AMERICAN GROTESQUE FROM NINETEENTH CENTURY TO MODERNISM:
THE LATTER'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE EXCEPTIONAL

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Kriengsak Kisawadkorn, M. A.
Denton, Texas
August, 1994
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This dissertation explores a history of the grotesque and its meaning in art and literature along with those of its related term, the arabesque, since their co-existence, specifically in literature, is later treated by a well-known nineteenth-century American writer in *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*. Theories or views of the grotesque (used in literature), both in Europe and America, belong to twelve theorists of different eras, ranging from the sixteenth century to the present period, especially Modernism (approximately from 1910 to 1945)—Rabelais, Hegel, Scott, Wright, Hugo, Symonds, Ruskin, Santayana, Kayser, Bakhtin, (William Van) O’Connor, and Spiegel.

My study examines the grotesque in American literature, as treated by both nineteenth-century writers—Irving, Poe, Hawthorne, and, significantly, by modernist writers—Anderson, West, and Steinbeck in Northern (or non-Southern) literature; Faulkner, McCullers, and (Flannery) O’Connor in Southern literature. I survey several novels and short stories of these American writers for their grotesqueries in characterization and episodes. The grotesque, as treated by
these earlier American writers is often despised, feared, or mistrusted by other characters, but is the opposite in modernist fiction.

As a matter of fact, American grotesque is seriously studied in Modernism--Southern grotesque writers such as Faulkner, McCullers, and O'Connor give prominence to Southern literature. I examine extensively Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying; McCullers' The Ballad of the Sad Cafe; and O'Connor's short stories--"A Good Man Is Hard to Find," "Good Country People," "The Lame Shall Enter First," and "Parker's Back" to demonstrate that these works portray grotesque characterization and episodes.

As for non-Southern grotesque writers, Anderson heads the list. A few of his short stories in both collections--Winesburg, Ohio and The Triumph of the Egg are studied as well as West's Reflections of a Golden Eye and The Day of the Locust and Steinbeck's grotesque novel Of Mice and Men and his short story "The Snake."

My last chapter reinforces my thesis that the grotesque is not despised, feared, or mistrusted by other characters anymore because modernist writers, with pity and compassion for their grotesque creations, have shown that these social aberrations are, in fact, ordinary and natural characters--they are finally accepted by "normal" observers.
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CHAPTER I

HISTORY OF THE GROTESQUE

Throughout most of its history, the concept of the grotesque has been largely applied to persons, actions, or scenes deemed frightening, horrible, or ugly by "normal" observers. Although defined in several different ways, the grotesque has largely been seen as unnatural and evil for most of its artistic and literary history. This view of the grotesque seems to have changed during the modernist period (approximately from 1910 to 1945). American authors in particular of the first two-thirds of the twentieth century seem to have written with greater understanding of and sympathy for grotesque characters. Other characters in a modernist novel, for example, may fear or despise the "grotesque" one, but the author often depicts the moral or ethical error of their way, and demonstrates a clear authorial sympathy for the outcast, the marginalized character. An outstanding example, of course, is Benjy in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929). Therefore, my thesis is that the grotesque in twentieth-century American
literature has become something to appreciate rather than something to fear, something to love rather than to hate.

This dissertation explores a substantial portion of the history of the theory of the grotesque in Western culture. Nineteenth-century American fiction writers of the grotesque are contrasted with twentieth-century counterparts to demonstrate the change in characterization of the attitudes toward "grotesque" characters.

In the opening chapter, I explore some uses of the term grotesque from its inception in Italian, through the French, and ending in English. The mention of the excavations in southern France and northern Spain is necessary to show that paintings and carvings on the cave walls became known as grotesque works of art of the primitive people in the Paleolithic Age. Likely, the excavation of Nero's Golden Palace in Rome created another view on the origins of the grotesque--the bizarre paintings are considered grotesque.

The application of the term grotesque was to art at the very beginning. The extension of its application to literature and non-artistic elements has been traced back to the early sixteenth century by the French writer Francois Rabelais in his voluminous Gargantua and Pantagruel (1532). Rabelais used the term to refer to parts of the human body. The reader of this novel might associate the term grotesque
with a description of Pantagruel's enormous body size. So physical monstrosity is one characteristic that is attached to the concept of the grotesque. Other characteristics include dwarfism, physical deformity or mental incompetence. Actions or episodes which are not in accordance with the "normal" observers are deemed grotesque. However, the term as applied broadly to literature came into use in England and Germany only in the eighteenth century.

The association of the grotesque with another term arabesque is treated, in some detail, in Chapter II. I survey their origins and definitions through different periods.

To understand the historical development of the term grotesque and to appreciate the wide variety of its uses, the reader should know what several famous theorists, both in Europe and America, have said about the subject through different literary periods. These well-known European and American theorists include Sir Walter Scott, Thomas Wright, John Addington Symonds, John Ruskin, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Wolfgang Kayser, Mikhail Bakhtin, Francois Rabelais, Victor Hugo, George Santayana, William Van O'Connor, and Alan Spiegel. I discuss in Chapter III all these theorists and evaluate their contributions in some detail.

Scott, perhaps the first Englishman dealing with the grotesque in English literature, associates the grotesque
with myth as well as with the Gothic. He also allies the
grotesque to the horrible. Wright, in a later period,
treats caricature as synonymous with the grotesque. Another
English theorist, Symonds, has a similar theory with Wright
except for the sense of caricature: with Symonds, caricature
connotes a sense of humor and mockery, but Wright's use of
caricature shows no connotation of satire or humor. The
last English theorist discussed is Ruskin, a notable
Victorian architect and writer. His book The Stones of
Venice (1851-53) is a valuable source for the study of
architecture and literature in general. Ruskin theorizes
that the grotesque is "not produced by the working of nature
and time, but exclusively by the fancy of man." Perhaps
anticipating the modernist view, he also touches on the
naturalness of the grotesque--in his words, "the grotesque
sometimes gives evidence of deep insight into nature."

Some Frenchmen have contributed their scholarship to
the study of the grotesque. The first one examined is
Rabelais, whose huge work has reached worldwide audiences
through translations, mainly in English: Gargantua and
Pantagruel. Rabelais introduces the grotesque concept of
the body--the bizarreness or incredibility of physical
monstrosity. Another French theorist is the versatile
artist--poet, novelist, playwright, and theorist--Victor
Hugo. His history of the grotesque is contained in his
famous play about one of the greatest English statesmen, Oliver Cromwell: La Preface de Cromwell (1835). Hugo associates the grotesque with the realistic, making it clear that the grotesque is not only an artistic mode but also exists in nature and around us--realistically.

On the German side, two famous theorists on the grotesque are Hegel and Kayser. Hegel, a remarkable philosopher and theorist, in his Lectures on Aesthetics (1835), associates grotesqueness with the symbolic and the romantic kind of art. According to him, in romantic art, the grotesque forms have a negative significance. More interestingly, Hegel uses the term arabesque to describe the "grotesque" of ornamentation. (The association of the two terms is also treated in American literature by Poe in his Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque--to be studied in a later chapter.) A German theorist of the present century, Kayser, offers clear cut explanations in The Grotesque in Art and Literature (1966), translated into English by Ulrich Weisstein. The book contains mainly a detailed history of the grotesque in German literature, with incursions into other literatures specifically for comparative purposes. Kayser's essential theory is that the grotesque is the alienated world--"the everyday world is suddenly changed into a strange and unpleasant place, into a world in which we do not wish to live."
The last European theorist studied in this dissertation is a Russian—Bakhtin. His rich and learned book *Rabelais and His World* (1984), translated into English by Helene Iswolsky, gives an opposing view to Kayser's theory on the grotesque as an alienated world. He also associates the grotesque with caricature, stating that "the grotesque is first of all a caricature but a caricature that has reached fantastic dimensions," by citing Pantagruel's physical monstrosity in support of his theory.

On this side of the Atlantic, three theorists are studied—Santayana, O'Connor, and Spiegel. Santayana is the first American scholar who contributed significantly to the study of the grotesque in the nineteenth century. The other two helped form the "grotesque" theories in the American modernist age (roughly from 1910 to 1945).

Santayana theorizes in *The Sense of Beauty* (1896), that the grotesque is the half-formed, the perplexed, and the suggestively monstrous. Another of his striking views is that forms that have become familiar, however distorted or impossible, physically speaking, are not grotesque. In other words, when the types are accepted, they are no longer grotesque. The contemporary American theorist O'Connor offers, in *The Grotesque: An American Genre* (1962), his theory that the grotesque is not only a modern phenomenon but also a peculiarly American one. He also links seemingly
unlinkable elements: the cowardly with the heroic, the ignoble with the noble, the realistic with the romantic, and the ugly with the beautiful. Finally, the last theorist on the grotesque included in Chapter III is Spiegel of the modernist age. In "A Theory of Grotesque in Southern Fiction" (1972), Spiegel views the grotesque, specifically used in American Southern literature, as a type of character that occurs repeatedly in contemporary Southern fiction that the reader has come to accept. His other view on the same subject is that the grotesque always appears in Southern fiction as either a physically or mentally deformed figure: the grotesque represents the most extreme departure from the established norms of the Old South.

In Chapter IV, I survey some older American fictional views on the grotesque, specifically those of Irving, Poe, and Hawthorne. These three dominate American Romanticism—the time overwhelmed by the prevalence of Gothicism from northern Europe. Among them, Poe writes most extensively of Gothicism in relation to the grotesque; Hawthorne and Irving to a lesser extent.

Irving's "Rip Van Winkle" has been called the most popular story in the world for all ages. Another of his stories, "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," is also very famous. These two short stories bring much more recognition to the author than his voluminous Knickerbocker's History of New
York or The Life and Voyages of Columbus. I treat these tales as grotesque since both the episodes and descriptions of some characters constitute grotesquerie, especially the grotesque concept of the body. Moreover, some scholarship on these tales by some viewers is included.

As for Poe, his coverage is the most extensive because his fictional work has always been known to contain bizarre, scary, extraordinary, grotesque materials, especially his Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque. I work on his two well-known tales: "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "Ligeia," to demonstrate that they contain these elements—the Gothic, the grotesque, and the arabesque. Some of the extensive scholarship on the grotesque in Poe is treated in the dissertation.

Similarly, some of Hawthorne's tales and romances consist of Gothicism and grotesqueness such as "The Minister's Black Veil," "Wakefield," and The House of the Seven Gables. I analyze these three writings, from which some passages are drawn and examined for the grotesque.

In Chapter V, I discuss generally the modernist American view of the grotesque. For modern Americans, the grotesque is by nature something exceptional, something set apart or something different from what is normal or typical and in its most extreme forms, situated in the domain of fantasy, dream, or hallucination—in the domain, that is, of
uncertainty, but not of evil. I make a distinction between two characteristic uses of the grotesque in the modernist literature of the United States: the Southern and Northern (or non-Southern) literature. Southern writers are represented by William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor, and Carson McCullers; the non-Southern by Sherwood Anderson, Nathanael West, and John Steinbeck.

However, these two American "regions" of the grotesque share such elements as ennui, pessimism, alienation, deformity (both physical and mental), and frustration. In other words, they share a sense of deterioration in modern (American) society.

Furthermore, in the fiction of modernist American writers, madness is often linked with physical deformity such as dwarfism (McCullers' Ballad of the Sad Cafe), gigantism (Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men), or general bizarre appearance (Anderson's "Respectability"), dress, and behavior (O'Connor's "Parker's Back"). More daring, nevertheless, is the use of insanity for point of view, clearly described by Bernard McElroy in Fiction of the Modern Grotesque (1989) as "a means of transforming the literal world of surfaces and possible events into a fluid, deranged fantasy world, filled with significance and populated by grotesques," for instance in some of Faulkner's novels (The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying). However
grotesque these characters seem to be, most of their creators treat them with compassion, and, more than this, often give them spiritual lives. Once we begin to experience their lives from the creators' angle of vision, we extend to them our sympathy.

In Chapter VI, I examine the Southern grotesque through its greatest interpreter--Faulkner. The Southern grotesque character represents physical and mental distortions shaped by new pressures of industrialism and the modern city. But whether he or she represents the death of the old order or the aberrations of the new, the grotesque is always a thorn in the side of the conventional society that has produced him or her. I examine Faulkner's best known novel, *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), and its grotesque protagonist (Benjy, who lacks all sense of time and constantly jumbles together past and present) as well as another well-known novel *As I Lay Dying* (1930) and its couple protagonists (Anse and Addie Bundren)--to demonstrate the grotesqueries of these protagonists and of some episodes brought about by these characters.

In Chapter VII, two famous female creators of the Southern grotesque are studied. One is best known as a short story writer of the South and the other is recognized for her novels. These are Flannery O'Connor and Carson McCullers, respectively. O'Connor has written extensively
on the grotesque. Her characters are usually unsophisticated people whose inability to control their own powerful impulses makes them natural "grotesques." I deal with some of these grotesque characters in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" (1955), "Good Country People" (1955), "The Lame Shall Enter First" (1955), and "Parker's Back" (1955).

As for McCullers, two of her novels (Reflections in a Golden Eye, 1941, and The Ballad of the Sad Cafe, 1951) are examined for their grotesqueries in characterization and events. The earlier novel portrays some grotesque characters at a southern army camp. The later novel, The Ballad of the Sad Cafe, has a grotesquerie that can make the reader cry and laugh. This is a story about the grotesque concept of the body--the encounter between gigantism and dwarfism.

In Chapter VIII, I examine other modernist American writers on the grotesque--they are Northern or (simply) non-Southern writers--Anderson, West, and Steinbeck. The first one has most seriously dealt with the grotesque. His "Book of the Grotesque," which opens Winesburg, Ohio (1919), is an excellent source for the study of the American grotesque. Anderson's novel portrays ordinary people psychologically warped by their desperately lonely lives in small-town America. Some stories in this novel: "Hands," "The Strength of God," and "Queer"; "The Egg" and "I Want to Know Why" in
another collection *The Triumph of the Egg* (1921) are studied in detail. West's *Miss Lonelyhearts* (1933) is a grotesque comedy. The grotesques of *The Day of the Locust* (1939) seek vengeance for the rootlessness, disappointment, and excruciating ennui of their lives through acts of random, unprovoked destruction.

The last non-Southern writer on the grotesque studied is Steinbeck—recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1962. Perhaps his only "grotesque" novel is *Of Mice and Men* (1937), but it is worth studying. The protagonist (Lennie), a tower of physical strength, must die because he has not the mentality to control his behavior and kills the soft things he loves to fondle. This is a study of the grotesque concept of the human body, but Lennie is treated with total sympathy from Steinbeck.

I also treat Steinbeck's short story "The Snake" as grotesque because of its bizarre episode in which a tall, dark, and mysterious woman is grotesquely described as a snake, and some of her actions seem to be those of a snake's as well.

A concluding chapter (IX) reinforces through summary and additional evidence the accuracy of my thesis that the grotesque in twentieth-century American literature has become something to appreciate rather than something to fear, something to love rather than to hate.
CHAPTER II

DEFINITIONS AND ORIGINS OF GROTESQUE AND ARABESQUE

Generally speaking, the terms grotesque and arabesque have different origins and they seem to carry different connotations as well. Since the co-existence of these two terms will appear again in a later chapter (IV), they are worth examining in detail.

For the beginning student of literature, the interpretation of the term grotesque might not be so profound or multifarious as the connotations the word actually carries. Its most restricted use is to describe persons as strange or bizarre. But the term is not restricted to descriptions of persons; it covers a variety of elements—decorations, paintings, drawings, architecture, comedy, tragedy, plays, fiction. The range and breadth of the term's applications are therefore worth extensive research.

Concerning the difficulty in dealing with the accuracy of the term and its applications in different periods of literature, Philip Thomson states clearly in The Grotesque (1972):
I have tried to keep to examples of and notions about the grotesque on which there is general agreement among modern writers on the subject, although it is not easy. But a discussion of the grotesque cannot afford to ignore the historical development of the word grotesque and its usage, and the various previous concepts of what is meant by the term, particularly as some of these older notions are still accepted (rightly or wrongly). The application of the term in the eighteenth century is likely to be markedly different from its use in the nineteenth, and both can be expected to be different from our present usage. These past uses of the word, however, can be extremely helpful in reaching our understanding of the grotesque . . . (10)

Clearly, the development and the concept of the grotesque should be carefully traced so as to help produce a clearer understanding of the term grotesque.

Similarly, the author of On the Grotesque (1982), Geoffrey Harpham, says it is necessary to "excavate" the origins of the grotesque to learn about its historical development and uses throughout different periods:

The case is very different when we consider the word itself of whose development and applications
we can form a very clear account at least of its formative years. The story is worth telling because through it we may be able to get some idea of how the disorderly concept with which we moderns have to struggle grew out of, and is still genealogically linked to, concrete particulars.

(23)

There seem to be two views on the origins of the term grotesque. The first view deals with a more recent historical background—around the first century of our era—while the second dates back to the Paleolithic Age.

In the first, the term grotesque originally referred to a specific art of the grotto—the excavations of 1480 through which the remnants of Nero's Golden Palace were discovered. The bizarre wall paintings in the palace elaborate knots and festoons of floral decorations, designs oddly transforming into snakes, satyrs, mythological animals as well as human figures. Hence, an art that unconsciously mingled and interfused human, animal, vegetable, and mineral in eerie and nightmarish fashion is identified with an exotic mode—the grotesque.

In the second, excavations in southern France (at Lascaux and at Les Trois Freres) and northern Spain unearthed Paleolithic man's paintings and carvings on cave walls. These discoveries reveal a mass of lines or markings
whose meaning is uncertain, images of large beasts, hybrid man-animal forms—grotesque works of art—such as a male figure, his eyes big and round like those of a night bird (an owl), curved antlers on his head, and the ears and shoulders of a reindeer or stag. The lower part of the back is provided with a horse's tail, below which the sexual parts are seen, rather human in shape, but located where a feline's would be. These art works date from 10,000 to 30,000 B.C. or earlier.

Hence, the term *grotesque* comes from the Italian *grotte* (caves). The word *grotesque* occurred in French as early as 1532, and was used in English as well before being replaced around 1640 by the present spelling "grotesque." Early usages of the word in English were restricted to antique paintings and to imitations of this style which became popular in the sixteenth century, particularly in Italy, for instance, the grotesques of Raphael. The extension of the word *grotesque* to literature and to non-artistic elements took place in France as early as the sixteenth century; for example, Rabelais used it with reference to parts of the human body. In England and Germany, extended meanings occurred in the eighteenth century. With this extension, the term *grotesque* took on a broader meaning. Its association with the word *caricature*—a topic widely discussed in eighteenth-century Europe—led to what Kayser,
a German theorist and critic, calls "a loss of substance" in the word. Arthur Clayborough, in *The Grotesque in English Literature* (1965), also observes this development:

The word *grotesque* thus comes to be applied in a more general fashion during the Age of Reason--and of Neo-Classicism--when the characteristics of the *grotesque* style of art--extravagance, fantasy, individual taste, and the rejection of 'the natural conditions of organization'--are the object of ridicule and disapproval. The more general sense . . . which it has developed by the early eighteenth century is therefore that of 'ridiculous, distorted, unnatural' (adj.); 'an absurdity, a distortion of nature' (noun). (6)

Harpham, again, having studied the term *grotesque*, comments on its linguistic aspect: "As its peculiar linguistic status indicates, *grotesque* is another word for non-thing, especially the strong forms of the ambivalent and the anomalous" (*On the Grotesque* 4).

As for the term *arabesque*, it is derived from *Arab* and -esque (a French suffix, like an English -ish), meaning primarily Arabian and patterned strangeness in the manner of abstract pictorial design reproducing no natural forms as proscribed by the Holy Koran, as in an arabesque screen.
Thompson writes of the relationship of the grotesque and arabesque, touching on these two terms' related one—the Gothic; the latter will be extensively studied in Chapter IV, especially in Poe's tales:

The usage of arabesque meanwhile began to be more clearly associated with the term grotesque, metaphorically applied to literature ancient scroll work styles that conjoined animal, human, and plant figures in a bizarre manner which was sometimes playful and sometimes ominous. The three terms [Gothic, grotesque, arabesque], then, were likely in the third quarter of the eighteenth century (and lingering well into the nineteenth century) to mean about the same thing. Arabesque was a term used to suggest "later Gothic" styles, and grotesque was a term associated with the intricate designs ornamenting Gothic buildings or other artworks, early and late. (Poe's Fiction 73)

Thompson also distinguishes between the grotesque and arabesque in their literary use: "The grotesque suggests more strongly a yoking of the chaotic, the fearful, and the comic; the arabesque suggests more strongly a sense of ironic perspectives in the midst of confusion and ominousness. . ." (109). Thompson explains Poe's use of
these two terms in his *Tales*: "... There seems little
doubt that in calling his tales 'Grotesque and Arabesque,'
Poe did not mean to split them into the comic and the
serious but instead to indicate the fusion of the comic and
serious into that vision the German Romanticists were
calling irony. . ." (110).

However, Poe's use of the term *grotesque* in one of his
Gothic tales, "The Murder in the Rue Morgue," does not
always carry a simple comic or satiric quality but with the
suggestive meaning of a psychological sense of the weird,
according to Thompson (117). Likewise, in another Gothic
tale, "The Masque of the Red Death," Poe's use of the term
reveals that he did not limit its meaning to 'bizarreness'
and 'whimsicality,' according to Lewis A. Lawson, in "Poe's
Conception of the Grotesque" (203). Lawson also comments on
Poe's not relying on the dictionary definition at that
time.'

I conclude here that, with their separate literary
developments, the two terms--*grotesque* and *arabesque*--
share, to a certain degree, the psychology of fear. In a
later chapter, their use in such Gothic tales as "The Fall
of the House of Usher" and "Ligeia" will help support this
conclusion.
CHAPTER III
THEORISTS ON THE GROTESQUE

Before and during Modernism, there are several theorists on the grotesque, both European and American. These are Sir Walter Scott, Thomas Wright, John Addington Symonds, John Ruskin, Hegel, Wolfgang Kayser, Mikhail Bakhtin, Francois Rabelais, Victor Hugo, George Santayana, William Van O'Connor, and Alan Spiegel. Scholars with similar theories or views on the grotesque will be studied together.

The grotesque theory or concept of the body, physical monstrosity which enters into the grotesque, is significantly treated by Rabelais and Bakhtin.

Rabelais, French physician and novelist, remains one of the world's foremost humorists and satirists. His best known work *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (1532), a humorous and satirical narrative on French society of his time, becomes an important source of the grotesque, especially the satiric grotesque: Rabelais is considered the greatest representative of this genre.
Rabelais introduces the grotesque concept of the body. He helps pave the way for later writers like Swift and Kafka; these two authors deal with grotesque gigantism in their fiction.

This long passage shows the grotesquely gigantic Pantagruel, as a baby, during his meal:

Pantagruel's early feats when he was still in his cradle—at his feeding he sucked the milk of 4,600 cows. He was served his gruel in a gigantic bell. His teeth were already so strong and solid that he chewed off a big portion of his bowl. One morning, wishing to suck one of the cows, he freed one hand from his swaddling clothes and, seizing the cow by its legs, chewed off the udder and half the stomach, as well as the liver and the kidneys.

(331)

It is thus obvious from the quotation that the body can have a distinctly grotesque form. It is in this grotesque atmosphere that the figure of Pantagruel appears on the scene.

Rabelais also associates satire with the grotesque in his work. A new term 'the satiric grotesque' hence comes into use. Rabelais makes use of the grotesque as a satiric weapon to attack his society. One of the several examples of the satiric grotesque is on the Catholic Church: "..."
the Catholic Church as a gigantic kitchen spread all over the earth; chimneys form the belfry, the bells are cooking pans, the altars dining tables, the various prayers and rituals as food . . . " (183).

Rabelais' work was profoundly studied by Bakhtin, Russian theorist on the grotesque. Bakhtin wrote a book on Rabelais, which was later translated into English by Helene Iswolsky. This voluminous work is Rabelais and His World. Apart from the grotesque concept of the body, Rabelais and Bakhtin cultivated laughter. For these two theorists of different periods and nationalities, laughter, like language, is uniquely characteristic of the human species. Moreover, Bakhtin stresses Rabelais' theory by introducing these terms as fundamental attributes of the grotesque style: exaggeration, hyperbole, and excess. Examples of this grotesque concept of the body occur in American modernist writers—McCullers (The Ballad of the Sad Cafe) and Steinbeck (Of Mice and Men).

Bakhtin's view on laughter is the exact opposite of Kayser's. Kayser, German theorist and critic of the present century, has seriously studied the grotesque. He has examined the period after the inception of the term grotesque; that is, from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. Kayser bases his theory of the grotesque primarily upon examination of German art and literature. His work The
Grotesque in Art and Literature, considered by Michael Steig, a Kayser scholar, the most comprehensive of all studies of the grotesque, gives clear cut definitions of the term.

Bakhtin and Kayser disagree completely on the nature of the grotesque, precisely its relationships to laughter and terror. Kayser "savagely piles epithet upon epithet to an ultimate effect of terror" dragging the reader "into the nocturnal and inhuman sphere," (Kayser 157) whereas Bakhtin not only knows nothing of terror, but also nothing of the private soul that experiences it. Kayser interprets laughter as "destructive humor." The joyful, liberating, and regenerating element of laughter, which is exactly the creative element, is totally absent. But Bakhtin, who was strongly influenced by Rabelais, recognizes the positive, regenerating, and creative meaning of laughter.

The theory of the grotesque in association with caricature is treated by Wright and Symonds.

Wright, English Victorian theorist and writer, contributes his theory of the grotesque in A History of Caricature and Grotesque in Literature and Art (1865). Wright associates caricature with the grotesque. He is trying to make the terms caricature and grotesque synonymous. Thomson supports Wright's view of the association between these two elements in The Grotesque
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(1972): "The grotesque has always been strongly associated with caricature, and even placed in the same category by some theorists, notably those who saw simple distortion as the basic principle in grotesque art" (38). Later, on the same page, he acknowledges that "it only becomes difficult to distinguish between caricature and the grotesque." Thus, his use of a new term 'a grotesque caricature' becomes a possibility.

However, Wright's use of caricature in synonymy with grotesque brings up this question: How far can one extend the sense of the term caricature without altogether losing sight of its conventional meaning? Here, Wright uses the word without any connotation of satire or humor in the sense of "an exaggerated representation." The following passage in the same book shows Wright's use of term caricature without its conventional sense of "ludicrous exaggeration":

The monstrous is closely allied to the grotesque, and both come within the province of caricature, when we take this term in its widest sense. The Greeks, especially, were partial to representations of monsters, and monstrous forms are continually met with among their ornaments and works of art. (9)
The term **caricature** must be understood here simply in the sense of 'a fantastic representation' which is not satirical or humorous, or exaggerated.

Symonds, another Victorian theorist, has the same theory as Wright in that caricature is always associated with the grotesque. Symonds defines caricature in his essay "Caricature, the Fantastic, the Grotesque" (1907) as "a distinct species of characterization, in which the salient features of a person or an object have been emphasized with the view of rendering them ridiculous." In the use of caricature in the sense of humor and ridicule, Symonds, therefore, contradicts Wright. For Symonds, where there is no spirit of mockery, there is no grotesqueness.

In the final part of the essay, Symonds discusses another element which has entered into both caricature and the grotesque, obscenity or indecency. He states that this element is a potential resource for satirical caricaturists, and that the cleanliness or uncleanness of an artist's mind becomes a matter of ethical significance.

Scott and Ruskin treat the theory of the grotesque in association with the Gothic and horror.

Scott, English novelist, poet, and antiquarian of Romanticism, is perhaps the first Englishman who deals specifically with the grotesque in English literature. He touches on the grotesque in German literature through his
essay on The Stories of Ernst Theodor Hoffmann (1827). He praises Hoffmann for his association of the grotesque with the Gothic since he himself is a devotee of the Gothic of the late eighteenth century. Furthermore, Scott associates the grotesque with horror. This view is commented on by Arthur Clayborough in The Grotesque in English Literature (1965): "The grotesque also has a natural alliance with the horrible; for that which is out of nature can be with difficulty reconciled to the beautiful" (36).

Ruskin, a famous Victorian artist and writer, offers in Volume III, Chapter III, on the Grotesque Renaissance, an elaborate analysis of the grotesque in The Stones of Venice (1851-53). As an architect himself, Ruskin regards the grotesque as a purely artistic phenomenon. He says that the grotesque is "not produced by the working of nature and time, but exclusively by the fancy of man" (149).

However, by the end of the nineteenth century, it was more common than not to speak of the "naturalness" of the grotesque. Ruskin lists both "naturalness" and "grotesqueness" among the attributes of the Gothic, implying that they could exist together in the same entity. He observes that the grotesque sometimes gives "evidence of deep insight into nature" (48).
Moreover, Ruskin combines horror with the grotesque, theorizing that all grotesque art contains the element of horror involving the perceptions of the human condition.

The view of the grotesque in association with the beautiful is treated by Hegel and Santayana.

Hegel distinguishes three essential kinds of art: the symbolic, the classic, and the romantic. The grotesque figures in the first and last kinds in his *Lectures on Aesthetics* (1835). According to Hegel, in symbolic art, the grotesque plays a positive role. He gives an example of symbolic art, that is architecture in the temple or church which attempts to provide visual beauty. More remarkably, he employs the term *arabesque* to describe the grotesque style of ornamental beauty. He speaks of arabesques as distorted vegetal forms, human and animal forms that emerge from and are entwined with plants.

Santayana's famous book *The Sense of Beauty* (1896), a treatise on aesthetics, is a good source for the study of the grotesque.

Santayana considers grotesque art in aesthetic terms rather than in broad philosophical terms. He also considers grotesqueness from the spectator's point of view rather than from the artist's. But unlike the majority of theorists on the grotesque, Santayana suggests that we call a given
object comic and grotesque when we consider its distortion from the natural rather than its "inward possibility."

Santayana, essentially, relates the grotesque to beauty, as he states "the good grotesque is novel beauty" (160). This statement is representative of his attitude toward the grotesque. As the book's title suggests, Santayana finds beauty in the grotesque.

The only theorist among those studied who associates the grotesque with the realistic is Victor Hugo. Hugo, a great French Romantic poet and novelist, contributes an interesting theory for the grotesque to literature. His *Preface de Cromwell* (1827) reveals that he associates the grotesque not with the fantastic but with the realistic, making it clear that the grotesque is not merely an artistic mode but also exists in nature and in the world around us. Hugo's association of the grotesque with the realistic thus creates a very important point as well as a tremendous shift in the notion of the grotesque. This innovative idea is asserted by G. K. Chesterton in *Robert Browning* (1903):

The grotesque may be employed as a means of presenting the world in a new life without falsifying it . . . it may be a function of the grotesque to make us see the real world anew, from a fresh perspective which, though it be a strange
and disturbing one, is nevertheless valid and realistic. (140)

This new notion gives significance in the present century, especially for Modernism, and it will bear examination when we come to the concept of alienation with modernist writers.

Hugo also touches on the idea of contrast between the grotesque and the sublime as an artistic device in the same work. He regards the grotesque not only as a useful source of contrast but also as a necessary complement without which the sublime remains imperfect. He states that the realistic results from the natural combination of the grotesque and the sublime: "... le reel resulte de la combinaison toute naturelle de deux types, le sublime et le grotesque, qui se croisent dans la vie et dans la creation ..." (24).

The last two (American) theorists on the grotesque have focused their theories on American literature. In other words, both are thinking about the American-ness of American literature. William Van O'Connor and Alan Spiegel, as a matter of fact, belong to the present century, more precisely, the American modernist age. They have helped establish theories of the "grotesque" for modern American literature. Nowadays, American grotesque novels and short stories seem to be captivating worldwide audiences, thanks
to such writers as Anderson, Faulkner, McCullers, and Flannery O'Connor.

As a professor of English and a writer, William Van O'Connor has contributed several theoretical works on American literature. Among them is his book on the theory of the American grotesque: *The Grotesque: An American Genre* (1962). O'Connor views the grotesque as not only a modern phenomenon, but also a peculiarly American one. He proceeds to link such seemingly unlinkable novels as Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, West's *Day of the Locust*, and Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* on the grounds that all three have, as Spiegel puts it in his "Theory of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction" (1972), "sought to incorporate the antipoetic into the traditionally poetic, the cowardly into the heroic, the ignoble into the noble, the realistic into the romantic, the ugly into the beautiful" (426).

Having studied the grotesque in other literatures (Western) and in American literature itself, O'Connor comments on the existence of the American grotesque: "Yet our literature is filled with the grotesque, more so probably than any other Western literature ..." (3). More interestingly, O'Connor has seen that the grotesque has developed concurrently with the present age, atomic bombs, and great social changes (6). The theorist admits that American grotesque originated truly in Poe, in such
naturalists as Crane, Norris, and London, as well as in such protesters against the genteel tradition as Edgar Saltus and Ambrose Bierce.

O'Connor has extensively surveyed both Southern and Northern literature, while Spiegel has dealt only with Southern literature. O'Connor lists well-known modernist Southern writers--Caldwell, Faulkner, Welty, Warren, McCullers, O'Connor, Capote, and Tennessee Williams. He furthermore argues the causes of the grotesque: "... the old agricultural system depleted the land and poverty breeds abnormality; in many cases people were living with a code that was no longer applicable, and this meant a detachment from reality and loss of vitality. . ." (6). In addition, O'Connor has touched on Northern grotesque writers such as Anderson, West, and Algren, believing that the grotesque has been encountered everywhere in American life and fiction.

As for Spiegel, he offers a clear view on the Southern grotesque in writers such as Faulkner, McCullers, and O'Connor in his "Theory of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction" (1972). He begins his theory with his comment on the use of the term grotesque by today's writers or critics: "... the term grotesque has been applied so frequently and so recklessly by so many contemporary critics to so many different literary occurrences that it now becomes increasingly difficult to use the term with any high degree
of clarity and precision" (426). Spiegel adds that Southern grotesque refers neither to the particular quality of a story (noble or ignoble, beautiful or ugly), nor to its mode of expression (fantasy or realism), but it refers "rather to a type of character that occurs repeatedly in contemporary Southern novels that readers have come to accept (428).

In addition, Spiegel views Southern grotesque as either a physically or mentally deformed person. For him such a character never loses his humanity—he or she stands among us:

But whether he appears as a physical cripple or a mental cripple, he succeeds as a literary creation because his deformity will not separate him from us, but rather will bring him closer to us. (429)

Spiegel sees a good example of a Southern grotesque in the character Benjy in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, a powerful creation because he transcends his mental deformity—his lacking all sense of time.

Spiegel seems to sympathize with the Southern grotesque "outcast"; he implies that it is not his or her fault in becoming a grotesque, but society's fault: "His existence tells the society something about itself whether it wishes to acknowledge his presence or not. He informs the society that his deformity is real, that it is there, and continues
to be there because it is society's deformity (which produced it) as well as his own..." (435).

The theorist also discusses the change of attitude by the modernist Southern fiction writer (in comparison to the earlier American attitude) toward the grotesque. The modernist writer chooses to relate his or her story from the point of view of the grotesque and gives to the grotesque the pity and compassion which the society does not extend.

All the above twelve European and American theorists on the grotesque (except Kayser, Bakhtin, O'Connor, and Spiegel) lived and worked before the modernist age, ranging from Rabelais in the sixteenth century to Santayana in the late nineteenth and the very early twentieth centuries (just before Modernism, roughly from 1910 to 1945). The use of the term grotesque, its association with other elements such as the fantastic, the horrible, the satirical, the realistic, and the beautiful through these periods have been studied.
WASHINGTON IRVING, EDGAR ALLAN POE, AND NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE ARE THREE NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN WRITERS WHO Authored "GROTESQUE" FICTION. THEY DOMINATE AMERICAN ROMANTICISM (1820-1860), DURING WHICH THE SPREAD OF GOTHICISM (IN RELATION TO THE GROTESQUE) FROM NORTHERN EUROPE, ESPECIALLY FROM GERMANY, IS PREVAILING IN THE NEW WORLD. AMONG THESE THREE MEN OF LETTERS, POE MOST EXTENSIVELY TREATS THIS INNOVATIVE LITERARY DEVICE, WITH HAWTHORNE AND IRVING FOLLOWING. THESE AMERICAN ROMANTICS CONTRIBUTE TO THE GOTHIC GROTESQUE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE.

IRVING'S TWO STORIES "RIP VAN WINKLE" AND "THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW" FROM THE SKETCH BOOK OF GEOFFREY CRAYON, GENT. (1819-20) BRING TO THE AUTHOR MUCH MORE RECOGNITION THAN HIS ENERGETIC AND VOLUMINOUS KNICKERBOCKER'S HISTORY OF NEW YORK (1809) OR THE LIFE AND VOYAGES OF COLUMBUS (1828)--THE LATTER NOW FORGOTTEN.

SURELY ONLY A RARE READER OF ENGLISH DOES NOT KNOW HOW RIP VAN WINKLE FINDS THE SPIRITS OF THE DUTCH EXPLORER
Hendrick Hudson and his crew playing at ninepins in the Catskill mountains, how a drink from their flagon of gin ("magic brew") puts him into a twenty-year sleep, from which he wakes to find his nagging wife dead, his country changed from a British colony into an independent republic. Or how the soft-hearted schoolmaster (Ichabod Crane) meets a headless apparition riding the road beside him on a dark night in the eerie woods. Through translations, even worldwide audiences, young and old, know these two tales well enough. Irving became the first imaginative American writer to be accepted by Europeans and to attain international fame when "Rip Van Winkle" was published in England in 1820 (one year after its American edition—the 1819 American best-seller). Lewis Leary also confirms Irving's success, especially in England, that the English novelist Thackeray summed up Irving's accomplishments when he called him "the first Ambassador from the New World of Letters to the Old" (316).

Although these two stories do not contain the word "grotesque," the plots or episodes connote, mainly, some grotesquerie. The descriptions of characters also add some grotesquerie to the stories.

The description of the protagonist in "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" creates a grotesque view for the reader.
Ichabod Crane's figure is like a caricature—it can provoke a grin or chuckle in the reader:

He was tall, but exceedingly lank, with narrow shoulders, long arms and legs, hands that dangled a mile out of his sleeves, feet that might have served for shovels, and his whole frame most loosely hung together. His head was small, and flat at top, with huge ears, large green glassy eyes, and a long snipe nose . . . one might have mistaken him for the genius of famine descending upon the earth, or some scare-crow eloped from a cornfield. (Irving 76)

The above description of Ichabod Crane is grotesque, caricatural, and satirical. This is contrastive to that of Ichabod's rival (for the pretty Katrina Van Tassel)—Brom Bones. The rustic youth's figure connotes his exposure to the sun, wind, and pure air of Sleepy Hollow, unlike the city boy from Connecticut, who seems to lack all these good things for a young man, and hence, is a weakling, physically and mentally.

Furthermore, the protagonist's name connotes some grotesqueness. "Crane" is a tall, wading-bird with long legs, neck and bill. To attach a crane's features to a person can make that person grotesque. As for the other boy, he deserves all credit when his name appears to be
Brunt. His "force of a blow" to his rival has a potential effect--Ichabod has never been seen since in the neighborhood. Also, the Christian name of the protagonist has some grotesque connotation: 'Ichabod' means the departure from glory, hence, the fall.

Daniel G. Hoffmann also comments on the protagonist's name in his article "Irving's Use of American Folklore in 'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow':"

Ichabod Crane is a sorry symbol of learning, of culture, of sophistication, of a decayed religious faith, of an outworn order in the world. His very name suggests decrepitude: "And she named him Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel" (1 Samuel. IV. 21).

(435)

Since fear and ambition are obviously attributive to Ichabod but not love--he is devoid of natural human affections. His heart does not set on the pretty Katrina but on her rich property. Due to his overimaginative fear of ghosts, Ichabod finally loses all chance for the double prize of the heiress and the wealth of the Van Tassel farm when, terrified by his excessive imagination, he is literally run out of the neighborhood by his rival, Brom Bones, impersonating the Headless Horseman.
Both the sleeping episode and the titular designation of the protagonist, "Rip Van Winkle," are, in my opinion, grotesque. Doubtless, Irving was familiar with some European narratives of supernatural sleep, such as the fairy tale about Sleeping Beauty. In this episode, Irving succeeds in his portrayal of the supernatural (a slumber of twenty years), even to the satisfaction of the skeptical American reader. As for the grotesque name of the protagonist, George Wetzel explains in an article that "This gravelike slumber was symbolized by Irving when he used the name 'Rip'--a common abbreviation of the gravestone formula of Irving's day, 'Rest In Peace.' Winkle is also perhaps intentionally humorous, for 'forty winks' is a term for slumber".

Because these two tales are undeniably based on German sources, their association with the Gothic is quite likely. Moreover, during Irving's long stay in Europe, he concerned himself with the Gothic—a widespread literary genre. It was also Sir Walter Scott who directed Irving's attention to German literature. His two most famous tales are thus contributions to the Gothic, not however, of the same ilk as Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) or Lewis' *The Monk* (1795). Irving's tales are classified as "sportive Gothic." Henry A. Pochmann speaks admiringly of Irving's expertise in this genre: "... a genre in which Irving has scarcely
been surpassed. The two [tales] remain classic examples of
type" (507).

It should be noticed here that a figure like Ichabod
Crane fits the grotesque concept of the body--he is perhaps
a laughing stock for "normal" observers. Irving does not
seem, however, to pity him. This older American view of the
grotesque is different from that of later periods in
American literature as far as the characterization of and
the attitudes towards grotesque figures are concerned.

No one can talk about the Gothic grotesque in
nineteenth-century American literature without commenting on
Poe's Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque (1840). As I
have said earlier, the Gothic was a widespread literary
topic among European and American writers of the Romantic
period. Such Gothic novels (written in English) as
Walpole's The Castle of Otranto (1765), Radcliffe's The
Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), and Lewis' The Monk (1795) were
widely read in the New Continent in Poe's day. Walpole's
gothic novel seems to have given real currency to the term
Gothic in English literature, emphasizing vaults, tombs,
stained-glass windows, gloom, eeriness, and an atmosphere of
medieval buildings: Gothic churches and old castles which
became inseparably associated with the thrills of mystery
and wonder.
Gilbert R. Thompson, a well-known Poe scholar, has studied the development of the term *Gothic* since Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* and provides his conclusions in *Poe's Fiction: Romantic Irony in the Gothic Tales* (1973):  

The connotation in Gothic of the supernatural and the fantastic, however, was heightened into the principal meaning of the term by the extraordinary success of *Otranto* and especially of Walpole's immediate imitators. The medieval atmosphere was a major element, but it served primarily as the backdrop for weird and terrifying events. . . . (70)  

The influence of Scott's Gothicism on Poe is evident: Scott's essay "On the Supernatural in Fictitious Composition: and Particularly on the Works of Ernest Theodore William Hoffmann" (1827) has long been associated with Poe's conception of the Gothic and the grotesque and arabesque.  

Paul A. Newlin's article "Scott's Influence on Poe's Grotesque and Arabesque Tales" (1969) clarifies this point. Newlin states that Poe scholars have cited Scott's essay as a source for the title of Poe's *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*, and that Scott had earlier used the terms *grotesque* and *arabesque* to refer to supernatural elements. The fact that Poe expanded or added a condition to the four
basic elements--the ludicrous, the fearful, the witty, and the singular, is similarly proposed by Scott. Newlin's further and more interesting statement is that "as Scott continues discussing the technique of 'adding and exaggerating' he provides Poe with a variation of exaggeration (the ludicrous heightened into the grotesque) to produce grotesque tales as well as the fearful arabesques" (9). Hence, Poe certainly seems to have relied heavily on Scott's essay for plot ideas, description, and even for the titles of the tales. However, Scott's essay is concerned only with supernatural tales, while Poe's grotesque and arabesque tales are not entirely supernatural, Newlin concludes (12).

In the next section, I will treat Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "Ligeia" individually.

In "The Fall" Poe explores the functioning of human imagination but, at the same time, points out the destructive dangers of that journey. Like many Gothic tales, it is set in an old mansion that foreshadows the terrible events that will take place there. Setting, characterization, plot, theme, and style all contribute to the single effect of terror. The tale, however, is much more than a tale of terror--it evidently portrays an isolated and suffering human being.
This being is intimately associated with the family house. The phrase "House of Usher" has then come to designate both the family and the family mansion. The protagonist's belief in the sentience of vegetable things, which the narrator dismisses as too grotesque to deserve any comment, is one central to Poe's belief in ultimate unity as he explains in *Eureka: A Prose Poem* (1848): "All these creatures which you term inanimate, as well as those you deny life for no better reason than that you do not behold it in operation—all these creatures have, in a greater or less degree, a capacity for pleasure and pain" (XVI, 314).\(^2\) A supernatural but grotesque concept of Gothicism is of significance here. The narrator states the fact after listening to Roderick Usher's ballad entitled "The Haunted Palace": "This opinion, in its general form, was that of the sentience of vegetable things. But, in his disorderly fancy, the idea had assumed a more daring character, and trespassed, under certain conditions, upon the kingdom of inorganization . . ." (II, 162). Moreover, this ballad may symbolize the House of Usher before its decline as well as Roderick's mental state before he starts to go mad.

Roderick also makes a connection between a house and person using a palace as an elaborate parallel for the human mind. The crack in the House, at first hardly invisible, suggests a fundamental split in the twin personality of
Roderick and Madeline—the last of the Ushers—and foretells the final ruin of both mansion and family.

As a grotesque character, Roderick pursues a world of fantasy through his art. To aid him in his reverie, he uses a certain type of music as well as the long list of books, devoted to extremes of the human imagination: tales of torture and mysticism, for instance. Above all, it is his painting that reveals his obsession with his fantasy world. It portrays "the interior of an immensely long and rectangular vault or tunnel, with low walls . . . No outlet was observed in any portion of its vast extent, and no torch, or other artificial source of light" (II, 159). And this painted vault represents the tomb of his twin sister.

As I said earlier, a grotesque figure like Roderick is not a socializing person. He has not been outside for many years. The isolation of his life from outer reality is indicated by the separate "atmosphere"--"a pestilent and mystic vapor, dull, sluggish, faintly discernible, and leaden-hued" (II, 152)--that seems to arise from the decayed trees and dank pool. Roderick's appearance is thus so unhealthy and, worse, unearthly that the narrator cannot relate it to "any idea of simple humanity." As for Madeline, her presence is never more than a physical one in the tale. She never speaks or shows emotion.
Concerning the reappearance of Madeline (after her presumed death), there are varied interpretations. For example, one interpretation is that she is still alive when Roderick and the narrator put her in one vault, then she escapes from it supernaturally, and finally throws herself upon her brother bearing him and herself to their deaths on the floor. Another interpretation is that Madeline is dead--her ghost avenges her brother's brutality to his death. My interpretation goes like this: the girl is dead; her hurling herself on her brother can only be a hallucination on Roderick's part. My thesis is that everything attributed to Roderick indicates mental instability: his extreme nervousness, his belief in the sentience of vegetable matter, his fixed idea of being ruled by the House itself, his wild music, and the most crucial, his fear of fear itself, which is actually the fear of his incipient madness. Furthermore, there are the narrator's own observations about his friend's "darkened" mind and the narrator's realization that Roderick himself knows he is going mad.

My interpretation of the girl's bloody clothes in this episode is that Roderick has an incestuous relationship to his sister--Madeline's bloody clothes may indicate Roderick's rape of his sister. Similarly, the incest theme can be applied to Clifford's relationship to his cousin Phoebe in Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*.
symbolic incest to the teenage boy's relationship to Jerry Tillford, a horse trainer, in Anderson's "I Want to Know Why"; imaginative incest to Quentin Compson's relationship to his sister Caddy in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*.

Some grotesquerie could enter into this interpretation: the narrator himself descends into insanity because of his intense psychological involvement in his friend's affair. He openly admits this fact, declaring: "I felt creeping upon me, by slow yet certain degrees the wild influences of his own fantastic yet impressive superstitions" (II, 165). In other words, the narrator feels himself sinking into Roderick's black world. He fails to see Roderick's views as anything but those of a madman.

Another gothic tale of terror and of the supernatural, "Ligeia," was Poe's favorite. The physical description of Ligeia is strikingly similar to that of Poe's mother, especially the large eyes, the raven-black curly hair, the shape of the mouth--an Oriental beauty--and the fact that Ligeia is described as very thin. Besides, Elizabeth Arnold Poe died of tubercular illness at the age of twenty-four when Poe was only three. Ligeia also dies of the same illness at a similar age. So the story of Ligeia seems to be a sophisticated structuring for an unconscious wish for the return of Poe's lost mother (Krutch 24).
After the death of Ligeia, the narrator-husband, with no other reason than "a moment of mental alienation," marries Rowena, a marriage which is briefly described as "unhallowed." The narrator confesses the pleasure he obtained from Rowena's fearful avoidance of him even the first month of their marriage. His sense of betrayal of his love for Ligeia leads to a loathing for his bride that worsens the mysterious illness to which she shortly succumbs. In this scene, Poe skillfully handles the drama and builds to the climax of the final lines when the successful possession of Rowena's corpse by the dead Ligeia is before the narrator's very eyes—he shrieks aloud incoherently: "Here, then, at least, can I never--can I never be mistaken--these are the full and the black, and the wild eyes--of my lost love--of the Lady--of the Lady Ligeia" (III, 40).

The narrator is finally possessed of the lost love who, through the force of her strong will, has returned to him. Comparatively, through her omnipotence, the mother has returned to the once-abandoned child. Poe desired the return of his dead mother, but dreaded that return (Krutch 26).

However, in "Ligeia," as in Poe's other Gothic tales, what seems monstrous or supernatural on the surface becomes "realistically" psychological, a matter of dream and
imagination, as one shifts perspective. Therefore, in following all that the narrator says, the reader must keep in mind that, if the narrator is suffering from obsession and opium consumption, his narrative cannot be accepted at face value. He seems to possess a fierce obsession with the idea that, by power of will, man may avoid death through genuine love. His mind is also haunted or hallucinated with the idea of resurrecting Ligeia in the body of Rowena, so the latter must die immediately.

An interesting interpretation of this episode is done by Roy P. Basler in his "Interpretation of 'Ligeia'":

Impatient for results and fearful that the apparent progress of Rowena's hysteria and physical collapse will not suffice, doubting the power of his will alone to effect his purpose, he has resorted to actual poison, which, however, his obsession adapts into the pattern of hallucination by perceiving that it is distilled from the atmosphere rather than dropped from a bottle in his own hand. (371)

The narrator's deed is accomplished. Next, he observes with intense excitement. As evidence of returning life appears in the corpse, he finds it necessary that "some immediate exertion be made . . ." and then resumes his
"passionate waking visions of Ligeia" (III, 37). This final episode has received varied interpretations. One interpretation is that, in spite of his utmost effort, the narrator is not successful in reviving Ligeia in Rowena's body. Now, with the deaths of both wives, the narrator is left desolate. The consciousness of his own failure to penetrate the mysticism of the will is certainly a deserved punishment for his intellectual error.

Poe's reputation as a Gothic writer is justly earned in his tales of the ghastly and the grotesque, especially in "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "Ligeia." In almost every tale, death lurks in the dark, sending chills from one generation of readers to another. Poe creates his imaginative worlds through a masterful use of mysterious settings and strong elements of the grotesque and supernatural. His distraught narrators, deranged heroes, and death-obsessed heroines bear little resemblance to the ordinary people we know.

Nevertheless, there exists no authorial sympathy for grotesque characters like Roderick Usher or the narrator-husband of Ligeia. The other characters may fear or despise these outcasts. The audience may do the same. But since the author seems to have written with less understanding of and no sympathy for these grotesques, where can it derive such sympathy for them? This older American view toward the
The last writer of the Gothic considered in relation to the grotesque is Hawthorne.

Hawthorne is best known as the author of *The Scarlet Letter*, and as the writer, who, along with Poe, created the American short story. This research will examine Hawthorne's two well-known short stories and one romance: "The Minister's Black Veil" (1836), "Wakefield" (1837), and *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851). These three works, except "Wakefield," share both Gothic and grotesque elements.

As I said earlier, one element of Gothicism deals with mysticism, the eerie, and terror. The protagonist of "The Minister's Black Veil" is the cause of all these horrible feelings in the other characters, who, of course, fear and distrust him. The minister's unexpected donning of a black veil on a Sabbath day brings about his congregation's unpleasant talk and, worse, its perturbation. His usual graceful and handsome appearance seems to be overshadowed by this simple piece of crape upon his face. The atmosphere inside the church is then eerie and terrifying to all present, both young and old. However, the Reverend Mr. Hooper ignored all these reactions and "ascended the stairs, and showed himself in the pulpit, face to face with his
congregation, except for the black veil. That mysterious emblem was never once withdrawn . . . " (I, 43). As always his people are impressed with his intellectual preaching in spite of their increasing fear of the minister.

This grotesque covering of the face received an unpleasant comment from the village doctor: "But the strangest part of the affair is the effect of this vagary, even on a sober-minded man like myself. The black veil, though it covers only our pastor's face, throws its influence over his own person, and makes him ghostlike from head to foot. Do you not feel it so?" (I, 46)

In his obsessive insistence on wearing the black veil, the minister is as much guilty of driving away the love and respect of his congregation, including his fiancee, who later renounces her engagement with him and remains unmarried until death. His adamant denial of Elizabeth's request to remove the veil demonstrates his grotesque view of the world, which remains a mystery to the young woman and all others. To them, the 'dark' minister is like something to fear rather than something to respect, something to hate rather than to love. In other words, these people react with ostracism toward their pastor. Even the corpse of the maiden also shudders when the minister appears face-to-face with her. The Gothic in relation to the grotesque is then obvious in this scene, which is filled with the
supernatural, terror, and the bizarre: "... A person who watched the interview between the dead and living scrupled not to affirm, that, at the instant when the clergymen's features were disclosed, the corpse had slightly shuddered, rustling the shroud and muslin cap, though the countenance retained the composure of death. . ." (I, 47).

Not until his dying moments on his deathbed do his parishioners and colleagues learn about the 'truth' behind his wearing the black veil: "Why do you tremble at me alone? Tremble also at each other! Have men avoided me, and women shown no pity, and children screamed and fled, only for my black veil? ... I look around me, and, lo! on every visage a Black Veil!" (I, 62) In other words, the reverend sees himself and all around him as guilty of an unpardonable sin. Finally, the minister's grotesqueness in his religious attitude toward human beings and in his obstinacy to give up his bizarre belief, and, surprisingly, his antique black veil still on--all are put under the earth.

Robert E. Morseberger calls the minister's perverse pride "a deep disease of spirit." Morseberger admits that he himself "like most other mortals, I have sorrows dark enough to be typified by a black veil" (462). He, accordingly, sees Mr. Hooper as a grotesque person, an "outcast" in Puritan society and, especially, in the ministerial group: "Presumably all Christian ministers
recognize sin in themselves, but they do not act as Hooper did. . ." (462).

The next tale is a purely grotesque one, with no Gothic elements involved. "Wakefield" is both the title of the story and the name of the protagonist. The introduction of the story tells us that Wakefield's case is "perhaps the strangest instance on record of marital delinquency; and, moreover, as remarkable a freak as may be found in the whole list of human oddities . . ." (I, 172). Wakefield's grotesqueness might be unheard of in an ordinary husband-wife relationship. In "Wakefield," Hawthorne puts a character into a situation in order to work out the questions raised in his mind by the actual incident. In keeping with this approach, the tone of the story is detached and the protagonist is barely revealed to the reader, except for his grotesqueness. What grotesqueness does the middle-aged husband have toward his wife of a ten years' marriage?

Wakefield tells his wife he is going out of London for a few days. But he returns to his wife after twenty years' absence. Where has he been during these long years? This is the crux of the story, which shows Wakefield's grotesque behavior. As a matter of fact, he has lived in an apartment nearby—he has not gone out of the city as he had told his wife. His conscience has often goaded him to return home,
but his "morbid vanity" thwarts him from so doing. He is also afraid that his wife might see him one of these days--"The crafty nincompoop . . . scared with the idea that, among a thousand such atoms of mortality, her eye must have detected him" (I, 179). Therefore, he "buys himself a new wig, of reddish hair, and selecting sundry garments, in a fashion unlike his customary suit of brown, from a Jew's old-cloth bag. Wakefield is another man" (I, 180). Near the end of his escapade, "all the miserable strangeness of his life is revealed to him at a glance: and he cries out, passionately, "Wakefield! Wakefield! You are mad!" (I, 183)

The husband's grotesqueness and his improper treatment of his wife seem not to affect Mrs. Wakefield at all; she, without having analyzed his character, calls these "a little strangeness, sometimes in a good man"--she has never scolded him for his misdemeanor, and receives him back as warmly as if nothing had happened.

Wakefield's grotesqueness is simply the irrationality of human behavior: his negligence of conventional responsibility. In his quiet muddleheadedness, his foolish, cheerful optimism, his ordinariness, he is thus the most terrifying "Outcast of the Universe." Hawthorne's ending expression then reminds the reader of the protagonist's grotesqueness--he becomes an outcast of society because he has made himself so.
The House of the Seven Gables describes a house that was once a "show place" in a small New England town but now presents little evidence of its former grandeur: it was built some 160 years ago by Colonel Pyncheon. But its site was gained unlawfully—to obtain it, the colonel charged unmercifully the owner of the land with witchcraft, for which the poor man was hanged. On the gallows, Maule cried out that the Pyncheons would forever be cursed.

The curse of Maule persists in plaguing the old mansion and its dwellers. Now over a century and a half later, the cavernous darkness of the old mansion seems to awe passers-by. The sole family member inhabiting the old place is Hepzibah Pyncheon, an aging old maid. Then Clifford Pyncheon, her brother, comes to live with her after having served his thirty years of imprisonment. Clifford had been accused by his cousin, Judge Pyncheon, of murdering their bachelor uncle; the judge sent Clifford to prison for a murder he did not commit. This evil judge later dies a mysterious death in the same chair that his great-grandfather and uncle had died in earlier, also mysteriously. Maule's curse has then had its effect on the Pyncheons for all these years. Hepzibah and Clifford have been overshadowed by the curse of the house, and they become powerless to help themselves. The brother-sister and
Phoebe, the last Pyncheons, finally move out of the house for good.

I read that the old mansion contains the collective consciousness of a single family; it is a sort of domesticated American version of a European Gothic castle. This old haunted house is similar to the House of Usher, and both shelter brothers-sisters.

A grotesque figure in this romance is perhaps Clifford. He is obsessed with a view of feminine beauty and with childish activities (he is in middle age); therefore, Phoebe is given the task of bringing him out of his childish behavior because he cannot bear the sight of his sister since she has grown old and ugly. He starts to have an eye for his young cousin. The incest theme is then obvious in Clifford's relationship to his cousin. Clifford has therefore the intellect of a child—"He had a singular propensity to hang over Maule's well, and look at the constantly shifting phantasmagoria of figures, produced by the agitation of water over the mosaic-work of colored pebbles at the bottom" (VII, 222). His fondness for blowing soap-bubbles suggests how grotesque he is at a senior age. Like Roderick, he never goes out of the house. Perhaps his lack of socializing with the outside world makes him a grotesque person.
As I see it, Hawthorne in these three fictional works shows no authorial sympathy for these grotesque characters (Hooper, Wakefield, Clifford). In the next portion of the dissertation, modernist American writers, with different attitudes toward their outcast creations, really show and extend their sympathy to grotesques. This authorial sympathy can therefore be transferred to the reader. In other words, the grotesque receives a more careful consideration and a better treatment from the author, and, thus, from the reader.
Before discussing the modernist American view of the grotesque, I will first touch on American Modernism—a relatively recent but major movement in modern American literature (approximately from 1910 to 1945). The term Modernism is given to the international movement that developed most extensively in America in the postwar period, precisely after the Great War (1914-18). The spirit of renewal that breathed through American politics and philosophy in the early twentieth century touched literature as well. American writers such as Anderson, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Faulkner, who had, in various ways, been affected by the war, were deprived of idealism. Instead, they had a prevailing feeling of inevitable doom and a view of the world as violent, vulgar, and spiritually void.

These writers agreed with the American expatriate Gertrude Stein (in Paris) that they were all "a lost generation," confronted with futility and the loss of idealism. Therefore, they felt that it was necessary to break with the more idealistic past. Ezra Pound's famous expression "make
"it new" was a helpful guide for the innovative spirit: almost all modernist writers agreed that new ways of seeing required new ways of saying. Anderson, revolting against convention, once wrote, "Life itself is a loose, flowing thing. There are no plot stories in life." This recognition of the flux of experience was a central motive of Modernism, a firm principle that Anderson shared with writers on both sides of the Atlantic.

Demands for "new ways of doing things" led to unconventional literary devices—no punctuation, no capital letters, endless sentences, obscure phrasing, extensive use of symbolism. A good example of Modernism in American literature is Anderson's introduction of the "open form" in creating a short story; that is, in the open form, plot development is less important than the expression of mood and character. The modern American short story can be said to begin with Anderson's "open form," which influenced such famous later writers as Hemingway and Faulkner: Hemingway begins his short story "In Another Country" with the middle part of the story: "In the fall the war was always there, but we did not go to it any more." So the beginning, the middle, and the end of the modernist short story do not conform to the pattern created by earlier American short story writers like Cooper or Irving.
Another good example of the modernist methods is found in Faulkner's novels; for instance, in *As I Lay Dying*, Faulkner does not use a traditional single narrative voice; instead, he has fifteen characters tell his story, alternating the novel's point of view among them. In this way, the reader hears many sides of a story and comes to recognize how important individual perception is in shaping reality.

Distrust of the old, traditional ways of perceiving society also led to new subject matter. The lives and perspectives of the disillusioned, the impoverished, and the grotesque are some examples. Innovatively, modernist American writers need not take on kings or noblemen or privileged people for their stories; instead, they turn to the middle-class or working-class people or even the "outcast" of society. Furthermore, modern American literature no longer reflects a patriarchal point of view. Male-dominant society is not so strong as in the earlier American periods. Such female writers as Welty, Porter, McCullers, and O'Connor have, as a consequence, the opportunity to air their views and share their literary knowledge with the reading public. Besides, the South is by no means merely an appendage of the national culture, because the brilliant and internationally acclaimed works of Faulkner, McCullers, and O'Connor, among many other Southern
writers, may even have raised Southern literature above all other American literature in the modernist period.

During the present century, America has attained a position of world leadership in material wealth and in industrial accomplishment. Increased industrialization has accelerated the pace of life, and a host of new socio-economic and psychological problems have arisen accordingly. Individuals have felt isolated, no longer bound to each other by tradition or by the structure of society. Many war returnees have brought home a disillusionment with the old order that is to replace the nation's characteristic optimism. They become frustrated, and later, alienate themselves from their family circle and society. Hemingway's "Soldier's Home" (1924) is an outstanding portrayal of such alienation. Harold Krebs, a World War I returnee, turns out to be a "grotesque" outcast in modern American society.

Therefore, for modern Americans, the grotesque is by nature something exceptional, something set apart or something differing from what is conventional. The grotesque then exists in the realm of uncertainty, but not of evil. For example, Krebs's mother may see him as evil (urging him to pray with her to escape evil) but the reader is invited to see Krebs as less evil than his mother does. We see him at worst as a psychological grotesque, but we
view him with sympathy and understanding. The chicken farmer in Anderson's "The Egg" (1921) has a distinguishable character—he wishes for grotesquely deformed chickens to be sold at high prices. His peculiar egg tricks set him apart from "normal" country people (in the Midwest). However, American writers, particularly of the first two-thirds of the present century seem to have written with greater understanding of and sympathy for grotesque characters. Their attitude toward the grotesque is then unlike that of earlier American writers.

Since two characteristic uses of the grotesque in modernist literature of the United States are in existence, the non-Southern or the Northern and the Southern literature will be dealt with in some detail. The non-Southern writers are represented by Anderson, West, and Steinbeck; the Southern by Faulkner, McCullers, and O'Connor.

Anderson's introductory "Book of the Grotesque" to open his best known Winesburg, Ohio (1919) tells the reader:

That in the beginning when the world was young there were a great many thoughts but no such thing as a truth. Man made the truths himself and each truth was a composite of a great many vague thoughts. All about in the world were the truths and they were all beautiful. . . . It was the truths that made the people grotesques. . . . The
moment one of the people took one of the truths to himself, called it his truth, and tried to live his life by it, he became a grotesque and the truth he embraced became a falsehood. (4-5)

According to Anderson, man is fated to distortion and grotesqueness from the very beginning. He has no real moral choice, except perhaps to choose the particular truth which must unavoidably warp him. Here, Anderson implies some inborn, innate nature that inevitably unites a person to an existing truth.

True to the introduction of the book, almost all characters in over twenty stories have sought and clung to various "truths" that disfigure them. Anderson sees that truths are eternal, therefore people pick them out. These truths are like Faulkner's "verities." They are indeed what Anderson calls--the grotesques. These ordinary people, as a matter of fact, have been psychologically warped by their desperately lonely lives in as seen in Anderson's small town, Winesburg, Ohio. (Anderson knew small-town America well because he grew up in Clyde, Ohio.) These people lack a possible communication between themselves: they do not communicate with each other, but tell their trouble, suffering, secret, to the central person (the village reporter) for consolation or compassion. More interestingly, each of these characters appears to have a
dream. His or her attempt to translate dream into action results in defeat. They become grotesque because they cannot live their dream; they cannot even articulate it. These "grotesque" characters personify a condition of mental deformity, which is the consequence of some fruitless effort to offer their love. The mental deformities include, for example, misogyny ("Respectability"), frigidity ("Adventure"), God-infatuation ("Godliness"), homosexuality ("Hands"), and inarticulateness ("Queer"). However grotesque these characters appear to "normal" observers or whatever unfavorable treatments they receive from other characters in Anderson's stories, the author frequently portrays the moral or ethical mistake of these grotesque characters' behavior) and shows a clear authorial compassion for the less fortunate figures. Irving Howe writes of this authorial sympathy toward Anderson's grotesque characters:

The ultimate unity of the book is a unity of feeling, a sureness of warmth and a readiness to accept Winesburg's lost grotesques with the embrace of humility. Many American writers have taken as their theme the loss of love in the modern world but few, if any at all, have thoroughly realized it in the accent of love.

(40)
As for the American Southern view of the grotesque, two good sources for the study of the Southern grotesque are Flannery O'Connor's "Some Aspects of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction" in her Mystery and Manners (1957) and Alan Spiegel's "Theory of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction" (1972). The latter has been discussed in Chapter III.

The physical and mental deformities that form the raw material for O'Connor's characterizations are obvious symbols of the human condition as she views it. O'Connor's characters are usually unsophisticated people whose inability to control their own powerful impulses makes them grotesques. The reader must believe the author when she says that "our present grotesque characters, comic though they may be, are at least not primarily so. They seem to carry an invisible burden; their fanaticism is a reproach [to the society they live in], not merely an eccentricity. I believe that they come about from the prophetic vision peculiar to any novelist . . ." (44). In the same essay, O'Connor asserts that grotesque characters "have an inner coherence, if not always a coherence to their social framework. Their fictional qualities lean away from typical social patterns, toward mystery and the unexpected" (40).

As a modernist writer, O'Connor avoids writing sentimental stories. She prefers to write what she has really seen or known in her native South and what suits her
talent most. For example, Manley Pointer, an itinerant Bible salesman, whose outlooks seems to be religious and respectful as a distributor of God's message, turns out to be crafty and mischievous—he even steals, under the very eyes of the owner, the girl's wooden leg for his grotesque collection. Similarly, O'Connor's portrayal of Mrs. Freeman, another one of the "Good Country People," is so realistic that no reader will fail to receive her moral message. Growing up in the Deep South, the author must have met such false Christians and unscrupulous women of her native Georgia. Her ultimate reason to portray the Southern grotesque is simply that it is the aspect of reality which her artistic talent is best able to produce. Her attack on sentimentalism is then her chief tool for the use of the grotesque. Also, she sees modern man as an often grotesque figure, a caricature of his true self. She acknowledges that her South is "a place of primitive emotion, ugliness, and bad luck, relieved only at long intervals by beauty or hope." Her stories, as a consequence, are not surprisingly filled with a variety of men and women who are physically or mentally deformed individuals—the bizarre "grotesques." She writes:

When we look at a good deal of serious modern fiction, and particularly Southern fiction, we find this quality about it that is generally
described, in a pejorative sense, as a grotesque. Of course, I have found that anything that comes out of the South is going to be called grotesque by the Northern reader, unless it is grotesque, in which case it is going to be called realistic.

(40)

Like Anderson (and many other modernist writers), O'Connor shows her sympathy for her grotesque characters. She has said that it is considered a great necessity for a present-day (or modernist) writer to have compassion toward his or her grotesque creation and that the audience seems to speak of it favorably and (to) associate it with authorial sympathy (43).

In conclusion, both American modernist regional views on the grotesque have more similarities than differences. While the non-Southern writer deals specifically with mental deformity in the grotesque, the Southern writer deals with both physical and mental deformity. Not surprisingly, the number of writers of the modernist grotesque besides O'Connor who make religion a central concern of their work is greater on the Southern side because the South, as a matter of fact, is more Christ-centered than any other part of the country. Finally, for almost all American modernist writers, a humanistic and sympathetic attitude towards the
grotesque is regarded as necessary so that the audience will possibly have a communal attitude towards the outcast.
CHAPTER VI

SOUTHERN GROTESQUE: WILLIAM FAULKNER

This chapter and the next will survey some well-known Southern grotesque writers of the modern age (William Faulkner, Carson McCullers, and Flannery O'Connor). These writers create funny caricatures and fascinating grotesqueries of the deep South. Most of their creations are ordinary people, either of the middle or the lower class. The authors portray these "grotesque" characters as they "realistically" exist. Although these physically or mentally deformed figures are looked down upon or even rejected by their fellow human beings, their creators seem not to ignore their existences--they extend their sympathy to the grotesques; and, simultaneously, they try to convince the audience that these so-called "doomed" figures are not actually evil at all.

Faulkner acknowledged meeting Sherwood Anderson, a non-Southern fiction writer, a few times in New Orleans and later in New York in the 1920s. During their conversations, Faulkner might have gotten from Anderson some advice on writing stories and novels, precisely "grotesque" or bizarre
ones. Faulkner hence wrote an essay entitled "Sherwood Anderson: An Appreciation" (published June 1953). There is, however, no clear indication that Faulkner’s creations of some "grotesque" characters such as Benjy and Quentin Compson, Anse-Addie Bundren, or Emily Grierson were influenced by Anderson. In my opinion, Faulkner's short-lived association with a rather well-known writer of this genre did perhaps inspire the younger writer when he created his own "grotesque" figures.

It is difficult for a reader not to view Benjy and Quentin Compson and Anse and Addie including their children in *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and *As I Lay Dying* (1930), respectively, as grotesque protagonists, because their behavior and actions convey grotesqueries. The audience is innovatively faced with the author's introduction of a literary device—the use of mental incompetence or insanity for purposes of point of view. Through interior monologues, the audience can learn about these "grotesque" figures' deranged fantasy world: their bizarreness is not pretended but comes out naturally. The audience may have a different attitude toward a modernist grotesque character than, for instance, a pre-modernist one. These "outcast" figures never lack sympathy from their creator; and neither will they lack pity and compassion from their audience.
Between the "grotesque" brothers, Benjy could receive more sympathy from the audience (including me) than his elder brother.

Benjy opens the novel--his case might be the most prominent, appearing first, followed by Quentin, Jason, and Dilsey, respectively.

The first section is set in the mind of a thirty-three-year-old idiot, Benjy, the youngest of the four Compson children. Benjy is mentally deformed--he cannot talk; he can communicate his feelings only by howling, moaning, or remaining calm. He is incapable of making judgments, of understanding relationships between ideas or events. For example, at an early age, Benjy did not learn that fire burns. He put his hand on the hot stove, but made no connection between the pain in his hand and the heat created by the fire. It seems that his childish mind is trapped in the body of a grown-up. Benjy is also devoid of all sense of time and cannot distinguish between the past and the present--he jumbles them together. Nothing changes for Benjy as all time runs together, thereby negating the concept of change in his mind.

As the scene opens on April 7, 1928, Benjy, at thirty-three, because of his mental disability, has a Negro boy (Luster) as a caretaker; at three and eleven, he was taken care of by Negro boys (Versh and T. P.) as well.
The following passages from the novel demonstrate how the grotesque but pitiful Benjy is despised by other characters:

"Listen at you, now." Luster said. "Aint you something, thirty three years old, going on that way. After I done went all the way to town to buy you that cake. Hush up that moaning. . . ."

Benjy cannot talk; he communicates with other people by uttering unintelligible noises. This unpretended behavior can annoy his caretaker, who seems to brag when he says he sometimes beats him out of his annoyance:

"You going take him with you, I reckon."

"Me." Luster said. "You reckon I be found anywhere with him, time he start bellinging."

"What does you do when he start bellinging."

"I whips him." Luster said. (17)

The reader may sympathize with Benjy, who is unkindly treated by his fellow human beings, and, at the same time, he or she might find Benjy's childish activities grotesque. Examples of his childish activities are: crying without any reason, crawling clumsily then snagging on a nail time after time, and playing alone in the shallow water. Benjy's helplessness, for instance, taking off his shoes and rolling up his trousers' legs to get in the water, all done by Luster, indicates what a sympathetic character he really is:
He [Luster] pulled me back.

"Sit down." I sat down and he took off my shoes and rolled up my trousers.

"Now, git in that water and play and see can you stop that slobbering and moaning." (19)

Even to undress himself in order to go to bed, Benjy becomes helpless; Luster is then ordered by Dilsey, his old mother, to "get him to bed." Annoyingly and maliciously, the Negro boy says to Benjy, "you get in that bed while my foots behaves" (84).

Judging by the language used with Benjy, I find that the grotesque protagonist has not received the proper respect as one of the Compson members, neither from his own niece, Quentin, nor from the Negro caretaker: Luster addresses him as "cry baby," (13) "a looney," (22) and "mulehead" (57); Quentin, Caddy's illegitimate daughter, unlike her mother, who has always treated her brother very well since the beginning, calls her uncle "you old crazy loon" (55). Moreover, she uses harsher comparative language when she tells her other uncle, Jason, about Benjy's sloppiness: "Has he got to keep that old dirty slipper on the table. Why dont you feed him in the kitchen. It's like eating with a pig" (80).

As far as the treatment of the grotesque Benjy is concerned, the two previous caretakers (Versh and T. P.)
seem to have handled him with some respect. Likewise, his family members seem to have had more concern with his plight than in the present. In other words, the older Benjy becomes, the less favorable treatment he gets from the people around him—they expect him to act and talk like an adult because he has the body of one. They are too ignorant to know that Benjy cannot help being what he is. And, at present, there is no Caddy either. What Benjy really loses in his loss of his only sister is love. As the rest of the novel reveals, loss of love brings about moral deterioration, leading to spiritual deformity, grotesque behavior and actions in some characters.

After Caddy's wedding, Benjy, being unaware of (time) change, continues his routine of waiting for his sister at the gate. He has been doing this for eighteen years since Caddy left home. He does not know exactly what he waits for; he knows only that something is wrong.

At thirty-three, Benjy's life consists of routines that reveal the way he has adapted to his losses. Everything that is meaningful in the present is related to the past and the things he has lost. For example, the Compson pasture has been turned into a golf course. Benjy enjoys both watching the golf balls flying and listening for the players' shout—"Here, caddie" (3). Upon hearing the word he begins moaning and bellowing for his lost sister. His
lingering near the golf course is the result of a reasonable cause and effect context that the reader (but not Benjy) can understand. Benjy is also fond of playing with what Dilsey calls his graveyard—a bottle in which he sticks two stalks of jimson weed (with a foul smell, commonly known as stink weed). Benjy, in addition, loves holding the white satin slipper, always very soiled. It is perhaps one of Caddy's discarded slippers. This slipper gives him comfort even though he no longer remembers the person to whom it once belonged. If Caddy reappeared, he probably would not know his sister. Benjy's childish activities appear as grotesqueries because they are performed by an infantile mind inhabiting an adult body. Even his physical appearance, however, as an adult male has grotesque qualities:

... and Luster entered, followed by a big man who appeared to have been shaped of some substance whose particles would not or did not cohere to one another or to the frame which supported it. His skin was dead looking and hairless; dropsical too, he moved with a shambling gait like a trained bear. His hair was pale and fine. It had been brushed smoothly down upon his brown like that of children in daguerrotypes. His eyes were clear,
of the pale sweet blue of cornflowers, his thick mouth hung open, drooling a little. (317)

Benjy's description accords with Rabelais' grotesque concept of the body. The physical portrayal also implies how infirm is the mental structure: the particles would not or did not cohere to one another. The reader learns that Benjy is indeed mentally incompetent.

Therefore, Benjy's behavior and appearance are regarded by the "normal" observers as grotesque. The other characters now despise and mock him except Dilsey, who has been sympathetic toward the "outcast" figure since his childhood. Mrs. Compson thinks he will become less a grotesque if his name (Maury) is changed (to Benjamin, from the Bible). Always Luster views him as a nuisance, a helpless case. Faulkner himself, however, has implicitly offered his sympathy to his grotesque creation—he has morally supported it. Pitying his grotesque character, Faulkner lets Benjy cry throughout the story and allows him to use this statement: "Caddy smelled like leaves" eight times as a "form of pure presence to the senses."

John Orr mentions this authorial pity and compassion when he writes:

In the first narrative section Faulkner gives both a palpable reading of what compassion is and what is its necessary doom. Benjy's desire for
compassion is mirrored in his worship of his sister's purity, not as an abstract ideal like that of Quentin's but as a form of pure presence to the senses--"Caddy smelled like leaves."  

Likewise, the audience's sympathy for Benjy is recognized by Jean Stewart, who clearly states: "... Perhaps the most remarkable thing in the book is the sympathetic insight with which the crazed mind of Benjy is interpreted."  

The audience might have an agreeable attitude toward Benjy realizing that no matter how grotesquely he behaves, he does it naturally with no pretense or with no evil intention at all.  

Perhaps another "grotesque" character in The Sound and the Fury is Benjy's eldest brother, Quentin Compson. While Benjy is oblivious to time, Quentin is obsessed with it, as is indicated at the beginning of his section (Section II): "When the shadow of the sash appeared on the curtain it was between seven and eight o'clock and then I was in time again, hearing the watch. . . ." (86) Time is Quentin's great foe because it brings change to his life. The way to defeat change is to defeat time, and the ultimate way to defeat time is through death. Quentin's committing suicide by jumping into the Charles River, his body weighted by flat-irons, is then understandable. Andre Bleikasten writes of Quentin's obsession with time:
Time to him is not only bewildering repetition, but a dwindling of reality, a downward spin toward grotesque disaster, the inexorable reductio ad absurdum of his desires and hopes and even of his sorrow, and since he can neither accommodate himself to time nor escape it alive, it is hardly surprising that he should eventually seek refuge in death. (14)

Whereas Benjy is not mentally disturbed but is mentally incompetent, Quentin has great mental competence but is certainly mentally disturbed. Quentin portrays the moral deterioration of a Southern aristocratic family such as the Compsons—he has imagined the act of incest with his own sister, Caddy. From the beginning to the end of his section, Quentin's interior monologues reflect the dual obsessions of incest and suicide; for instance, "Not virgins like dogwood, milkweed. I said I have committed incest, Father I said" (88); "Then why must you listen we can go away you and Benjy and me where nobody knows us where" (142); "This is Quentin I'm wet I'm wet all over you don't have to if you don't want to" (177); and "... the road empty in darkness in silence the bridge arching into silence darkness sleep the water peaceful and swift not goodbye" (198).

Furthermore, Quentin's jealousy of his sister's association with other young men brings unhappiness to Caddy
and anguish to himself. His ludicrous fight with his fellow student, Gerald Bland, for no apparent cause, shows his grotesquerie and insanity: he simply asks Gerald whether he has a sister or not; when Gerald says no, Quentin hits him immediately, the other hits back, giving him a black eye (190). His incestuous fascination with his sister is one-sided because Caddy does not respond to his desires--she has an affair with Dalton Ames, but later marries Herbert Head. Being too grotesque and too insane to think about his sister's happiness in her "normal" relationships with other men, Quentin asks her to elope with him (and to bring Benjy along), but Caddy replies, "I've to marry somebody," (129) then declines his proposal.

Finding that his proposal to his sister is futile, Quentin approaches and convinces his father that he and Caddy have committed incest, hoping that through some ultimate sin, he might have Caddy to himself: "Because if it were just to hell; if that were all of it. Finished. If things just finished themselves. Nobody else there but her and me. If we could just have done something so dreadful that they would have fled hell except us" (90).

Before coming to Harvard, Quentin had received his sister's invitation to her wedding. He has been tormented by this news ever since. With the failure in getting his sister back, Quentin plans his suicide. He buys enough
flat-irons and then wraps them up in a shoe-box (to look like a pair of shoes wrapped up) in order not to make his roommate suspicious. In drowning himself, he thinks of washing his guilt and rejoining his sister in the next world.

In the final pages of Quentin's section, at this point Quentin's narration becomes nearly unreadable without painfully close attention to reading the endless sentences without punctuation, and the words so juxtaposed as to escape "normal" or expected meaning. Quentin's grotesque and insane mind reads like this just before his committing suicide:

I had forgotten the glass, but I could hands can see cooling fingers invisible swan-throat where less than Moses rod the glass touch tentative not to drumming lean cool throat drumming cooling the metal the glass full overfull cooling the glass the fingers flushing sleep leaving the taste of dampened sleep in the long silence of the throat (199).

Despite his (half-)insanity and grotesqueness, Quentin is a sympathetic character. The author has created him in such a way that other characters and the audience view him as a social outcast. However, Quentin is given a spiritual life and morally supported by Faulkner himself. The
authorial sympathy is of great importance to this grotesque figure, and it indicates that he does not stand alone but side-by-side with his creator.

A different sort of grotesquerie is evidenced in the Bundren couple--Anse and Addie--in Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* (1930). I find the primary subject matter of this novel grotesque: the transportation, by wagon, of a three-day-old corpse for burial in the town of Jefferson, a trip that ends up taking six days in itself. The trip becomes a nightmare and a disaster for all the Bundrens. The coffin is upset and the mules are drowned in the swollen river. The eldest son's leg is broken. The insane son sets fire to a barn to destroy his mother's corpse, but she is saved from "death" by fire by another son. Buzzards follow them along the way. In Jefferson, after the burial, the father, having taken his daughter's meager savings, buys new false teeth and gets himself a new wife to bring to his impoverished farm.

Edmond L. Volpe sees this novel as an accumulation of grotesqueries--these grotesqueries are obvious only to a detached observer because the fifty-nine short interior monologues that are used to tell the story allow the reader no consistent view of any character; he or she is then forced to view in broad perspective these individual characters (127). Volpe, as a spokesman for the audience, confirms that the theme is grotesque:
To the reader, the devotion of so much anguish and physical effort to keep above ground a mass of decaying matter for the purpose of fulfilling a meaningless promise to a dead woman becomes physically absurd. The journey burlesques the burial ritual which, with solemn prayers consigning the soul to its maker, man uses to mask the reality of physical death. In the very process of honoring the dead, the Bundrens' funeral journey, with its entourage of buzzards, is a grotesque proof of how dead the dead really are. (130)

Addie still remembers her father's statement, "the reason for living was to get ready to stay dead a long time," which serves as the touchstone of her existence. Marked by this remembrance of her death-haunted father, Addie, in her turn, becomes a father figure to her children. She wields sufficient authority and assumes domination of the children and her husband. By demanding burial at Jefferson and by imposing the depressing ordeals of the journey on her family, Addie, for the last time, makes them obey her law. The fact that she clings to her principle to control all in the family regardless of their hardships in the preparations for the journey and (in) the journey itself makes Addie a grotesque character. She has created a tough
problem for her family to solve so as to find out whether her wish can still be observed even after her death. The making of a coffin for the dead, the borrowing of mules to pull the wagon, and traveling to a distant graveyard at Jefferson are really daunting ordeals for all concerned (family members and neighbors). Addie's grotesque demand results in Cash's broken leg, the drowning of the mules, and the great fatigue of a non-stop six days' journey. Addie seems to be hounding her family members even after her death by all the ordeals she has inflicted upon them; it looks as if she is reaching out from behind time to drag them after her into the nether world.

As for Anse, he is unquestioningly the great grotesque creation of the novel. He fits both in the grotesque concept of the body and in the grotesqueness of behavior. He is described as an unkempt and toothless gangling bumpkin throughout the novel. He has the "grotesque" habit of scratching his head, rubbing his knees, blinking, and "mumbling his mouth" (129). Anse is therefore portrayed as a grotesque caricature who can evoke laughter or chuckles in the reader. Bleikasten comments on Anse's physical grotesqueness in *Faulkner's As I Lay Dying*: "Anse is an odd body, a "humour," a pure caricature in the Dickensian tradition and in the popular humorous vein of the old
Southwest, hacked out by the "savage caricaturist" who is none other than Faulkner himself" (74-75).

Anse is also obsessed with getting false teeth and a new wife to replace Addie. At the end of the novel, his repetition of "Now I can get them teeth" shows his adamant desire for dentures: during his wife's living, he had no opportunity to claim for them; now that "God's will be done," (33) his desire can be fulfilled. Finally, after the burial in Jefferson, Anse buys himself dentures and gets himself a new wife, less than twenty-four hours after burying his former wife. Having "grotesque" behavior, Anse has no feelings toward his wife and children. He puts his needs before his family's. He feels indifferent toward Addie even if she lies dying and needs marital care--his thoughts appear to be in Jefferson about how to get what he has always wanted. His new wife, in the eyes of his children, looks grotesque: "a kind of duck-shaped woman all dressed up, with them kind of hard-looking pop eyes like she was daring ere a man to say nothing" (181).

Faulkner portrays Anse as a grotesque caricature; he has nevertheless given him a moral life implying that he has cared for his outcast creation. Instead of belittling his grotesque character as the other characters in the novel do, Faulkner sympathizes with him.
As for the Bundren children, all seem to be grotesque in "normal" observers' eyes. For example, Darl, the most grotesque among them (in my opinion), sets fire to a barn to destroy his mother's putrefying corpse so that they can save time traveling to Jefferson for her desired burial. Darl is finally taken off to the asylum in Jackson.

Darl, the barnburner, in spite of his grotesque behavior and actions, receives some recognition for his "second sight" and some sympathy from Doreen Fowler and Ann J. Abodie when they comment on him:

We know early in the novel that the community sees Darl as different from itself . . . No matter how much we appreciate his ironic detachment, or how much we sympathize with his attempt to cremate his mother's putrefying corpse, we must also accept his isolation from his community."
CHAPTER VII

FLANNERY O'CONNOR AND CARSON McCULLERS

Two famous women writers of the grotesque who have extensively contributed to this genre in American Modernism are Flannery O'Connor and Carson McCullers. From the same southern state (Georgia), both have helped produce for Southern literature the reputation for being largely about the grotesque, which allegedly occurs more often in the South than elsewhere. While one writer is chiefly recognized for her short stories, the other is known for her novels. These two female writers of the Southern grotesque will be dealt with separately in some detail. O'Connor's short stories—"A Good Man Is Hard to Find," "Good Country People," "The Lame Shall Enter First," and "Parker's Back"—and McCullers' novels--Reflections in a Golden Eye and The Ballad of the Sad Cafe--will be examined for their grotesqueries in characterization and episodes. I will demonstrate through references to the great amount of scholarship on these authors' lives and works that even if many of their characters may be misfits, the fiction itself
has gained a solid reputation in American literature of this century.

Flannery O'Connor (1925-1964) was the only child of parents whose Southern manners and Catholic background influenced her deeply. Since her childhood, she had been preoccupied with the grotesque; for instance, Pathe News sent, in 1935, a photographer to document her deformed pet chicken that could walk either backward or forward.

During her short life (39 years), the prolific and talented O'Connor produced thirty-one short stories, two novels, some essays and speeches, and a book of letters, chiefly to her publishers and friends. O'Connor never lost her writing and reading spirit. Her reading was mainly on religious matters since she was herself a devout Catholic. Her knowledge of Christianity became an important tool for her writing, especially about the grotesque. She could combine her religion with the grotesque she easily found in her region. A Christian belief pervades almost every story and novel she ever wrote. Gilbert H. Muller, a scholar on Flannery O'Connor, has written of her extensive use of Christianity in her grotesque fiction:

She [O'Connor] utilizes Catholic and broadly Christian doctrines to illuminate emotions and experiences that emerge from a grotesque perspective. She is an artist of the Catholic
grotesque, and therefore acknowledges possibilities of meaning which transcend the ordinary configurations of the secular grotesque. Her fiction provides a way by which the grotesque can be tested and evaluated, accepted or rejected, in a Christian light. (99)

Although O'Connor was a pious Catholic herself, her grotesque characters are rarely Catholic. Her Catholic faith then made her a misfit in the Protestant South. In addition, she only rarely wrote about Catholic characters.

To Flannery O'Connor, the old order seemed to have crumbled and the old families (of the South) began to lose their values; moral deterioration, violence, corruption, and other vices came rushing in and destroyed the old traditional values. This is a reason that, in her fiction, O'Connor associates violence with the grotesque because, according to her, violence is a natural result of the grotesque (Muller 78). When asked why she liked portraying grotesque characters of different classes and types from the rural South, O'Connor replied:

Whenever I'm asked why Southern writers particularly have a penchant for writing about freaks, I say it is because we are still able to recognize one. To be able to recognize a freak, you have to have some conception of the whole man,
and in the South the general conception of man is still, in the main, theological. In any case, it is when the freak can be sensed as a figure for our essential displacement that he attains some depth in literature.

O'Connor's conception of the "whole man" was a Catholic conception even if she lived among mostly non-Catholics in Savannah, Georgia.

O'Connor's characters are usually unsophisticated individuals who are not able to control their own powerful impulses, thus rendering them natural "grotesques." These grotesque characters to be studied in this section are The Misfit and the grandmother (old Mrs. Bailey) in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" (1955), Joy-Hulga Hopewell and Manley Pointer in "Good Country People" (1955), Rufus Johnson and Mr. Sheppard in "The Lame Shall Enter First" (1955), and O.E. Parker in "Parker's Back" (1955). These creations are normally despised by other characters in the stories because, to the "normal" observers, they are social aberrations, except for Manley (who looks superficially respectful as a Bible salesman), but their creator extends to them her compassion and moral support. O'Connor emphasizes the use of (authorial) compassion toward the modernist grotesque (even if she seems to make fun of it):
It's considered an absolute necessity these days for writers to have compassion. Compassion is a word that sounds good in anybody's mouth and which no book jacket can do without. It is a quality which no one can put his finger on in any exact critical sense, so it is always safe for anybody to use. . . . Certainly when the grotesque is used in a legitimate way, the intellectual and moral judgments implicit in it will have the ascendancy over feeling.¹

"A Good Man Is Hard to Find" has received more attention from scholars and critics than any other O'Connor story, perhaps because of its exceptional grotesquerie. Such grotesque characters as The Misfit and the grandmother can help us examine why they are grotesque to the "normal" observers. Moreover, some descriptions of some characters are deemed grotesque by comparing them or their appurtenances to that which is inanimate or nonhuman--for example, the wife: "whose face was as broad and innocent as a cabbage and was tied around with a green head-kerchief that had two points on the top like a rabbit's ears,"² the grandmother's "big black valise that looked like the head of a hippopotamus," (118) and the owner of a roadside eatery, Red Sammy Butts: "his stomach hung over them [his trousers] like a sack of meal swaying under his shirt" (121).
As I said earlier, the grandmother is a grotesque character. Her behavior and actions seem not to be "normal" as observed by other characters in the story. It could be she who leads the whole family of six (including herself) to be "wiped out" by an escaped convict (who named himself The Misfit) and his henchmen. From the beginning to the end of the story, the grandmother's grotesqueries are observed. Her son, Bailey, might hate the idea of her taking her pet cat with her on a long trip (from Georgia) to Florida--she hides the cat in a covered basket and puts the basket at her feet without anybody else's knowledge. She fears that if left alone in the house, her cat might accidentally turn on one of the gas burners and suffocate itself. It is this very cat that upsets Bailey's control of the car when it jumps onto his shoulder--the car overturns and falls off the road into a ditch, where The Misfit and his men find them and later get rid of them all.

It is also the grandmother's idea of making a detour from the highway to the dirt road in order to show the others an old mansion she used to visit when she was a young woman. They cannot find it. Bailey's frustration and the children's restlessness seem to ruin the vacation spirit. The grandmother keeps saying "It's not much farther" to relieve everyone but "as she said it, a horrible thought came to her. The thought was so embarrassing that she
turned red in the face and her eyes dilated and her feet jumped up, upsetting her valise in the corner. The instant the valise moved, the newspaper top she had over the basket under it rose with a snarl and Pitty Sing, the cat, sprang onto Bailey's shoulder" (124). Immediately after the accident, the old woman recalls that the place is in Tennessee not in Georgia. She then feels ashamed of herself to have caused the accident but remains silent about this. A "normal" person would have admitted the mistake. So this act is perhaps grotesque.

Instead of using her head, the grandmother uses her big mouth to reveal the identity of The Misfit, who, in my opinion, might not otherwise have done what he did to the whole family. The grandmother's grotesque outspokenness turns The Misfit's apparent goodwill of helping with the family's overturned car into silent fury, which leads to the execution of all concerned. Thus, old Mrs. Bailey's shriek: "You're The Misfit! I recognized you at once!" (127) when appearing face-to-face with The Misfit could reveal her grotesque manner of talking inappropriately and dangerously.

Her other utterance (to The Misfit) which manifests her selfishness of putting her own safety first regardless of her grandchildren's safety is "You wouldn't shoot a lady, would you?" (127) She might consider herself the only "lady" present because of her fine dress but not her
daughter-in-law or June Star. If the grandmother had not grotesquely mentioned her safety first but the children's, out of her sympathy, The Misfit might have had a sympathetic attitude towards the children. Old Mrs. Bailey's unthoughtful speech seems to have irritated The Misfit to the point of "forcing" him to shoot the whole family.

The more the grandmother says about The Misfit, the less sincere she appears in his thought. Once she grotesquely touches on his individuality, The Misfit retorts ironically:

"I know you're a good man. You don't look a bit like you have common blood. I know you must come from nice people!"

"Yes mam, finest people in the world!" (127)

Realizing that every approach she has used with The Misfit has failed, the grandmother turns to religion in order to try to soften the convict. Also, by this time, the male victims have been executed, only the females are on the waiting list. She says, "If you would pray, Jesus would help you" (130). To this, The Misfit becomes a talker on Christianity. He twice says "Jesus thrown everything off balance," (131, 132) signifying that Jesus has not extended His hand to him.

At this moment, the grandmother feels that her (ill) fate is coming near because the rest of the female victims
have gone into the woods with The Misfit's henchmen and she remains with The Misfit. She further thinks that her final approach toward him might save her life, saying, "I'll give you all the money I've got" (132). The Misfit views her offer a grotesque one, to which he replies: "Lady, there never was a body that give the undertaker a tip" (132). Immediately when she utters this speech and touches The Misfit, the latter shoots her:

"Why you're one of my babies. You're one of my own children!" She reached out and touched him on the shoulder. The Misfit sprang back as if a snake had bitten him and shot her three times through the chest. (132)

Not only is the grandmother's materialistic offer (all her money) viewed by The Misfit as grotesque but also her spiritual offer (being one of her children). The latter offer, the more crucial one, provokes The Misfit's sudden fury leading to her killing because, under no circumstances does he wish to be one of her children, meaning she is no good in his eyes: "She would of been a good woman if it had been somebody there to shoot her every minute of her life" (133).

As for The Misfit, I find some of his manners and actions grotesque. First of all, his naming himself "The Misfit" seems to be grotesque--his reason, "because I can't
make what all I done wrong fit all I gone through in punishment" (131). His too polite use of language to his apparent victims also seems grotesque. His polite requests "would you mind" and "would you like" are used three times (126, 128, 131); his addresses to the grandmother and the children's mother as "ladies" appear throughout the story. His proper commands or harsh language will not sound grotesque here. His "soft" language thus belies his inhumanity.

The Misfit's manner of narrating his past life, in my opinion, is grotesque. He talks non-stop about his story without considering his audience whether it is interested in his narration or not. He is even deaf to the grandmother's frequent interruptions. For example, when the old lady asks him, "What did you do to get sent to the penitentiary that first time?" he never listens to her but goes on with his grotesque description of the reformatory wall: "Turn to the right, it was a wall," The Misfit said. "Turn to the left, it was a wall" (130).

His seemingly blasphemous references to Christianity can be seen as a grotesque inversion of religion: "I don't want no hep [from Jesus]" (130); "Jesus thrown everything off balance" (131, 132).

The Misfit's going bare-chested is viewed as grotesque to the "normal" observers. Feeling embarrassed to show his
bare torso, especially to the ladies, he says, "I'm sorry I don't have on a shirt before you ladies" (129). His thin torso does not look attractive either. The grandmother has noticed "how thin his shoulder blades were just behind his hat because she was standing up looking down on him" (129). Later, he gets Bailey's shirt off his dead body and wears it, as he always does with his former victims' clothing.

However grotesque The Misfit may appear to the reader, he is a "good man" in many respects. O'Connor portrays him with pity and compassion and puts him far ahead of Bailey and Red Sammy Butts in gentleness and politeness. He may have told the truth that he had been falsely accused, thus leading to his present plight: "It was a head-doctor at the penitentiary said what I had done was kill my daddy but I known that for a lie. My daddy died in nineteen ought nineteen of the epidemic flu and I never had a thing to do with it" (130). The author, implying in this statement that her creation became a social aberration because of his society, thus shows her moral support. As for the grandmother, the author does not neglect her either. Her manners and actions may appear grotesque to other characters or to the reader, but they seem to be her "natural" characteristics. The authorial sympathy is implicit when O'Connor describes the way the grandmother dies--"with her legs crossed" (132)--grace is thus extended to her.
O'Connor thus has The Misfit put away the grandmother mercifully because the latter seems to have dreamed of receiving grace. The old lady's death with such "crossed" legs has certainly fulfilled her dream. James F. Farnham has observed O'Connor's use of grace in her writing, then comments:

The central theme found in Flanner O'Connor's writing is the redemption (i.e., grace) of man. Miss O'Connor's most evil characters are acutely aware of Christ, making their pain more intense by their blasphemy of Him.4

However, the readers do not neglect the violent convict—he has received their compassion, as viewed by Sister Rose Alice when she writes:

The Misfit . . . remains the most pathetic character in the story, the one for whom our [the readers'] sympathies are most actively aroused.5

In "Good Country People," I consider the Bible salesman, Manley Pointer, and the one-legged Ph.D. country girl, Joy-Hulga Hopewell, grotesque characters. The hayloft seduction scene, which is one of the most absurd or grotesque tableaus in O'Connor's fiction, is worth examining as well.

The grotesque concept of the human body is applied in this story because the female protagonist is a cripple, "a
large blonde girl who had an artificial leg" (127); a shotgun blast accidentally blew her leg off during childhood. The protagonist, with a deformed body that corresponds to deformed spirit, is thus completely alienated from the world. Her grotesqueries may contradict her best education (a Ph.D. in philosophy) and are only matched by the antagonist's--both grotesque country people give the title (of the story) an irony.

Therefore, the daughter of Mrs. Hopewell is a grotesque. Her grotesqueness, first of all, involves her names--she has two names, the one her mother gave her at birth, and the other she gave herself when she became of age (to do so). The first of these names is Joy, the second, Hulga; and the question of which of these names is the artificial one (like her artificial leg) is not as simple as it may appear. This intellectual daughter is pleased with the ugliness of her chosen name, Hulga: "She considered the name her personal affair. She had arrived at its first purely on the basis of its ugly sound and then the full genius of its fitness had struck her. . . . She saw it as the name of her highest creative act" (275). But her chosen name appears grotesque to her mother: "When Mrs. Hopewell thought the name, Hulga, she thought of the broad blank hull of a battleship. She would not use it. She continued to call her Joy . . ." (274).
A resemblance between the leg and the name might be drawn here—the name Hulga is as false as the leg, and the real name Joy is, like a real leg, the one she was born with and the one O'Connor seems to enjoy, "the beautiful name, Joy" (274). Grotesquely speaking, the girl now sees herself not as Joy, but as Hulga; she tolerates her mother's constant calling her Joy "to which the girl responded but in a purely mechanical way" (274). However, she will not tolerate anyone else's calling her by that name. To make her new name noticed by others, she intentionally walks or "stumps," making a loud noise, because "it was ugly-sounding" (275). Her grotesque behavior thus alienates her mother and her mother's friends. As an alienated person, "all day Joy sat on her neck in a deep chair, reading. Sometimes she went for walks but she didn't like dogs or cats or birds or flowers or nature or nice young men" (276). In other words, nothingness is a key word for her existence.

Moreover, what she has read may perhaps verify the above statement; for instance, she has read and has underlined in a book: "If science is right, then one thing stands firm: science wishes to know nothing of nothing. Such is after all the strictly scientific approach to Nothing. We know it by wishing to know nothing of Nothing" (277). When her mother turns to that page and reads it, she immediately has a chill.
Muller comments on this grotesque belief in nothingness or nihilism and the denial of significance in life: "Belief in such solipsistic nonsense reveals the sort of intellectual pride, found in Hawthorne's fiction as well as O'Connor's, which debases the individual and makes him grotesque" (27).

Mrs. Hopewell sees her daughter's way of dressing herself as grotesque because Joy-Hulga "went about all day in a six-year-old skirt and a yellow sweat shirt with a faded cowboy on a horse embossed on" (276). She is thus worried about her daughter, who has never listened to her for advice on how to dress properly and how to get along in society as a thirty-two-year-old well-educated citizen. On the contrary, her daughter "grew less like other people and more like herself . . . And she said such strange things!" (276)

When a young itinerant Bible salesman comes one day to their house, Joy-Hulga views this religious Manley Pointer as an apparently naive country boy. She also thinks that he is very commonplace, "just the salt of the earth." So she wants to seduce him, realizing that, with her intelligence (a Ph.D. in philosophy) and her life experience (she is thirty-two), she will be successful in this matter. Therefore, she persuades the young man to meet her the next morning. The girl already thinks of this rendezvous as a
great joke and a triumph over the opposite sex, because she earlier "looked at nice young men as if she could smell their stupidity" (276). Accordingly, for half of the night, lying in bed, she anticipates the role she will play in the Bible salesman's "education" (283).

The next morning, Joy-Hulga puts on a pair of slacks and a dirty white shirt, then thinking of a special occasion, she grotesquely puts some Vapex on the collar of her shirt because she has no perfume at all (284).

As for Manley, he wears a new hat for this special event but the hat is "slightly too large for him" (285). What seems grotesque to the girl is that the young man brings his black valise of Bibles on his date. Manley explains: "You can never tell when you'll need the word of God, Hulga" (285). Later in this seduction scene, one of the Bibles turns out to be hollow and it contains a small flask of whiskey, a pack of dirty playing cards, and a prophylactic (289-90).

After the first long kiss, the girl is certain that her bait captures its prey--she proposes that they go into the barn for privacy. But instead of the lower story (of the barn), Manley suggests the upper one and the use of the ladder, grotesquely aiming to test the lame girl's ability to climb up the ladder. Up in the loft, the bespectacled girl yields to the boy's demand to take off her glasses,
which he slips into his pocket (287). "Loss of her
glasses," Muller writes, "leaves Hulga symbolically and
literally adrift in a world of distorted visions" (28).

Grotesquely persistent that the girl say her love to
him, Manley is pitifully viewed by Joy-Hulga as an
unexperienced lover who needs an assuring statement—a
cliche for her. She then consoles him: "You poor baby!
It's just as well you don't understand" (287-88). The
moment the cripple tells him the truth about her real age
and brags about "a number of degrees" she has got, Manley
sees her as a bizarre girl to have mentioned unnecessary
things during a love scene. He then retorts: "I don't care
a thing about what all you done. I just want to know if you
love me or don'tcher?" (288) But Manley's most grotesque
action in this scene is to have the crippled girl take off
her artificial leg. This she refuses to do until he
announces that it is her artificial leg that fascinates him:
"It's what makes you different. You ain't like anybody
else" (288). Joy-Hulga does not know what Manley is going
to do with the leg, but she yields to his grotesque demand.
Later, she learns that it is not she who has prepared to
seduce the Bible salesman but vice versa when she sees all
the seductive devices contained in one of Manley's "Bibles."
Finally she realizes that she has been shamefully cheated
the moment the boy bags her false leg and hurries away,
leaving her stunned by his final speech: "... Pointer ain't really my name. I use a different name at every house I call at and don't stay nowhere long. ... You ain't so smart. I been believing in nothing ever since I was born!"

(291)

Again, Muller touches on the grotesque outcome of the story and (on) these two grotesque characters, who seem to soil Christianity, thus earning no grace:

The extraordinary paradox of the Bible salesman who turns out to be a false Christian and the girl who is exposed as a false atheist is an ideal figure for exposing the grotesque destinies of those myopic souls who have been deprived of grace. Subjected to a situation that is psychologically and morally devastating, Hulga finally learns that she has no identity, and it is at this point in the resolution of the story that she is seized with the horror of the alienated world. (28)

Nevertheless, Robert Coles, an O'Connor scholar, interprets Joy-Hulga's yielding to the Bible salesman's wish (to see her taking off her artificial leg) as "A kind of religious experience for the girl [through Manley]--a parodic version of what we are told in the New Testament happens when one finds Christ." 6
Moreover, some critics such as Josephine Hendin sees Joy-Hulga's fall as the preparation for conversion. Hendin points out that the crippled girl is grotesquely attracted to "the deformity she sees in Manley, namely Christianity" (74). Hendin also indicates that when Joy-Hulga last sees Manley, he appears Christlike to her weak eyes in that he is "struggling successfully over the green speckled lake" (291). Hendin concludes that it is still difficult to see that Christianity is what the country girl has prepared herself to return to (75). In my opinion, the girl is too stubborn to change her attitude towards her religious belief. Furthermore, her unfavorable experience with the "false" Christian like Manley could drive her away from Christianity.

Perhaps other characters may despise Joy-Hulga, especially her "grotesque" choice of the name Hulga--to them, the new name sounds harsh (in comparison to the old name Joy, which sounds sweet). However, Miss O'Connor seems to understand the girl's grotesque mind instead of despising her as the others do when she writes of the girl's choice of the new name as "her personal affair" and "her highest creative act" (275). The author thus shows her sympathy toward Joy-Hulga. O'Connor, moreover, implicitly cheers up the limping heroine when, in spite of her handicap, "she led
the way and he [Manley] came breathing heavily behind her" (286).

As for the Bible salesman--the sort of Antichrist figure--he might implicitly gain the authorial admiration: he may be a grotesque as well as a devil (in the girl's eyes) but he is not a fool like the Ph.D. The girl's mother, Mrs. Hopewell, views Manley as a very simple country boy while Mrs. Freeman, her friend, doubts the boy's country looks and manners--she has not been deceived (as her friend) when Manley turns out to be not one of the "Good Country People."

The next story to be examined also concerns the grotesque concept of the human body--"The Lame Shall Enter First." The "Lame" is a juvenile delinquent, Rufus Johnson, with a clubfoot. His benefactor, Mr. Sheppard, City Recreational Director and guidance counselor, brings him home on parole, from the penitentiary to live with him and his son, Norton. The boy actually wants to stand on his own feet but Sheppard wants to trespass into the boy's life, which the latter detests. These two characters (Sheppard and Rufus) are viewed as grotesques because of their "bizarre" behavior. Their interactions convey some grotesqueness as well.

Rufus is a wild, pessimistic, Satan-dominated grandson of a zealous "prophet." Rufus seems to be a compulsive
juvenile delinquent. Since the boy has a monstrous clubfoot, Sheppard immediately concludes that his rebellion can be explained simply as compensation for his inferiority complex. Sheppard also learns that the teenager has always been maltreated by his grandfather; therefore, when Rufus is paroled, Sheppard approaches the boy, hoping to win his love and confidence by proposing to Rufus the comforts of a home and a caring parent.

O'Connor often associates physical deformity with grotesqueness, as is evident in Joy-Hulga in the previous story. In this one, Rufus is portrayed in a similar way. His unexpected denial of a new shoe which his protector has had custom-made upsets both Sheppard and the clerk at the shoe-shop. Rufus has already tried it on and has walked in it and it seems to fit his clubfoot, but, to the dismay of both men, the boy has adamantly refused to have it (470). With his grotesque behavior, Rufus retorts defiantly the clerk's complaint: "Go soak your skull. Your brains are on fire" (471). Losing face with the clerk and feeling disappointed with the refusal of his offer, Sheppard, however, has to pay for this dear shoe, lamenting the boy's manner to the clerk: "He's not mature enough for it yet. I had thought he was less of a child" (471). (Rufus is a teenager.)
Actually, Rufus is physically crippled, not mentally—his I.Q. score of 140 verifies this fact (449). But, as I said earlier, he seems to act grotesquely to compensate for his (physical) deformity; moreover, Rufus' wearing a hair style implies how grotesque and belligerent he really is: "He combed it [his hair] straight down on his forehead. Then he swept it to the side, Hitler fashion" (455).

Whatever reformatory methods the counselor-psychologist has applied for the benefit of his protege, Rufus has never been gratified by those methods, nor by the "advantages" of a home. On the contrary, he frequently slips away from home to resume his evil doings—breaking into houses and stealing from them, scavenging for food in garbage bins, and telling lies. Some of these actions bring trouble to himself and to Sheppard alike. And why not Sheppard, the "mental" cripple? The Sheppards [shepherds] will enter first too along with their black sheep.

Rufus grotesquely admits to Sheppard that the Devil already possesses him but finally convinces the humanitarian that he too is in the hands of the Devil. The boy revels in his deformity and grotesqueness while, at the same time, maintaining that "Nobody can save me but Jesus" (474). Rufus then differs from others in seeing the possibility that one day he will give himself to Jesus. In fact, he
believes that it is people like himself--the lame--who will enter first or, precisely, be saved first (thus, the title).

Near the end of the story, as Rufus is about to be taken away by the police (after being caught while stealing), he shouts at Sheppard, showing no gratitude but grotesque contempt toward his benefactor: "I lie and steal because I'm good at it! My foot don't have a thing to do with it! The lame shall enter first! The halt'll be gathered together. When I get ready to be saved, Jesus'll save me, not that lying stinking atheist . . ." (480).

On Sheppard's side, his ideas about educating Rufus and his own son seem grotesque. Education for Sheppard means mastering scientific knowledge. Sheppard buys a telescope for this purpose. But soon Rufus is more interested in Jesus than in stars and attacks Sheppard on his humanitarianism: "Those space ships ain't going to do you any good unless you believe in Jesus" (476). When this fails, Sheppard buys a microscope, hoping that vastness can be replaced by detail, depth rather than spaciousness (466). But the difficult boy loses interest in the new instrument in a short time. Sheppard thinks he is Jesus Christ, so Rufus indicates to Norton (459); but Sheppard is a false prophet in Rufus' eyes.

As his name suggests, Sheppard is a man desirous of good deeds toward mankind. He devotes his time to
counseling boys, free of charge, at the penitentiary. He later brings home a juvenile delinquent to live with him and his ten-year-old son. Sheppard has given more care and affection to the outsider than to his own child, whose mother has been dead for over a year. When Sheppard, at the opening of the story, tells his son that he allows a young criminal to live with them, describing grotesquely where the juvenile delinquent searches for food and how his clubfoot affects him, the young son, eating his breakfast, throws it all up in "a limp sweet batter" (448). This is not only grotesque but also repulsive and no less repulsive to the author, but it is entirely functional and necessary in the story: it symbolizes the indigestive mess of Sheppard's "enlightened" views, which his son will similarly be unable to keep down.

Sheppard's grotesque attempts to win over the young criminal through psychology, astronomy, home comforts, and gifts are all failures; in return, his good deeds toward Rufus are despised and critically attacked by the teenager. Reflecting on this matter, Sheppard sees his own grotesqueries: he has imposed very strict principles on Rufus, thinking that the boy is intelligent enough to cope with them; he aims so high in his treatment of Rufus that the boy will one day turn out to be as "good" as he. The boy perhaps wants to prove that he is of value in his
attempt to live by himself. The way of life that Sheppard believes in is ultimately just as evil as aimless destruction because it is based on selfishness.

By associating himself too closely with Rufus, Sheppard has thus neglected his own child, who, without maternal care and love, really needs his father. Grotesquely thinking that his own son should not deserve more attention from him because he has a lower I.Q. score than Rufus, Sheppard turns his attention to Rufus—"What was wasted on Norton would cause Johnson to flourish" (452). And by leaving Norton alone with the juvenile delinquent Sheppard causes the younger boy to be "braindrained" by the older one—the way for Norton to see his dead mother, as Rufus suggests, "You got to be dead to get there. You can't go in no space ship" (462). This Sheppard has overheard. In a flash he realizes that he has thus denied love to his own son: "I did more for him [Rufus] than I did for my own child" (481). This moment of insight creates in Sheppard's heart a spontaneous flow of love for his child, but it is too late: the lonely boy "hung in the jungle of shadows, just below the beam from which he had launched his flight into space" (482).

As a cripple and a grotesque, Rufus Johnson is spiritually supported by Miss O'Connor. She has a better understanding of this social outcast than Sheppard does, thus giving him a spiritual life. For Rufus, a spiritual
offer, rather than Sheppard's materialistic offer, is what he really needs—he is more interested in the Bible than in telescopes or microscopes. His denial of a shoe for his clubfoot indicates that he, as a lame, wants to have a privilege to "enter first" the divine kingdom. The author has portrayed Rufus in that way, and, at the same time, has extended her sympathy to her creation.

Sheppard, a grotesque character, is also shown sympathy by the author. He might be despised by other characters, especially Rufus, but Miss O'Connor understands his strong ambitions to "push" the juvenile delinquent until the boy reaches the reformer's goals, not the boy's goals. Sheppard's grotesque behavior and actions toward his son and Rufus are then understandable. When all these ambitions become a failure, the author never neglects him, but gives him a spiritual life—he is implicitly described as a saint for all his great efforts toward mankind: "beneath the white halo of his hair" (481). The modernist creator always stands side-by-side with her own grotesque creations.

The last story to be studied is grotesquely comical and bizarre when the ubiquitous reversed Christ appears as a tattoo on the back of Obadiah Elihue Parker, thus, the title ("Parker's Back").

At the age of fourteen, Parker developed his feeling for tattoos when he saw a tattooed man at the fair; he has
been obsessed with tattoos ever since. What impressed Parker about the man's tattoo was that "the arabesque of men and beasts and flowers on his skin appeared to have a subtle motion of its own" (513). In other words, Parker was fascinated by his vision of the arabesque designs. Tattoos, as a matter of fact, suggest the physical grotesque.

Since his introduction to the tattoos, Parker has been addicted to the grotesque world of skin embellishments. He admits that he has worked all these years just to pay for more tattoos (513). He has traveled far and wide, both in the United States and overseas (as far as Burma); everywhere he went, Parker "picked up more tattoos" (514). It appears that Parker's front is almost completely covered (with tattoos). When the story opens, he has one body-space left and that a place he cannot see--his back. At this time, he meets his future wife, Sarah Ruth Cates.

Sarah Ruth is grotesquely described as "plain, plain. The skin on her face was thin and drawn tight as the skin on an onion and her eyes were gray and sharp like the points of two icepicks" (510). Such grotesque imagery separates O'Connor's characters from their humanity, comparing them to inanimate objects.

However, Parker forces himself into a mental transformation through his marriage to Sarah Ruth, whose religious standards represent for Parker the ideals he
unconsciously desires. Therefore, Parker's decision to have a tattoo of the suffering face of Christ put on his back is to please his wife by bringing himself to Christ in front of her eyes: "He visualized having a tattoo put there that Sarah Ruth would not be able to resist--a religious subject" (519) and "the right one to bring Sarah Ruth to heel" (520). Moreover, what attracts Parker to the Byzantine Christ picture when he is leafing through the artist's book is that it has "all-demanding eyes"--resembling Sarah Ruth's penetrating eyes (522). What a grotesque idea Parker really has in his choice for the resemblance of Christ's and his wife's eyes! Also, this kind of tattoo will take time and cost him a great deal, but Parker accepts the deal.

Upon completion of the tattoo on his back, Parker walks to a pool hall nearby which he frequents when in town; there he is jeered and sneered at because of the new grotesque tattoo on his back--a fight, then a throwing-out from the pool hall (527). Reflecting on the brawl because of his Christ tattoo, Parker thinks of his wife, who, he imagines, will certainly be pleased with it.

When Parker arrives home, the results are surprising and inevitable. However, when Parker shows the tattoo to his wife, she is no less demanding than before:
"Another picture," Sarah Ruth growled. "I might have known you was off after putting some more trash on yourself."

"Don't you know who it is?" he [Parker] cried in anguish.

"No, who is it?" Sarah Ruth said. "It ain't anybody I know."

"It's him." Parker said.

"Him who?"

"God!" Parker cried.

"God? God don't look like that!"

"What do you know how he looks?" Parker moaned.

"You ain't seen him."

"He don't look," Sarah Ruth said. "He's a spirit. No man shall see his face."

"Aw listen," Parker groaned, "this is just a picture of him."

"Idolatry!" Sarah Ruth screamed. "Idolatry! Enflaming yourself with idols under every green tree! I can put up with lies and vanity but I don't want no idolator in this house." (529)

Immediately, Sarah Ruth grabs a broom and beats her husband across the shoulders with it; large welts appear on the face of the tattooed Christ. The reader finally learns
that Parker flees from his incompatible wife, "leaning against the tree, crying like a baby" (530).

Parker's taste for having one tattoo after another put on his body can perhaps draw a negative feeling from a viewer, but his last wish to have the face of Christ tattooed on his whole back is regarded as grotesque. Hardly does anyone have a similar wish as Parker—the most religious figure (of Christianity) should appear on the altar instead of on a human being's back. But the author understands Parker: he is infatuated with tattoos of any kind, regardless of observers who might despise him and his grotesque mind. Furthermore, Miss O'Connor demonstrates her sympathy to the grotesque when she describes his final scene: "There he was—who called himself Obadiah Elihue—leaning against the tree, crying like a baby" (530). Here, the author feels pity and compassion for Parker, who, in spite of his great efforts, is faced with a failure. No one, even his own wife, extends his or her hand towards the grotesque except his creator.

Flannery O'Connor's grotesque figures as we have seen in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," "Good Country People," "The Lame Shall Enter First," and "Parker's Back" are real types which still exist in the South, but Miss O'Connor exaggerates that "life in Georgia is not at all the way I picture it, that escaped criminals do not roam the roads
exterminating families, nor Bible salesmen prowl about looking for girls with wooden legs" (Mystery and Manners 38). However, the grotesques' appearances in Southern fiction, chiefly in O'Connor's fiction, make the Southern scene more recognized in the literary domain. With other contributions by another Southern female writer of the grotesque, to be studied next, and by Faulkner in the previous chapter, the Southern grotesque has gained fame, nationally and internationally.

In this section, another Georgian female writer of the grotesque is examined--Carson McCullers, a contemporary of Flannery O'Connor. McCullers (1917-1967) is better recognized for her novels (than her short stories). Two of her novels--Reflections in a Golden Eye (1941) and The Ballad of the Sad Cafe (1951)--are regarded as grotesque ones.

Most of the characters in Reflections in a Golden Eye are grotesques. They show no physical deformities, but they are emotionally maimed (as are many of O'Connor's grotesques). The novel is about (army) officers and their spouses at a southern army post. There is no love between these couples--they have to seek it from other persons, surprisingly associated with them in one way or another. To McCullers, it is love, especially love of a person who is incapable of returning or receiving it--her idea of selecting grotesque figures for her fiction.
The opening page of the novel seems to prepare the reader for the grotesque action to follow: "There is a fort in the South where a few years ago a murder was committed. The participants of this tragedy were: two officers, a soldier, two women, a Filipino, and a horse." What really led to this murder is worth examining.

As I said earlier, most of the characters in this novel are grotesques--Captain Penderton, Alison Langdon (Major Langdon's wife), Anacleto (a Filipino houseboy in the Langdon household), and Private Williams. These individuals, with their interrelationships, also help create grotesque episodes even in a seemingly rigid and disciplined army society.

Captain Penderton, a latent homosexual, is impotent with his beautiful wife, Leonora, but infatuated with their neighbor and his superior, Major Langdon, who is her lover. Later, he is drawn to a common soldier, Private Williams, who was once sent to clean around his house. But, as a grotesque himself, Private Williams "had done even more than the Captain specifically requested" (505); he cut away too much of the overgrowth, and has since exposed the Penderton house to plain view, a matter of consequence later in the action.

Captain Penderton is known by his wife as a coward--he is afraid of horses--"he only rode because it was the thing
to do, and because it was another one of his ways of tormenting himself" (550). When he takes out his wife's horse, Firebird, without her knowledge, the Captain grotesquely torments the horse by letting him run short distances, but the animal bolts and the Captain is certain that "he was to be thrown, and not only thrown but killed" (550). However, the beast is giving out, and the Captain experiences a new dread, that he will not die. Feeling cheated (by the horse), he beats Firebird savagely. His grotesque action is witnessed by Private Williams, who is sunbathing nearby. During their encounter, "the Captain had a close swift view of the young soldier's bare foot; it was slim and delicately built, with a high instep marked by blue veins" (553). The soldier, however, does not pay attention to the Captain but to the battered beast which he leads away from the officer.

From now on, the Captain begins to have a "crush" on the soldier--he often thinks of the soldier, and this thought tantalizes him greatly. Once he follows the soldier into the stable and watches him rubbing the animals: "He [the Captain] looked at the fine, skillful hands and the tender roundness of the soldier's neck. The Captain was overcome by a feeling that both repelled and fascinated him; it was as though he and the young soldier were wrestling together naked, body to body, in a fight to death" (556).
As for Private Williams, he is grotesquely introduced to the reader at the beginning of the novel as the one who "did not smoke, drink, fornicate, or gamble" (503). He has been drawn to animals, especially horses, since the age of seventeen: "He [Private Williams] stroked her [the mare's] swollen belly and stood for a time with his arms around her neck" (516); "On winter mornings the boy [Williams] would get up before daylight and go out with a lantern to his cow's stall. He would press his forehead against her warm flank as he milked and talk to her in soft, urgent whispers" (520). His actions toward the animals look as though they were lovers. These two episodes are among several show the young man's infatuation with beasts. Similarly, Anderson portrays the boy's obsession with a stallion in "I Want to Know Why" and Faulkner depicts the idiot Ike Snopes's love of the cow in The Hamlet (1940).

However, Private Williams has never had a heart for women, because he has learned from his father since boyhood that "women carried in them a deadly and catching disease which made men blind, crippled, and doomed to hell" (514). Once he has seen the naked Leonora, he is drawn to her nakedness (not her personality). Each night he performs his voyeurism at her home: first, outside the window of the Captain's study; then, in her room, where he watches Leonora as she sleeps. Grotesquely, he has never fondled her body--
he always recalls his father's idea of women (above)--he
crouches by her bed, examines her perfumes, touches a strand
of her bronze hair, and holds a piece of clothing on his
lap: "He was so close that he could feel her warm, even
breath. . . . a look of bliss awakened in his heavy face.
The young soldier felt in him a keen, strange sweetness that
never before in his life had he known" (539). His seventh
visit to Leonora's bedside is his last. The Captain notices
the Private's silhouette in his wife's bedroom, loads his
pistol, crosses the hall, and switches on the light. He
shoots twice, leaving "one raw hole" in the center of the
soldier's chest (594).

Private Williams seems to have no place in the
civilized society--it is too sinister for the young innocent
to live in. He should restrict himself to his own world
among nature and animals. However, he is killed by the
officer before he has an opportunity to come to terms with
his newly discovered identity.

Major Langdon's wife and the houseboy are, in my
examination, grotesque characters in this fiction. Alison
is the only grotesque who has a physical deformity--she cut
off her nipples with the garden shears. She is grotesquely
described as "a small, dark, fragile woman with a large nose
and a sensitive mouth" (513).
Alison Langdon, like Captain Penderton, suffers from cuckoldry—her husband has an affair with the Captain's wife. Her daughter, deformed at birth, died when she was only eight months old. For years the delicate wife has suffered from heart disease, and the child's death has brought her to the brink of insanity. One night, she was found "unconscious and she had cut the tender nipples of her breasts with the garden shears" (522). At the opening of the novel, Alison hates her husband and has distanced herself from everyone except the Filipino servant, whom she brought with her from the Philippines when he was seventeen. Anacleto worships his mistress and attends her constantly, having matched her "wail for wail" in the labor room, and now he regularly tastes her medicine. His grotesqueries also include his narcissism—he cannot pass a mirror without looking at himself—and his French usage in an American household (he is already fluent in English). Besides, he fancies himself a ballet dancer and asks after performing a little dance in his mistress's bedroom: "Have you ever noticed how well 'Bravo' and 'Anacleto' go together?" (532)

McCullers' concept of God whose specialty is grotesques emerges in the fiction as Anacleto observes that "the Lord had blundered grossly in the making of everyone except himself and Madame Alison--the sole exceptions to this were
people behind footlights, midgets, great artists, and suchlike fabulous folk" (529).

With his effeminate manner, the Filipino servant is often despised by his master (Major Langdon), who declares that a tough term in the military world would "make a man" of him (583). Once when Anacleto is seen dancing down the stairs like a very dainty ballerina, and trips himself and falls, his master jeers at him (532).

When Alison tells Anacleto that she plans to file for divorce, the young man suddenly has daydreams about a future alone with his mistress—his juvenile fantasies indeed. As for Alison, she imagines a romantic future with her caregiver. Unfortunately, she dies two days after her divorce at a distant mental hospital, and Anacleto disappears from the story.

All the four grotesque figures except Anacleto suffer from a lack of love. The Captain receives no love from his own wife, or Alison from her husband; Private Williams gains no love from society. Upset by this feeling, these characters alienate themselves from their circle and turn to "grotesque" actions, either consciously or unconsciously. Their grotesqueries, in the eyes of other characters, are contemptuous, thus unacceptable. But the author has a different attitude toward these grotesque characters—she sympathizes with them, understanding that living at an army
post in peace time is monotonous with no bustle or rustle and that the place is "designed according to a certain rigid pattern" (502). McCullers implies that ennui can affect several lives at the barracks. Her portrayal of the Captain's homosexuality toward the Private is also understandable, because in her real life, her husband, Reeves McCullers, fell in love with their best friend, David Diamond, whom he lived with for five months in Rochester, New York. The author therefore wrote of the Captain's infatuation with the soldier with more understanding of his "grotesque" mind. In fact, McCullers was recognized as one of the first American writers to deal openly with homosexual impulses. Her other novel, to be studied next, portrays a similar case.

It is perhaps certain that no more grotesque pair exists in American literature than the gigantic Miss Amelia and her dwarfish and hunchbacked Cousin Lymon. The Ballad of the Sad Cafe concerns Rabelais' grotesque concept of the human body: gigantism and dwarfism. Miss Amelia and her Cousin Lymon are physically grotesque (giantlike and dwarflike human beings); their manners and actions also manifest their grotesqueness. Besides, some events such as a ten-day unconsummated marriage and a public fistfight between a man and a woman seem grotesque. McCullers' short novel can make the reader laugh and cry at the same time.
The author's portrayal of these grotesque characters and events has received steady attention from reviewers and critics since its appearance in 1951. For example, Claire Kahane, a noted feminist, treats this novel as a modern grotesque and Gothic fiction; she has also studied extensively the fictional works of Flannery O'Connor and Carson McCullers and thus places McCullers closer to O'Connor than to any of her other contemporaries.\(^6\)

The novel has continued to stand up well under the investigation of critics. Many maintain that it is McCullers' best work.

The contrast in physical structure of the protagonists gives a grotesque picture of man-woman: "Miss Amelia was a dark, tall woman with bones and muscles like a man"\(^3\); "Miss Amelia was a powerful blunderbluss of a person, more than six feet tall--and Cousin Lymon a weakly little hunchback reaching only to her waist" (24).

Furthermore, their deformities signify the grotesque concept of the body: "She [Miss Amelia] might have been a handsome woman if, even then, she was not slightly cross-eyed" (4). The description of her crossed eyes at the end of the novel (when she is entirely upset by her life) renders Miss Amelia more grotesque: "And those gray eyes--slowly day by day they were more crossed, and it was as
though they sought each other out to exchange a little glance of grief and lonely recognition" (64).

As for Lymon, he is also grotesquely described: "His crooked little legs seemed too thin to carry the weight of his great warped chest and the hump that sat on his shoulders. He had a very large head . . . and a sharp little mouth" (6). Because of his grotesque body, townspeople have difficulty guessing his age: "Some maintained that he was about twelve years old, still a child--some were certain that he was well past forty" (59).

When walking side-by-side, Miss Amelia and her cousin are caricatures, drawing some chuckles or some grin from their observers. Setting aside their grotesque physique, these two characters are competent in several ways--Miss Amelia singlehandedly runs an excellent distillery and the only general store in town. Others hardly do their work but do observe Miss Amelia's colorful career. With the collaboration of her cousin, her store gradually turns into a cafe within a few years. "Cousin Lymon sat turning the ice-cream freezer" (35); "... it was the hunchback who was most responsible for the great popularity of the cafe" (37). These are just a few examples showing how commercially capable the two cousins are. Their cafe running is obviously a successful career.
But the story does not end at this point. The reappearance of Marvin Macy, Miss Amelia's ex-husband, now a jailbird, has a reverse effect on both cousins. Miss Amelia once married a local bad boy but quickly (within ten days) threw him out when he tried to make sexual advances to her--their marriage was a grotesque one in which the groom could not harvest the nuptial bliss with his bride because of her grotesquely unyielding heart. Moreover, the bride put their wedding presents on sale in her store. The groom went away penniless but wrote his bride a threatening note that "he would get even with her" (30). The story says that Macy's humiliation by Miss Amelia caused him to revert fiercely to his old cruel habits that had shocked the town and gained him notoriety throughout the state. Captured, finally, he was charged for several cases of crimes and sent to an Atlanta prison. Because of her hatred of Macy, Miss Amelia has never mentioned his name except for "that loom-fixer I was married to." Although this occurred a long time ago, the townspeople have always remembered and have laughed over this grotesque affair (31). Macy therefore returns to town for revenge.

Ironically, the dwarf becomes enamored with Macy--he performs every trick he knows to get Macy's attention, while Macy ignores and despises his suitor. He even calls Lymon "this Brokeback" and "the runt" in front of the other
customers at the cafe when the hunchback is trying to tempt him. Enraged, Macy then gives the cripple a blow on the side of the head (46). With revenge in mind, Macy is clever enough not to push the dwarf away but to use him to harass Miss Amelia. Already having an infatuation for the handsome man, Lymon follows along after Macy in any kind of weather, even on wintry cold days--his tubercular lungs get worse, resulting in a severe cough and profuse sweat. Lymon's grotesque behavior and actions inside and outside the cafe are also observed by his cousin, who warns him against his association with Macy. But Lymon is deaf to her words, and, during these days, he even imitates grotesquely "her awkward long-legged walk; he crossed his eyes and aped her gestures in a way that made her appear to be a freak" (57). Miss Amelia's benevolence to her cousin seems to be entirely forgotten when the latter brings Macy, her rival, to live in her cafe without her permission. Nevertheless, she does not turn Macy out, pondering that "it is better to take in your mortal enemy than face the terror of being alone" (56).

The final episode which seems grotesque is a public fistfight between a man and woman--the competition everyone has been waiting for during these days. The giantlike Miss Amelia and her former husband (one inch shorter than she) are to fight barehanded without referee inside the cafe. The battle of the sexes is, as a matter of fact, a grotesque
event, but no one objects to it because Miss Amelia has experienced several bouts of this kind and has been a winner all along. This time she is actually winning when the dwarf leaps savagely upon her back and turns her victory into physical and emotional defeat. The narrator describes this grotesque picture in which the dwarf clutches at the giant's back: "The hunchback sprang forward and sailed through the air as though he had grown hawk wings. He landed on the broad strong back of Miss Amelia and clutched at her back with his clawed little fingers" (62).

With the humiliating defeat, with the disappearance (forever) of her beloved Cousin Lymon, and with the ruin of her distillery including the theft of her valuable belongings by the two men, Miss Amelia's life and career, in the eyes of townspeople, will not be the same as before. However, the despised woman has received McCullers' pity and compassion when she writes: "Miss Amelia let her hair grow ragged, and it was turning gray. Her face lengthened, and the great muscles of her body shrank until she was thin as old maids are thin when they go crazy" (64); "For three years she sat on the front steps every night, alone and silent, looking down the road and waiting. But the hunchback never returned" (65). At the same time, the author's reminiscence of and admiration for Miss Amelia's past capabilities demonstrate that McCullers stands by her
side and never despises her as other characters do: "There is no good liquor to be bought in the town; the nearest still is eight miles away, and the liquor is such that those who drink it grow warts on their livers the size of goobers, and dream themselves into a dangerous inward world. There is absolutely nothing to do in the town." (65).

Miss Amelia, in other words, becomes a recluse and the community now has no "recreational" place to go to because of the closing-down of the cafe. The town seems not to be bustling and rustling as before. The people's only source of entertainment is the gloomy singing of the chain gang at work on the highway.

McCullers' two novels and O'Connor's four short stories as examined in this chapter portray grotesque characters and episodes. Both authors, from the Deep South, have drawn several authentic grotesque characters, for which Southern literature is well known. Their fiction has definitely helped publicize their reputation as important Southern writers of the grotesque. In the next chapter, other modernist writers (Anderson, West, and Steinbeck of non-Southern literature) will be investigated to find out what similarities or differences they might have towards the grotesque in comparison with their Southern counterparts.
CHAPTER VIII

ANDERSON, WEST, AND STEINBECK

Three non-Southern (or Northern) writers on the grotesque are studied—Sherwood Anderson, Nathanael West, and John Steinbeck. The principal locales for their writing are the Midwest (rural Ohio), New York, Hollywood, and California's Salinas Valley. These three writers actually grew up and worked in the same region of their fiction (except West, who moved from his native New York to Hollywood). For these non-Southern writers, their characteristic use of the grotesque is different from that of the Southern writers (Chapter VII): the latter give the reader the everyday world as it is experienced by a person who is mentally or physically deformed while the former give the reader a normal individual who is chiefly beset by a surrounding world that is grotesque. Anderson's three stories from Winesburg, Ohio (1919), a series of twenty-one stories on Midwesterners in the 1880s—"Hands," "The Strength of God," and "Queer"; two stories from another collection of thirteen stories, The Triumph of the Egg (1921)—"The Egg" and "I Want to Know Why"; West's two
novels—Miss Lonelyhearts (1933) and The Day of the Locust (1939); and Steinbeck's one novella--Of Mice and Men (1937)--will be investigated for their individual grotesqueries with some examples drawn from these works. Besides, a certain amount of scholarship or criticism on these authors will be included.

Sherwood Anderson (1876-1941) has most seriously and extensively dealt with the grotesque among the three writers. He himself once showed his "grotesqueness," perhaps to his paint factory workers: one day when he was dictating a letter, he stopped abruptly in the middle of a sentence and left his office (and his wife and three young children) never to return again. Anderson walked out on his successful career and his family in order to become a writer, as we learn from his biography.

Anderson's "Hands," "The Strength of God," and "Queer" appear in his Winesburg, Ohio (1919), which is an excellent source for the study of the American grotesque, precisely a non-Southern grotesque. It might be difficult to find another book in which there is such a collection of eccentrics, sex perverts, voyeurs, half-wits, God-infatuated, and frustrated individuals. Cleveland B. Chase, an Anderson scholar, writes of the author's selection of such "grotesque" people and episodes for his book:

Anderson has peopled his mythical Winesburg with
strikingly abnormal types; often he goes still further and selects as the basis for his story abnormal events in their lives. It is true that there are such people in most communities and that such events as he pictures do occur; but they are exceptions, not the rule. . . . He has consciously neglected the normal in favor of the sub- or abnormal. . . . Those people about whom he does write are abnormal because their processes of resistance and of adaptation have made them so.

(37)

Anderson's prefatory "The Book of the Grotesque" (to *Winesburg, Ohio*) explains what his characters have in common: they are all "grotesques." Grotesques, according to Anderson, seize on one "truth," an idea or an ambition and allow it to become an obsession. The truth they have sought and held on to must inevitably disfigure them; they later find that the truth becomes a falsehood. Anderson's grotesques, in fact, are ordinary rural people who suffer from the universal illness of isolation and frustration; they also do not communicate with each other. Their failure of communication renders them alienated (from each other)—they are afraid to reveal their secret or to show their love and affection for each other. Only to a young man (George Willard) do they return when, at night, they need not fear
the spite of public detection. The young reporter, however, can only comfort them, nothing more than this. These grotesques finally become social aberrations, thus being despised by other characters, but not by the author, who understands them. Anderson, like several other modernist writers on the grotesque, aware of their plights, extends his pity and compassion to his creations.

The first story to be studied is "Hands." The name of the protagonist is Adolph Myers but, because of an "indecent" episode, he changes his name to Wing Biddlebaum. The narrator introduces and explains the (new) name: "The story of Wing Biddlebaum is a story of hands. Their restless activity, like unto the beating of the wings of an imprisoned bird, had given him his name." The protagonist moved from a Pennsylvania town to Winesburg, Ohio, twenty years ago, and has been known as Wing Biddlebaum ever since.

The story of hands is a grotesque one. The use of the human body is misinterpreted and thus viewed as grotesque in this story. Wing was once a school teacher in a Pennsylvania town; he was much loved by the boys: "Here and there went his hands, caressing the shoulders of the boys, playing about the tousled heads" (13). However, the tragedy occurred one day when his sensitive, wandering, and caressing hands were misinterpreted by a half-witted boy who "became enamored of the young master. . . . Strange, hideous
accusations fell from his loose-hung lips. Through the Pennsylvania town went a shiver" (14). Then, several boys, similarly, told their parents about their schoolmaster's touching and hugging them. To the townspeople, Wing's use of hands with their offspring seems grotesque. Afraid of his further "grotesqueness," many parents "had intended to hang the schoolmaster, but something in his figure, so small, white, and pitiful, touched their hearts and they let him escape" (15). Wing fled from there to live in Winesburg, his present town. Carelessness or misjudgment has perhaps been Wing's truth for a long time; he finally finds it a falsehood.

In his new town, Wing has to be careful with his hands; most of the time he conceals them in his pockets or behind his back even when he tells his story to the town reporter.

Wing becomes a recluse in Winesburg because his wish to blend learning with love had been fatally misunderstood in his earlier life. He reminisces with regret that "the hands must be to blame" (15).

Waldo Frank, a modernist critic, writes of the "grotesque" hands in the Industrial Age:

Hands, at the turn of the century, were making machines, making all sorts of things ("the thing is in the saddle"); making the world that was unmaking the tender, sensitive, intimate lives of
the folk in their villages and farms. Hands are made for loving; but hands making mechanical things grow callous, preoccupied . . . fail at love.  

For the past twenty years, Wing has still been the town mystery. He has lived alone, away from town. His failure of communication with others has thus alienated him from society. The only person he turns to is George Willard, who, he thinks, could help him. Wing tries to explain himself, like many other characters (to be studied next), to George, believing that he alone in this town has an instinct for finding the right words and using them honestly. The grotesque character hopes that George will some day speak what is in his (Wing's) heart and thus re-establish his connection with mankind. However, George is too young to understand his plight at the time; the reporter gives the poor man only a promise that he will become spokesman for inarticulate individuals like Wing Biddlebaum.

Anderson's next story to be examined is "The Strength of God." This is the grotesque story of a clergyman who cannot suppress his desire for voyeurism involving a next-door naked woman. When the minister allows the temptation to dominate his mind, even the strength of God (thus, the title) cannot restrain him from such an indecent practice towards his female parishioner.
The Reverend Curtis Hartman of the Winesburg Presbyterian Church, a married man, always prays and prepares for his Sunday services in the study room in the bell tower of the church. One day, the minister "was shocked to see, in the upper room of the house next door, a woman lying in bed and smoking a cigarette while she read a book" (173). The woman is a high school teacher in town, Kate Swift, who is not a traditional country lady—her experiences in Europe and New York City for over two years account for her "loose" manners (174). The minister has been obsessed with Kate's "neat trim-looking figure" ever since. More grotesquely, in order to peek into Kate's bedroom without any obstacle, Hartman breaks his church window with a stone precisely at the place where the figure of a boy stands "motionless and looking with rapt eyes into the face of the Christ" (176).

However, the reverend realizes his "sin" thus trying to seek God's "strength" to get rid of his immoral practice: "Please, Father, do not forget me. Give me power to go tomorrow and repair the hole in the window. Lift my eyes again to the skies. Stay with me, Thy servant, in his hour of need" (178). No matter how hard he has tried to conquer his carnal desire to look at the woman's body, the minister fails in it in spite of his certainty that "The Lord has devised this temptation as a test of my soul" (179).
Finally he admits his utter weaknesses, oblivious of his ministerial and marital responsibilities:

Man has a right to expect living passion and beauty in a woman. He has no right to forget that he is an animal and in me there is something that is Greek. I will throw off the woman of my bosom and seek other women. I will besiege this school teacher. I will fly in the face of all men and if I am a creature of carnal lusts I will live them for my lusts. (180)

Hartman has constantly practiced his voyeurism for all these days, ignoring his cold room in the church. His Peeping Tom game seems to come to an end when, one winter night, in the lamplight he sees "a naked woman threw herself. Lying face downward she wept and beat with her fists upon the pillow" (182). The minister grotesquely views Kate's action as her fervent praying. She also looks like Christ to him. With a changing mind, Rev. Hartman quits looking at the naked Kate but hurries down out of the church to tell this "divine" appearance to the town reporter: "What I took to be a trial of my soul was only a preparation for a new and more beautiful fervor of the spirit. God has appeared to me in the person of Kate Swift" (183). He also says he is satisfied with his deliverance.
The minister's next grotesque action is to smash the window so that it will be entirely replaced--no peeping hole remaining. Now, he has God's strength in him and he breaks the glass window with his bare fist.

Anderson understands the minister's plight--his voyeuristic impulse--when a chance is available to him. The author might imply that all "normal" males will practice voyeurism of a shapely young female, scantily clad or naked. The one truth to which he holds for so long is perhaps his passion. The minister is certainly a "normal" character but his surrounding world seems to be grotesque--his grotesqueness is then a result of the environment he lives in, plus his sudden uncontrollable desire. Anderson has sympathy for the poor minister who, "with grim determination" (180), is greatly desirous of a look at the young woman's figure in spite of a long, cold wait in his church room until Kate appears in her bedroom. But when the minister thinks that "God has manifested himself . . . in the body of a woman" (182), the author pities him: "With a cry he [Hartman] arose . . . " (182). His cry is perhaps interpreted that the minister repents for his sin in the presence of God (in Kate's naked body, as he realizes). After this episode, he destroys the instrumental peeping hole. He even praises the Lord for giving him strength to
do so. Anderson has thus given a spiritual life back to his creation.

The title of the next story leaves no doubt to the reader that it is a grotesque one--"Queer." Elmer Cowley, a young merchant, has no specific deformity: he is a grotesque as such. For years, Elmer has suffered silently because he thinks of his family (his parents, sister, and himself) as being queer (thus, the title)--all misfits in Winesburg. His father earlier sold his farm and bought a general store. Elmer's father has been a miserable failure as a merchant because of his inarticulateness--he feels ill at ease talking with people. Uncommunicative, Ebenezer's favorite expression is "I'll be washed and ironed and starched" (233). Elmer thinks that his father's queer expression, his unattractive store, and his awkwardness with his customers, cause townspeople to view the whole family as bizarre "grotesques." Elmer therefore intends to change this image.

However, Elmer, like his father, is inarticulate. But one day he wants to be as articulate as the town reporter, George Willard--he expresses his feeling with desperate force to a Jewish salesman--his inarticulateness turns into threats. His harsh speech is accompanied by his brandishing an empty pistol. He tells the salesman that he will do no more purchasing until some sales are made, and that he wants no more queer merchandise. He drives the salesman out of
the store. During all this time, his father has uttered no word (231-32).

Reflecting later upon his action towards the salesman, Elmer realizes his own queerness. Then he goes to see George to discuss his feelings. But when appearing face-to-face with the reporter, Elmer is unable to articulate any of his confused thoughts. When he tries to talk, his arms move unnaturally and his face twitches. In vain, he asks George to leave him alone.

Returning to the store, he takes twenty dollars from his father's cashbox and prepares to run away on the next train to Cleveland so that "he would no longer be queer and would make friends" there (241). However, before leaving, he summons George to the train station for one final talk. On the platform, in front of George, Elmer's grotesque inarticulateness recurs; his usual queer expression (identical with his father's, which he hates so much) comes out of his mouth: "Well, you see, I'll be washed and ironed and starched" (243). Then, he stuffs the money (he has taken from the cashbox) into George's hand, admitting that he has stolen it. Unable to articulate more, he strikes out desperately with his fists and begins "hitting George Willard blow after blow on the breast, the neck, the mouth" (243). Unable to give Elmer the love that might dissolve his queerness, George suffers the fate of the rejected
priest. Elmer, on the contrary, is proud of his "grotesque" action toward his Samaritan, saying repeatedly to himself, "I showed him. I guess I showed him. I ain't so queer. I guess I showed him I ain't so queer" (243).

In contrast to George, Elmer is by nature inarticulate and, consequently, unable to break out of his isolation. Elmer struggles in vain to make his feelings understood by others. Since he holds to his truth of unsociability for so long, he is often awkward and lacks confidence in the presence of other people. He is also incapable of responding to the understanding he wants so desperately when it is proffered. He certainly lacks intelligence; he has not enough real insight or imagination to guess that others might be in the same plight as he. His resentment about his isolation seems to intensify his dilemma. His rejection to George's friendship and compassion means that he clings to his belief, which, in the eyes of other characters, is grotesque. Elmer is thus feared and despised, especially by the traveling salesman. But Anderson understands Elmer, his own creation. It can be said that Elmer is portrayed as one of those Winesburg citizens whose plight is imposed upon him and is not at all the result of anything he has consciously done or willed. The author has also shown his sympathy for his inarticulate character--Anderson extends to him his helping hand when he writes of Elmer's departure for
Cleveland to a new life, a new hope: "He would get work in some shop and becomes friends with the other workmen. Gradually he would become like other men and would be indistinguishable" (241). However, it is doubtful if Anderson lets his (grotesque) characters escape and has their lives changed, as he himself escaped from the conferring paint business and became a successful writer. Cleveland B. Chase seems to have a negative perception of Anderson's treatment of his characters:

He [Anderson] has the comparatively rare gift of stating human problems validly; but once having stated them, he runs off, hysterically frightened at what he has done. He has sufficient insight into people, events, and emotions to broach a number of pertinent subjects, but not once, even in *Winesburg*, has he carried his investigations to the end without flinching." (80)

Irving Howe, a noted scholar on Anderson, likewise, views Anderson's grotesque figures as static or unchanged through time: "... they [central figures in *Winesburg*] are allowed no variations of action or opinion; they do not grow . . ." At the same time, he seems to encourage the reader to accept Anderson's "exceptional" characters as he writes:

The ultimate unity of the book is a unity of feeling, a sureness of warmth and a readiness to
accept Winesburg's lost grotesques with the embrace of humility. Many American writers have taken as their theme the loss of love in the modern world but few, if any at all, have so thoroughly realized it in the accents of love.³

In another collection, *The Triumph of the Egg* (1921), Anderson's two well-known stories--"The Egg" and "I Want to Know Why"--will be investigated for their grotesqueries. These two stories are concerned, more specifically, with the relationships between man-animal: man with chickens (eggs) and man with horses, respectively. These unusual relationships are perhaps viewed as grotesque; so are some actions and episodes.

"The Egg" is probably the best of the thirteen stories in the collection. This story has been called the epitome of Anderson's grotesques. It is a fantastic story filled with symbolism. Sometimes symbolism is clear enough, as, for example, when the egg represents life, but Anderson's symbolic language is not always so easily understood, especially by an Anderson beginner.

"The Egg," however grotesque the title name appears to be, is frequently reprinted in anthologies of outstanding fiction. An Anderson scholar, Robert Morss Lovett, praises Anderson's ability to demonstrate in this story "the terror in life before its vast unknowability and the pathos of its
trivial futility." Also, the stories in this collection are viewed and analyzed by Lawrence Gilman as "tales of trivial, gross, stunted, frustrated, joyless, ugly and twisted human lives--he [Anderson] is able to disclose... the infinite pitifulness of these souls who are ourselves."5

According to the introduction to Winesburg, Ohio, a "grotesque" is someone who seizes a single truth out of life and lives by that truth alone. The narrator's father in "The Egg" thus fits Anderson's definition of the word grotesque. This story is both pathetic and comical, particularly in its final scene.

The narrator's father, unnamed, like the narrator himself, has experienced a few jobs before ending up with his present one as a restaurant keeper--he worked as a farmhand in Bidewell, Ohio, before marriage; after marriage, he and his teacher wife with their young son (the narrator) went into chicken raising to suit "the American passion for getting up in the world."6 However, their chicken business turned out badly--diseases (pip and cholera, chiefly) killed most of the small chickens. The narrator laments his family's chicken business: "After ten years of worry with incubators that did not hatch, and with tiny--and in their own way--balls of fluff that passed on into semi-naked pullethood and from that into dead henhood, we threw all
aside and packing our belongings . . ." (49). They moved to downtown Pickleville and started the restaurant business.

With so much hardship all along in his working life, the father is now described by the narrator as a caricature: "a bald-headed man of forty-five, a little fat . . . There were two little patches of hair on father's head just above his ears. . . . his head was like a broad road, such a road as Caesar might have made on which to lead his legion out of Rome . . ." (50). The narrator also touches on his father's grotesque collection--"Grotesques [deformed chickens] are born out of eggs as out of people. . . . he saved all the little monstrous things that had been born on our chicken farm. They were preserved in alcohol and put each in its own glass bottle" (51-52). The father has had an idea that if he can bring into henhood or roosterhood a five-legged hen or a two-headed rooster he will become rich some day. He thus views his grotesques as prized possessions, and has to take very good care of them by placing them on a shelf back of the counter as a showcase.

Fortunately, their restaurant business goes well. Again, the American spirit enters the father's heart--he becomes highly ambitious and wants to put something more into his restaurant business. This time he thinks of entertaining his customers. But the kind of entertainment
is perhaps unlike any other the reader is familiar with.
The following episode is then a grotesque one.

The father tries to perform several "tricks" with an egg for Joe Kane's amusement. First he attempts to stand the egg on its end: at the moment he succeeds in standing it on end, Joe is no longer looking. When Joe looks again, the egg has rolled over on its side. Next he heats one egg in vinegar so that the shell will soften and the egg will fit into a bottle. But the entertainer is nervous and clumsy; and Joe, who is waiting for a train, is easily distracted. "The egg broke under his hand. When the contents spurted over his clothes, Joe Kane, who had stopped at the door, turned and laughed" (62). Angered by the young customer's laughter, the old man throws another egg at him but misses the target. With disappointment in launching this kind of entertainment, the father grabs another egg and runs upstairs to his wife and son, who learn that he is a complete failure--they comfort the crying old man at the story's end.

Actually, the father is a "natural" grotesque. His mental deformity is a result of his high ambition to expand his business by establishing some kind of entertainment, which, to the "normal" observers, is grotesque. But the father's grotesque manners and actions are mostly harmless,
as viewed by Joe Kane: "Joe Kane decided that the man who confronted him was mildly insane but harmless" (61).

Having experienced utter failure in his own notion of entertainment, the grotesque character turns to his family for consolation. To the other characters, like Joe Kane and several customers at the restaurant, the father can be viewed as grotesque, thus despised (by them). However, Anderson has shown the poor character his own pity and compassion, understanding that the grotesque figure wants to rise up in the business world—ambition is then his truth. His putting on a "grotesque" showcase and some bizarre entertainment to draw as many customers as possible is therefore reasonable. Unconscious of his grotesqueness in the eyes of his customers, the father then acts naturally and harmlessly.

When Anderson writes of the grotesque old man's crying in front of his family, admitting the failure of his singlehanded entertainment, the author has then given him a spiritual life: "He began to cry like a baby" (57). This signifies that the author has cared for his grotesque figure. While others may despise the grotesque, never will its creator.

The grotesque father has also been viewed as a sympathetic figure by an Anderson scholar, Rex Burbank, who states that the father's life has the same quality as an
egg—very fragile, refractory, and intractable in itself, concluding: "His [father's] natural diffidence will not permit him to compete on equal terms in the world of success . . . When he tries boldly to enter that dangerous world, he so far exceeds the limitations of his nature that he becomes grotesque, at once comical and pathetic."

Anderson's last story to be studied here is "I Want to Know Why," contained in the same collection as the previous story. The love of horses is central to the story, but the love seems so "abnormal" in the eyes of "normal" observers that it becomes grotesque.

It is the story of an unnamed boy (age fifteen) from Beckersville, Kentucky. He admits, at the story's opening, that "I can't help it, I'm crazy about thoroughbred horses" (9). To him, they epitomize something which is "so lovely and clean and full of spunk and honest" (10). The protagonist-narrator's association with horses seems to be crazy, as he has said: "More than a thousand times I've got out of bed before daylight and walked two or three miles to the tracks" (10). His parents are reluctant to deny the boy's "grotesque" pastime.

At ten years old, he was tricked by a friend to eat a half cigar so that he would be stunted and not grow anymore; his ambition to be a jockey was so high that he would do anything to attain it. However, his eating a cigar made him
sick and a doctor was sent for. His father did not allow him to become a stable boy either.

Because of his close connection to horses, the boy, unexaggeratingly, can sense a winner, but this is only to rejoice in him, never to exploit him—he hates gambling. His running away from home with three friends of about his own age to attend the races in Saratoga is therefore understandable. The boy perhaps dedicates himself to his love of horses and to the men at the stables and tracks whom he admires more than his own family.

The day of the races he goes to the paddock to look at the horses. As soon as he sees one of them, Sunstreak, a beautiful stallion, the boy knows that he has fallen in love at first sight with Sunstreak (14). His further statements about the graceful horse demonstrate that he will treat Sunstreak as a lover: "He is hard all over and lovely too. When you look at his head you want to kiss him."

About the boy's grotesque love for the stallion, Jon S. Lawry digs deep into Anderson's use of sexual terms in this passage, noting that the boy has a "crush" on the horse: "... that love is conveyed in openly sexual terms (the boy "aches" as he watches a "lovely" animal, which is "like a girl you think about sometimes but never see," and he feels like kissing the horse)." Lawry further states that the boy has a mystical sense of understanding that Sunstreak
can manipulate any way it likes (so as to mislead the gamblers): "... the boy adores Sunstreak, feeling with the horse (stallion) its enormous will and energy held under strong control." However, Lawry's writing of the boy's love for Sunstreak's trainer, Jerry Tillford, does not convey any sense of homosexual impulse toward Jerry: "... Jerry, whom--significantly--he now likes better than his own father."

Jerry, unlike his own father, evidently shares the boy's interests in thoroughbreds and racing; Jerry is also an authority on them, and his job puts him in a position to befriend the youth in terms of his interests. Moreover, he has always allowed the boy to walk right into the stables to examine horses freely. These favors may have made the boy think of Jerry Tillford as a kind of fatherly figure to him. Again, the boy's relationship to his mentor can be interpreted as symbolic incest as connected with the grotesque!

When Jerry with some of his friends goes to a whorehouse after his winning race, the boy, in order to "be as near Jerry as I could" (17), sneaks along after them to the outside of the place. In his innocent voyeurism, the boy finds Jerry's woman and her cohorts ugly and foul-mouthed. When the boy overhears Jerry bragging about himself that "he made that horse [Sunstreak] that it was him
that won the race and made the record" (18), he begins to hate Jerry, who has betrayed his love for Sunstreak. So, Jerry's actions shatter the boy's faith in his fatherly image. He asks himself in enraged bafflement: "What did he do it for? I want to know why" (thus, the title). The boy's ending statements reveal how very furious he becomes when his "lover" stallion is dishonored (by Jerry, its own trainer): "I wanted to scream and rush in the room and kill him [Jerry]. I never had such a feeling before. I was so mad clean through that I cried and my fists were doubled up so my finger nails cut my hands" (19). What a grotesque but sympathetic sight the boy is creating!

Anderson himself had been very fond of horses since his childhood in Clyde, Ohio. The race tracks became then his milieu. His tales and sketches of *Horses and Men* (1923), verify his authority on horses. His own father, like Jerry Tillford, was an expert on horses. Therefore, Anderson could catch the colors, the lights and shadows, and the spirit of the race tracks. It is no surprise that his portrayal of horses and men in "I Want to Know Why" is informative, especially to the audience with no knowledge in this field.

Furthermore, because of his association with horses and people who are intimately involved with them, Anderson wrote with a deep understanding of these characters and their
relationships with their animals. The boy, who has had a grotesque infatuation with a prized stallion, also receives sympathy from Anderson when he lives a different life after that final depressing episode in Saratoga: "But things are different. At the tracks the air don't taste as good or smell as good" (19). The boy may now have very sad feelings—no one but his creator will stand by his side and comfort him.

Anderson's demonstration of affection and compassion toward his creations is also viewed approvingly by Lionel Trilling, one of America's most distinguished literary critics and a contemporary of Anderson: "Is it strange that, with all Anderson's expressed affection for them [his creations], we ourselves can never love the characters he creates?" This favorable criticism will certainly enable the reader to re-consider his or her attitude toward the grotesque.

In the next section, another modernist non-Southern writer of the grotesque, Nathanael West, will be studied along with his two "grotesque" novels—*Miss Lonelyhearts* (1933) and *The Day of the Locust* (1939).

Nathanael West (1904-1940), the pseudonym for Nathan Weinstein, a New Yorker, published four novels during his short life. He is, however, remembered primarily for the above two works. In both, West applied cinematic style
because he had been a screenwriter for several picture companies in Hollywood during the last decade of his life. Not until the appearance of the Complete Works (1957) was West popularly recognized. Critics have been examining his novels extensively and thus have elevated him to high rank. West's fiction brought some type of the grotesque dark humor into prominence, especially during the last phase of American Modernism. Even some Southern writers, for instance, Flannery O'Connor and Carson McCullers, were inspired by this genre.

Miss Lonelyhearts, probably the best of West, is a grotesque novel. The unnamed protagonist--the title character--and the clownish Peter Doyle are grotesque, as well as some episodes in this novel, according to my examination.

The title character is the unnamed writer of a newspaper (New York Post-Dispatch) column. His advice column seems to attract correspondents from all walks of life: "On most days he received more than thirty letters, all of them alike, stamped from the dough of suffering with a heart-shaped cookie knife."¹⁰ His column is better known as the "agony" one because those who write him are presently in agony, obviously shown by the abstract names such as "Sick-of-it-all" and "Desperate." They speak of
their woe, desperation, and suffering. For example, "Sick-of-it-all" is tortured by her husband and has excruciating kidney pains in her eighth pregnancy. As a Catholic, she cannot have an abortion. She thus begs advice on this matter. "Desperate" is a malformed teenage girl, yearning for dates like other (normal) girls. She pleads with Miss Lonelyhearts to tell her why she deserves such a fate. The columnist thus becomes increasingly obsessed with the genuine sufferings of his correspondents. As he is their only hope of salvation, he cannot ignore them, but helps his fellow men, suffers for and with them, becomes like the living Christ.

Irving Malin treats Miss Lonelyhearts, the advice columnist, "Sick-of-it-all," and "Desperate" including those with abstract names as grotesques. He writes: "Like Miss Lonelyhearts, "Sick-of-it-all" has no name except the abstract quality. People without identity are abstract, stylized, grotesque."  

Similarly, McElroy, surprisingly, views the letters sent to the columnist as grotesque: "The letters themselves may indeed be 'profoundly humble pleas,' but they are also grotesque parodies of human suffering" (136).

In the eyes of his feature editor, William Shrike, the lovelorn columnist's clothing and appearance are perhaps grotesque—he is dressed like a priest—"His forehead was
high and narrow. His nose was long and fleshless. His long chin was shaped and cleft like a hoof." The cynical editor despises him and mentions to his staff: "The Susan Chesters, the Beatrice Fairfaxes and the Miss Lonelyhearts are the priests of twentieth-century America" (68). Shrike, as a matter of fact, has charged Miss Lonelyhearts with writing the lovelorn column so as to "snare" readers.

The protagonist later comes in contact with a grotesque couple (the Doyle's) through a similar correspondence. Mrs. Doyle, unhappily married to a cripple, asks to meet him personally in the park. The description of Mrs. Doyle seems to be more grotesque than that of the protagonist. In his eyes, everything in her body is grotesquely gigantic: "legs like Indian clubs, breasts like balloons, and a brow like a pigeon . . . she looked like a police captain" (100); "her massive hams were like two enormous grindstones" (101). Because her husband is "all dried up," she is not ashamed to seduce the young columnist—-they end up satisfactorily.

Next comes Doyle's letter to Miss Lonelyhearts. The cripple hands it to him in a bar where he has been waiting to do so. Doyle appears as a caricature to the columnist: "The cripple had a very strange face. His eyes failed to balance; his mouth was not under his nose; his forehead was square and bony; and his round chin was like a forehead in
miniature" (124). Doyle also conveys his wife's message to have the columnist for dinner at their house.

The episode at the Doyles is regarded as grotesque when Mrs. Doyle, furious at her husband's rudeness: "Ain't I the pimp, to bring home a guy for my wife?" strikes him on the mouth with a rolled newspaper. The clownish husband grotesquely "growled like a dog and caught the paper in his teeth. When she let go of her end, he dropped to his hands and knees and continued the imitation on the floor." When the columnist stoops to lift the cripple, "Doyle tore open Miss Lonelyhearts' fly, then rolled over on his back, laughing wildly" (128). Contemptuously, the wife kicks her husband for his grotesquerie.

At the story's end, the columnist quits his job with the newspaper—he wants to have a new life with his fiancee on a Connecticut farm, but his wish is cut short when Doyle pays an uninvited visit to his apartment. This last scene is a sympathetic one. West does not want the reader to admire Miss Lonelyhearts—he makes him feverish at the beginning of the last chapter. West associates his character with Christ: "He fastened his eyes on the Christ that hung on the wall opposite his bed. As he stared at it, it became a bright fly, spinning with quick grace on a background of blood velvet sprinkled with tiny nerve stars" (138). His shout of "Christ! Christ!" miraculously
alleviates his fever and brightens his dark room--his identification with Christ is then complete. In other words, the columnist has now had a religious experience (thus, the title of the chapter). When Doyle appears at his door, he runs to succor him with love. The author here portrays Miss Lonelyhearts as Christ to cure the crippled poor man: "God had sent him [Doyle] so that Miss Lonelyhearts could perform a miracle and be certain of his conversion. It was a sign. He would embrace the cripple and the cripple would be made whole again" (139). But the columnist's sign is misunderstood by Doyle, thinking that he is perhaps going to strangle him with his arms spread like that. The two men struggle; then appears Betty, the columnist's fiancee. Her well-meaning gestures startle them. When Doyle's gun, hidden by the very pages of Miss Lonelyhearts' column, goes off finally--"Miss Lonelyhearts fell, dragging the cripple with him. They both rolled part of the way down the stairs" (140). Both grotesque characters have died still clinging together.

West alternates between pity and compassion for the social aberrations of modern society and contempt for the trivial values people so desperately embrace. West has shown his moral support to Miss Lonelyhearts, the grotesque protagonist, when he writes of the columnist's receiving grace before his death. Doyle, the other grotesque in the
novel, has also, implicitly, received grace through the Christlike Miss Lonelyhearts' embrace. West has thus demonstrated his care and affection for his grotesque creations. Edmond L. Volpe, a modernist critic, on his part, writes of the reader's sympathy for the grotesque protagonist: "... the inhumanity of Shrike's joke is far more repulsive than Miss Lonelyhearts's delusion. When the reader is returned in the next scene to the hero's consciousness, he [the reader] is more inclined to sympathy than before..."

In *The Day of the Locust*, another clownish character comes into view. McEnroy comments on West's portrayal of the clownish figures in his fiction: "The beaten clown is an appropriate type for modern man as seen in West's fiction. He is a pathetic victim, rendered ludicrous and grotesque by forces over which he has no control and for whose existence he is in no way to blame. But at the same time, his very helplessness and bumbling good intentions are primarily what make him the object of abuse and sadistic glee" (133).

Another grotesque character in this novel is Homer Simpson--his first name, Irving Malin explains, ironically marries classical wisdom and simpleton behavior (92). These two grotesque characters, according to Tod Hackett, the artist-protagonist, have come to California (Hollywood) to die.
The artist's grotesque name "Tod" means "death" in German since his painting "The Burning of Los Angeles" carries a prophetic connotation of "death"—death to those who come to the city.

West's working title of this novel was The Cheated. The Day of the Locust refers in its title to the plague of locusts inflicted on Paroah in Exodus. Those who have dreamed of glamor in the golden West rush to California, but what they finally encounter is entirely phony and dead. In other words, they are all cheated. Though they are transported to the California Mecca of dreams, these characters are as stunted and crushed as Anderson's grotesque, pathetic Midwesterners.

Often considered the best novel on Hollywood, the work actually uses this make-believe realm as a symbol of the mad-cap futility of modern (American) society.

Harry, a former clown with the Oriental acrobats, has come to Hollywood with his teenage daughter "thinking to earn a living playing comedy bits in films. There proved to be little demand for his talents, however" (284). He has not been able to find such a job; he takes to selling silver polish, instead. He thus earns a meager income which is often not enough for his rent and his drinking. Whenever he comes to know someone, his clowning spills over grimly into real life. For example, when he meets Homer for the first
time, Harry does various clownish tricks, juggling his derby hat, bowing, and jerking his body (299). They discuss the price of silver polish. After a while, thinking that his clownish performance might not be enough for Homer, Harry practices a victim's laugh in order to complete the sale. But the laugh gets out of hand; it somehow crosses the line into self-pity and leaves him exhausted (300). Then, he forcefully acts again "like a mechanical toy that had been overwound, something snapped inside of him and he began to spin through his entire repertoire" (301) until his body becomes spastic and then collapses. Homer, nevertheless, does not appreciate the clown's grotesque act in the least.

Harry, entirely hopeless in getting a decent job, lives a miserable life in Hollywood. He soon dies of heart failure, leaving not a penny to his daughter. Faye has to seek prostitution to earn enough money for her father's decent funeral.

Another grotesque character in this novel is Homer, a former bookkeeper at a hotel in Iowa, his home state. He "migrates" to Hollywood to try his luck. When the protagonist sees him with Harry, he "knew very little about them except that they had come to California to die" (261). Irving Malin comments on West's purpose of introducing both grotesque characters in the same chapter: "The fact that West introduces both Harry and Homer in the same chapter may
be intentional. Perhaps he wants us to associate these two. They are failures, having left or never entered Hollywood society" (92).

One of Homer's grotesqueries is the use of his hands. (The fluttering hands of Homer are obviously modeled upon those of Wing Biddlebaum in Anderson's "Hands.") His hands are not passive as other parts of his body because they contain the violent energy his body tries to suppress. Homer must control his hands by various ritualistic activities—by plunging them into cold water; hiding them in a towel; and trying to forget them (289). In the eyes of Tod, Homer's playing tricks with his hands is bizarre and grotesque (389).

Because of his weak character, Homer is never attracted to women, especially Faye, to whom he has always given help, spiritually and materialistically. He has allowed her to move in with him (after her father's death), free of charge. Under the same roof, he cannot make her share the affectionate feelings he has toward her. Once, at a bar, upon watching a homosexual show, Faye says (to all men present, Tod, Homer, and other men of their group) that she hates "fairies," then turns to Homer and asks him the meaning of the word fairies, implying that Homer is one of the "fairies" she has just mentioned. Seeing Homer's
grotesquely weak personality, the young beauty does not have her heart set for him.

Whenever Homer feels an attack of ennui, he is fond of amusing himself with the only words he knows: "Oh, say can you see,/ By the dawn's early light . . ." (314). At the age of forty, the National Anthem is the only song that Homer can ever sing. But for a grotesque like Homer, one is better than nothing. Worse, with no sign or hope of love from Faye, Homer is so miserable that he cries. His crying, however, receives the author's concern and pity when he writes: "... like Homer, whose anguish is basic and permanent, no good comes from crying. Nothing changes for them. They usually know this, but still can't help crying"; "Homer was lucky. He cried himself to sleep" (315).

In the final scene, Homer is seen leaving Hollywood for his hometown in Iowa. With total deception (from the golden world) and hopelessness in life, Homer looks, in the eyes of Tod, "like a badly made automaton"; his appearance is even more grotesque because of his open fly and his unbalanced suitcases (412). The celluloid world is not for Homer or Harry.

West has obviously shown his sympathy and concern for those who have been "there" and, perhaps, for those who might think of coming to California for their luck, when he states: "The sun is a joke. Oranges can't titillate their
jaded palates. Nothing can ever be violent enough to make
taut their slack minds and bodies. They have been cheated
and betrayed. They have slaved and saved for nothing" (412).

McElroy also praises West's spirit of good will toward
his grotesque creations in the two novels just studied: "In
both of West's successful novels, Miss Lonelyhearts and The
Day of the Locust, we are consistently presented pity or
compassion shown toward a person in misery . . ." (133).

The last section of this chapter is dedicated to the
study of Steinbeck's grotesque (short) novel Of Mice and Men
and his grotesque short story "The Snake."

John Steinbeck (1902-1968), another American recipient
of the Nobel Prize for Literature, in 1962, gave prominence
to his native locality--the Salinas Valley--in several
pieces of his writing, especially Of Mice and Men (1937) and
The Grapes of Wrath (1938). The former has been made into
movies of different versions since the publication of the
fiction.

In Of Mice and Men (its former title, Something That
Happened), the author first experimented with writing a
play-novella--he once adapted this novella into a Broadway
play by himself. The grotesque concept of the human body is
accounted for in this fiction. Lennie, one of the two
protagonists, has uncontrollable physical strength. His
bizarre character results in his death in the end because of this grotesqueness, however "natural" it seems to be.

At the story's opening, Steinbeck introduces the audience to his protagonists of different sizes:

The first man was small and quick, dark of face, with restless eyes and sharp, strong features. Every part of him was defined: small, strong hands, slender arms, a thin and bony nose. Behind him walked his opposite, a huge man, shapeless of face, with large, pale eyes, with wide, sloping shoulders; and he walked heavily, dragging his feet a little, the way a bear drags its paws.13

These are two single farm workers--George Milton and Lennie Small. Through the opening dialogue, the reader comes to know and believe in the touching partnership of the gruff protector and his half-witted giant protege. Then, the small but clever George blames his "opposite" for the latter's uncontrollable use of his enormous and powerful hands. Lennie's hands are unlike those of Anderson's Wing Biddlebaum or of West's Homer Simpson--the giant's hands love stroking soft things such as velvet, silk, fur (inanimate), puppies, rabbits, mice (animate, thus the title). With no control of his great power, Lennie always crushes soft creatures in his powerful hands. George warns Lennie not to feel women's dresses again as though they were
mice (to Lennie) so that they will not again get in trouble because of Lennie's grotesque behavior (24-25).

Next, the audience sees both itinerant George and Lennie at Curley's ranch as workers. Once a farmhand himself in his native Salinas Valley, the author understands these farm workers' plights and hardships. They wish for no more loneliness and dream of better lives with their own farm to work on. Such characters as the protagonists and Candy, an old swamper, their acquaintance on Curley's ranch, have dreamed of owning a joint farm among them, saying "We could live offa the fatta the lan'" (101). But Crooks, another outcast and black "philosopher" on the ranch, realizes that these poor men's dreams are like "castles in Spain." Crooks's philosophy proves to be true at the story's end. His statements are:

I seen hundreds of men come by on the road an' on the ranches, with their bindles on their back an' that same damn thing in their heads. Hundreds of them. They come, an' they quit an' go on; an' every damn one of 'em's got a little piece of land in his head. An' never a God damn one of 'em ever gets it" (129).

The grotesquely towering half-wit, who has to turn to his protector every time he is faced with a "problem," gets involved, innocently at first, with the flirtatious wife of
young Curley, the boss's violent son. This time, George being in town with other farmhands and Lennie being alone in the barn, Curley's wife, lonely, desirous of someone to talk to, even a "dum-dum" as she once calls Lennie (137), comes into the barn. She admires Lennie, who, she knows, has even hurt her boxing husband. (Curley actually told her his injured hand was caught in a machine.) After a while, she lets Lennie feel her hair because he has told her of his peculiar fondness for soft things. Through a series of unfortunate circumstances Lennie becomes frightened and unintentionally kills the woman. Later, Curley organizes a posse to capture Lennie, dead or alive, but George knows very well that the brutal man must kill his companion on the spot. Grotesquely, George will go to put away mercifully his friend himself, to let him die in full enjoyment of their common dream.

The final encounter between the two comrades, followed by their innocent dialogue, is one of the most touching and sympathetic episodes in American fiction, in which George puts to death his longtime companion and protege. The reader will perhaps feel pity for the "naturally" grotesque character, whose dream of tending rabbits on his own farm never comes true.

Steinbeck has let his grotesque character cry twice (21, 176)—the first is after he has escaped with George
from lynching on another ranch, the second is after he has escaped by himself from the crime scene. Lennie's tears are probably signs of his repentence--he has caused serious trouble twice in spite of his friend's frequent warnings. Steinbeck, however, writes with an understanding of and thus shows his sympathy for the grotesque character. Warren French, who has extensively studied Steinbeck and has written several books on him, states that the novella shows Steinbeck in possession of characters for whom he has sympathy, especially the less fortunate ones like Lennie. French concludes that "readers who spoke of Of Mice and Men as sentimental should think of it as an expression of Steinbeck's outraged compassion for the victims of chaotic forces."  

Similarly, Mark Spilka seems to act as spokesman for many readers of this fiction when he touches on the sympathy shown to the outcast farm workers, particularly Lennie:

> Of Mice and Men remains his [Steinbeck's] most compelling tribute to the force . . . And once more it must be said to move us, too. For however contradictory it seems, our sympathy for these characters, indeed their love for each other, is founded more deeply in the humanness of that impulse than in its humanitarian disguises.
In Steinbeck's short story "The Snake" (1938), the episode is grotesque—a nameless mysterious woman comes to purchase a rattlesnake from a biologist, but the strange woman only wants to watch the snake eat a rat. However, she never returns to the laboratory as she has said. The description of the woman gives a peculiar image of the snake itself: "She was dressed in a severe dark suit—her straight black hair, growing low on a flat forehead . . . Her black eyes glittered in the strong light." Moreover, the protagonist (Dr. Phillips) notices her a cold-blooded amphibian: "Low metabolic rate, almost as low as a frog's, from the looks" (77). He also observes "how short her chin . . . between lip and point" (78). With the thought of her being some kind of snake herself, Dr. Phillips seems to be in dread of her. From this moment on, he has to watch out for her further movements: "Out of the corner of his eye he saw her body crouch and stiffen" (83); "She was weaving too [as the snake was]" (83). After the rat has been killed, it is she who relaxes sleepily, satiated; and when the snake swallows the entire rat, the biologist fears that "If she's opening her mouth, I'll be sick. I'll be afraid" (85). The big woman's footsteps on the wooden stairs are so soft that the scientist imagines she "crawls" away and disappears.

After the woman's departure, Dr. Phillips "tried to comb out his thought as he looked at the torpid snake. He
thought 'Maybe I'm too much alone'" (88). Charles E. May interprets the young scientist's loneliness and his encounter with the mysterious woman:

Indeed the doctor has been visited by the mythic force because he is alone. Cut off from life by his sole attention to the observation of life, cut off from any spiritual realm by his concern for the scientific, the doctor remains outside that "solidarity of life" which ultimately is religious. Perhaps realizing this, yet helpless to do anything about it, the doctor admits, "If I knew--no, I can't pray to anything. (334-35)

The young scientist's situation is not neglected by Steinbeck, who wrote with an understanding of a scientist's serious but lonely life--because of much dedication to experiments, a scientist has to restrict himself to his world, thus alienating his society. His grotesque imagination of a snake-woman could result from his intense involvement in his work. The author shows his concern and sympathy for a devoted professional like a scientist.

When readers are encouraged by the author to show sympathy for the grotesque creation, their attitude towards it also changes--they now understand its condition, its plight, and its naturalness. Therefore, they share the authorial care and compassion--the essentials of American
modernist writers' attitudes towards the grotesque. The
grotesque, which, previously, was something to hate, fear or
despise, begins to be viewed as something to love, trust or
respect.
CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

Hawthorne's Reverend Hooper has never had a vision of Christ as revealed in the flesh of a naked woman before his eyes. This does not mean that, as a religious man, he has had no relationships with his female parishioners. The girl, whose funeral he is attending, is startled face-to-face with the veiled minister, as witnessed by the town doctor's wife. Rev. Hooper's passion for the flesh is elaborately manipulated by a famous nineteenth-century writer, while that of Rev. Hartman, a modernist creation by Anderson, seems to be distinguishable as the minister himself conveys his vision to the town reporter. The treatment of fictional grotesque characters through different periods in American literature is thus not alike: during the earlier period, the grotesque was something to despise, to fear, or to hate, but, during Modernism it receives more recognition, even regarded as a "natural" way of life. Therefore, the grotesque becomes increasingly something to respect, to embrace, or to love.
Moreover, a prominent theme of religion, precisely Christianity, is dealt with by most of the (studied) modernist writers, as seen in Anderson, West, O'Connor, and Steinbeck. Anderson's "The Strength of God," West's Miss Lonelyhearts, O'Connor's "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," and Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men have similarities in their religious theme—grace. Rev. Hartman's voyeuristic practice turns out to be "positive" when, in his own terms, he has a vision of God appearing in the shapely naked body of a school teacher—this miraculous revelation of God enables the minister to forget his grotesque activity to turn to worshiping the Lord. He realizes that he has received grace through this episode, then hurries to narrate this event to the reporter.

Miss Lonelyhearts, the writer of the advice column (in a newspaper), always suffers with and for his anguished correspondents. As a minister's son, he knows how to help relieve the plights of these sufferers. When his own suffering finally comes to him, he looks at the Christ on the wall of his bedroom. As he stares at it, it becomes a shiny fly, spinning gracefully. The grotesque protagonist acknowledges the presence of Christ, thus enabling him to receive grace—resulting in the relief of his feverish pains.
Similarly, the grandmother in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" is not ignored by O'Connor, who, according to James F. Farnham, "is a Christian writer acutely aware of grace, a writer whose talents impel her to the portrayal of a contemporary society deformed by its disavowal of grace." O'Connor has the Misfit put the grandmother away mercifully in her dream of having received grace.

The Misfit, in spite of his idea of killing all the Baileys including the grandmother when his identity is revealed by the old lady, is believed by Marion Montgomery to receive grace, even more than the grandmother, from his creator:

One may believe, as Miss O'Connor does, that the Misfit has a capacity for grace greater than that of the grandmother. One may even suppose the possibility, perhaps even the probability, of the Misfit's conversion; but one does not thereby conclude his rescue an inevitable dictate of inexorable grace.²

As for Steinbeck's grotesque character, the half-wit with enormous physical strength in Of Mice and Men, Lennie has to die because he has no mentality to control his towering energy. His unintentional killing of young Curley's wife results in his imminent lynching by her revengeful husband and his men. He has to escape to a
hiding place where, he thinks, his companion will come to rescue him. Considering the bestial punishment his friend is going to receive, George hurries to meet Lennie before the others and puts him away mercifully while the latter is still dreaming of the Promised Land across the river.

Concerning a religious interpretation of the concluding scene between the two comrades, Lee Dacus says that perhaps Lennie is a Christian and that George is Christ. Dacus' interpretation then implies that Lennie has received grace through his friend's hand:

If, then, Lennie serves as the Christian figure, we are forced to conclude that George, in the role of Lennie's only friend, his source of protection, aid, faith, and finally the instrument of death, must stand, though much less well-defined, as the Christ figure. . . . in the manner of a Good Shepherd. 3

While the implied theme of grace is dominant in the modernist writing, it was not prominent in the earlier American period, particularly in the nineteenth century. The modernist attitudes towards grace for the grotesque signify that there have been some changes since Irving, Poe, and Hawthorne. The earlier writers do not take the subject of grace seriously. Nor do they do the subject of authorial sympathy for the grotesque.
All six (studied) modernist writers each show their pity and sympathy for their grotesque characters. For example, O'Connor has Parker cry like a baby when his attempts to fascinate his wife by his Christ tattoo on his back ("Parker's Back") have failed and thus has been beaten by his wife. Anderson lets the former chicken farmer cry when his egg tricks ("The Egg") have failed to attract his customers in his new restaurant business. West allows Homer Simpson (The Day of the Locust) to cry when he has received no affection from a beautiful girl who has moved to live in his house. Steinbeck touches on Lennie's twice crying to show that he pities the half-witted giant for having caused trouble (twice) to himself and to his companion. As for Faulkner and McCullers, their grotesque characters do not cry (as to seek the authors' pity and sympathy). Anse Bundren is shown sympathy by Faulkner when he is denied a pair of false teeth by his domineering wife—he has been a toothless gangling bumpkin for a long time. Immediately after his wife's funeral, the author allows him to have such dentures and, more, a new wife. McCullers, in The Ballad of the Sad Cafe, has the grotesquely huge Miss Amelia sit alone every night for three years waiting for the return of her beloved cousin. The author has thus revealed her spiritual support for the unfortunate woman.
Furthermore, the grotesque concept of the human body—modeled upon Rabelais' theory—is taken by O'Connor in "The Lame Shall Enter First" and "Good Country People"; by McCullers in The Ballad of the Sad Cafe; by Steinbeck in Of Mice and Men; and by West in Miss Lonelyhearts. Rufus Johnson is a physically deformed grotesque--a clubfoot--who refuses his mentor's generous offer of a right-fitting shoe. Joy-Hulga Hopewell wears a wooden leg because of a longtime gun accident. Her artificial leg grotesquely becomes a collection item of another (mental) grotesque, Manley Pointer. Miss Amelia and her cousin, Lymon, earn such terms as gigantism and dwarfism to describe their respective body structure. Miss Amelia, in fact, beats her ex-husband in a grotesque fistfight between the sexes if her cousin does not help her rival. Lennie is portrayed by Steinbeck as a superhuman character as far as physical strength is concerned. However, his mind is not so compatible with his bodily strength that he is always in trouble. His "opposite" is the one who ends his life mercifully. The Doyle couple in West's Miss Lonelyhearts fits into the grotesque concept of the body--the wife is bizarrely gigantic; the husband is a cripple. He also has another grotesquerie besides his physical one--his imitating of a dog to please his frustrated wife.
The following two characters are regarded as "natural" grotesques because what they do is never pretentious or sophisticated but natural. Anse Bundren in Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* and the unnamed father of the narrator in Anderson's "The Egg" are farmers. Anse acts naturally when he asks his wife's permission to buy new false teeth in Jefferson. The latter's denial of his desire does not make him angry with her. He waits until she dies to get what he has yearned for. His getting a new wife in the city to replace his dead wife is quite natural— he needs someone to be his companion at old age. The chicken farmer (the unnamed character) in "The Egg" has preserved grotesquely-deformed chickens in bottles with an aim to displaying them to his customers when he is going to open a restaurant in town. His egg tricks are also aimed to increase the number of customers. The chicken farmer's "grotesque" actions are viewed as natural. How else can we expect the two farmers to act if not by the way they have been brought up?

O'Connor's Joy-Hulga, a Ph.D. in philosophy, Faulkner's Quentin, a Harvard student, and West's unnamed well-known columnist, these grotesques are perhaps intellectuals. However, their intellect cannot help them solve their problems they have faced in real life— only Joy-Hulga escapes death but receives disgrace when she is grotesquely "beaten" by the seemingly naive provincial Bible salesman.
The next category of the grotesque which I have examined among these modernist writers is that Faulkner, West, and McCullers have treated husband and wife and close kin with their grotesqueries. Anse and Addie Bundren are the grotesque couple in *As I Lay Dying*; the Doyles in *Miss Lonelyhearts*; and Miss Amelia and Cousin Lymon (both cousins) in *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe*.

The last category of the grotesque, according to my investigation, is that almost all grotesque characters' lives do not have happy endings. All except Anderson write of the deaths of almost all grotesque characters at the close of the fiction. In other words, most of the modernist writers' fiction has no conventional happy ending.

Whatever (ill) fate the above social aberrations must face during their lifetimes, they continue their activities in spite of being despised, feared, or mistrusted by other characters around them. Their "exceptional" behavior and actions are often rejected by the "normal" observers in the modernist fiction, but these bizarre grotesques are usually treated with a deep understanding by their creators as natural and quite accepted fellow human beings. The writers' moral support of their grotesque can be interpreted that the latter will come out positively to the audiences as something unaccustomed to (prior to Modernism) appreciation, love, and trust. The reading public's acceptance of the
exceptional seems to be a new phenomenon in American literature. Anderson, Faulkner, West, Steinbeck, McCullers, and O'Connor have fulfilled their aims in the creation of the grotesque to be accepted by the modern world.
NOTES

Chapter II

1Noah Webster's American Dictionary of the English Language, published in 1831, defined "grotesque" as "wildly formed; whimsical; ludicrous; antic."

The Oxford English Dictionary, published in 1747, defined "grotesque" as "ludicrous from incongruity; fantastically absurd."

Chapter IV

1George Wetzel, "Irving's Rip Van Winkle," Explicator 10 (June 1952), item 54.


3Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Complete Works, 20 vols. (Cambridge: Riverside, 1900) I, 43. Subsequent references are to this edition and are given by volume number and page number parenthetically in the text.

Chapter V

1The term was coined by Gertrude Stein during her expatriate days in Paris in the 1920s.
Chapter VI


4William Faulkner, As I Lay Dying (NY: Random House, 1957) 114. Subsequent references are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text.


Chapter VII


2"Some Aspects," 43.

3Flannery O'Connor, The Complete Stories (NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1971) 177. Subsequent references are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text.


7Carson McCullers, The Complete Novels and Stories (Boston: Houghton and Mifflin, 1951) 498. Subsequent references are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text.


Chapter VIII

1Sherwood Anderson, Wineburg, Ohio (NY: Modern Library, 1947) 9. Subsequent references are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text.


"Sherwood Anderson, *The Triumph of the Egg* (NY: B. W. Huebsch, Inc., 1921) 47. Subsequent references are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text.


8Jon S. Lawry, "Love and Betrayal in Sherwood Anderson's 'I Want to Know Why,'" *Shenandoah* 13 (Spring 1962) 46-54.


10Nathanael West, *The Complete Works* (NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux) 66. Subsequent references are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text.


13John Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men* (NY: Modern Library, 1937) 9. Subsequent references are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text.


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16 John Steinbeck, "The Snake" in The Long Valley (NY: Viking Press, 1938) 75. Subsequent references are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text.

Chapter IX


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