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“Womanpinksmelling” Tell the Old
Verities of the Heart. A Relevance-
theoretic Approach to Faulkner’s
Compounds***

**Baya Bensalah
PhD Student & Lecturer
Kasdi Merbah University,
Ouargla, Algeria**

Athens Institute for Education and Research
8 Valaoritou Street, Kolonaki, 10671 Athens, Greece
Tel: + 30 210 3634210 Fax: + 30 210 3634209
Email: info@atiner.gr URL: www.atiner.gr
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“*Pinkwomansmelling*” and “*Womanpinksmelling*” Tell the Old Verities of the Heart. A Relevance-theoretic Approach to Faulkner’s Compounds

Baya Bensalah
PhD Student & Lecturer
Kasdi Merbah University,
Ouargla, Algeria

Abstract

For many years, Faulkner’s language, precisely diction, has been the wonder of researchers. It has been labeled fulsome, inexorable, neurotic, fanciful, crowded, circumlocutory, exasperating verbose ...merely reflecting the writer’s mannerism and deliberate complexity. Applying a thematic criterion, many critics have come to the conclusion that this peculiar language is the result of conscious choices and intentional maneuverings but none (to our knowledge) has rendered a scientific account of its intentionality and relevance. Our objective in this paper is to provide explanations for the particular choices made by the writer, their relevance and pragmatic effects and to determine to what extent they are intentional. We have selected Compounding as a sample of Faulkner’s vocabulary to be the object of a Lexical Adjustment analysis within the framework of Relevance Theory. Our analysis points at the processes by which linguistically specified word meanings are modified in use and illustrates the flexibility of lexical narrowing and broadening. We demonstrate that one concept may have multi entries (semantic, social, cultural, encyclopedic...etc), each of which opens doors of endless speculations. Many of these are just weak implicatures while the *ad hoc* concept (which is obtained once the lexically adjusted meaning reduces processing cost, eases accessing intended assumptions by making the modifier (in the compound) the holder of the most relevant and the one intended by the writer.

Contact Information of Corresponding author: bensalah30@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Grice initiated the argument that many facts about word use do not give direct insight into word meaning, but follow from more general pragmatic principles (See Grice 1967). This belief readdressed the research of word meaning towards a combination of semantics with a general account of pragmatics or language use. However, this combination of *word use* (what is said (semantics)) and *word meaning* (what is implicated (pragmatics)) overlooked the inherent pragmatic mechanisms determining *what is said* and consequently, of a lexical pragmatics affecting communication.

Lexical pragmatics, a rapidly growing research field (Carston 1997, 2002; Blutner 1998, 2002; Lascarides & Copestake 1998; Sperber & Wilson 1998, 2000, 2002; Wilson 2003) starts from the assumption that there is a gap between the concept **encoded** by a word and the concept **communicated** by use of that word in a particular context. Then, lexical pragmatists' goal is to explain how hearers bridge the gap between the two concepts and to account for the pragmatic processes involved.

Cognitive pragmatic approaches to Lexical Pragmatics, namely Relevance Theory's advocates, put the thesis that word meaning has to be pragmatically inferred in context, i.e., enriched. Sperber and Wilson (1998) suggest that the basis for contextual enrichment of lexical meaning in context is the meaning that is specified in the concept encoded in the word. This means that the meaning communicated by the use of a word is context-dependent and the function then of lexical pragmatics is to endow a word with meaning in a particular communicative situation (ibid). This argument was taken further by Wilson and Carston who explored how concepts encoded as word meaning are adjusted in the utterance context. "*...the meanings of words are frequently pragmatically adjusted and fine-tuned in context, so that their contribution to the proposition expressed is different from their lexically encoded sense.*" (See Wilson and Carston 2007). Put differently, the discrepancy between lexically encoded concept and communicated concept can be accounted for by conceiving the different pragmatic adjustment processes involved in interpretation. Their aim then, is to develop a relevance-based account of the cognitive processes that mediate the move from encoded concept to *ad hoc* concept¹ via mutual adjustment of explicit content, context and contextual

¹ The outcome of the pragmatic lexical adjustments is the construction of an *ad hoc* concept (occasion-specific sense). It springs from "*interaction among encoded concepts, contextual information and pragmatic expectations or principles.*" (Wilson and Carston 2007) and results in a narrowing/a broadening of the linguistically-specified meaning: the communicated concept may be either more specific or more general than the encoded concept (ibid). Following the

implications.

1.1 Pragmatic Adjustment Processes

The literature on lexical pragmatics distinguishes three main types of lexical-pragmatic adjustment process, corresponding to three main ways in which the two concepts may differ: **Lexical Narrowing**, **Approximation** and **Metaphorical Transfer** but as the two latter are varieties of Lexical Broadening, we suggest listing them as follows:

1.1.1 Lexical Narrowing

Narrowing is the case where a word is used to convey a more specific sense than the encoded one, resulting in restricting and highlighting the linguistically-specified denotation (e.g. drink used to mean ‘alcoholic drink’ (See Wilson and Sperber 2002, 2003 for details).

1.1.2 Lexical Broadening

As opposed to Lexical Narrowing, Broadening is the case where a word is used to convey a more general sense, with consequent widening of the linguistically-specified denotation. It has five varieties: **Hyperbole**¹, **Metaphorical Extension/Transfer**², **Approximation**³, **Category Extension**⁴, and **Neologism**⁵.

In much of the literature, lexical pragmatic adjustments have been seen as distinct pragmatic processes and studied in isolation from each other. Within Relevance Theory (Henceforth RT), Wilson and Carston (2007) defend the alternative view that they are outcomes of a single pragmatic process which fine-tunes the interpretation of virtually every word⁶. Thus, their research is geared towards the development of a unified account in which a single inferential process is involved.

standard practice, ad hoc concepts are represented as starred concepts (e.g. WOMAN*, MAN*, PINK*).

¹ It involves a further degree of broadening, and hence a greater departure from the encoded meaning to the actual characteristics of the referent as intended by the speaker. (ibid)

² It refers to the extension of the category denoted by the linguistically encoded concept.

³ A word with a relatively strict sense is extended to a penumbra of cases that strictly speaking fall outside its linguistically-specified denotation. (ibid)

⁴ It refers to the use of salient brand names (*Hoover*, *Kleenex*) to denote a broader category (‘vacuum cleaner’, ‘disposable tissue’) (ibid). Personal names (*Chomsky*, *Einstein*) and common nouns both lend themselves to category extension (See Glucksberg 2001: 38-52 for more details).

⁵ Neologism is a case where words are invented, blended or transferred from one syntactic category to another. (See Wilson, D. 2003).

⁶ They adopt a simple model of linguistic semantics that treats words as encoding mentally-represented concepts, elements of a conceptual representation system or ‘language of thought’, which constitute their linguistic meanings and determine what might be called their linguistically-specified denotations.

1.1.3 An inferential Account of Lexical Adjustment

RT's researchers argue that lexical adjustment is a special case of a more general process of Mutual Parallel Adjustment. In order to adjust the meaning of words in contexts so that their contribution to the proposition expressed is different from their lexically encoded sense, Mutual adjustment seems "*to apply spontaneously, unconsciously and automatically.*" (Wilson and Carston 2007) and is seen as parallel rather than sequential (See Wilson and Sperber 2002, 2004). Therefore, lexical narrowing and broadening, like utterance interpretation in general, operate via mutual adjustment of explicit content, context and cognitive effects, and of explicatures, contextual assumptions and intended implications (or implicatures) and are geared by the principle of "*follow a path of least effort*" so as to satisfy the expectations of relevance raised by the utterance¹. They stop when these expectations are satisfied (or abandoned) (Wilson and Carston, 2007).

We will argue that broadening and narrowing are not necessarily two separate processes (an encoded concept is not *either* narrowed or broadened). We rather think that they might simultaneously come about within the same word. Faulkner's compounds which are very often neologisms are believed to be cases where words are narrowed just to be more specific but their equivalent ad hoc concepts give rise to a broadened meaning that might not be communicated with an existing word. This leads us to think that Faulkner's diction is one way of addressing the language incapability to express speaker's thoughts, in RT's terms language underdeterminacy (See Carston 2000: 15-83). We think Faulkner is fully aware of this failing and employs all what it takes to force new words out of the English language. Being malleable, word formation offers itself as an effective linguistic tool for an inexhaustible creation of new words and Faulkner exploits it to the utmost. Consequently, our objective is to delineate the relevance of this feature, account for its inferential processing and identify the writer's intention

1.2 Methodology

During the initial stage of the analysis, five (5) different major lexical features were identified: Affixation, Hyphenation, Periphrasis, High Diction and Compounding. For the purposes of this paper, we will focus exclusively on

¹ The relevance-based account of pragmatic processing proposes, among other principles, the Communicative Principle of Relevance (Sperber & Wilson 1995: 266-71) according to which, every utterance addressed to someone creates general expectations of relevance. The hearer is entitled to expect it to be at least relevant enough to be worth processing and to find an overall interpretation that satisfies his expectations of relevance, since this is his best hypothesis about the speaker's meaning and intentions.

Compounding (See Finegan, 2004; Kortmann, 2005; Yule, 2006). It is essential to mention that its recurrence was not quantified; undertaking its computation within Faulkner's oeuvre is nearly an unattainable enterprise. We have therefore decided to take as matter of fact O'Connor's (1964) statement that for compounding, Faulkner does it noticeably in one novel, namely in Light in August (henceforth LA). We definitely agree with O'Connor, LA is by far, the recipient of Faulkner's most stylized compounds (the one-unit compounds¹). This variety is the rarest type of compounding (as far as its orthography is concerned) but obviously, it is one of Faulkner's most favorite neologisms. His creative genius pushes the edges of editorial conventions to invent 'bizarre creatures' (*cinderstrewnpacked, sparrowlike, childtrebling, parchmentcolored, garmentworried, dreamrecovering, frictionsmooth...etc*). We believe they are used as stimuli for their ability to grab the reader's attention, thus, they must be intentional and consequently insightful for our investigation.

As a sample of analysis, we select two compounds made up of the particular concept WOMAN. This concept is omnipresent in Faulkner's oeuvre but noticeably, in LA where it is reiterated 359 times (both singular and plural forms). Bearing in mind that the novel contains 381 pages, we do not even need a rate for its occurrence; suffice to say that over 381 pages, it does not occur only in 22 pages.

Our initial investigation enabled us to identify different prevailing lexical fields grouped in the compound words made up of WOMAN and the clusters they form with other nouns or adjectives; they can refer to woman's femininity, abomination, color, smelling...etc. In the second section of this paper, we will highlight some of these intricacies while in the first one, we will follow RT's inferential heuristic to examine the compounds.

1. *Pinkwomansmelling vs. womanpinksmelling*

2.1 *Activation of Logical Properties*

- (a) 'In the rife, *pinkwomansmelling*², obscurity behind the curtain he squatted, *pinkfoamed*, listening to his insides' (LA: 52)
- (b) 'He began to look about the womanroom as if he had never seen one before: the close room, warm, littered, *womanpinksmelling*. "Womanfilth," he said.' (LA: 56)

We have in (a) and (b) a set of compounds. In four of them the word

¹Many lexeme combinations are always possible to form new compounds and their orthography can vary: Separate units '*hard little gray eyes*' (Go Down Moses: 7); Hyphenated '*short-legged black-browed ready-faced man*' (The Hamlet: 12); One unit '*weatherhardened*' (LA: 225).

² Enhancing and underlining in the quotes is always mine.

woman is a major constituent. *Pinkwomansmelling* and *Womanpinksmelling* are of a particular interest as they are made up of identical units but formulated in a different syntactic organization. Based on (Spencer 1991: 310) bracketed model, *pinkwomansmelling* is represented as:

- [[Pink] woman]] ; [[[Pink] woman] smelling]]] ; [[[[Pink] woman] smelling] obscurity]]]

This compound functions as an adjective modifying *obscurity*. It is made up of three words: [pink+ woman + smelling], [adjective + noun+ participle]. During the initial attempt to generate its meaning, the encyclopedic features of each encoded concept are first accessed independently to activate a range of logical properties and then, in a second stage, combined to yield the features of the compound.

(A) **PINK: Encyclopedic Properties** [Pink refers to a color, a mixture of red and white; the color pink is named after the flowers called pinks, flowering plants. (See Wikipedia)]

(B) **PINK: Conventional Assumptions** [Pink is commonly used for Valentine's Day and Easter; Pink is sometimes referred to as the color of love; In gender societal norms, pink is strongly associated with femininity; it is the color for girls (and blue is for boys); This association instigates some concepts such as Code Pink: Women for Peace, Pink ribbon, Pink-collar, Pink triangle, Pink News... (See Wikipedia)]

(C) **WOMAN: Encyclopedic Properties** [An adult female human; Feminine quality or aspect; womanliness]

(D) **WOMAN: Conventional Assumptions** [A mother, a wife, a sister, a daughter...etc; A female servant or subordinate; A female lover or sweetheart; A flirt, a coquette, a prostitute.]

(E) **SMELLING: Encyclopedic Properties** [To perceive the scent of (something) by means of the olfactory nerves; Smelling is generally associated with Perfume]

(F) **SMELLING: Conventional Assumptions** [Women like wearing perfume, may be more than men do; Human bodies have natural smell]

In the formation of *pinkwomansmelling*, [*Smelling*] is the head and the other constituents [*Pink* + *Woman*] are dependents on it, or modifiers of it. Then, the entire compound becomes modifier of the main head which is [*obscurity*]. The logical properties of each encoded concept enable implications to be drawn. As the word is made up of three constituents, each of their properties modifies the properties of the next constituent in the compound. As such, the first modifier modifies the first head, [PINK modifies WOMAN] combined, they become the second modifier [PINKWOMAN] of the second head [SMELLING], then the entire compound [PINKWOMANSMELLING] becomes the modifier of the main head [OBSCURITY], the overall pattern is: [[modifier (PINK) + [head (WOMAN)]] = [modifier (PINKWOMAN)] + [head (SMELLING)] + [modifier (PINKWOMANSMELLING) + [head

(OBSCURITY)].

This compound is therefore a hyponym of *obscurity*, i.e. a kind of *obscurity*. The modifiers [*Pink, Woman, Smelling*] act to distinguish this member from other members of the same category, i.e., from the other members of the set of hyponyms, for example another hyponym is ‘*the ammoniac and dryscented obscurity*’ (LA: 63), ‘*cluttered obscurity*’ (TSAF: 162). Whereas, the head element is *obscurity*, and can therefore be viewed as the hypernym. It determines the general kind of *obscurity* the compound [*Pinkwomansmelling*] refers to and acts to name the general (semantic) category to which the whole word belongs.

This being said, we need to know how the development of the logical form of the compound can lead to explicatures and implicatures; how the discrete meaning of each of the compound constituents is adjusted and how the final adjustments of the activated properties interact.

2.2 Pragmatic Adjustment1: PINK

First, the reader ‘*spontaneously, unconsciously and automatically*’ (Wilson and Carston 2007) treats the entire compound whose logical properties are activated in parallel (i.e., each part of the compound activates its corresponding logical properties) along with their corresponding lexical and/or reference disambiguation, contextual assumptions and implications.

From the first [modifier-head] [PINKWOMAN], it is deducible that the WOMAN the narrator refers to is not merely the [ADULT HUMAN FEMALE] with the assumptions in (C) and (D). This concept is very broad and does not meet the reader’s expectations of relevance. In this picture comes the modifier PINK and activates a variety of more/less strongly evidenced encyclopedic properties of different subsets of PINK in (A) and (B). These need to be adjusted to be consistent with the head WOMAN, as well as with the second head SMELLING. To activate the relevant features, we need to look for further references to PINK in the context. This will be the first adjustment:

Context (1): Christmas (reference disambiguation, the slot for *HE* is filled with Christmas) describes the dietitian as ‘*a little fullbodied, smooth, pink-and-white*’ (LA: 51) and as ‘*pink-colored and surreptitious*’ (ibid). These references are no wonder as in Faulkner’s oeuvre, ladies are pink back into (As I Lay dying, henceforth AILD: 1930): ‘*If I jump I can go through it like the pink lady in the circus*’ (AILD: 16); ‘*its eye rolling wild and baby-blue in its long pink face*’ (AILD: 42). It is manifestly evident that by PINK, the writer refers to the color pink, the dietitian fresh pink face. So the first pragmatic adjustment in accordance with **Context (1)** is that PINK activates the picture of a pink-faced woman, hence **PINK*¹** in (1).

(1) **PINK*¹** [AN ADULT FEMALE HUMAN; PINK-FACED (A

COLOR, A MIXTURE OF RED AND WHITE.)

Yet, the hypothesis that PINK can also refer to the perfume is also envisaged as it is enhanced by **Context (2)**: ‘*He was hid behind the bed,*’ *she says, and Old Doc Hines said, ‘You used that **perfumed soap** that tempted your own undoing...*’ (LA: 156). *Perfumed soap* might refer to the perfume extracted from the flower pink hence, **PINK*²**:

- (2) **PINK*²** [PERFUME EXTRACTED FROM THE FLOWERS CALLED PINKS].

Meanwhile, in the text, there are equally other important references to PINK, but this time having to do with toothpaste in **Context (3)** [‘*the **pink worm** coil smooth and cool and slow onto his parchmentcolored finger*’ (LA: 51) and ‘***pinkfoamed**, listening to his insides*’ (LA: 52)] which refers to the pink toothpaste that Christmas eats, hidden behind the curtain of the dietitian room (detailed explanation of this scene is given farther). This new context adjusts the concept to **PINK*³**

- (3) **PINK*³** [TOOTHPASTE, PINK WORM COIL SMOOTH AND COOL]

Although, the concept PINK has been narrowed (see Figure 1), we are here in front of a serious query: which PINK is intended by the writer? Is it **PINK*¹**, **PINK*²**, or **PINK*³**? In order to yield an overall interpretation which satisfies the expectations of relevance, the reader has to consider the three competing candidate hypotheses (1) and then submit them to further process to get confirmed/denied or modified.

(1): (1a) the writer implies the pink-faced woman. (1b) the writer implies the pink toothpaste. (1c) the writer implies the perfume from the pink flowers.

2.3 Pragmatic Adjustment2: WOMAN

In the compounds *pinkwomansmelling* and *womanpinksemlling*, there seems to be a different set of implications, more/less evidenced. Our argument is that the very organization of the clusters of the two compounds is the indication that in each case a different concept is highlighted. We believe that the implicit semantic relationship between head noun and modifier in the noun compounds heavily depends on the order in which the modifiers and head are ordered as well noted by Sparck (1985: 363–381) ‘*In a compound word consisting of two or more elements, it is claimed that the linear arrangement of the elements reflects the kind of information being conveyed.*’

Apparently, the two compounds are the same. Yet the order in which the cluster modifier-head in **PINKWOMANSMELLING** is that of PINKWOMAN (modifier) modifying SMELLING. This means a combination and interaction of **PINK*¹** and **PINK*²** which are more enhanced by two new

contexts (4) and (5):

Context 4: ‘Here he squatted, among *delicate shoes and suspended soft womangarments*’ (LA: ibid). This context highlights the coquettishness of the woman and broadens **PINK***¹ and **PINK***² into (4)

- (4) **PINKWOMAN***¹ [COQUETTISH, PERFUMED, SOFT SWEET SKIN, A LITTLE FULLBODIED, SMOOTH, PINK-AND-WHITE, WEARING MAKE-UP...]

Context 5: “Answer me, *Jezebel!*” he shouted.’ (LA: 55) “ Jezebel come running from her *lustful* bed, still astink with *sin* and fear. “for the Lord’s *abomination* and *outrage*. Suffer it,” and she said, “You can talk to him. I have seen you. You could persuade him,” and Old Doc Hines said, “I care no more for your *fornications* than God does, [...] I will be disgraced.” Stinking with her *lust* and *lechery* she was then, standing before Old Doc Hines...’ (LA: 156).

This particular context is very crucial as it adds more properties to the already established concept in (4). *Lustful, abomination, outrage, fornications, lust, lechery...* all implicate that WOMAN cannot be a mother, a daughter or a sister. Thus, we are called to further narrow the concept WOMAN in (C) and (D). We will eliminate [A mother, a wife, a sister, a daughter] as well as [A female servant or subordinate] and will select the set of the properties in [A female lover or sweetheart]. These properties are much more emphasized by the name *Jezebel*¹ which allows us to select [A flirter, a coquette, a prostitute]. Therefore the new properties pragmatically fine-tune the concept **PINKWOMAN***¹ into **PINKWOMAN***² which will be broadened to include the properties in (5) (See Figure 2):

- (5) **PINKWOMAN***² [COQUETTISH, PERFUMED, SOFT SWEET SKIN, A LITTLE FULLBODIED, SMOOTH, PINK-AND-WHITE, WEARING MAKE-UP...] [A FEMALE LOVER OR SWEETHEART.] [A FLIRTER, A COQUETTE, A PROSTITUTE, A SEXUALLY PROMISCUOUS WOMAN].

In **WOMANPINKSEMLLING**, the modifier-head is WOMANPINK, and if we follow the principle of modifier modifying head, we do not see how woman (modifier noun) can modify pink (adjective head). It must be then

¹ Jezebel was a princess, identified in the Hebrew Book of Kings as the daughter of Ethbaal, King of Tyre and the wife of Ahab, king of north Israel. Jezebel was a power behind the throne. Instead of embracing the worship of *Yahweh*, she introduced instead the worship of the goddess of love and sensuality known as *Ashtoreth* (In later Jewish mythology, she became a female demon of lust). The high altar of this pagan goddess was throbbing with sensual and erotic encounters readily and willingly given by priestesses-prostitutes. Jezebel used power, manipulation and lust to control the king of Israel and his people and has a long-standing reputation as the most dangerous seductress and the wickedest woman in the Bible. In some interpretations, her dressing in finery and putting on makeup before her death led to the association of use of cosmetics with "painted women" or prostitutes. (See Wikipedia)

another explanation. PINK must then be considered as a noun and in the available closest context (**Context3**), the communicated concept is PINK*³ in (3).

Manifestly, the two compounds do not have the same implications though our perception of them is easily tricked. Upon a first reading of the first instance of *pinkwomansmelling* (page 52), and the second instance *womanpinksemlling* (page 56) we did not perceive the difference. The optical illusion results from the influence of the tricky linguistic patterns on the overall compounds; only a closer re-reading can restate the difference. Faulkner seems to bamboozle the reader's very sense of vision by manipulating the order of two compounds with three identical clusters but producing and intending two entirely different ad hoc concepts.

In English, this construction (Noun-Noun), *womanpink* might mean a PINK which belongs to the woman like in *womanroom* (LA: 52) and *womangarments* (LA: 51) which respectively implicate the room/the garments of the woman. And it is clear that it is here a possessive case. Therefore, the intention of the writer in the two different linguistic realisations is not the same; the first being **PINKWOMAN***² and the second the **TOOTHPASTE***. Indeed, in one scene, Christmas eats toothpaste while hiding behind the curtains in the room of the dietitian which confirms that **TOOTHPASTE*** belongs to **PINKWOMAN***² and by the same token, confirms the two hypotheses (1a) and (1b) but not yet (1c). This latter has not been sustained by any context. So we need further adjustments:

2.4 Pragmatic Adjustment3: SMELLING

On page 66, Christmas is a young man; he indulges in a sexual relationship with Bobby, the Negro prostitute. We can read **Context 6** [*But he could not move at once, standing there, smelling the woman, smelling the negro all at once; enclosed by the womanshenegro and the haste*] (LA: 66)] which suggests a range of potential implications (e.g., Christmas in context 1 and 2 smells the woman not the toothpaste) which would satisfy the reader's expectations of relevance as they seem to be properly warranted and evidenced by the reoccurrence of *smelling (the woman and the negro)* as well as by the properties in (E) and (F). So SMELLING here leads to:

- **SMELLING***¹ [SMELLING IS GENERALLY ASSOCIATED WITH PERFUME; WOMEN LIKE WEARING PERFUME, MAY BE MORE THAN MEN DO; HUMAN BODIES HAVE NATURAL SMELL]

But of course, we cannot deny the fact that **TOOTHPASTE*** cannot be excluded by this new concept because it is strongly implicated by **Context2**, so we have to acknowledge that the intricacies of the three concepts

(**PINKWOMAN*²**, **TOOTHPASTE***, **SMELLING*¹**) are co-existent and intertwined in Christmas' mind; deciding with certainty which one is really intended by the writer is a risky task. We will then, posit the hypothesis in (2) and seek its confirmation in further processing.

(2) The three concepts are semantically intertwined in the two compounds.

The most accessible adjustment of **PINKWOMANSMELLING** (and hence the one favoured by the heuristic) is the ad hoc concept **PINKWOMAN*²SMELLING*¹**. Whereas, the most accessible adjustment of **WOMANPINKSEMLLING** needs a further broadening as **SEMLLING** here refers to both smelling the woman and the toothpaste, hence **SEMLLING*²**. The final ad hoc concept is **TOOTHPASTE*PINKWOMAN*²SMELLING*²**.

The final ad hoc concepts are relevant; if replaced in the overall implications suggested by the discourse text, they enable further contextual implications to be drawn. Guided by his expectations of relevance and using contextual implications made manifest and accessible by these communicated concepts, the reader starts deriving cognitive effects.

One of the major components to the success of this derivation is the contextual information provided by the discourse texts. (a) and (b) are passages from a scene in chapter 6; Faulkner digs into Christmas' childhood when he was only '*...five years, sober and quiet as a shadow.*' (LA: 51). By this time, he is trapped in the orphanage described as a "*penitentiary or zoo.*" (LA: *ibid*) During the quiet hour of early afternoon, for almost a year, ever since the day when he discovered by accident the toothpaste which the dietitian used, Christmas sneaks into the dining room '*on his bare and silent feet to the washstand*' (*ibid*), grabs the dietitian's toothpaste tube and then slips beneath a cloth curtain which screened off one corner of the room. '*Here he squatted, among delicate shoes and suspended soft womangarments*' (LA: *ibid*) sweating and eating the pink toothpaste. One day, he was watching '*the pink worm coil*' when he heard the footsteps of the twenty-seven old dietitian '*old enough to take a few amorous risks*' (*ibid*) and her companion Charley (the orphanage janitor) in the corridor and then their voices just beyond the door. They have a sexual intercourse and Christmas can hear their rustlings and whisperings. Hiding and waiting, he takes a good deal more of the toothpaste and started feeling sick '*pinkfoamed, listening to his insides*' (LA: 52). As the swallowed toothpaste lifted inside him, he throws up. The dietitian heard him and out of his vomit, she drags him violently, her face no longer '*smooth pink-and-white*' (LA: 51).

PINKWOMAN*² the narrator refers to is the dietitian who has a sexual intercourse with Charley. If processed in a context containing the

assumption that [coquettish woman who uses perfume to excite man's sense of smell] is exceptionally perfumed and smells good, contextually implies that the smelling the narrator refers to is that of the dietitian, a coquettish well perfumed woman involved in a sexual relationship. Furthermore, she is not Charley's wife, she is merely his flirter and the '*smooth pink-and-white*' face and the '*delicate shoes and suspended soft womangarments*' (LA: 51) consequently enhance the coquettishness of the woman. The encyclopaedic properties of stereotypical category member (coquettish woman) are likely to be highly accessible and some of the properties in (6) are likely to be strongly activated by use of the concept **PINKWOMAN***² hence broadening its implications to include **COQUETTISH WOMAN***.

- (6) **COQUETTISH WOMAN***: [REMARKABLY PRETTY, REMARKABLY ATTRACTIVE, REMARKABLY PERFUMED, WATCHES OVER MAN'S SEXUAL DESIRE, SENSUAL, SENSUOUS ...A FLIRTER, A COQUETTE]

Of course, the dietitian is merely an orphanage employer, so some of the contextual implications in (6) are not yet properly warranted. However, we can have a better pragmatic adjustment by considering what a woman means to Christmas in:

Context (7): '*The dietitian was nothing to him yet, save a mechanical adjunct to eating, [...] except as something of pleasing association and pleasing in herself to look at—young, a little fullbodied, smooth, pink-and-white, making his mind think of the diningroom, making his mouth think of something sweet and sticky to eat, and also pink-colored and surreptitious*' (LA: 51)

Much like Pavlov's dog which starts salivating at the hearing of the bell, the sight of the *dietitian* makes Christian's mouth think of something [Pink-colored] sweet and sticky to eat. We have here strongly evidenced implications, as they confirm our hypothesis in (2); we can thus advance that [The three concepts are semantically intertwined in the two compounds] is an implicature. We can also infer from *pleasing in herself to look at* and from the furtive amorous relationship that the dietitian has nearly all of the properties in (8).

On this account, the contextual implications are derived by regular forward inference from the contextual assumption that the dietitian is [**COQUETTISH WOMAN***] together with additional contextual assumptions in (**Context7**), and they in turn provide the basis for a 'backward' inference to the adjusted propositions in **PINKWOMAN***² which justify their acceptance as part of an overall interpretation that satisfies the reader's expectations of relevance. Consequently, **PINKWOMAN***² is given more implications and is broadened to **WOMAN*** in (8) including women who share with **COQUETTISH WOMAN*** Christmas' perception of woman in (7):

- (7) **CHRISTMAS' WOMAN*** [ADJUNCT TO EATING; PLEASING IN HERSELF TO LOOK AT; MAKING HIS MIND THINK OF THE DININGROOM; MAKING HIS MOUTH THINK OF SOMETHING SWEET AND STICKY TO EAT; PINK-COLORED; SMOOTH PINK-AND-WHITE FACE; CANDY HAIR]
- (8) **WOMAN*** [REMARKABLY PRETTY; REMARKABLY ATTRACTIVE; REMARKABLY PERFUMED; WATCHES OVER MAN'S SEXUAL DESIRE; SENSUAL, SEXUOUS...; A FLIRTER, A COQUETTE] ; [ADJUNCT TO EATING; PLEASING IN HERSELF TO LOOK AT; MAKING HIS MIND THINK OF THE DININGROOM; MAKING HIS MOUTH THINK OF SOMETHING SWEET AND STICKY TO EAT; PINK-COLORED; SMOOTH PINK-AND-WHITE FACE; CANDY HAIR]

The reader treats the linguistically encoded word meaning of PINKWOMANSMELLING as no more than a clue to the writer's meaning, and in the discourse contexts discussed so far, implications having to do with sex, scents, suppression, fear, are likely to receive additional activation from other items in the context, and would therefore be most accessible for use in deriving contextual implications.

So, we need to reconsider the whole compound: *rife, pinkwomansmelling, obscurity*. As we have posited some hypotheses in (1 and 2) and pointed to the fact that there is an intimate relationship between modifiers and heads, and that this head-modifier relationship is important for semantic interpretation in that '*the meaning of the construct is a sub-type of the head*' (Zwicky 1993: 296); we can now affirm that the compound *rife pinkwomansmelling obscurity* is a type of obscurity. At the same time, the modifiers play a '*contributory role, restricting the meaning of the head in one way or another.*' (ibid), that is of all the possible *obscurities* the head could be denoting, the modifiers act to pin it down to denoting the '*rife pinkwomansmelling*' type. Hence, the series of modifiers [RIFE, PINK, WOMAN, SMELLING] act to pin down OBSCURITY. Consequently, the interpretation is something like: There exist obscurities, some of which are human mind obscurity, intellectual obscurity, linguistic obscurity, space creation obscurity...etc. There are ranges of these, including obscurities which are DENSE and smell THE TOOTHPASTE, THE PERFUME OF A WOMAN, and SEX. This is the final pragmatically narrowed ad hoc concept in (10):

- (10) **RIFE PINKWOMANSMELLING OBSCURITY*** [DENSE, THE PERFUME OF A WOMAN, SMELL OF THE TOOTHPASTE AND OF SEX.]

At this level, the reader can assume that the explicatures of the compound are those in (I) and among its implicatures are the **strong**

implicatures such as those in (II) and weak implicatures such as those in (III):

- (I) **Explicatures:** Charley and the coquettish dietitian illicitly have sex/ Behind the curtain, Christmas can smell the woman in the garments/ The woman is a coquettish, a flirter, a lover/ Christmas is eating the toothpaste.
- (II) **Strong Implicatures:** Her smell is associated with that of the toothpaste/ The color of her skin is associated with the color of the toothpaste/ The obscurity is filled with perfume/ The obscurity is filled with sex smell/ The obscurity is filled with toothpaste smell/ Christmas is only 5 years old/ This event is confusing
- (III) **Weak implicatures:** This event might have serious psychological sequelae (this is confirmed by Christmas' abusive behaviour towards Bobby and Joanna Burden)

Having found an interpretation which satisfies his expectations of relevance, at this point the reader should stop. Nevertheless, as we deal with a literary corpus, we do not think that a competent reader will stop at this level. More cognitive effects might be drawn as the final ad hoc concepts might further be broadened in the context of the overall thematic framework of the writer's oeuvre. In the following section, we will briefly show how lexical broadening might open up doors for endless speculations guided as it were, by Faulkner's unremitting juggling with word formation.

2. Speculations

References to womanhood and to femininity saturate the compounds. Every single aspect of WOMAN is detailed, be it physical or mental. Compounding tackles, garments, voices, smelling, worrying, blood, flesh...etc and encompasses intricate concepts. One interesting concept is **womanshenegro** (LA¹: 66). This is a particular neologism created to make up for the lack in the language stock for an encompassing word that would capture an image bigger than simply the isolated *woman*, *she* or *Negro*². We can often communicate this concept by modifying a certain word for which we have a stable conceptual representation in memory and the words *woman*, *she* or *negro* have all this stable conceptualization but what Faulkner does is combining them for the sake of a new concept which presents at once a new category of human beings, neither simply a *woman*, nor simply *she*, nor simply *Negro*, but a **WOMANSHENEGRO***. We can easily associate this new concept with the larger image of WOMAN, the entity both shaped by Faulkner

¹ The following abbreviations will be used. ITD: Intruder in the dust; AILD: As I lay Dying; TSAF: the Sound and the Fury; TH: The Hamlet; AA: Absalom Absalom!; TR: The Reivers, A Reminiscence; TT: The Town; RFN: Requiem for a Nun; GDM: Go Down Moses.

² Ervin argues: '...these words are in effect the combined frames in a motion picture. Taken apart, we see common words; projected together onto the screen they produce new, combined, lifelike images.' (See Ervin, T)

and shaping his works:

First, it is no wonder, WOMAN has no proper identity; in LA alone, for instance, woman is referred to 319 times simply as *women/woman* but never named, merely an unidentified insignificant yet an appealing sexual object, '*something prone, abject*' (LA: 66) whose reference is simply SHE*[A THIRD PERSONAL PRONOUN] that could be anybody, any female, any SHE, as long as she can remain the source of satisfaction to man's '*unadulterated uninhibited immoral lust*' (TT: 13).

Second, the concept NEGRO* broadened by the concept WOMANSHE* inscribes woman as a repulsing entity reminding Christmas of his own *negroblood* and the 'darkness' that obscures the cabins, the streets, the town, the villages along fifteen years of wondering and seeking an identity out of the blackness of the *Negroblood* running in a White body's veins. His reaction to this wretched female monster is to assault her wrathfully '*hard, kicking into and through a choked wail of surprise and fear. She began to scream, he jerking her up, clutching her by the arm, hitting at her with wide, wild blows,[...]*' (LA: 66) ignoring Ned McWillie (TR) who understood that beating a woman does nothing but creating a threatening enemy '*Hitting [...] do not hurt her because a woman dont shove back at a lick like a man do; she just gives to it and then when your back is turned, reaches for the flatiron or the butcher knife*' (TR: 131)

Like Christmas, (for whom the dietitian was '*nothing*' save '*a mechanical adjunct to eating*' (LA: 51), Butch (TR) does not remember anybody except in terms of his immediate need and "*what he needed now [...] was another woman, he didn't care who provided she was more or less young and pleasing*' (TR: 131). But, for Sutpen (AA), woman is not a sex-doll; she is the backbone of his design: the 'Heir-making' machine. Disappointed and thwarted, he looks down at the mother and his new-born daughter and said '*Well, Milly, too bad you're not a mare like Penelope. Then I could give you a decent stall in the stable*' (AA: 78). Will Varner (TH) would show more respect, he would not give her a '*stall in the stable*' but a HOME, the only sphere where she belongs! His wife, Mrs. Varner, who never had a first name but another SHE, was '*one of the best housewives in the county and was indefatigable at it*' (TH: 293); she has sixteen children, one child every year, not to mention miscarriages...and Mr. Varner proudly personifies a whole mode of thinking that encapsulates women in the unquestionable roles: Reproduction, Motherhood and Household: '*[We] already had a mess of children and maybe we ought to quit then. But I wanted some more gals . . . a gal will stay home and work until she does get married*' (TH: *ibid*).

While Christmas shouts: '*Why in hell do I want to smell horses?*' horses

'are not women. Even a mare horse is a kind of man.' (LA: 46) and squats among the **Womangarments** of the **Womanshenegro**, senses the **Womansmelling** of the **Womanflesh** in the **Womanroom** and hears the **Womanvoices** and the **woman-worrying** (LA: 65); Flem Snopes sees the 'appearance [...] out of the old Dionysic times—honey in sunlight and bursting grapes, the writhen bleeding of the crushed fecundated vine beneath the hard rapacious trampling goat-hoof' (TH:54); Butch simply sees the WOMANSHE as: 'one hunk of meat' (TR: 102) and Mr. Labove (Eula's school teacher) fantasizes about Eula's 'too much' body 'too much of leg, too much of breast, too much of buttock; too much of mammalian female meat' (TH: 56). All these womanshemeathunks (compound mine) are alike except 'a little difference in the pelt' (ibid).

Labove (TH) joins Butch (TR), Rattliff (TT), Flem Snopes (TH), Sutpen (AA), McWillie (TR), Mr. Varner (TH) and Christmas (LA) to redefine WOMAN's Femininity, Womanliness, Femaleness or Womanhood... he does not know what to call it... 'mammalian female meat' (TH: 52), 'the supreme primal uterus' (TH: 110), 'the queen, the matrix' (TH: 112), 'miraculous intact milk' (TH: 117)... but Rattliff surely knows a great deal about Man's fantasies. Consider how Faulkner's voice through Rattliff (TT), magnificently describes Eula's divine sensuality:

'It was that there was just too much of what she was for any one human female package to contain and hold: too much of white, too much of female, too much of may be just glory, I don't know: so that at first sight of her you felt a kind of shock of gratitude just for being alive and being male at the same instant with her in space and time, and then in the next second and forever after a kind of despair because you knew that there never would be enough of any one male to match and hold and deserve her; grief forever after because forever after nothing less would do' (TT: 6)

If Old Doc Hines (Christmas' grand-father) were to listen to Rattliff's admiration for Eula, he would have gnashed his teeth out of outrage and offence. Being deceived by his daughter Milly, who bore him an illegitimate grand-son (that is Christmas whose father is thought to be partly Negro), he is the one who supplies the least flattering compounds associated to woman: While Jason encloses woman as 'once a bitch, always a bitch' (TSAF: 163), Old Doc Hines identifies her as 'the walking shape of bitchery' itself (LA: 54); 'a handful of rotten dirt' (ibid); a 'little womanfilth' (ibid), and a 'Woman's muck.' (LA: 98). 'Womansuffering' and 'Womansinning' are the sign of 'God's abomination of womanflesh!' (ibid). Old Doc Hines 'had seen the womansign of God's abomination already on her, under her clothes' (ibid) but she is not

even worthy to watch because *'There is no more evil here now but womanevil'* (LA: 156).

Faulkner frenetic neologisms redefine woman over and over again and bring together multiple frames into a single projected image. Most of the characters' references to women reflect this attempt and present woman with all what is merged together in their minds. They try to combine their concepts of woman with any attribute that can confine their different relationships to the different women affecting their lives. From Addie (AILD) who realized that she *'had been tricked by words older than Anse or love'* (AILD: 52) to Dilsey who *'had seen de last and de first'* (TSAF: 264), to Caddy, Faulkner's dearest lost woman, to Temple whose rape with a corn cob took two novels to be told (Sanctuary 1931 and RFN 1951)...to Joanna Burden whose very name points at the 'burden' of being a woman, a White (nigger-affinity) woman, a White (nigger-affinity) middle-aged woman, a White (nigger-affinity) middle-aged sensual woman, a White (nigger-affinity) middle-aged sexually frustrated woman, a White (nigger-affinity) middle-aged sexually motherly frustrated woman... *ad infinitum*¹...all Yoknapatawpha's women present a too important challenge to be addressed by simple language. So, it is no wonder Faulkner endeavors so hard to invent compounds to enclose all of these intricacies within one word, not a cumbersome sentence, a 'stuffed' paragraph, but just one concept to communicate a whole story, *the old verities of the heart*.

We think that all of his lexical features go along this enterprise of surpassing language underdeterminacy itself. Any reader of Faulkner can perceive this kind of struggle to give words to the nameless and the unnamed; words 'bigger-than-life' overwhelmed, crowded that desperately struggle like bizarre creatures which do not fit in their caves. Faulkner's idiosyncratic compounds emanate from his dissatisfaction with the language; he is conscious that no word ever fully encodes the thought it is used to communicate. In ITD, he elbows Lucas off stage and wonders at the scantiness of Vocabulary *'...he marvelled again at the paucity, the really almost standardised meagreness not of individual vocabularies but of Vocabulary itself...'* (ITD: 80). Felber argues that major developments in all fields of human endeavor during the 20th century have led to an influx of millions of concepts, but that there is a deficit of terms to name them (Felber 1984: I) and Sperber and Wilson confirm that *'most concepts do not map onto words, only a fraction of a language user's conceptual repertoire is lexicalized...'* (Sperber and Wilson, 1998b).

¹ 'Compounds are not limited to two words, [...] the process of compounding seems unlimited in English: starting with a word like sailboat, we can easily construct the compound sailboat rigging, from which we can in turn create sailboat rigging design, sailboat rigging design training, sailboat rigging design training institute, and so on.' (See Akmajian et al, 2001)

1. Results and Conclusion

The steps we followed all along this analysis can be summarized as follows: First, we selected appropriate set of encyclopaedic assumptions to act as hypotheses for the derivation of the expected contextual implications. Second, their appropriateness depended on two criteria: their degree of accessibility in the discourse context of the compound, and the potential contextual implications they yielded. Third, we considered the most accessible interpretation deriving enough implications to satisfy our expectations of relevance.

We can confirm that, as advanced by RT, in lexical adjustment tentative hypotheses about contextual assumptions, explicatures and contextual implications are incrementally modified so as to yield an overall interpretation which satisfies the reader's expectations of relevance.

We have noticed that the discourse context is an overriding tool as it provides the most accessible adjustment of the encoded concepts and hence the one favoured by the heuristic. The resulting *ad hoc* concept is narrower than the encoded concept in some respects, but much broader in others. This points at the processes by which linguistically specified word meanings are modified in use and it also illustrates the remarkable flexibility of lexical narrowing and broadening: a word may give rise to a number of different *ad hoc* concepts, and that the two processes may combine in forming a communicated concept. The inferential account of interpretation proposed by relevance-theorists predicts such flexibility. As such, we can advance that they are not necessarily two discrete processes; they might simultaneously come about within the same word and concurrently contribute both to the proposition expressed by an utterance and to its contextual implications and implicatures. Faulkner's neologisms are cases where the linguistically encoded concepts are narrowed just to be more specific but their equivalent *ad hoc* concepts not only give rise to strong implicatures, but can also be broadened to get a wide range of weak implicatures. The depth, to which the encoded concepts are processed, in arriving at the pragmatic meaning the writer intends as a component of the explicature of his text, and the effort invested are constrained at every stage by the search for an optimally relevant interpretation.

We think that the results of our analysis might be beneficial as they provide further support to RT's still going on hypothesis and commitment to a unitary account of lexical pragmatic processes (Wilson and Carston 2007: 232).

Moreover, RT comprehension heuristic is descriptively adequate and offers an automatic inferential procedure for constructing interpretations by following a path of least effort in mutually adjusting context, explicit content

and contextual implications (via ‘shuttle’ inferences) so as to make the utterance relevant in the expected way. This heuristic was followed in our analysis and proved to be effective as the overall final interpretation satisfies expectations.

Along this intended meaning, we investigated the semantic relationship between the head noun and modifier(s) of noun compounds, we have seen how interpretations can be restricted and guided by the writer’s intentional ordering of modifier-head combinations, consequently, gently putting the reader in the right track for his intended meanings. We conclude that compounding is definitely a relevant feature and is the product of a deliberate malleability of language for the intention of maximizing communication with significantly reduced cost.

Hence, even though, at first glance, it might be believed that Faulkner’s neologisms are complex and hard to process, they are in fact a means for mass-information. A maximum of assumptions are communicated at once, making thus information, precise and concise and avoiding long descriptions that require longer time and more energy to process.

Finally, Faulkner’s compounds reveal his agenda, his thematic scheme: the mystery of the human being, the *old truths of the heart*. This stylistic texture tells us something about the writer’s genius; he treats language, as he would treat Plasticine, the routine rigid pattern limiting thought crumbles into a soft, malleable and fresh language liberating thought and by the same token stirring, stimulating the reader’s thoughts and instilling a way of thinking, of behaving. That is an achievement which many a great writer would consider the ultimate goal of writing.

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Appendix

Figure 1: Lexical Narrowing: PINK

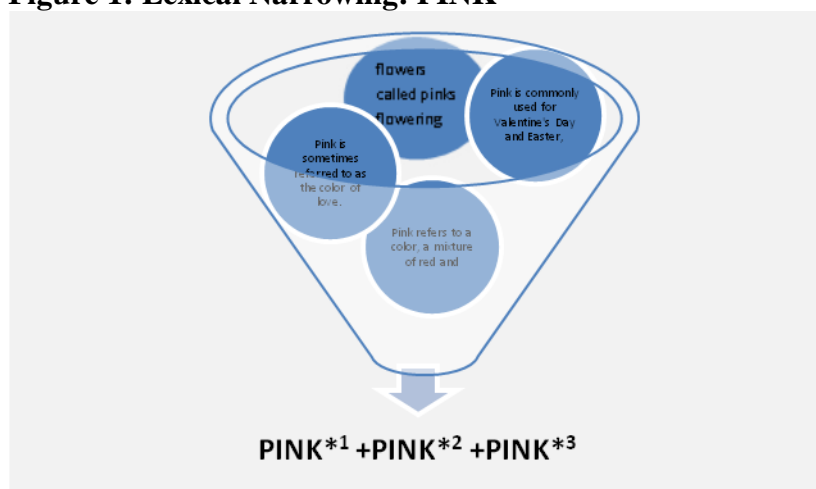


Figure 2: Lexical Broadening: Woman

