Tales of "Darkness Fringed with Light": Unmastered Women in Faulkner, McCarthy and Morrison

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Introduction

William Faulkner's profound and lasting influence[1] upon two of the most important contemporary American writers, Toni Morrison and Cormac McCarthy, has often been taken for granted. The following essay will attempt to trace that "influence" in some detail, by focusing upon the "intertexuality" at play in three powerful novels: specifically, upon the character of Lena Grove from *Light in August* (1932), the first in a line of what Morrison calls "unmastered women," a genealogy that passes through Rinthy Holme in McCarthy's *Outer Dark* (1968) and Florens in Morrison's *A Mercy* (2008). Lena serves in many ways as the lynchpin of *Light in August*, as Faulkner himself contended (though this view has not gone unopposed by critics). After examining her function in the text, I will show how the figure of a young woman on a perilous journey—in André Bleikasten's words, "set against a background of pastoral stillness, a tale of darkness fringed with light"—also provides the inspiration and narrative framework for McCarthy's and Morrison's novels.

These are three hauntingly beautiful texts, each of which could easily be named *Dark House* (as is well known, the original title for both *Light in August* and *Absalom, Absalom!*); however, at present, there are no studies that bring the three novels together in any rigorous way. This is one of the main goals of my essay; another is to address, albeit to a very limited extent, the question of Faulkner's "influence" upon two of the most talented and important contemporary American authors—one being Morrison, whose

work has been examined in relation to Faulkner's to a great extent, particularly after she won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1993, and the other being McCarthy, whose debt to Faulkner is often assumed or taken for granted but rarely examined in detail.[2]

With each text, I will focus upon the Lena Grove-like figure and what I take to be her function in the narrative. I will also examine various textual elements—more specifically, shifts in narration or centers of narrative consciousness, the pastoral setting, and the motifs of darkness and light—and how they combine to transform this figure and her journey. I'll also offer a tentative conclusion by speculating upon that transformation—in other words, how the Lena Grove-figure and her quest in the two more recent novels have been transformed—and what this may tell us about these two important, and profoundly Faulknerian, contemporary American writers. Looking ahead to my conclusion, I want to suggest that McCarthy's work reflects the context of the American war in Vietnam, during which it was composed and published, while Morrison's novel expresses a more recent desire to achieve some sort of "postracial" society by imagining a "preracial" past, a time when racial categories were less fixed and more fluid.

One way that we might connect the three figures and texts is by focusing our attention upon the authors' use of myth or allegory. Carolyn Denard, in fact, has argued for a "mythical consciousness" (a term she borrows from Ernst Cassirer) shared by Faulkner and Morrison, an awareness that almost certainly informs what Morrison refers to as the writer's "gaze." This phenomenon is described by Denard as follows:

> Both Faulkner and Morrison look directly in an unblinking way at those believed not worthy of our gaze and suggest that no matter their difference or their faults, there is an equalizing value in their being. We find a redemptive possibility in Morrison's and Faulkner's focus on the discredited [Morrison's term, denoting 'those believed not worthy of our gaze'] […] The expanse of the mythical gaze in the works of both Faulkner and Morrison is perhaps most clearly evident in

> their use of allusions and analogies from ancient mythologies—African, Hebrew, Greek, and northern European. (24)

Surely, Cormac McCarthy can be added to this group, both in terms of his ability to "look directly in an unblinking way" at the "discredited," as well as in his possession of an equally strong "mythical consciousness;" however, in McCarthy's work, there seems to be very little "redemptive possibility" in what is, at times, the author's rather pitiless gaze—as is the case with *Outer Dark*, for example. Nevertheless, it is this allegorical or "mythical gaze," resting upon these "discredited" characters—including those female characters who Morrison in *A Mercy* calls "unmastered women"—to which I would like to turn in my discussion of the three novels, beginning with *Light in August* and Lena Grove.

Lena and "the mystic light of August"[3]

Before we begin examining the text in any detail, we should note the title and consider the significance of Lena's name—something that she has in common with her descendants, Rinthy and Florens, whose names are equally resonant. This may also allow us a convenient way to approach the question of Lena's place in the novel. Cleanth Brooks discussed the meaning of the title in the Notes to his classic study, *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country* (1963), pointing out how the title had been assumed for many years to have alluded to "a folk idiom for impending birth. A cow that is expected to calve in August will be 'light in August,'" and he draws a parallel to the "rather bovine Lena," who is likewise due to give birth at that time of year (375). However, as Brooks notes, when asked about this at the University of Virginia, Faulkner himself denied the connection and claimed that

> [i]n August in Mississippi there's a few days somewhere about the middle of the month when suddenly there's a foretaste of fall, it's cool, there's a lambence, a luminous quality to the light, as

> though it came not from just today but from back in the old classic times… from Greece, from Olympus… a luminosity older than our Christian civilization. Maybe the connection was with Lena Grove, who had something of that pagan quality. (Ibid.; quoting *Faulkner in the University*, 199)

In keeping with this interpretation of Lena's "pagan quality," Melvin Backman points out how she is "[h]umorously and whimsically portrayed" as the "earth-goddess of Yoknapatawpha" who "embodies the still, burgeoning movement of life itself" (69). "Lena," he argues—echoing Brooks, for whom she is "the female principle"—is "woman in her most natural and traditional role: she [is] mother and bearer of life," or in Reverend Hightower's often-cited phrase, "*the good stock peopling in tranquil obedience to it [her destiny] the good earth*" (406). In addition, this notion of fertility or fecundity is also hinted at in Lena's surname, "Grove," which would seem to imply a clearing in the wilderness—an image that will be repeated in *Outer Dark* and *A Mercy*, which I will discuss later.

Before doing so, however, it may prove useful to focus upon the structure of *Light in August*. Many critics have examined the three narrative strands—one belonging to Lena Grove and the other two concerned with the Reverend Hightower, on the one hand, and Joe Christmas, on the other—and have attempted to show how they overlap or intertwine, while other scholars have argued that Lena represents fertility or life whereas the other principal characters—Hightower, Christmas and the latter's lover, Joanna Burden—symbolize sterility or death.[4] Once again, Brooks may provide us with a representative reading: he states that "*Light in August* is, in some respects, a bloody and violent pastoral" (54), with Lena "stand[ing] in obvious contrast to" Joe Christmas, "[t]heir very likenesses stress[ing] their basic differences" (55). As Brooks points out, "[b]oth [characters] are orphans; both escape from home by crawling out a window; [and]

both are betrayed by their first loves" (Ibid.). We shall see later, when I discuss the other two texts, how these same traits are shared by Rinthy and Florens.

Brooks reads the contrast between Joe and Lena in terms of their relationship to the larger community, with Lena being helped in her quest while Joe finds himself—or, perhaps more accurately, *wills* himself into becoming—a pariah figure, completely alienated from the community. Edmond Volpe lends support to both Brooks' and Backman's readings by viewing Lena, "[w]ith her 'inwardlighted quality of tranquil and calm unreason,' her swollen belly and faded blue dress," as a "composite image of a pagan fertility goddess and a Christian Madonna" (152). Lena is, for Volpe, "all heart and body—simplicity and trust. She is neither troubled by logic nor worry about the future, abstract ideas nor traditions. And her 'calm unreason' is her power and her protection" (Ibid.). Hers is a "bright, mindless, life-oriented natural world," while Christmas inhabits a "taboo-ridden, dark, violent, death-oriented social world" (153). This structural contrast between two of the principal characters, as well as the motifs of light and darkness referred to by Volpe, is in fact also shared by all three texts under discussion, and I would like to begin from this point with my own reading of *Light in August*, which will allow me to then approach both *Outer Dark* and *A Mercy*.

Light in August begins and ends with Lena, who repeats her often-cited phrase, "My, my. A body does get around" (30, 507). The third-person narrator frames the novel with episodes centering upon Lena: first, heavily pregnant and on the road, searching for "Lucas Burch;" later, hitching a ride with both her newborn baby and long-suffering suitor Byron Bunch in tow. As André Bleikasten noted, "Lena holds the novel together, enfolds it in her monumental serenity, makes it what it is: a story full of sound

and fury set against a background of pastoral stillness, a tale of darkness fringed with light" (275). Though this reading has not gone unchallenged by Faulkner scholars—namely, that Lena assumes such importance or "holds the novel together," as Faulkner's own comments on the novel would seem to support[5]—most readers would agree with Backman that, at least structurally, Lena "round[s] out the vision of life that *Light in August* presents," has "the first and last word in the novel" (68) and, therefore, provides a frame for the narrative.

In addition to her framing function, Lena also provides what Backman calls a "counterpoint" to the character that comes closest to assuming the role of protagonist in the bulk of the novel, Joe Christmas. According to Backman,

> by the nature of [Lena's] being she defines [Christmas] as her polar opposite. She *is*, he is trying to be; she carries life, he death. She is necessary not only to provide counterpoint to the Christmas story but also to round out the vision of life that *Light in August* presents. She has the first and last word in the novel; she exists, in a sense, before and after Joe Christmas. She signifies by being. (Ibid.)

In other words, Lena—like her descendants, Rinthy and Florens, as I will soon discuss—plays an important role by setting the other characters in sharp relief, thereby illuminating the possible meaning of the text itself. As mentioned earlier, Lena may be contrasted not only with Joe Christmas but also with Gail Hightower or Joanna Burden. Indeed, hers is a pastoral world, one which stands in stark contrast to the gothic setting in which the other principal characters live and which characterizes the novel more generally. She is, as Hightower's words cited earlier (concerning "the good stock") inform us, one of the simple, hill people who populate Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha county and who come closest, along with their black servants and neighbors, to being portrayed in an almost "heroic" light. This seemingly timeless, pastoral or agrarian—and to some extent nostalgic, nearly utopian—world, which the Lena Grove-figure both embodies and moves

within, is in fact rapidly disappearing and is yet another common element shared by the three novels under scrutiny in this essay.

Finally, there are the crucial motifs of darkness and light central to all three novels. In *Light in August*, what is essentially a dark tale is, as mentioned earlier, illuminated by Lena Grove, by her quest and her act of regeneration. Once again turning to Backman, we might say with him that

> [b]y giving birth to her child in the Christmas cabin, [Lena] seemed to lift the curse from the Burden plantation, which had been plagued—like its owner, Miss Burden—by barrenness and decay. The child's birth, assisted by the minister [Rev. Hightower], comes like a burst of light, as if the bright augmenting dawn were celebrating the return of life and hope to mankind. Even Hightower partakes of this sense of triumph, as though he too, at least for the moment, were part of life. Born on the day that Christmas dies […], the child seems the symbol of the light that has replaced the darkness. (85)

"Darkness" in *Light in August* may denote the gothic elements of the novel, the overall tone or mood prevailing over the Christmas section of the story, or it may refer to race, to black skin or "blood," and Christmas' tortured existence. "Light" could perhaps signify the cool, clear and crisp weather, that "foretaste of fall" to which Faulkner referred in his remarks at the University of Virginia, cited earlier, or it may denote salvation or redemption, regeneration or rebirth. In any case, it is clear that darkness and light stand—much like Joe Christmas and Lena Grove themselves—in stark contrast to one another, and that the latter (light) is privileged over the former (darkness). As we shall see in the discussions that follow, beginning with *Outer Dark*, Faulkner's heirs, McCarthy and Morrison, appropriate and transform these and other elements in their work.

Rinthy and the "agony of sunlight"[6]

The title of Cormac McCarthy's second novel, *Outer Dark*, as William J. Schaffer first noted (see Arnold 46), comes from the eighth chapter of Matthew (8:10-12): "the

sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth." It opens and closes with dreamlike sequences infused with motifs of blindness and darkness which involve Culla Holme, who lives with his sister, Rinthy, in an isolated region of Appalachia at the turn of the century. Rinthy gives birth to her brother's child, but Culla abandons the boy in the wilderness. The child is picked up by a tinker, an itinerant peddler, who is then pursued by Rinthy—hunting her "chap," as she puts it, using an archaic Appalachian word for baby boy also used by Lena Grove—and, in turn, by Culla and three mysterious and terrifying figures. Although unnumbered in the text itself, there are six italicized passages which help structure the narrative, following which lay eighteen sections that might be considered chapters. Culla and Rinthy appear together for the first and only time in the opening section and, following this, the "chapters" alternate between them as the narrative itself unfolds, ending with Rinthy entering a glade, a clearing in the woods (or grove), where she discovers (but perhaps does not recognize) the skeletal remains of her child before falling asleep beneath the tree where the dead tinker hangs; then, in the final segment, set years later, Culla meets a blind man who repeats a story that resembles the dream sequence which opened the novel. In this way, much like *Light in August* (and *A Mercy*, as we shall see), *Outer Dark* ends as it begins, repeating the same imagery and doubling back upon itself.

Perhaps the first thing to note about *Outer Dark*, in relation to *Light in August*, is in fact the significance of Rinthy's name. It may be meant to bring to mind the word "labyrinth"—a maze, possibly even a tangle of trees, roots and branches, which would seem to suggest a jungle or wilderness—or it may be, as Edwin T. Arnold suggests, a shortened version of "Corinthians," which might provide a clue as to why Rinthy's

"gentleness is generally met with equal kindness" (49). For Arnold, Rinthy is the embodiment of Saint Paul's teachings concerning "faith, hope, [and] love." Significantly, she feels no guilt for having had the baby, unlike Culla. In fact, Rinthy does not blame him for fathering the child: as Arnold points out, it is only Culla's denial of their child that she holds against him. Culla, on the other hand, is met everywhere with suspicion, judgment and violence, as his name might suggest—a name that invokes the verb "to cull," which comes from a Latin word meaning "collect," but is more commonly associated with selecting and killing undesirable animals. The three riders or avenging furies who repeatedly cross his path seem to have been called forth by his guilt—perhaps they have been sent to punish Culla for his crime or "collect the bill," as it were.

Culla's crime, incest, brings us to my next point in reading *Outer Dark*: its relation to the pastoral. Before returning to Rinthy, the Lena Grove-figure, I would like to momentarily pause to mention John Grammer's reading of the novel, which links the two ideas. For him,

> [i]ncest conventionally represents a social order which, in its anxiety to avoid contact with the corrupting outer world, ends by collapsing inward on itself—such an order was dreamed by the pastoral visionaries of the South. Culla and Rinthy […] are the representative figures […] of their dying pastoral world […] Rinthy's aimless and hopeless quest for her child […] is an attempt to redeem the pastoral order. (37-38)

Rinthy, whose sole purpose is to find her child—for whom she continues to lactate long after its disappearance—is constantly described in terms of virginal or pastoral innocence and purity. She sets out on her journey "humming softly to herself and so into the sunshine that washed fitfully with the spring wind over the glade, turning her face up to the sky and bestowing upon it a smile all bland and burdenless as a child's" (53). She is at peace with nature, and it with her: "Butterflies attended her and birds dusting in the road did not fly up when she passed" (98). As Grammer describes it,

> [t]he powerfully maternal Rinthy, hunting her 'chap' and lactating helplessly, is of course a figure of great natural fecundity, the earth-as-mother who lies at the heart of pastoral myth […] Rinthy is McCarthy's version of Lena Grove, Faulkner's footloose embodiment of the maternal (and pastoral, as her name implies) life force. (38)

Georg Guillemin also reads *Outer Dark* in relation to *Light in August*, through an intertextual comparison of the siblings' relation to that of Joe and Joanna, whose encounter (according to Bleikasten, who Guillemin cites) is "the fortuitous but fatal collision of two lives under the same curse, the same paternal *malediction*" (320): in other words, the curse of the "Dead Father," the one who "names, separates, places, marks, and casts the spell, whether through his voice or his eyes" (319). But like Lena, who comes to us, as Bleikasten notes, "from the plumbless depths of a time before time, prior to the nightmare of history, a time slow and simple" (275), Rinthy manages to move in a timeless space, quite to the contrary of Culla. Even the song she hums comes "from an old dead time" (98). Thus, in this way, Rinthy displays characteristics of both Joanna and Lena.

Contrasting Rinthy with Lena, however, may in the end prove more fruitful, and this brings me to my final point in discussing this novel. As Grammer informs us,

> Rinthy is a dark and hopeless version of Lena, just as *Outer Dark*—the very title suggests it—is a dark and hopeless version of *Light in August*. In Faulkner's work Lena's untouchable will to life balances Joe Christmas's death wish; but in this doomed pastoral community the death wish is nearly universal, and Rinthy's sad effort to redeem it is manifestly futile. (38)

Rinthy, who defines Culla as her own "polar opposite" (as Lena had done with Joe), carries (or, perhaps more accurately, pursues) life while Culla carries (or, more precisely, is pursued by) death. Rinthy is lactating, literally overflowing with life, and, like Lena, she receives kindness and charity along her journey, while Culla leaves nothing but death and destruction in his wake, much like Joe Christmas. But in *Outer Dark*, there is no light to replace or redeem the darkness, no hope for Rinthy to ever find her child alive or to lift

the curse from either herself or her brother. This melancholy atmosphere pervades much of McCarthy's work, but as I mentioned earlier, in this novel the dark tone may reflect the larger historical or cultural context in which it was written and published. The year 1968 was a particularly violent and tumultuous one, to be sure, beginning with the start of the Battle of Khe Sanh and the Tet Offensive, which seemed to illustrate how the war in Vietnam was turning against the United States, then continuing with an ever-intensifying barrage of horrific images in the American and world media coming out of Vietnam—which would culminate in the revelation, a year later, of the My Lai Massacre (which actually occurred in March 1968)—before ending with the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King and a rising tide of violent unrest. It is therefore difficult to imagine McCarthy putting an optimistic gloss on this dark allegorical work. In the next section, however, I would like to turn to a much more hopeful reworking of the Lena Grove-story, published forty years after *Outer Dark* and in a very different cultural context.

Florens and "the dark stew of seventeenth-century America"[7]

In an interview prior to the publication of *A Mercy*, Toni Morrison stated that in her ninth novel she "wanted to separate race from slavery to see what it was like, what it might have been like, to be a slave but without being raced; where your status was being enslaved but there was no application of racial inferiority" (NPR, Oct. 27, 2008; cited in Jennings 645). The idea for the novel grew out of Morrison's understanding that the coupling of race and slavery had not been present at the founding of the colonies, but rather had been "constructed, planted, institutionalized, and legalized" in a gradual, historically traceable manner. Setting her story in what John Updike called, in his review

of *A Mercy*, the "dark stew of seventeen-century America"—more specifically, 1690 in the colony of Virginia—Morrison attempts to recall the moment "when what we now call America was fluid," before racial categories were rigidly defined or codified and "before slavery was equated with race."

The novel's structure permits multiple narrators to relate or reveal its plot in turns, a technique that can almost certainly be traced back to Faulkner, and it alternates between first- and third-person narration. The first-person confessions of the Lena Grove-figure, Florens—a mixed-race, enslaved sixteen-year old girl who was, at her mother's plea, adopted eight years earlier by an Anglo-Dutch trader and would-be farmer named Jacob Vaark (who Florens calls "Sir"), in partial payment for a debt owed him by a Portuguese slave owner—open the novel and then are interspersed throughout, distributed among third-person narration which provides the various histories of the principal characters, among whom we have Sir's wife (Rebekka), a Native American woman whose people had been decimated by plague (Lina), and Sorrow, a "mongrelized" young woman who apparently survived a shipwreck. These last three, along with Florens, will constitute a community of "unmastered women" upon Sir's death from smallpox. Sir's acceptance of Florens, despite his aversion to dealing in "flesh," constitutes the "mercy" of the novel's title. Much like *Light in August* and *Outer Dark*, *A Mercy* features multiple narrative threads that are woven together among these shifting perspectives, and Florens' story (like Lena's) opens and closes the book.

The principal plotline, in fact, involves Florens' journey to find a free African blacksmith who had once worked for Sir. At that time, Florens had fallen in love with him and he had cured Lina of smallpox, which has now stricken Rebekka after killing Sir.

Rebekka writes Florens a pass that will allow her to travel unhindered—it is hoped—in order to fetch the blacksmith before it is too late. Florens, of course, has her own motives for hunting her "chap" (so to speak) but she also knows that without her mistress, Rebekka, the women of Vaark's household will become

> three unmastered women […] alone, belonging to no one, […] wild game for anyone. None of them could inherit; none was attached to a church or recorded in its books. Female and illegal they would be interlopers, squatters, if they stayed on after Mistress died, subject to purchase, hire, assault, abduction, exile. (58)

Given these and other dangers of life on the frontier, the pastoral aspect of the novel, along with the concept of "darkness," becomes more complex, as it becomes conflated with race and sexuality. In fact, as Florens travels along her journey, quite to the contrary of either Lena or Rinthy, the people she encounters more often than not pose a threat, and she feels safer among the animals in the wild. Florens, whose name literally means "flowering, blossoming, or flourishing," is repeatedly compared to the wild forest all around—"You are nothing but wilderness," the blacksmith tells her, referring to her uncontrollable desire, what she calls the "inside dark"—and she comes to understand that the very darkness of that forest, which so frightens the European colonists, is also the darkness of her skin, what she calls the "outside dark," something that she shares with both her mother and her lover, as she recognizes in the following passage:

> You [the blacksmith] have the outside dark as well. And when I see you and fall into you I know I am live. Sudden it is not like before when I am always in fright. I am not afraid of anything now. The sun's going leaves darkness behind and the dark is me. Is we. Is my home. (115)

In this way, Morrison has transformed the "outside" (or "outer") darkness into something positive, something to be affirmed rather than feared. Florens is in fact at home in the dark, which signifies for Morrison something very different than it did for either Faulkner or McCarthy—in other words, whereas Joe Christmas and Culla Holme try in vain to hide or escape it, Florens realizes that darkness not only offers her shelter and safety, but

also a profound sense of identity and community, linking her to both her mother and lover—and this leads me to my conclusion.

Conclusion

Regardless of whether we read *A Mercy* as a novel about "the traumatic birth of America" (Adams) or one that presents a "preracial" vision of the past—the better, perhaps, to imagine the possibility of a "postracial" future—or whether we read *Outer Dark* as an allegory of the slow death of the Old South or as a reflection of the violence of the late-1960s and the American war in Vietnam, we can certainly trace the influence of *Light in August* in these two novels. All three texts feature a pastoral setting, shifting centers of narrative consciousness, and a complex mosaic of dark and light motifs. All are unmistakably "mythical," as well, particularly in the sense that they circle back and return to the same scene where they began: Lena gives birth in the Christmas cabin on the day Joe dies, and then closes the novel by once again "hitting the road," so to speak, which is where we first encountered her; Rinthy finds her child's remains in the glade or grove where the boy had most likely been abandoned at the start of the novel by Culla, who, for his part, ends his journey in a swamp, where it began; and Florens returns to the Vaark household older and wiser, having tamed the wilderness of her own heart and realized that she is slave to no one. She has learned, at long last, the harsh lesson that her mother's ghost teaches from the grave in the moving final chapter, a lesson that all three of these "unmastered women" have in fact learned—that "to give dominion over yourself to another is a wicked thing" (167). In so doing, these three female figures—Lena, Rinthy and Florens—have become the key to understanding these three haunting tales of "darkness fringed with light."

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[1] The concept of "influence" is extremely problematic, as Professor Hisao Tanaka pointed out to me. I wish to thank him for alerting me to this and for suggesting the substitution of the concept of "intertextuality," which avoids the assumption of (Oedipal) rivalry between an author and his or her precursors—a view perhaps epitomized by Harold Bloom's well-known "anxiety of influence" thesis.

[2] Philip Weinstein (1996), for example, devoted an entire monograph to Faulkner and Morrison, while two comparative essays, by Jones (2002) and Fulton (2004), have been published more recently. Comparisons to Faulkner have consistently appeared in the literature on McCarthy, including in various essays in the Arnold and Luce edited volume (1999), in Guillemin's study (2004), as well as in myriad book reviews, such as the early one by Prescott (1965), and in interviews, such as the well-known one conducted by Woodward (1992).

[3] Guillemin's phrase, used to contrast Lena's movement in *Light in August* with that of her counterpart in McCarthy's *Outer Dark*, Rinthy Holme (68). I am deeply indebted to Guillemin's reading in what follows.

[4] Millgate may be said to be representative in his reading of the novel in terms of "strands," rather than plots (37-38), while Chase famously reads these strands or "circles" symbolically, in terms of "light and dark […] life and death" (210-219).

[5] See Faulkner's comments at the University of Virginia, for example, regarding how the novel "began with Lena Grove," how it "was mainly the story of Lena Grove" (74); however, this view has been vigorously challenged by Brooks, Malcolm Cowley, and Irving Howe, to name but a few of the best-known proponents of what Howe calls the novel's "structural incoherence" (209).

[6] Once again, this phrase is from Guillemin (Ibid.)

[7] Updike's phrase, from his review of *A Mercy* (112).