal of a trust, the role he desired as poet of Bleston.

It is not the accident itself which takes that role away from Burton, for he will recover. But the publicity surrounding the attempted murder has made it impossible for him to reveal the secrets of the city with impunity. Like Theseus coming to the throne of his father, Revel must take on his new responsibilities in the knowledge that guilty negligence has brought him to the desired goal.

Burton has brought Revel to an understanding of the art of writing. It is he who has explained that "in real life one's mental analysis of past events takes place while other
events are accumulating" (PT, p. 156) and that this pattern should be followed in novels. In fact he has been Revel's guide to writing the journal. But Revel knows that Burton has not fulfilled in his own fiction the high purpose of the artist to "disturb the hitherto accepted order of things and betray its fragility" (PT, p. 135). Instead he has, by condemning the new, placed himself in the ranks of all upholders of the status quo. The journal of Revel must replace The Bleston Murder and show the inner conflict which ravages Bleston.

In the fourth section of L'Emploi du Temps, Revel assumes his role as poet of the city. "The Two Sisters" sets the tone with lyrical invocations to Rose and Ann. With his new-found power Revel gives a voice to the sorceress Bleston, who speaks to him directly and contrasts her strength with his feeble dream of an imaginary city. His desire to destroy Bleston with the power of his vision and create a spiritual city by the power of words has brought him to the edge of despair and madness. His friends exclude him from their circle, for his probing eye makes him forever an alien presence in their midst.

Not content with the information that he has gained from the modern city of Bleston, he probes into its layers of
history, comparing it with all the cities of the past back to Sodom, destroyed by the fire of God. The theme of fire and destruction, which runs through the novel, begins to be transformed into the theme of light, brought by the control of fire.

The figure of Horace Buck, Negro friend of Revel, had been associated throughout the book with the fires that break out sporadically in the city. Unassimilated by the black community and shunned by the white, he has chosen to show his hatred of Bleston by setting small fires to destroy it piece by piece. Horace Buck is clearly related to all the alienated characters of mixed blood in the work of Faulkner. He reminds the reader of Joe Christmas in Light in August, who belongs neither to the black community nor to the white, and who expresses his hatred of society in violence. As in Absalom, Absalom! the secret evil of modern society reveals itself most powerfully in race prejudice. The legend of Cain, interpreted by Revel as the replacement of the old by the new, also has an ugly and guilty secret to be reinterpreted. Race hatred is the evil counterpart of the fratricide which brands Cain, and it is the scar on the face of modern man. Revel himself is guilty, for, although he can accept Horace Buck as a brother, he has never attempted to see Orientals as people. Again and again he eats in the Chinese restaurant "under the benevolent
reptilian eye of the plump yellow-skinned waiter" (PT, p.207). The nameless unchanging Oriental is a symbol of all people who are denied their individuality by our indifference.

In Faulkner's novel also a Biblical story of fratricide is retold with a difference, which reveals racial hatred as the modern counterpart of that fratricide. Unlike Absalom, Henry does not kill his brother to punish him for committing incest. It is Bon's Negro blood which makes Henry do murder rather than accept him into the Sutpen family.

In the last section of the novel, L'Emploi du Temps, the dream of Jenkins, which proves he did not actually try to kill Burton, reveals that he identified Burton with Horace Buck. Contrary to Revel's idea of Jenkins as champion of the new, he hates the Negro as a symbol of the introduction of new elements into the social structure of Bleston. His theory, that Burton disturbed the status quo with his story of fratricide in Bleston, has led to the notion that the author must be a Negro like Buck. The attempted murder of Burton, the crux of the story, is now revealed to be just an accident. Burton was tempted to cast himself in the role of victim in a real-life detective story. Again he has led Revel into a misinterpretation of events.
This final section shows Revel driven close to madness by his realization that he has lost Ann to James Jenkins. Despair at the crumbling of his hope makes him realize that the whole structure he has raised to make sense of the confusion of Bleston may itself be an illusion. He is tempted to destroy his journal, the mirror of Bleston, until he realizes that all he has written, whether imagined or real, whether fact or illusion, contributes to an understanding of the world as it appears to a human being lost in the labyrinth of experience. A dream reveals the possibility that his efforts to replace the old by the new may contribute to the creation of a New Cathedral whose form is still unimaginable. To bring the vision closer to reality will require the co-operation of others. Revel leases the journal to the sisters so that they may read the record of his struggle.

so that through the eyes of these sisters, Bleston, thanks to this writing which will remain after I have gone, and then gradually by contagion through other patient eyes, you will be caught in the net I have woven, and will pursue this study of yourself, you will build up your slow recovery, strengthen the surest of your dreams, and gather together your host of sparks, so that my silent words may begin to echo through all your rafters, so that your own silent words may at last achieve passionate utterance, Bleston, you who in the depths of your heart long, as much as I do, for your death. (PT, p. 240).

Revel's aim to convert the sand of experience into transparent
glass, so that its meaning may be understood, can only be accomplished through the fire of creation. It can only be useful to others if they join together to create the new world he envisions.

Although *L'Emploi du Temps* ends on a much more hopeful note than *Absalom, Absalom!*, it is constructed with the same didactic purpose of telling what it is like to live in the modern world. The South and Bleston exist as representative areas of that world. The blindness of the inhabitants to the real nature of their environment reflects the real state of modern man, whose personal experience is rarely adequate to give a clear idea of the enormous complexity of his world.

Into this area both Faulkner and Butor introduce a narrator who is alienated for a specific reason. Revel is more obviously deprived of identity than Quentin, because he remembers nothing of his past. An alien in the English city, he cannot communicate easily with the residents. His isolation is symbolic of the familiar modern disease of estrangement. Quentin has grown up in his environment, but he has personal reasons for being a stranger in the modern world. His relationship with the South is already that of a ghost from the past. These two young men remain, throughout the novels, unassimilated into the community.
The research begun into the area's particular characteristics rapidly turns to the study of models already accepted by other people as symbols of the area. Miss Rosa tells the story of Sutpen to Quentin because she feels it illustrates the reasons for the defeat of the South. Revel's attention is directed to the Murderer's Window by the story of a fratricide in the present.

By contrast both men choose the model for their own identity. In both cases the choice slowly reveals a likeness between the hero and the narrator which has nothing to do with heroism. The exile of Henry Sutpen from the living present and the exile of Theseus from Athens are clearly indicative of the fate lying in store for the narrators. Quentin had not realized that his romantic attachment to the traditions of the past was based upon an unrealistic idea of history. A fatal flaw in the pattern of the aristocratic South is revealed to be an offence against the family of man. The slavery of the black race in the South was a crime which places a burden of guilt upon the community in the present.

Revel is as innocent as Quentin of any criminal act, for the supposed attempted murder of Burton turns out to be just an accident. Yet he feels haunted, like Quentin, by the burden of guilt which is upon the whole community. Because
L'Emploi du Temps is far more concerned with abstract ideas than Absalom, Absalom!, the race prejudice which mars Bleston is only one aspect of the guilty burden modern man must accept. As I have already indicated, race prejudice is associated by Butor with the ignorance of the true nature of individuals and objects. Ignorance leads to judgment of facts on the basis of unexamined prejudices. Constant revision of the facts is necessary and still no one person can achieve more than a partial understanding of the world he inhabits. Revel is a victim of the paradox that one must withdraw from the world to examine the facts, yet withdrawal means that the present moment slips away unheeded. Every missed opportunity to gather knowledge places a burden of guilt upon man.

A similar trap lies in the use of myths, which symbolize all assemblies of knowledge into patterns. These are useful, and indeed necessary, to gather and pass on knowledge to others. Yet they must also be reinterpreted for they tend to become static images, imprisoning man in traditions that have little relation to his present experience. Revel learns by comparing his own real life with that of Theseus that he can only use the myth by a reinterpretation of its message and a painful acceptance of his likeness to the guilty and unheroic aspect of his model.
Butor and Faulkner both use several versions of the story they are telling to demonstrate the play between character and events. Each mentor of the narrator assembles the facts in a different way to make his present world into an acceptable home for his spirit. The alienation of the narrator forces him to question the conclusions of his mentors, and to re-assemble the facts. The discovery of a hidden fact or of a new and disturbing relationship between the facts brings the alienation of the narrator into play. His research reveals the fact that the world is indeed an alien place, which must be changed to become the true home of man.

The art of Faulkner and Butor is a fusion of form and content. A quest for meaning takes the form of a trial of various techniques of search and of narrative techniques at the same time. There is nothing lost by this method, for every detail contributes to the reader's appreciation of the complexity of the quest. In both *Absalom, Absalom!* and *L'Emploi du Temps* the final revision of the whole is left to the reader, so that he is challenged to participate in a creative reconstruction.

The style of these two novels is so different that it is not apparent at first that they are both essentially baroque novels. Faulkner's long and complicated sentence structure, combined with his predilection for unusual or antiquated words,
makes it easy to classify him as a baroque novelist. Butor uses simple language and his sentences are easy to understand, in spite of the unusual punctuation and paragraphing. The baroque element is found in Butor's elaboration of a few basic situations to create a complex structure. As in Faulkner's novel, every change or addition alters the significance of the story, but Butor's characters suffer from the development of his theme in a way that Faulkner's do not. In Absalom, Absalom! the characters reveal themselves in the building of a structure, while in L'Emploi du Temps they appear to be in a state of flux, changing as the narrator needs them to represent abstract ideas.

The difference between the characters in the two novels illustrates the difference between the novels themselves. Absalom, Absalom! is a novel about people to whom we can relate, while L'Emploi du Temps is basically a critique of the novel as a method of demonstrating ideas. It is a literary theoretician's exposition of the novel as an exercise in logical abstraction. What abstraction is to the logician, and even to the scientist, the novel is to Butor.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

In France the leaders of literary opinion had paid serious attention to the work of Faulkner before his reputation was established in America. Their interest in him, and in other American novelists, was due to the obvious need for new techniques in the French novel. During the nineteen-thirties and forties, while writers in the United States were forging ahead with the creation of a truly contemporary literature, the novel in France was at an impasse. The two great traditions of realism and of psychological analysis had reached a peak with the masters of the novel in the nineteenth century. Since then, their methods had been followed closely, with the result that fiction lagged behind the sciences and arts in coming to grips with a changing world.

By contrast American writers seemed to be free of any burden of tradition. Experiments with new techniques might not be completely successful, but the spirit of a new age was caught by adventures with untried subjects and methods. In his article "American Novelists in French Eyes," published in the Atlantic Monthly, August, 1946, Sartre explained to Americans the fascination of their literature for the French. He described the impact of Hemingway, Steinbeck, Dos Passos and
Faulkner on French writers, some of whom began to imitate the new techniques rather crudely. Then Sartre went on to predict the gradual absorption of these techniques into the main stream of French literature:

We have not sought with morose delight stories of murder and rape, but lessons in a renewal of the art of writing. We were weighted down, without being aware of it, by our traditions and our culture. These American novelists, without such traditions, without help, have forged, with barbaric brutality, tools of inestimable value. We collected these tools but we lack the naïveté of their creators. We thought about them, we took them apart and put them together again, we theorized about them and we attempted to absorb them into our great traditions of the novel. We have treated consciously and intellectually what was the fruit of a talented and unconscious spontaneity. . . . We shall give back to you these techniques which you have lent us. We shall return them digested, intellectualized, less effective, and less brutal—consciously adapted to French taste.1

A study of the influence of Faulkner in France shows that Sartre was right in predicting a certain loss of effect with the adaptation of American techniques to suit French needs. In the second chapter of this thesis, I mentioned the various

ways a knowledge of Faulkner helped the New Novelists to express the ideas of their time. In this final chapter I wish to consider some of the characteristics of Faulkner which have resisted adaptation to the needs of novelists whose culture is so different from his. Some of these characteristics did not survive translation, even by the expert Coindreau. At this level a language illustrates its peculiar structure which opposes the thought pattern of its culture to that of an alien culture. Other characteristics, like Faulkner's use of antithesis, have been borrowed with varying degrees of success.

To begin with the effect of translation on Faulkner's style, it is noticeable that some of the power of his language is lost in French. As I have already mentioned, Coindreau pointed out that he could not help but clarify, to a certain extent, the obscurity Faulkner apparently wished to produce in *The Sound and the Fury*. French tends to establish a logical relationship between the words in a sentence which Faulkner's English may leave vague.

Most striking to an English reader is the loss of Southern Negro dialect in Coindreau's version. The sermon of the Reverend Shegog illustrates the hypnotic power of Negro
oratory in the English text. A comparison with the French version of the same passage shows how much of that power has been lost in translation:

"O blind sinner! Breddren, I tells you; sistuhn, I says to you, when de Lawd did turn His mighty face, say, Aint gwine overload heaven! I can see de widowed God shet His do'; I sees de whelmin flood roll between; I sees de darkness en de death ever-lastin upon de generations . . ." (SF, p. 370)

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Another type of loss almost escapes observation until a detailed comparison of texts reveal the frequent substitution of ordinary French for expressions that are so odd in English that they catch the reader's attention. For example, Quentin remembers "the empty barn vacant with horses," (SF, p. 168) and it is clear that he was conscious of empty space where horses should be. Emotional response has disappeared in the matter-of-fact French words: "l'écurie vide de chevaux". (BF, p. 135).

It is not surprising that translation flattens the prose of Faulkner to some extent. The translator may be unable to find equivalent words for antiquated or poetic expressions,

as Woodworth points out in his book *Faulkner en France*. If the basic meaning has been conveyed, the translator may not be too concerned that the French makes Faulkner's language appear to conform a little more to traditional usage than it actually does in English.

Faulkner's sentence structure has been reproduced as closely as possible by his translators. It is doubtful, though, whether the long sentences achieved, in French, the effect he desired. French critics were usually content with mentioning the difficulties of his baroque style, without analyzing it as a literary technique.

As I have already pointed out, only Simon imitates the style of Faulkner in his novels. For the effect on readers accustomed to lucid prose, it is interesting to read Jacques Guicharnaud's article, "Remembrance of Things Passing: Claude Simon". After describing the difficulties Simon's style presents to understanding, Guicharnaud goes on:

> Even more disturbing to the French reader is the fact that all the rules of good style, as it is taught in school, are rejected: parentheses within parentheses, cascades of "que"s, conjunctions, and adverbs, occasional cacophony, an overabundance of present participles.³

Guicharnaud associates the style with the general theme in Simon's early novels, which show the defeat of reason as it tries to affirm order in a dissolving world. Jean Ricardou, in his article on *La Route des Flandres*, "Un ordre dans la débâcle," sees the style as an illustration of the breakdown of order so carefully demonstrated throughout this novel.⁴

Simon was obviously fascinated by the way Faulkner conveys the feeling that an action is still incomplete or that a thought is still in the process of being formulated. The baroque style was well-suited to the expression of confusion in the minds of characters facing the dissolution of their world. Simon has borrowed this style to express the disarray of his world. It is questionable, though, whether the similarity of Simon's purpose to Faulkner's justifies the direct transplantation of alien stylistic techniques into French literature. Perhaps a more rigorous adaptation of the style would have allowed Simon to avoid some of Faulkner's irritating mannerisms.

From the silence of French critics on Faulkner's use of oxymoron it is reasonable to infer that it was considered

just another peculiarity of his style. Simon has used the antithesis of motion and stasis in descriptions, but he explains, for example, that the narrator feels motionless while he is moving, so that the use of contradictory adjectives is avoided. Antithesis, which Faulkner apparently feels in the very nature of things, is transformed and intellectualized by Simon into the contrast between appearance and reality.

Faulkner also uses antithesis to direct the reader's attention to key moments in the novel. The action frequently builds up to a certain point, then freezes suddenly in a striking image. The frozen moment usually captures an action which the narrator must examine several times, from different angles, in order to discover its meaning. Butor and Simon have both used the static image to arrest motion, so that a fleeting moment is preserved for later reflection upon its meaning. It appears in *La Route des Flândres* as the return of memory to certain points, where the significance of an event eluded the narrator. Georges' mind keeps returning to the image of a dying horse, whose passive acceptance of death is gradually absorbed as a lesson to all the living engaged in furious action around its still form. It is so obviously a symbol that the reader understands its significance before Georges apparently does. By contrast Faulkner's static images
usually capture an opaque moment of action, the meaning of which becomes clear as our knowledge of the characters progresses. The arrest of motion is dramatic and creates suspense.

The use Butor has made of this particular technique is to return the narrator, Revel, to the tapestries which freeze the story of Theuseus in actions at various stages of his life. As Revel advances in knowledge of himself and his environment, he discovers the relevance of these frozen moments to his own experience. Because the events pictured are, presumably, familiar to the educated readers of Butor, there is no surprise to provide dramatic illumination of the rather unexciting events of Revel's life. My criticism of Butor's use of this technique is that it becomes a formal exercise in interpretation of the present through reinterpretation of the ancient myth.

The lack of Faulkner's sense of drama is apparent also in the adaptation of the most important technique in *Absalom, Absalom!* by Simon and Butor. The story of Sutpen crystallizes the history of the South for Quentin, so that he can understand its meaning in terms of a symbolic human figure. For Georges in *La Route des Flandres*, the confusion is concentrated, so that it can be analyzed, in the enigmatic figure
of a distant ancestor. In *L'Emploi du Temps*, the myths of Cain and Theseus also represent for Revel his inheritance as a modern man.

A crucial difference between Sutpen's story and those used by Simon and Butor is that it contains a secret that must be discovered by the narrator. All the speculations about the reasons for Henry's murder of Bon fail to solve the mystery until the secret is revealed. Suspense is built up as the search for Henry's motive becomes a matter of personal concern to Quentin. His identification with Henry exploits the drama of the murder and prepares the reader to feel shock when Quentin actually meets the aged murderer. Faulkner is a master of the art of recreating suspense, after essential details have been revealed, by delaying the emotional response of the narrator to facts he would rather evade in his romantic evocation of the past.

By contrast, the whole story of the de Reixach family has the quality of a structure built to illustrate the conviction of Georges that civilizations periodically crumble in war. The story contains no dramatic confrontations with an opposing reality in the past for it parallels the experience of Georges in the present. The deaths of Captain de Reixach and his ancestor are presented as enigmas to be solved, but
the narrator simply invents explanations which satisfy him. Only possibilities which do not conflict with his idea that order, discipline and sexual morality decline as a civilization dies are considered. There are no surprises to shock Georges, or to give him insight into his own character. He identifies to some extent with the ancestor de Reixach, and that static figure is made to live again through Georges' imagination. But no ironic contrast between the real and the imagined ancestor is possible, for the interpretation of Georges is all we are given. The farcical story invented by Blum to explain the suicide is fitted into the pattern of a breakdown in order created by Georges out of his own experience. It provides comic relief from the sombre inventions of Georges, rather than ironic contrast, for the dignity of the de Reixach family crumbles in farce, as the order of a civilized world disappears in war.

Since we are only given Georges' account of all events it is not surprising that all interpretations reported confirm the meaning he has given to experience. Faulkner's method of contrasting one person's viewpoint with another's, and his occasional comments on the story from his privileged position of omniscience, have been rejected as techniques in \textit{La Route des Flandres} and \textit{L'Emploi du Temps}. In the case of
Simon's novel, the powerful evocation of the experience of war makes the lack of an alternate vision acceptable. The reader is totally convinced that Georges is giving a representative view of disaster.

In *L'Emploi du Temps*, the reader is far more aware of the need for an objective, or at least an alternate, point of view. Again, the basic pattern of the novel is borrowed from Faulkner's use of a static figure in the past to provide a stable reference point for research into the meaning of present experience. Butor has adapted this technique with more originality than Simon. It has been cleverly remoulded to serve Butor's purpose as a phenomenological novelist. My criticism of *L'Emploi du Temps* is that Butor has neglected to make the real world around the narrator as compellingly solid and inescapable as the South in *Absalom, Absalom!*

Because Butor has obviously been influenced by Faulkner's presentation of the South, it is legitimate to compare his evocation of the spell of a region with Faulkner's. The city of Bleston is based on Butor's experience of Manchester, where he taught for two years. Living as an alien in England gave him the idea of writing a novel about the alienating effect of a modern industrial environment. The weak point of the novel is that the people of Bleston are not convincingly
portrayed. Butor depends far too heavily on stock characteristics of English people, like reserve and distrust of foreigners. The result is that all the natives of Bleston have a two-dimensional quality. Although they express some of their feeling about the city, they are not shown in action to demonstrate what it is really like to be an inhabitant of Bleston.

The contrast with the South in Faulkner's novels is immediately apparent. His creation of Yoknapatawpha county is based on life-long experience of Mississippi. The characters are convincingly rooted in an area where a pattern of life has developed over a period of time. The alienation of many Southerners in Faulkner's work is caused by their unwillingness to accept a new pattern imposed by social change.

Opposed to the values of the modern industrial world stand the people who look to the past as a time of pioneer courage and virtue. It is Faulkner's particular skill at conveying the lure of the past which makes the confrontation with its evil so dramatic in *Absalom, Absalom!* His sympathy with those who idealize the Old South is so strong that the reader feels their confusion as they face the ugly facts revealed in Sutpen's story. The shattering of Quentin's illusions does not lead him to accept the modern world. He gives in to despair
when he realizes that the South was corrupted from within by attitudes perpetuated into the present.

Butor has made the struggle between old and new the theme of his novel. Like Faulkner, he is fascinated by the past and the reinterpretation of its message. But for Butor the past is the panoramic history of Europe and the narrator of L'Emploi du Temps seeks to understand Bleston in the light of that cultural background. The particular history of the English city is never shown to be the cause of blindness to its evil. Revel has no emotional ties with its past, and the memories of its native sons are never explored. In the case of James Jenkins, for example, there is ample opportunity to probe the causes of the decline of his family. The reasons for the absence of creative energy in the grandson of a great sculptor could have been related, by convincing details, to the oppressive atmosphere of the city. Instead James is merely presented as more aware of the corruption in Bleston than his fellow citizens, but just as wary of change as they are.

The lack of a strong emotional bond between the community and its past makes the struggle between old and new rather lifeless. In fact Butor does not depend on the citizens to defend the old order with passion. Deserting the realistic
study of Bleston, he makes the city become a monster, driving the narrator to the brink of madness, in its furious defence of the old.

In this novel the role of racial prejudice in the old order that is doomed has obviously been suggested by the part it plays in Faulkner's South. On this subject the difference between the two writers is obviously the result of a totally different experience. Negroes in Faulkner's world are as at home in the South as whites. They are completely accepted as long as they do not attempt to cross the barrier between white society and black. In *L'Emploi du Temps* prejudice is just part of the general atmosphere. Its vicious power to crush is never tested by a crisis in the story of Horace Buck. In Faulkner that power is often unleashed, for racial prejudice is usually close to the nerve centre of his novels.

In both Sinon and Butor it is possible at times to see that Faulkner's themes have been borrowed without adequate care to adapt them to the French experience. The theme of alienation in the present has particularly attracted these two writers. Certain ways in which Faulkner's characters demonstrate their alienation are deeply rooted in their history. For instance, Quentin's complicated attitude to women has its basis in his family's puritanism. The careful establishment of its causes
makes this attitude seem a realistic detail of his alienation from life in the present. Simon has borrowed the lurid side of this characteristic for Georges in *La Route des Flandres*. There does not seem to be any good reason for Georges' feeling that sex is degrading. No puritanical background is given in this novel. Butor has borrowed the diffidence of Quentin with women because it can be made to illustrate inability to live and love in the character of Revel. Since we are not given any personal details of Revel's past we do not know why he cannot give his love.

In these instances the liberating technique of interior monologue, which allows the writer to demonstrate the way the world appears to one person, has led these writers slightly astray. They were right to reject the psychological analysis of character, for it had become an outmoded technique of traditional French novels. Faulkner's example of presenting objects in consciousness, without explanation, showed the way to transmit the feeling of experience as it happened, or as it was relived in involuntary memory. These writers have not always taken the same care as Faulkner, though, to reveal the reasons for a narrator's present attitudes to life through a return to past experience. It is still necessary to establish links with the past and with the environment, as Faulkner did, to make a character and his story convincing.
The transmission of a powerful literary influence from one culture to a very different culture always presents problems. A great writer often succeeds in making the experience of his fictional characters symbolize the experience of an age. It is this quality in Faulkner which has attracted modern French novelists. They want to probe the present malaise of the Western world as Faulkner probed the symptoms of the same disease in the South. The methods he used suited the particular problems faced by Southerners. They are not always completely successful when applied to the present situation of Europeans.
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