Allegory as rhetoric: Faulkner's trilogy

Sally Louise Schroeder

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A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English Composition

by
Sally Louise Schroeder

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ALLEGORY AS RHETORIC:
FAULKNER'S TRILOGY

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ABSTRACT

Careful and critical readers are aware that frequently, it is in the reflections of others that they see themselves. This is but one of the effects which readers both experience and respond to as they read Faulkner's trilogy. Functioning as their narrator--their surrogate--and their touchstone, V. K. Ratliff reveals to them the effects of Faulkner's militant rhetoric, rhetoric which is devised to deliberately manipulate their thoughts and those of Ratliff and other characters in his trilogy and effect mental changes in all of them. Exploiting such rhetorical and stylistic devices as designed instability, misdirection, implicature, and ellipses, Faulkner's manipulative style forces his readers to both experience the effects of Ratliff's contradictory behavior and respond to Faulkner's texts by speaking with them. What is unique about Faulkner's rhetorical use of allegory is that the allegory he chooses--one which is both familiar but whose message only seems obvious--causes uncritical readers to overlook it as either a rhetorical argument or an analytical tool. Because most readers are aware of some version of the tale about the man who sells his soul to the devil, they miss the implicature which
Faulkner's exploitation of its message suggests: "There will always be men and women who will say this is rotten, this stinks, I won't have it" (Gwynn and Blotner 148). In his trilogy, Faulkner reveals in V. K. Ratliff the struggle of one man--and, by implication, the struggles of everyone--who ultimately resists the fraudulent temptations which money and power seem to offer. It is by experiencing vicariously the consequences of Ratliff's own struggle with his standard of values as he vacillates between what he knows inherently to be right or what he knows to be fraudulent that causes readers to both perceive the consequences of fraud's perverse effects upon others and understand that Faulkner's trilogy is a parable which argues militantly that each reader must find his/her own truth in the allegory's apparent message--do what you know is "right."
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INTRODUCTION

Fraud, which is a canker to every conscience, may be practiced by a man on those who trust him, and on those who have reposed no confidence.

--Dante

"Only thank God men have done learned how to forget quick what they aint brave enough to try to cure, he told himself, walking on... Because I missed it, missed it clean" (H 86-7). V. K. Ratliff's simple but elliptical self-critical remark can only suggest to us--the readers--the magnitude of evil which Flem Snopes seems to embody. We learn, however, that Ratliff is mistaken about himself; he is unable to forget that Flem appears to be a man without a conscience, a man whose soul resides in an "asbestos matchbox--a dried-up smear," a man who, some critical readers and Yoknapatawpha residents believe, makes a bargain with the Prince of Hell (H 149). Later, remembering his thoughts, readers may question their initial perceptions of both Ratliff and Flem. The questioning of Ratliff, in particular, is central to any reader's experience with Faulkner's trilogy--The Hamlet, The Town, and The Mansion. Our point of view in these novels is both established by and filtered through Ratliff. He is our narrator, our
surrogate, our touchstone: The questions about his actions and his character inhere in the texts; they fundamentally shape our experience with them.

The genesis of William Faulkner's trilogy occurs in 1925 and, fifteen years later, the first volume, The Hamlet, is published. This text does more than introduce readers to the Snopeses; it, and the trilogy's sequential texts--The Town (1957) and The Mansion (1959)--seem to suggest that Flem and almost all of his "proliferating, powerful, and, as Faulkner would say, self-progenitive" kinsmen perpetrate fraud upon the citizens of Yoknapatawpha County (Howe 79). Like Edmund Spenser, Faulkner endeavors "to portray the nature of the world in which we live by contrasting it with a state of excellence from which we have declined and to which we may aspire;" his trilogy appears to chronicle the ascent to and ultimate fall from power of Flem and his ideology, Snopesism (Nelson 82). Readers who agree that there is merit to this interpretation of the trilogy may perceive that Flem's actions--his usurpation of Will Varner's custom-made flour-barrel throne in this text, his confiscation of his wife's lover's bank in The Town, and his death in his cell-like study in the dispossessed bank
president's home in *The Mansion*—remind them of specific individuals, individuals who may possibly be their neighbors. Such singular people, Irving Howe argues, are like those who "come afterwards: the creatures that emerge from the devastation, with the slime still upon their lips" (80). Readers, however, find Faulkner's Snopeses in the South, a South which emerges devastated by the violence and destruction of the Civil War.

Out of the social vacuum the Civil War leaves behind, emerge men such as Jason Compson, Thomas Sutpen, and Flem Snopes, who appear to resemble one another in their ambitions, crudeness, avarice, and amorality; each of them—and others like them—suggest to readers the hard-headed parvenu whom many of them may have met, the individual whose sole objective seems to suggest "a single-hearted devotion to the cash box" (Cash 192). Readers observe in Faulkner's world how both its prewar social and cultural leaders are forced to defend themselves "against [this] new and exploiting class [which is] descended from the landless whites;" they see how these former leaders—families like the Sartorises—"are defeated in advance by their chivalric code of tradition which prevents them from using the weapons
of the enemy" (Cowley xxi). In both Frenchman's Bend and Jefferson, readers meet this new, exploitive, and, perhaps, inimical ideology--Snopesism--which appears to advocate a particularly perverse representation of the American Dream, a dream which suggests anyone or anything is for sale; they observe how Snopesism seems to spread like "ants or...mold on cheese" seeking out, exploiting and, on occasion, shattering and destroying those who attempt to challenge its power (Gwynn and Blotner 193). The dream also suggests that Flem Snopes functions as both its symbol and its principal advocate. Acting as a guide for readers in Faulkner's very suggestive and allegorical Yoknapatawphan world is V. K. Ratliff.

Both as a guiding, narrative voice and the trilogy's symbol of humanistic values, Ratliff is the character who seems to "give character to and determine the character of a culture," the particular culture of both a hamlet and a town (Botkin xxxvii). My thesis proposes first that his speech acts--his inner monologues, his dialogues, and the allegorical episode itself--suggest that Faulkner uses allegory to persuade readers to re-vision Ratliff's character. Second, it is the effect of their continuous re-
vision which enables readers to understand that both Ratliff's speech acts and his behavior function to influence their perception of him, Flem Snopes, and the trilogy. When he appears to abandon this role in *The Hamlet*, readers experience an ellipsis; they become frustrated by Faulkner's failure to offer either a synthesis or a resolution to explain the gap that Ratliff's atypical behavior poses to them. Their frustration causes readers to react—to respond—to the text both to discover what Faulkner does not seem to tell them and to seek either a resolution or a synthesis to *The Hamlet*.

My rhetorical study of Faulkner's work uses linguistic theory to analyze the speech acts of several characters in the trilogy, but I focus on those of Ratliff. Linguist Mary Louise Pratt points out in her text on speech-act theory that she considers Faulkner one of the "best known modern writers to use the natural narrative framework" (67). Typically, this story-telling form functions within the context of conversation, but an actual audience is not always present; it may only be implied. Often, Ratliff's first-person narrative stories act to either explain or clarify an event for another character(s) and, as a result,
readers; they may also be framed to cause both characters and readers to perceive the changes that occur between characters and between characters and readers. (Ratliff tells two such stories in Chapter III about the Memphis whore and the meaning of respectability). Stephen M. Ross\textsuperscript{1} states that "'listening to voices' is [f]undamental to the experience in and of Faulkner's fiction" (2). "William Labov's entire analysis," Pratt argues, "is stated in terms of devices speakers use to produce effects in hearers," and much of what Ratliff says, for example, does seem to be designed by Faulkner to produce effects in hearers, both characters and readers. To use linguistic theory to analyze his characters' speech acts is both appropriate and necessary to understand how speech act analysis enables critics and careful readers to recognize that the effect of what Faulkner's characters suggest by what they say within the trilogy is just as important as what they do.

To be successful a speech act does at least two and possibly three things: It 1) says something, a locutionary act; 2) does something, an illocutionary act; and 3) effects, that is, has consequences, a perlocutionary act (Pratt 80). For example, when law enforcement officers
issue warnings to drivers, they say (explain the violation) something to them; they do something, warn them; and, ideally, they affect their behavior--drivers correct their inappropriate behavior. To achieve the successful completion of a speech act, however, also requires that speakers be able to do what they say—for example, promise, describe, command, inform, explain, state, warn.

Functioning as a singular and specific speech act, *The Hamlet*’s allegorical episode meets the requirements for a successful speech act: It both says and does something to Ratliff and to readers. To Ratliff, the allegorical episode suggests that if he does not oppose Snopesism, he acts as fraudulently as Flem; it also suggests that there may be consequences for Ratliff and others if he does not heed the allegorical message. To readers, the rhetorical effectiveness of the dialogue between Flem and the Prince indicates that Flem desires Hell—that anything or anyone is for sale, even Hell. Although there may be other interpretations which the allegory poses to readers, because it is Ratliff who experiences the allegory, the message it conveys to him remains, like an echo, in both their minds.
and Ratliff's. Does the allegory suggest that Ratliff, too, is for sale?

My Chapter I, *The Hamlet*, both introduces Ratliff and Flem to readers and responds to critical comments with analyses of speech acts from *The Hamlet* that reveal alternative arguments to those which are offered by critics. Using linguistic theory in Chapter II, I analyze the allegorical episode as a single speech act by studying the speech acts in Flem's and the Prince's dialogue to discover how the argument the allegory contains affects and/or manipulates both Ratliff and readers. In Chapter III, *The Town* and *The Mansion*, I again use linguistic analysis to show what each text's speech acts imply to readers about Ratliff's behavior, which either supports or weakens the resolution to the trilogy that both the allegorical episode and *The Hamlet* suggest.

For each text, Ratliff acts either as an observer who chronicles events or as an occasional interpreter who explains events in Frenchman's Bend and Jefferson to readers. To avoid personal bias, I analyze both the texts and, for the most part, the speech acts, chronologically to show both Ratliff's gradual evolution as an observing
character and Flem's apparent success as an ideological spokesperson. My brief summary proposes that it is the trilogy's parabolic structure which enables Faulkner, through his use of rhetoric, to put before readers the consequences for either individuals or communities that abandon humanistic values for those which advance fraudulent ideologies.

My proposal does not imply that Faulkner intends to specifically recommend that critics and careful readers revision the trilogy, but his author's preface in The Mansion points out to readers that he "has learned...more about the human heart and its dilemma" during the thirty-four years which elapse since Faulkner's conception of The Hamlet.\(^2\) Both his comments in the preface and the apparent ellipsis in The Hamlet indicate to careful readers that a pattern of inherent unity exists in the Snopes chronicle for those who experience the trilogy as a unified whole, rather than seeing it as three separate texts.

The critical view, which argues that Ratliff succumbs to either excessive greed or pride, fails to explain adequately what Ratliff's behavioral change does to careful readers who study the trilogy as a unified whole. In one of
the earliest analyses of the complete work, Warren Beck argues in his seminal text, *Man in Motion: Faulkner's Trilogy*, that both critics and careful readers have a responsibility to re-see--to re-vision--the trilogy to discover Faulkner's pattern not in *The Hamlet*, but in that text's relationship to each of the trilogy's other texts (3-4). I agree with Beck's argument.

Because I first read the trilogy as a single text, I did not experience the work as an argument on either greed or pride or on the consequences of unchecked consumerism or the evils of trade; at the time, I was unaware of seventeen years of criticism which proposed these and other interpretations of *The Hamlet*. In 1995, similar arguments were still being offered at the yearly Faulkner Conference. Individual texts continue to be analyzed, not the trilogy; yet Faulkner's author's preface and the allegorical episode remain to offer other, valid resolutions to explain the trilogy and, as a result, *The Hamlet*. My interpretation is rooted in the allegorical episode: To indicate a "change in texture, in the reader's perception of events, and the reader's sense of the discourse itself," Faulkner presents the allegory in italic print to persuade readers to re-
experience the text (Ross 145-46). Because it is Ratliff who both seems to buy into Snopesism and, along with readers, experiences the allegorical episode, my textual re-vision focuses on the effects of his seemingly contradictory behavior--what he does and what he says--and offers a rhetorical explanation for the ellipsis which this behavior encourages the reader to experience.

Re-vision, Adrienne Rich explains, is "the act of looking back--seeing with fresh eyes--...[and] entering the text from a new critical direction" (537). Richard H. King and Beck also urge that readers return to the text. King argues that readers need "to reread [Faulkner] continually and constantly, against all efforts to domesticate or normalize him, [to] not ever get folksy and cozy about [him or] make [him] pure and simple" (42). And Beck states that, in addition to re-seeing the trilogy, critics and critical readers should also reconsider the more complex characters who have been overshadowed by others who, superficially, appear more important (23). While their suggestions differ slightly, Rich, King, and Beck agree that readers are responsible for entering the text from a new direction. The new direction of my own re-vision of the trilogy began more
than thirty years ago when I encountered an ellipsis which seemed to suggest a contradiction between the implied message of the allegorical episode and the ambiguous conclusion of *The Hamlet*.

Quite simply, I responded to the text by asking myself, "What are the italics doing here?" A rapid segue to the present reveals that Faulkner uses italics to cause me, the reader, to notice the allegory--to recognize it not merely by noticing its presence, but by seeing that it requires that I, the reader, grasp the "seemingly disorganized images" by which Faulkner displays and "gradually, subtly reveals the essential unity within all" (Williamson 203). Such deliberate rhetorical use of disorganized images should remind critics and careful readers alike that Faulkner "believe[d] the basic line [was] circular" (Blotner 160). Beginning with *The Hamlet*, readers are compelled to circle back--to re- vision the trilogy and see its essential unity.
CHAPTER I

The Hamlet

Whilst that for which all virtue now is sold,  
And almost every vice--almighty gold.

--Ben Jonson

"To read Abasalom, Abasalom! is to subject ourselves to the effects of a speech act" (Miller, 261). J. Hillis Miller's statement that Abasalom, Abasalom! is a textual speech act supports Richard Gray's argument--the Yoknapatawpha novels are polyphonic: the great and open dialogue of their speech acts has a persuasive effect on critical readers (54). Readers who seek to understand a text, or a part of one, "unwittingly and without wishing to do so, [subject] themselves already to its performative power"; we react not only rhetorically to the effects of textual speech acts--what they do to us--we engage in linguistic criticism (Miller, 262). Roger Fowler defines this method of literary study as "not just study of the language, but study of the language utilizing the concepts and methods of modern linguistics"; the focus is on the "verbal analysis of the language of literature" (2-3). Because the trilogy's texts are Yoknapatawpha novels, and
readers both respond to and participate in their dialogue, a linguistic and rhetorical analysis of their speech acts is an appropriate method to employ to arrive at the resolution to the ellipsis which the allegorical episode suggests.

As I point out in the introduction, readers' responses not only reveal the shape of the trilogy's texts, they are an integral part of Faulkner's textual environment, his postage stamp of native soil. Readers both respond to and speak with the trilogy's texts from their own points of view. Distinctly and individually, readers' experiences both affect and effect Faulkner's textual environment and, because they bring their varied experiences into his environment, they become an integral part of Faulkner's world. Such reader response illustrates how the "texts and readers speak to each other" both to indicate and to reveal the multiple points of view each text contains (Kolmerton, Ross, and Wittenberg ix). Readers find, however, that Faulkner's postage stamp is altered by Ratliff's apparent abandonment of Faulkner's humanistic values, his verities--"courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice" for those of Snopesism (Cowley 724). It is Ratliff's seeming abandonment of these qualities which
appears to create the ellipsis which readers encounter at the conclusion of *The Hamlet*.

To understand the ellipsis and to reveal what *The Hamlet* seems to say to readers about Ratliff's behavior, it is necessary for readers to examine his speech acts—to both listen to and respond to them, that is, to speak with and communicate with the text. Such active reader participation will reveal how Ratliff's speech acts and the allegorical episode function rhetorically to shape *The Hamlet*’s environment; readers may also learn whether Ratliff's speech acts support the conclusions of critical analyses. (For the complete text of the allegorical episode, see Appendix.)

As their narrator and occasional interpreter--their surrogate--and their touchstone, it is largely through Ratliff's eyes and Ratliff himself that readers experience the events which occur in Faulkner's trilogy. In "Ratliff," Ross says, "Faulkner comes the closest to granting dialect speech the full and substantial credentials of narrative voice" (110). Because readers frequently hear Ratliff's voice telling the story as they read it, he functions as either their narrator or their interpreter. Ratliff not only tells readers how he knows of the events and how he may
or may not participate in them, he also tells readers what he thinks about them (Ross 76). It is in this latter role that he can both affect and effect the reading experiences of readers. Because he both knows about and may be a participant in the events he narrates, he provides a contextual framework which readers do not have and, by providing them with this contextual framework, he effects changes in readers' understanding of and experiences with the events--he influences them to see things through his eyes.

But neither Ratliff's narrative nor interpretive function is omnipotent; his authority is limited both by the responses readers make to him and to the texts and by Faulkner's authorial voice. Ratliff, for example, cannot "report more sophisticated narrative without commenting upon it as being more sophisticated" (Ross 110). He can tell readers what he thinks Gavin Stevens says, but only by using his own colloquial idiom. And although Ratliff can use an "even more extreme dialect than Faulkner uses to transcribe the quoted speaker's words," he may not reverse the process: Ratliff does not mimic Gavin's standard speech either by quoting his "'superior' speech accurately or by employing a
more sophisticated standard idiom" (Ross 110). But even with readers' and Faulkner's limitations, Ratliff's narrative voice is powerful, and his power causes readers to view him as their touchstone.

Because any touchstone acts as a standard or a measure of quality, Ratliff becomes the standard by which readers evaluate the events which occur in the trilogy—they not only see Frenchman's Bend and Jefferson through his eyes, they understand these two very different communities through Ratliff's narrative and interpretive voice. But when he seems to fail them as their touchstone and become part of the fraudulent world that he chronicles, readers experience both his apparent failure as their touchstone and their own failure to judge him accurately. By deliberately forcing readers to respond to Ratliff's experiences with fraud by experiencing them, Faulkner also forces readers to judge the values of their own world at the same time that they judge those of Ratliff and his world. The result for readers may be—as it is for Ratliff—as unexpected as it is revealing.

Critics, differing more in degree than in kind in their analyses of Ratliff, focus often on either greed or pride to explain his change in behavior. They emphasize that
Ratliff's greed causes him to trade his one-half ownership in a Jefferson restaurant for one-third of the Old Frenchman's place, and the graphic picture which Faulkner suggests in his depiction of Ratliff and Odum Bookwright--Ratliff's partner in the purchase of the Old Frenchman's place--appears to confirm their interpretations:

...struggling for the shovel, snatching and jerking at it, their breathing harsh and repressed,...[until] Ratliff seemed to realise what he was doing. He released the shovel; he almost hurled it at Bookwright. "'Take it,' he said. He drew a long shuddering breath. 'God,' he whispered. 'Just look at what even the money a man aint got yet will do to him'" (H, 343).

Linguistic analysis of these speech acts, however, reveals to readers that Ratliff not only realizes what he has done, but that he is not proud of his actions: "Just look at what even the money a man aint got yet will do to him" (italics added). "Yet" acts to qualify what Ratliff appears to say; it suggests to readers that Ratliff does recognize that his behavior is just like that of others who have accepted Snopesism's motto; he has sold a part of himself. Some readers may accept this opinion--that Ratliff compromises both his principles and his judgment in his efforts to
defeat Flem; other readers, however, may note that Ratliff's expressive use of an expletive--"God"--suggests more than just the shuddering breath he draws; "God" reveals his shock at his actions. Unlike some other characters who do succumb to Snopesism, Ratliff stops, looks, and sees himself--struggling, snatching, jerking--apparently overcome by greed. He appears to realize suddenly just how much he wants whatever is buried at the Old Frenchman's place; his unusual behavior and the expletive suggest both his disgust and his anger with himself. And Ratliff's final speech act indicates these emotional feelings because he ends the struggle with his friend and partner: He releases the shovel and almost hurls it at Bookwright. The performative power of "take it" both ends the altercation and eases the tension. The rhetorical effect of Ratliff's speech act is to say--"No, this is not who I am"--and neither his speech act nor his physical acts suggest to readers that his "soul has...been trapped by the diabolical Flem" (Hoffman 105). In the examples which follow, Ratliff's speech acts reveal to readers that he is neither excessively greedy nor an advocate of Snopesism. Because his struggle with Bookwright occurs at The Hamlet's conclusion, readers' interpretations
of Ratliff have been shaped over a period of time and they realize that his behavior with Bookwright at the Old Frenchman's place is not typical. What readers do not understand—and what causes the ellipsis—is the reason for his behavior.

Irving Howe argues that "Ratliff proves as gullible as Flem's other victims...[he] is deceived by the hoary trick of 'salting' the earth with hidden treasure. [He] succumbs to avarice—or perhaps to the 'game' of the struggle with the Snopes" (249). Howe also faults Faulkner in his critique: "[O]ne questions the plausibility within the terms of behavior set up by Faulkner himself, of Ratliff's sudden loss of intelligence and wit" (250). However, as the previous citation's speech acts reveal, Howe's allegation that Ratliff succumbs to avarice is mistaken; he is fooled, but he neither submits nor yields to Flem's apparently superior trading skills.

Howe appears to reject both Ratliff's self-evaluation, which halts the struggle with Bookwright, and his belief that Will Varner's trading acuity act as sufficient reasons for Ratliff to purchase one-third of the Old Frenchman's place: "[Ratliff] had never for one moment believed that it
had no value....if [Varner] kept it, it was too valuable to sell" (H 158). Varner, however, does divulge reasons other than either pleasure or value for keeping the Old Frenchman's place for twenty years:

"I like to sit here. I'm trying to find out what it must have felt like to be the fool that would need all this just to eat and sleep in." Then he said, "I reckon I'll just keep what there is left of it, just to remind me of my one mistake. This is the only thing I ever bought in my life I couldn't sell to nobody" (H 6).

Varner's candid admission--that he cannot sell the property to anyone--should act to focus Ratliff's and readers' attention on what Varner's first two speech acts suggest--he has acted foolishly and he has made a mistake. Readers have already experienced other conversations between Varner and Ratliff about the property which support this explanation. In one earlier conversation, Varner repeats his reason for sitting on his property: "It [is] only to an itinerant sewing-machine agent named Ratliff--a man less than half his age--that Varner ever [gives] a reason: 'I like to sit here. I'm trying to find out what it must have felt like to be the fool that would need all this just to eat and sleep in'" (H 3; 6). Varner owns the Old Frenchman's place, land
now consisting largely of "small shiftless mortgaged farms...and the skeleton of the tremendous house..." from which various "heirs-at-large" have been pulling down and chopping up wood for thirty years (H 3). "But," as Varner tells Ratliff, these "folks...wont even climb a ladder to pull off the rest of the boards" (H 6). Employing irony, Varner is actually telling Ratliff and readers that unless he does something to demolish the rest of the house and clear its demesne, he cannot sell the property. It is the house and its immediate grounds that Varner considers his uniquely foolish mistake; the mortgaged farms are a source of income. Countless heirs-at-large are no longer willing to do more than scavenge, not because they refuse to climb a ladder, but because they do not want to perform the necessary labor for nothing. Varner uses irony again to tell Ratliff his reason for sitting and looking--to learn "what it must have felt like to be the fool who would need all this just to eat and sleep in" (italics added). Readers, however, already know that Varner is not a fool. As the wealthiest and most powerful man in Yoknapatawpha County, no one questions his bartering skills, particularly Ratliff (H 5). But readers may well question Varner's
common sense: To use the land profitably, he must either clear the land himself or pay someone to clear it for him. Moreover, readers may begin to question Ratliff's communication skills--his inability to recognize irony--and thus, his role as either their narrator or interpreter.

Readers already know that businessmen--barterers included--do not usually disclose their private trading practices to another--potential--rival and, for them, the truth and accuracy of Varner's statement seems persuasive (H 82). But a second, perhaps more important, reason for them to accept Varner's statements is that he genuinely likes Ratliff: "He [sits] the old horse and [looks] down at Ratliff,...who [is] a good deal nearer his son in spirit and intellect and physical appearance too than any of his own get" (H 158). The implicature in Varner's internal reflection suggests strongly that he seems to see Ratliff as his true son--not a potential rival--and would not mislead him.³ Internal reflections or monologues, Pratt suggests, are evaluative devices signifying comparisons; Varner is comparing Ratliff to his son, Jody (63-64). Varner's indirect speech acts fail, however, to communicate his
thoughts and Ratliff, by reputation an equally shrewd trader, misses his irony, his implicature.

Ratliff's speech acts indicate that he does not believe Varner; instead, they reveal that he assumes, incorrectly, that Varner cannot make a trading error. Ratliff's erroneous assumptions appear to be the result of his complete faith in Varner, not just in Varner's trading skills. While such faith—in either individuals or philosophies—can be misplaced, in this instance it suggests to readers that Ratliff possesses character traits which reveal both his loyalty to and respect and friendship for Varner. Ratliff will continue to reveal these qualities as well as examples of Faulkner's values repeatedly in the trilogy. A complex character, he is a man who, "at any moment of action is not just himself as he is then, he is all that made him,..." (Gwynn and Blotner 84). In Ratliff, Faulkner creates not only a memorable character who consists of many parts, he creates a character who grows throughout the trilogy in both stature and perception.

Georgia M. Green argues that indirect speech acts are "quicker, safer, and more effective," but her argument presupposes that the "audience shares speakers' assumptions"
and "listens carefully to what is said," that is, what is suggested or implied; Ratliff appears to do neither (77). By missing Varner's irony, Ratliff misses its intended meaning--to tell him that the former mansion and demesne are of no value to him. Varner realizes that Ratliff thinks otherwise, but in spite of his strong feelings for him, Varner cannot or, perhaps, will not say more to Ratliff without also seeming to say, "I've been a fool, just like the Old Frenchman."

Readers continue to observe Ratliff missing Varner's implicature when he appears to ignore Varner's candid remarks about either buying or selling anything from Flem: "'You got better sense than to try to sell Flem Snopes anything,' Varner said. 'And you sholy aint fool enough by God to buy anything from him, are you?'

Readers understand from their previous observations that the intended effect of both indirect speech acts is to warn Ratliff. Rhetorically, the implicature in Varner's indirect speech acts--particularly his use of "sholy" to emphasize fool--appears to function as a reminder which is intended to persuade Ratliff to accept his explanation, buying the Old Frenchman's place would be a fool's mistake. Varner also
asserts that he makes a second mistake by selling the property to Flem in the hopes that "pure liver would choke that cat" (H 158). Flem not only digests the liver, he later sells the property to Ratliff and his partners. Readers will remember this incident later and realize that Flem may have had Ratliff in mind as a potential buyer. Few people were unaware of Ratliff's intense interest in the Old Frenchman's Place. Knowing this, readers assume that Ratliff, like Flem, has a valid economic reason to trade his one-half interest in a restaurant for the remains of a mansion. But readers who assume Ratliff has such a similar economic reason err. Ratliff underestimates Flem's driving ambition to acquire money and power; he should have both questioned the economic merits of such a trade--a viable restaurant for an abandoned mansion--and listened more carefully to Varner's warning about trading with Flem.

In Varner's first speech act--"You got better sense than to try to sell Flem...anything"--he seems to say to both Ratliff and readers that "Yes, Ratliff, you are a good trader but do not sell anything to Flem; you are a fool if you do." His dialogue's implicature suggests that Ratliff will lose in any trade with Flem just as Varner loses in his
trade with Flem: Varner trades his daughter and the Old Frenchman's Place to Flem to protect his reputation. In return, Flem gives his name to Eula's unborn child and acquires both the property and the potential power that his association with Varner will bring him. Because barterers know there are always risks in any trade, the suggestion that Ratliff is a fool seems to imply that there is something in or about a trade with Flem that is suspect.

In his second sentence--"And you sholy aint fool enough by God to buy anything from him, are you?"--Varner repeats himself, except that this time Varner warns Ratliff even more strongly against buying anything from Flem. Because this warning is more direct--he bluntly tells Ratliff he is a fool if he buys anything from Flem--Varner again implies that there may be something wrong with the trade, something unethical or, perhaps, even illegal.

Together, these indirect speech acts reveal to both Ratliff and readers that Flem seems to be more than a good trader; Varner does not seem to think that anyone can out-trade him, including both Ratliff and himself. And the trades which Varner and Ratliff each make are not only bad bargains, they provide Flem with his first stepping stone
toward the acquisition of both money and power. But Ratliff continues to ignore Varner's warnings. Because readers already know that he recognizes the threat which Flem and his philosophy pose to everyone in the hamlet, readers assume that more than money is involved in this exchange of properties. The only specific foreshadowing is the elliptical message Ratliff leaves for Varner--"Just tell him Ratliff says it aint been proved yet"--which suggests that Ratliff has an idea, if not a plan (italics added).

Because Varner gives the Old Frenchman's place to Flem as a wedding gift, he receives nothing tangible; he gives Flem the property only to protect the Varner name by trading his daughter to a man whom these speech acts reveal Varner neither likes nor respects. Ratliff, in an equally foolish trade, gives Flem a quit-claim deed for his share in the restaurant and receives a worthless piece of property (354). Later, readers will observe that within "six months Snopes had not only eliminated [Ratliff's] partner from the restaurant, Snopes...was out of it, replaced...by another Snopes accreted in from Frenchman's Bend into the vacuum behind the first one's next advancement by which, according to Ratliff, they had covered Frenchman's Bend, the chain
unbroken..." (T 8-9). In contrast to Varner and Ratliff, Flem gains both the power to influence Varner and the restaurant to provide financially for himself and his family and, as he amasses more money and power, to support the various members of the Snopes tribe as he farms them to Jefferson from Frenchman's Bend.

Both Varner's words and actions violate a cardinal principle of barter--Varner interferes: "[He] went as far and even further than a man can let hisself go in another man's trade" (H 82). But Varner's interference fails to deter Ratliff; he continues to miss the implicature in both indirect speech acts (H 82). Ratliff not only disregards Varner's warnings, he, Bookwright, and Armstid buy the remaining ten acres of the Old Frenchman's place later the same day (H 354). Both by his actions and speech acts, Ratliff suggests to readers that he remains convinced that the Old Frenchman's place has value; it may even be more valuable now because Flem owns it. The other partners appear to share his opinion. Readers, however, can only continue to conjecture about Ratliff's inability to communicate with Varner, a man he knows well. Because they know at the time that Ratliff and his partners buy the Old
Frenchman's place Ratliff has 1) witnessed the fraud Flem commits as Ike Snopes' guardian; 2) experienced the allegorical episode; 3) ended Lump Snopes' attempt to pervert the residents of Frenchman's Bend, 4) listened to Flem lie publicly to Mrs. Armstid about money that she has been promised by one of Flem's employees 5) witnessed Lump perjure himself by supporting Flem's lie in open court, and 6) admitted his hypocrisy, readers question not only Ratliff's credibility, but his values as well (H 315; 326). Why, they may well ask themselves, does Ratliff act in contradiction to the values they associate with him, values they know Ratliff both understands and in which he believes. Their doubts about his credibility may increase; they may also begin to doubt his values. But readers find that their only recourse seems to be further re-vision of both Ratliff's speech acts and his pattern of behavior.

The communications breakdown which occurs between Varner and Ratliff validates Green's warning about the disadvantages of indirect speech acts--the intended audience shares the speaker's assumptions and listens carefully to what is implied. Readers have observed on more than one occasion that Ratliff's actions suggest he can hear only
what he assumes Varner says. Hearing, in effect, his own assumptions rather than listening to what Varner implies, Ratliff does not recognize his errors until he and his partners buy a salted gold mine, the act which causes the ellipsis in the *Hamlet*.

Most simply, an ellipsis is an omission which leaves a gap in the text. The effect, however, of a textual ellipsis is that it causes readers to experience ambiguity: the sense of the text becomes obscure or cryptic to them (*Random House Dictionary* [RHD]). Because readers neither expect Ratliff to make such a seemingly poor trade nor understand his reason for trading with Flem, they become frustrated by Faulkner's seeming failure to offer either a synthesis or a resolution at the conclusion of *The Hamlet*. Both early and more recent critics argue that two plausible interpretations which both explain Ratliff's elliptical behavior and suggest an appropriate resolution to *The Hamlet* are his excessive greed and/or pride. But neither of these interpretations explain adequately his change in behavior after he experiences the allegorical episode--he closes Lump's theater and he admits his hypocrisy. Faulkner's deliberate and carefully framed, as well as highly ambiguous,
conclusion to *The Hamlet* leaves readers frustrated. No longer does Ratliff appear to be the same man who says, "No, this is not who I am," when he ends his struggle with Bookwright. Now, readers can only wonder if they have misjudged Ratliff; he seems to be no different than all the others who have bought Snopesism. The problems raised by the ellipsis are not resolved until *The Town*.

Ratliff's failure to realize the significance of Flem's ownership of the Old Frenchman's place becomes, ultimately, the most important error Ratliff makes. His actions reveal to readers that although he recognizes how Flem uses Varner's thumbscrew--Eula's pregnancy--to get what he needs, Ratliff does not recognize the same manipulative tool when Flem uses it against him. Readers, however, are aware that Flem has discovered Ratliff's thumbscrew--the Old Frenchman's place--and that he uses this knowledge as a stepping stone to [achieve] his own ends. Because Flem and readers are aware both of Ratliff's strong belief in Varner's trading skills and his equally strong desire to own some portion of the Old Frenchman's place, they recognize that it is Ratliff's mistaken assumptions--not the game of barter--which lead to Flem's successful acquisition of
power. The other effect of Ratliff's repeated failure--to listen carefully--demonstrates clearly to readers the need for them to both listen and address adequately the information which Ratliff communicates to them. Observing how Ratliff's and Varner's failure to communicate appears to both ensure Flem's success and cause the ellipsis which they must explain, readers may again question Ratliff's role as their narrator, interpreter, and surrogate.

But the question Howe raises about Ratliff's behavioral change--his sudden loss of intelligence and wit--illustrates clearly for readers the ideas which Bleikasten and others have mentioned: Faulkner's texts are "unstable, shifting configurations of meaning, [an] endless circling around an absent center" (Bleikasten 11). And Ratliff's abrupt change in behavior does cause readers to engage in continuous speculation both by defamiliarizing the environment of the text for them and by illustrating why Faulkner believes that they must bring their own varied experiences into his environment and continue to communicate with the text. The effect, however, of such unrelenting re-vision and re-analysis is to create doubt in the minds of readers about Ratliff.
Readers who become unsure about the narrator/reader relationship may begin to seriously question and/or doubt the narrator's credibility. Because Ratliff functions as the character who is central to all three texts—the chronicler in The Hamlet and the interpreter in The Town and The Mansion—any loss in Ratliff's credibility affects readers' developing understanding of him. Moreover, readers may also ask themselves how Ratliff's seeming unreliability as both a character and a narrator affects his role as the one who represents Faulkner's humanitarian values. The result of their increasing doubts about both Ratliff's credibility and values is to compel readers to use their own experiences to help them understand him. In effect, readers become what Jay Watson identifies as "bricoleurs,...literary fix-it readers" (25). As a process, bricolage "reconstructs a working whole out of disparate parts and is not unlike the legal process in which lawyers reconstruct their cases out of distinct and dissimilar pieces of evidence" (Watson 41). Readers must develop their case, too, by reconstructing Ratliff out of disparate and frequently contradictory parts to reach an understanding of him.
Functioning much like jurors evaluating evidence, readers seeking to explain Ratliff's breach of character and discover who he is, must continue communicating with the text—paying particular attention to his speech acts—to reach either a synthesis or a resolution to the trilogy as opposed to only *The Hamlet*. But while conjecturing about Ratliff, Judith Bryant Wittenberg cites Walter J. Slatoff's argument that readers must also recognize that Faulkner's novels are striking in the extent to which impulse or tension is not released, to which conflict remains unresolved,...opposed entities can neither be separated nor reconciled....Instead of moving toward synthesis and resolution, his presentation often provides a suspension of varied or opposed suggestions (361-62).

Faulkner often suspends varied or opposed textual elements rather than move toward or reveal a synthesis and resolution. His characterizations of both Flem and Ratliff, for example, demonstrate how he suspends varied or opposed elements by claiming that his characters "belong to [him];" but he also says that "any character that you write takes charge of his own behavior. You can't make him do things once he comes alive and stands up and casts his shadow"
(Kartiganer and Abadie, (52). Both Ratliff's departure from character in The Hamlet and Flem's similar departure in The Town depict Faulkner's views and illustrate how deliberate authorial behavioral manipulation can act to defamiliarize a text by misdirecting readers, forcing them to circle around Bleikasten's absent center. But whether Faulkner fails to reveal either a synthesis or a resolution, or simply abandons his readers to endless interpretations, his texts do appear to indicate the conclusion that "ambiguity [is] a principle of organization [which functions] to compel them [readers] to consider more than one cause or motive for any given episode" (de Ponseti 979). In the trilogy, Faulkner uses such rhetorical techniques as allegory, ellipses, ambiguity, and, especially, conversation rich in implicature to encourage readers to conjecture as they re-vision his work. The effect of their re-vision is to draw readers into a what Gray describes as a "great and open dialogue" that functions to suggest resolutions for the frustration which Faulkner's ambiguity seems to cause them (Ideology, 54; 56). Two effects of misdirection by the suspension of varied or opposed literary elements seem to be obvious--readers may no longer be certain about Ratliff's values and they may also
question his credibility as both their chronicler and interpreter.

Readers' confusion is also mirrored in the critics' multiple and often contradictory interpretations. For example, while Howe argues that Ratliff's gullibility causes him to succumb to avarice, Daniel Hoffman and Joseph R. Urgo maintain that either witlessness or a weakness for easy money lead to his change in behavior. Meanwhile, Gray supports profit as the cause in his argument. His statement--"[G]reed is good"--applies to anyone who participates in the trade for the Old Frenchman's place: "Ratliff and his friends believe that the greediest of them all knows best how to get rich quick--Flem" (Life, 270). But, for the careful reader, an alternate interpretation is equally evident: Accepting two of Flem's promissory notes from his cousin Mink Snopes, Ratliff then allows Flem to destroy them. A careful analysis of this exchange provides further insight into the issues that make Ratliff, seemingly such a simple character, so problematic for the reader.

In one of their most important encounters in The Hamlet, Flem gives Ratliff a bill of sale and he and readers watch Flem destroy it because of Mink's message which
Ratliff brings with it: "Say 'From one cousin that's still scratching dirt to keep alive, to another cousin that's risen from scratching dirt to owning a herd of cattle and a hay barn. To owning cattle and a hay barn.' Just say that to him" (H 76). The Snopes family's steady progress in Frenchman's Bend is the result of a tale which alleges that Flem's father, Ab, burns hay barns. Mink's message and Flem's response to it cause readers to believe that the tale they have heard earlier in The Hamlet is probably true. Flem seems to understand completely the implicature of the Mink's indirect speech acts: Just as the Harris and de Spain hay barns are inexplicably "taken fire," his hay barn may also be "taken fire" if he continues to use Mink's note for his financial benefit (H 16). Even though Mink does not mention fire, readers understand his threat, his implicature. But it is the consequences of the second note which readers do not expect: Ratliff permits Flem to burn this note when he discovers that the payee is Ike Snopes. In the revealing inner monologue which follows, Faulkner allows readers to overhear Ratliff's thoughts upon meeting Ike. It is the effect of this meeting which remains in the minds of both Ratliff and readers and, for readers, it
suggests that Ratliff's subsequent actions in the trilogy are, in part, the result of his introduction to Ike. He recognizes that Flem will commit fraud to achieve his objectives of money and power.

Any use of interior monologue, Ross explains, "requires some suspension of disbelief on the reader's part for, by definition, interior discourse cannot be heard," and access to Ratliff's psychic voice, "the voice that is of and in [his] psyche, the silent voice of thought, [is] heard only in the mind and overheard only through fiction's omniscience" (132; 171). The effect of such fictional omniscience is to enable readers to hear how "thinking takes on the spirit, if not the form, of dialogue with an Other or the self as Other" (Ross 139). Ratliff's inner monologue about Ike enables readers to hear both his thoughts and his response to his thoughts, a response which explains the effect Ike has upon him--"something black." Moreover, hearing Ratliff's thoughts enables readers to both experience his introduction to Ike and discover that his thoughts reveal his feelings and, consequently, his values:

something black [blows] in him, a suffocation, a sickness, nausea. They should have told me! he cried to
himself. Somebody should have told me! Then, remembering: Why, he did! Bookwright did tell me. He said Another one of them. It was because I have been sick, was slowed up, that I didn't-- (H 85).

Continuing to watch them approach the desk where he stands,

Ratliff observes

...the mowing and bobbing head, the eyes which at some instant, some second once, had opened upon, been vouchsafed a glimpse of, the Gorgon-face of that primal injustice which man was not intended to look at face to face and had been blasted empty and clean forever of any thought, the slobbering mouth in its mist of soft gold hair. "'Say what your name is,' Snopes said. The creature looked at Ratliff, bobbing steadily, drooling. 'Say it,' Snopes said, quite patiently. 'Your name.' 'Ike H-mope,' the idiot said hoarsely. 'Say it again.' 'Ike H-mope.' Then he began to laugh..." (H 85).

Readers know they are listening to Ratliff's thoughts because Faulkner "'locates' [the level] at which the discourse of consciousness within the psyche" occurs (Ross 149). In this inner monologue, Ratliff's voice is a "meditative" one, a voice which is the "result of its narrative circumstances," and it seems to result from Bookwright's identification of Ike as "Another one of them" two days earlier (Ross 136). Located on the "surface" of
Ratliff's thinking and identified both by its cause-and-effect reasoning as well as by its lack of any textual irregularities, readers observe that Ratliff's inner monologue begins simply as a "narrated sensation" only to pause and resume, but resume at a deeper level of consciousness which reveals his "narrated act of thinking" (Ross 142). By the time Flem introduces Ike to Ratliff, readers perceive that Ratliff's thoughts have become less structured--the long run-on sentence--and thus, less controlled and more subjective (Ross 142). To establish Ratliff's subjectivity, Faulkner uses "cried" rather than the non-descriptive said to describe his meditative voice--a crying voice.

Faulkner's substitution enables Ratliff to "give verbal expression to voluntary thought and uncontrolled urge alike, to what William James summarize[s] as

sensations of our bodies and of the objects around us, memories of past experiences and thoughts of distant things, feelings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, desires and aversions, and other emotional conditions, together with determinations of the will, in every variety of permutation and combination (Ross 71-2; 132).
Rhetorically, Faulkner uses a meditative psychic voice to enable readers to hear both Ratliff's conscious voice and his subconscious thoughts, thoughts which are not yet apparent at the conscious level to either them or Ratliff. Because readers have already observed other, less noble aspects of Ratliff's character, they may not accept his conscious psychic voice as his true voice. Conversely, readers have also observed that Ratliff seems to be engaged in a struggle with himself—a struggle to do the right thing. In effect, Ratliff's inner monologue can either lull readers who believe the conscious voice into a false sense of security, or raise—for readers who believe the subconscious voice—even more questions. Again, Faulkner suspends varied or supposed suggestions and readers may be compelled to bring their own experiences into their evaluation of Ratliff's thoughts.

Enabled to both hear Ratliff's psychic discourse and experience their own introduction to Ike as well as Ratliff's, readers may find that they "struggle with identity through words," Ratliff's identity (Gray, Ideology 53-54). Because Ratliff's crying psychic voice reveals to readers the overwhelming distress that "something black"—a
blackness which seems to be "based on the grotesque, morbid, or unpleasant aspects of life, black comedy or black humor"--seems to cause him to experience, they do not understand his decision to walk away from Ike (RHD). Again, readers observe seemingly contradictory and elliptical aspects of Ratliff's character; they become more uncertain about both his values and his role as their narrator: He refuses to profit from the debasement of another human being, yet he does nothing to end Flem's exploitation of Ike except allow him to burn Ike's note.

Careful readers also notice the gap in Ratliff's otherwise seamless character. Before Ike is identified, Ratliff appears to see only a being who is exceptional because he is not "made in His image," but when this unfortunate individual becomes real to him--is identified as a Snopes--then Ratliff seems to understand that Ike requires compassion (H 81). Because they observe his contradictory emotional reactions to Ike, readers cannot understand Ratliff's apparent decision to abandon him; their questions about his character increase in equal proportion to their growing doubts about his role as their touchstone.
Readers are forced to internalize Ratliff's conflict: If he allows Flem to redeem the note, Flem can continue to exploit his guardianship position to finance his business ventures; if Ratliff allows Flem to destroy the note, he loses his profit. Perhaps readers can even empathize with Ratliff's explanation--"...thank God men have learned how to forget quick what they aint brave enough to try to cure" (H 86). Readers who have brought their own experiences into Faulkner's environment, however, realize that they, too, probably have wavered between choices before reaching a final decision. Ratliff's vacillation causes readers to do more than question him as their narrator and touchstone; they may begin to question their own values and ask themselves what they would do in his position. Ross and other critics mention frequently that Faulkner's texts demand that readers respond. Ratliff's endless vacillation --his increasingly obvious inner struggle--is an excellent example of the necessity for readers to both respond to and communicate with the text.

But the performative power of Ratliff's psychic voice--its persuasiveness--does function to both expose Flem's exploitation of Ike and reveal his lack of humanitarian
values to Ratliff and readers. For Ratliff and those readers who can forget what they have observed, his explanation may or may not indicate hypocrisy, but for careful readers, Ratliff's decision is puzzling: Why does he allow Flem to continue to be Ike's legal guardian? He and readers know that Flem misappropriates Ike's inheritance and violates his fiduciary responsibilities. Readers must again question Ratliff's behavior and thus, his credibility as their narrator and surrogate. However, the final effect of Ratliff's inner monologue follows immediately and it reveals a possible answer to this question.

Unable to eat the dinner Mrs. Littlejohn prepares for him, Ratliff

pushed the plate aside and onto the table he counted the five dollars profit he made...[and] he calculated the three years' interest on the ten-dollar note, plus the principal (that ten dollars would have been his commission, so it was no actual loss anyway) and added to the five dollars the other bills and coins--the frayed banknotes and worn coins, the ultimate pennies and gave the money to Mrs. Littlejohn to keep for Ike (H 87).

He also leaves what appears to be a simple message for Varner with Mrs. Littlejohn: "Just tell him Ratliff says it
aint been proved yet neither. He'll know what it means" (H 87). The effect of both the money and the message is to suggest to readers that Ratliff has decided to do something about Flem. Because these two speech acts occur immediately after Ratliff meets Ike, they imply to readers that Ratliff can neither ignore nor forget what he observes. Readers, too, are affected. Embedded in their minds are the images of both Ike, a grown man who "struggles to drag a wooden block" and Ratliff, possibly a hypocrite, who struggles to forget what he has seen (H 86). The final effect of Ratliff's interior monologue is that although Ratliff struggles with both his own self-evaluation as well as his evaluation of Flem, he decides to err on the side of caution; he remains the detached, uninvolved observer rather than the concerned, involved participant who ends Flem's guardianship of Ike. The ostensibly generous financial gift which he leaves with Mrs. Littlejohn may serve more to ease his conscience than replace the value of the note. Although readers gain an acute sense of Ratliff's guilt by his very deliberate decision to replace the value of Ike's note, they are also aware that he could--and should--do more than use money to ease his conscience. They also have observed his
own personal struggle with himself and realize that, for now, this seems to be all that he thinks he can do. But because he decides to remain the detached observer, readers may well ask themselves whether the image of Ike which is embedded in their minds is also present in Ratliff's mind.

The effect of Ratliff's decision to remain detached and uninvolved causes readers to conjecture: They can either agree with his decision because it is the choice they would make; they can disagree and question his credibility, his values, and his role as their narrator, their surrogate, their touchstone; or they may realize that Ratliff is "a man wishing to be braver than he is, a man in combat with his heart or with his fellows, or with the environment," and he fails (Gwynn and Blotner 51). The decision individual readers reach is, to a large extent, the result of their own unique experiences. Because Ratliff's decision seems to be the result of an intense struggle with his heart, this struggle suggests to readers that he still merits his role as their touchstone.

Michael Millgate also faults Ratliff's "cupidity," but he points out that Ratliff's "economic defeat is not accompanied by any defect in human terms" (189; 199). He
does not, however, suggest any motive for the property swap nor explain why Ratliff suffers no loss in human terms. But the implicative message Ratliff leaves with Mrs. Littlejohn does elevate one particular explanation, and the conversation with Varner (below) indicates that Ratliff's economic defeat by Flem occurs because he seems to act to correct a wrong, not to make a profit. A linguistic analysis of this conversation between Varner and Ratliff illustrates Joseph Blotner's observation about a "Faulkner hallmark--he withholds information and works by implicature rather than statement" (176). The original ellipsis--Ratliff's abrupt and unexplained change in behavior--is merely one of the more obvious omissions in the trilogy. Faulkner utilizes conversational implicature extensively to create ellipses that compel readers to listen carefully to the information which is communicated--to learn what is actually meant by what is omitted. The effects of the previous conversation between Ratliff and Mrs. Littlejohn as well as the one which follows between Ratliff and Varner--the message Ratliff leaves with Mrs. Littlejohn and the exchange with Varner--are not realized fully until the conclusion of *The Hamlet*. Faulkner withholds the
In an earlier dialogue, Varner asks Ratliff's opinion about his son's decision to hire Flem as a clerk in Varner's general store: "'Out with it,' Varner said. 'What do you think about it?'" (H 27). Ratliff's reply is vague; he does not seem to answer Varner's question either directly or completely. As a result, the conversation's implicature conceals a great deal more from readers than it reveals; it suggests only that Varner and Ratliff understand each other perfectly even though their conversation violates three of Paul H. Grice's four conversational maxims: quantity, to be as informative as required; relation, to be relevant; and manner, to avoid both obscurity and ambiguity. Both men observe the maxim of quality, however; they appear to say nothing to each other that they think is either false or for which they lack evidence (Grice 26-27).

''You mean what I really think?''

'What in damnation do you think I am talking about?'

'I think the same as you do,' Ratliff said quietly. 'That there aint but two men I know can risk fooling with them
fsocks. And just one of them is named Varner and his front name aint Jody.'

'And who's the other one?' Varner said.

'That aint been proved yet neither,' Ratliff said pleasantly" (H 28).

Because Varner insists that Ratliff offer an opinion on his son's decision, Ratliff asks Varner whether his request is serious, the what (the effect) of Jody's decision. Varner's expletive emphasizes his question's seriousness. Varner's what also refers to Ratliff's opinion which seems to confirm his own: No one but a Will Varner or a V. K. Ratliff can risk--has either the trading skill or the economic resources--a trade with the Snopeses. But careful readers note that Varner does not offer an opinion and Ratliff does not clearly identify either man, yet both men (and readers) understand what the other seems to suggest. The implicature--"aint been proved yet"--in Ratliff's message proposes to both Varner and readers that there is no proof yet that Flem is the best trader; yet, it may also suggest that Ratliff--the other man--will try prove at some future date that Flem is not the better trader.

In contrast to his spoken remarks, however, Ratliff's inner monologue suggests to readers that he has other
thoughts as he leaves his apparently innocuous message with Mrs. Littlejohn. These evaluative thoughts reveal his growing awareness and misgivings, and, perhaps, even his fears about both Flem and Snopesism:

I quit too soon. I went as far as one Snopes will set fire to another Snopes's barn and both Snopeses know it, and that was all right. But I stopped there. I never went on to where that first Snopes will turn around and stomp the fire out so he can sue that second Snopes for the reward and both Snopeses know that too (H 88).

In this inner monologue, Faulkner allows readers to both overhear Ratliff's psychic voice argue with his conscious thoughts about the effects of Snopesism on others and learn that the result of his argument forces him to leave money for Ike. Thus, the difference between using Ratliff's psychic voice to meditate and to "engage in cause-and-effect reasoning" reveals how Ratliff's earlier subconscious thoughts influence his conscious ones and force him to leave money for Ike (Ross 142). But he realizes that money is not enough; he is going to have to do something as well about the Snopes' growing influence in Frenchman's Bend. His conversation with Varner and the message he leaves with Mrs. Littlejohn both imply that Ratliff appears to think he must
defeat Flem in the game that he assumes each of them already know and understand. Readers, however, are aware that Ratliff's unwillingness to trade either in human beings or with human lives acts as a definite disadvantage to him in any test of bartering skills with Flem; they understand also that Ratliff's moral victory in the goat trade is no longer meaningful. The ellipsis in Ratliff's implicative message--"aint been proved yet"--forces readers to discover what Ratliff seems to say by discovering what he omits, fails to say. By re-visioning the context of Ratliff's first use of the phrase, readers learn that in the conversation between Varner and Ratliff about trade, Ratliff believes that there is no proof that Flem is the better trader; instead, he implies that he may be the better trader.

Readers observe that Ratliff's decision appears to be the result of Lump's public abasement of Ike; he seems to think he must try to defeat Flem in a true test of trading skills. They recognize that what has been merely a "game" of trade between Ratliff and Flem has become, rather, a question of which of them is the better trader and, possibly, the better man. For Ratliff, defeating Flem in
trade seems to be the only method he thinks he possesses to show others in Frenchman's Bend that Flem is not omnipotent, that his version of the American Dream is fraudulent—that not everyone or everything is for sale. For Flem, however, defeating Ratliff eliminates the only remaining, serious threat to his twin goals—money and power.

Because Faulkner shows readers so many conflicting images of Ratliff, he forces them to both re-vision him and respond to these apparent contradictions by actually experiencing Ratliff's inner struggle. As a result, readers become, as Watson suggests, bricoleurs; they must both reconstruct Ratliff out of the distinct and dissimilar parts which Faulkner's language suggests and use their own equally distinct and dissimilar experiences to understand this complex character, to discover who Ratliff is. Both Ratliff's seeming lack of communication skills and his failure to listen carefully have caused readers to doubt his credibility as their narrator. But readers also observe his inner struggle with himself and with his awareness of both Flem's fraudulent acts and the perversity these acts seem to indicate to them. But in the following dramatic incident, it is the performative power of the speech acts between
Ratliff and Mrs. Littlejohn which function rhetorically to suggest to readers just how human Ratliff seems to be after he witnesses the grotesquery between Ike and his beloved, Mink Snopes' cow.

To explain how Ratliff's and Mrs. Littlejohn's speech acts function and, as a result, underscore their performative power, I have separated their conversation by paragraphs. The locutionary acts are underlined and the perlocutionary effects of the many illocutionary speech acts (acts in which the utterance states the act itself) are formatted in small capital letters to provide additional clarity.

"'He pulled that plank off! At just exactly the right height! Not child-height and not woman-height: man-height! He just keeps that little boy there to watch and run to the store and give the word when it's about to start. Oh, he aint charging them to watch it yet, and that's what's wrong. That's what I dont understand. What I am afraid of. Because if he, Lump Snopes, Launcelot Snopes . . . I said encore,' he cried. 'What I was trying to say was echo. Only what I meant was forgery.' He ceased, having talked himself wordless, mute, into baffled and aghast outrage, glaring at the man-tall, man-grim woman in the faded wrapper who stared as steadily back at him.

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'So that's it,' she said. 'It aint that it is that itches you. It's that somebody named Snopes, or that particular Snopes, is making something out of it and you dont know what it is. Or is it because folks come and watch it? It's all right for it to be but folks mustn't know it, see it.'

'Was,' he said. 'Because it's finished now. I aint never disputed I'm a pharisee,' he said. 'You dont need to tell me he aint got nothing else. I know that. Or that I can sholy leave him have at least this much. I know that too. Or that besides it aint any of my business. I know that too, just as I know that the reason I aint going to leave him have what he does have is simply because I am strong enough to keep him from it. I am stronger than him. Not righter. Not any better, maybe. But just stronger.'

'How are you going to stop it?'

'I dont know. Maybe I even cant. Maybe I dont want to. Maybe all I want is just to have been righteouser, so I can tell myself I done the right thing and my conscience is clear now and at least I can go to sleep tonight" (H 197-98). This critical "dialogic scene," Ross points out, shows how "dialogue in Faulkner which remains dialogue tends to undergo a metamorphosis from speech act into some other mode of intense confrontation, usually violent in nature, [frequently] pitting one character against another" (81). The effect of these speech acts is to reveal potential
violence. Resembling conventional exchanges, they suggest a conflict in which the weapons are words which—in some of Faulkner's texts—can and do lead to violent acts.

Readers quickly observe the obvious antagonism which exists between Mrs. Littlejohn and Ratliff as they listen to their "question-answer, assertion-denial, challenge-response" dialogue (Ross 81). The purpose of dialogic scenes in Faulkner's texts is "to bring into sharp focus the differentiation necessary to suggest an unbridgeable gulf of differences" (Ross 83). In this intense dialogic scene, Mrs. Littlejohn's speech acts indicate that she doubts Ratliff's motives, she thinks he acts hypocritically when he closes Lump's show; he, in turn, both resents her intimations and disparages her appearance and, by implication, her opinions. She is a woman after all—albeit man-tall, man-grim—and should either not voice her opinions or voice them in a less insistent staccato-like manner. Mrs. Littlejohn drums "it" at Ratliff eleven times in her accusatory dialogue with him. O. B. Emerson notes that Faulkner frequently employs repetition as another rhetorical trope: Repeating either specific words or trivial phrases ("it" is used seventeen times and implied one time in three
paragraphs), Faulkner both heightens the emotional effects and develops his plots by "gradual clarification;" such repetition also functions to demonstrate the effects of "frustrated attempts at communication" (19). Again, by fiction's omniscience, readers listen to an emotional dialogic exchange in which the comments by both parties reveal their frustration with one another. Yet neither speaker violates the turn-taking requirement. There are no interruptions nor is there any violence, but their confrontational exchanges insinuate strongly the potential for violence.

Ratliff ends the first paragraph apparently speechless. Both utterly baffled and morally outraged, he appears inundated by the sheer enormity of the evil that he observes. He has just witnessed what many of the men in Frenchman's Bend have already seen--the act of sexual intercourse between Ike and Mink's cow. The effect that his observations have upon him cause Ratliff to become what Miller describes as a "human consciousness suspended in amazed outrage at its own situation, poised immobile and at the same time in terrific motion" (258). The wordless pause which occurs as a result of Ratliff's immobility--his
outrage with himself and his situation--creates another ellipsis which readers must attempt to explain in order to understand what the perlocutionary effect of his outrage does to both him and them. (Watson 79). Mikhail Bakhtin asserts that conversational pauses "may be psychological, prompted by some external circumstances" (954). Readers may try to reconcile this ellipsis by assuming that Ratliff's wordless pause is caused by guilt--his earlier failure to stop Flem's exploitation of Ike. Guilt does seem to be the apparent reason he leaves money for Ike with Mrs. Littlejohn. Harold C. Goddard points out that "moral indignation against others indicates more often than not that the man who feels it is guilty in some subtler or symbolic form of the very sin he is castigating" (Bloom 108). It seems clear to both Mrs. Littlejohn and readers that Ratliff has acted hypocritically previously and he accepts begrudgingly Mrs. Littlejohn's criticism. But readers have also observed that Ratliff appears to be afraid, and his fears are not, apparently, only for himself; he seems to fear for everyone in Frenchman's Bend: Both Ratliff and readers have observed how Snopesism does both exploit human weaknesses and pervert human values in this
hamlet. Ratliff's words--the sheer performative power of his speech acts--and actions communicate the awareness of his fears to both Mrs. Littlejohn and readers.

Ratliff has just witnessed how Snopesism functions to "pervert human intellect to fraud or malice against [others]" (MacAllister xxv). Using fraud--deceit--to gain some unfair or dishonest advantage, the Snopeses intentionally conceal or pervert truth for the purpose of misleading others, that is, leading astray morally or leading others into either mental error or false judgment (RHD). Dante characterizes the fraudulent--"simoniacs, sycophants, hypocrites, falsifiers, thieves, sorcerers, grafters, pimps, and all such filthy cheats...as traitors [who] lie in endless expiation" (105). Only sorcerers and simoniacs are lacking in the Snopes tribe. But while Snopeses do not buy or sell ecclesiastical privileges or engage in witchcraft, they do attempt to "corrupt, bribe, buy or purchase others" (RHD). Ratliff's frank acknowledgement of his own hypocrisy--"I aint never disputed I'm a pharisee"--may remind him and readers of Flem's allegorical Hell; he may see himself, not Flem, as fraudulent. This recognition would both explain his angry
response to Mrs. Littlejohn and cause his aghast outrage which both suspends and immobilizes him. But, as he tells Mrs. Littlejohn and readers, he does something—he ends Lump Snopes' particular fraud, his perversion of an Other. Both his action and his emotionally charged language (Faulkner uses exclamation marks three times to denote the intensity of Ratliff's speech acts) and vividly etched picture of what he has seen compel Ratliff's audience—Mrs. Littlejohn and readers—to listen to him, to believe him.

In the second paragraph, facing Ratliff—glaring at him—is Mrs. Littlejohn. She, too, appears to share Ratliff's feelings, but her focus is not upon Ike's act. She directs her outrage instead upon the men who watch it, who let it happen because they want to see it. The implicature in her remarks communicates to Ratliff and readers both her genuine concern for Ike—the helpless victim of Flem's exploitation and Lump's abasement—and her personal disgust with the hamlet's hypocritical voyeurs. But the overall effect of both Mrs. Littlejohn's speech acts and her repetitive use of it suggest dynamically that she doubts Ratliff's motives; she thinks he is no different than all the other men who watch: "What do you think I think
when I look out that window and watch them sneaking up along that fence?' she said. 'Only all you done was think,' he said" (H 197). Reflecting, perhaps, Goddard's observation, that both Ratliff's anger with himself and the accuracy of Mrs. Littlejohn's observations appear to be the cause of his irate over-reaction to her implications. Readers may recall similar self-directed anger after Ratliff's struggle with Bookwright. But he seems to readers to be wrong to criticize her; they observe that Mrs. Littlejohn is just as outraged as Ratliff, but her failure to act, in effect, acknowledges her position in the male-dominated hierarchy of Frenchman's Bend--her place is in the church, in the home, in the kitchen.

By experiencing the effects of Emerson's observation that "frustrated attempts at communication" act to draw them inexorably into the impassioned and frustrating dialogue between Mrs. Littlejohn and Ratliff, readers become aware that their deepening involvement heightens the ambiguity an absent center causes them: Ratliff's decisive act both alters their view of him once again and appears to clarify the plot by changing its direction. Such ever-present ambiguity in Faulkner's fiction demonstrates de Ponseti's
argument to readers that there are multiple causes or motives for any event (979). Readers witness this ambiguity in Ratliff's and Mrs. Littlejohn's dialogue. For example, it is only because they have been in a dialogue—communicating with the text—that they know Mrs. Littlejohn is wrong to doubt Ratliff's motives. Readers understand this because they, too, participate in the dialogue, they understand why Ratliff does not walk away from what he sees this time—that he must say "No, I will not accept this." They also understand that by acting, Ratliff ceases to be an observer.

Because Ratliff makes such an unequivocal and forceful statement to readers by his decision to close Lump's theater, they see a facet of his character that they have not observed previously. However, his act reveals more than an apparent end to his inner struggle with his heart; it also indicates that he ends his struggle with the residents of the hamlet who either refuse to act or, in the case of Mrs. Littlejohn, cannot act. Because he appears to act both to protect a community from itself and to make amends for his earlier failure to act, Ratliff realizes that he must cease being a detached, uninvolved observer of a community,
he must become a caring, involved participant in a community. Ratliff must do what he knows is right for the community and for himself. Thus, his behavior shows that he inherently understands what the allegory will reveal to him --he must decide to act--to do what is right--and his last speech act in the dialogic scene with Mrs. Littlejohn tends to support this explanation.

Careful readers observe that the implicature in Ratliff's concluding remarks indicate that he is not unmindful of the pain his actions cause Ike, but he closes Lump's voyeuristic theater because he can no longer ignore the actions of the Snopes tribe. Later in The Hamlet, Ratliff will tell Bookwright that "I was protecting something that wasn't even a people, that wasn't nothing but something that dont want nothing but to walk and feel the sun and wouldn't know how to hurt no man even if it would and wouldn't want to even if it could" (H 321). Readers cannot help but experience the compassion and pity these words express so eloquently. His sensitive and insightful depiction of Ike does not suggest to them either a greedy or prideful man. Rather, readers see a man who acts belatedly to correct his very human weakness, hypocrisy.
Critics and critical readers who do not consciously consider the rhetorical power of Ratliff's speech acts discover that their arguments and criticisms are weakened by this omission. By focusing on "previously selected aspects of the texts, they fail to analyze the language of the texts utilizing linguistic concepts and methods" (Fowler 3). Together, Ratliff's speech acts and his behavior function as persuasive rhetorical devices which indicate to readers that he has reasons other than pride or greed which may explain his purchase of the Old Frenchman's place. Although Ratliff's speech acts do reveal to readers a man who, yes, has pride in his work--he appreciates earning a profit and enjoys the game of barter--they do not suggest that he is either driven by or obsessed by money. These same speech acts also function to reveal a man who is neither proud of who he is nor of what he has done. His behavior after he acknowledges his hypocrisy to himself and Mrs. Littlejohn as well as readers, appears to be both genuine and persuasive; it suggests to readers that Ratliff, while far from perfect, is a very humane, human being.

Readers arrive at the conclusion to The Hamlet only to find that their fundamental question about Ratliff's actions
and his character is not answered; they remain frustrated by Ratliff's contradictory behavior. Nor does Faulkner offer either a resolution or a solution to explain the ellipsis which Ratliff's decision to trade with Flem causes. As their narrator, surrogate, and touchstone, Ratliff appears to have failed readers' expectations as the character who seems to "give character to and determine the character of a culture." But by circling back one more time and re-entering the text from a new direction, one that seeks Ratliff's character and actions among the disorganized and elliptical images which Faulkner displays, readers discover that they, like Ratliff, have been manipulated by Faulkner's deliberate rhetorical use of these seemingly disorganized images. The effect of Ratliff's speech acts reveals to readers that it is perhaps their own inability to communicate with the text which causes them to misjudge Ratliff.

Because Faulkner exploits ambiguity rhetorically and he deliberately misdirects readers, their opinions about Ratliff vacillate. When he fails to hear the implicature in Varner's indirect speech acts because he does not seem to listen, readers question Ratliff's communication skills;
when he assumes the Old Frenchman's place has value, readers begin to question Ratliff's role as their narrator and surrogate; when he fails to expose Flem's fraudulent abuse of his fiduciary responsibilities, readers question Ratliff's credibility and his values; when their constant re-visions fail to explain adequately Ratliff's behavior, readers doubt him. But when Ratliff ends his struggle with Bookwright; leaves money for Ike with Mrs. Littlejohn; closes Lump's theater, readers understand that Ratliff reveals his genuine awareness of and belief in courage, honor, hope, pride, compassion, pity, and sacrifice, Faulkner's verities.

Although Ratliff's many contradictory acts can cause readers to assume that he acts out of either greed or pride when he trades with Flem, his contradictory behavior also suggests that neither greed nor pride explain his obvious humane behavior. Readers are forced to reach another conclusion that does resolve their questions--their doubts--about Ratliff. Ratliff, however, gives readers his explanation when he tells Mrs. Littlejohn, "I aint never disputed I'm a pharisee." Ratliff is, in his own words, a hypocrite, a person "who only pretends to have some
desirable or publicly approved attitude" (RHD). Ratliff also tells Mrs. Littlejohn and readers that he ends Ike's public abasement so that "I can tell myself I done the right thing and my conscience is clear now and at least I can go to sleep tonight." Both of these speech acts suggest that Ratliff recognizes that he must do more than pretend to act in either a desirable or publicly acceptable manner; he must do the right thing because it is the right thing to do. Careful readers should realize that they may have been premature by assuming that Ratliff fails as their narrator, their surrogate, their touchstone. These readers learn from both the allegory and Ratliff's behavior and speech acts in The Town that Ratliff is more than their touchstone, he is the trilogy's touchstone.
CHAPTER II

The Allegory

Living is motion, and motion
is change and alteration...

--Faulkner

Faulkner uses an allegory to affect readers' perceptions of Ratliff as narrator, surrogate, and their touchstone and their interpretation of the trilogy. Because of its characteristic ambiguity, The Hamlet's open allegory acts to deny readers a definitive explanation of Faulkner's "intention," yet, it provides them with an analytical tool to attempt to reveal the inherent unity of the trilogy by compelling readers to discover its controlling theme. The result of the allegory's ambiguity causes readers to change their usual reading attitudes, to seek connections to explain Ratliff's behavior and character rather than the meaning of the change in his behavior and character.

Because these changes in readers' perspectives are significant and fundamental and the focus of my argument on allegory as rhetoric, the allegory is analyzed separately as a speech act. Only the speech acts in the dialogic scene which immediately follows the allegory are affected by this
violation of chronological order. The effects of this chronological violation are negligible. In Chapter I, my linguistic analysis focuses on the effects that Ratliff's and Mrs. Littlejohn's speech acts have on each other and on readers, whereas the focus of my linguistic analysis in this chapter is the effect of the apparent difference between the meaning that the allegory reveals to Ratliff and his response to the meaning has upon readers.

To appreciate the significance of Faulkner's allegory, readers need to recall Ratliff's first encounter with Flem—to remember that he wins a moral victory, yet he walks away from Ike. Now, several months later in the story, readers join Ratliff as he travels to the hamlet where he will once again be faced with a choice—to either act to end the continued Snopes' exploitation of Ike or remain the detached, uninvolved observer. The decision which Ratliff reaches appears to be the result of his allegorical experience because it follows the allegory immediately. But this positive decision to intervene on Ike's behalf fails to remove readers' doubts concerning Ratliff's roles as narrator, surrogate, and touchstone because he appears to contradict the allegory's meaning by his seemingly
inexplicable decision to trade properties with Flem. His decision causes readers to continue to question Ratliff's actions; their doubts about both his behavior and his character may even increase. Readers may also begin to question either their own or Ratliff's interpretation of what the allegory appears to reveal—what is "right."

Because they still have questions and doubts about Ratliff, readers realize that they must continue to look for a pattern in either his character or his behavior to explain his decision to trade with Flem. Readers must continue to re-visions Ratliff.

Both by its unusual placement midway in The Hamlet and by the abrupt shift to italics, Faulkner calls readers' attention to the allegorical episode. Readers suddenly and abruptly discover that they have left Faulkner's Yoknapatawphian world and entered a world that they neither know nor expected to visit—Hell. Readers have just learned in the final pages of Book 2 of The Hamlet that Eula Varner has been forced by her parents to marry Flem because she is pregnant. It appears to be Ratliff's reflections on Eula's marriage to "the froglike creature which barely reached her shoulder" that causes him to recall the events which lead up
to the day of Eula's and Flem's wedding (H 147). Readers will leave Hell just as abruptly as they enter it and find themselves continuing their journey with Ratliff to Frenchman's Bend but they discover that the allegory is an unexpected transition to Book 3 in the text.

Faulkner offers readers no explanation for shifting to italics, but Ross points out that by using italics, Faulkner seeks to "express some change in the 'gestures' of what Roman Ingarden call[s] the 'verbal body' of the literary work" (Ross 145). Faulkner's shift to italics functions to persuade readers to both re-vision the text and "encourages a change in perceptions of the events and readers' sense of the discourse itself," but his lack of orientation catches readers unprepared (Ross 145-46). They are riding with Ratliff on his first visit to Frenchman's Bend since the wedding and find themselves in Hell instead. The effect of this sudden change in location, combined with Faulkner's shift to "italics, unconventional punctuation, and present tense, gives [his allegory of Hell] a texture of heightened immediacy common to Faulkner's psychic voice" (Ross 230). Faulkner explains his technique as "purposely us[ing] italics to permit a thought transference" (Ross 146). The
perceptual result for readers, however, is to experience the "designed instability of an open parable with a single ethical motif with variations of infinite number and strength" (Eastman 18). Richard M. Eastman argues that the rhetorical effect of designed instability prevents readers from arriving at "any quick allegorical interpretation" (18). And readers of the trilogy do experience rhetorically designed instability; they seem to be constantly circling endlessly around an absent center or hanging suspended between varied and opposed suggestions, misdirected by Faulkner's designed instability.

Although "allegory means clear visual images, readers to not need to know what that meaning is; they need only to be aware that the meaning is there" (Eliot 204). Faulkner's allegory uses this concept. It appears to reveal clear visual images of the consequences of fraud, yet at the conclusion of The Hamlet Ratliff's contradictory behavior belies the seeming clarity of the allegory's images. Readers realize that his allegory has a meaning that they must try to discover, but they are constantly frustrated in their attempts by Faulkner's misdirection: Readers gradually become aware that Faulkner's allegory seems to be
designed to show Ratliff what is right and force him to change his behavior. Instead, the allegory's effect on Ratliff causes him to act in contradiction to the meaning of the allegory that readers perceive and frustrates their efforts to reach a clear understanding about Ratliff's behavior. Faulkner's allegory appears to be the novel's most blatant example of "rhetoric," [that] D. J. Hill argues, uses such manipulative functions as designed instability, misdirection, lack of either a textual center or resolution to "treat thought militantly by rendering given ideas effective in producing mental changes in others" (878). In The Hamlet, Faulkner utilizes allegory militantly to effect such mental changes in both Ratliff and readers. But in The Hamlet, although Faulkner's militant rhetorical use of allegory effects such mental changes in both Ratliff and readers, the changes that are produced seem to be antithetical: For readers, the mental images cause them to understand that the allegory means do what is right; for Ratliff, these same mental images appear to have no lasting effect upon his behavior.

To further heighten the effects of his allegory's mental images, Faulkner uses italics to signal "a change in
readers' perception of events," to "engender verbalized thought," and to "suggest states of consciousness or awareness" (Ross 146; 16; 145). Ross qualifies Faulkner's use of italics, however. He points out that the significance of italics is in their relation to "other contiguous discourse" (145). But Faulkner's placement of the allegory causes readers' perceptions to change abruptly because the allegory seems to result from Ratliff's thoughts, not contiguous discourse, and his thoughts are about previous events which frame his allegorical experience. However, it is Ratliff's state of consciousness that the italics highlight.

All writers, Ross suggests, seek "ways to enhance readers' sense that certain discourse emanates unspoken and unarticulated from within a character's private consciousness;" Faulkner uses italics both frequently and extensively, particularly to reveal the voice of the character's psyche (Ross 134; 145). In Ratliff's allegorical episode, Faulkner uses italics both to reveal Ratliff's psychic voice and to allow readers to observe his thoughts by their "presumed" entry into his mind where he "is positioned vis-à-vis the discourse of his mind" (Ross
Readers, like Ratliff, are affected by what they appear to experience, but the effect of their experience differs from that of Ratliff: While they may gain greater insight into Flem's character as a result of the allegorical episode, readers may also see that other aspects about Ratliff's character are suggested by the allegorical episode, particularly after the episode ends. And Ratliff may see either Flem or an image of himself--his Other--in the allegory.

Readers do not know whether Ratliff sees his Other or Flem in the allegory, but they see Flem, Ratliff, Ratliff's Other, and perhaps, themselves. Although they recognize that Ratliff is not Flem--he is neither uncaring nor unfeeling, he is simply detached, uninvolved--readers also see certain similarities between the two men, similarities which could become realities if Ratliff abuses them. They each enjoy the game of barter, they both observe, instead of participate in, the world around them, and they each value money. Ratliff, however, does not use fraud to exploit, manipulate, or pervert people to acquire money and power. The ultimate effect of the allegorical episode, however, is to suggest to both Ratliff and readers what is "right."
As an open allegory with an ethical motif as opposed to a closed one, Faulkner's allegory functions to destabilize his readers; it both frustrates and prevents them from discovering either a synthesis or reaching a conclusion to *The Hamlet*. Using both "sympathetic and antipathetic detail,...an open allegory is constructed...to block final verification of any one hypothesis" (Eastman 18). Moreover, allegory's derivation, *allēgorein*—to speak so as to imply something other—suggests that Faulkner's allegorical speech act may not be just a simple example of bartering skills to suggest, as many critics have argued, that Flem out-trades the Prince of Hell and, as a result, accedes to his throne *(RHD)* (H 149-53). For readers, the allegorical episode becomes an analytical tool; it suggests that there can be no certain synthesis or resolution of *The Hamlet*'s ellipsis until the conclusion of the trilogy. For Ratliff, the allegorical episode acts both to reveal what is right and to suggest that he change his behavior, but readers may perceive his change as equivocal. But whether it functions as either an ethical motif or as an analytical tool, the allegorical episode is a speech act, a speech act which may function, like the speech acts of Sarty Snopes in Faulkner's
short story "Barn Burning," as a form of rebellion in the plot—the rebellion of Ratliff's psyche—and as a militant argument against any quick or simple resolution to *The Hamlet* by readers (Ross 12-15).

As we travel with Ratliff toward Frenchman's Bend, fiction's omniscience allows us again to overhear Ratliff's psychic thoughts while he remembers the institutions which serve Jefferson—the bank, the courthouse, the station (4-5). Ratliff's thoughts then shift to a certain day when each of these institutions fulfills its designated role to facilitate the quick marriage of Eula Varner to Flem Snopes. Using the words *remembering* and *thought* to locate the level of consciousness at which Ratliff's psychic discourse begins, readers again hear his meditative voice as it remembers both the events which occur on Eula's and Flem's wedding day and his thoughts about these events and Eula and Flem (4; 12). His memories and thoughts are merely Ratliff's surface recollections, resembling the thoughts we all have as we go about our daily activities. Gradually, however, Ratliff narrows the focus of his thoughts and we become aware that each of the institutions, the train, and even Eula, become merely a *part, a figment, of the*
concentric flotsam and jetsam and there remained only the straw bag, the minute tie, the constant jaw (25-27). (I identify my citations from the allegory by italics.)

We have no doubt that Ratliff is thinking about Flem; these singular items of flotsam and jetsam have functioned as metonymic symbols to both identify and characterize Flem for readers since his arrival in the hamlet (25): "[Jody] saw suddenly in one of the sashless windows...a face beneath a gray cloth cap, the lower jaw moving steady and rhythmically..." (H 19). Flem's jaw continues to move steadily until the trilogy ends, but we see the items he chews change from tobacco to gum to air. But when Flem leaves the tenant farm Ab leases from Varner and moves to Frenchman's Bend, he "appears at the church...wearing a tiny machine-made black bow which snaps together at the back with a metal fastener..." (H 57). The only other person to wear a tie is Varner; he also wears one to church (H 58). The tie, too, becomes a fixture. And the day he moves into Varner's home, Flem "carries a brand-new straw suitcase" (H 89). Flem continues to carry the straw suitcase both on his honeymoon to Texas and to Hell. It is not, however, among the items onlookers see in the wagon when Flem moves to
Jefferson, nor is it mentioned after the allegorical episode (H 361-62). Perhaps it has "taken fire," or perhaps Flem has no further use for it.

Because of its earlier relevance, however, we notice the absence of the straw suitcase. It has functioned previously to signify an upward move by Flem: his move up from Varner's tenant farm and into Varner's home; his move up by his marriage to Eula. No longer just a clerk in Varner's general store, Flem is a man of property--he owns one-half of a restaurant--a man on the move, a man to watch, a come'r. This interpretation, however, suggests that it is Flem, not Ratliff, who understands what is "right."

Either collectively or individually, these three specific items act as labels which say Flem Snopes. We know they are significant because they occur in Ratliff's thoughts in isolation, identified by "the"--a definite article--not "a," an indefinite article. We, too, begin to see Flem automatically as a moving jaw, or a tie, or, in Hell, as an it (183). "Automation assignment" both de-personalizes and de-humanizes individuals by emphasizing automatically the impersonal objects which characterize them.
In contrast to the seemingly robotic Flem, Ratliff is characterized by the personal and intimate details which reveal him as a human being. For example, Ratliff wears "neat tieless perfectly clean faded blue shirts which he makes himself," but he is not characterized synecdochically or metonymically by either a "shirt" or a "sewer." Yet, in striking contrast, we learn in The Mansion that Ratliff buys two exquisite designer ties for one hundred and fifty dollars (232). One tie "rests on a rack under a glass bell alongside...a sculpture by Linda Snopes Kohl's husband in Ratliff's home;" it is a tribute to Eula Varner. The other tie, Ratliff tells Chick, "is a private matter" (M 232).

Without dwelling extensively on the meaning of the vastly different ties which Faulkner's metonymic symbols imply, I assert they function to show readers what basic differences distinguish the characters of the two men: They reveal that Ratliff evolves from a man 1) who characterizes Eula as "just gal-meat" in the allegory to the man who honors privately her existence in The Mansion (232); 2) one who begins as a hypocrite to the man who finally says, "No, we cannot live like this" (Williamson 375); 3) one who sells part of himself to a man who "uses his talents to make
something which wasn't here yesterday" (Gwynn and Blotner 269); 4) one whom readers doubt to one whom they believe upholds humanistic values. Readers, on the other hand, observe Flem appears to be a man without values. In him they see a man 1) who considers Eula as an item of trade and bears responsibility for her death; 2) who trades his stepdaughter's love for a bank president's chair; 3) who perverts the law to maintain his power; 4) who gains our respect by appearing to accept the reason for his death. But Flem's seemingly trivial and harmless symbols--the straw bag, the minute tie, the constant jaw--may function to conceal from us in their ordinariness the perversity in his soul.

When the italics appear, Faulkner "alters [our] perceptions [of Ratliff's thoughts] by deepening [our] presumed penetration into [his] mind. Faulkner uses italics most consistently to signal less-controlled, deeper ranges of inner experience" (Ross 146). One specific sign which Faulkner uses to show readers that Ratliff's thoughts come from a deeper level of his consciousness is to indicate the "change from meditative to psychic voice by using the single quotation mark" (Ross 160). Ross points out that the single
quotation mark also means that the character's thoughts could be uttered out loud, in contrast to thoughts that are not bracketed by quotation marks (148). Another sign of even deeper psychic penetration occurs at the end of the allegorical episode; there is no period to indicate any finality. (Ross 148). Readers turn the page and find that they have returned to the Yoknapatawphan world and Book 3 of The Hamlet. They leave Hell just as suddenly and abruptly as they enter it and, for them too, there is no period to indicate finality either to the varied implications of the allegorical message or to the diverse experiences of Faulkner's rhetorically designed instability. Instead, readers must continue to seek their own resolutions to both the allegory and The Hamlet.

Entering Hell in media res, we meet the Prince and his attendants, and, immediately and obviously, we know the Prince is upset both by the appearance of his baffled attendants and the reason for it—his hollers at them (31). Although Faulkner uses the neutral "says" to describe the Prince's mimetic voice twice as often as very specific descriptive terms, we seem to be aware only of his hollering, snapping, sarcastic, sneering, screaming voice as
we listen to the dialogue. Long before he becomes a voice, the Prince seems to be "voice," an authoritative unquestioned voice which indicates his omnipotence to everyone except his mentor and Flem. These modifiers both categorize the Prince's voice and reveal to us the Prince's increasing irritation and anger with his attendants, with Flem, and with himself. At the conclusion of the allegorical episode, the Prince "becomes" a phenomenal voice—he is scream. Flem, in contrast, uses "says" exclusively, suggesting, probably, his composure, his certainty.

Because we know that the last thought Ratliff has before we enter Hell is of Flem, when we see the attendants seeking advice from the Prince about him, we are not surprised to learn that the omission of a referent for him does not prevent us from automatically attaching the pronoun him to Flem. Rather than an example of automation assignment, however, Faulkner uses our internalized grammar rules rhetorically to suggest the connection between him and Flem as the subject of an earlier conversation to which we are not privy. Because the metonymic symbols are the immediate referents, we expect Flem to be the subject; our
expectation is validated when the attendants offer their own metonymic symbol to identify him--a bargain is a bargain (33). Except for one specific reference, Flem is identified by others as he, him, you, or by his vanities with unmeltable snaps or the straw suitcase (114; 133). The one notable exception to this identification pattern occurs when Flem admits to the Prince, Ratliff, and readers that he possesses no soul (176); he both ceases to speak and assumes the Throne, an it--a non-human being, seemingly damned (183). The rhetorical effect of using the internalized grammar rules in the first dialogue exchange is to immediately tell readers that it is Flem who bargains with Satan's son, not Ratliff. The result is that readers are compelled to persist in their efforts to find a pattern in Ratliff's behavior which explains the reason that he appears to disregard the allegory's ethical motif.

The alleged purpose of Flem's visit to Hell is to redeem his soul, but we are told that there is now only a dried-up smear in an asbestos matchbox (38-42). We are not, however, immediately aware of the object of Flem's visit. Faulkner uses periodic structure to delay introducing Flem's soul as the subject of the allegorical episode--we might be
discussing any small valuable object until we reach line forty-five. The implicature of the attendants' remarks suggests to us that Flem's soul is lost; he is without a soul, he cannot suffer Hell's eternal torment (44). But Flem is not willing to compromise; he refuses to accept one of the extra souls that turn up daily with letters of recommendation from Congressmen in lieu of the small soul he pawns (49-51). The indirect (implicative) speech acts suggest to us that Flem's soul is both unusually small and clearly unable to survive the fires of Hell. Whether it is the size of Flem's soul or its quality which causes its metamorphosis, asbestos cannot protect it. But it is implied that other souls in Hell survive intact; we hear their constant screams in the background of the Prince's magnificent hall (122-124). Implicatively, this suggests that Flem has committed fraud: He cannot be an authentic Christian or his soul would have survived Hell's fires to lie in eternal torment like those of the others. Flem's argument, however, is simple, repetitive, and, eventually, effective—he wants his soul, or Hell—a bargain is a bargain (120; 32).
To understand how deceit—the basic requirement in any successful fraudulent act—functions, readers observe that Flem deceives the Prince by pawning a soul which is not his. He lies. In effect, he tells readers that he has prior knowledge that he has no soul. Readers already know that Ratliff does not pervert human intellect; rather, he experiences others' pain and misfortunes, possesses a soul, and can do what is right. The contrasts between the two men cannot be more explicitly stated. This comparison effectively reveals to both Ratliff and readers what is "wrong." The result is to encourage readers to find the pattern in Ratliff's behavior which explains the reason that he appears to disregard the allegory's ethical motif, to do what is "right."

Using deception, Flem demonstrates that he is not Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus; he does not agree to give the Prince and his attendants the authority to compel him to lie in eternal torment (44). Allowed to pawn what is not his, he can be held neither accountable for his act, nor responsible for the decisions others make to sell either themselves or something of value—the decisions are theirs, not his. The effect of his philosophy is apparent to us in
the Prince's and Ratliff's decisions--the Prince foolishly allows Flem to pawn a soul which is not his while Ratliff trades something of value--a part of himself--for something of no value--a worthless piece of property. Another effect is that we understand Flem's reason for refusing the bribes that both the attendants and the Prince offer--he is not susceptible to corruption by his own corrupt methods (76; 146-55). By refusing to change his position, Flem is able to successfully manipulate the Prince's rising frustration and anger and cause him to make foolish counter-proposals until his former mentor intervenes to remind him of his father's error as well as reprimand him sharply. The old one's two indirect speech acts suggest that the Prince is a less able leader than his father, Satan, and the effects of his speech acts are three-fold: To remind, reprimand, and contrast.

The effect of the old one's speech acts upon readers is also three-fold: to remind them of Varner's warning to Ratliff that he is a fool to sell anything to Flem and an even bigger fool if he buys something from him; to remind them of the strong reprimand which Ratliff administers to himself when he sees himself struggling with Bookwright; to
both contrast the results of the trades between the Prince and Flem as well as between Ratliff and Flem and suggest to them that anyone and anything is for sale, including Hell and Ratliff.

Rhetorically, the impact of the old one's speech acts might cause us to ask whether our epithet—touchstone—is an appropriate designation for Ratliff: Does he possess the values that we expect of a narrator, a surrogate? But Faulkner does more than either affect or effect readers' belief in Ratliff; he causes readers to doubt themselves, to doubt, that is, their values that have allowed them to assume that Ratliff shares their beliefs in humanistic values. Readers' responses to their individual analyses of Ratliff will reflect their personal convictions and, consequently, their opinions of Ratliff. To see either Ratliff or yourself as Flem—an advocate of Snopesism—is not what readers expect of Ratliff or themselves. But this is precisely the rhetorical effect Faulkner achieves when he manipulates readers to force them to understand that the objective of fraud is to pervert human intellect. Ratliff, however, appears to either miss or ignore the old one's implicative message, because he does trade properties with
Flem and his decision seems to confirm the verdict that he and, perhaps readers, returns on himself. He succumbs to greed.

But the Prince's angry response to the same message suggests to us that his mentor is correct--he is a lesser man than his father and he apologizes to the old one (103). We observe the effect of the old one's speech acts upon the Prince when he learns that Flem wants Hell (120). He responds with a gestured speech act. Faulkner does not characterize the Prince's voice to describe this effect, he "qualifies his speech indirectly through accompanying gestures or portrayals of the speaker's place, attitude, or posture" (Ross 74). While we are forced again to look for a pattern to explain why Ratliff fails to follow either the old one's or his own advice, we see that the effect of the old one's reprimand causes the Prince to change his behavior from that of a self-indulgent ruler who is a sensuous devotee of luxury to a ruler with the stature of his father (125-28). It is this transformed Prince who begins his dialogue with Flem.

Flem's willingness to accept Hell does more than reveal to readers his determination to force the Prince to honor
his bargain. His single-mindedness suggests to them that he does not acknowledge boundaries--ethical, legal, moral, human--which regulate, civilize, and humanize society. Readers recognize the perversity which Flem embodies and remember Ratliff's earlier fears, but they continue to question his character and his values because he is willing to trade with such a man. Their only recourse, however, is to search for a pattern which may explain his behavior to them.

But Flem's willingness to accept Hell in lieu of a soul causes readers to realize that Ratliff would not make such a trade; the differences which distinguish Flem and Ratliff are apparent even though Ratliff continues to act in contradiction to both our expectations and the message the allegory reveals. By manipulating Ratliff's pattern of behavior, Faulkner "puts readers in a new position [and] compels them to make a new decision" (Miller 269). Because their new positions are caused by these contradictory images of Ratliff, readers' expectations of pattern are frustrated, if not subverted, and they may not be able to either experience or respond to Ratliff's struggle until they find a pattern which explains his contradictory behavior.
Seemingly revitalized and self-confident as a result of his mentor's reprimand, the Prince meets alone with an equally self-confident Flem. Continuing to use gestures as speech acts, Faulkner indicates Flem's calm assurance to us by the lack of respect he shows the Prince: Chewing and spitting, Flem asks about his soul as though he is requesting the time of day (137-40). But Flem's response to the Prince's remark--"But you have no soul"--indicates the reason he is confident: Is that my fault? (141). Flem quickly turns the argument to his advantage by pointing out that because he has no soul, the Prince is his creator (142-44). But Flem does more than remind the Prince that he is his creation; he establishes in our minds that he has always been aware that he has no soul, aware, that is, that his creator is the Prince. Rhetorically, Faulkner's argument (between Flem and the Prince) within an argument (the allegory itself) functions to clarify Flem's identity to both Ratliff and us.

Although both arguments are about what is "right," their functions differ: In the argument between Flem and the Prince, Faulkner shows Ratliff and readers that Flem's identity is based on fraud--he succeeds only by concealing
or perverting truth for the purpose of misleading others—he succeeds by doing what is "wrong." In the allegorical argument, however, Faulkner shows Ratliff and readers what is "right." For readers, the message is clear—both Flem's bartering skills and his economic and social advancement are the result of fraud and, thus, readers are even more puzzled by Ratliff's decision to trade with Flem and to repudiate the message the allegory reveals—do what is "right."

Nor is the Prince convinced by Flem's argument; he repeats the offers that his attendants have made; he goes even further—he shows Flem performing even the ones he hadn't thought about inventing (154). The sweeter than music sound by which the Prince describes the temptations, the gratifications, and the satieties he displays does not indicate to us that he is speaking about money, tobacco, or ties (146-49). But Flem remains immune to any form of temptation; he has everything which pleases and rewards him, and he has more than enough ties and money apparently to satisfy his wants. Because we, too, see Flem performing these various and, on occasion, inventive and unimaginable acts, we are aware of the eroticism which Faulkner's choice of the verb "perform" suggests (153).
The erotic effect of Faulkner's verb, depending upon the individual reader, can stimulate the reader, repel the reader, bore the reader, or remind the reader of what Ratliff had said about Flem after he closed Lump's theater: "...this was probably the first time anywhere where breath inhaled and suspired and men established foundations of their existences on the currency of coin, that anyone had ever wished Flem Snopes were here instead of anywhere else, for any reason, at any price" (H 199). As a result, neither Ratliff nor readers are surprised when Flem indicates his rejection of the Prince's bribes; he spits a scorch of tobacco--he is not interested in anything he has seen or been offered (156). Because the implicature in Ratliff's indirect speech act suggests so strongly that Flem would not have allowed Lump to operate his theater, readers realize that there is a boundary which Flem acknowledges--a sexual one: Flem does not appear to have any sexual appetites, prurient or otherwise. Later, readers learn that Flem is impotent. Ratliff's observation about Flem's probable attitude toward Lump's theater is confirmed in The Town when Flem both falsifies evidence to imprison a pornographer and exploits the long relationship between Eula and de Spain to
indicate to both Jefferson and readers that he thinks that she behaves like a whore. The effect of the bribes upon Flem, however, is indicated by his gestured speech act, he is not interested in either the performance he has seen or the bribes he has been offered (156).

Because Faulkner's carefully structured argument about trading methods both reveals to readers and Ratliff that Flem and the Prince use fraud to get what they want and juxtaposes the well-defined differences between the bartering methods of Ratliff and Flem, readers not only question Ratliff's failure to see this difference, they continue to question the pattern of his behavior--his vacillation, his assumptions, his apparent inability to either understand the implications of fraud or follow the advice of others. Even the Prince's error which allows Flem to pawn what he cannot possess--a soul--fails apparently to convince Ratliff that fraud is the vital component of Flem's trading successes (139-43). Readers, however, are aware of this and they realize that Ratliff and Flem play the game of barter by different rules. But Ratliff's decision to trade with Flem indicates that he either ignores or misses the obvious corollary which the Prince's defeat suggests. The
result of Flem's trade with the Prince is that he does more than usurp another throne, he seizes an entire realm--Hell. Faulkner's metaphor reminds readers of the power Flem appropriates by his usurpation of Varner's flour-barrel throne. But Ratliff does not seem to understand this corollary either.

Because readers recognize the corollaries between Flem's fraud and his successful trades and his usurpation of power as well as his acquisition of money and additional power, they do not understand Ratliff's inability to understand them; they begin to look for other reasons which can explain his contradictory behavior. One possible explanation that is suggested by critics is pride. But the same alternative interpretations which argue against greed are equally valid to reject pride as an explanation. There is, however, another, and perhaps more probable explanation for Ratliff's behavior--he denies what he sees and hears in the allegory--he denies the image of his Other, darker self. The result is that just as he ignores Flem's exploitation of his position as Ike's legal guardian, he ignores the perverse results of Flem's trades. Ratliff's pattern of acting in contradiction to the allegory's message suggests
that he has not ended his struggle with hypocrisy. To find an explanation which explains Ratliff's behavior, however, readers must continue to re-vision both his behavior and his speech acts.

But because of Faulkner's effective manipulation of their images of Ratliff's contradictory behavior, readers are forced to do more than re-vision his behavior, they are also forced to look at their own behavior and ask themselves why they continue to believe that Ratliff does understand the allegory, that he is, in fact, their narrator--their surrogate--their touchstone. The obvious answer is that some readers continue to believe in Ratliff because they have observed those qualities which demonstrate his values; they believe in the genuineness of his struggle to do what is "right." Others respond to his experiences because they have endured such experiences. But a less obvious explanation for readers' struggle with his contradictory behavior is that his struggle may reveal aspects of their own behavior which resemble that of Ratliff.

In contrast to Flem's casual speech act signifying a physical rather than a verbal rejection, the Prince reacts in baffled rage sufficient to cause him to make a mistake--
he offers to Flem what he cannot deliver, *Paradise* (160). Flem's response is immediate--'Is it yours to offer?'--and we recognize that the Prince also commits fraud; he offers to give Paradise to Flem in lieu of Hell. Now, it is the Prince who assumes, incorrectly, that he has out-traded Flem, but his trade is as fraudulent as Flem's--he offers what he does not possess, *Paradise* (161-63). Flem does not dispute the Prince's reasoning, he simply takes the Prince's throne because *a bargain is a bargain* (189-91; 32). Flem demonstrates both his opinion of the Prince and his right to the Prince's throne by violating our expectations that participants in a dialogue take turns speaking--he interrupts the Prince--'I never disputed that' (177). Flem violates the conversational expectations noted by Grice's Cooperative Principle; he flouts the rules which regulate turn-taking to protest the Prince's assumption that he does not acknowledge he is his creation.

Typically, when there is a turn-taking violation, one speaker drops out of the conversation quickly and the conversation resumes at the point of the interruption. But as Pratt points out, whenever a fictional speaker flouts a maxim of the Cooperative Principle, it is because "the
author is implicating something in addition to what the fictional speaker is saying or implicating" (199). When Flem (Faulkner) flouts the maxim of quality he admits he is the Prince's creation and his admission signifies that the Prince's argument is not valid. But Flem's flouting violation also functions to show readers the effects of fraud not upon a poor trader like Henry Armstid, for example, but upon a very successful trader--the Prince of Hell. Faulkner's allegory does more than reveal what is "right," its rhetorical argument demonstrates that Snopesism is neither weak, insignificant, or without appeal; it is, rather, a fraudulent philosophy which is a formidable opponent with serious consequences for those who do not resist its false and misleading promises, its fraudulent ideology. Few have made this decision in The Hamlet, but Ratliff does make this choice upon arriving in Frenchman's Bend when he observes Lump's exploitation of Ike.

Because "moving is both the cause and the effect of teaching," Faulkner uses a story--an allegory--to teach Ratliff a moral lesson and move him to do what is "right" (Sidney 123). Readers, too, experience the effect of Faulkner's story and they realize that it is the effect of
being moved which causes Ratliff to end his contradictory behavior and do something about the perverse advantage which Lump gains by leading some of the hamlet's residents astray morally. Faulkner's allegorical story may also move readers to effect a change in their behavior.

Readers become aware that the psychic level of Ratliff's allegorical experience intensifies as both he and they have momentary access to the Prince's thoughts—now he feels that ere hot floor under his knees and he can feel his-self grabbing and hauling at his throat to get the words out like he was digging potatoes outen hard ground—and experience his Hell (84-87). Again, as observers, we watch as the Prince becomes a phenomenal voice—an event in and of itself—a voice which "exists outside of speech act...as sound, act, gesture, or the power of speech irrespective of speech's semantic 'content'" (Ross 19-20). We hear a voice --separated from both speech and speaker--screaming and watch the Prince scrabbling across the floor, clawing and scrabbling at that locked door, . . . (193-95). The locked door, just like the constant screams of authentic Christians sentenced to eternal torment, functions to remind us that there is no escape from either Hell or a bad bargain when we
sell, or trade, something of value. The effect of phenomenal voice in the allegorical episode, Ross' definition suggests, is both to "affect and alter human life" (21). We see how the Prince's phenomenal voice affects and alters Ratliff's life upon his arrival in Frenchman's Bend. We, as readers, may not become aware of the effects of phenomenal voice on us until the trilogy's conclusion.

Because he is no longer the hollering, snapping, sarcastic, sneering voice which signifies power, we see the Prince as voice--screaming, scrabbling across the floor--without power (194-95). Reduced to a "discursive gesture," the Prince "replicates within the fictional world readers' relation to the narrative discourse"--we both see and hear this vision through the phenomenon of voice (Ross 22). We also see the contrast between our world and the allegory's world and understand the meaning of this contrast: This is the result for those who fail to do what is "right." There is, however, another result of our vision of the Prince's phenomenal screaming voice. Because Faulkner separates voice from its source, it is "no longer a discrete medium of human utterance but now a generalized source of all
utterance" (Ross 29). Faulkner's allegorical message is not just for Ratliff and his observers, the trilogy's readers, it is for everyone. Even though readers are aware of Faulkner's textual voice by its absence, they know its presence is implied throughout his texts (Ross 29). Thus, when he separates the Prince's phenomenal voice from its source, the result is that it, too, echoes throughout the trilogy's discourse and acts to remind readers that fraud continues to exist in both Faulkner's Yoknapatawphian world and their own world.

When the allegorical episode ends, we are suddenly in Book 3 of *The Hamlet* and although we are still with Ratliff, we are now outside of Varner's fenced lot on the outskirts of Frenchman's Bend (157). While this is the first meeting between Ratliff and Varner since the wedding, we do not join Varner on his ride into the hamlet; instead, we continue to listen to Ratliff's psyche as he resumes his surface recollections, but now his memories return to the events which occur before the wedding. By shifting away from italics, Faulkner again encourages a change in readers' perceptions of events and discourse. But because the change is sudden and abrupt, the effect on us is one of illusion--a
misapprehension of our experience—yet we know that along with Ratliff, we have been in Hell. It is not until we arrive in Frenchman's Bend and, with Ratliff, witness Lump's public abasement of Ike that we observe that Ratliff's behavior changes—he becomes not only involved, he acts and he acts alone. Because readers observe that the obvious and immediate effect of the allegorical episode on Ratliff occurs shortly after he arrives in Frenchman's Bend, they realize that he understands the allegory. He does what is "right."

When Ratliff abandons his role as the detached observer and ends Lump's exploitation of Ike, his decisive act also indicates that he ends his struggle with hypocrisy. By abandoning his role as the detached, uninvolved observer for one of an actively involved participant in the life of a community, Ratliff both effects and affects the lives of its residents and his own life. His positive act reveals to the community, to himself, and to readers that he understands the allegorical message. Ratliff demonstrates that one individual can make an important difference, that one person can say no, that we cannot live like this anymore. Readers, however, may react cautiously to Ratliff's positive change.
in behavior. There have been other occasions when he does what is "right" only to resume his contradictory behavior.

Functioning as both a solitary and particularly distinctive speech act, the allegory enables Ratliff and readers to experience what Miller describes as a "prolonged hovering flight of consciousness over the outstretched ground of the case supposed" (259). In effect, readers and Ratliff are more than observers, they are analysts and the case they study is not just the case of Flem Snopes, it is also the case of Snopesism. For Ratliff, the result of the prolonged hovering of his consciousness forces him to re-see both Flem's willingness to exploit others to achieve his purposes and his own earlier failure to act, his lack of bravery, his hypocrisy. Because he seems to see his double, what Robert B. Alter calls a "reflection or imitation,...often a covertly parodistic imitation that exposes hidden aspects of the original," Ratliff seems to change his behavior (969). Readers, already aware of the character traits which Ratliff shares with Flem, recognize the implied differences between the two men that the allegory reveals and, although they realize that Ratliff is neither another Flem Snopes nor an advocate for Snopesism,
they are still uncertain about either his behavior or his values.

When readers both hear Ratliff admit to Mrs. Littlejohn that he is a "pharisee" and observe what he does to begin to erase this image, they want to believe that his behavioral change is genuine, that "all [he] want[s] is just to have been righteouser, so [he] can tell [himself] I done the right thing and my conscience is clear now and at least I can go to sleep tonight." Because he closes Lump's theater shortly after the allegory, Ratliff's action indicates to readers that he understands the allegory's message—he protects something that "wasn't even a people," he does what is "right." Although readers can accept this explanation because Ratliff does something that is "right," Faulkner seems to suggest that readers who reach this conclusion may misunderstand his action.

Because readers hear Ratliff admit his hypocrisy--"I aint never disputed I'm a pharisee"--they are willing to accept both his statement and his behavior as genuine, but by using the terms "pharisee" and "righteouser" Faulkner reminds them that a pharisee is an individual who is less righteous and "use[s] hypocritical 'observance' as a cover"
Faulkner's language causes readers to question both Ratliff's explanation and his behavior. Is Ratliff genuinely righteous or does he just simulate righteousness to appear less hypocritical than others in Frenchman's Bend?

In *The Origin of Satan*, Elaine Pagels points out that "Matthew insists that the 'scribes and the Pharisees' use mere hypocritical 'observance' as a cover for violating what Jesus...proclaims to be the central commands of love for God and neighbor," but she also indicates that Matthew engages in "demonic vilification" in many of the "sayings that he attributes to Jesus" (82-84). Rather than practicing what Matthew calls mere hypocritical "observance" of the Torah, Jewish teachers who are contemporaries of Jesus explain that the Torah teaches, "Whatever you do not want others to do to you, do not do to them. That is the whole of the Torah (84). By using "pharisee" and "righteous" Faulkner seems to be making a similar argument. Just as neither Jews nor Matthew believe that the moral lessons of the Torah should be either ignored or merely observed hypocritically, readers should question whether Ratliff's explanation and his behavior are genuine. Simply "tell[ing yourself you] done the right thing" does not mean that either your decision or
its result is sufficient to sleep with a clear conscience. Ratliff must believe that what he does is "right" and that his actions are the result of his convictions and not the result of observances which conceal his hypocrisy.

Later, when Ratliff again acts in contradiction to the message which the allegory reveals, readers realize that his decision to purchase property from Flem suggests that his apparent change is only that--apparent. This seeming contradiction causes readers to do more than analyze Ratliff's pattern of behavior. It forces them to analyze his character.

In their constant re-visioning of Ratliff, readers have observed specific instances which reveal his character as one that justifies his role as their narrator--their surrogate--their touchstone: Ike's overwhelming impact on him causes him to acknowledge Snopesism's perversity; his singular decision to close Lump's theater; his explanation to Bookwright for closing Lump's theater; his admission to hypocrisy. Moreover, readers are aware that Ratliff's trading practices with others as well as his customers are both fair and ethical. While none of these examples is, by itself, sufficient to establish Ratliff as an outstanding
model of either a surrogate or a touchstone, together these examples reveal a man obviously engaged in a serious struggle with his identity—-who he is. Is he a man whose actions reveal that he knows what is right or is he a man whose actions deny the meaning of the allegory? Faulkner states that "truth is that thing, the violation of which makes you writhe at night when you try to go to sleep, in shame for something you've done that you know you shouldn't have done....truth is the constant thing, it's what man knows is right and that when he violates it, it troubles him" (Meriwether and Millgage 145). Readers know that the truth of who he is troubles Ratliff greatly. It is because he continues to struggle with this truth that readers believe that he knows what is "right."

But there are no answers to explain Ratliff's trade with Flem at the conclusion of The Hamlet; readers are both forced to circle back to his speech acts in this text and listen closely to those in The Town and The Mansion to find the "unity to the sequence [of texts] whether planned in advance or not" (Frye 51). Readers who do circle back and look more closely at Ratliff's speech acts, however, discover that he does tell them he is not greedy: "'God,'
he whispered, 'Just look at what even the money a man aint
 got yet will do to him'" (H 343). Ratliff does not call
 upon God for help, he calls out to God and acknowledges to
 God and to readers his desire for money. Ratliff recognizes
 his struggle with Bookwright for what it is--a struggle with
 a man who is both his friend and his partner for something
 he does not need.

 Faulkner's militant rhetoric forces both Ratliff and
 readers to experience the effects of Snopesism--its
 concealment or perversion of truth for the purpose of
 misleading others--that is, leading astray morally or
 leading others into either mental error or false judgment--
during their prolonged hovering over the case supposed in
 both The Hamlet and the allegory. The result of this
 rhetorical experience seems to be designed by Faulkner to
 effect changes both in their respective thoughts and in
 their mental images of the different worlds in which they
 each live. In The Hamlet, readers do not observe a man who
 is an ideal touchstone, but neither do they observe a man
 obsessed by either greed or pride. Instead, The Hamlet
 reveals that Ratliff is a man who struggles to change his
 pattern of behavior and do what he knows is "right." Just
as they must continue to re-vision Ratliff in the sequential
texts to either explain or understand his behavior, readers
must re-vision their own behavior patterns as they witness
the effects of Snopesism on the town of Jefferson.

Faulkner's allegory is an open allegory comprising an
ethical motif with a speech act. It enables him to deny his
readers any definitive explanation of its intention yet, at
the same time, it allows him to tell them a story which
teaches them by moving them to accept its implied message.
Rhetorically, however, the very ambiguity of open allegory
functions to destabilize, misdirect, frustrate, and even
block readers, preventing them from reaching either a
synthesis or a resolution which explains its ethical motif,
its message. Their response to the allegory as a speech act
(their communication with the text) which enables readers to
perceive both its message--what is "right"--and discover
that the allegory, as well as the trilogy, is an argument
which reminds them "that Hell is not a place but a
state...which can only be thought of, and perhaps only
experienced, by the projection of sensory images" (Eliot
211-12). Faulkner's allegory projects such sensory images
to advocate his verities of the heart, his universal truths.
CHAPTER III

The Town and The Mansion

There is some soul of goodness in things evil,
Would men observingly distill it out;
For our bad neighbor makes us early stirrers,
Which is both healthful, and good husbandry.

--Henry V

Because of one specific act, many early critics conclude that Ratliff is neither the character who characterizes nor determines the character of a culture unless it is the particular culture of either greed or pride in both a hamlet and a town. But, as I suggest in my responses to these early readers, there are alternative arguments which suggest that it is Ratliff's hypocrisy which causes him to depart from character, not his alleged greed or pride. And, although my analysis of Faulkner's allegory fails to prove that Ratliff is either the trilogy's or readers' moral center, both the effect of the contrast in behavior which the allegory reveals between Ratliff and Flem as well as my rhetorical analysis of their respective actions and speech acts in The Town and The Mansion, establish that Ratliff is, indeed, an appropriate touchstone for Faulkner's verities of the heart.
With just two words, "Come up," Flem and readers leave the hamlet of Frenchman's Bend (H 366). But Flem's simple speech act is more than a command to a pair of mules; it functions to remind readers that he has indeed come up. In less than ten years, Faulkner points out, Flem "has consumed a small village until there is nothing in it for him to eat" (Urgo 146). Flem has risen both economically and socially, from being a clerk in Varner's general store to owning part of a restaurant in Jefferson; from being the son of a poor tenant farmer to being the son-in-law of his former employer, the wealthy, powerful, and influential Will Varner. In the town of Jefferson, however, he and readers both discover that some of the methods which he uses in a hamlet fail him in a town, particularly one like Jefferson.

Because Jefferson appears to be a town which is "held together...by talk--by rumor, anecdote, conversation, pleasantry, sermon, conjecture, query, even rumor--and in a large part by a fundamental respect for the law and law abiding," a profession which also depends upon words, the ever-increasing and "silent, inscrutable [Snopes] presence makes them a threat to the community" (Watson 208). Jefferson's residents find themselves "besieged by [these]
grasping exogenous forces," whose very silence about each other and their activities appears to townspeople and readers alike to resemble more the methods of secret and foreign intelligence agents. But it is their secretive and alien presence which makes the Snopeses both conspicuous and, frequently, the topic of talk or, to be more accurate, stories.

The stories which readers hear in The Town function rhetorically as "narrative surveillance--'colloquial detection'--to detect, isolate, and neutralize [the] difference" Snopeses represent (Watson 209). And, because he wants readers to "look at an object from several points of view," Faulkner uses primarily the voices of Ratliff, Gavin Stevens, and Chick Mallison to tell the various stories which readers find in The Town (Gwynn and Blotner 139-40). The subject of all of the stories in this volume of the trilogy is Snopes, that is, Flem or another member of the Snopes tribe. Faulkner's active voice captures a more complete picture of, in this instance, Flem Snopes because readers seem to be both present and experiencing the events as they occur rather than relying on the hearsay, conjecture, or talk which readers experience in The Hamlet.
In Frenchman's Bend, for example, while readers and some of the hamlet's residents watch an apparently crazed Armstid continue to dig for buried treasure at the Old Frenchman's place, readers listen to unidentified voices discuss the results of Flem's and Ratliff's trade:

"He's still at it."
"He going to kill himself. Well, I dont know as it will be any loss."
"Not to his wife, anyway."
"That's a fact. It will save her that trip every day toting food to him. That Flem Snopes."
"That's a fact. Wouldn't no other man have done it."
"Couldn't no other man have done it. Anybody might have fooled Henry Armstid. But couldn't nobody but Flem Snopes have fooled Ratliff"(H 365).

Careful readers observe that Faulkner returns to the dialogue's repetitive language he uses between Ratliff and Mrs. Littlejohn to develop his plot by clarifying it gradually.

In these six conversational exchanges, Faulkner repeats "it" five times, implies "it" once, and uses "that" three times and, in almost every instance, the implied meaning of these referents changes from digging, to Armstid's death, to loss, to trickster, to tricked Ratliff. The effect, however, of Faulkner's decision to omit explicit antecedents
does not prevent communication between the hamlet's observers; instead, his method of "transcribing voices as you hear the voice speaking the speech" functions to "enhance his illusion of speech" (Ross 98-101). Adding to this illusion of speech, Faulkner uses "distinct alphabetical, lexical, grammatical, and syntactical alterations" (Ross 100). The effect upon readers of such use of language is that they experience--hear--the immediacy, the candor, and the realities of actual conversation. From this casual conversation between acquaintances, readers learn that these observers do not seem to question either Ratliff's character or his values, they seem to question Flem's values, or rather, the absence of them.

The hamlet's observers do not deny the foolishness of Ratliff's trade, but they imply that Flem may not have traded honestly--"Wouldn't no other man have done it." The immediate antecedent for "it" is "that's a fact," but it is the prior phrase--"That Flem Snopes"--which begins this final series of exchanges. Functioning as a demonstrative, "that" seems to suggest that Flem is a card, a trickster, but even as a trickster, he should not have salted the Old
Frenchman's place or used that particular device to trick Ratliff and the others. "Wouldn't" causes the implicature by raising doubt about the trade in readers' minds, because "wouldn't" seems to suggest that no one but a Flem would use this method. The next speech act may even increase readers' doubts. "Couldn't no other man have done it" both suggests that only Flem has the trading skills to succeed by using this method and reminds readers of Varner's warning to Ratliff in The Hamlet--"...you sholy aint fool enough...to buy anything from him [Flem], are you?" None of these speech acts are, in and of themselves, accusatory, but together, they suggest that both Varner and the observers seem to think that Flem does not always trade ethically. The final speech act--"couldn't nobody but Flem Snopes have fooled Ratliff"--indicates that even Varner could not have fooled Ratliff.

The result of the last two dialogue exchanges causes readers to see Ratliff differently. By suggesting that Flem is a particular kind of trader--a dishonest or an unethical one--the hamlet's observers alter readers' images of both Ratliff's trade and Ratliff himself. Rather than an act which is motivated by either greed or pride, the trade
appears to be one of simple foolishness which is the result of Ratliff's failure to listen carefully to either the message the allegory reveals or what Varner tries to tell him. While readers realize that Varner's remark may be just a reaction to his foolish trade, the remarks by the observers in Frenchman's Bend appear candid and without prejudice. And supporting both Varner's and the observers' opinions is what readers learn from the allegory--they hear Flem admit that he commits fraud to trick the Prince. The cumulative effect of both the allegory and these speech acts causes readers to see Ratliff as the hamlet's observers do--as a man who makes a mistake rather than as a man without human values who acts for reasons of either greed or pride. By contrasting the images of Ratliff in *The Hamlet* to those of Flem in *The Town*, readers recognize that Faulkner uses Flem as a foil to compare the meaning of the allegory's message--do what is right--to the philosophy of Snopesism--use fraud to get what you want. The effect of this comparison is to show readers the consequences for a society which seemingly lacks human values. The conclusions which the hamlet's observers reach, however, are contradicted by
the explanation which Ratliff gives for his trade to Gavin, Chick, and readers:

"'It was that Old Frenchman house,' he said. Uncle Gavin waited. 'The Old Frenchman place.' Uncle Gavin waited. 'That buried money.' Then Uncle Gavin understood: not an old pre-Civil War plantation house in all Mississippi...but had its legend of the money and plate buried in the flower garden....

'It was Henry Armstid's fault, trying to get even with Flem for that horse that Texas man sold him that broke his leg.'

'No,' Ratliff said, 'it was me too as much as anybody else, as any of us. To figger out what Flem was doing owning that old place that anybody could see wasn't worth nothing....So when Henry taken to following and watching Flem and finally caught him that night digging in that old flower garden, I dont reckon Henry had to persuade me very hard to go back the next night and watch Flem digging myself....'

'How long did you and Henry dig before you quit?'

'I quit after the second night,' Ratliff said. 'That was when I finally thought to look at the money....They was silver dollars me and Henry dug up. Some of them was pretty old. One of Henry's was minted almost thirty years ago.'
'A salted mine,' Uncle Gavin said. 'One of the oldest tricks in the world, yet you fell for it. Not Henry Armstid: you.'

'Yes, Ratliff said'" (T 7-8).

The first effect of this dialogue exchange is that it seems to be a continuation of the previous one between observers and readers in Frenchman's Bend at the conclusion of The Hamlet. By repeating "it," Faulkner continues the conversation about Ratliff in The Town and both maintains the trilogy's unity and develops his plot by turning again to repetition and speech acts to gradually clarify it. The result for readers is that they enter the town and immediately resume the earlier conversation about Ratliff, yet they are in Jefferson rather than Frenchman's Bend.

"It" is, for Ratliff, the old house--the Old Frenchman's place--and the salted mine trick--the buried treasure. He is tricked by Flem with a rumor which, more than fifty years after the Civil War, has become legend. But Gavin's quick and easy acceptance of Ratliff's explanation indicates that he recognizes Ratliff's foolish trade as just that, foolish, neither greedy nor vain. Implicatively, readers understand that Ratliff is not the
first person to succumb to this rumor; they also realize that Varner's strong warnings to Ratliff about trading with Flem may suggest that he, too, has done some unprofitable digging. Because Ratliff neither denies his foolish behavior nor allows Gavin to blame Armstid—he says, simply, "Yes, I fell for 'it'"—readers, too, are willing to accept Ratliff's explanation. They observe that missing in Ratliff's dialogue is any suggestion of hypocrisy; they find, instead, both humility and self-directed humor—Ratliff can laugh at his foolish mistake.

The illusion of speech enables readers to hear Ratliff's explanation. They realize that he has gradually evolved from the earlier detached, uninvolved, and hypocritical observer to a man who is now involved, humbled, and a willing participant. They no longer observe the former contradictory and elliptical behavior which causes both their frustration and their inability to understand his actions in *The Hamlet*. Instead, they recognize that Ratliff's words and actions reveal a man who both possesses human values and believes in them. These two dialogue exchanges remind readers that neither the Frenchman's Bend observers nor Gavin and Chick in Jefferson believe that
Ratliff trades with Flem for reasons of either greed or pride. Readers who have succumbed to the assumptions of either greed or pride to explain Ratliff's contradictory behavior may be surprised by the attitudes of both the hamlet's observers and Gavin. Their quick and easy acceptance that his trade with Flem is either foolish or an example of something everyone does causes readers to re-examine the basis for their false assumptions. Just as Ratliff has been compelled to examine his behavior, readers must re-vision their own actions. By varying Ratliff's image, Faulkner does more than deliberately mislead readers about him, he misleads readers about the images they have of themselves.

Gavin's next speech acts seem to support this interpretation:

We've all bought Snopeses here, whether we wanted to or not;...I dont know why we bought them. I mean, why we had to: what coin and when and where we so recklessly and improvidently spent that we had to have Snopeses too. But nothing can hurt you if you refuse it, not even a brass-stealing Snopes. And nothing is of value that costs nothing... (T 95).
Gavin's remarks to both Ratliff and readers have two obvious results. First, they suggest that those readers who conclude that Ratliff acts out of greed or pride form their conclusions prematurely; they seem not to have been either listening to what is said or observing carefully. Like Ratliff, they have assumed. Other analyses which state that Ratliff is either witless or gullible are weakened by his decision to both close Lump's theater and admit that he is a hypocrite. To understand Ratliff, careful readers will consider both his behavior and his character in the context of the trilogy rather than that of a single text. Secondly, Gavin's remarks also function to remind readers that they, like Ratliff, may have "bought" Snopeses. Because Gavin says that "we dont know why we buy Snopes," he could be suggesting that we, the readers, need to understand our own "purchases" of Snopeses--to ask ourselves why we say yes rather than no to Snopeses--before we judge the motives of others. Gavin's use of we can imply that everyone acts foolishly, recklessly, thoughtlessly, and, perhaps, hypocritically--we are all human and subject to human error.

Functioning in The Town primarily as their interpreter rather than their narrator, Ratliff's anecdotal stories
frequently either explain or clarify a character or an event directly for readers and/or Gavin and Chick, or he relates this information indirectly for readers while they listen to his conversations with others. As they both watch and listen to Ratliff, readers observe that he continues to evolve from the narrator who appears too often in *The Hamlet* to be both unreliable and untrustworthy to their very reliable and trustworthy story teller--their interpretive surrogate--whose anecdotes illuminate Flem's character and, consequently, Snopesism for us. By placing Ratliff in a natural story-telling structure rather than an allegorical one, Faulkner continues his rhetorical use of stories to effect mental changes in his characters as well as his readers by the juxtaposition of Ratliff's and Flem's contrasting images. In the story which follows, an anecdote, Ratliff reveals to Gavin, Chick, and readers how Flem plans to usurp a bank president's chair.

Appointed superintendent of the town's power plant by Manfred de Spain, president of a Jefferson bank, Flem is later removed from this position because he steals the plant's brass fixtures in an effort to make money. Publicly exposed as a thief, Flem begins to alter his...
behavior: He adopts respectability as a disguise to conceal his real objectives. At the same time, however, he ignores Eula's and de Spain's eighteen-year relationship and seems to support adultery. Ratliff explains Flem's contradictory behavior to Gavin and readers with an anecdote: "He dont want to [catch Eula and de Spain] because [he] dont need to yet....Not catching his wife with Manfred de Spain yet is like that twenty-dollar gold piece pinned to your undershirt on your first maiden trip to what you hope is going to be a Memphis whorehouse. He dont need to unpin it yet" (T 15; 29). Just as Flem exploits Ike in The Hamlet by violating his fiduciary responsibility to him, he exploits Eula by acting as an accomplice to her adultery.

Both of these images--thief, manipulator--suggest to readers that Flem's apparent change in behavior is not just apparent, it is fraudulent. It reveals that his pattern of fraudulent behavior reinforces readers' image of him in the allegory--the image of a man who seems to lack any understanding of human values. They recognize that he continues to employ deception to gain some unfair or dishonest advantage by misleading others in his relentless pursuit of money and power, because they have already both
observed and experienced Flem's fraudulent behavior in *The Hamlet* and its allegory. In *The Town*, however, it is Gavin who neither fully appreciates nor grasps the consequences for those whom Flem deliberately leads astray morally or into either mental error or false judgment. Because it is a "unique narrative form" that "refers to either something beyond or beneath that form, an anecdote can 'integrate event and context'" (Greenblatt 5). Ratliff's anecdote about a particular event--the Memphis whorehouse--functions, like the allegory, as a speech act causing Gavin and readers to recognize that Eula's adulterous relationship with de Spain is Flem's twenty-dollar gold piece; he will spend it only when his other manipulative methods no longer effectively produce results--money and power.

Using repetition again to manipulate both his characters and his readers with Ratliff's anecdote, Faulkner repeats a pattern of phrasing--"he dont want to," "he dont need to yet," "he dont need to unpin it yet" and "yet" to suggest that Flem will inevitably unpin the twenty-dollar gold piece. His repetition acts to both heighten the emotional effects of Ratliff's anecdote and gradually clarify his plot by foreshadowing. The other effect of such
manipulation--to frustrate attempts at communication--causes Gavin to miss Ratliff's implicature because he fails to understand that the twenty-dollar gold piece is a metaphor for a bank president's chair: "Because, to use what you call that twenty-dollar gold piece, he's got to use his wife too. Do you mean to tell me you believe for one moment that his wife will side with him against Manfred de Spain?...How can he hope for that?" (T 151). Careful readers, however, may recognize that the inevitability which Faulkner's repetitive pattern indicates suggests that Flem is successful. These readers are not completely surprised when Flem forces both his wife and Varner to support his election for vice-president of de Spain's bank.

In contrast to Ratliff's contradictory behavior, which reveals his inner struggle with his heart, Flem's superficially inconsistent acts reveal no apparent fundamental and permanent behavioral change. His goals seem to remain fixed--the acquisition of money and power. In The Hamlet, Faulkner's use of disorganized images of Ratliff compel readers to constantly re- vision both these contradictory images and his speech acts to understand his behavior, but in The Town, it is the steady, step-by-step
accumulation of specific examples of Flem's fraudulent actions which cause them to see a single image of a man who is apparently perverse—a man without conscience, a man without values, and, as the allegory suggests, a man without a soul. Faulkner's rhetoric in *The Town*, resembling that of *The Hamlet*, allows readers to experience the effects which Flem's use of fraud has upon those who stand in his way, just as they have already experienced Ratliff's struggles with himself and his values to do what is "right."

Ratliff's explanation is both simple and implicative: Flem's possession of the twenty-dollar gold piece enables him to use extortion to become vice-president of de Spain's bank. "At least we know now jest how much Miz Flem Snopes is worth"—Varner's vote and influence (T 119). Flem forces Varner and de Spain to support his selection as vice-president of de Spain's bank by both threatening to reveal that Linda is not his daughter and disclosing the affair between Eula and de Spain. Such public disclosure would not only tarnish the Varner name but, even more importantly, it would label his daughter an adulteress and his grand-daughter a bastard. Readers see yet another image of Flem—the image of an extortionist. But Eula and Linda are worth
more, they are worth another throne, a bank president's chair. Flem's seemingly benign attitude toward Eula's and de Spain's affair continues, however, to puzzle Gavin. His failure to understand the implicature in Ratliff's anecdote blind him to Flem's obsessive need for the mask of respectability to disguise his real intentions from others. Readers may also experience difficulty understanding Ratliff's explanation for Flem's behavior. His indirect speech acts about Eula's worth and his anecdote about the Memphis whorehouse may not communicate the importance Flem attaches to respectability. They, like Gavin, may only see Flem's obvious goals: "'Rapacity,' [Gavin] said. 'Greed. Money. What else does he need? want? What else has ever driven him?'" (T 152). Because readers already know that both Ratliff's assumptions and hypocrisy cause him to fail to listen carefully to Varner's indirect speech acts and the allegory's message, they recognize that Gavin's failure to listen carefully has a similar result--he and Ratliff are unable to communicate and Gavin does not understand Flem's need for respectability. Readers, however, understand his need because they hear Ratliff explain its importance to Chick:
"...a feller that jest wants money for the sake of money, or even for power, there's a few things right at the last that he wont do, will stop at. But a feller that come--came up from where he [Flem] did, that...thought he discovered that money would buy anything he could or would ever want, and shaped all the rest of his life and actions on...that one day he...found out...that maybe he had throwed--thrown it away.'

'What?' I said. 'What is it he's got to have?'

'Respectability,' Ratliff said...'When it's jest money and power a man wants, there is usually some place where he will stop; there's always one thing at least that ever--every man wont do for jest money. But when it's respectability he finds out he wants and has got to have, there aint nothing he wont do to get it and keep it...there aint nobody or nothing within his scope and reach that may not anguish and grieve and suffer'" (T 258-59).

Ratliff's anecdote suggests strongly that Flem will commit any act to acquire respectability. Functioning to both reveal Flem's character and explain his past and present actions to Chick and readers, it implies that because Flem is the son of a poor tenant farmer, he thinks money is the answer to everything. Only when he moves to Jefferson does Flem learn that he needs respectability too; money will not
buy that, appropriate behavior will. But, as readers already know, Flem does not change his behavior, he conceals it.

In contrast, Gavin is born respectable. He is unable to appreciate the importance of respectability to someone who lacks it. The result is that both Ratliff's anecdote and his speech act about Eula's worth prevent rather than clarify Flem's need for respectability; readers understand its importance because they hear Ratliff explain its value to Chick. But Ratliff's anecdote has another, unexpected result for readers--it causes them to see a different image of Flem--the image of a man who dreams of a better life. Just as Faulkner's rhetorical use of allegory forces readers to re-vision Ratliff to understand his behavior, his comparable use of an anecdote forces readers to re-vision Flem to understand this new image which the anecdote suggests.

But Gavin's inability to understand Ratliff's implicature, like Ratliff's earlier inability to understand Varner's implicature, illustrates once more the difficulties which a combination of implicature and repetition cause when the intended audience does not listen carefully: Readers
discover they must function as a jury whose own experiences will affect their evaluation of Flem. Such rhetorically manipulative techniques act to draw readers more deeply into Faulkner's Yoknapatawphan environment—to understand it and to become increasingly a part of it. Because these rhetorical devices are found frequently in Faulkner's texts' speech acts, readers have already been subjected to what Miller identifies as their performative power (see above, page 10). In The Town, readers respond constantly to the performative power of speech acts which they have already experienced.

Ratliff's anecdote also suggests to readers that he seems to understand Flem's behavior and his character because of their similar backgrounds (Ratliff is also the son of a tenant farmer) as well as his experience in The Hamlet's allegory: Ratliff recognizes that the allegory shows him the importance of what is right by revealing the perversity which Flem's actions suggest. Because the residents of both Frenchman's Bend and Jefferson respect him, they do not think that his hypocritical behavior demonstrates a lack of values. Faulkner's manipulation of the contrasting images of Ratliff and Flem results in
readers recognizing that because Ratliff's transformation is genuine, he is their interpreter--their surrogate--their touchstone. Readers also recognize that Flem's apparent inability or unwillingness to change his behavior may, ultimately, destroy him.

Because Flem realizes that his public image as a thief may deny him success in Jefferson, he acts to change his image from that of a thief to that of the honorable man his position at the bank suggests. To become this honorable man, however, Flem commits fraud: he manipulates others to commit fraudulent or malicious acts against those who pose a threat to him. To reveal the effects which Flem's mask of respectability has upon those who may either frustrate or obstruct his goals, Faulkner continues to both withhold information and work by implicature rather than direct statement in *The Town*. As a result readers encounter more ellipses which compel them to listen carefully to the information that is communicated in order to learn what characters actually mean by what they do not say. Faulkner does not resolve all of these ellipses for readers until *The Mansion* and readers experience the same effect that his
failure to resolve The Hamlet's ellipsis causes--they become frustrated.

The first step Flem takes to improve his image in Jefferson is to slowly and efficiently remove any other Snopeses from Jefferson to protect himself from the consequences of their actions. To remove Montgomery Ward Snopes, operator of a pornographic photography studio, Flem perverts both the law and Montgomery Ward: By pointing out to the sheriff and County Attorney Stevens that Jefferson's reputation is threatened by the imprisonment of a pornographer--"I'm interested in Jefferson. We got to live here"--they imprison Montgomery Ward for distilling moonshine rather than for operating his pornographic studio (T 176); to remove I. O. Snopes, practitioner of insurance fraud, Flem sells his home--The Snopes Hotel--and banishes I. O. from Jefferson; to ensure that Mink Snopes is found guilty and imprisoned for murder, he refuses to help him either financially or legally, and, to guarantee that he is not paroled early, he uses bribery to extend Mink's life sentence; to become president of de Spain's bank, he unpins the twenty-dollar gold piece and he writes the epitaph which honors Eula:
Chick's remarks, however, function to subvert Flem's seeming public tribute to his wife's virtue: "...I would have to be a lot older than twelve before I realized that the wreath was not the myrtle of grief, it was the laurel of victory; that in that dangling chunk of black tulle and artificial flowers and purple ribbons was the eternal and deathless public triumph of virtue itself proved once more supreme and invincible" (T 337). Eula takes her own life rather than be labeled a whore by both the man and the town that seek retribution "in the name of righteousness and simple justice" because the man and the town both condoned and overlooked her adultery for eighteen years (T 307). Neither Flem nor the town would have willingly paid tribute to her virtue without Flem's decision to disclose her affair to Varner and his wife; they do so to protect their reputations. Chick's observations about Eula suggest that the wreath's artificial flowers and myrtle only indicate Flem's simulated grief for a loved one; the wreath actually signifies Eula's victory over Flem and the town. In death, Eula is acknowledged to be virtuous; she protects her
daughter, herself, and the Varner name by removing Flem's access to and manipulation of his source of power--herself.

Faulkner offers readers three reasons for Eula's suicide: "She was larger than life and had no business being in either the hamlet or the town" and "It was for the sake of that child....That at least this girl would have had the similitude of an intact though a tragedy-ridden home, just as other children did" (Gwynn and Blotner 31; 195). In response to Gavin's question, "Tell me, V. K. Why?", Ratliff replies, "Maybe she was bored" (T 358). Gavin agrees with Ratliff, but he defines "bored" for Ratliff and readers: "Yes,...[s]he was bored. She loved, had a capacity to love, for love, to give and accept love. Only she tried twice and failed twice to find somebody...brave enough to accept it" (T 359). Again, there is neither a resolution or a synthesis to his text; Faulkner leaves Ratliff, Gavin, and his readers at Jefferson's railroad station watching a departing train rather than waiting for the arrival of a mule-drawn wagon, but, by using a train as his metaphor, Faulkner seems to suggest forward motion at the conclusion of The Town. Like the mule-drawn wagon that Flem uses to move up to the town of Jefferson in The Hamlet,
the train seems to indicate a new destination to readers, but this metaphor functions rhetorically to convey readers backward. It carries them back to the final book of *The Hamlet* and the day that a Jefferson jury finds Mink guilty "of murder in the second degree..." (H 333). The effect upon readers of his *in media res* opening to *The Mansion* is that they resume, without any obvious interruption, their role as spectators at Mink's trial as though they have neither read *The Town* nor waited nineteen years for the final volume of the trilogy.

By repeating the technique he employs to take readers to Hell in *The Hamlet*, Faulkner manipulates his readers again by unexpectedly heightening their sense of immediacy and signaling a thought transference which will, in this case, induce them to look for "the truth" in the story they are about to hear in *The Mansion*. The other, unintended, effect, is that readers who do not read the trilogy as a unified whole, experience, with Mink, half of what will be a thirty-eight year prison sentence. The first result of the long delay between the publication of the second and third volumes is, as mentioned previously, that much early
critical opinion focuses on individual texts rather than analyzing the trilogy.

Blotner says that typical early reviews of *The Mansion* find "parts of the novel superb, but it [does] not rank with [Faulkner's] best. It would be," Blotner continues, "two years before the most subtle and judicious appraisal would come in a study of the whole trilogy..." (674). Because much of critics' early analyses focuses on individual texts, there is a tendency for these critics to overlook the "process of scrutiny and evaluation" that "Faulkner traces in all his works, but especially and at greatest length in the trilogy *Snopes*" (Beck 190). Readers experience Faulkner's scrutiny and evaluation through Ratliff as he looks at himself and his environment. As a result, Ratliff and readers each learn that their evaluations reveal in the reflections of others aspects of themselves. This lengthy evaluative process also indicates that Faulkner continues to trace the ethical theme of *The Hamlet*’s allegory in the trilogy's sequential texts and it discloses both the inherent unity of the trilogy and its parabolic structure.

But the final result of readers' long wait is that they understand that any further speculation about Ratliff's
contradictory behavior is unnecessary. For early critics, Ratliff's actions in *The Town* demonstrate that he is neither greedy nor vain. For readers, Ratliff's acknowledgment to Mrs. Littlejohn and them that he is a hypocrite reveals that despite contradictory behavior which causes him to make a serious error in judgment, he is a man who believes in and upholds those values which are the only true safeguards that any society has to protect itself from the effects of fraud. Readers learn from Ratliff that one individual can make a difference if that individual says "No" to ideologies which seek to either pervert or subvert human values. Ratliff's belated recognition that fraud's effects cannot be either blindly ignored or hypocritically tolerated is a warning to the trilogy's readers that they, too, must be more alert to fraud's presence in their lives. Faulkner's display of disparate and disorganized images and his rhetorical manipulation of these same images function to effect changes in how readers see Ratliff; these changes should cause readers to become aware of their own hypocritical behavior as well. In *The Mansion*, however, readers will confront a different challenge when they once again serve as a jury to
judge the actions of those who commit fraud to uphold human values.

Upon taking their seats in the Jefferson courtroom, readers notice that Mink is not listening; he does not appear to hear the jury say "'Guilty' and the Judge say 'Life'," because he is looking for Flem in the crowded courtroom: "'You, Snopes! Did you or didn't you kill Jack Houston?' 'Dont bother me now. Cant you see I'm busy,'...hollering into, against, across the wall of little wan faces hemming him in: 'Snopes! Flem Snopes! I'll pay you--Flem'll pay you!'' (M 3). Repeating some of the same dialogue, Faulkner begins his final text of the trilogy by circling back to the language of The Hamlet.

Readers' only orientation to The Mansion is to remember what Ratliff has already told them in The Town--Mink spends eight months "laboring under a mistake,...the mistake not of shooting Houston, but of when he pick[s] out to do it; picking out the time to do it while Flem [is] still off on his Texas honeymoon..." (T (78-79). Mink seems to agree with Ratliff; he tell readers that he "knew Flem would not be there when he would need him...he simply could wait no longer; Houston...would not let him wait ..." (M 4-5).
Mink's final indirect speech act not only tells readers his reason for shooting Houston--he must act--that he has no choice--but its indirection reminds them that there is yet another ellipsis in both *The Hamlet* and *The Town*. It is the unexplained ellipsis which Ratliff's contradictory behavior causes in *The Hamlet*, however, which forces readers to either sit in prison or engage in speculation about the inconclusiveness of the trilogy for nineteen years.

Faulkner's authorial preface in *The Mansion* appears to be his reply to the opinions of early critics who failed to appreciate either his understanding of his characters or the unifying theme of this work. To reveal his ethical theme, Faulkner continues using the same multiple voices in *The Mansion*--Ratliff, Gavin, and Chick--which offer varying points of view to readers in *The Town*.

The rhetorical effect gained by multiple voices is to let readers observe events in *The Mansion* "from three or four sides and from three or four mentalities" (Gwynn and Blotner 139-40). Faulkner explains that this trick [enabled him to] deliberately look at the object from three points of view: one was the mirror which obliterated all except truth, because the mirror didn't know the other factors existed; another was to look at it from the point of view
of someone who had made of himself a more or less artificial man through his desire to practice what he has been told was good virtue; [t]he other was from the point of view of a man who practiced virtue from simple instinct...because it was better (Gwynn and Blotner 140).

There is, however, another point of view expressed in The Mansion by Mink, a "morally questionable character" who demands that the texts' characters and readers hear his 'word' (Ross 91). "Mink's 'word'," Ross says, "is the presence that readers must account for in this text" (91). It is from Ratliff's point of view--the voice of simple, instinctive virtue--that readers gain an understanding of the views of the other three voices as he continues to function as an interpreter for readers.

Unlike The Hamlet in which readers struggle with a character's (Ratliff) apparent denial of humanistic values, in The Mansion, readers' struggle is with characters' affirmation of these same values by seemingly denying them.

Not all of the struggles The Mansion are resolved at the trilogy's conclusion. For example, readers who are familiar with The Sound and the Fury may be reminded of the ambiguity surrounding Faulkner's lack of a resolution for either Caddy or her daughter, Quentin, in his similarly ambiguous
resolution for Linda in *The Mansion*. Because readers hear his story largely from Mink's point of view, they may be forced to circle back to *The Hamlet* and re-acquaint themselves with the context in which Mink's story occurs. Readers who do re-vision *The Hamlet* discover that these two texts--*The Hamlet* and *The Mansion*--reveal the effects of Snopesism upon Ratliff and Flem as well as upon Linda, Mink, and Gavin.

The allegory's meaning--do what is "right"--is subverted in *The Mansion*. Doing what is right becomes the deadly weapon Linda and Mink use to destroy Flem. They each say, "No!" by murdering Flem. Each of them believes that the legal system fails to provide them with justice and equity; each of them believes there is no other recourse except murder; each of them leaves Jefferson unpunished by the legal system. There are also consequences for others: Attorney Gavin Stevens is guilty before the fact for aiding and abetting in the murder of Flem; Ratliff and others are also guilty because they sign the petition for Mink's early parole knowing that he plans to murder Flem. Should they all be punished? By whom? As readers experience the events in *The Mansion*, these questions hover over Miller's case.
supposed: Is Flem's murder justified by any legal statute or moral law? Gavin tells Chick that "when this one [World War II] is over, all humanity and justice will have left will be the law" (M 207). Linda's and Mink's actions several years after the war appear to refute not only Gavin's statement, but they suggest that the law cannot resolve all legal, humanitarian, and moral questions.

From Mink's court-appointed lawyer, readers learn that Mink's only possibility of either a pardon or an early parole "depends on [him] and [his] friends--if you have responsible friends to support your petition and your record down there at Parchman don't hold anything against you--[that] you [Mink] not try to escape yourself or engage in any plot to help anybody else escape" (M 43-44). Careful readers realize that his friends will decide Mink's future, just as Ratliff's friends have already decided his future by supporting him despite his trade with Flem. This time, it is Ratliff who is a friend who helps to decide someone's future--Mink's future--but, unlike the lack of doubt that his friends have about both his character and behavior, he retains his doubts about Mink when he agrees to sign Linda's petition. These doubts remind readers of his early
understanding of Mink's character in *The Hamlet*: "'Only this here seems to be a different kind of Snopes like a cotton-mouth is a different kind of snake.' That wasn't the last time this one is going to make his cousin [Flem] trouble, he thought" (H 91). Because readers hear both Ratliff's description of Mink and his brief inner thoughts about his character early in the trilogy, they realize that for Flem, Mink is like the cotton-mouth, a potentially fatal enemy.

Mink seems to understand the conditions that his lawyer outlines for an early release: "That's all I got to do to get out in twenty or twenty-five years. Not try to escape" (M 44). It is, however, the implicature in Mink's next indirect speech act that functions to foreshadow Faulkner's plot: "I got something I got to attend to when I get out" (M 44-45). Mink tells readers that he shoots Houston not because Houston forces him to pay him for feeding his cow, but because of the one-dollar pound fee which Houston charges him for allowing the cow to graze. Varner seems to agree with Mink:

"'Did Houston tell you that?' 'That's right,' he said. 'Hell fire, Varner said again."
'...Here,' he said. So the Law does say I got to pay another dollar before I can get my cow.' 'Yes,' Varner said. 'If Houston wants to claim it. Take this dollar--' 'I don't need it,' he said already turning. 'Me and Houston don't deal in money, we deal in post holes....Because if folks don't put up with the Law, what's the use of all the trouble and expense of having it?" (M 28-29).

Both Varner's use of an expletive and the dollar he offers to give Mink suggest to readers that he seems to agree that Mink's anger is justified; he is not known by anyone to be generous. But it is Varner's use of "if" which indicates that enforcement of the pound fee is conditional; it indicates to readers that few farmers enforce this law. Readers already know the reason for Houston's decision: He is angry because Mink allows his cow to run free and, as a result, she is serviced by his bull. In contrast to Houston's enforcement of the pound fee, most farmers in the area do not object to the use of their cropland as open range after harvesting. Mink however digs post holes for "thirty-seven and a half four-bit days [to] work off" both the extra feed costs for a pregnant cow and the stud service rather than accept Varner's offer to put his debt to Houston on Mink's furnish bill at Varner's general store (M 39; 19).
He thinks the thirty-seven and a half days are sufficient payment. His decision to shoot Houston suggests to readers that he rebels against both a man and an economic and legal system which, in his mind, are unjust to him and to everyone not part of this system.

In the following inner monologue Faulkner reveals Mink's 'word' about his standard of values. Although there is a meditative quality to Mink's thoughts because they are the result of narrative circumstances, it is actually Mink's psychic voice using psychoanalytic layering to show readers the discourse of a psyche that engages in cause-and-effect reasoning. The effect is that readers see the world through Mink's eyes, but they do not see the world through Mink; instead, they hear Faulkner's diegetic voice. Readers recognize Faulkner' voice by his prose--the three "long sentences, the compound phrases, and the sophisticated diction," but they must remember that although it is Faulkner's voice speaking through Mink, it is Mink's own voice that is present and recognizable by his grammar, his idiomatic phrasing, and such Mink 'words' as "licks" (Ross 91; 93-94). At the end of his inner monologue, Mink's voice
does break through and readers hear him speak and justify his decision to shoot Houston.

Because Faulkner uses the mingled speech of the mimetic voice of a "morally questionable" character to "serve as readers' perspective," he allows them to both hear Mink's "portrayal of events or of consciousness" and discover Mink's values. The effect on readers of hearing Mink's voice is that by sharing his experiences, they understand the reasons that he believes that "Flem fails to keep his (Mink's) 'word'" to him (Ross 91). The result is that although they may or may not agree with the method he chooses to exact retribution, readers gain a clearer perception of Mink's role as the "anti-Snopesian agent of retribution when he kills Flem" (Ross 90). Faulkner's rhetorical manipulation of mingled mimetic and psychic voices as well as authorial language also allows him to be the voice of Mink, the actual speaker. The result of Faulkner's rhetorical mingling of voice is that Mink's voice--his character--gains an authority--the author's voice--neither it nor he would have otherwise. This added authority spurs readers to listen closely to Mink's 'word'. Their reactions to his argument cause readers to re-examine
their own values, not just those of either Mink or Mink/Faulkner.

The rhetorical effect of Faulkner's mingled voices functions like his rhetorical use of allegory--it forces readers to become part of the speaker's (or allegory's) environment--they respond to the respective arguments about doing what is "right" both legally and economically by communicating with the text. The result of these arguments forces readers to look at their own experiences. They must also ask themselves whether the allegory's message--do what is "right" means subverting the law by undermining its authority. Readers--as they have done with Ratliff--must look at themselves and discover whether or not this meaning of the allegory can be "right." Does saying "No" mean justifying murder? Readers should also ask themselves whether they are treated fairly and equitably by the institutions which regulate their lives. Finally, readers must also respond to the moral issue Mink raises in the following inner monologue: Does anyone have the legal or moral right to take a life in response to alleged unjust or unfair treatment by the very institutions which are responsible for dispensing justice and equity? That Mink is
the victim of a social, economic, and legal system that favors those who are considered to be his social and economic betters is not disputed in the trilogy. Varner's offer to both pay Mink's pound fee and advance him money to pay the fine is his endorsement of his tenant's position. Mink may be a Snopes, but he is not an advocate for their philosophy. Faulkner's use of the third person singular for Mink's voice seems to indicate that Mink speaks for "everyman" who does not receive justice or equity from them, they, or it. But only Faulkner's individual readers can decide whether Mink speaks for them.

Mink's inner monologue is the natural outcome of a running conversation he has been having with himself about the reasons he kills Houston. Mink kills Houston for more than his imposition of the pound fee; he kills Houston because Houston's "arrogance, intolerance, and pride" force Mink to defend his own simple rights" (M 7). Mink does not forget that Flem is in Texas. He can no longer wait until the

only person who had the power to save him and would have had to save him whether he wanted to or not because of the ancient immutable laws of simple blood kinship was a thousand miles away

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Now, Mink realizes that he "must trust them--the Them of whom it was promised that not even a sparrow should fall unmarked. By them he didn't mean that whatever-it-was that folks referred to as Old Moster. He didn't believe in any Old Moster. He had seen too much in his time that, if any Old Moster existed,...He would have done something about" (M 5). Mink seems to believe that if an Old Moster exists, He should have done something for Mink; Mink should not have had to kill Houston. Mink assumes that Flem would have helped him in his dispute with Houston over grazing rights and he is probably correct. Flem would help Mink to protect the Snopes name that "...aint never been aspersed yet by no living man. That's got to be kept pure as a marble monument for your children to grow up under" (H 204). Readers recall that Flem removes all the Snopeses in Jefferson whose actions might be an embarrassment to him and is responsible for his wife's death in order to protect the integrity of the Snopes name. He honors Eula's purity in death with a marble monument. But when Flem returns from Texas he refuses to help Mink. Flem wants Mink imprisoned to protect
the Snopes name and Flem's fraudulent guise of respectability. His failure to help Mink--to, in fact, be partly responsible for the extension of Mink's sentence--further contributes to the reasons for his death.

To clarify my analysis of Mink's inner monologue, I have separated it into three sections.

He meant, simply, that them--they--it, whichever and whatever you wanted to call it, who represented a simple fundamental justice and equity in human affairs, or else a man might just as well quit; the they, them, it, call them what you like, which simply would not, could not harass and harry a man forever without someday, at some moment, letting him get his own just and equal licks back in return.

The first section appears to reveal Mink's controlled, yet apparent anger, at them--those individuals who have the power--the economic and legal power--to administer "justice and equity" in human affairs, but who have not administered either justice or equity to him. Readers are aware that Mink's anger is caused by Houston's demand for the one-dollar pound fee; they also know that he not only works off the original costs of his fine, but that he also works off the pound fee by digging post holes for two more half-bit days. Mink shoots Houston after he takes his cow home,
because he does not think the additional fine is either just or fair; it denies him his just and equal "licks back."

Mink's value system is based upon the ancient Code of Hammurabi (eighteenth century BCE). Readers already know that Mink has obeyed its precepts--he kills Houston because of the pound fee; he "makes restitution [for letting] his beast loose and it feeds in another man's field" (Exodus 22.5).

They could harass and worry him, or they could even just sit back and watch everything go against him right along without missing a lick, almost like there was a pattern to it; just sit back and watch and (all right, why not? he--a man--didn't mind, as long as he was a man and there was a justice to it) enjoy it too; maybe in fact They were even testing him, to see if he was a man or not, man enough to take a little harassment and worry and so deserve his own licks back when his turn came.

In the second section, Mink acknowledges that they--these same individuals--have the right to harass him, worry him, or even do nothing but enjoy his difficulties. He is, after all, a man and a man can withstand harassment and worries as long as the harassment and worries have a just purpose. Mink does not even object if They test him. Suddenly, they become They and readers perceive, by Faulkner's obvious and
deliberate violation of capitalization rules, that Mink is no longer talking about individuals, he is talking about Powers, the Powers that affect every one--all of us--and suggesting, perhaps, a God or gods. And Mink acknowledges that They, too, have the right to harass, worry, and test him as a man to decide whether or not he deserves his own opportunities to fight back--to get his own just and equal "licks--to succeed on his own merits. Mink is not merely acknowledging higher Powers, he is beseeching them to understand that he, too, deserves his chance--his opportunity, his moment--to demonstrate his worthiness according to the very challenges by which They have tested him. Mink's solitary plea for both legally just and economically fair treatment targets the core of Snopesism--an ideology which uses perversion to deny justice and equity to anyone who has done all that is required and deserves his or her "licks." Readers begin to see the world through Mink's eyes, but they do not see the world through Mink; instead, they hear Faulkner's voice and recognize his rhetoric in Mink's argument for what is just and fair--for the old verities and universal truths--which Mink's plea for "fundamental justice (truth) and equity (fairness)" implies.
Mink truly believes that he possesses honor, pride, compassion, and pity; that he has demonstrated his courage by the sacrifices he makes for his family and the pride he has in the Snopes name. He thinks he is entitled to hope that They/Them will grant him justice and equity by showing him their compassion and pity in answer to his entreaty.

Faulkner's violation of capitalization rules does more than suggest a Power or Powers. It seems to function to establish an adversarial relationship between Mink and they/them/it and They/Them/It. In the first section, readers are aware of Mink's obvious but controlled anger at they, them, it, but he seems, if not to expect this behavior from them, than at least not to be surprised by it. He is used to such behavior from those who possess legal and economic power. Readers already know that Flem does nothing to help Mink defend himself during his murder trial. Even earlier in The Hamlet, readers recall that Mink argues his 'word' in his message to Flem: He reminds Flem that he is "still scratching dirt to keep alive" while Flem enjoys the benefits that Flem's threat of a hay barn being "taken fire" bring him. Flem receives his "licks;" Mink wants his own "licks." But Mink's inner monologue seems to suggest that
if They deny him his "licks," it is because they are not the Power(s), not a God(s). They are demons who deny--or pervert--justice and equity to a man who has proven himself, who deserves to get his "licks." Mink's argument continues to pit They, Them, It or they, them, it against him and readers realize that Mink may be making their own arguments. Do readers--does anyone--receive justice and equity from their economic "betters"? From They, Them, It or even they, them, it? But while readers begin to see the world through Mink's eyes, only individual readers can decide whether they see their world through Mink.

But at least that a moment [will] come when it [is] his turn, when he [has] earned the right to have his own just and equal licks back, just as They had earned the right to test him and even to enjoy the testing; the moment when they would have to prove to him that They were as much a man as he had proved to Them that he was; when he not only would have to depend on Them but had won the right to depend on Them and find Them faithful; and They dared not, They would not dare, to let him down, else it would be as hard for Them to live with themselves afterward as it had finally become for him to live with himself and still keep on taking what he had taken from Jack Houston (M 6).
In the final section, readers hear Mink's voice break out and they hear his 'word,' his justification for killing Houston. Mink's belief that a right moment "will come" depends solely upon Them--They--and he is willing to depend upon Them, he has "won the right to depend on Them," or, if They fail him, then They will have to live with themselves and, under those conditions, They would find that just as hard to do as he has. To indicate to readers the Powers' failure to respond to him, Mink returns to the use of them and, in effect, he reduces Them--the Powers--to the level of only them--those individuals who do not administer justice and equity--and his reduction suggests that he denies the Powers, he denies God. And Mink does deny God--Old Moster. Readers learn that he has not been religious since he discovers that churches are "places which a man with a hole in his gut and a rut in his britches that he couldn't satisfy at home, used, by calling himself a preacher of God, to get conveniently together the biggest possible number of women that he could tempt with the reward of the one in return for the job of the other..." (M 5).

Faulkner's use of Mink's mimetic voice to argue the theme of The Mansion also functions to re-emphasize the
rhetorical argument of the allegory: do what is right.

Readers' understanding of both what is "right" and their own values continue to be tested upon the return of Linda Varner Kohl to Jefferson. Linda enables Mink to exact retribution both for herself, in the name of her mother, and for Mink, in the name of all those in the trilogy who do not receive either justice or equity by his 'word.'

Flem dies alone in his cell-like study in his mansion just sitting in his swivel chair with his feet "propped on the unpainted wooden ledge nailed to the proper height," waiting quietly for Mink (M 366; 415). He dies because he fails to understand that he is neither immune to nor unaffected by fraud's perversion of human values. By denying justice and equity to others, he experiences the "savage retribution of suffering brought on those who live their lives according to [a] fraudulent ideology" (Miller 268). Do Linda and Mink do what is "right"?

Although I ask several questions about fairness and equity in The Mansion, the issues my questions raise can be condensed into two: 1) Do Mink and, by implication, readers receive the same justice and equity that their economic betters receive from the legal and economic
institutions which regulate their respective lives? 2) Is there ever either a legal or a moral justification to subvert the law to receive redress when the law which functions to provide remedies fails because it has been corrupted by those who possess the economic resources to pervert the legal system? Faulkner offers no answers, but he implies strongly that those who are denied judicial fairness and equity by corrupt legal and economic institutions because they lack the economic resources do have the legal and moral right to say "No," I will not live like this." Neither Mink nor Linda is punished. With Ratliff's help, Gavin accepts and understands both Linda's act and his responsibility. Old friends, Ratliff and Gavin seem to realize that "people just do the best they can" (M 429). As Ratliff demonstrates often to the trilogy's readers, that, too, is frequently doing what is "right."
The questions raised in The Mansion remain hovering above this case supposed and echoing in readers' minds long after they have finished reading Faulkner's trilogy.
CONCLUDING REMARKS

Men of sound intellect and probity, weigh with good understanding what lies hidden behind the veil of my strange allegory!

--Dante

Readers leave Faulkner's trilogy and his allegorical Yoknapatawphan world aware that they have experienced more than a trip to Hell; they have experienced with Ratliff the fraud of Snopesism. Because Ratliff is their guide--their surrogate--as well as their touchstone, readers learn by his struggle that fraud is a formidable foe. It corrupts by deceiving. Wearing many disguises, it masks its intentions both to pervert human intellect to gain some unfair or dishonest advantage and to pervert truth by misleading others--leading them astray morally or into mental error and/or false judgment. As readers learn from Ratliff's experience, fraud's continued presence in readers' lives appears to be the result of its ability to manipulate that thumbscrew he and, perhaps, readers, deny they have. But readers also learn, that while not immune from its susceptibility, Ratliff overcomes his weakness and says "No, this is not who I am."
Flem, too, says "No, this is not who I want to be" when he is traded by his father to Varner for a pair of mules. He adopts and makes his own Ab's and Varner's trading techniques. He fails, however, to recognize that Ab does not succeed and Varner realizes belatedly that he exceeds the limits of honest trading. Early in The Hamlet, Ratliff tells a story about Ab's defeat in a trade to explain that he "soured" on life because another trader "eliminated him from horse-trading" (H 29). Varner, too, loses in a trade and the price he pays is his daughter's life and his granddaughter's presence in his life. Flem fails to understand that even as one of fraud's practitioners, he is not immune from his own ideology--Snopesism. Someone will always say, "No!"

Readers observe and experience in each of the trilogy's texts the effects that Faulkner's contrasting images of trade or barter disclose. An ancient practice, trade is the exchange of goods or services rather than money. Ideally, the result of a successful trade enables all parties to a trade to obtain what they require. Ratliff, for example, accepts such items as chickens and used equipment in exchange for his sewing machines. There is no suggestion by
anyone that Ratliff abuses the largely self-enforced rules of honest trading. Varner and Flem, however, are criticized both directly and indirectly by the residents of Frenchman's Bend because they do not always obey these same rules. Varner, however, retains the respect of the hamlet's residents because he has qualities other than economic power which they admire. Flem acquires both money and power but he is neither liked nor respected. He is feared. Because he relies on fraud in his trades, his deceptive practices eventually cause pain or ruin or death to many of those who trade with him.

Readers realize that Flem is "not Iago and not Macbeth...Except for an extraordinary diligence in looking out for his personal advancement, he [has] no [apparent] motives at all...He merely...never [seems to realize] what he [is] doing" to others (Arendt 287). Ratliff, however, does not limit his observations about evil to Flem Snopes; he points out that "[humans] aint really evil, [they] jest aint got any sense" (M 230). And Chick, now a young man, responds: "But so much more the reason, because that leaves him [man] completely hopeless, completely worthless of anybody's anguish and effort and trouble" (M 230). Flem,
too, seems to make a comment about the evil his fraudulent acts cause others by allowing Mink to fire again after his first attempt fails (M 415-16). The senselessness and thoughtlessness are what Ratliff observes in his uncommon but sensible epitaph for Flem: "...this is what it all comes down to. All the ramshacking and foreclosing and grabbing and snatching, doing it by gentle underhand when he could but by honest hard trompling when he had to,..." have achieved his dream of a better life (M 428). Ratliff's judgment of Flem is both fair and truthful. Choosing fraud rather than honest hard trompling, Flem condemns himself. As our touchstone, Ratliff's direct speech acts guide readers back to the allegory's message--do what is "right."

Because Flem chooses the ignominy of success that is achieved by deceiving others rather than the success that is achieved by honest methods, his fraudulent ideology fails, ultimately, to fulfill his dream for a better life. He does not understand that not everyone or everything is for sale, that there will always be someone who will act to uphold those values which belie fraud.

Through Faulkner's rhetoric in the trilogy, readers experience the effects of one man's struggle with his
susceptibility to fraud. They discover that because fraud is familiar, it is easy to either fail to recognize its perverse effects or to simply ignore them. The result is that because no one is either immune to or unaffected by fraud's perversion of values, than anyone--"those who trust and those who have reposed no confidence"--can be affected both by those who are its practitioners and by those who either do nothing because either they do not see its effects or they disregard them. Fraud's practitioners, Faulkner argues, are "desouled, they live without individual humanity" (Gwynn and Blotner 242). Flem Snopes is such a being and he and his ideology rely on the those individuals who ignore fraud's effects for their success. The effect of Faulkner's rhetorical argument is to show readers that it is only when those human beings who possess individual humanity say, "This is rotten, this stinks, I won't have it," that human values continue to exist (Gwynn and Blotner 148). As their touchstone, Ratliff demonstrates to readers that he is such an individual.

A careful examination of Faulkner's rhetoric proves that although Ratliff seems to be a hypocritical man allegedly motivated by greed and/or pride, immoral character
defects which are incompatible with human values, he "risks public opprobrium" by saying "No" to both Lump's voyeuristic theater and Flem's fraudulent ideology even though he does not initially appear to understand the reason for his decision to either protect Ike or reject Snopesism. (Gwynn and Blotner 148). But readers learn from Ratliff's actions, from his speech acts and, finally, from his character, that no individual is one act, one decision, one experience. He, or she, is a composite of various acts, decisions, and experiences which form the whole individual. Despite behavior which is reliable yet contradictory, truthful yet elliptical, compassionate yet hypocritical, insightful yet foolish, Ratliff is not only readers' credible narrator and interpreter, he is their touchstone, the character whose point of view largely determines the trilogy's textual environment for its readers by acting to preserve its human values.

Forced to re-vision Ratliff to understand the ellipsis which his atypical behavior causes, careful readers learn that it is Faulkner's deliberate and militantly rhetorical manipulation of Ratliff's behavior which causes the ellipsis and functions to both shape their experiences
with him and with the trilogy and effect changes in their mental images of Ratliff. The result of their re-vision of Ratliff shows readers that by both observing and experiencing his all too human behavior, they discover that Faulkner's allegory offers an alternative interpretation—hypocrisy for that of either greed or pride—to explain his behavior and change their perception of him. As a singular and unique speech act, Faulkner's rhetorical allegory reveals to Ratliff and, by implication, to readers, what is "right."

To discover what rhetorical effect the allegory has upon Ratliff and readers, I use the context of the trilogy as the framework for my linguistic analysis of the speech acts of Ratliff and others. Employed as an analytical tool, linguistic procedures function to both allow the critic "to describe literary utterances in the same terms used to describe other types of utterances" and yet act to prevent an arbitrary focus on previously selected aspects of the trilogy's texts (Fowler xiii). For example, to learn whether another interpretation can both clarify Ratliff's actions and support my argument that Faulkner uses allegory rhetorically to force readers to re-vision Ratliff's
behavior, I use linguistic procedures to examine what Ratliff actually says to both other characters and to readers rather than focusing on what the text seems to either suggest he means or what others interpret him to mean (Fowler 3). By using linguistics as my analytical tool, I have been able to argue that it is Faulkner's manipulation of Ratliff's behavior which causes The Hamlet's ellipsis and that Faulkner's allegory functions as a rhetorical argument which causes readers to re-vision Ratliff and discover that hypocrisy is an alternative to either greed or pride as an explanation for Ratliff's contradictory behavior.

My experience with linguistic analysis indicates that it is an effective and valuable analytical tool with which to study literary texts, particularly those literary texts whose authors consciously focus on the effects that their dialogue has upon readers. Faulkner is such an author. He insists that readers need to listen carefully to what his characters say--to hear the "fluidity" of [their] voice[s]--to gain a perspective on both his characters and the world in which they live (Ross 3). Faulkner demonstrates the importance of voice to his writing by his method of writing: "I listen to the voices, and when I put down what the voices
say, it's right" (Cowley 114). Readers who learn to listen carefully to the voices of Faulkner's characters both hear what his characters actually say and realize that the effects of their speech acts give them a point of view that they would not otherwise have (Ross 2-3). As the subject of my thesis, The Hamlet's allegory is an example of the rhetorical effect upon readers that a particular speech act can reveal to readers from an otherwise inaccessible point of view--a character's psyche. The allegory's meaning alters more than readers' perspectives of Ratliff; it functions to alter their perspectives of both other characters and events by forcing them to re-vision Faulkner's work.

Beck argues that "to see [the trilogy] steadily also requires attention not just to its main narrative continuity and overall design, but to its intricate continuous counterpointing, those recurrences of detail which are never merely repetitious if considered from the altering angle of a new context" (5). Beck's observation about Faulkner's intricate and continuous counterpointing is obvious in the seemingly repetitive voices readers encounter in the trilogy, particularly those of Ratliff, Gavin, and Chick.
Each of their voices tells its own story and, at the same time, comments upon another's story about the same incident. The effect is that of a well-written fugue. Readers understand that the trilogy's seemingly disparate and disorganized images form a unified whole which is in motion rather than stasis. Their responses to Ratliff's speech acts and their communication with the text enables readers to add their voices to the trilogy's movement.

Moreover, readers' re-visioning of Ratliff enables them to both fill in the gap his seemingly inexplicable and contradictory behavior causes them and resolve other ellipses by which Faulkner manipulates them. Miller points out that "[r]eading requires the reader to make energetic efforts. He/she must put two and two together, emphasizing this or that, filling in gaps. For the results of these acts of...reading, the reader must take responsibility" (269). Certainly Faulkner requires his readers to be energetic and take responsibility. By forcing them to continue their re-vision throughout the trilogy, he causes readers to actually experience the effects of an ideology which survives by manipulating others to commit fraudulent or malicious acts against those who pose a threat. They
also experience Millers's concept of "savage retribution of suffering brought on those who live their lives according to that ideology." This continuous re-vision, however, functions to open up the trilogy's individual texts by revealing that resolutions or syntheses to individual texts do not satisfactorily explain the trilogy; to resolve the trilogy, they need to recognize that its inherent unity is its parabolic structure.

Through Ratliff's eyes, his speech acts, and his stories about trading, respectability, the Memphis whorehouse, the dog bush, and his heritage, readers experience more than his evolution as a character, we experience a world beset by a philosophy which appears to promise everyone an opportunity to enjoy his or her own version of the American Dream, the price of which is their rejection of their values. Their analysis of Ratliff's speech acts enables readers to both assemble and re-arrange the many, apparently disorganized images which Faulkner displays of him in The Hamlet, particularly those in the allegory, until they see and understand him as a complete and unique individual rather than someone who is merely a randomly composed and abstract composite. As a result,
readers gain a point of view from both Ratliff and their own experience in Hell which enables them to examine fraud in its natural environment.

Together, Ratliff and readers reveal fraud's secrets--its perversions, its victims, its practitioners--and they each recognize that fraud's growth and development in The Hamlet, its maturity in The Town, and its apparent death in The Mansion are but reflections of their own experiences in Hell. The difference between Hell and their own respective environments is that Ratliff and readers have an opportunity to change their environments. As rhetoric, Faulkner's allegory is a persuasive militant argument that causes both Ratliff and readers to understand the consequences for those who fail to understand its message--do what is "right." The Hamlet is not just a single text about the greed of one man and the perversity of another, it is a story about "the terrifying version of appetitive man" both yesterday in Faulkner's Yoknapatawphan world and today in his readers' world (Brooks xi-xii). And, if history is an accurate guide, it is a probably a story about tomorrow's world as well.

My thesis mentions frequently the need for readers to see the trilogy as a unified whole, to recognize its
parabolic structure. I propose this argument because
"Faulkner's novels always have something 'left over' in the
Balzacian sense" and I suggest that one of the leftovers in
the trilogy is Faulkner's decision to alter the trilogy's
storyline by changing the objective of Gavin Stevens from
one of further advanced study in Germany to that of military
service for and in France in World War II (Wittenberg 361).
Does he abandon the original plot in The Hamlet from one of
a "series of tall tales...to the trilogy's reflections on
his perceptions of a changed society," or is the trilogy
Faulkner's response to false ideologies (Grimwood 142)?
Williamson points out that although Faulkner "was never a
political person, he both watched the rise of fascism in
Europe with increasing alarm and signed a statement by
writers against the Franco regime in Spain" (265). Gavin
may be speaking with Faulkner's authorial voice in his reply
to Ratliff's question about his reason for leaving Germany:

[Its] glorious music and splendid
mystical ideas come out of obscurity,
darkness. Not out of shadow: out of
obscurity, obfuscation, darkness. Man
must have light. He must live in the
fierce full constant glare of light,
where all shadow will be defined and
sharp and unique and personal: the
shadow of his own singular rectitude or
baseness. All human evils have to come out of obscurity and darkness, where there is nothing to dog man constantly with the shape of his own deformity (M 132-33).

The unexpected result of my rhetorical analysis of Faulkner's allegory has been to discover that the trilogy functions as a parable which both restates his allegorical argument—do what is "right"—and re-emphasizes the argument of Beck—it is the responsibility of critics and readers to recognize that they must understand each of the trilogy's texts in relationship to each of its other texts to see the pattern in Faulkner's work. Viewed as a parable, the trilogy is a highly effective rhetorical argument which enables Faulkner to reveal to his readers the effects that fraud and false ideologies have on the lives of his readers and, by implication, everyone.
...The feet of the small horses twinkled rapidly in the dust and he sat, loose and easy to the motion, the reins loose in one hand, inscrutable of face, his eyes darkly impenetrable, quizzical and bemused, remembering, still seeing them--the bank, the courthouse, the station; the calm beautiful mask seen once more beyond a moving pane of glass, then gone. But that was all right, it was just meat, just gal-meat he thought, and God knows there was a plenty of that, yesterday and tomorrow too. Of course there was the waste, not wasted on Snopes but on all of them, himself included-- Except was it waste? he thought suddenly, seeing the face again for an instant as though he had recalled not only the afternoon but the train too--the train itself, which had served its day and schedule and so, despite the hard cars, the locomotive, no more existed. He looked at the face again. It had not been tragic, and now it was not even damned, since from behind it there looked out only another mortal natural enemy of the masculine race. And beautiful: but then, so did
the highwayman's daggers and pistols make a pretty shine on him; and now as he watched, the lost calm face vanished. It went fast; it was as if the moving glass were in retrograde, it too merely a part, a figment, of the concentric flotsam and jetsam of the translation, and there remained only the straw bag, the minute tie, the constant jaw:

Until at last, baffled, they come to the Prince his-self. 'Sire,' they says. 'He just wont. We cant do nothing with him.'

'What?' the Prince hollers.

'He says a bargain is a bargain. That he swapped in good faith and honor, and now he has come to redeem it, like the law says. And we cant find it,' they says. 'We done looked everywhere. It wasn't no big one to begin with nohow, and we was specially careful in handling it. We sealed it up in a asbestos matchbox and put the box in a separate compartment to itself. But when we opened the compartment, it was gone. The matchbox was there and the seal wasn't broke. But there wasn't nothing in the matchbox but a little kind of dried-up smear.
under one edge. And now he has come to redeem it. But how can we redeem him into eternal torment without his soul?'

'Damn it,' the Prince hollers. 'Give him one of the extra ones. Aint there soul turning up here every day, banging at the door and raising all kinds of hell to get in here, even bringing letters from Congressmen, that we never even heard of? Give him one of them.'

'We tried that,' they says. 'He wont do it. He says he dont want no more and no less than his legal interest according to what the banking and the civil laws states in black and white is hisn. He says he has come prepared to meet his bargain and signature, and he sholy expects you of all folks to meet yourn.'

'Tell him he can go then. Tell him he had the wrong address. That there aint nothing on the books here against him. Tell him his note was lost--if there ever was one. Tell him we had a flood, even a freeze.'

'He wont go, not without his----'
'Turn him out. Eject him.'

'How?' they says. 'He's got the law.'

'Oho,' the Prince says. 'A sawmill advocate. I see. All right,' he says. 'Fix it. Why bother me?' And he set back and raised his glass and blew the flames off'en it like he thought they was already gone. Except they wasn't gone.

'Fix what?' they says.

'His bribe!' the Prince hollers. 'His bribe! Didn't you just tell me he come in here with his mouth full of law? Did you expect him to hand you a wrote-out bill for it?'

'We tried that,' they says. 'He won't bribe.'

Then the Prince set up there and sneered at them with his sharp bitter tongue and no talkback, about how likely what they thought was a bribe would be a cash discount with maybe a trip to the Legislature threwed in, and them standing there and listening and taking it because he was the Prince. Only there was one of them that had been there in the time of the Prince's pa. He used to dandle the Prince on his knee when the Prince was a boy; he even made the
Prince a little pitchfork and learned him how to use it practising on Chinees and Dagoes and Polynesians, until his arms would get strong enough to handle his share of white folks. He didn't appreciate this and he drawed his-self up and he looked at the Prince and he says,

'Your father made, unreproved, a greater failure. Though maybe a greater man tempted a greater man.'

'Or you have been reproved by a lesser,' the Prince snaps back. But he remembered them old days too, when he old fellow was smiling fond and proud on his crude youthful inventions with BB size lava and brimstone and such, and bragging to the old Prince night about how the boy done that day, about what he invented to do to that little Dago or Chinee that even the grown folks hadn't thought of yet. So he apologised and got the old fellow smoothed down, and says, 'What did you offer him?'

'The gratifications.'

'And----?'
'He has them. He says that for a man that only chews, any spittoon will do.'

'And then?'

'The vanities.'

'And--?'

'He has them. He brought a gross with him in the suitcase, specially made up for him outen asbestos, with unmeltable snaps.'

'Then what does he want?' the Prince hollers. 'What does he want? Paradise?' And the old one looks at him and at first the Prince thinks it's because he aint forgot that sneer. But he finds out different.

'No,' the old one says. 'He wants hell.'

And now for a while there aint a sound in that magnificent kingly hall hung about with the proud battle-torn smokes of the old martyrs but the sound of frying and the faint constant screams of authentic Christians. But the Prince was the same stock and blood his pa was. In a flash the sybaritic indolence and the sneers was gone; it might have been the old Prince his-self that stood there. 'Bring him to me,'
he says. 'Then leave us.'

So they brought him in and went away and closed the door. His clothes was still smoking a little, though soon he had done brushed most of it off. He come up to the Throne, chewing, toting the straw suitcase.

'Well?' the Prince says.

He turned his head and spit, the spit frying off the floor quick in a little blue ball of smoke. 'I come about that soul,' he says.

'So they tell me,' the Prince says. 'But you have no soul.'

'Is that my fault?' he says.

'Is it mine?' the Prince says. 'Do you think I created you?'

'Then who did?' he says. And he had the Prince there and the Prince knowed it. So the Prince set out to bribe him his-self. He named over all the temptations, the gratifications, the satieties; it sounded sweeter than music the way the Prince fetched them up in detail. But he didn't even stop chewing, standing there holding the straw suitcase. Then the
Prince said, 'Look yonder,' pointing at the wall, and there they was, in order and rite for him to watch, watching his-self performing them all, even the ones he hadn't even thought about inventing to his-self yet, until they was done, the last unimaginable one. 155 And he just turned his head and spit another scorch of tobacco onto the floor and the Prince flung back on the Throne in very exasperation and baffled rage.

'Then what do you want?' the Prince says. 'What do you want? Paradise?'

'I hadn't figured on it,' he says. 'Is it yours to offer?'

'Then whose is it?' the Prince says. And the Prince knewed he had him there. In fact, the Prince knewed he had him all the time, ever since they had told him how he had walked in the door with his mouth already full of law; he even leaned over and rung the fire-bell so the old one could be there to see and hear how it was done, then he leaned back on the Throne and looked down at him standing there with his straw suitcase, and says, 'You have admitted and even argued that I created you. Therefore your soul was
mine all the time. And therefore when you offered it as security for this note, you offered that which you did not possess and so laid yourself liable to----'

'I have never disputed that,' he says.

'---criminal action. So take your bag and---' the Prince says. 'Eh?' the Prince says. 'What did you say?'

'I have never disputed that,' he says.

'What?' the Prince says. 'Disputed what?'

Except that it dont make any noise, and now the Prince is leaning forward, and now he feels that hot floor under his knees and he can feel his-self grabbing and hauling at his throat to get the words out like he was digging potatoes outen hard ground. 'Who are you?' he says, choking and gasping and his eyes a-popping up at him setting there with that straw suitcase on the Throne among the bright, crown-shaped flames. 'Take Paradise!' the Prince screams. 'Take it! Take it!' And the wind roars up and the dark roars down and the Prince scrabbling across the
floor, clawing and scrabbling at that locked door,
screaming. . . .
ENDNOTES

Introduction

1. Stephen M. Ross' text, Fiction's Inexhaustible Voice: Speech and Writing in Faulkner, is the primary source for any analysis of Faulkner's use of voice.

2. The full text of Faulkner's preface in The Mansion reads as follows:

This book is the final chapter of, and the summation of, a work conceived and begun in 1925. Since the author likes to believe, hopes that his entire life's work is a part of a living literature, and since "living" is motion, and "motion" is change and alteration and therefore the only alternative to motion is un-motion, stasis, death, there will be found discrepancies and contradictions in the thirty-four-year progress of this particular chronicle; the purpose of this note is simply to notify the reader that the author has already found more discrepancies and contradictions than he hopes the reader will--contradictions and discrepancies due to the act that the author has learned, he believes, more about the human heart and its dilemma than he knew thirty-four years ago; and is sure that, having lived with them that long time, he knows the characters in this chronicle better than he did then.

W. F.

Chapter I

3. Varner is more candid with Ratliff than his son, but Jody also misses his implicature about hiring Flem as a clerk in the Varner general store.

4. Flem manipulates Jody Varner's knowledge and fear of the Snopes' reputation as barn burners to force Jody to hire him as a clerk at Jody's father's general store. Jody has carelessly and foolishly told Flem that the "fellow we are speaking of,...[is] going to get a benefit out of keeping...quiet and peaceable"; Jody intends to grant store credit and provide more land to Ab Snopes for tenant
farming, but Flem interrupts him to ask, "You run a store, dont you?" (H 22-23). Jody agrees quickly to hire Flem.

5. These four maxims contribute to the Cooperative Principle: "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the state at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (Grice 26).

6. Varner is not the only resident of Frenchman's Bend who trades people; Ab Snopes trades his son's services at Varner's general store for a pair of mules.

7. Ratliff has a contract to provide fifty goats for a Northerner's goat ranch; he tricks Flem into buying the goats: He sits in front of an open window to make sure Flem hears about his need for goats. But Ratliff acquires Flem's contract on the goats in exchange for Mink's second note for the sewing machine which Mink purchases from him. Ratliff forgoes his profit when he allows Flem to burn the note rather than to profit by it or by Ike (H 83-87).

8. Faulkner uses tribe to describe the Snopeses in response to a question from the audience at the University of Virginia: "I first thought of these people and the idea of a tribe of people which would come into an otherwise peaceful little Southern town like ants or like mold on cheese" (Gwynn and Blotner 193).

Chapter II

9. In addition to both failing to consider a possible function for Faulkner's allegorical episode and judging Ratliff prematurely, critics failed to consider how the ensuing texts would affect the characters in *The Hamlet*.

10. The private matter concerns the designer, Myra Allanovna. She both designs this tie and reveals her representation of Ratliff's character from his description of a favorite Mississippi flower (M 176-77).
Chapter III

11. Armstid purchases one of Flem's spotted horses and suffers a broken leg when he tries to capture it. Faulkner incorporates his previously published (1930) short story--"Spotted Horses"--into "The Peasants," the final book in The Hamlet (Cowley 322).

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