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NOVA SERIES TOM. XXIV.

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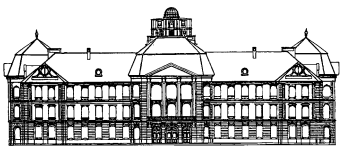

KÁROLY ESZTERHÁZY TEACHERS' TRAINING COLLEGE
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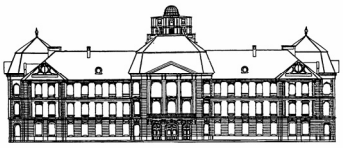

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CONTRIBUTORS

László Dányi, Assistant Professor at the Department of American Studies, Károly Eszterházy Teachers' Training College, Eger, Hungary

Sharon L. Gravett, Professor at the Department of English, Valdosta State University, Valdosta, USA

Lenke Németh, Assistant Professor at the Department of North-American Studies, Lajos Kossuth University, Debrecen, Hungary

Zoltán Simon, Assistant Professor at the Department of North-American Studies, Lajos Kossuth University, Debrecen, Hungary

Judit Szathmári, Assistant Professor at the Department of English Studies, Dániel Berzsenyi Teachers' Training College, Nyíregyháza, Hungary

Lehel Vadon, Professor at the Department of American Studies, Károly Eszerházy Teachers' Training College, Eger, Hungary

David L. Vanderwerken, Professor at the Department of English, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, USA

Gabriella Varró, Assistant Professor at the Department of North-American Studies, Lajos Kossuth University, Debrecen, Hungary

Zsolt Virágos, Professor at the Department of North-American Studies, Lajos Kossuth University, Debrecen, Hungary

EDITORIAL NOTE

The Department of American Studies at Károly Eszterházy Teachers' Training College is pleased to present Volume IV of the Eger Journal of American Studies.

The *Eger Journal of American Studies* is the first scholarly journal published in Hungary devoted solely to the publication of articles investigating and exploring various aspects of American Culture. We intend to cover all major and minor areas of interest ranging from American literature, history, and society to language, popular culture, bibliography etc.

The journal welcomes original articles, essays, and book reviews in English by scholars in Hungary and abroad.

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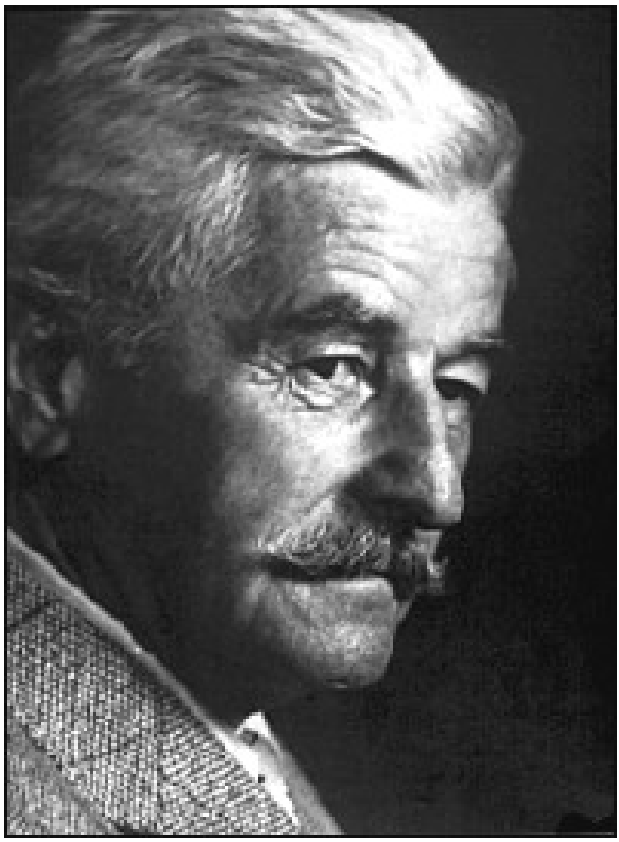
* * *

The present volume of the Eger Journal of American Studies is dedicated to William Faulkner Centennial.

FAULKNER CENTENNIAL

IN MEMORIAM WILLIAM FAULKNER



(1897–1962)

LÁSZLÓ DÁNYI

THE SOUTHERN TOTEBAG: THE IMAGE BANK IN WILLIAM FAULKNER'S *A ROSE FOR EMILY*

The complexity of Faulkner's art is vindicated by the difficulty of classifying his works, which is a great advantage rather being a drawback. Falkner's art managed to avoid boxing itself into convenient categories signaled by superficial labels. It is Faulkner's diversity which fascinates readers. Both umbrella terms and specific notions have been attached to his writing, thus he can be identified as a realist, a symbolic naturalist, a regionalist, a Southerner, a gothic writer or a modernist. He is a highly individual writer, nevertheless, the Faulknerian world is a homogeneous entity the creation of which has been a great achievement and a great burden simultaneously, because no writer in the South after him has managed to avoid the comparison to Faulkner's art, so they have had to act in the shadow of the genius.

So it is this complexity which is the test of the genius, but it is also this complexity which is the greatest test for the teacher in the classroom. Unless teachers can devote a whole semester to Faulkner's writing, they usually face the problem that they need to introduce their students into Faulkner's world within the frame of a couple of lectures and seminars, and they struggle with time. One short piece however which might prove to be a suitable example to illustrate the diversity of Faulkner's work is "A Rose for Emily".

Faulkner's greatest achievement is that the microcosmic proportions of the story can appeal to the percolating macrocosmic qualities of the writer's oeuvre. The story shows how unity is born out of diversity, as it nicely illustrates almost all the dimensions that Faulkner's art can open. So it can offer a solution to those teachers

who wish to tackle with the problem of how to make an author's oeuvre palpable to the students. How to raise students' interest?

In this essay I would like to show various ways through which the work can be approached, I would also like to show the diversity of interpretations and the process through which unity is born out of this versatility. The following is a summary of the connotations of the work, aspects of analyzing the work, key terms that can be exploited during class discussions. The labels refer to overlapping features, so in the next part I would like to sum up the following ramifications of the story and its author: naturalistic regionalism, symbolic naturalism, expressionism in Faulkner's style, gothicism, psychoanalytical approach and the Southern qualities in his story. The essay does not aim to fully explore the implications of the notions above. Within the confines of a paper like this my only endeavour is to give hints and ideas for further study and teaching. While exploring the various dimensions of the story, I insist on relying on the images that can radiate and can be related to the ontology of Faulkner's South. The theoretical background to the analysis is provided by that aspect of iconology which applies the "visual–verbal interaction throughout the American literary and artistic tradition" (Miller 2).

Faulkner as a naturalistic regionalist

The first step in approaching Faulkner's world is to try and map his terrain. Faulkner created his own fictional realm, Yoknapatawpha County, which is not a fantasy land, but a region in the state of Mississippi called La Fayette County. We know about this from the map that he attached to his writing. If we compare the map of Yoknapatawpha County and that of Lafayette County, we will see that the coincidence is obvious. So Faulkner was a regionalist in the way that he, like Thomas Hardy, created his own land, and he was a naturalistic regionalist because it is the region that determines his characters and the characters also define themselves by the moral code of their region, the American South. His characters are rooted in their Southern soil, and they are indoctrinated by it. The region with its history dooms the characters, and Jefferson, the place where Emily lives is a microcosm of the American South. A sign of naturalistic determinism is Emily's death at the very beginning of the story. After

learning about this death we, the readers, realize that Emily has been committed to failure.

The fictional town of Jefferson coincides with Oxford, Mississippi. The structure of the story also reflects this determination because it is confined by a frame which yokes the story. What are the parts of the frame? The rose itself, which appears as a flower in the title and is the colour of the bridal at the very end. The rose colour is in sharp contrast with the gloomy and tragic event that happened in the room which is supposed to be a locale for happiness. Fading glory is also a part of the frame. References to past glory appear through the images of the decaying house which used to be white. At the end of the story the motive of fading glory recurs with even greater intensity through the "faded rose color" and the "tarnished silver" and "invisible dust" (Faulkner 233). The description of the old generation's longing for the past also recurs powerfully,

> …as the old do, to whom all the past is not a diminishing road but, instead, a huge meadow which no winter ever quite touches, divided from them now by the narrow bottle-neck of the most recent decade of years. (232)

So the old generation still lives in the past for them the past is their inspiration, their "meadow", they want to live in the past, their past is their present. The past is not something gone, it is still an integral part of their lives. Their past is never touched by "winter", the past is their eternal spring, the beginning and the starting point of everything. The image expresses the conviction that for most Southerners the most precious things in life are those that once were or the ones that are ought to be, but not the ones that are.

Another indifferent force shaping the characters is history. Faulkner's sense of history is expressed through Emily refusing to pay taxes. Emily is confined by her status, moral obligations and privileges as well. She adamantly rebels against change.

Faulkner as a symbolic naturalist

The Faulknerian symbols imply that radical social change which created a South which is referred to as the Modern South. Emily Grierson herself is a symbol of the Old South. Her aristocratic detachment from the rest of town folks confirms the idea of the Old

South as a historical era which seems to be remote but still inherently lives in the characters. Emily symbolizes this attitude. Everybody wants to know more about her, they are preoccupied with guesses concerning her life, but they can never reveal the core of the problem around her. Their speculations revolve around a malleable entity which is more like a living dead. The Old South has the same function. All the Southern characters cling to it, but they may not know exactly what it was like. Both Emily and the Old South are buried and recreated by mythology. Through Emily's life we can see how the unknown can create myths, and how uncertainty can settle onto the character (Virágos 395). Respect was won by Emily because all the people from the town went to her funeral. They wanted to express their affection for a "fallen monument" (226), through this they wanted to express their respect towards the past.

Homer Barron can be referred to as the embodiment of the North. He is a vigorous Yankee, and his job also confirms this idea that he is the exploitative Northerner. He works for a construction company. The construction itself can stand for the transformation of the South into a new region, into a modern country and a new region which is industrialized and urbanized and where all the old southern social values are gone.

Emily's and Colonel Sartoris' characters stand for all the values that the Old South represented, 'a tradition, a duty, and a care, a sort of hereditary obligation upon the town' (226). Their obligation was self-imposed, and this obligation is symbolically juxtaposed to the new social structure which is democratically elected but which is resented by Emily representing the feudalism of the Old South. From the point of view of the old generation the key terms of honor, chivalry, decorum and dignity have become replaced by disintegration, fall, decay and doom.

Faulkner inhabited his imaginary Yoknapatawpha County with fictional characters who he met and meticulously observed. These characters represent two generations. In this constellation Emily represents the old generation, which is gradually superseded by the new generation. Faulkner divided his characters into two major groups. These two groups are more like two different sets of characteristics and behavioral patterns. The fist group is the one sharing characteristic features and qualities of the old generation, they

are called the Sartoris-type characters. The other type is the representatives of the new generation, the Snopes-type characters. As Faulkner's writing is inhabited by dynasties of characters, these Sartoris-type characters are the old Southern families: the Compsons, the McCaslins and the Griersons. They are past the peak of their prosperity and are riddled by moral decay. On the other hand, the Snopes clan are efficient, materialistic, they are merchants and entrepreneurs who are overtaking the Sartorises.

Emily's house is also an integral part of the landscape of the Old South. The porticoed house is a typical "big, squarish frame house … decorated with cupolas and spires" (226). The story of the house is a mirror of the decline of the Old South. The use of the past perfect also illustrates vanishing glory. The colour has also vanished, the house used to be white symbolizing elegance and aristocracy, but by now the whiteness, that is the aristocratic flair has vanished.

The enormous social change that affected small communities, small towns is represented in the shift in focus in Jefferson. The re–structuring of priorities expresses this change. Emily's house used to be on the most select street of the town. Not only has the house lost its bright whiteness, but the once select street has also lost its significance. It is not the most important street any more, which shows the aristocracy in a state of losing positions in the town since they used to have their houses on that street. The new centres are the commercial, business centres, the haven of material wealth for the new generation.

To sum up, the story can be comprehended as an allegory of decadence built around the life of a simple Jefferson spinster. The story depicts the seduction of the aristocratic South (Miss Emily) by a vigorous and enterprising North (Homer). The South (Miss Emily) having destroyed its seducer, lives to the end proudly cherishing the shreds of its traditional aristocratic dignity.

Faulkner as an expressionist

Several elements of expressionism can be traced in the story. Exaggerations, distortions, caricature-like descriptions and enlargements are all signs of expressionism. These signs are transmitted towards the readers through visual, olfactory and auditory images. Among the

visual images the emphasis on a part of Emily's body – her hair –, and the way this tiny piece of hair gains significance and leads to the solution of the puzzling problem at the end are expressionistic devices. The changes in Emily's physique and hair colour turn her into a sexless persona in the story. The father's portrait on the wall is also an oppressing force that overshadows Emily's life.

The poignant smell that is so palpably described is an olfactory image that penetrates into every niche of the story.

Among the auditory images the significance of the expressionistic dialog in part 3 should be stressed. Considering the proportions of the parts, it should be noted that the third part is the shortest and the most dramatic part. In comparison to the other parts in the story the pace of the narration in part 3 is intensified. After the steady flow of the first two parts, in part 3 we, the readers, are suddenly introduced to three topics: Homer Barron, noblesse oblige and buying poison. The dialog in the drugstore (230) increases tension by the use of unfinished sentences, artificial pauses, repetitions, and word choice (arsenic, haughty eyes, skull and bones). The reference to Emily's face as a strained flag also reinforces the idea of artificiality and it builds up tension rooted in doom.

Faulkner as a gothic writer

From the beginning of the story we know that Emily's life ended in failure. The funeral is not only the burial ceremony of an average person in the town, because Emily was a monument. However, the word "fallen" implies that her life may not be commemorated as a glorious period in the history of the town. So from the very beginning of the story Emily and the South that she represents is doomed to failure.

The story can be analyzed as a mockery on the traditional gothic story pattern, thus being a grotesque gothic story. Thomas Inge writes the following about the significance of humour in the short story,

> …this story, Faulkner's best known, partakes of this tradition in its exaggerated treatment of a Southern lady who resorts to necrophilia as a means of protecting her genteel reputation. While critics have labored at the serious and symbolic meanings of the story, perhaps Faulkner finally meant for it to be another of his outrageous tricks on his gullible readers. (Inge 16)

All the images strengthen the idea of a transformed gothic story. The lady to be saved is a sexless and cruel person, the savior is a meek man, and their dark and dusty gothic chamber of horrors is the place which is supposed to be the place for pleasure that is their pink bridal.

Faulkner as a psychological writer

The forces that shaped Emily's life can be explored from the psychological aspect. Firstly, Emily's attachment to her father, and the impact of the father figure on Emily's life affected her psychosexual development. Secondly, Emily's role in her relationship with Homer Barron could be exploited, and her incipient domineering role in this affair expresses the gender-switch that she undergoes. The mental turmoil and Emily's delusions, and her losing touch with the reality of her time result in her desire and action of necrophilia, which is again a psychic disorder. Through the psychological aspect of the analysis the general decline and disorder of the social consciousness of the South could be explored.

The psychological analysis of Homer Barron's character may address the issue of gender and masculinity, self-identification and self-esteem. Homer Barron's reticent meekness is in sharp contrast with Emily's marauding sense of possession.

The presuppositions and the rumour around Emily reveal an element of the social consciousness of the South. In the story we are introduced to the social awareness of the South, and learn about the common consciousness of a Southern small town. The unmasking of this awareness may result in analysing the significance of belonging, the relationship between personal and common or shared guilt and sin. Besides Emily, the other major characters in the story are the town folks. We learn about Emily through public rumour. This narrative device increases tension, because the readers never know how much is supposed to be taken for granted. Exaggeration and inventing story fragments to fill in the unknown white spots are inherent features of public rumour, thus this form of narration often leaves the reader in doubt and builds up exacerbation and suspense.

Faulkner as a Southern writer

All the preceding parts of the essay refer to Faulkner, the Southern writer. As soon as we start reading the story, we know that we are in the South. What are those special characteristic features that bind us to the region?

- man-made parts of the setting: the porticoed house, cotton wagon, cotton gin,
- the social structure: hierarchy, aristocracy, black folks,
- social consciousness: tradition, respect, honour, duty, care, sin, guilt and belonging,
- writing style: long baroque sentences in the descriptive parts, colloquialism and vernacular idioms in the dialogs,
- sense of history: confederacy, dynastic sense of history.

The analysis of the criteria mentioned above will contribute to a better understanding of Faulkner's world. From the springboard of "A Rose for Emily" the imagery of Faulkner's works will be comprehended with greater ease. In relation to imagery Cleanth Brooks concludes his essay on Faulkner as follows,

> He had fully absorbed the oral tradition from tales told around a hunter's campfire or yarns heard on the front porch of a country store. Yet he also dared to venture high-flown rhetoric – flamboyant language, rich cadences, and elaborate imagery. He is an original. There is no one else quite like him in American literature. His place in the canon is secure. (Brooks 342)

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SHARON L. GRAVETT

THE ARTISTIC ARTICULATION OF THE PAST: *BELOVED* AND *ABSALOM, ABSALOM!*

But I have to say. … that there was for me not only an academic interest in Faulkner, but in a very, very personal way, in a very personal way as a reader, William Faulkner had an enormous effect on me, an enormous effect.

I don't really find strong connections between my work and Faulkner's.

Toni Morrison's assessment of William Faulkner in her talk on "Faulkner and Women" (Morrison 296, 297) reveals her complicated response to him on both a personal and a professional level. Personally, Morrison knows Faulkner's work well; her master's thesis at Cornell was entitled "Virginia Woolf's and William Faulkner's Treatment of the Alienated." Of course, a knowledge of Faulkner's work does not imply that Morrison automatically utilizes that knowledge in her own writing.[1] And such assumptions clearly frustrate Morrison who, in an interview, exclaims, "I am not like James Joyce; 1 am not *like* Thomas Hardy; 1 am not *like* Faulkner. I am not *like* in that sense. I do not have objections to being compared to such extraordinarily gifted and facile writers, but it does leave me

[1] John Duvall, another critic who has examined links between Morrison and Faulkner, also denies any simple pattern of influence when he avers, "But in positing an intertextual relation between Song of Solomon and Go Down, Moses, 1 am not granting the latter any privilege as master text" ("Doe" 95).

sort of hanging there when I know that my effort is to be *like* something that has probably only been fully expressed in music..." (McKay427).[2]

In this paper, I would like to suggest that Morrison is indeed like Faulkner, but not in a mechanical sense of certain specific borrowings. Instead, I would assert that the same attributes that attracted her personally to Faulkner are reflected in her own approach to literature and to her writing. Morrison obviously found Faulkner's works personally appealing so it should not surprise readers to discover that her novels share certain affinities with those of Faulkner; however, affinities do not necessarily mean imitation but perhaps merely a similar approach. With this observation in mind, it would be helpful to look at two novels which seem to have a great deal in common—Morrison's *Beloved* and Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*.[3] Exploring these two novels will show that Morrison has not only read Faulkner attentively but critically as well, creating a work that does not merely mimic his earlier novel but comments on it and perhaps even rewrites it.

First, like Absalom, Beloved's action revolves around the repercussive aftereffects of the American civil War which seems a natural choice for both writers. Faulkner was interested in exploring his own Southern heritage, while Morrison wanted to examine the heritage of American slavery. In either case, both authors sought to demonstrate how events from the past continue to haunt the present. Each novel incorporates this theme through a particular narrative strategy—the ghost story. In Absalom, Quentin Compson is overwhelmed by the presence of a past that existed long before the current day of 1909. This presence pulls at him so strongly that he quite literally feels himself tearing in half:

> he would seem to listen to two separate Quentins now—the Quentin Compson preparing for Harvard in the South, the deep South, the deep South dead since 1865 and peopled with garrulous outraged baffled ghosts, listening, having to listen, to one of the ghosts which

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[2] Susan Willis asserts that in comparing Morrison with Faulkner that their "tremendous differences… which include historical period, race, and sex" (41) are more common than any perceived similarities.

[3] John Duvall maintains that these two novels enter into a "covert dialogue" ("Authentic" 84).

> had refused to lie still even longer than most had, telling him about ghost-times; and the Quentin Compson who was still too young to deserve yet to be a ghost but nevertheless having to be one for all that, since he was born and bred in the deep South… . (4)

At times, Quentin may feel split in two, but at other times he feels that he has no individual identity at all: "his very body was an empty hall echoing with sonorous defeated names... He was a barracks filled with stubborn back-looking ghosts..." (7).

The haunting power of the old South moves Quentin so intensely because its characters are so vivid. The ghosts are indeed the most compelling figures in the novel; Thomas Sutpen, Charles Bon, Henry Sutpen and eventually Rosa Coldfield all take on a laterally larger-than-life quality that threatens to overshadow the current generation. Even in death, they remain the most alive characters.[4]

Ghosts appear even more laterally in *Beloved* where house number 124 in Cincinnati, Ohio is possessed by the vengeful spirit of a dead baby that the female residents—Sethe, her daughter Denver, and her mother-in-law Baby Suggs, who eventually becomes a ghostly presence herself—must fight against, "Together they waged a perfunctory battle against the outrageous behavior of that place; against turned-over slop jars, smacks on the behind, and gusts of sour air" (4).[5]

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[4] John Duvall observes, "*Absalom, Absalom!* is densely populated with ghosts…" ("Authentic" 87).

[5] Actually, the battle against this spiteful spirit reminds readers of the similar maneuvers waged against Thomas Sutpen. For many characters in *Absalom*, Sutpen is the enemy, the intruding presence, that the established community must fight. For example, the aunt of Ellen Coldfield, Sutpen's second wife, who saw both Ellen's father and Sutpen as foes, treated each visit as an armed encounter. The narrator describes:

> the aunt... cast over these visits [of Sutpen's] also that same atmosphere of grim embattled conspiracy and alliance against the two adversaries, one of whom—Mr. Coldfield—whether he could have held his own or not, had long since drawn in his picquets and dismantled his artillery and retired into the impregnable citadel of his passive rectitude: and the other—Sutpen—who probably could have engaged and even routed them but who did not even know that he was an embattled foe. (49)

Even after his death, Sutpen's presence remains a threatening one, creating a path of ruin at Sutpen's Hundred and drastically affecting the life of Quentin Compson.

Though the baby is the most literal ghost in *Beloved,* the vengeful infant is not the novel's only haunting presence. As in *Absalom,* many of the book's characters belong to the past—Mr. and Mrs. Garner, the men from Sweet Home, Schoolteacher, and even Sethe's own mother. In fact, for Sethe, the baby's presence is actually easier to face than that of the other ghosts that surround her. When one of the Sweet Home men, Paul D, comes back into Sethe's life, he drives away the baby's spirit but brings other, more threatening, memories, such as what happened to her husband, Halle; "he had beat the spirit away the very day he entered her house and no sign of it since. A blessing, but in its place he brought another kind of haunting: Halle's face..." (96).

Like Faulkner, Morrison uses the strategy of the ghost story to illustrate the past's continuing presence; however, she does vary that strategy somewhat. While Quentin Compson is haunted by a past he never even experienced, Sethe at least confronts the ghosts of her own past. Furthermore, while the baby's spirit interferes with the normal social relationships that Sethe and Denver might be expected to develop, it also makes them both strong, independent women. The same positive effect cannot be attributed to Quentin Compson.

Despite differences in the application of the ghost story, in both *Absalom* and *Beloved,* the real importance of the haunting apparitions is to demonstrate how much the past continues to influence the present. Try as they might, characters in both novels are consumed by previous events; the central characters in each—Quentin Compson and Sethe—find themselves overwhelmed by the past, even to the extent that their pasts are of ten more "real" than their presents. For Sethe, "her brain was not interested in the future. Loaded with the past and hungry for more, it left her no room to imagine, let alone plan for, the next day" (70) Quentin experiences the same sensation, leading a life consumed with events that occurred long before his birth.[6] Even when he heads north to attend Harvard University, Quentin cannot leave Sutpen's Hundred behind him. Rather than getting involved in campus life, Quentin draws his roommate, Shreve, into the story of Thomas Sutpen and his children. Neither Sethe nor Quentin can seem to break free from the past which leaves them unable to function effectively in the present.

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[6] Carl E. Rollyson observes, "Quentin's tragedy lies precisely in this fact that his vision of the past has usurped all of his emotional and intellectual faculties. He now can see life only in terms of the past…" (64).

In fact, the lives of both of these characters revolve around a crucial past event which they feel compelled to come to terms with. In that respect, each novel, besides being a ghost story, is also a mystery.[7] At the heart of each rests an obscured pivotal event which must be explored in greater depth. In *Absalom,* the central event is the murder of Charles Bon, a suitor to Sutpen's daughter, Judith, who is killed by Henry, Sutpen's son, at the gates of Sutpen's Hundred. This event serves as the primary mystery that continues to enthrall members of the community years after it occurs. Miss Rosa Coldfield, the only surviving member of the town who actually knew many of the participants in the story, complains that no action is ever truly completed. She says, "*it [is] not the blow we suffer from but the tedious repercussive anti-climax of it*" (121). Quentin comes to share a similar view, thinking, "Maybe nothing ever happens once and is finished. Maybe happen is never once but like ripples maybe on water after the pebble sinks, the ripples moving on, spreading…" (210). The saga of Sutpen and Bon continues to intrigue subsequent generations.

However, these subsequent generations are not so interested in facts but in motives. They want to know more than that Henry Sutpen killed his friend Charles Bon; they want to know why. This detective story occupies Quentin, his father, and Shreve. At first, they surmise that Bon's mistress and child offended Henry. Such an explanation, though, does not seem compelling enough; even Mr. Compson is forced to admit that "even for the shadowy paragons which are our ancestors born in the South and come to man-and-womanhood about eighteen sixty or sixty-one. It's just incredible. It just does not explain" (80). As Quentin and Shreve probe further into the case (and as Quentin eventually discovers the aged Henry Sutpen hiding out at Sutpen's Hundred) they come to discover that Bon was Sutpen's child from a prior relationship. Therefore, a marriage to Judith would be incestuous. Still, even a brother-sister relationship appears not to be the ultimate breaking point for Henry; miscegenation (Bon's mother was black) not incest seems to prompt the murder of Bon (at least in

[7] Frederick J. Karl concurs: "Yet while *Absalom, Absalom!* moves on several levels, social, historical, personal, it comes… through secret passageways, by means of hiding necessary information, by using divulgence as a psychological weapon… [It is] a detective story of sorts…" (210).

Quentin and Shreve's reconstruction of events).[8] This reconstruction serves an important purpose for Faulkner because it allows Quentin to realize the injustice and hypocrisy at the heart of Southern society. His last lines in the novel illustrate the weight of this realization when he exclaims about the South, "*I dont hate it… I dont. I dont! I dont hate it! I dont hate it!*" (303).

In *Beloved*, Morrison develops a similar mystery: why does a baby's spirit haunt Number 124? Although readers learn early in the narrative that the baby's throat was cut, who did it and why remains shrouded in mystery. As the novel progresses, readers slowly discover that the baby's mother, Sethe, had escaped from slavery, crossed the Ohio, and had made her way to freedom in Cincinnati. Only midway through the novel does the reader finally learn that Sethe's owner had followed her across the river and, Sethe, rather than let herself or her children be recaptured, attempted to kill them, but succeeded only in killing her little girl. [9]

During the rest of the novel, Sethe must come to terms with this violent act, and once again, facts are not as important as motives. Sethe must confront the circumstances that would lead her to attempt to murder her own children. To do this, she has to face not only the murder but her life as a slave. Both memories become harder and harder to repress, particularly when Paul D arrives followed shortly thereafter by a mysterious young woman whom Sethe comes to believe is her daughter. Beloved becomes the physical embodiment of the past and her presence nearly destroys Sethe. Oddly enough, Sethe is rescued by the same coalition of neighborhood women who had

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[8] Eric J. Sundquist explains that "it is… the debacle of miscegenation, which the novel so continually engages as the curse and sin that brings Sutpen's design, like that of the South itself, to collapse. It is the debacle that makes Clytie neither slave nor free… and makes Charles Bon neither slave nor son and brother" (114).

[9] A corollary mystery is explored by Stamp Paid who wonders why Baby Suggs declines and dies, and finds his first explanation unsatisfactory. At first, "he believed that shame put her in the bed. Now, eight years after her contentious funeral and eighteen years after the Misery, he changed his mind" (177). He decides instead that "her marrow was tired… she could not approve or condemn Sethe's rough choice. One or the other might have saved her, but beaten up by the claims of both, she went to bed" (180). Like Quentin in *Absalom*, Stamp Paid gradually comes to reinterpret the past.
There are also further mysteries in *Absalom* such as why Rosa Coldfield rejects Thomas Sutpen and why Wash Jones would kill him.

deserted her before; they feel, "Whatever Sethe had done, [they] didn't like the idea of past errors taking possession of the present" (256).

Unlike Henry Sutpen or Quentin Compson, Sethe has the opportunity to relive the moment of so many years before and choose another alternative. When a white stranger once again approaches her home, she lashes out at him rather than at herself or her family. Even though her action is mistaken, it allows her to break free from her past.[10] Differing from both Quentin, who ends his tale with a litany of hate against the environment which seemed to trap him, and Henry, who ends his days quite laterally entombed in his father's house, Sethe may be able to break the pattern and establish a different future for herself.[11]

Despite their variations in treatment, both Faulkner and Morrison demonstrate their concern with the past's centrality to the present. In so doing, they employ similar narrative strategies—using elements from the ghost story as well as the detective story. However, as these approaches indicate, the major emphasis in each novel lies not so much in the past itself but in the *telling* of that past. Both *Beloved* and *Absalom* are filled with characters who spend a large part of their time recounting tales of past events. These stories serve several purposes: they give characters a sense of community (recounting a tale creates a relationship), they allow characters the opportunity to probe the past imaginatively (trying to discover the motivations behind the bare

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[10] David Cowart points out that another Morrison novel, *Song of Solomon*, also has a more optimistic view of the future:

"Unlike Faulknerian history, which—at least at the personal level—can tend to be a terrible revelation, the past that Milkman Dead comes to know liberates him, once he has risen above a dream of easy riches in the form of recovered treasure" (89).

David Lawrence adds, "In *Beloved*, Morrison suggests a way through the door of memory, even if that way entails a precarious balancing act between the danger of forgetting a past that should not be forgotten and of remembering a past that threatens to engulf the present" (200).

[11] Craig Werner points to this difference between Morrison's and Faulkner's characters when he observes, "An increasing perception of the extent and inevitability of that identification [with the past] liberates the Afro-American protagonists, paralyzes Faulkner's" (725).

historical events), and they demonstrate that no one version of the past is sufficient.[12]

First, telling stories together forges relationships between characters. In Absalom, a number of characters are linked through recounting Sutpen's story. It is ironic how the divisive Sutpen character manages to unify many subsequent characters who attempt to come to some under standing of the meaning and relevance of his story. In fact, Sutpen's saga even brings together such seemingly disparate characters as Quentin Compson from the deep South and his Harvard roommate, Shreve, a Canadian. They become "two who breathed not [as] individuals now yet mething both more and less than twins." (236). In Beloved, Denver develops a similar sense of companionship when she begins telling stories about her birth to Beloved; "The monologue became, in fact, a duet." (78). Denver gets something she desperately needs—a companion—and she also finds, in retelling this story, added insight. Sethe also discovers a similar relief in her storytelling experiences with Beloved. Learning "the profound satisfaction Beloved got from storytelling" (58), Sethe becomes more comfortable talking about herself and her past, even to the extent of revealing aspects about her former life she had previously thought were "unspeakable" (58). In fact, "she found herself wanting to [tell the past], liking it" (58). This ability to share her past brings Sethe a great deal of comfort. In talking to Paul D about events at Sweet Home, Sethe realizes that "her story was bearable because it was his as well—to tell, to refine, and tell again" (99).

In both *Absalom* and *Beloved*, the act of storytelling, of entering imaginatively into the past, gives characters new ways of under standing former events. Denver, for example, through telling the story of her own birth to Beloved begins to realize the difficulties of her mother's situation: "Denver was seeing it now and feeling it—through Beloved. Feeling how it must have felt to her mother. Seeing how it

[12] Andrew Levy sees story telling as the principal action of Beloved, observing, "Beloved constitutes a catalog of these ways [of telling the story of self], represented from different characters' points of view. Individually, no single 'trajectory' appears entirely successful. But if no individual can tell the story, Morrison appears to suggest, then perhaps the story is meant to be told multivocally, as a fluid amalgamation of many individual perspectives—the community of narrative voices, for instance, that constitutes Beloved itself" (115).

must have felt to her mother. Seeing how it must have looked. And the more fine points she made, the more detail she provided, the more Beloved liked it. So she anticipated the questions by giving blood to the scraps her mother and grandmother had told her—and a heartbeat" (78). In *Absalom*, Quentin and Shreve also identify strongly with the young men in their tale—Henry Sutpen and Charles Bon: "So that now it was not two but four of them riding the two horses through the dark over the frozen December ruts of that Christmas Eve, four of them and then just two—Charles–Shreve and Quentin–Henry…" (267).

At this point, history and art intersect;[13] being a storyteller does not mean recounting a body of established facts but endeavoring to discover the meaning of events through an act of imagination. The "true" story may never be really known; at best, characters can only try to discern the most satisfying explanation possible.[14] In *Absalom*, when Quentin and Shreve try to discover why Henry Sutpen would kill Charles Bon, in the absence of direct evidence, they must create their own scenario. Shreve, for example, in trying to flesh out the relationship between Henry and Charles, creates Bon's home in New Orleans, "[a] drawing room of baroque and fusty magnificence… which was probably true enough..."(268).

For characters in both *Beloved* and *Absalom*, the real interest lies not in discovering exactly what happened but in telling the story itself. Ultimately, it matters less what was said and more that it was said at all. The story, indeed the stories, are the import ant thing. In *Absalom*, every character may have a different reason for telling the tale of Sutpen and his family; for example, Rosa Coldfield begins the process by recounting her story to Quentin Compson, presumably to justify her behavior and her hat red of Sutpen. Of course, Quentin realizes early that Miss Rosa spends time discussing the past with him "because she wants it told" (5). However, once Quentin enters into the tale, the story takes on more than Miss Rosa's limited perspective. As

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[13] Frederick B. Karl asserts, "Wherever history lies, it is driven by individualized narrative transmission..." (214).

[14] Morrison, in fact, based *Beloved* on the actual story of Margaret Garner who "attempted to kill her children rather than have them reenslaved when they were all captured in Ohio in 1850" (Samuels and Hudson-Weems 95). While Morrison does not try to recreate Garner's story precisely, she uses it as a departure point for her own artistic endeavor.

Quentin begins to reconstruct the story, his interests lie not so much with Sutpen as with his progeny, particularly Henry and Bon.[15] For Quentin, and perhaps for Faulkner, the real fascination seems to be solving the enigma of Charles Bon. Bon's shadowy presence comes to dominate the novel; in a very real way, *Absalom* stands as a monument to someone history threatens to forget—the bastard child who was refused his heritage just because he had some Negro blood. Faulkner thus uses his novel to explore the racial injustices that allow a father to deny a son and a brother to kill a brother[16]—the legacy, in fact, of the Civil War.[17]

The same may be said of *Beloved* where Beloved herself comes to represent the thousands of black women who perished anonymously in the chains of slavery. In the final chapter of the novel, the narrator asserts, "Everybody knew what she was called, but nobody knew her name. Disremembered and unaccounted for, she cannot be lost because no one is looking for her, and even if they were, how can they call her if they don't know her name?" (274). Like Charles Bon, Beloved remains a nebulous figure whose true history is never known. While Thomas Sutpen will be remembered, as will Sethe and Baby Suggs, Bon and Beloved are those that history tends to overlook. However, Morrison, like Faulkner, sets about in her novel to redress that oversight. Although the narrator in Beloved chants the refrain, "This is not a story to pass on" (275), the story does continue and Beloved is remembered.[18]

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[15] These multiple voices also suggest, as mentioned earlier, that no one version of the tale can claim total authority.

[16] John Duvall points out that" it is in these moments of non-recognition that *Absalom*'s ghosts emerge" ("Authentic" 89).

[17] Eric J. Sundquist maintains, "What he [Faulkner] discovered were the visionary powers the problem of race was capable of eng aging as it became, over the course of his career, the definitive crisis of twentieth-century American social history and the violently explicit subject of his fiction" (ix).

[18] Morrison has another historical oversight to redress as well. Not only does she want to speak for those, like Beloved, who never had a voice, but for those who actually wrote accounts of their slave experiences and had to censor themselves in order to be accepted by their audience. Morrison claims, "'My job becomes how to rip that veil' behind which the slave narrator was forced to hide" (Samuels and Hudson-Weems 97).

Faulkner and Morrison both seek to critique a society that forces parents to deny and even murder their children.[19] Since Bon, a child with a mixed bloodline, threatens his father's "grand design" of success and upward social mobility, Sutpen denies him—with tragic results both to Bon and to his "legitimate" children. Since Beloved faces a future as a mere piece of property, Sethe chooses to kill her rather than allow her to return to slavery. Once again, this action also has dire consequences for Sethe's remaining family—Baby Suggs declines and dies, her sons leave her, and Denver fears her.[20] The past—particularly the past of the slave-holding South—continues to exert its devastating influence into the present.

These comparisons between *Beloved* and *Absalom* show that while Morrison shares similar preoccupations with Faulkner, she does not always draw the same conclusions.[21] Yet, even though she of ten presents different alternatives, Morrison joins Faulkner in exploring the relationship between history and art. She explains her own attraction to Faulkner's works: "My reasons, I think, for being interested and deeply moved by all his subjects had something to do with my desire to find out something about this country and that artistic articulation of its past that was not available in history, which is what art and fiction can do but sometimes history refuses to do" ("Faulkner and Women" 296). Like the major characters in their

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[19] Both Thomas Sutpen and Sethe, despite their own experiences, become oppressors. Sutpen, who had felt the pain of rejection when he had been forced to go to the back door, does exactly the same thing to his own son. Sethe, who had felt the pain of being the possession of another without any will of her own, deprives her own daughter of any choice when she takes her life. Wilfred Samuels and Clenora Hudson-Weems observe, "we are left with the frightening realization that Sethe, by trying to destroy the monster that had deprived her and her family of their humanity, had herself become one..." (111).

[20] Denver admits, "I love my mother but I know she killed one of her own daughters, and tender as she is with me, I'm scared of her because of it. She missed killing my brothers and they knew it…. All the time, I'm afraid the thing that happened that made it all right for my mother to kill my sister could happen again" (205).

[21] David Cowart observes, "… Morrison is no epigone. If Joyce and Faulkner figure as presences in this novel [*Song of Solomon*], they do so without impairing or qualifying Morrison's ultimate originality and autonomy" (95). He continues, "The presence of her precursors does not qualify her originality and artistic autonomy—it merely guarantees that she will produce not black literature but literature" (100).

novels, both Morrison and Faulkner choose the role of storyteller rather than historian. They seek to explore moments (and people) that history either ignores or merely reports. Examining motives as much as actions, they attempt, through literature, to under stand the *whys* of history as fully as the *whats*. Perhaps even most importantly, Morrison creatively explores her own literary past by reconstructing and recreating Faulkner's earlier work.

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LENKE NÉMETH

TRANSCENDING GENERIC BORDERS: WILLIAM FAULKNER'S *THERE WAS A QUEEN*

> Time present and time past
> Are both perhaps present in time future,
> And time future contained in time past.
> If all time is eternally present
> All time is unredeemable.
> (T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*)

Enamored and enchanted with English romantic poetry at the beginning of his literary career, William Faulkner aspired to become a poet, yet his literary journey navigated him to genres other than poetry. After winning world fame and recognition with his daring and dauntingly enigmatic prose works by the 1950s, at the zenith of his career he labeled himself a "failed poet" claiming: "I think that every novelist is a failed poet. I think he tries to write poetry first, then he finds he can't. Then he tries the short story, which is the most demanding form after poetry. And failing at that, only then does he take up novel-writing" (qtd. in Meriwether 217). Indeed, Faulkner's efforts to start out as a poet were abortive, yet all throughout his career he remained a poet and a romantic at heart.[1] His poetic vein apparent in his unusual feel for words as well as in his instinct for color and rhythm is perhaps best captured in his short stories, a genre that

[1] See John Birk's study on Keats' influence on Faulkner's oeuvre, while the romantic dimension in Faulkner's works is discussed by Robert Woods Sayre. Both references are in the Works Cited section.

Faulkner considered "the hardest art form" next to poetry (qtd. in Blotner 345). Admittedly, in his search for the most demanding literary form Faulkner created narrative techniques, innovative in the extreme, that tend to transgress and dissolve generic categories by integrating techniques encountered in arts other than fiction (music, film, painting).

Faulkner's short story "There Was a Queen" (1933), selected for study in the present paper, serves as an excellent example of transcending generic borders by a skillful fusion of the formal elements of poetry, fiction, and music. Lyrical in its tone, diction, and imagery, musical in its construction, this story blends poetic language with an intricate pattern of musical structuring combining a polyphonic arrangement of narrating voices and the theme-and-variation musical form in its overall design. The reading I am proposing here aims to show that the convoluted technique of narration employed by Faulkner in the story is brilliantly adapted to rendering his main thematic concern, the decline of a Southern aristocratic family. Nevertheless, a close study of the working of the musical structural design will show that neither is the vanishing of past glory presented with nostalgia, nor is the new South depicted with sympathy. It is expected, though, that the investigation will throw into relief Faulkner's profound artistic vision that human morality is of central importance in human action. I would also argue that the approach focusing on parallels between literary and musical structures is a legitimate enterprise, though this kind of literary analysis has frequently generated conflicting responses in literary criticism.[2]

There seems to be consensus that Faulkner's vast repertoire of narrative techniques was cross-pollinated by musical forms such as symphony and polyphony, yet the interface between the variation theme and his short story structure has not been explored. His

[2] René Wellek and Austin Warren, for instance, are disinclined to give validity to such an approach on the grounds that "literary devices of recurrence, contrast, and the like [...] are common to all the arts" (127). By contrast, T. S. Eliot argues that "the use of recurrent themes is as natural to poetry as to music," thus "there are possibilities for verse which bear some analogy to the development of a theme by different groups of instruments, there are possibilities of transitions in a poem comparable to the different movements of a symphony or a quartet, there are possibilities of contrapuntal arrangement of subject-matter" (38).

compositional technique, particularly in his novels, readily evokes symphonic construction, which in literature is "a repetition-with-variation type of compensatory device [...] based on a movement away from and back to the principal key as well as on the exposition—development—recapitulation (re-exposition) pattern, in which there is a continual return to the main theme" (Virágos 176). Admittedly, the multiple narration technique, a widely used modernist narrative procedure—also improved and refined by Faulkner—has its origins in the musical texture of *polyphony* that ensures equal emphasis to contesting voices and parts in a musical piece. Parallel to the gradual withdrawal of the omniscient narrator in fictional experiments, particularly from the end of the nineteenth century, this musical device proved to be a suitable means of authorial manipulation to foreground characters with their own points of view. As Faulkner rejects a single authorial point of view, "most of his stories are told largely through the consciousness of participant characters" (Beck 739), that is, he employs the polyphonic character arrangement in his fictional works. Interestingly enough, a precise description of this character portrayal technique is provided by M. M. Bakhtin, who identifies the polyphonic structural design in Dostoevsky's novels. Accordingly, Bakthin's observations concerning Dostoevsky's narrative techniques appropriately elucidate Faulkner's pluralized narration method:

> A character's word about himself and his world is just as fully weighted as the author's word usually is; it is not subordinated to the character's objectified image as merely one of his characteristics, nor does it serve as a mouthpiece for the author's voice. It possesses extraordinary independence in the structure of the work; it sounds, as it were, alongside the author's word and in a special way combines with the full and equally valid voices of other characters. (7)

"There Was a Queen" also exhibits the working of a beautifully orchestrated polyphony of voices narrating the same story—constantly expanding—from the perspectives of three women inhabiting the now unmanned Sartoris house. In addition, a third-person narrator's somewhat detached voice also appears throughout the story, yet it cannot be considered the mouthpiece of the authorial point of view, or, for that matter, of a fourth perspective. Warren Beck's claim

concerning the presence of Faulkner's voice is also valid here: "even if Faulkner himself speaks, through third-person narrative, he usually keys his utterance to the mood of the scene and makes himself the lyrical mouthpiece of his characters' experiences" (739).

First published in *Scribner's Magazine* in January, 1933, "There Was a Queen" belongs to a cluster of short fiction written by Faulkner in his most productive period between 1926 through 1933, when his canonical masterpieces appeared: *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), *As I Lay Dying* (1930), *Light in August* (1932), and *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936). In the selected work Faulkner extends the story of the Sartoris family introduced in *Flags in the Dust* (1929, published as *Sartoris*) and addresses the issue who qualifies as a Sartoris woman. He embeds one of his recurrent themes of stasis vs. change in a conflict arising between first John Sartoris's sister, Old Mrs. Virginia DuPre (Miss Jenny) and Narcissa Benbow Sartoris, the widow of Mrs. DuPre's great-great-nephew. Narcissa's sexually unscrupulous act, using her sexuality to "buy back" the obscene love letters addressed to her a long time ago, threatens and undermines Sartoris pride and honor. The third woman character included is Elnora, a mulatto servant, who was singled out by "Cunnel" to take care of Virginia DuPre. Far from playing a minor role, Elnora finds it her mission to uphold and defend the Sartoris code.

The theme-and-variation[3] form, which adequately describes the compositional structure of the selected story, follows the pattern of introducing a theme which is developed and altered during repetition with changes. By analogy, in Faulkner's story a *single* scene placed in the center of the narration matches the musical theme (which is certainly not identical with a covertly expressed literary theme): it is the *creek episode* when Narcissa and her son, Bory walk across the pasture toward the creek and come back with their clothes on. This episode serves as a catalyst in several ways. It sets the story in motion

[3] A widely used formal technique through most of the history of classical music, the theme-and- variation form was much favored by several twentieth-century composers such as Arnold Shoenberg, Anton Webern, Paul Hindemith, and Benjamin Britten. In his *Variation and Fugue on a Theme by Purcell*, for instance Britten introduces various instruments to pick up the theme and elaborate on it, each making full use of its own potentials in tone and technique

as it triggers the static characters' physical movements as well as their mental journeys into the past. Spotting Narcissa with her son makes Elnora leave her cabin an hour before the time of her usual routine, while the motionless and erect Miss Jenny sitting in her wheelchair next to the window suddenly leans forward to see Narcissa and her son crossing the garden. Ultimately, this event hastens Miss Jenny's death. When she learns that sitting in the creek is a purification ritual for Narcissa after she has "defended" the Sartoris honor by sleeping with a federal agent in Memphis to retrieve the love letters that were thought to have disappeared, Miss Jenny asks for her "small black bonnet of ancient shape" she would wear when she was upset and dies leaving behind "a faint single gleam of white hair" (228).

Like a musical theme, the creek motif is both developed and altered with continuous variations that move from simple to more elaborate ones, thus following the basic principle of the progress from a simple to a more intricate design that provides an overall shape to a variation set. The musical theme is reiterated and modified by a succession of invariants, also identified as potential constants, and variants that may be harmonic, melodic, contrapuntal, and/or rhythmic, which constitute the variation theme. The invariants contribute to the unity of the work, while the variables shape some other factors such as density, range and register in music. Analogously, recurring in its altered and modified versions in the three women characters' accounts, the creek scene is gradually expanded in a non-linear mode into larger temporal and spatial dimensions, which allows for revealing the Sartoris family's distressing past. Thus the structural design proves to be a suitable means to create nostalgia for and stir memories of the irrevocable and irretrievable past of the Sartoris house. Recurring elements, like the *flower garden*, which Miss Jenny keeps watching, the *scent* emanating from it, and the *Carolina window* function as invariants, while Miss Jenny's and Elnora's memories and reminiscences gradually unfolding qualify as various types of variants. In my reading of the text the *harmonic* and *melodic* variants reiterate and modify the theme by embellishing it with emotionally neutral information, while the *contrapuntal* and *rhythmic* variants always uncover some painful and upsetting detail about the past. Thus a complex network of interrelating variants illuminates and extends the creek episode.

Tracing the convoluted route of the *garden* invariant as modified and expanded will illuminate the actual working of the compositional design. Arguably, the *garden* features as a constant reminder of Miss Jenny's as well as the Sartoris family's tormenting past. First mentioned in a purely factual manner by the narrator in the opening scene, the *garden* is established as a spatial referential point for Virginia DuPre, "who was ninety years old and who lived in a wheel chair beside the window above the flower garden" (Faulkner 211). Next this invariant is reiterated by a *harmonic* variant as the image of the garden is enriched with sweet smells and pleasing sounds, dimensions effecting upon sensory organs: "[Elnora] went up the quiet, high-ceiled hall filled with scent from the garden and with the drowsing and myriad sounds of the June afternoon, to open the library door" (213).

The *scent*, the *seeds*, the *jasmine*, and the *window* constitute closely related invariants metonymically referring to the *garden*, and they are perpetually developed and altered in conjunction with each other, thus enhancing the density and complexity of the texture. These items gain symbolic meanings throughout the story and serve as points of departure in the present from where past events are unfolded in a non-linear fashion. This structural principle effectively underlies Faulkner's time concept whereby the past projects itself into the present and the present reaches back to meet the past. Conversely, the variation set compositional design proves to be an appropriate means to show Faulkner's treatment of past as proposed by Zsolt Virágos:

> the past, or rather the sum total of all the pasts, is a kind of lump in the present, which must not be chronologically unraveled, for then we would have a succession of relative pasts and presents. Faulknerian past therefore is extra-temporal. It is something here and now, present in the proper sense of the word. (346)

If past is invariably present, all time is held together echoing Eliot's words: "If all time is eternally present/All time is unredeemable."

A *harmonic* variant of the window motif describes Miss Jenny's position next to the window and links her with the past both literally and figuratively: "Beside the window (the sash was raised now, with its narrow border of colored Carolina glass which in the winter framed her head and bust like a hung portrait) an old woman sat in a

wheelchair" (213). Her immobility prevents her from going down into the garden and the window hermetically separates her from the outside world by framing her as if she were "frozen" into a portrait hung on the wall. Modified in a *contrapuntal* variant by Elnora, the window turns out to be "a kind of lump in the present" as it evokes Miss Jenny's home in Carolina and her escape from there: "Getting here in the dead winter without nothing in this world of god's but a basket with some flower seeds and two bottles of wine and then colored window panes old Marse John put in the library window so She could look through it like it was Cal-lina" (216). Curiously enough, the first version of the title, "Through the Window"[4] also underscores the significance of the window by highlighting, though, the *object*, the garden, that is, what is seen through the window. By contrast, the second version, "An Empress Passed," as well as the final title, "There Was a Queen," shift the emphasis on the *subject*, on the person watching through the window, therefore on the passing away of a distinguished person who embodies the dignity and the pride, all the mores of a bygone era, an irrevocable past.

Elnora's emotionally charged reminiscences pertaining to the *garden*, the *window*, and the creek episode are beyond doubt subsumed in the categories of *contrapuntal* and *rhythmic* variants. Her rapidly flowing speech replaces the slow pace of the descriptive language of the story, whereby the inner dynamics is maintained by the alternation of passages of greater intensity with passages of less intensity. The change in tempi largely contributes to the musicality of a text since the transitions between these passages "give a rhythm of fluctuating emotion essential to the musical structure of the whole" (Eliot 32).

Driven by her loyalty to Miss Jenny and her outright hostility towards Narcissa, she provides antecedents to the creek scene and reveals the most painful memories about Miss Jenny's escape from the Yankees in '69. Elnora's watching "the woman and the boy go down across the pasture in the hot June sunlight" gives rise to a *contrapuntal* variant of the creek motif and is linked to Narcissa leaving for Memphis for two days for no apparent reasons as well as her sudden

[4] The versions of the title as well as the publication history of the short story are provided by Hans Skei's study. See Works Cited for the reference.

arrival home: “Well, it’s her business where she is going, [. . .] same as it her business how come she went off to Memphis, leaving Miss Jenny setting yonder in her chair without nobody but niggers to look after her” (212). Further on the *contrapuntal variants* provided by Elnora disclose that Narcissa is both scheming and manipulative. For instance, Elnora is not surprised about Narcissa’s return from Memphis since “she ain’t going to leave this place, now she got in here” (212). Elnora finds suspicious “Miss Narcissa’s doing a mighty lot of traipsing around all of a sudden,” especially “for a woman as lazy as her” (213), which implies Narcissa is dishonest and deceitful. Her outright contempt of Narcissa, however, is expressed in her judgment that she is “Trash. Town trash” (31). Convinced about Narcissa’s deviousness Elnora even contradicts Miss Jenny by claiming that “she [Narcissa] won’t never be a Sartoris woman” (214).

The *rhythmic* variants concerning Miss Jenny’s fleeing from Carolina and her arrival in Mississippi mirror Elnora’s agitated state of mind when recalling those harrowing events to her son Isom: “Come all the way here by Herself, and the country still full of Yankees. All the way from Cal-lina, with her folks all killed and dead except old Marse John” (216). Further escalating the horror of the escape in a steady crescendo, Elnora expands the previous *rhythmic* invariant by adding: “With the Yankees done killed Her Paw and Her husband and burned the Cal-lina house, over Her and Her mammy’s head, and she come all the way to Mississippi by Herself, to the only kin She had left” (216). In light of the past sufferings and torments Miss Jenny went through, Elnora finds Narcissa’s cunning behavior particularly outrageous and indignantly bursts out: “she thinks she can pick up and frolic” (217). She also clearly sees how the “town trash” could cheat Miss Jenny the “quality” as she [Narcissa] worked for five years to get herself married to Bayard: “Coming out here two or three times a week, with Miss Jenny thinking she was just coming out to visit like quality. But I knowed. But knowed what she was up to all the time” (217–18), as she explains to her son Isom.

The *garden* acquires an even greater significance when Miss Jenny’s perspective is presented. Building an emphatic crescendo with various types of variants and a thrice refrain-like repetition of Miss Jenny looking down into the garden (218), Faulkner does not merely emphasize the importance of the place for her but also foreshadows

disclosing some ancient, perhaps hidden secrets about the family. Indeed, the garden is inevitably linked to her own past and the disturbing memories of being forced to leave her home in '69. However, Miss Jenny's *melodic* variant of the escape with her intently looking at the "now stout shrubs which she had fetched from Carolina as shots not much bigger than matches" (218) juxtaposes Elnora's *contrapuntal* variants pertaining to the same event. At the same time the former accentuates Miss Jenny's attempt to hush down those painful memories. A *harmonic* variant of the garden reminds Miss Jenny of Narcissa: "it was in the garden that she and the young woman who was to marry her nephew and bear a son, had become acquainted" (218–19). Yet, a *contrapuntal* variant reveals her resentment over Narcissa's insignificant character: "I wonder how she ever got herself engaged to Bayard, talking so little. Maybe she did it by just being, filling some space" (219).

The invariants, the *garden*, the *scent*, the *jasmine* are all effectively drawn together in the climactic moment when Narcissa faces Miss Jenny after the creek episode. Before the young woman can utter a word, Miss Jenny peremptorily demands that Narcissa smell the jasmine emanating from the garden. A reminder of Miss Jenny's past, "a kind of lump in the present," the jasmine is endowed with sacred properties as if warning Narcissa to take an oath on it and tell the truth: "Wait, "the old woman said. "Before you begin. The Jasmine. Do you smell it?" (222) Expanding the jasmine motif in a carefully structured *contrapuntal* variant that not only accentuates the eternal cyclicality of the jasmine growing but also relates it to her family's past memories Miss Jenny establishes frames of reference for Narcissa: "Always this time of day it begins. It has begun about this time of day in June for fifty-seven years this summer. I brought them from Carolina, in a basket. I remember how that first March I sat up all night, burning newspapers about the roots. Do you smell it?" (222) The repetition of the question "Do you smell it?" hammers it through that Narcissa should conform to the rules and traditions of this family.

Narcissa's perspective then unveils the mystery about the creek episode. It turns out that she meant to defend the respectability of the Sartorises in a rather ambivalent way. When learning about the existence of the obscene love letters that were stolen on the night of her wedding to young Bayard, she decides to get them back from the

Federal agent who possesses them as he was investigating the robbery. Narcissa decided to regain them by selling her body to the Federal agent in Memphis. Justifying her travel to Memphis she says: "I had that much regard for Bory and you, to go somewhere else" (225). Back home she felt the urge to bathe with her clothes on in the creek. Devastated by the Narcissa's corruptness as well as her conviction that she acted as a Sartoris woman, Miss Jenny refuses to speak to Narcissa and not long after Narcissa's departure she dies in her wheelchair.

Despite Miss Jenny's apparent control of the conversation between herself and Narcissa, she is destined the fate of the other members of the family as the narrator's description of the two women prior their meeting suggests. Motionless, quiet, with silver head that is fading, Miss Jenny represents stasis, while Narcissa, "a large woman in her thirties" embodies strength and power and there is even "something about her of that heroic statuary": "She [Miss Jenny] sat erect in the wheel chair, motionless, watching the young woman cross the room, her white dress flowing slowly, heroic, like a caryatid from a temple façade come to life" (222). Interestingly enough, *caryatid*, used as a qualifying adjective to depict the likeness in the posture that Miss Jenny and Elnora adopt when they are both eager to see Narcissa through the window is now attributed to Narcissa, yet considerably modified in its reference. The two women's caryatid-like character is transmitted to Narcissa and the caryatid symbolically transforms into a living being full of vitality. This image reinforces that she embodies change, motion, and activity, which are all in sharp contrast with stasis, motionlessness, inertia, and inactivity the other two women represent. Furthermore, turning into an "enlivened caryatid" may entitle her to take over Miss Jenny's place and become a Sartoris woman.

Narcissa's prospective Sartoris woman status is dubious and it would be rash to conclude that Miss Jenny's death would inescapably entail Narcissa's assuming the role and position of a Sartoris woman. Since Faulkner "saw in his stories innumerable ramifications of meaning, [...] and that all subjects are infinite" (Virágos 337), he further weaves the intricate web of the story by endowing Elnora with a multiplicity of roles. The compositional structure as well as the roles ascribed to her grants her prominent place and status. First, framing

the story with Elnora indicates her de-marginalization: her silent movements and repressed thoughts narrated by an indifferent narrator fill the opening scene, while her summoning Narcissa to the dead body of Miss Jenny finishes the story. Second, as stated and argued earlier, fuelled by her resentment and anger over Narcissa's leaving Miss Jenny for two days, Elnora extends the context of the creek scene with *contrapuntal* and *rhythmic* variations thus revealing details about Narcissa's character and Miss Jenny's past. Third, the "coffee-colored" Elnora enacts the stereotypical role of the faithful black servant. In this capacity, her role can also be properly qualified as the black mammy, a stereotypical character frequently appearing in Faulkner's works. I find that a list of qualities attributed to a black mammy as presented below summarizes Elnora's traits as well:

> She was considered self-respecting, independent, loyal, forward, gentle, captious, affectionate, true, strong, just, warm-hearted, compassionate-hearted, fearless, popular, brave, good, pious, quick-witted, capable, thrifty, proud, regal, courageous, superior, skillful, queenly, dignified, neat, […] faithful, patient, tyrannical, sensible, discreet, efficient, careful, harsh, devoted, truthful, neither apish nor servile. (qtd. in Kent 55)

Most importantly, however, Elnora is cast in the role of a careful observer, a character type I will refer to as "the compassionate troubled observer" borrowing Beck's term. In his typology of Faulknerian characters Beck argues that "Quentin Compson in *The Sound and the Fury* and in *Absalom, Absalom!*, a whole chorus of country folk one by one in *As I Lay Dying*, Benbow in *Sanctuary*, Hightower in *Light in August*, the reporter in Pylon, and Ratliff in *The Hamlet*" belong to this group of characters. As he points out the principal function of these observers is to "provide the reflective point of view from which the story is told and thereby determine its moral atmosphere" (741). Linguistic as well as compositional evidence testifies that Elnora also qualifies as a "compassionate troubled observer." This role seems to have been instilled into her: "she was half black, and she watched" rather than "wonder as a white woman would have wondered" (212). Feeling it her mission to take care of Miss Jenny, as instructed by "Cunnel" "because it's a Sartoris job, she dedicates her life to watching Narcissa's acts in order to defend Miss Jenny from an outsider. Indeed, the verb "watch" frequently occurs in

the descriptions characterizing Elnora: she "watches the white woman," "watched the carriage roll away," "watching the carriage disappear" (212). As pointed out earlier Elnora's *contrapuntal* and *rhythmic* variants expanding the context of the creek episode all mirror her succinctly articulated opinion about Narcissa "Trash" and while "Miss Jenny Quality" (215).

Giving such prominence to Elnora with a combination of procedures undercuts the story's apparent romantic nostalgia to the past since she herself is the product of an unjust social system where sexual transgressions were accepted for whites. Elnora is Old Bayard's half-sister, "though possibly but not probably neither of them knew it, including Bayard's father" (210). Ironically, in her ardent defence of "Miss Jenny quality" (215) and her antagonism toward Narcissa, she perpetuates a bygone era with its hypocrisy, pretension, and mendacity. In light of this Narcissa's immoral behavior may be read as a continuation of the pattern set by the previous generations. By the same token their sins may have caused the extinction of the male members of the Sartoris clan.

The pervasive presence of the past in the present is achieved by the effectively applied theme-and-variation design as discussed above, and also by an intricate patterning of the story on phonological, grammatical, lexical, and syntactic levels, all closely related to each other. While the compositional design contributes to gradually widening the temporal and spatial scope of the story, Faulkner, "the prose poet" (Virágos 343) uses poetic devices that determine the tone and the musicality of the story. The first two paragraphs of the story establish the somnolent, drowsy atmosphere rendering a sense of stasis, which otherwise dominates the whole story.

Detached as the narrator attempts to sound, he cannot escape rendering an overwhelming sadness and melancholy that pervades the house and its present inhabitants. The dominance of the past is immediately set by the overabundant use of past perfect and past tenses. The repetition of *had died* in connection with four generations of the Sartoris family strengthens a sense of fading into the past. Even the present state of affairs is rendered via past tense: "the quiet was now the quiet of the women folks" (210). Even the present event—Narcissa and Bory going to the creek—is projected into the past by Elnora telling and viewing it from the past: "she had come to the door

and watched them—the boy and the big young woman in white going through the hot afternoon, down across the pasture toward the creek" (211).

Just like the subtle, sweet fragrance of the jasmine that penetrates Miss Jenny's room, a dull, drowsy, and lethargic mood pervades the one-hundred-year old Sartoris house. This mood is achieved by overabundant use of the word *quiet* all throughout the story, which enhances the all-pervasive stillness as well as motionlessness in the Sartoris home. In musical terms the word "quiet" functions as a basso continuo, insistently present and coloring the tone ("that expression of grave and quiet contempt," "in her cold, quiet voice," "the quiet, high-ceiled hall"). The repetition of this word, however, contributes to the musicality of the story, since following T. S. Eliot's argumentation, "the music of a word is, so to speak, at a point of intersection: it arises from its relation to the words immediately preceding and following it, and indefinitely to the rest of its context" (32).

Establishing analogies between formal elements of theme-and-variation and Faulkner's "There was a Queen" has contributed to identifying correspondences between literature and music, which "enhance and refine the auditory perception of literature" (Egri 7) and has allowed for revealing a multiplicity of interpretative levels in the story. Last but not least, casting Elnora the major role of the "compassionate observer" who determines the moral atmosphere of the story underlies Faulkner's credo that morality is of utmost importance in human acts.

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ZOLTÁN SIMON

FAULKNER'S *PYLON*: A NEGLECTED COMMENTARY ON TECHNOLOGY AND THE SOUTH

In his introduction to *Southern Writers and the Machine*, Jeffrey J. Folks makes some very astute observations on the response of southern writers, including William Faulkner, to the quick-paced modernization of their region. He claims that change, most notably the rapid transformation of the South from a basically rural and agrarian society into a modern, technologized and industrialized one, is the central concern of most southern literature in this period. His underlying assumption is that the concept of change is the central subject of all representative modern texts coming from the South, to an even greater extent than in modernist literature in general (1). He asserts that the basis of the aesthetic with which Southern writers responded to technological progress derives partly from the nineteenth-century British notion of the Victorian technological sublime and partly from an inherently American attitude of attempting to situate and conceive of technology within the pastoral tradition (3). Folks maintains that, contrary to the general associations of the South with conservative and traditionalist thinking in conflict with progressive ideologies, most of the major intellectuals of the early twentieth century had long acknowledged the ultimate defeat of such a reactionary, backward-looking position. "There is plenty of nostalgia for the past," he writes, "but very little conviction of an actual attempt to return to a pre-industrial order" (4). This does not mean that Southern writers in and after the 1920s were direct proponents of industrialization and pioneers of technological development, but by

and large they had at least made "an attempt to come to terms with the modernization which was well underway and clearly irreversible" (4).

Pylon (1935) is perhaps the Faulkner novel that most thoroughly bears out the above dichotomy focusing on a technology that in many ways proved to be an excellent choice for an icon of technological progress in the 1930s: the airplane. Faulkner's choice of aviation as the representative technology with which to demonstrate his ambivalence toward unlimited trust in technological progress and development is hardly accidental; in fact, it is deeply rooted in his biography. On top of the intensified interest of the general public in flying after World War I, further heightened by the accomplishments of Charles Lindbergh in the late 1920s, Faulkner's own personal interest, as well as a lifelong association with aviation, was also a significant factor. To put it very bluntly, William Faulkner was an "airplane nut" of the worst order. His fascination with flying dates back to his childhood when he first caught a glimpse of balloonists at the Lafayette County Fair in 1908.[1] A few years later he and his brothers would actually build an "aeroplane" of sorts, which, as a matter of course, thirteen-year old Billy crashed on its maiden flight, or rather fall, from a low bluff in the Falkner backyard (Harrison 22). This early aviation incident, a combination of enthusiasm and pending disaster, could be seen as a foreshadowing of Faulkner's subsequent aviation adventures.

In the 1910s when the earliest barnstormer troupes toured many places in the South, and the war was just around the corner, young William Faulkner became even more enchanted with the chivalric nature of aerial combat, admired these "knights of the air," and wanted to become like them. When World War I broke out and the airplane found its first practical use in the military, Faulkner resolved to become an aviator. Even to this day, various contradictory accounts are in wide circulation on Faulkner's service in World War I. After the war Faulkner came home to Mississippi in style, wearing an RAF

[1] As his brother John later recalled, the fatalism surrounding the aviators was very much a part of this early encounter: "All airmen of that day were looked on as lunatics […] We knew one of them would fall and be killed sooner or later, and... we wanted to be there and see him when he got what was coming for him" (qtd. in Harrison 21).

uniform, spreading the news, or at least not refuting it, that he had been wounded in an air crash, or even in air combat overseas, that he had destroyed two German planes in France, and that he had at least two major operations that resulted in a metal disk in his hip and a silver plate in his head. (Less sympathetic critics add that he was noted to even feign a limp to prove the former, and used the latter on occasion to cover up for a little too much drinking.) His version of the events, at least in those early years, is well summarized in the following account of his life, printed along with an interview in 1931:

> In 1915 he enlisted with the Canadian air force and went to France. He crashed behind his own lines. He was hanging upside down in his plane with both legs broken when an ambulance got to him. […] After he recovered he transferred to the American air force. He has a pilot's license now and sometimes flies a rather wobbly plane owned by a friend in Oxford. (qtd. in Meriwether 23–24)

The fact is, of course, that the legends of being shot down were part of the self-created myths that Faulkner projected for himself. He was, indeed, a flying cadet in Canada, but his entire military career was spent in ground school training. He never made it to Europe before the Armistice, and in fact he only learnt to fly a plane in 1933—two years after the above interview was published.

The following year, however, he also bought a Waco C type airplane and for a while piloted it on a semi-regular basis. He also encouraged his younger brother Dean to learn to fly, and even financed his flying lessons "hoping the talented Dean would stick to something he could make a living at" (Karl 521). First with his flying instructor and friend, Vernon C. Omlie, and later with his brothers John and Dean, he took part in several air shows in northern Mississippi. In 1934, he and Omlie flew to New Orleans to attend the air show staged at the occasion of the opening of Shushan Airport, which was one of the most memorable aviation events of the times in the South. This event, where he had an opportunity to see some of the most famous exhibition fliers of the country, was a direct inspiration for *Pylon*, written in the same year and published in 1935. By this time, aviation "became Faulkner's 'baseball,' a metaphor for the way he linked himself to a national pastime, a pastoral with frail machines" (Karl 518). Faulkner, his brother Dean and some of his friends even

set up an air circus not unlike those described in *Pylon* and "Death Drag." Then, however, tragedy struck: on November 10, 1935, Dean crashed the plane during an air show and was killed along with three passengers. This was one of the most devastating experiences in Faulkner's life. He felt guilty since it was he that encouraged Dean to fly and gave him the airplane in which his Dean was killed. Nine months later Omlie also died in a plane crash. For a whole year Faulkner would not touch the controls of an airplane, and only occasionally afterwards.

Significantly, when asked about aviation in an interview in 1955, Faulkner gave other reasons for his recent negligence of the earlier hobby. Only a few decades after the pinnacle of the aviation sublime, he complained of the gradual disappearance of freedom and spontaneity once associated with flying. "I still enjoy aviation," he said,

> but it has become so mechanical that the pleasure I had once is gone. One has to be a mechanical or technical expert to fly any more. The days when anyone with an airplane and a tank of fuel could fly where he wanted to is past. […] After the First World War, aviation was new. People were willing to pay up to $100 to go up in a plane. You didn't need any license to practice this activity. As flying got more regimented and as there got to be more planes, it got less interesting and you earned less money at it, so I left it. (Meriwether 139)

While conveying a sense of loss and disillusionment prevalent in the post-World War II period, this comment allows little insight into the true meaning of aviation for Faulkner in earlier decades. As Robert W. Hamblin asserts in his entry on aviation in *The William Faulkner Encyclopedia*, Faulkner was attracted to flying primarily by the risks it involved: "Small in stature, effeminate in appearance and bearing, unfortunate in love, Faulkner appears to have sought to assert his manhood and courage by courting danger and death at the controls of a plane" (26). Amazement at the power and potential of airplanes, especially as seen against the background of the skies of the technologically backward, agricultural South, combined with a constant awareness of the dangers inherent with it—this is a special

version of Faulkner's technological sublime.[2] However, as Gray notes, Faulkner always "remained just on the margins of things; knowing enough now to share in the adventure, to experience vicariously the thrill of transgression, but unwilling to push things farther, to venture beyond the role of the weekend pilot" (195). Such a cautious reconsideration of the sublime of aviation would especially be timely after the tragic losses of his brother and his friend, just after the publication of *Pylon*, Faulkner's comment on the technological sublime in the 1930s.

Little wonder, then, that aviation also plays a significant part in Faulkner's art. Some of his earliest writings, poems like "The Ace" and "The Lilacs," as well as short stories in the early 1920s, such as "Ad Astra," "Love," "Landing in Luck," "Death Drag," and "Honor" were inspired by aviation, particularly the image of the war pilot. Most of these writings reach back to the cult of the World War I ace, while some of them, most notably "Honor" and "Death Drag" with their barnstormer characters, anticipate *Pylon*.[3] The dichotomy of dreams and reality, which is at the core of Faulkner's attitude toward aviation is well borne out in his first novel, *Soldiers' Pay* (1926). The book tells the story of two young soldiers' return home from World War I, one unharmed, the other disabled physically and psychologically. The chief characters of the novel are Cadet Julian Lowe, Faulkner's real alter ego, who never had a chance to be in combat, and the dying ace, Lt. Donald Mahon, his self-made alter ego, a projection of his wishes. A similar contrast is played out in Bayard Sartoris, the protagonist of *Flags in the Dust* (1929) and his twin brother John, who were also combat pilots in World War I. John is shot down by a German plane while Bayard survives, but the wartime experience leaves him incapable of reintegrating into peacetime society. Tortured by survivor guilt over his brother's death, he is

[2] In addition to fulfilling his need for danger, denied in World War I, airplanes also allowed Faulkner a means of constructing an alternate identity and to escape, however temporarily, the drudgery of everyday life and the responsibilities it entails. Paradoxically, horses fulfilled a similar need in a later stage of his life (Karl 496). In this respect, it is interesting to note the parallels between the lives of Faulkner and his fictional character, Bayard Sartoris.

[3] There is even a *ménage á trois* in "Honor," which can be regarded as a preparatory sketch for Pylon.

constantly looking for a substitute sublime, something that is as thrilling, exhilarating, and at the same time as dangerous as flying those fighter planes was. He seems to find this first in a high-powered automobile, which eventually kills not him, but his grandfather, and then in a wild stallion, which fulfills much of the same need. Eventually, he comes full circle back to aviation, and significantly dies when testing an experimental airplane—if not on the altar of patriotism, then at least as a sacrificial victim for progress.

More importantly, in addition to the texts mentioned above, in which the sublime of aviation is an important, if not central, motif, Faulkner also devoted a full novel to this topic. *Pylon*, Faulkner's eighth novel, is about flying and the motivation of the fliers, reflecting its author's ambivalent feelings of fascination for aviation combined with his fears, soon justified in his brother's accident. Given the importance of the changes brought about by the quick technologization and urbanization throughout the United States it is all the more surprising that *Pylon* is perhaps Faulkner's most underrated novel. The book received a rather lukewarm reception from contemporary reviewers, although it was later very warmly praised by Dos Passos and Hemingway. Edmond L. Volpe asserts that *Pylon* "provides an unsatisfying, almost irritating, reading experience" (175). The highly fragmented, allusion-laden, innovative style and language of the text may also be an alienating factor: "Its frequent unannounced shifts in point of view and narrative voice, over-reliance on Eliotic subject matter, and neologistic vocabulary—these are the traits that have repeatedly irritated *Pylon*'s commentators" (McElrath 277). In his critical biography, Richard Gray even went as far as calling *Pylon*, citing what he considered unanimous critical consensus, Faulkner's least satisfactory novel. He seems to ground this claim in Faulkner's own ambivalence and confusion regarding aviation: "He could not, in short, turn the dream of flight into a convincing fiction [. . .]. He could only report his confusions and leave it at that; after which, it was not the bar he sought, by way of compensation, but other stories nearer the earth" (203). While it must be granted that the plot of *Pylon* is rather meager, Michael Zeitlin is justified in claiming that the story of *Pylon* is "secondary to its more important function, which is to record, transcribe, interpret, and so *manage* successfully the phenomena of a radically transformed reality" (233; his emphasis). In my own

analysis, I hope to show that the confusion, ambivalence, and indeterminacy may well be there, but rather than discounting the value of the work, in fact, they further underline the themes of the text, including Faulkner's commentary on the technological sublime of the 1930s.

As I mentioned above, one of the reasons why many critics denounced the text was Faulkner's apparent overdependence on Eliotian material. Granted, Faulkner deliberately engages in a seemingly never-ending intertextual game with T. S. Eliot. The city and especially its new airport, built on land that was formerly a swamp, are invariably presented as wastelands. As one critic puts it, the whole "novel ultimately is about waste: human waste mainly, but also the waste of energy, waste of meaningful life, waste of what should be the best" (Karl 530). As part of the intertextual game, there is even a Valley of Bones here, as well as a chapter entitled "Lovesong of J. A. Prufrock," not to mention the "burial by water" of Roger Shumann, the pilot protagonist who crashes into the lake. As Susie Paul Johnson puts it, however, these critics disregard the "abundant and original detail and concern" (288) that Faulkner invests. The airport "celebrates the promise of technology and represents the future as New Valois sees it. But in *Pylon* planes become instruments of exploitation; their ability to attract the crowds is valued more than the safety of the pilots" (Johnson 292). The essential motive is greed for profit, which is contrasted with the aviators' foregoing of the same. Crowds of ticket-holders come in anticipation of tragedy, to see the professional pilots flirting with death. The sublimity of the airplanes for many spectators directly translates into the spectacular crashes, fireballs with waste of human life and machine. Technology so used offers no promise of escape from the wasteland; indeed, it contributes to the wastelanding of the world.

Another reason for the unpopularity of *Pylon* is the inaccessibility of its highly innovative language. I would like to argue that this, too, is related to the sublimity of technology. As Michael Zeitlin notes, the language of *Pylon* appropriately complements its theme: "so alien, so fast-paced, so beyond the range of established literary language and convention did Faulkner find the contemporary scene that he needed to invent a new language, one now determined by the imperatives of a

mechanized culture" (232). As several critics have noted, *Pylon* is really an extended poem in narrative form (Volpe 176; Karl 532). The abundance of neologisms, composite, portmanteau words, such as corpseglare, wirehum, gasolinespanned, pavementthrong, traffic-dammed, machinevoice, gearwhine, typesplattered, reminds the reader of Dos Passos, whose use of newspaper headlines interspersed in the text is also utilized here. As Cecelia Tichi notes, this technique "underscores the rapid-transit age with the technique of jamming words together to suggest rapid-fire speech and instantaneous perception" (198). Time and space collapse as a result of technology, and the technique that Faulkner uses in an attempt to recreate this feeling is the mechanization of the text, writing prose made of standard parts (repetition is an important device in *Pylon*), and creating text based on engineering standards.

The fame of William Faulkner, "the sole proprietor of Yoknapatawpha County," rests on his works set in and around the immediate vicinity of his hometown, Oxford, renamed Jefferson, in his fiction. *Pylon* is a notable exception to the generally rural settings used in most of his longer fiction. This is Faulkner's only novel set entirely within or on the very outskirts of a major American city, even if a fictional one, and Faulkner's "first real attempt to register the voices of the city" (Gray 198). New Valois, Franciana is, as Faulkner himself admitted, a rather thinly disguised fictional version of New Orleans, Louisiana. The description of the city abounds in images of decay and spiritual corruption. The time is during the week of Mardi Gras, which is also the time of the opening of the city's new airport, significantly named after the corrupt Jewish chairman of the municipal sewage board.[4] Mardi Gras, of course, symbolic of death and rebirth, provides an excellent backdrop to Faulkner's examination of the anxieties regarding an artistic response to technology. *Pylon* is also unique in being Faulkner's only novel set in the future: the novel was written in 1934, but is set in 1935. It is a "prophetic book, in which air racing is used as a general metaphor for a nightmarish vision of the future" (Harrington 154).

[4] Faulkner's somewhat anti-Semitic attitude, as borne out in his characterization of Colonel Feinman, may be traced back to his rather negative experiences in Hollywood.

In addition to airplanes, other technologies like telephones, taxicabs, typewriters—all of them icons of the big city and tools of a newspaper reporter, this archetypal city character—are also prominently featured. As Zeilin notes, technological images like "the telephone's 'dead wirehum' or the lamp's 'corpseglare' refract a dying civilization [...] a grotesque anti-pastoral, a viciously fragmented world" (234). While Faulkner's indebtedness to Eliot is doubtless, he owes much to Dos Passos's description of the pulsating city as well, even though the nameless reporter is definitely no Jimmy Herf, and New Orleans in 1935 is certainly no Manhattan. However, although situated in the heart of the South it may well be on its way to becoming a metropolis, and Faulkner skillfully pinpoints those aspects of urbanization and technologization which seemed inevitable, yet ambiguous: awesome while frightening. The roadster of Hagood, the reporter's boss, as painted against the background of the old "French Town," is a case in point: "a machine expensive, complex, delicate and intrinsically useless, created for some obscure psychic need of the species if not the race, from the virgin resources of the continent, to be the individual muscles bones and flesh of a new and legless kind" (87). This shift in the fundamental background of his fictional work, a clear, although only temporary, break, a "holiday from Yoknapatawpha County—and from the Southern past" as Cleanth Brooks called it (178), is at the same time also the earliest and the best articulation of his rather ambivalent views on the role of technology in contemporary America, and especially in the South.

The novel features many typically Faulknerian themes. Flying emerges in *Pylon* as symbolic of the general disillusionment and restlessness of youth in the post-war period. Another obvious theme is that of survival, never a purely materialistic necessity, but balanced against certain ideals that are hardly rational. Faulkner's concept of psychological necessity, that men and women must do what they are driven to do by their most profound inner motivations, is brought to the foreground. A central question in *Pylon* concerns human motivation and the complexity of why people do things, ranging from external circumstances and physical needs to inner desires, compulsions, and even obsessions. Onlookers, newspaper reporters, and members of the audience speculate about the flyers' motivation: Do they fly just for the money or for another reason? The answer is

uncertain: “they dont need money except now and then when they come in contact with the human race” (47), the reporter claims. The airplane can eradicate the need for money—it has no value up there. It almost creates a superhuman, or a cyborgian, but in any case non-human race out of those who fly it. The central dilemma of the reporter, and thereby of the text as a whole, is whether the fliers are human to defy death like this?

> “Because they aint human like us; they couldn’t turn those pylons like they do if they had human blood and senses and they wouldn’t want to or dare to if they just had human brains. Burn them like this one tonight and they dont even holler in the fire; crash one and it aint even blood when you haul him out: it is cylinder oil the same as in the crankcase.” (45)

The reporter’s implication is that if they are not human, then human morals, ethics, or emotions do not apply to them. “It ain’t adultery; you cant anymore imagine two of them making love than you can two of them aeroplanes back in the corner of the hangar, coupled” (231), the obsessed reporter repeats his mantra to convince himself even and to make sense of his experience of the fliers.

As the passage above, and many other passages in the text suggest, *Pylon* frequently foreshadows the postmodernist project of deconstructing traditional binary oppositions. A text grounded in anxiety and conflict regarding progress versus nostalgia, *Pylon* also reveals “a deeper unease of unresolved uncertainties about male and female, past and future, pastoralism and technology, stability and change” (Gray 197). The sublime of aviation prompts Faulkner, for example, to express dissatisfaction with the dichotomy of mechanic and organic. On the very first page of the novel, the airplanes on the advertising placard are compared to “a species of esoteric and fatal animals not trained or tamed but just for the instant inert” (7). A few pages later, the new airport is described as having “a mammoth terminal for some species of machine of a yet unvisioned tomorrow”; then on the same page we get our first actual glimpse of the racer planes, which are presented here as “waspwaisted, wasplight, still, trim, vicious, small, and immobile” (18). After Shumann’s first crash in their original plane, the reporter describes the machine as “lying on its back, the undercarriage projecting into the air rigid and delicate and

motionless as the legs of a dead bird" (164). The last moment of idyll, of a positive sublimity of aviation before the disintegration of Shumann's plane mid-air, is also a description of the racers from a distance, in pastoral, organic terms: "The noise was faint now and disseminated; the drowsy afternoon was domed with it and the four machines seemed to hover like dragonflies silently in vacuum, in various distancesoftened shades of pastel against the ineffable blue, with now a quality trivial, random, almost like notes of music—a harp, say—as the sun glinted and lost them" (233). After that, the airplane becomes very mechanical again, fuselage and tail section apart, all of it becoming along with the human pilot part of the "refuse from the city itself [...] any and all the refuse of man's twentieth century clotting into communities large enough to pay a mayor's salary—dumped in the lake" (236–37).

The crossover between organic and mechanical, however, works both ways. The reporter's description of the aviators is just as unforgiving: "Yair; cut him and it's cylinder oil; dissect him and it aint bones; it's little rockerarms and connecting rods..." (231). Apparently, however, this is not only the reporter's perception, but also the narrator's, and by extension, Faulkner's. Jiggs, the barnstorming team's mechanic, is especially frequently described in terms of machinery. He is "walking at his fast stiff hard gait like a mechanical toy that has but one speed" (11), moving his legs with "tense stout pistonlike thrusts" (23). The reporter is also described in terms of a mechanical entity. His face freezes "like a piece of unoiled machinery freezes" (243), and his namelessness also suggests non-human, inanimate qualities, as does his most frequent association by several characters with a scarecrow.[5] Unconsciously, he even wishes

[5] Faulkner's own comments in an interview on the namelessness of the reporter seem to discourage such interpretations. Characters name themselves, he claims, and the reporter just never revealed his name to him: "I have written about characters whose names I never did know. Because they didn't tell me. There was one in *Pylon*, for instance, he was the central character in the book, he never did tell me who he was. I don't know until now what his name was. That was the reporter, he was a protagonist" (Meriwether 132). But then, again, why the reporter never seemed to possess a name, this most basic of all human possessions, is open for interpretation. (Cf. also the rather unconvincing article by David

to be an interchangeable part in the efficient mechanism of the aviators, to be like them, free of society's normal restriction, and especially to partake of Laverne in their promiscuous lifestyle, which fascinates and repels him as much as the world of aviation: "Sometimes I think about how it's you and him and how maybe sometimes she dont even know the difference, one from another, and I would think how maybe if it was me too she wouldn't even know I was there at all" (175). At the same time, despite all his awe and fascination with aviation the reporter always remains a complete outsider of technology. He has but one hour's flight instruction to his credit, and it turns out that he does not even know how to drive a car (267). The ending of the book, where he attempts to write up the story of the barnstorming team but writes "not only news but the beginning of literature" (314) proves that he is indeed more of an artist than an efficient journalist, the cog in the machine he is expected to be.

Another binary similarly deconstructed is gender: in the all-male environment of the aviators the only female protagonist, Laverne, is described as genderless, or at least as a person whose gender is uncertain and of no significance: "a woman not tall and not thin, looking almost like a man in the greasy overall" (21). By contrast, she is very much gendered in the important inserted story of Laverne's first parachute jump where "[s]he wore skirts; they had decided that her exposed legs would not only be a drawing card but that in the skirt no one would doubt that she was a woman" (194). Even here, however, Laverne is attempting to obliterate the stereotype of the bashful female when crawling back to the cockpit and initiating sex with Shumann, and then jumping out of the airplane with no undergarments, causing havoc among the hundreds of spectators underneath. Industrial production and human reproduction are intermingled, the previously separate categories of human, machine, animal all but melted into one, as in the reporter's account of the circumstances of Jackie's birth: "the kid was born on an unrolled parachute in a hangar in California; he got dropped already running like a colt or a calf from the fuselage of an airplane onto something because it happened to be big enough to land on and then takeoff again" (48).

Yerkes, which claims that the real name of the reporter, born on April Fool's Day, is "That".)

In an article examining gender, technology, and utopia in *Pylon* and "Honor" (an earlier short story by Faulkner which contained some of the key elements of the novel), Vivian Wagner offers what she calls "a forgiving and hopeful reading of Faulkner's airplane tales" (82), an analysis of techno-utopianism through the lens of feminist theory. Machines, fetishized by "high, white, male Modernism," generally function as weapons "to conquer and destroy a feminized, organic world" (81). The airplane in *Pylon*, however, can be an exception in these stories, she asserts, since the revisioning of gender roles invariably occurs in and around airplanes: "The airplanes are, ultimately, substitute wombs, where the characters are engendered and where their roles are both determined and questioned" (89). *Pylon*'s utopia then, as represented in the character of Laverne, is in its challenging of the patriarchal authority of the nuclear family and its heterosexual norms. While I feel that Wagner's reading is stretching the boundaries of interpretive liberty, it certainly is right on target as far as the richness of the symbolic interpretations of the airplanes, and the interplay between sexuality and technology are concerned. Described by the reporter in terms of an orgasm (97), flying is almost inseparably tied up with sexuality in the novel. Speculating on the motivations of the barnstormers, one of the reporters notes that flying is a compulsion for some: "It's because they have got to do it, like some women have got to be whores. They can't help themselves" (292). Speed and risk are aphrodisiacs for Laverne, who conjoins the two ephemeral sensations in the parachute jumping episode (147). As a result of his fascination, indeed obsession, with both Laverne and aviation, the reporter also strongly associates sexuality with flying.

Several critics have commented on the reporter protagonist's, and by extension Faulkner's, ambivalent attitude to the fliers as an underlying theme in *Pylon*, and usually regarding this indeterminacy as a problematic point of the novel. Using Faulkner's own comments made at the University of Virginia, Edmond L. Volpe claims that "[s]ympathy for them in their isolation from society merges with antipathy for them as rootless beings beyond the range of God and love" (176). Brooks also realizes that the reporter is "torn between two ways of seeing [the barnstormers]—as merely passionless machines or as heroic supermen" (181). Gary Harrington reiterates the same argument, also noting the shift in pronoun use as signaling the

reporter's attitude: "[w]hen viewing the fliers romantically, the reporter uses the plural personal pronoun 'we,' indicative of an inordinate sympathy with—and involvement in—their predicament; when considering them cynically, he uses 'they,' suggestive of his distancing himself from their behavior or even of an antipathy towards it" (53). The romantic perception of the fliers is especially powerful initially. As an idealistic young man, he easily subscribes to the glamorizing image of the flier constantly conveyed by the loudspeaker voice of the air meet, the sensationalist newspaper headlines, and other elements of the popular culture around him. "[G]lamor may not be quite the right word to describe the quality with which the Reporter's imagination has invested them; perhaps 'awe' would be more accurate" (183), Brooks notes. The reporter gradually realizes, however, that the barnstormers and the ideas they represent offer no salvation, no means of escape from the wasteland. Through the description of a series of technological mishaps starting with Colonel Burnham's fiery crash and culminating in the disintegration of Shumann's plane in mid-air, Faulkner exposes the almost religious awe and veneration with which many of his contemporaries regard machines. As a powerful statement to this effect, in one of the concluding episodes of the novel, Roger's father, Dr. Shuman symbolically, almost ritualistically, destroys the toy plane of Laverne's son with the frustration and anger of a Luddite: "He stooped and caught up the toy and held it up, his face twisted into a grimace of gnomelike rage, and whirled and hurled the toy at the wall, while the boy watched him, ran to it and began to stamp upon it with blind maniac fury" (312).

In his analysis of Southern writers and the machine, Folks concludes that after the initial rejection of the iron demon, Faulkner finally embraced technological progress as inevitable. On the basis of the textual evidence I would argue that it is just the other way round. After an initial period of unconditional fascination with aviation came disappointment. As Brooks claims, *Pylon* is "the bitterest indictment of modernity (and its worship of speed), with the possible exception of *Sanctuary*, that Faulkner ever wrote" (200). *Sanctuary* and *Pylon* are the two novels by Faulkner that take a direct look at the industrial and urban culture of the future rather than retreat into traditional world of

agrarian manners, and neither of those texts finds much to admire in that culture.

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DAVID L. VANDERWERKEN

FAULKNER'S "CRIMINAL" UNDERWORLD IN *LIGHT IN AUGUST* AND *SANCTUARY*

Faulkner's career-long flirtation with the detective genre results in his creation of a number of underworld communities, mostly concerning prostitution and bootlegging, his two general symbols of corruption. *Light in August* offers a two-chapter glimpse into this world while *Sanctuary* is Faulkner's most extended analysis of how the underworld functions in relation to respectable upperworld society. Indeed Faulkner embeds his underworld into the very fabric of the upperworld community, collapsing distinctions. In its own grotesque way, the underworld imitates to the point of parody the value of respectability that governs the upperworld, while the upperworld enables the underworld in a peculiar symbiosis. Hypocrisy characterizes both realms, especially when the two world interpenetrate. The diner in *Light in August* and the Old Frenchman Place and Miss Reba's Memphis house of pleasure in *Sanctuary* become laboratory sites where Faulkner explores colliding worlds that have more in common than they may appear. Faulkner strongly suggests that the open and honest criminality of the underworld is less contemptible than the avoidance and tolerance practiced by respectable middle-class gentility.

A major and effective strategy on Faulkner's part is to create an elaborate pattern of character pairings and doublings that blurs value distinctions between upright and immoral behavior. Introduced to the diner that fronts for a brothel by his dour and brutal foster father, Simon McEachern—whom readers have already been conditioned to despise because of his doctrine-driven parental style—Joe finds a

surrogate father figure in Max the proprietor-pimp from Memphis. Even though Max's primary concern is protecting his business from exposure, he treats the innocent Joe with more kindness, even if caustically applied, than Joe has ever known from McEachern. Max allows the relationship between Joe and Bobbie to develop, so long as it's on her time, and he incorporates Joe into his rural entourage of small-time criminals. Only when Joe whacks McEachern at the schoolhouse dance does Max act against Joe since Max's operation is now threatened with collapse. Despite the punches Joe takes from Max and another henchman as the gang prepares to flee back to Memphis, Joe adopts for life the smoking mannerisms and flair for sarcasm of Max. Much of Joe's surface identity is formed by his short-term visit to the town's underworld. Later in his life Joe will branch out into bootlegging, his side business during his stay at Joanna Burden's home (*LA* 55, 87, 113), although Faulkner only vaguely mentions Joe's operation or his product manufacturers or suppliers. The point is Joe retains a life-long connection to the underworld after his initiation into it by Max and Mame.

Max's wife, Mame, a version of a Reba Riversesque madame but on a much smaller scale, also treats Joe with a distant kindness that parallels the pathetically unsuccesful attempts by his foster mother to win Joe over emotionally. Mame's function is to maternally oversee the Memphis-imported waitress/prostitutes during their tours of duty in Max's diner. While Mame with her "diamondsurfaced respectability" (*LA* 175) is sympathetic to Bobbie's well-being, she is equally concerned with the profit motive, knowing that their business "wont last forever. These little towns wont stand for this long. I know. I came from one of them" (*LA* 193). When the crisis over Joe's actions arises, "bitching up" Max's sweet "little setup" (*LA* 219), Mame stuffs a bill into the semi-conscious Joe's pocket, seed money for his upcoming fifteen-year odyssey.

Mame's point that the small town will overlook the brothel so long as nothing occurs to overtly violate its alleged sanctity is well taken. Joe's assault on McEachern and his connection with Max's establishment will force the local authorities to take action against an illegal operation they have known about all along. That the town can comfortably co-exist with an outrage in its midst is exemplified nicely by McEachern's own attitude in the scene where he takes Joe to lunch

(dinner) at Max's because the "dinner there is cheap." McEachern takes the occasion to proffer a moral lesson to Joe on what "to avoid and shun," although he leaves Joe confused about what is the "matter with it." The champion of piety and righteousness believes in avoidance himself as he replies to Joe's query: "that is the business of the town and not of yours" (*LA* 175). It is indeed a business of the town's, even if Max is not a member of the Chamber of Commerce, and McEachern acquiesces to the prevailing hypocrisy—the "outrage to credulity: these two as husband and wife, the establishment as a business for eating, with the successive imported waitresses clumsy with the cheap dishes of simple food" (*LA* 178)—until Joe and, indirectly, McEachern will cause a scandal that cannot be ignored. The same pattern will hold in *Sanctuary*. Until Popeye murders Tommy at the Old Frenchman Place and later murders Red in Memphis, Lee Goodwin's and Miss Reba's respective businesses are tolerated and accepted as public services. Everyone looks the other way until propriety dictates otherwise.

While not on the register of historic sites in Mississippi, the Old Frenchman Place, an antebellum plantation gone to ruin, provides a fitting site where the rural underworld, its big city connection, and self-proclaimed respectable society cross paths. Horace Benbow, Gowan Stevens, and Temple Drake will sojourn with the alleged riffraff, and Horace, Temple, and Popeye will all have occasion to visit or take up residence at Miss Reba's, the other site where citizen pillars take a walk on the wild side.

Horace Benbow, the idealistic attorney who has left his wife, stumbles across the bootlegging gang at the Old Frenchman Place dramatized indelibly by the opening scene when Benbow and his polar opposite, Popeye, squat for two hours at the spring. Despite his Oxford, England (not Mississippi) education, the novel reveals that Benbow is no match for Popeye, even if we accept Faulkner's biography of Popeye in the last chapter in which a doctor proclaims that, mentally and physically, Popeye will never develop beyond five years old (*S* 308).

Indeed Benbow is no match for any of the novel's other males with whom Faulkner pairs him. Benbow's assumptions and principles—that upperworld institutions, "law, justice, civilization" (*S* 132) actually function as intended—keep handicapping his effectiveness as

a criminal attorney. Benbow fails to understand that his client, Lee Goodwin, who "wouldn't talk" (*S* 115), believes in a code of silence and in the law of the jungle (*S* 115, 131, 270–79). Benbow is unaware that his counterpart, District Attorney Eustace Graham, to whom Benbow's own sister, Narcissa, betrays his case, has no qualms about acting upon Narcissa's information. Since Faulkner keeps these machinations behind the scenes, we can only speculate on how Temple Drake shows up in the courtroom as a defense witness to recite perjured testimony that dooms Lee Goodwin. Or the role of the "Memphis Jew lawyer" (*S* 282) sitting at the defense table on the second day of Goodwin's trial as Benbow's surprise and silent partner, presumably the same lawyer that the beaten-up Sen. Snopes rants about. This mysterious stranger says nothing, but readers grasp that he is in complete control of the proceedings. With all these forces arrayed against him, no wonder that Horace fails to vigorously defend his client. Only once does Benbow compromise his rigid morality in paying off Snopes for the information that Temple is in residence at Miss Reba's. Of course, this affair backfires on Benbow when his star witness is taken from him and produced at the trial coached to the ears to shift the murder trial to a rape trial, sealing Goodwin's fate, then whisked away by the Drake family. Horace meekly returns to his deadening life in Kinston with the bitter knowledge of the capricious reality of his ideals, that the collaborative community efforts by the upper- and underworlds easily undermine law, justice, and civilization.

A second accidental upperworld visitor to the Old Frenchman Place is Jackson debutante and Ole Miss freshman, Temple Drake, along with her hapless date, Gowan Stevens. Temple suspects almost immediately that she is in danger among this gang of underworld men who do not recognize her status as interdict sexual partner, who do not hold with Southern gyneolatry, and whose anti-romantic/anti-chivalrous inclinations render Stevens, the champion of upperworld values, absurd. Even her feeble-minded protector, Tommy, feels stimulated by Temple's presence. Although Temple tries her time-tested strategies toward men on Popeye, Van, and Lee, who designate all women as potential or acting prostitutes, her attempted manipulations fail abysmally. The process now begins where Faulkner posits the Judge's daughter's as a latent prostitute. When Van and

another man carry the drunken and beaten Stevens into Temple's makeshift boudoir, Van shouts "'Open the door... we're bringing you a customer'" (*S* 72). In the same scene, Ruby accuses Lee of wanting to "'finish the trick Van started'" (*S* 75). While Ruby preserves the Belle's virginity on that Saturday night, the next morning features the notorious scene that later led Faulkner to ruefully exclaim, "I'll always be the corncob man." When Popeye transports Temple to Miss Reba's, the house becomes a kind of finishing school for Temple's education as a quasi-prostitute, albeit one with only one—or one-and-a-half—clients. Despite Ruby's attempts at reality instruction about the world Temple has fallen into (*S* 55–63), Temple adapts only after her traumatic and grotesque experience. Readers share Horace Benbow's shock when we meet a transformed Temple in her new boudoir at Miss Reba's.

The third upperworld visitor to the Old Frenchman Place is Gowan Stevens, hapless suitor of Narcissa Benbow Sartoris, a local boy whose thirst for whiskey starts the whole fiasco that results in Temple's captivity. A self-proclaimed "Virginia gentleman" (*S* 68) who apparently majored in drinking at the University of Virginia, Stevens fails at both holding his liquor and protecting Temple's virtue precisely because he's always too drunk to function when the times to defend Temple arise. Stevens is first paired with Van, who makes the most dramatic effort to seduce Temple and who easily overpowers the ineffectual Stevens at every turn. For Van, Stevens is just one of Temple's "customers," and Van hopes to be another although Ruby's strategies will prevent that. Although Stevens departs the Old Frenchman Place and the text at the end of chapter 10, readers find a replacement of him at Miss Reba's in the person of Red, Popeye's "stunt double," let us say, whom Temple describes as looking like a "college boy" (*S* 235). While Red claims no fear of Popeye, "that dopey bastard" (*S* 239), Red fares even worse than Stevens since Popeye murders him.

Although the denizens of the Old Frenchman Place maintain a patina of respectability as seen when Lee Goodwin shaves and dons a "frayed tie" (*S* 104) before notifying the sheriff of Tommy's murder, the church-going Miss Reba takes great pride in the impeccable respectability of her establishment as a place that caters to a cross-section of Memphis's professional male elite:

> "Anybody in Memphis can tell you who Reba Rivers is. Ask any man on the street, cop or not. I've had some of the biggest men in Memphis right here in this house, bankers, lawyers, doctors—all of them. I've had two policecaptains drinking beer in my dining-room and the commissioner himself upstairs with one of my girls." (*S* 143)

Reba proclaims this to Temple who is beginning the process of adaptation to her new environment, one that will eventually make her another of Miss Reba's "girls." All social levels pass through Miss Reba's, from the innocent country rubes, Virgil and Fonzo, through the class-indeterminate Senator Clarence Snopes to Horace Benbow who follows Ruby's and Snopes's tips to depose Temple in his defense of Goodwin.

Miss Reba sees herself as a family woman, a mother, with many family responsibilities just like her upperworld double, Narcissa, and her underworld pairing, Ruby Lamar Goodwin. Miss Reba stills grieves over her dear departed, Mr. Binford, and she fiercely maintains the reputation of her house as a "respectable shooting gallery" (*S* 255), as she tells her madame friends, violated by Popeye's turning it into a "peep-show" and "French joint" (*S* 255, 258) with Red and Temple. Her eviction of Temple and Popeye after Red's death shows more effective courage than we see from other characters. She efficiently quashes a budding scandal whose shock-waves could impact her business. Her maternal treatment of Temple ends abruptly when she feels Temple and her accomplices have crossed the line of propriety.

The shift in Temple from first-year college student testing society's limits to alcoholic gangster's moll takes place off stage during several intervening weeks. The radical change in the debutante catches Horace Benbow, and us, off guard as she hollers for gin and cigarettes (*S* 214) and tells her tale in a "bright, chatty monologue... recounting the experience with actual pride, a sort of naive and impersonal vanity" (*S* 216). Miss Reba controls Temple's gin supply, doling it out in medicine-like dosages in a kind of behaviorist reward system. Temple's macabre story leads Benbow into a dark night of the soul purged by a vomiting episode as he imagines his own Little Belle back home capable of following in Temple's dancing shoes (*S* 223). As her drunken, whorish antics in the scene at the Grotto points up, Temple

has turned into Gowan Stevens as she essentially sets up Red for death rather than saving him.

While the Old Frenchman Place and Miss Reba's house function as underworld sites, courts of law are firmly upperworld institutions providing, as Faulkner puts it, a "certain clumsy stability in lieu of anything better" (*S* 281). Yet Lee Goodwin's trial is perhaps the strangest literary trial ever as he is convicted of both a murder and a rape he had no part in whatsoever and becomes a burnt offering on the altar of Yoknapatawpha County's sense of duty, sanctity, and communal vengeance. The trial, in Faulkner's elliptical and carnivalesque presentation, becomes the final, darkly comic site where both upper-and underworlds reveal their symbiosis, yet Faulkner leaves the conspiracy to the reader's imagination to infer. The second day of the trial demonstrates that the fix is in. D.A. Graham and the Memphis underworld attorney, who sits mockingly at the defense table, stage manage the proceedings, introducing a blood-stained corncob into evidence, producing Temple, supposedly Benbow's witness, shifting the focus of the trial from murder to rape, and arranging for the Drakes to appear to squire Temple away after her perjured testimony. The all-male jury takes a nominal eight minutes to tender a guilty verdict.

One of the more interesting aspects of this travesty of a trial is Faulkner's portrayal of Temple and her testimony before she is redeemed from her underworld sojourn back into the upperworld by her father and brothers. "[H]er long legs blonde with running" when we first meet her, Temple now sits immobile, her "long blonde legs slanted, lax ankled" (*S* 28, 284) as if she has been drugged, "giving her parrotlike answers" (S 286) to Graham who has clearly rehearsed Temple for her performance. She has been carefully made up and dressed for the occasion by her manipulators in a black satin dress and matching hat, buckled shoes, platinum clutch purse, and a "shoulder knot of purple" similar to Ruby's mangier shoulder ornament. (*S* 284, 269). Her ensemble is suggestive of formal mourning apparel, not appreciably different from Miss Reba's attire at Red's funeral, although her accessories hint of her recent semi-hooker status in Memphis. Further, Faulkner describes Temple's cosmetics for her appearance as clown-like in effect: "Her face was quite pale, the two spots of rouge like paper discs pasted on her cheek bones, her mouth

painted into a savage and perfect bow, also like something both symbolical and cryptic cut carefully from purple paper and pasted there" (*S* 284). Temple's symbolic and cryptic mask nicely reinforces her role as the character in whom upperworld and underworld collaborate most dramatically. The only difference in the two theaters of operations is that the underworld is slightly more overt in its corruptive practices.

Faulkner's creation of respectable criminality in *Light in August* and *Sanctuary* echoes into our own era. As he so often was, Faulkner was ahead of his time in representing the intricate alliance between the upper- and underworld communities. Arguably, the most profound study following in Faulkner's footsteps is Francis Ford Coppola's *Godfather* film trilogy where the Corleones present themselves as a respectable business family, olive oil importers, who happen to have a few subsidiary investments. Always very formally dressed and espousing family values, the Corleones employ a kind of deceptive doublespeak when discussing family business. References to politicians that the Don "carries in his pocket like so many nickels and dimes," to police officers who report to the family, and to media representatives "on the payroll" testify to the collusion between the gangster world and broader American society. As Michael tells corrupt Nevada Senator Geary, "Senator, we're both part of the same hypocrisy but never think that applies to my family."

The disconnect between business and family seen in Faulkner and in the Corleones continues in *The Godfather*'s direct heir, HBO's series *The Sopranos*. Waste management replaces olive oil as the legitimate cover for North Jersey's mafia boss. Unlike the impeccably attired Corleones, we often see Tony in his armpit undershirt and ratty bathrobe, moving somewhat slowly because of his heavy dosages of Prozac. Tony is predicated as just another harried suburban family man with a harridan of a mother, an unhappy wife, and two feisty teenagers, all of whom cause him great "agita." While the occasional FBI search of the Soprano residence breaks down the legitimacy/illegitimacy charade, the characters have no real trouble reasserting the comforting illusion they're just a hardworking, achieving, upper middle-class family. And North Jersey's upperworld political and social players forge mutually beneficial ties to the Sopranos. Faulkner was truly on to a significant social insight in

demonstrating how upper- and underworlds reinforce each other. Indeed, the one community doesn't exist without the other.

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GABRIELLA VARRÓ

MASKS AND MASKING IN WILLIAM FAULKNER'S *ABSALOM, ABSALOM!*

William Faulkner's intricate usage of the ancient device of the mask is relatively little recognized in the otherwise extensive criticism that America's fifth Noble Prize winner for literature has elicited. Yet, the subtle awareness of masking techniques is interspersed throughout Faulkner's oeuvre. They are detectable in the multiple narrations of his long fictions where each narratorial voice aspires to be and masks itself as the authoritative and true version of the "original" story; see instances for this in *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying*, or *Absalom, Absalom!*, the shifting identifications (masks) his characters attain in the face of the all-important, abstract yet idolized Community in stories such as "A Rose for Emily," "Dry September", and also in the presentation of Southern history that wavers between the masks of legend or romance versus documentary and history, most beautifully presented in "Delta Autumn," "The Bear" and *Absalom, Absalom!*. In the present essay I will detail three areas of Faulkner's manifold applications of the mask in what I regard as a central piece of his fictional universe, *Absalom, Absalom!*. These three realms of masking are: (1) the masks of narration; (2) the masks of gender; and finally (3) racial masks.

(1) The masks of narration

Absalom, Absalom! is narrated by four characters, Miss Rosa Coldfield, Mr. Compson, Quentin Compson's father, Quentin Compson and Shreve McCannon, only the first of whom is an actual—although even at that quite marginal—participant and actor in

the happenings reported. Similarly to other stories of multiple narration of Faulkner's the main players in the tale are not given separate narrative voices,[1] and thus are, figuratively, numbed. They are denied the right to give their version of the "Truth," or, for that matter, to wear their own unmasked faces before the public. Instead, the four protagonists, i.e., Thomas Sutpen, his first-born son, Charles Bon, as well as Judith and Henry Sutpen, Bon's half-sister and brother, are all shrouded behind narrative voices. Their characters, actions, speech, and entire presence in the novel are dependent upon and appear via the filter of the respective narrators, thus the main players in the tragedy exist as masked subjects. Yet, even these narratives, whose function it is then partly to author the lives of Thomas Sutpen and his offspring, are not always readily separable from one another, neither do they claim to have access to the full story of the past. Thus the authoring and authentication processes remain fragmentary and the unmasking never reaches completion. The hero and his original tale remain masked and shrouded in the retellings, which in their repetitions-variation-digression pattern deny the very possibility of unearthing the "original," "the real," "the true" and complete version of hero/past. The novel thus evolves both for reader and the narrators as an infinite quest, and even when the last pieces of the puzzle are made to fit in their proper position, we cannot be sure that we know it all, and not just one out of the many yet possible versions. The quest engaged in through the parallel narrations involves epistemological questions: what is there to learn, what is it that we know, and how do we know these things. Moreover the reader always has to keep in mind that the knowledge gradually gained is contaminated by tellers' subjectivities.

This horizontal division of the narrative as well as character, life-story, and past—into voices—denies total access to the (non-existent) "Pure," "Real" or "Actual," which is represented. Nevertheless, the past (along with the larger concepts of time, character and story) surfaces in these narrative reenactments not so much as a fixed or static entity to be completely recovered, but much more as an ever-

[1] See a similar instance in *The Sound and the Fury*, in which, according to some critics, all four sections recount Caddy Compson's story without ever allocating a separate section to her.

changing fluid continuum. Past in Faulkner's sense never ceases to exist, instead it is constantly in the process of being constructed. As Irving Howe states, this concept of time contributes to the "illusion of timeless present" (225) in the novel. Through this sectioning of the narrative, Faulkner restates the age-old wisdom that the past (or for that matter the life of another person) can never be fully comprehended by the succeeding generations, yet it is the task of the present to be eternally approximating the essence of the bygone.

Beyond this horizontal sectioning,—serving as guises for the hero/truth/past trio—, Faulkner has also devised a vertical structuring. The narrative's vertical layers are those story-telling modes and patterns behind which one might detect the original or "authentic" narrative per se. As various narrative traditions are piled on top of each other in each respective telling, Faulkner disguises (or else masks) his own distinct "story." This layered quality of the narrative employs: (a) elements of fabulation (the oral tradition), (b) allusions to the Biblical tradition, and (c) ancient Greek patterns to cover traces of the (d) submerged narrative.

(a) The fabular

The fabular predominantly appears in Miss Rosa Coldfield's narrative, clearly because at the time of her involvement in the happenings she is only a young girl in her teens. Sutpen accordingly often surfaces in her version as an "ogre," frightening, larger than life, yet, somehow also divine.

> There was an ogre of my childhood which before my birth removed my only sister to its grim ogre-bourne and produced two half phantom children whom I was not encouraged, and did not desire, to associate with as if my late-born solitude had taught me presentiment of that fateful intertwining, […]—and I forgave it; there was a shape which rode away beneath a flag and (demon or no) courageously suffered—and I did more than just forgive. (137)

Miss Rosa's exaggeration of Sutpen's character is typically childlike, her rewriting (authoring) of Sutpen's life carries varied fairy-tale-like elements, in which she poses as an innocent onlooker, an outsider to the horrors her imagination magnifies. As she states at one point in her narrative there "must have been some seed he [Sutpen] left, to cause a

child's vacant fairy-tale to come alive in that garden" (121). Her simultaneous fascination and fear of Sutpen, (also expressed in the quote's "demon or no"), reflects a child's sentiments, who is bound to dread and love power under the same breath. Her sister Ella's world is also closer to a tale-like objectification than to the real, although the latter consciously escapes into a manufactured fantasy life, whereas the former's fabulating tendency is due to innocence and inexperience, as well as a deep-seated attraction to the monster of her childhood fancy. Ellen's dream world is described in Chapter III by Mr. Compson as a "world of pure illusion in which, safe from any harm, she moved, lived, from attitude to attitude against her background of chatelaine to the largest, wife to the wealthiest, mother of the most fortunate" (56).

The ogres, dragons, phantoms and other fairy tale creatures inhabiting Miss Rosa's universe and Ellen Coldfield's make-believe existence as the chatelaine in Bluebeard's castle are only two versions of fabulation. Yet, *Absalom, Absalom!*'s fabular patterns, are not exhausted in these two women fabricating tales about themselves and the characters around them. The entire setting and the characters inhabiting this space are also imbued with fabulous dimensions. Sutpen's Hundred evolves in the story as indeed a magnificent castle, with Sutpen, king-monster-landlord, and Bon, the young pretender as well as prodigal son, entering the scene to claim it all: princess, castle, estate, and name. All the narrative voices return to this layer of the story as fable, and they emphasize the element of the oral, unfixed and indefinite aspect within both the tradition evoked and the tale told.

The fabular features of the narrative, the characters' view of their own lives and others as fabulous are supplemented by the fact that, as Shreve says, the very reality of the characters in these fairy stories might also be in doubt. They are, as he puts it, "people who perhaps never existed at all anywhere, who, shadows, were shadows not of flesh and blood which had lived and died but shadows in turn of what were (…) shades too (…)" (250). This is a clear hint that the epistemological dimension is further complicated by the ontological in the novel. Let us not forget, though, that besides these shadows of shades (i.e., the four protagonists) being fabled into existence, the four tellers are also in the process of being created by the author himself.

Thereby all but the ultimate teller (the writer) and the (the writer's, the narrators') process of telling maintain their realities.

(b) The Biblical

Faulkner's profound knowledge of both the Old and New Testaments is a well known fact, and the detection of Biblical parallels in his tales and novels has been a popular enterprise among critics ever since the 1950s.[2] The very title of *Absalom, Absalom!* has prompted critics to meditate at length upon Faulkner's motivations for turning to the story of David and Absalom from the Old Testament. In the original Biblical story Absalom "rebels against his father, after having killed Amnon" (Björk 200), his own brother, for the latter had committed incest with their sister, Tamar. In Faulkner's "redoing" Henry-Absalom murders his half-brother Bon-Amnon for aiming to marry his half-sister, Judith-Tamar. Critics were often puzzled by the fact that David's tragic exclamation in the Bible "My son Absalom, Absalom my son: would to God that I might die for thee, Absalom, my son, my son Absalom!" (Internet 1) was taken for the novel's title, especially because Sutpen's heartless, almost indifferent attitude to his sons renders such outburst of emotions from him almost completely unthinkable. In my reading the Sutpen-David analogy is more complex than to restrict it to the single and infamous Biblical outcry cited. Sutpen is King David inasmuch as he is obsessed with creating his own dynasty by fathering sons who would secure his position as king, tyrant, ruler of a "nation." His creation of Sutpen's Hundred, the literal house and estate, figuratively equates with the creation of family, name, heritage, descent, similar to the complex meanings inferred by David's house. Faulkner's primary interest in the old story is with the motif of the curse, which overtakes the house of David just as it does the house of Sutpen. Abraham's cynical remark in the Bible cited by Shreve: "Praise the Lord, I have raised about me sons to bear the burden of mine iniquities and persecutions; yea perhaps even to restore my flocks and herds from the hand of the ravisher […]" (268), recovers the knowledge that the curse will come home to roost. In other words, sins will not be left unpunished, and the sinner bringing

[2] See references to Lennart Björk and Walton Litz in the Works Cited section.

about the curse knows this the best. This curse that is bound to come full circle in the family certainly originates from the mythic stories of the Bible, but they might as easily be seen as elements from Greek tragedy as well.[3]

Apart from the David-Absalom cycle of the Bible the novel also recovers the best known stories of the Old Testament, the creation of the universe, and the most popular myths related to the figures of God and Jesus. Since these Biblical allusions have been widely analyzed elsewhere I will only briefly dwell on this issue here. *Absalom, Absalom!* can be read as patterned after the Biblical creation story in its entirety, with Sutpen figuring as God in the tale. No other character, claims Irving Howe "rules a book so completely as does Sutpen in *Absalom, Absalom!*" (228), and this domination of the narrative assumes mythical relevance. Thomas Sutpen's creation of Sutpen's Hundred out of nothing, in the middle of nowhere is an easily perceptible parallel. He, as the narrative reveals "so far as anyone […] knew either had no past at all or did not dare reveal it—a man who rode into town out of nowhere with a horse and two pistols and a herd of wild beasts […]" (12). His grand dream of re-authoring himself by re-naming and creating the world after his image, pursued first in Haiti—by marrying the daughter of a plantation owner—, and later on in Jefferson, Mississippi—through the marriage to Ellen Coldfield—, echoes the Biblical grand design of calling the universe into being. Sutpen's equation with God is dispersed throughout the four narratives, and despite (and also along with) the demonic qualities (which are also innate to his persona) his position as Creator-Originator is ever-present. His double role as villain and victim is also a conscious choice from Faulkner's part. Quentin, evoking the memory of his own father's retelling of Sutpen's story notes at one place: "Father said, how the book said that all men were created in the image of God and so all men were the same in God's eyes anyway, looked the same to God at least, and so he would look at Sutpen and

[3] Walter Brylowski's, Dusoir Lind's and Lennart Björk's critical works are especially useful in pointing out parallels between the myths of the Bible and Greek legends and tragedies. See references to these works in the Works Cited section.

think *A fine proud man. If God Himself was to come down and ride the natural earth, that's what He would aim to look like*" (232).

Charles Bon's likeness to the figure of Christ is even more striking, and references to this are scattered throughout the text. Quite early in the story, in part III Mr. Compson compares Bon to a phoenix "fullsprung from no childhood, born of no woman and impervious to time and, vanished, leaving no bones nor dust anywhere" (61). The entrance to the scene in the shape of a phoenix, having no father or mother, and disappearing without a trace are readily decodable Christian parallels. Bon carries his cross (his betrayal by his father and mother; his doomed relationship to his own kin) with resignation, willingly offering himself as sacrifice. He also dies as a sacrifice, both to deliver the house from even greater tragedies and to take the sins of the house upon himself. From among the whole cast of the novel he is the clearest and purest one, who nonetheless is dragged down by forces he is incapable of controlling.

The force of Biblical allusions brings the narratives within the novel closer to the mythic paradigms, extending the breath and cultural relevance of Faulkner's text. The pretence (the masking) of the novel as a modern rewriting of one of the most ancient written stories of human kind, however is just another guise for the underlying story Faulkner is about to tell.

(c) The Greek

From among the many layers Faulkner uses to disguise his original narrative the Greek patterns figure as the most emphasized ones through character, plot and theme. According to Lennart Björk "we are called upon to conceive of Sutpen—and the other characters—in terms of Greek culture, and its dramatization in Greek tragedy" (197), and he refers the reader to Aeschylus for the possible model Faulkner had in mind. Sutpen as Agamemnon, his daughter from a Negro slave, Clytemnestra, Miss Rosa's Cassandra-like figure are but the most frequently served up figures from the ancient Greek mythology, but the Oedipus and Eteocles myth-cycles also carry evident analogies. Besides these myth-cycles, whose parallels in character and action are readily available in Faulkner's tale, the concepts of tragic fate, sense

of doom, the already mentioned returning curse, and the notion of fate weave an entangling web around the novel's characters.

These ancient concepts rhyme perfectly with Sutpen-Agamemnon's tragic stature, whose singular character, actions and fate set to motion a series of happenings, which can neither be stopped, nor can they be prevented. Faulkner's characters all patiently and passively await and submit to their destiny, without ever questioning what fate (or the Gods above) has wrought for them. Sutpen, for instance, is well aware of the fact that his son's (Henry's) college friend, regularly brought home for the holidays, is his own son as well, yet, the all-knowing father remains silent about this for a long time. Instead of hindering the fatal collapse that ultimately means the fall of his own carefully planned design as well, he keeps leaving home to avoid confrontations with Bon, and even when the time of the confession about the actual identity of Charles Bon arrives, it is not to Bon, the person most concerned, but to Henry. Bon accepts his destiny passively, his knowledge of the relationship between himself and Judith is not contested, rather it is born with humility.

The novel abounds in references to Greek tragedies through numerous allusions to the theatricality of action, set, the masked quality of the players involved. Expressions like "the tragic burlesque of the sons of Ham" (162), that "the plantation was just a blind to his [Sutpen's] actual dark avocation" (59), allusions to the fact that all the characters are playing to some unseen audience, reveal the constructed quality of the drama. In section III the narrator states of Sutpen that "he was unaware that his flowering was a forced blooming too and that while he was still playing the scene to the audience, behind him Fate, destiny, retribution, irony—the stage manager, call him what you will—was already striking the set and dragging on the synthetic and spurious shadows and shapes of the next one" (60).

In the best tradition of ancient Greek tragedies (and heroic epics) each character is linked to a recurring phrase or quality by which he or she is identified. Although this "epic attribute" is sustained with only slight modifications from narrative to narrative, the characters they reference move from being faces (masks), real people, to theatrical and/or social roles. At one place Miss Rosa is depicted as staring at Sutpen "from behind the face the same woman who had been that child now watched him with that same grim and cold intensity" (56).

The division into "face" "woman" and "child," i.e., mask, social role, private self, displays not only the various and shifting identifications other players of the drama also assume, the roles and functions envisioned imply the presence of dramatic "personae" inherent in the role playing in everyday life. It is no surprise that this masquerade of life is often witnessed passively and with awe even by the actors involved, like in Miss Rosa's following statement:

> Turned twenty true enough yet still a child, still living in that womb-like corridor where the world came not even as living echo but as dead incomprehensible shadow, where with the quiet and unalarmed amazement of a child I watched the miragy antics of men and women—my father, my sister, Thomas Sutpen, Judith, Henry, Charles Bon—called honor, principle, marriage, love, bereavement, death. (133)

If the characters are masks playing out or at times sitting back and watching their own life-drama in the audience, the entire stage of their tragedy is the approximation of the Greek amphitheatre. This elevated and exaggerated stage design, with actors and actresses wearing magnified masks to delineate eternal and ever-recurring rituals is grasped in the section where the characters are represented as enlarged portraits hanging suspended in air. "[T]he (now) five faces looked with a sort of lifeless and perennial bloom like painted portraits hung in vacuum, each taken at its forewarned peak and smoothed of all thought and experience" (62), says Faulkner's narrator. The scene inevitably recalls associations with Eugene O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra*, where again the ancient doom of the family is played out on the scene against the family portraits predicting and determining the players' unavoidable destiny.

(d) The submerged narrative

Through the filters of the fabular, the Biblical and Greek patterns, the shape and directions of Faulkner's original narrative are visible. The tale that veils itself in traditions of the oral, the mythic and the ancient tragic ultimately unfolds as the story of the collapse of the South. The assumed story-telling traditions and guises all supply thematic, characterological, scenic, narratological underpinnings to the main and submerged narrative. Neither is it accidental that the

novel ends with the curious exchange between Quentin and Shreve discussing the South and what it means for Quentin. To the prompting question of Shreve's as to why Quentin hates the South the latter replies:

> 'I don't hate it,' Quentin said, quickly, at once, immediately; 'I don't hate it,' he said. I
> *I don't hate it* he thought, panting in the cold air, the iron New England dark; *I don't. I dont! I dont hate it! I dont hate it!* (311)

In effect the words uttered do acknowledge Quentin's simultaneous hatred and love for the South despite all of its moral corruptness, history, its social ills, of which the entire preceding novel is a record. Thomas Sutpen, the king-ogre of fairy dreams, the all-powerful Creator of the Bible and the almighty and tragic Agamemnon, is also the upstart Southern aristocrat, who brings about his own and his kin's decline by accepting and practicing the racism held as the foremost ill responsible for the defeat of the family and the region.

2. The masks of gender

The novel enumerates a line a characters who are neither female nor entirely male but rather neutral with respect to gender. This curious position of standing on the borders (regarding sexual identity) has already been commented on with respect to Miss Rosa's figure, whose sexlessness is a recurring motif of the narrative. She says of herself in section "Five" "I became all polymaths love's androgynous advocate" (121). Her want of love haunts her from her childhood and follows her into the depravations of adulthood. Yet, her loveless life does not entirely explain her unique gender identity of the in-between. She sees her femininity as "hollow" (120), and at times she even meditates upon turning into or being reborn "weaponed and panoplied as a man" (120). The feminine side of her self misses and grieves for love, and accordingly she constantly imagines infatuation with idols she hardly knows (Sutpen) or has not ever met (Bon). Her fancied masculinity, not elaborated in the novel, is restricted to a passing imagining, which at best is a substitute for her femininity she and the outside world consider dead. The members of the trio of Miss Rosa-Judith-Clytie are all versions of the same loveless, sexless life that Miss Rosa's narrative confesses about. Not even Judith's

"relationship" with Bon, which almost results in marriage, involves any form of physicality. She is repeatedly mentioned in the novel as "the same as a widow without ever having been a bride" (12).

Similarly, Bon and his son (Charles Etienne) are without a clear gender identity. Charles Etienne, the only child of Bon and his octoroon mistress is described in the novel as a "child with a face of not old but without age, as if he had had no childhood, […] as if he had not been human born but instead created without the agency of man or agony of woman and orphaned by no human being" (161). Bon's conception on earth is likewise unhuman, "as far as he knew [he] had never had any father but had been created somehow between that woman who wouldn't let him play with other children, and that lawyer […]—two people neither of whom had taken pleasure or found passion in getting him or suffered pain and travail in borning him" (280). The passionless, painless conceptions and mysterious origins emphasized regarding the son and the father (Bon), underpin their unearthliness. Just as they appear to be not human born, they are neither exclusively masculine, nor exclusively feminine, but both. Henry and Judith are both in love with Bon; in fact as stated in the novel Henry and Judith were a "single personality with two bodies both of which had been seduced almost simultaneously by a man" (75). Bon, however, clearly takes interest in Henry, his attraction to or love for Judith is at best marginal. Whether Bon and Henry's attachment is anything else but a brotherly love is not detailed in the novel, but given that Judith and Henry are two versions of the same self, the love that the different-sexed siblings share exists between the brothers as well. Bon slices himself up between the people drawn to him (the octoroon, Judith, Henry), just as Jesus is willing to embrace them all. His androgyny then is not a mask of homosexuality but rather a metaphor for his larger, more relevant position of the in-between (human and holy, man and woman, later: black and white).

Whether it is the outside world that projects this vacuous gender identity (Miss Rosa, Clytie, Judith), or some mythic function (social role) that metamorphoses as one's dual gender position (Bon, Henry, Charles Etienne), the hesitation between clear-cut gender roles is abundantly present throughout the novel. Just why did Faulkner cover up the original gender traces of his characters? Why did he choose to disguise gender with its lack or multiplication? The answers partly lie

with Faulkner's core narrative of the decline of the South. The extended and repeated presence of sexlessness (the masking of proper gender identities) ultimately results in the denial of the notions of rejuvenation and renewal. It is not by chance that the potential couples of the coming generations: Bon and Judith, Miss Rosa and Sutpen fail long before having even started. These relationships are tainted and cursed by impeding incest, greed for power, obligations of dynastic schemes unmotivated by love. Even when whites do reproduce (as in the singular case of Ellen Coldfield and Thomas Sutpen), their offsprings turn out to be enervated, empty receptacles of their father's doom. The rest of the children who come to life are either put to death as soon as they are born (Wash Jones' granddaughter), meet their death caused by fatal diseases (like Charles Etienne), or wander around the cursed "castle" howling idiotically.

3. Racial masks

As the characters of the novel are virtually hidden behind the guises of the narratives, as Faulkner's original tale masks as fable-myth-drama, and as the main actors hesitate between clear-cut gender roles, so are racial identities contested and kept secret. The question of "race," the controversial and even paradoxical paradigms it was bound to bring about had been reflected prior to Faulkner. The double taboo, as well as the most extreme case scenario that could evolve in the context of white-black interaction was obviously the co-occurrence of miscegenation and incest. *Absalom, Absalom!* in fact continues and crowns a long line of narratives, whose major focus is the complex "interracial incest" theme. Examples for similar preoccupations in subject matter range from James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912), through Pauline Hopkins's "Of One Blood" (1902–1903), Thomas Dixon's *The Sins of the Father* (1912), all the way to the oft-quoted Trueblood-episode of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952). Although Werner Sollors in his *neither black nor white yet both* (1999) devotes an entire chapter to the incest-miscegenation theme, he does not consider the related issue of masking as an equally relevant component. Yet, masks do play a central role in race relations, so much so that without them the very essence of the social, historical, political, cultural and surely personal

conflicts of the American South in the 19th century is likely to be missed. That "interracial incest" can even occur (as a cultural phenomenon or as a fictional theme) is largely due to two interrelated factors, namely (a) the historical curse of color, which had to be masked or denied to avoid the shame and abasement it involves, and (b) the secrecy of parenthood covering/masking the reality of miscegenation.

(a) The curse of color

The notion that blackness was viewed by society as a curse upon the individual is interspersed throughout Faulkner's story. The wife whom Thomas Sutpen marries in Haiti hides her racial identity, and is consequently denied and rejected by her husband. Charles Bon, the only son born out of that wedding likewise remains unacknowledged by his father because of his tainted bloodline. Both Eulalia Bon Sutpen and her son are in a way pressured to disguise their true racial identities and pass for whites (whether out of premeditated design or unconsciously) by a white society which does not tolerate discoloration, i.e., the violation of racial purity. The curse of race runs especially deep in the consciousness of the American South, and Faulkner knows both the myths and the realities of this awareness of race. It is not by chance that the four narratives reach this ultimate point of interest only by gradation. The entire novel, as Sollors argues, can be read as a tale told twice, for the first time (by Miss Rosa and Mr. Compson) entirely without the incest and miscegenation motifs, and secondly by the Shreve-Quentin pair, who re-read the whole story with this filter included. As Sollors phrases it: "The novel gives the readers a tale and then asks, almost clinically, what would change in it if the elements of first incest and then miscegenation were added to it" (331).

Faulkner's underlying story then concerns not simply the decline of the South, but ultimately race relations in the South, which to a great extent account for this decline. In tracing the causes of Henry's fratricidal murder of Charles Bon, the first two narratives offer clues like bigamy, liason and marriage with an octoroon, which somehow seem invalid. The second two narratives of Shreve and Quentin make "sense out of many details that would otherwise remain unexplained"

(330) says Sollors. The fact that the college friends do not only tell but also invent as well as relive the possible events that led up to Charles Bon's murder adds a great deal to the heretofore benumbed tale. The contradictory, even paradoxical patterns of race that were bred in the South can only be highlighted by and through the fantasies and approximations of the two young men, possibly homosexual. In the Canadian Shreve and the Southern Quentin the Charles Bon-Henry pair finds intelligible echoes. The ice-cold college room serves as a backdrop as well as a symbolical mirror of emotions and moods to sift through and retrospectively make sense of the past. Although outsiders to the happenings both, and also removed from the past actions in time and space, they are curiously most entitled to decode and interpret the relevance of former events (for themselves and the reader). Their deep and mutual understanding of social taboos, the implications of social exclusion, a shared notion of curse, and knowledge of paradoxes that historical, social, personal conditions might bring about, make of them interpreters and impersonators of the past.

The entangling paradigms that the curse of color elicits are many and they find curious echoes in the attraction-aversion patterns of sex (Shreve-Charles & Quentin-Henry), nation (North vs. South), history (the Civil War) related in the novel. Although the ideal of the racially pure is constantly set in contrast with the racially tainted or contaminated, Thomas Sutpen himself violates the taboo of racial boundaries (both in fathering Bon, and when fathering Clytie with one of his own slaves). Bon enters the war on the southern side, and thus is figuratively—and ironically—fighting for the maintenance of his subservient social position. Racial masquerades are asserted and refused by Bon and Charles Etienne as the situation might require. As Faulkner's narrator puts it: he (Charles Etienne) was

> hunting out situations in order to flaunt and fling the ape-like body of his charcoal companion in the faces of all and any who would retaliate: the Negro stevedores and deckhands of steamboats or in city honky-tonks who thought he was a white man and believed it only the more strongly when he denied it; the white man who, when he said he was a Negro, believed that he lied in order to save his skin, or worse: from sheer besotment of sexual perversion; in either

> case the result was the same: the man with body and limbs almost as light and delicate as a girl's giving the first blow… (170)

The curse of color is nowhere more agitating than in the figure of the mulatto, whose liminality creates double alliances and retributions in both the white and the black society (exemplified through the figures of Bon, Charles Etienne, Bon's octoroon mistress as well as Clytie). It is not by chance that both Bon and later his son marry or choose octoroon or full-blooded black partners so as to give recognition to their otherwise hidden blood-lines, and thus possibly make good for their inadvertent strategies of passing.

(b) The secrecy of parenthood

The taboo of miscegenation, a consequence of the taboo of race is both the ultimate wrong and the ultimate fact of Southern existence which the novel seeks to explore in its full complexity. As white fathers (primarily Sutpen) have a tendency to refuse their ill-gotten black offspring, so it is the greatest desire of their sons (e.g. Bon) to be acknowledged by the secretive fathers. Characteristically, Charles Bon is willing even to go as far as incest to be as much as reacted to by his father. The novel as well as history, however, denies such open confrontation between the Father and the Son, when justice could be done, or sins could be admitted. The taboo of racial intermixing remains the deepest secret (though a commonly occurring reality) in the South. This fact and the traces of it are covered up both by the narrative patterns (Miss Rosa and Mr. Compson mask the reality of sexual intermixing between the races by dropping interracial connections from their respective stories), the assertions of the characters (Bon's insistence on his and Henry's shared racial origins, i.e., whiteness), and the actions of the protagonists (Sutpen's resistance to as much as confront the mulatto son and reveal him the truth). Yet, as the novel ultimately suggests miscegenation is the final trump card for Sutpen as well as for Henry in resisting Charles Bon's seductive lure. It beats all, and eventually is of greater relevance than incest would be. "So it's the miscegenation, not the incest, which you cant bear" (294), cries Bon in the climactic scene before his death.

The masks of narration, and the masks of gender culminate and reveal the masks of race, which hide the troubled relationship of white

society to the Negro. For it is not only racial intermixing or the realities of passing that are laid bare by Faulkner but the very complexities of the black presence (whether historical, social, cultural or personal) in the south. As the masks are gradually torn away (from narrative, gender and race), Faulkner's inquest of white responsibility regarding the social and historical situation of blacks, his interrogation of the accomplices in the crime (of murder, of slavery as a system, of intermixing), and his unveiling of "the fantasies of 'race' (…) [functioning] as the screen for all sort of repressed desires" (Sollors 331) become evident.

If, as J. Hillis Miller argues, incest is "much sameness" (qtd. in Sollors 324) taken to an extreme, whose narrative analogue is the "constative" (rather than the performative as Miller states), and if miscegenation's—defined as "too much difference" (cited in Sollors 324)—analogue is the performative, the novel delves into the latter at the apropos of the former. Irving Howe is absolutely right in stating that "of all Faulkner's novel *Absalom, Absalom!* most nearly approaches structural perfection [since] (…) the novel creates sudden eddies of confusion" (224) both to model and to mirror the "eddies of confusion" in the Southern paradigms of race, culture, society, history. Faulkner's ingenious narrative technique then does not only mask but also unmasks those psychological, social and historical conflicts that lie at the heart of interracial realities in the South.

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ZSOLT VIRÁGOS

THE SHORT STORY AS INTERTEXTUAL SATELLITE: THE CASE OF WILLIAM FAULKNER

> *In a short story that's next to the poem, almost every word has got to be almost exactly right. In the novel you can be careless but in the short story you can't.*
>
> ——William Faulkner (1957)

> *To me she was the beautiful one, she was my heart's darling. That's what I wrote the book about…*
>
> ——William Faulkner (1957)

[1] An open-ended, revisable quality

Despite the fact that he did mass-produce short stories on occasion, mainly for financial reasons, few twentieth-century modernists were as sophisticated in their short-prose technique and narrative depth as William Faulkner. This sophistication may be due, among several other factors, to his particular brand of a "process aesthetic." The publishing history of Faulkner's long and short prose fiction clearly documents his conviction that narratives should always be open to further revision, that they are never complete or finished. This aesthetic, variably practiced by such well-known predecessors as Poe and Whitman, is most clearly manifested in Faulkner's revisiting and recasting of thematic units in new guises. These repeated tellings have

coalesced into distinct novel-plus-short-story clusters in the Faulkner canon, with the symbiotic components of the clusters signifying upon each other.

We find, in other words, that Faulkner was, in a sense, often retelling. He kept returning to a vision not quite perfectly apprehended, he tended to brood over his material and approached a subject, a character, a type figure, an emotion-laden symbol repeatedly from different points of view for the purposes of fictional "corrections" or of adding further perspectives. This has largely contributed, in a technical sense, to the Balzacian "design," that is, the *interlocking* quality of his output, which is most obviously present in the textual device of *recall*. It is some of the consequences of this aesthetic, of this design and device that the present study is going to look at.

The most crucial consequences of Faulkner's realization that narratives are open-ended, that familiar material should be accessible to reiterated scrutiny and to further revision, are his fictional reassessments and retellings. "Few other authors," a critic has remarked, "invite such self-consciousness in the process of reading, or display in the course of a story how firmly readerly judgments emerge from the reader's own predilections. This open-ended, revisable quality of Faulkner's aesthetic may help us understand why so many of his stories appear again in novels" (Mitchell 258). Or vice versa: a number of short prose narratives have materialized as spin-offs of novels previously published.

[2] Determining agents: intertexts within the canon

Thus, for instance, the incidents related in "Wash" (1934)—which was to be incorporated later into *Go Down, Moses* (1942) and which presents the experiences of the McCaslin clan—bloomed into the massive *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936). *The Hamlet* (1940) incorporates revised versions of five stories published in the 1930s, and *The Unvanquished* (1938)—like *Go Down, Moses*—is a novel made up entirely of short stories. Contrariwise, still exploring the Sartoris legend after the publication of *Flags in the Dusts* (1929), the first of the county novels, Faulkner looked both forward and backward in time, writing of the situation of the family ten years after the

conclusion of *Sartoris* in "There Was a Queen" (1933). Or take "That Evening Sun," Faulkner's most anthologized and perhaps his most gripping story, which can be regarded as a satellite of *The Sound and the Fury*. Because "Evening Sun" carries such a heavy load of determinacy in texts other than itself, it is the least accessible outside the Yoknapatawpha County context, depending as it does on the subtle characterizations and tensions of the Compson family of the novel whose fictional satellite the short story actually is. The textual links and analogies—discrete objectifications of mandatory intertextuality—oscillate between "That Evening Song" and *The Sound and the Fury*, with the latter serving as the core fathering text.

Indeed, the problematic of intertextual linkage, or more specifically, the degree of determinism arising out of it, will be another major concern in the present study. Indeed, eventually it will also have to be pondered whether or not intertextuality is always a helpful tool and enriching filter in interpretive transactions when the texts scrutinized belong to the same individual canon. Of course, this dilemma spawns further questions: when does determinacy become *over*determinacy? What are the ideal limits of the reading agent's extratextual background information? What, after all, is the difference between intertextual and "innocent," thus between "contaminated" and "unadulterated" reading?

In the subsequent discussion—as my title indicates—the word "satellite" will be used to denote a given *short story* as related to a core determining text: that of a *novel*. This relationship would, in the first analysis, prompt a look at evolutionary and ontological interrelationships between novel and short story. In the given framework—the degree of embedding in the construction and elaboration of Yoknapatawpha County—this will not be necessary.

[3] County Tales: "adjunctive" and "projective"

It will be, however, useful to remember two of the classes of Olga Vickery's threefold division of Faulkner's "County" stories: *adjunctive* and *projective*.[1] An *adjunctive* story is a narrative unit in its own right; it will simply add more information about certain

[1] The third type of story, both formulaic and parodistic, will not be dealt with here.

characters, situations, or the history of Yoknapatawpha County. To put it more unequivocally, the functional components of an adjunctive story will reinforce or document what has already and elsewhere been established. Established primarily in *Flags in the Dust*, in which Faulkner created the world that he subsequently explored throughout his career. Consequently, a story of this class will operate with a high degree of predictability. Typical adjunctive stories in the Faulkner canon are "Dry September" or "A Rose for Emily." Thus, Miss Minnie May's actions and the consequences of her reactions are choreographed—like the subsequent motions of a familiar ballet performance—by a predictable script. The script is nothing else but the "logic" and ethos of Yoknapatapwha County. Again, despite the story's surprise ending, all the acts and decisions of Miss Grierson—as of a deranged "Sartoris" woman and a "proud fool"—are predictable in the sense that they do not contradict the by now decadent ethos of the Sartoris world. Hence its peculiar and broader—no matter how Gothic and gruesome—realism.

Conversely, a *projective* story tends to be "an element of structure" (300), meaning that this type of short story tends to be more organically involved in the very genesis of construction: the architectonics of Yoknapatawpha. In this logic, the story is to examine a new aspect (for instance, of character) of what has already been established. As such, it will impose new demands of action on the characters and, more importantly, it will project *new demands of understanding* on the reader.

[4] "Possibly but not Probably": what makes "There Was a Queen" projective?

In this logic, therefore, owing to the fact that it creates new demands of understanding in the reader, "There Was a Queen" (1933) should be considered a projective story: it subverts and redefines an essential question perhaps insinuated but not actually confirmed in *Flags in the Dust* (1929). The dramatic power of the story centers on the contrast between the pride and dignity and sense of family of Mrs. Virginia DuPre (Miss Jenny or Aunt Jenny), the sole direct survivor of the family line, the last of the Sartoris women, and the lack of these qualities in Narcissa Benbow Sartoris, the widow of Miss Jenny's

great-great-nephew. Her crudely pragmatic attitudes, the sexually unscrupulous role she plays, her outrageous act of "sleeping with the enemy" disqualifies—or ought to disqualify—her from entering the race for the title of Sartoris Woman after Virginia is gone.

The irony of the situation is that although Narcissa will clearly not be a worthy keeper of Miss Jenny's code, this female outsider with the morality of a Snopes will inherit the Sartoris estate. Although morally she fails to measure up to the family code, socially she is and will be "a Sartoris woman." The nature of the story's most significant dilemma is thus primarily a problem of merit rather than of identity: who after all is deserving to be the last Sartoris woman? If we ask this question at the end of the novel, the answer clearly is Miss Virginia. In the short story, however, owing to the passage of time (which ultimately brings the death of the ninety-year-old Miss Jenny) and, more importantly, a piece of additional information pertaining to the blood-line of another female character creates a new element which is likely to reverberate and which may give the reader a pause.

In the second paragraph of the text, when talking about how all the men are gone and how this new quiet is "the quiet of womenfolks," Faulkner injects a statement, an apparently casual remark that the novel has not confirmed:

> As Elnora crossed the back yard toward the kitchen door she remembered how ten years ago at this hour old Bayard, *who was her half-brother* (*though possibly but not probably neither of them knew it, including Bayard's father*), would be tramping up and down the back porch, shouting stableward for the Negro men and for his saddle mare. (210; emphases added)

This brief shift in the narrative focus is also bound to change the moral focus somewhat. Suddenly it turns out that there *is* a woman in the family, Elnora, who is not only a blood kin but who would also be ethically suited to serving as the true keeper of Miss Jenny's code. Besides undertaking the slave woman's—then the house servant's—role in the family, Elnora has assumed the white family's cares and griefs as her own. Without knowing precisely about the outrageous act of Bory's mother in Memphis, Elnora turns out to be an infallible judge of the Benbow woman. To begin with, Elnora considers Narcissa an "outsider from town" (211). She is also aware of

Narcissa's predatory mentality. "'She ain't going to leave this place, now that she done got in here.' Then she said quietly, aloud, without rancor, without heat: 'Trash. Town trash'" (212). Later:

> "Born Sartoris or born quality of any kind ain't *is*, it's *does*." […]
> "Her not come back? When she worked for five years to get herself married to Bayard? Working on Miss Jenny all the time Bayard was off to that war? I watched. Coming out here two or three times a week, with Miss Jenny thinking she was just coming out to visit like quality. But I knowed. I knowed what she was up to all the time. Because I knows trash. I knows the way trash goes about working in with quality. Quality can't see that, because it is quality." (216–218)

The double irony of having the wrong woman for a rank of high morality and responsibility, as well as the irony of having to disqualify Elnora is tacitly implied in the dialogue between Miss Jenny and Elnora:

> "They ain't come in the back way, have they?" she said.
> "Nome," Elnora said. She approached the chair.
> The old woman looked out the window again. "I must say I don't understand this at all. Miss Narcissa's doing a mighty lot of traipsing around all of a sudden. Picking up and—"
> Elnora came to the chair. "A right smart," she said in her cold, quiet voice, "for a woman lazy as her."
> "Picking up—" the old woman said. She ceased. "You stop talking that way about her."
> "I ain't said nothing but the truth," Elnora said.
> "Then you keep it to yourself. She's Bayard's wife. A Sartoris woman now."
> "She won't never be a Sartoris woman," Elnora said. (213–214)

The short story text, as opposed to that of the novel, raises the option that through genes and codes—heredity and morality—the last Sartoris woman after Miss Jenny's death should be the one who has remained and will remain a monument of Sartoris values: the daughter of John Sartoris, product of the widely practiced "illicit plantation liaison." On account of her ethnic handicap, however, Elnora would never be socially accepted as a Sartoris kin by the community. That she could and ought to be the last Sartoris woman remains a whispered secret between Faulkner and the reader.

[5] Intertextual versus "innocent" reading

"That Evening Sun": this ominous short story, a classic of the genre, has been selected for closer scrutiny in this discussion. It was first published in *American Mercury* in March, 1931, less than two years after *The Sound and the Fury* saw print. The ties that link the two texts, the novel and the short story, are obvious and somewhat complicated. Blotner suggests, for instance, that the *Sound* itself was originally intended as a short story (565). He also suggests that very possibly this early work was the material that grew later into "That Evening Sun Go Down,"[2] which was a beefed-up version of another early text, "Never Done No Weeping When You Wanted to Laugh." Another source claims that there were some other early texts ("A Justice" and "The Twilight") using the Compson background (Karl 314). Minter adds that "Twilight" was the third Compson story and it became *The Sound and the Fury* (345).

"That Evening Sun" is successfully constructed—primarily contextualized—to operate as a "projective" composition. When, in the reading process, it is continually compared with the fathering text, that is, when it is being read against the background of the story's novelistic intertext (*The Sound and the Fury*), the short-story satellite will offer radically essential insights. However, it would be a mistake to think that a prior familiarity with the novel is a *sine qua non* prerequisite: the story is self-contained and sufficiently autonomous to be read in isolation (that is, in a sense "innocently"; not in tandem with the longer text from whose central experience it partly grew). Thus, to put it simply, "Evening Sun" does not necessarily require the intertextual crutches. In other words, "innocent" reading in the given context means "unadulterated" reading, i.e., sense-making free from the determinism of the potential intertext.

This also means, however, that in Faulkner's interlocking canon understanding and interpreting the respective novelistic and short-story text in the two different modes (intertextual ↔ "innocent") can be radically different. Moreover, statistically, because the initiated recipient—the one familiar with *Sound*—cannot be made to "unlearn"

[2] The title is a line from "St. Louis Blues," which Faulkner heard W. C. Handy play years before.

the reading experience, an "innocent" receptive acquisition of "Evening Sun" is seldom probable. Thus, for instance, each of the Compson children reacts differently to the horror of the situation described in "Evening Sun" but whether the interactions and transactions between the children are also anticipated—thus in a way predictable, "typical"—depends on the interpretive filter used. This filter can only be derived from the reader's previous exposure to and familiarity with the novel. Much of the story's determinism and predictability in this case can only be derived from a prior exposure to *The Sound and the Fury*. Reading "Evening Sun" as the satellite of a particular novelistic text (or *texts*, as we shall see) is thus likely to elicit a host of contradictory questions and dilemmas which range from fictional inconsistencies and excessive determinism to the problems of predictability and of "innocent" reading. In this understanding, "innocent" or "unadulterated" reading would mean a newcomer's apprehending the impact of the meaning structure of the text. The reading, that is, of a newcomer to Faulkner.

There exist altogether three "Evening Suns." In view of the fact that there is no conclusive evidence which would permit accurate dating of the inception and writing of the definitive version of this story, I will not be concerned here with the earlier versions. The inevitable question, of course, cannot be avoided: which of them (or whether any of them, or all of them, or none of them) did Faulkner regard as an added telling of the Compson story?

[6] "That Evening Sun": the shape of the story

Those early, and substantially shorter, versions comprise the building blocks that later found their way into the 1931 version of the short-story text: the County background; the Compson home; Nancy working for the family; Quentin as narrator; and, marginally, Candace and Jason. Benjy is absent, as he is kept out of all the early texts as well as of the final version. Apparently the fast tempo and the economicality of composition yielded no room for accommodating the logistics of containing the idiot child.

The largest bulk of the story focuses on the black washerwoman Nancy, who lives in a cabin near the Compson house. Besides taking in washing from the Compsons, she also cooks for the white family

when Dilsey, their regular servant, is ill. Nancy is also a prostitute, and is mortally afraid of Jesus, her estranged common-law husband, who she believes is trying to kill her with a razor—apparently because she is pregnant with another (probably a white) man's child. Nancy is thus expecting a white man's child and a black man's rage. She foresees her death. But even as Nancy becomes more certain, the older Compsons downplay the chance of violence. When Dilsey returns to work, Mrs. Compson refuses to let Nancy stay in the house for the night and Nancy, frightened but still clever, persuades the three Compson children to come to her cabin in the evening with her.

In one of the most desperate scenes literature can create, she tries to make them stay as long as possible because she is desperately hoping to rely on them for temporary protection against the man she knows is lying in wait in the ditch outside the cabin: she knows that the presence of the white children in her home can prevent Jesus from entering. The contrast between Nancy's calm horror and the death she knows awaits her and the children's partial or total failure to sense that horror accentuate the pathos and the horror of the situation. Nancy tries desperately to entertain the children. She tells them a story and they pop corn. The children—especially Caddy—comment on her strange story (which seems to be chiming in with her own present situation) and her strange actions, but are untouched by the fear behind them. Everything seems to be conspiring against Nancy and she knows full well that her desperate attempt to buy more time from fate is a losing battle. It is becoming apparent that she is unable to induce the children to stay long. It is getting late. Jason is fretful and wants to go home, Quentin and Candace are becoming uneasy. Finally, Mr. Compson arrives; he is sympathetic with Nancy's fears, but does not believe that she is in imminent danger. He takes the children away, and Nancy is so much convinced that Jesus will get her no matter what she does that she does not even close the door. Faulkner developed the story subsequently to contrast the father's—and Quentin's—lack of real concern with the two younger ones'—especially Caddy's—more immediate involvement in a kind of violence and an unreported tragic dénouement which will eventually envelope them. Because Faulkner does not dramatize the conclusive action (the violent act, that is, the actual murder), questions regarding Nancy's ultimate fate remain unanswered. The story's certain but

unspoken conclusion is that Nancy is dead beyond the narrative's temporal parameters, that is, soon after the story's conclusion.[3]

[7] "That Evening Sun": the Compson background

In "That Evening Sun" Faulkner clearly turned to already created characters and setting as vehicles for his reinvigorated subject. The Compson parents in the short story are much the same as the novel's Mr. and Mrs. Compson. The father, Jason III, who figures prominently in the plot, is basically well-intentioned, sensitive, kind, and he loves his brood. Yet he is incapable of taking command of his household; he is soft and weak when confronted with his whining and neurotic wife. However, he has not yet retired into the kind of ironic and cynical detachment from the world in which we find him in the novel. In "Evening Sun," because he cannot do more than advise Nancy not to take the threat from Jesus seriously, he plays a crucial role in unwittingly causing her death (if it is a death). Caroline Bascomb Compson is in each and every important aspect a close replica of the novelistic image, with both these portraits harking back to another well-known selfish, hypochondriac and egoistic Southern wife, Harriet Beecher Stowe's Marie St. Clare of New Orleans.

As regards the Compson children, the Benjy of the novel, as mentioned, does not exist in the story. The economy of the rather crowded and hectic plot obviously did not require the presence of the idiot child. If there were a Benjy present, he would be four years old. The other three children, however, are very much in evidence. Quentin, a surprisingly quiet boy, is the narrator of the story which he tells as a childhood experience. We are informed of everything through his mind's filter; thus we learn about the ages of the children from him: "I was nine and Caddy was seven and Jason was five" (84). As regards the Quentin↔Candace relationship, there is no trace or hint of an incestuous attachment. In him there is yet no trace of obsession with Candace, there is no foolish and self-destructive idealism. Despite the father's ineffectiveness and the mother's coldness there is no blatant indication in the text that this is a self-

[3] In the Faulkner canon several other short stories are finished before he establishes the fact that acts of violence will take place: for example,"Red Leaves," "Dry September," "Mountain Victory"

destructive family. Yet, as we shall see, through the interaction of the three Compson children Faulkner is able to show, with as much naturalistic subtlety as possible, that the seeds of their respective future fates are buried in their genes and psychology. Four other characters from the novel round out the familiar setting of the Compsons—all of them are black figures: Dilsey appears in flesh and blood, Roskus, Frony, and T.P. are briefly mentioned.

[8] Authorial lapses: "inconsistencies"

The co-ordination of "That Evening Sun" and *The Sound and the Fury* is rather shaky. Indeed, in adjusting the two texts, Faulkner—as he is known to have done dozens of times throughout the canon—took a rather cavalier approach to his task of weeding out chronological errors and other inconsistencies. He did not concern himself very much with adherence to logical and real-life adjustments either. For instance, Quentin Compson, the narrator, is nine years old at the time of Nancy's terror; the date, therefore, to judge from *The Sound and the Fury*, is 1899. He is telling about it, however, fifteen years later ("But fifteen years ago, on Monday morning the quiet, dusty, shady streets would be full of Negro women […]" {78}) when, according to the novel's text, he has been dead three (or four) years. It would not be surprising if fertile critics were to build a big case to prove the special (though nonexistent) ramifications of the story's "dead narrator" speaking "from beyond the grave." In addition, as Stephen E. Whicker notes, the picture Quentin is made to sketch in the first two paragraphs "does not sound like 1913, but more like the time the story was written, a fact which throws the events of the story into the period when the author himself was growing up" (255). However, these minor lapses do not really prevent the intertextual juices from flowing.

[9] Keeping the murder off-stage—a "clear but unspoken possibility"?

There emerges, however, a prominent issue—both central and controversial—which is ultimately contributory to fundamentally uncertain interpretive options of Faulkner's text. This crucial ambiguity concerns the ultimate fate of the black prostitute and supposed cocaine addict Nancy beyond the temporal and spacial

parameters of the story. The fact is that Faulkner indeed fails actually to spell out Nancy's death. Nor does he show—visually, imagistically—the physical evidence of the anticipated/imminent violent act. What I am talking about could perhaps be diagnosed as an undesirable lapse or a somewhat disconcerting oversight on Faulkner's part. This seems, however, an unlikely option.

As I have indicated earlier, in the Faulkner canon several other short stories are finished before the author establishes the fact that acts of violence will take place ("Red Leaves," "Dry September," "Mountain Victory," "Wash," "Pantaloon in Black," etc.). Thus it is equally unlikely that Faulkner was "inconsistent" when he choreographed Nancy's ultimate fate. If he was "inconsistent," his inconsistency was the result of a conscious and deliberate authorial decision, rather than of oversight. In choosing not to show the ultimate conclusive act of Nancy's virtual execution, Faulkner could manipulate the reader to experience the impact of those modernistic devices of "not telling" that are normally associated with generating intentional obscurity: suppressed reference, unexplained gaps, withholding of information, refusal to furnish descriptive segments as conventionally expected, burial or temporary suspension of authorial voice (and hereby denying the reader certain basic knowledge of crucial additions), etc. Yet it seems clearly implied at the end of the story that Nancy is about to be murdered for her infidelities by her jealous husband. A close look at the incriminating final scene will make this quite clear.

> We left her sitting before the fire.
>
> "Come and put up the bar," father said. But she didn't move. She didn't look at us again, sitting quietly there between the lamp and the fire. From some distance down the lane we could look back and see her through the open door.
>
> "What, father?" Caddy said. "What's going to happen?"
>
> "Nothing," father said. […] We went down into the ditch. I looked at it, quiet. I couldn't see much where the moonlight and the shadow tangled.
>
> "If Jesus is hid here, he can see us, can't he?" Caddy said.
>
> "He's not there," father said. "He went away a long time ago." […]

> We went up out of the ditch. We could still see Nancy's house and the open door, but we couldn't see Nancy now, sitting before the fire with the door open […].
>
> But we could hear her, because she began just after we came up out of the ditch, the sound that was singing and not unsinging. "Who will do our washing now, father?" I said.

Quentin the narrator looks back from adulthood; he has had fifteen years to ponder what actually expired a decade and a half ago; he was given more than a sufficient amount of time to meditate over the validity and dramatic significance of his ominous question. He appears to be a reliable narrator, and there is no reason to suspect that his memory should have failed him in such a crucial matter.

Yet Faulkner's insinuation of Nancy's actual death as her ultimate fate has had a rough passage in the interpreting community. For instance, Olga Vickery claimed, very firmly, more than four decades ago that in "That Evening Sun"

> the situation is so vividly rendered and Nancy's fears so powerfully communicated that her death has, at times, been taken for granted and her corpse identified with the bones picked clean by buzzards in *The Sound and the Fury*. But in view of her disconcerting resurrection in *Requiem for a Nun*, a careful re-reading discovers how much emphasis is placed upon the foolishness of her fears. As in "That Evening Sun" so in "Dry September" or "Wash," Faulkner's refusal to dramatize the conclusive action serves both to intensify the dominant emotion and to project it beyond the story itself. By this last Faulkner makes the reader implicitly accept the possibility of future continuation of the narrative and recognize that his characters' lives extend beyond the formal confines of individual works. Questions remain unanswered as to the fate of young Sartoris Snopes fleeing from his barn-burning father, Dewey Dell still carrying her child as the Bundren family begins its homeward journey, or Byron Bunch whose inept but earnest advances are firmly repelled by Lena Grove.

With the buzzards, that "other Nancy,"[4] and the sundry "unanswered" questions aside, this argumentation actually hinges on three clusters of allegations: **[1]** as to Nancy's ultimate fate: her terror is unfounded ("the foolishness of her fears"), the adult Compsons are right in refusing to take her fears seriously, thus Jesus is *not* about to slit her

[4] See this issue clarified in Whicher 253–254.

throat; **[2]** concerning the resurrection of Nancy: indeed she does become a central fictional character as Nancy Mannigoe two decades later in Faulkner's *Requiem for a Nun* (1951), thus she stays alive beyond the temporal and spatial parameters of "Evening Sun." **[3]** Re Faulkner's refusal to dramatize the conclusive action: the blurred outlines of the story's conclusion potentially enrich the text's meaning structure through emotional intensification and projection (that is, extension of plot segments and characters beyond and outside the text).

What can be said in answer to these propositions? One, Vickery works on the assumption that Nancy managed to fool everyone, including even those who refused to go out of their way to extend a helping hand. But it is unlikely that she should also be able to fool the narrator, Quentin, who, as I mentioned earlier, had fifteen years to check his facts and get them straight about Nancy and Nancy's part of and in the story before he begins his narrative. Two, for the very same reason, it is hardly likely that the reader should be justified in thinking of Quentin as a fallible narrator: the oldest Compson son does not appear to have any limitations of perception or understanding. He may lack compassion but not intelligence. Moreover, the Nancy story has registered in his memory as a time- and community-tested residue. Operating through an unreliable narrator was a risk Faulkner knew he had better avoid in a short-prose narrative; besides, the unrequired epistemological gaps in the communicated information would have weakened a text of such subtle nuances substantially. Three, in discussing who has fooled whom, it is unlikely that Nancy could fool Dilsey. On the evidence of the black-and-white and the black-and-black interactions in *The Sound of the Fury* we are probably not wide of the mark to think that Dilsey is never fooled. Dilsey would immediately spot a false note out of Nancy. To accept this, of course, one has to have read the novel. No "innocent" reader would understand Dilsey's special role in the Compson household. Four, should we accept Vickery's arbitrary reading of the absence of the story's conclusive action, Faulkner's best-known lynching story, "Dry September," would cease to be a lynching story.

Commentators of the persuasion that Nancy is indeed murdered within a few minutes after the story comes to an end, have, as we have seen, an abundance of clues both inside and outside the text. The most

conclusive proofs have been mentioned, and there are several more of these clues. For instance, if there was nothing to be afraid of when somebody frightened Dilsey in the Compsons' kitchen ["Was it Jesus?" Caddy said. "Did he try to come into the kitchen?" (86)], why does Mr. Compson find it necessary to take a pistol with him ["father came back up from the kitchen, with his pistol in his hand" (86)]? The reader may also wonder why two further unmistakable warnings from Jesus are disregarded by the Compsons? In the first one Mr. Compson himself announces that "[s]ome Negro sent her [Nancy] word that he [Jesus] was back in town" (83). The second warning, though somewhat more ominous, is also dismissed:

> "He in the ditch," Nancy said. "He waiting in the ditch yonder."
> "Nonsense," father said. He looked at Nancy. "Do you know he's there?"
> "I got the sign," Nancy said.
> "What sign?"
> "I got it. It was on the table when I come in. It was a hogbone, with blood meat still on it, laying by the lamp. He out there. When yawl walk out that door, I gone." […]
> "Nonsense," father said. (97)

Moreover, in describing the Nancy-and-Jesus story, Faulkner's biographers report, he was writing about something that actually happened; a real-life scene was also a given. Blotner: "A Negro named Dave Bowdry cut his wife's throat and threw her behind their bed." Furthermore, "there is a ditch like the one Nancy had to cross behind the place where the Faulkners used to live." Again, a source reports to Blotner, "Dave [Bowdry] committed the murder a short distance from the Falkner home" (566). These additions may have a biographical relevance but they can hardly serve as conclusive proof of anything. Faulkner obviously decided not to describe the violent act because he saw the killing itself was secondary to other more dynamic novelistic factors. Like in Greek drama, the murder is kept off-stage. However, the deployment of modernistic devices aimed at "not telling" can sometimes be hazardous.

[10] The hazards of resurrection

Before we proceed, we have to answer the question of whether or not it is likely that extratextual input such as critical, philological or

biographical information of the kind that "resurrects" a fictional character assumed dead within a fictional frame of reference will change the way a given text is read? On first analysis, it probably is. The reader can test their attitude with analogous literary examples. For instance, let us look at the potential impact of the link between Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* (1961) and a work by the same author published well over three decades later: *Closing Time* (1994).

The intertextual ties between these two works by Heller are somewhat analogous with the link (through Nancy) between "That Evening Sun" and *A Requiem for a Nun*. At the end of *Catch-22* Captain Yossarian, fed up with the madness of the war, decides to run away to Sweden, rowing in a tiny boat, from the unidentified Mediterranean island where he is stationed with the U.S. Air Force. The last four words of the novel ("…and he took off" [478]) launch him on his risky voyage. Fictional logic, reason, experience, geographical facts, etc. would jointly insinuate that Yossarian will never make it; he escapes his island without any hope of survival. Thus to most readers his death is taken for granted. The question is whether this reading of the novel is radically changed, disrupted even, when Heller publishes *Closing Time*, in which he "surprises" his readers with a kind of belated and unexpected rescue operation: we are told that Yossarian did not die after the end of *Catch-22*. He is older, suffering from bouts of depression, but he is alive and kicking.

Arbitrary resurrections of this sort are likely to elicit a host of contradictory responses: joy, disbelief, confusion, annoyance; most probably these last two. Although Vickery does not believe Nancy is murdered, it is not by accident that she speaks about the "disconcerting" resurrection of the black washerwoman. Of course, radical interventions in implicated texts are always "disconcerting," even disturbing and annoying, for the simple reason that metamorphic interventions of this nature are likely to subvert reader anticipation, which, from the cultural consumer's point of view can be disorienting and seldom easy to handle.

There may be further reasons for annoyed reactions. A happy conclusion of the Nancy story (she remains alive) can be disturbing also because the reader wants to know whether he is investing—intellectually and emotionally—in reading a tragedy or a farce. If "Evening Sun" is a story of how a black woman fooled everyone, it is

a farce we are reading. Or a riddle at best. Moreover, the reader may easily feel cheated, and the story may immediately lose its pathos, its sombre and heartbreaking quality, its cathartic reverberations. It seems a safe bet to hypothesize that most discerning readers would instinctively wish to resist the alternative of a facile conclusion—a happy ending or an arbitrary (even if delayed) resurrection—for the simple reason that they would not want to see the emotions of pity, fear, compassion, awe and tragic certainty trivialized. As these would be trivialized in subsequent postmodern texts. Indubitably, in Faulkner's story, bridging the distance between tragic doom and cheap hysterics is insurmountable.

Yet the dilemma remains. It may be intriguing to ponder at this point that perhaps *theory* could be called upon to help. Even so, however, it is unlikely that the core of the dilemma could be removed once and for all. On the one hand, it is certainly true that aesthetic views about the artifact as a sealed and autonomous product with a self-contained world of its own sound helpful and appealing. In this logic, we could even arbitrate the separation of the two Nancies from each other; we might even wish to claim that, ontologically, the Nancy of "Evening Sun" has nothing to do with the Nancy Mannigoe of *Requiem for a Nun*. Which, in the final analysis, happens to be a more than valid claim. On the other hand, however, how can theory persuade the reader to disregard "resurrected" characters? Who are either resurrected or not? In other words, how can you instruct the reader, one, to "unlearn" incriminating information, and, two, to continue reading "innocently," rather than intertextually, just because the theory of the autonomous artifact advises not to worry about unpleasant ramifications?

Despite these question marks and dilemmas I am convinced that it was Faulkner's intention to portray Nancy as a haunted and existentially doomed woman who meets her violent death beyond story's end. When Mr. Compson and the three children escort Nancy back to her own cabin they are also conducting her to the death which will follow. This is the unspoken but clear indication. Faulkner was too great a writer to want to write a case history of trivial hysterics. Or cheap melodrama.

As regards the identity of the "two Nancies" and Faulkner's writerly intentions with "them," subsequently the author himself had

this to say: “She is the same person. These people I figure belong to me and I have the right to move them about in time when I need them” (qtd. in Blotner 1309). This statement clearly chimes in with Faulkner’s oft-quoted pertinent formulation in the *Paris Review*: “I can move these people around like God, not only in space but in time too” (Stein 82). There is yet another related statement of Faulkner’s which Blotner reports: “They’re horses in my stable and I can run them whenever I want to” (qtd. 1309). These formulations are interesting, but in the present context not necessarily helpful, beyond the fact that they reinforce Faulkner’s solid conviction that he is absolutely sovereign in his literary kingdom. Beyond that claim, these words are silent when it comes to the actual conclusion of “Evening Sun.” It is also easy to see some of the risks and hazards of modernistic games focusing on “not telling.” The lesson is obvious that intertextual transactions generate filters that open up larger horizons of sense-making. However, these added filters may also tend to function as blinders. They may determine—sometimes *over*-determine—the process and substance of interpretation. We are dealing here with a case of overdeterminacy that is seldom useful. Or necessary.

[11] “Evening Sun”: whose story?

At certain junctures “innocent” and intertextual readings can radically diverge. Nancy’s tragic ordeal and prominent role in the story may easily lull one into believing that “Evening Sun” is Nancy’s story. This is one of the two options and this interpretation comes, characteristically, from an “innocent” reading of the text. However, the other, intertextual, option is this: it is not because of Nancy that Faulkner is revisiting the Compson clan. She may be just an alibi, a red herring. Intertextual channels of communication are likely to convey determinisms—from the fathering text to its satellite—that are capable of a thorough realignment of the linkage of the latter’s functional elements. If we give the story an intertextual reading within the Yoknapatawpha canon, the Nancy part of the story—despite the horror of Nancy’s unspoken murder—is negligible, almost irrelevant. Viewed in this light, Nancy is primarily a narrative device: she is a mirror in which the Compsons are shown. Especially one of the

Compson family, to whom Faulkner is known to have been especially attached at the time the two intertexts—the *Sound* and its satellite—were composed: Candace ("Caddy") Compson. When read intertextually, "Evening Sun" is Caddy's story. It is her story that Faulkner wanted to tell in *The Sound and the Fury*. It is her image as a child—the doomed and lost woman as a seven-year-old girl—that Faulkner is telling in "Evening Sun."

We have biographical and autobiographical evidence of the powerful impact of Caddy on Faulkner. The struggle he went through while writing the *Sound*, the work that "caused me the most grief and anguish" (Stein 72) was primarily dominated by the image of Caddy. "The novel" [the *Sound*], Bleikasten contends, "is Faulkner's first descent into Hell, and Caddy remains his ever-elusive Eurydice" (56). We also know from the relevant literature that the various versions of the three "Evening Suns" were written at a time Faulkner was very much preoccupied with the "symbology of the soiled drawers." In the *Paris Review* interview he offered this comment on the circumstances of the composition of Caddy's story in *The Sound and the Fury*:

> I wrote it five separate times, trying to tell the story, to rid myself of the dream which would continue to anguish me until I did. It's a tragedy of two lost women: Caddy and her daughter. […] It began with a mental picture. I didn't realize at the time it was symbolical. The picture was of the muddy seat of a little girl's drawers in a pear tree, where she could see through a window where he grandmother's funeral was taking place and report what was happening to her brothers on the ground below. By the time I explained who they were and what they were doing and how her pants got muddy, I realized it would be impossible to get all of it into a short story and that it would have to be a book. And then I realized the symbolism of the soiled pants, and that image was replaced by the one of the fatherless and motherless girl climbing down the rainpipe to escape from the only home she had, where she had never been offered love or affection or understanding.
>
> I had already begun to tell the story through the eyes of the idiot child […]. I saw that I had not told the story that time. I tried to tell it again, the same story through the eyes of another brother. That was still not it. I told it for the third time through the eyes of the third brother. That was still not it. I tried to gather the pieces together and fill in the gaps by making myself the spokesman. It was still not complete, not until fifteen years after the book was published, when I wrote as an appendix to another book the final

> effort to get the story told and off my mind, so that I myself could have some peace from it. It's the book I feel tenderest towards. I couldn't leave it alone, and I never could tell it right, though I tried hard and I would like to try again, though I'd probably fail again. (Stein 73–74)

Elsewhere he talked in a similar vein of what Caddy meant to him. In the *Southern Review* version of his introduction ("An Introduction for *The Sound and the Fury*") he commented that "[…] in the Sound and The Fury [sic!] I had already put perhaps the only thing in literature which would ever move me very much: Caddy climbing the pear tree to look in the window at her grandmother's funeral while Quentin and Jason and Benjy and the negroes looked up at the muddy seat of her drawers" (227). In the same text, by way of conclusion, he said this: "So I, who had never had a sister and was fated to lose my daughter in infancy, set out to make myself a beautiful and tragic little girl" (227–228).

In the *Mississippi Quarterly* version of his introduction ("An Introduction to *The Sound and the Fury*") Faulkner wrote:

> […] Whereupon I, who had three brothers and no sisters and was destined to lose my first daughter in infancy, began to write about a little girl.
>
> I did not realise then that I was trying to manufacture the sister which I did not have and the daughter which I was to lose, though the former might have been apparent from the fact that Caddy had three brothers almost before I wrote her name on paper. […] I saw that [the children] had been sent to the pasture to spend the afternoon to get them away from the house during the grandmother's funeral in order that the three brothers and the nigger children could look up at the muddy seat of Caddy's drawers as she climbed the tree to look in the window at the funeral, without then realising the symbology of the soiled drawers, for here again hers was the courage which was to face later with the shame which she was to engender, which Quentin and Jason could not face. (230–231)

To the end of his life, Faulkner spoke of Caddy with deep devotion. She was, he suggested, both the sister of his imagination and "the daughter of his mind" (qtd. in Minter 347) "To me she was the beautiful one, she was my heart's darling […]"

[12] A repeated telling?

In the *Paris Review* interview thus Faulkner was talking of writing "five separate times" to tell the story. By that, he meant not only the four published versions in the original version, but the appendix he prepared. In *The Sound and the Fury* the four tellings mean four different voices: Benjy's, Quentin's, Jason's, and the "objective" author's. According to Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury* was not finished until fifteen years later, when he made "the final effort to get the story told and off my mind." Linked to this—the four or five tellings—are the approximately half dozen versions of an introduction to *Sound*. The fact is that Faulkner's introduction—the one he wrote during the summer of 1933 for a new edition of the novel that was to be published by Random House—survives in several partial and complete manuscript and typescript drafts, of which two have been published, these two respectively and familiarly known as the *Southern Review* and the *Mississippi Quarterly* versions.

What is important and surprising here is that Faulkner did not consider "Evening Sun" as yet another telling, and it is difficult to see why he should have thought so. At the time of the interview, for all practical purposes, he seems to have forgotten about the special significance of his (perhaps) best story. This is surprising, for several reasons: **[1]** beyond a shared family background, a joint cast of characters, a shared genesis, the short story grew out of the novel's central experience; **[2]** "Evening Sun" itself is a repeated retelling several times over; **[3]** both texts are pervaded by the same particular poignancy, emotional intensity and symbology. **[4]** This is the only text in the Faulkner canon in which the image of Caddy is directly accessible, where she is not a fiction within the fiction. In the novel she is separated from the reader by a double wall. Since she exists only in the minds of her brothers and because she is not accessible in the now, she is merely an optical illusion, a haunting memory.

Because the novel's Caddy is conjured up only by indirection and because she is enveloped in a thick fog, she is only vaguely accessible to the recipient. "We can find out what she represents for Benjy, Quentin, and Jason; we never discover what she actually is" (Bleikasten 65). Thus, paradoxically, Caddy, who is the very soul of the novel and without whom *The Sound and the Fury* could not exist,

cannot be regarded the heroine of the novel in any traditional sense. Her elusive figure, the triumph of Faulkner the conjurer's art, is the product of a game of illusion. No wonder she generated a plethora of names, labels, metaphors, and dichotomous pairs in the relevant literature. She has been identified as a myth, a mirage, a bewitching image, an empty signifier, virgin and whore, sister and mother, angel and demon, the figure par excellence of the Other, a blank screen, a chimera, a pure figure of absence, a focal and vanishing point, the novelist's ever-elusive Eurydice, "a name in itself void of meaning and thus apt to receive any meaning" (Bleikasten 56), etc.

In "That Evening Sun" we finally see Faulkner's "secret Muse" in direct presentation. Intriguingly, Faulkner still keeps his distance from her: he chooses to say nothing about her physical appearance. Thus we never learn whether or how this "beautiful and tragic little girl" is beautiful; we are not even told whether she was sloe-eyed or a brunette, or both, or neither. The only thing we know is that we see her years before her fall from Paradise; before "the dark, harsh flowing of time" swept her away, sweeping her into "dishonor and shame too" (Faulkner, Introduction to 230), before even the reader feels obliged to ponder where the courage came from with which she was "to face later with honor the shame which she was to engender" (231). Thus, while reading "Evening Sun," intertextually and with a Caddy filter, the reader will find it hard to dismiss those haunting questions that Faulkner himself was brooding over in the *Mississippi Quarterly* version of his introduction to the novel, especially these three: **[1]** what is it that sweeps Caddy to where she could not return from? **[2]** what sweeps her into dishonor and shame too? **[3]** Is there, perhaps any indication of the courage inherent in facing the shame which she was to engender, which Quentin and Jason could not face? The answers are hidden in the interstices of the novel. To a searching intertextual reading, however, "That Evening Sun" is not silent either. Faulkner chose to shed light on these, his own, dilemmas through making the three children talk.

[13] Verbalizations: the Compson children speaking

So let the children talk. The larger bulk of the story is made up of their oral utterances, with most of these presented in dialogue. Owing

to the fact that most of the interpersonal transactions are projected as units of oral verbalization, the differences between the Compson children are masterfully portrayed through their speech acts. The nine-year-old Quentin, who in the novel grows up to be a sophisticated and suicidal intellectual who—because of Faulkner's carelessness—is telling the story "from beyond the grave," is a surprisingly silent and dispassionate boy. Perhaps even a cold and heartless one. As a child in the story, he speaks no more than a dozen times. Despite his seniority among the children, he does not have much authority and he is definitely not a decision-maker for the group. When he speaks for a rational option, which he always does, he is easily overruled by Caddy. Here is the scene rendering Nancy's desperate attempt to take the *white* children to her cabin as protection against the intrusion of Jesus with his razor.

> "Let's go down to my house and have some more fun," Nancy said.
> "Mother wont let us," I said. "It's too late now."
> "Don't bother her," Nancy said. "Don't bother her now."
> "She didn't say we couldn't go," Caddy said.
> "We didn't ask," I said.
> "If you go, I'll tell," Jason said.
> "We'll have fun," Nancy said. "They wont mind, just to my house. I been working for yawl a long time. They won't mind."
> "I'm not afraid to go," Caddy said. (90–91)

Despite his taciturnity, Quentin utters the story's most often quoted sentence—"Who will do our washing now, father?" (100)—which, in a compositional sense, seals Nancy's fate. As a child witnessing the scene, Quentin knows that Nancy is going to be murdered. As a narrator he also knows—should know—that the violent act has been accomplished.

The five-year-old Jason is a near-exact replica of the adult Jason IV. Already as a child, he is insensitive, selfish, disloyal, accusatorial, even vicious. He is the one who is ready to blackmail anyone and who will tell on most of the others. Although the reader has no

confirmation that Jason will be the only one who is "sane"[5] and who will be able to compete (and while competing he will lose soul). Even as a child, he is the master of extortion. His pragmatic ethos is well reflected in some of his loaded sentences, for example this: "I'll stop [crying] if Dilsey will make a chocolate cake" (89). Among the three children, he is the easiest to identify by the sentences he utters: "I bet you're drunk," Jason said. "Father says you're drunk. Are you drunk, Nancy?" (80). His crude ego trips foreshadow the bigoted adult's way of thinking in a racialized community: "Jesus is a nigger," Jason said. […] "Dilsey is a nigger too." […] "I ain't a nigger" (this last sentence repeated in the story four times). The seeds of the future adult whiner's personality are clearly present in the young boy. Some further typical utterances of Jason's:

> "I didn't have any fun." "If you go, I'll tell." "I don't think that's a good story." "I am going to tell." "I don't like popcorn," Jason said. "I'd rather have candy." "I'm going to tell," Jason said. "Yawl made me come." "I didn't have fun," Jason said. "You hurt me. You put smoke in my eyes. I'm going to tell." […] "Caddy made us come down here," Jason said. "I didn't want to." […] "I am not a tattletale," Jason said.

The champion verbalizer of the story, however, is the seven-year-old Caddy. The phrase "Caddy said" occurs in the text fifty-eight times! There is hardly anything talked about or otherwise happening in the story that she would fail to comment on. She is possessed of a unique capacity of empathy and extraordinary curiosity—this latter beyond the point of inquisitiveness—and she has instinctual interpretive powers. She is also mentally alert and intellectually observant, as well as receptive to every nuance. There is no sexual implication, no matter how veiled, that would escape Caddy's furtive notice. Her curiosity appears to be insatiable. She overwhelms her environment with statements and she bombards people with questions. Especially the latter. Typical is the kitchen scene involving Jesus, Nancy, and Caddy:

> […] [Jesus] said it was a watermelon that Nancy had under her dress.]
> "It never come off of your vine, though," Nancy said.

[5] In the "Compson Appendix" (1945) Faulkner described Jason IV as "the first sane Compson […] and […] the last" (212).

"Off of what vine?" Caddy said.

"I can cut down the vine it did come off of," Jesus said.

"What makes you want to talk like that before these chillen?" Nancy said. "Whyn't you go on to work? You done et. You want Mr Jason to catch you hanging around his kitchen, talking that way before these chillen?"

"Talking what way?" Caddy said. "What vine?"

Some of her observations are uncanny: she knows more than one would expect, and she is capable of sensing the importance—especially the unusual quality—of events and human situations that she is yet unable to fathom. Moreover, most of Caddy's sentences are questions: she is the one who wants to see and know. Indeed, she asks more questions than all the other characters combined. Indeed, we should think of Caddy Compson as the archetypal inquirer: she is ready to climb the tree of knowledge, however hazardous that climb should be, while her brothers are merely watching her do so. Here is a further sample of typical Caddy-ish utterances:

[*Mr. Compson to Nancy: "And if you'd just let white men alone."*] Caddy: "Let what white men alone? How let them alone?" [*Later*:] "Slit whose belly, Nancy?" Caddy said. […] "Nancy," Caddy whispered, "are you asleep, Nancy?" […] "Was it Jesus?" […] "Did he try to come into the kitchen?" […] "Can you see us, Nancy?" […] "Can you see our eyes too?" […] "What did you see down there in the kitchen?" Caddy whispered. "What tried to get in?" […] "Why is Nancy afraid of Jesus?" Caddy said. "Are you afraid of father, mother?" […] "What have you done that made Jesus mad?" Caddy said. […] "What's Jesus going to do to you?" Caddy said. "I'm not afraid to go," Caddy said. […] "What are you talking so loud for, Nancy?" Caddy said. […] "You talk like there was five of us here," Caddy said. "You talk like father was here too." […] "Nancy called Jason 'Mister,'" Caddy said. […] "We're not talking loud," Caddy said. "You're the one that's talking like father—" [*In Nancy's cabin*] "What are we going to do?" Caddy said. […] "You said we would have some fun," Caddy said. […] "Tell us a story," Caddie said. "Can you tell a story?" […] "Tell it," Caddy said. […] "You dont know any stories." […] "What ditch?" Caddy said. "A ditch like that one out there?" [*Sensing Nancy's obsession with the idea that someone is hiding in the ditch outside:*] "Why did she want to go home and bar the door?" Caddy said. [*Caddy senses that something is out of the ordinary with Nancy*] "Your hand is on that

> hot globe," Caddy said. "Dont it feel hot to your hand?" [*Then:*] "Look at Nancy putting her hand in the fire," Caddy said. "What is the matter with you, Nancy?" [*She is in command*] "We ought to go home anyway," Caddy said. "Come on, Quentin." [*Nancy: "When yawl walk out that door, I gone."*] "Gone where, Nancy?" Caddy said. [*Nancy: "I reckon what I going to get aint no more than mine."*] "Get what?" Caddy said. "What's yours?" ["*We left her sitting before the fire."*] "What, father?" Caddy said. "What's going to happen?"

The novel's version of Caddy's figure is seen through a thick fog. Yet, despite the fuzzy contours a consensus is likely to emerge among readers to the effect that Caddy possesses the vitality, the tenderness, the empathy, the capacity for love, the compassion—and yes, the courage—which her self-centered brothers and parent so sadly lack. Against this background, the short-story satellite is not a coda but a projective component enhancing the dramatic intensity of the inner chemistry of a doomed family in the making. In this sense "Evening Sun" represents, despite Nancy's violent end, the sinister calm before the storm. For the duration of a dramatic episode, when she is but seven years old, Caddy apparently ceases to be a chimera. We witness Faulkner's triumph both in liberating her from the obsessive memory of her brothers and in negotiating the risky business of "objectifying" Caddy without the resultant image blotting out the mystery of her bewitching portrait. While we hold our breath as spectators of the author's precarious game, we also come to understand the reason for the lack of a Caddy section in *The Sound and the Fury*. Clearly and indubitably, Caddy would have been eligible for the position to serve an objective narrator; after all "she had survived from the pastness which makes up much of the novel" (Karl 323). But Faulkner wanted no direct exposure; elusiveness was his key insight into Caddy. And for this reason he was determined not to give the final segment of *Sound* over to her. In the final analysis, Caddy is elusive to her brothers in the novel, and so she must remain to the reader. And, most importantly, she never ceased to be elusive to her creator. The image of Caddy as reincarnated in "That Evening Sun" was the furthest risk Faulkner was willing to take.

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LEHEL VADON—JUDIT SZATHMÁRI

WILLIAM FAULKNER: A HUNGARIAN BIBLIOGRAPHY

The intention of the editor of Eger Journal of American Studies is to launch for a bibliographical series of major American authors in Hungary.

The present bibliography is satisfying to make available for the first time a reasonably complete record of publications—both primary and secondary sources—of William Faulkner.

The books in Primary Sources are listed in order of date of first publication in English, followed by the Hungarian translation in chronological arrangement. Selections from the works of Faulkner and his short stories in Hungarian translations are arranged in order of publication date in Hungary.

The entries of the Secondary Sources are presented under the names of the authors, listed in alphabetical order. The entries by unknown authors are arranged in chronological order.

Material for this bibliography has been collected from periodicals and newspapers, listed in the book: Vadon Lehel: *Az amerikai irodalom és irodalomtudomány bibliográfiája a magyar időszaki kiadványokban 1990-ig.* [=A Bibliography of American Literature and Literary Scholarship in Hungarian Periodicals to 1990.]

A key to the Hungarian abbreviations and word: évf. = volume, sz. = number, kötet = volume.

1. WILLIAM FAULKNER IN HUNGARIAN
(Primary Sources)

a. William Faulkner's Works in Hungarian Translations and Editions
b. Omnibus Volumes
c. Long-short-stories in Omnibus Volumes
d. Selections from William Faulkner's Novels
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2. HUNGARIAN PUBLICATIONS ABOUT WILLIAM FAULKNER
(Secondary Sources)

a. Bibliography
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d. Shorter Writings, News and Other Publications
e. Book Reviews
f. Reviews of William Faulkner's Work in the Theater
g. Reviews of a Motion Picture Based on William Faulkner's Work

WILLIAM FAULKNER
(1897–1962)

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(Primary Sources)

1/a

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35. HAJNALI HAJTÓVADÁSZAT. [=RACE AT MORNING.] Válogatott elbeszélések. [=Selected short stories.] Translated by György Déry, István Geher, Endre Gömöri, Tamás Katona, Dezső Kosztolányi, László Balázs, Péter Lengyel, András Lukácsy, László B. Nagy, Levente Osztovits, Zoltán Papp, Ilona Róna, Mihály Sükösd, Imre Szász, Klára Szőllősy, Dezső Tandori, János Viktor. Az utószót írta:

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1/c

Long-short-stories in Omnibus Volumes

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1/d

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1/e

Picture-novel

50. SÍRGYALÁZÓK. [=INTRUDER IN THE DUST.] W. Faulkner regénye nyomán Cs. Horváth Tibor és Sebők Imre. [=A picture-novel by Tibor Cs. Horváth and Imre Sebők based on Faulkner's novel.] *Népszava,* 1965. 93. évf. 181. sz. – 233. sz. (1–62. rész.)

1/f

William Faulkner's Short Stories in Hungarian Books

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143. –ért: William Faulkner: Sírgyalázók. [=Intruder in the Dust.] *Film Színház Muzsika,* 1964. VIII. évf. 21. sz. p. 22.

144. E. Sz.: William Faulkner: Míg fekszem kiterítve. [=As I Lay Dying.] *Magyar Hírlap,* 1971. 4. évf. 100. sz. p. IV.

145. (FK): A neve: vereség! William Faulkner: Az öreg. [=His Name: Defeat! William Faulkner: The Old Man.] *Híd,* 1965. XXIX. évf. 4. sz. pp. 554–555.

146. F. R. (Falus Róbert): Könyvszemle. (William Faulkner: Hajnali hajtóvadászat.) [=Book Review. William Faulkner: Race at Morning.] *Népszabadság,* 1968. XXVI. évf. 162. sz. p. 7.

147. F. R. (Falus Róbert): Könyvszemle. (William Faulkner: Szentély.) [=Book Review. William Faulkner: Sanctuary.] *Népszabadság,* 1968. XXVI. évf. 120. sz. p. 7.

148. F. R. (Falus Róbert): Könyvszemle. (William Faulkner: A hang és a téboly. [=Book Review. William Faulkner: The Sound and the Fury.] *Népszabadság,* 1970. XXVIII. évf. 118. sz. p. 7.

149. F. R. (Falus Róbert): Könyvszemle. (William Faulkner: Míg fekszem kiterítve.) [=Book Review. William Faulkner: As I Lay Dying.] *Népszabadság,* 1971. XXIX. évf. 112. sz. p. 7.

150. F. R. (Falus Róbert): Könyvszemle. (William Faulkner: Vad pálmák.) [=Book Review. William Faulkner: The Wild Palms.] *Népszabadság,* 1972. XXX. évf. 260. sz. p. 7.

151. F. R. (Falus Róbert): Könyvszemle. [=Book Review.] (William Faulkner: Sartoris.) *Népszabadság,* 1974. XXXII. évf. 279. sz. p. 7.

152. F. R. (Falus Róbert): Könyvszemle. (William Faulkner: Példabeszéd.) [=Book Review. William Faulkner: A Fable.] *Népszabadság,* 1977. XXXV. évf. 90. sz. p. 7.

153. GALSAI PONGRÁC: Az ifjú fegyenc és a tenger. (William Faulkner: Az öreg.) [=The Young Convict and the Sea. William Faulkner: The Old Man.] *Nagyvilág,* 1963. VIII. évf. 5. sz. pp. 781–783.

154. G. I.: William Faulkner: Sírgyalázók. [=Intruder in the Dust.] *Népszava,* 1964. 92. évf. 125. sz. p. 2.

155. GYURKÓ LÁSZLÓ: A kiszolgáltatottság útjai. Négy nyugati regényről. (William Faulkner: Megszületik augusztusban.) [=The Ways of Defencelessness. On Four Western Novels. William Faulkner: Light in August.] *Élet és Irodalom,* 1961. V. évf. 50. sz. p. 7.

156. GYURKÓ LÁSZLÓ: A kaland tanulsága. William Faulkner: Zsiványok. [=The Moral of Adventure. William Faulkner: The Reivers.] *Élet és Irodalom,* 1965. IX. évf. 37. sz. p. 4.

157. ILLÉS LÁSZLÓ: William Faulkner: Zsiványok. [=The Reivers.] *Népszabadság,* 1965. XXIII. évf. 249. sz. p. 9.

158. KÁNTOR LAJOS: Mire képes az ember… (William Faulkner: Az öreg.) [=What a Man is Capable of… William Faulkner: The Old Man.] *Utunk*, 1962. XVII. évf. 48. sz. p. 10.

159. KOROKNAI ZSUZSA: Befejezett múlt? William Faulkner: Sartoris. [=Past Perfect? William Faulkner: Sartoris.] *Élet és Irodalom,* 1975. XIX. évf. 3. sz. p. 10.

160. KOVÁCS JÁNOS: Az öreg. William Faulkner kisregénye. [=The Old Man. William Faulkner's Long-short-story.] *Palócföld,* 1963. pp. 132–133.

161. KRIM, SEYMOUR: Faulkner úr. [=Mr. Faulkner.] (Joseph Blotner: William Faulkner. Chatto and Windus, London, 1975.) *Nagyvilág,* 1976. XXI. évf. 3. sz. pp. 462–464.

162. KRISTÓ NAGY ISTVÁN: Két könyv az amerikai Délről. [=Two Books about the American South.] (William Faulkner: Megszületik augusztusban; William DuBois: Fekete láng.) [=William Faulkner: Light in August, William DuBois: The Black Flame.] *Nagyvilág,* 1962. VII. évf. 7. sz. pp. 1085–1087.

163. LÁZÁR ISTVÁN: Égtájak. William Faulkner: A hang és a téboly. [=The Cardinal Points. William Faulkner: The Sound and the Fury.] *Új Írás,* 1970. X. évf. 8. sz. pp. 126–127.

164. LÉKAY OTTÓ: William Faulkner: Sírgyalázók. [=Intruder in the Dust.] *A Könyv,* 1964. IV. évf. 5. sz. pp. 190–191.

165. MESTERHÁZI MÁRTON: William Faulkner utolsó regénye. (William Faulkner: Zsiványok.) [=William Faulkner's Last Novel. The Reivers.] *Nagyvilág,* 1965. X. évf. 11. sz. pp. 1735–1736.

166. NAGY PÉTER: William Faulkner. (Revue des Lettres Modernes 27–29. sz. Numéro spécial.) *Irodalmi Figyelő,* 1957. III. évf. 4. sz. pp. 362–363.

167. NAGY PÉTER: William Faulkner. (A medve.) [=The Bear.] *Magyar Nemzet,* 1959. XV. évf. 56. sz. p. 4.

168. NÉMETH LÁSZLÓ: Egy Faulkner-regény (The Wild Palms.) [=A Faulkner Novel. The Wild Palms.] *Tiszatáj,* 1974. 28. évf. 1. sz. pp. 8–11.

169. OLTYÁN BÉLA: Faulkner és az amerikai Dél. (William Faulkner: Sírgyalázók.) [=Faulkner and the American South. William Faulkner: Intruder in the Dust.] *Napjaink,* 1964. III. évf. 8. sz. p. 11.

170. PÁLYI ANDRÁS: William Faulkner: Példabeszéd. [=William Faulkner: A Fable.] *Új Tükör,* 1977. XIV. évf. 17. sz. p. 40.

171. REMÉNYI JÓZSEF: "Sanctuary". William Faulkner regénye. [="Sancturay". William Faulkner's Novel.] *Nyugat,* 1931. XXIV. évf. II. kötet, 18–19. sz. pp. 374–375.

172. REMÉNYI JÓZSEF: Új regények. [=New Novels.] (E. Hemingway: Death in the Afternoon; W. Faulkner: Light in August; Floyd Dell: Diana Stair.) *Nyugat,* 1933. XXVI. évf. I. kötet, 1. sz. pp. 69–70.

173. S. A.: William Faulkner: Megszületik augusztusban. [=William Faulkner: Light in August.] *A könyvtáros,* 1962. XII. évf. 7. sz. p. 433.

174. SZABAD OLGA: Az Amerikai Dél hű tükre. [=The True Mirror of the American South.] (William Faulkner: Sartoris.) *Békés megyei Népújság*, 1976. XXXI. évf. 63. sz. p. 6.

175. SZENTMIHÁLYI JÁNOS: William Van O'Connor: The Tangled Fire of William Faulkner. *Irodalmi Figyelő,* 1955. I. évf. 3. sz. pp. 273–275.

176. SZŐLLŐSY KLÁRA: William Faulkner, a novellaíró. [=William Faulkner, the Short Story Writer.] (Collected Stories of William Faulkner. New York, 1956. Random

House, 900 p.) *Világirodalmi Figyelő,* 1958. IV. évf. 4. sz. pp. 368–372.

177. TAXNER ERNŐ: Az amerikai dél belülről. (William Faulkner: Sírgyalázók.) [=The American South from Inside. William Faulkner: Intruder in the Dust.] *Nagyvilág,* 1965. X. évf. 2. sz. pp. 291–293.

178. TAXNER-TÓTH ERNŐ: Amerikai regények – amerikai sorsok. [=American Novels – American Lots. William Faulkner: Absalom, Absalom!] (William Faulkner: Fiam Absolon! Európa Könyvkiadó, Budapest; Bernard Malamud: A beszélő ló. [=Talking Horse.] Európa Könyvkiadó, Budapest; James Baldwin: Ha a néger utca beszélni tudna. [=If Beale Street Could Talk.] Európa Könyvkiadó, Budapest.) *Könyvvilág,* 1980. XXV. évf. 9. sz. p. 8.

179. TŐZSÉR ÁRPÁD: A gyűlölet regénye. Faulkner: Megszületik augusztusban. [=The Novel of Hatred. Faulkner: Light in August.] *Irodalmi Szemle,* 1963. 3. sz. pp. 331–333.

180. –u–: William Faulkner: Megszületik augusztusban. [=Light in August.] *Film Színház Muzsika,* 1962. VI. évf. 7. sz. p. 44.

181. UNGVÁRI TAMÁS: Dél tragédiája. (William Faulkner: Megszületik augusztusban.) [=The Tragedy of the South. William Faulkner: Light in August.] *Magyar Nemzet,* 1962. XVIII. évf. 42. sz. p. 4.

182. UNGVÁRI TAMÁS: Emberi példázat. Jegyzet Faulkner: Az öreg című kisregényről. [=Human Parable. Notes to Faulkner: The Old Man.] *Élet és Irodalom,* 1962. VI. évf. 39. sz. p. 6.

183. VÁMOSI PÁL: Olga W. Vickery: The Novels of William Faulkner. A Critical Interpretation. *Világirodalmi Figyelő,* 1962. VIII. évf. 3. sz. pp. 459–460.

184. William Faulkner új műve. (A potyázók.) [=William Faulkner's New Work.] *Élet és Irodalom,* 1962. VI. évf. 16. sz. p. 12.

185. Faulkner, a magánember. [=Faulkner, the Private Individual.] (John Faulkner: My Brother Bill.) *Híd,* 1963. XXVII. évf. 12. sz. pp. 1288–1289.

186. William Faulkner: Zsiványok. [=The Reivers.] *Nők Könyvespolca,* 1965. 5. sz. p. 4.

187. William Faulkner: Zsiványok. [=The Reivers.] Európa Könyvkiadó, 374 oldal. *Érdekes Könyvújdonságok,* 1966. 11. sz. p. [4.]

188. William Faulkner: Megszületik augusztusban. [=Light in August.] *Nők Könyvespolca,* 1966. 2. sz. p. 6.

189. William Faulkner: Hajnali hajtóvadászat. [=Race at Morning.] Európa Könyvkiadó, 684 oldal. *Érdekes Könyvújdonságok,* 1968. 10. sz. p. 2.

190. William Faulkner: Hajnali hajtóvadászat. [=Race at Morning.] *Könyvbarát,* 1968. 10. sz. p. 2.

191. William Faulkner: A hang és a téboly. [=The Sound and the Fury.] Európa Könyvkiadó, 333 oldal. *Érdekes Könyvújdonságok,* 1970. 5. sz. p. [6.]

192. William Faulkner: A hang és a téboly. [=The Sound and the Fury.] *Nők Könyvespolca,* 1970. 2. sz. p. 5.

193. William Faulkner: Vad pálmák. [=The Wild Palms.] Európa Könyvkiadó, 261 oldal. *Érdekes Könyvújdonságok,* 1972. 10–11. sz. p. [3.]

194. William Faulkner: Vad pálmák. [=The Wild Palms.] *Könyvbarát,* 1972. 10–11. sz. p. 3.

195. William Faulkner: Barn Burning – Gyujtogató. *Új Könyvek*, 1998. 10. sz. p. 137.

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Reviews of William Faulkner's Work in the Theater

196. ANTAL GÁBOR: Requiem egy apácáért. Camus drámája Faulkner regényéből Kaposvárott. [=Requiem for a Nun. Camus's Drama Based on Faulkner's Novel in Kaposvár.] *Magyar Nemzet,* 1971. XXVII. évf. 40. sz. p. 4.

197. GESZTI PÁL: Rekviem egy apácáért. (Faulkner–Camus műve a kaposvári Csiky Gergely Színházban.) [=Requiem for a

Nun. Faulkner–Camus' Play at Csiky Gergely Színház in Kaposvár.] *Film Színház Muzsika,* 1971. XV. évf. 9. sz. pp. 4 – 5.

198. LEHOTAY-HORVÁTH GYÖRGY: Kaposvár: Rekviem egy apácáért. [=Kaposvár: Requiem for a Nun.] *Magyar Hírlap,* 1971. 4. évf. 48. sz. p. 6.

199. RIDEG GÁBOR: Két színházi este vidéken. (Egyik: Requiem egy apácáért – Kaposvárott.) [=Two performances in the Country. One of them: Requiem for a Nun in Kaposvár.] *Népszava,* 1971. 99. évf. 48. sz. p. 2.

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Reviews of a Motion Picture Based on William Faulkner's Work

200. BÉLLEY PÁL: Tévénapló. (William Faulkner: Hosszú, forró nyár.) [=Television Diary Notes. William Faulkner: Long, Hot Summer.] *Magyar Hírlap,* 1973. 6. évf. 59. sz. p. 9.

201. PÁLYI ANDRÁS: Tévénapló. (William Faulkner: Hosszú, forró nyár.) [=Television Diary Notes. William Faulkner: Long, Hot Summer.] *Magyar Hírlap,* 1973. 6. évf. 81. sz. p. 13.

202. PÁLYI ANDRÁS: Tévénapló. (William Faulkner: Hosszú, forró nyár.) [=Television Diary Notes. William Faulkner: Long, Hot Summer.] *Magyar Hírlap,* 1973. 6. évf. 128. sz. p. 7.

203. PÁLYI ANDRÁS: Tévénapló. (William Faulkner: Hosszú, forró nyár. [=Television Diary Notes. William Faulkner: Long, Hot Summer.] *Magyar Hírlap,* 1973. 6. évf. 142. sz. p. 9.

JUDIT SZATHMÁRI

A GUIDE TO CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN FICTION

(Abádi Nagy Zoltán: Mai amerikai regénykalauz, 1970–1990. [Zoltán Abádi-Nagy: Guide to Contemporary American Fiction, 1970–1990.] Budapest: Intera, 1997. 594 [1] pp.)

Irony, entropy, and postmodernism express only a fraction of the issues Zoltán Abádi-Nagy has published on within the abundant field of the American novel tradition. His *Mai amerikai regénykalauz* of 1997 draws upon not only previously researched material but is also a unique enterprise in its own right. A lot is suggested by the title itself and the readers expectations will fully be met when exploring the depth of this publication. The introduction explicitly claims that the book fills the void of a compact and complex overview of the American novel and novelists between 1970 and 1990, overarching trends and tendencies, sometimes narrowly defined classification. As of 1995, the publication of *Regénykalauz*, some works had been available on certain genres, and limited information could be found in literary magazines, and still, Abádi-Nagy's book explores the possibilities not yet offered by such publications in their entirety.

The main focus and conducts any book is to convey are expected to be explicit through the choice of title. Being a teacher of American literature, I have met numerous publications in the field. Yet, very few, whose own function was so appropriately defined and offered such a professional guide merely by the title printed on the cover.

Mai (Today's) provides a flexible time frame for the reader to find his way through the two decades the author decides for himself to explore to set as a boundary in which to place his research. Although

it somewhat narrows the focus with regard to time, by establishing 1970 as the point of entry and ending in 1990, through the authors selected for presentation, it covers the period both prior to and consecutive of the two given decades. Yet another advantage of such a selection is the ability for the reader to see how diverse the literary scene is at a given point in time. The authors in this guide represent the variety and complexity of the two decades' prose. This way the reader becomes more apt to compare and contrast contemporary figures, trends and tendencies of the American canon. Such parallel presentation with the spotlight fixed on a definite era raises awareness of the similarities and differences otherwise too far-reaching to notice.

Kalauz (Guide) is yet another word to dwell upon with its connotative meanings. Translated as guide, it applies on the one hand a helping hand to offer principles which help one reach his destination. On the other hand, the original Hungarian denotation suggests an assistant whose task is to serve as a post in an unfamiliar territory.

Exploring the works of fifty contemporary American novelists with seventy individual novels discussed, Zoltán Abádi-Nagy meets the needs of students, instructors and non-professional readers alike. As stated in the introduction by the author himself, the book is designed to be an enterprise, following the literal translation of the Hungarian "vállalkozás." And, indeed, it proves itself to be one.

Personal experience in teaching American literature at college level has revealed that students found it much easier to comprehend trends, tendencies, literary thought, to analyze prose, poetry and drama if they are familiar with the "background" they claim the need to possess as essential for understanding. What the majority of students imply by background information turns out to be biographical data on the author in question. True, traditional literary education makes us accustomed to Hungarian literature course books which tend to establish such a pattern, yet this guide offers the optimal balance between biographical and literary information.

Entries on the novelists' lives are not extensive to lure the reader into the web of easily digestible, tabloid data. As judged and evaluated by Zoltán Abádi-Nagy, they familiarize the reader with the knowledge indispensable when in the process of meeting new challenge. In focus of these biographies is, however, the literary career pursued and

achieved by the authors within the time frame defined by the book's title. Biographies also smoothly introduce, thus, ease the reader's way into more complex literary analysis. Establishing the relevant literary categories, terminology, and a compact criticism of these before eventually entering the world of novels selected for analysis encourages the reader to pursue further inquires not only in the matters unfamiliar to him as yet. Given the strictly defined time scope the encyclopedic biographies offer, we need to acknowledge the effort Abádi-Nagy invested in broadening the horizon obstructed by the limited space of publication.

Entries on individual novels rely on current literary theory and employ scholarly analyses of the works selected. They follow a strict pattern in proportion as far as plot summaries and descriptions are only cited to support the literary analytical argument of the author. While highly scholarly in approach, no complicated terminology impedes the utilization of information. They are detailed to the extent the given work requires explanation and do not bind the reader in unnecessary details. Depending on the critical acclaim each author is devoted one or two novels' space in detailed analysis. These also contain references to other prose writings by the same author, thus offering a possibility of multilevel analysis.

Through the 595 pages of the book, the reader is to meet authors of the two decades in alphabetical order. Such a presentation, although the size of volume imposes its limits, provides for the subjective presentation of the writers of the age. As the entries on each author prove, and following the rules of the alphabet, hinders any biased approach to the inclusion of either writer or work.

The list of the selected 50 authors is well explained in the introduction. No reader may run into unexpected difficulties when searching for information. *Kalauz* serves as a bridge between the American homeland of the novels and the Hungarian, not exclusively professional audience interested in the genre of the novel. While in the United States the abundance of the genre may cause problems, for the Hungarian reader the availability of such literary products has been rather limited.

The introduction also explains how to manage our way through the information provided about each author and work. Since both the English and the Hungarian titles are given, the reader may conduct his

research on any of the given novels or authors by being instructed whether there is a Hungarian translation available.

With regard to the novels discussed and analyzed the book, the introduction also states that three quarters of them were prepared for the specific needs of this present guide. It is an important factor to note as the diversity of the authors here would easily display a bias in selection, yet never can the reader sense such treatment of preference. In some cases where there is more information available on a novelist's most well-know work, Abádi-Nagy explores less frequently discussed pieces. The omission of names and works is well explained in the introduction, offering help for further research.

For the general reading public, the names of J. D. Salinger, Jack Kerouac, William Burroughs and Irwin Shaw sound very familiar and one may be surprised not to find them in the book. However, a careful reading of the introduction will guide the reader towards the rules of selection and he will not feel deprived. Due to limited space and the two decades which binds the book in terms of time, some of the best-known, and most popular names had to be left out to make room for a large number of authors whose career includes novels published in the given time. Many others, who are well-known for the Hungarian reading public, did not receive the kind of critical acclaim required to be the chosen 50. The five-page introduction still paves the way for further discussion and never claims to be exclusive in making the list of seventy novels final and unalterable.

By 1995, the time *Kalauz* was published, Hungarian readers may have been familiar with literatures of the United States not quite yet having made their entry in the American Canon. While minority literatures have reached an increasingly keen reading public, here, they are not treated separately. The fact that American Indians prefer to be citizens of their tribal affiliation first, and then to be seen as American may account for their names missing from the book. On the other hand, since authors and novels are not arranged in subchapters, one finds entries on representatives of other samples of minority literatures.

Not intended a reference book, rather a guide and handbook, the work does not need to offer a list of technical terms employed throughout the text. Since terminology follows the language agreed upon in literary criticism both professional and non professional

readers find it comfortable and easy to work with. With the correct balance of plot and analysis the book serves both scholarly approach and can easily be handled by those not professional in the field of American literature. As implied by the title, the guide cannot include all the works of every individual novelist of the time. The criteria of selection explicitly explain the factors which helped determine the present list. The reader may never find personal bias on behalf of the author; critical acclaim is the basic determining factor in choosing any given work.

Today's student of American literature hardly ever meets the obstacles one came across even a decade ago, when the availability of American novels was somewhat limited not only in Hungarian translation but also in their original form. The problem is rather the opposite: with new media facilities, the shrinking figurative distance between Europe and the United States offers such vast resources that one may find it overwhelming to select current publications. With the encyclopedic biographies and the novels' literary analyses, *Kalauz* is an answer to the need and interest of Hungarian readers, not only scholarly but lay as well. Novels listed but not discussed offer future prospects of interest. The translation of titles assists readers in; on the one hand, locate novels already published in Hungarian, on the other hand the list of not yet available novels paves the way for future studies both for professionals and non-scholarly interests.

With an impressive career in academia, Zoltán Abádi-Nagy's work is unique in its field and proves a successful starting point for further, similar publications beyond the time scope of this guide. The book is written with expertise both in the academic field and in instruction.

JUDIT SZATHMÁRI

AMERICAN LITERATURE IN HUNGARY

(Vadon Lehel: Az amerikai irodalom és irodalomtudomány bibliográfiája a magyar időszaki kiadványokban 1990-ig. [Lehel Vadon: A Bibliography of American Literature and Literary Scholarship in Hungarian Periodicals to 1990.] Eger: EKTF Líceum Kiadó, 1997. 1076 pp.)

When holding such a massive volume of information for the first encounter one may shy away and be discouraged by the amount of data it includes. As established by the title, Lehel Vadon's *Az amerikai irodalom és irodalomtudomány bibliográfiája a Magyar időszaki kiadványokban1990-ig* explores such a vast scholarly field that we have to acknowledge the scope of such an extensive, detailed and thorough research. Although the title does not explicitly reveal, it may be concluded that the starting point of research is the very first interaction between the American homeland of literary products and the Hungarian reception of and response to them. Knowledge of the exact point of departure however is not relevant to conclude that *Bibliography* offers an insight on how academia and scholarly interest correspond in the two continents and overcome the literal as well as the figurative distance separating the countries.

The explicit distinction between "literature" and "literary scholarship" suggest an extensive pool of academic data. The reader may at once realize that Vadon's work does not exclusively target a scholarly audience but also offers insights for the "less" professional

audience. His designation of *Bibliography* is that it serves as a "textual first aid" for scholars, librarians and students alike.

Researching periodicals bears the implication that detailed and analytical examination of publications either not available or often neglected by less careful readers was achieved by the author. Experience in teaching and instructing students of college and university level in the field of American studies has taught many to accept the fact that unless a volume's title overtly displays its relevance to any assignment the student is to meet the requirement of, few people devote their time and energy to search for less obvious sources to help fulfill their task. For the average student such information becomes available only when presented with the exact publication information on yet unknown, still existing works. In this respect Vadon's *Bibliography* serves as a reference book not only to compensate for the lack of research knowledge but also to assist scholars in the field of American studies.

Some of the journals and magazines listed by the author here are long, if not forgotten, but less frequently utilized by today's readers of American literature. From the 19th century to the 1990s, the latest entries in the volume, the range varies with regard to popularity and availability. The 1619 periodicals, the sources for bibliographic data cover the range of publications from their very first appearance to current periodicals. The immense research carried out by Lehel Vadon is most impressive in the range of secondary sources where one encounters women's magazines, literary journals, and daily newspapers. As the list demonstrates, sources are not exclusively literary in the strict sense of meaning, yet they reveal Hungarian interest in various American literary products. While, on the one hand not all of the daily publications could have been included this is, of course not due to a biased standpoint. On the contrary, in order to achieve a broader interpretation of *Hungarian* Lehel Vadon also researched periodicals published beyond the Hungarian border.

In 864 pages the first and largest unit of *Bibliography* contains bibliographical information on American authors in alphabetical order. The names of individual authors, annotated with pennames and pseudonyms thus proving invaluable help for researchers function as subchapters. Entries on authors include date of birth and death, if known, and more importantly designations of the genres the excelled

in. This latter fact is inevitable since many of the names are not well-known in Hungary, and if they do sound familiar for the reader, one may often find less popular, new genres listed under the name. Many of the entries are on characters in the American literary scene not even familiar to the American reading public any more.

Bibliographic information is divided into categories of primary and secondary sources, explicitly separating the two lists, thus aiding the reader to distinguish works by and on any given author. An impressive and true proof of scholarly achievement is the collection and categorization of secondary sources, where the data gathered ranges from literary products written to or abut the given author to literary essays on his or her work, as well as various media interviews on the given author.

Consecutive to the first unit is a separate one, devoted to unknown authors. For the sake of more effective assistance, the chapter is further divided along various genre categories the works listed here belong to. Closely related and thematically excellently positioned is the chapter on folk literature.

Chapter three presents an impressive list of American Indian folk literature, following the traits of the oral tradition of the original inhabitants of the land. It is a justification of the Hungarian interest in the "exotic" world of the American continent, and, by the same token, a response to the need of widening the literary scene often limited to the Western ideas of written literary products. Until the appearance of new trends of criticism with regard to American literature surfaced supported by contemporary schools of thought, the date of beginning had been set by the conquerors of the native population. Western cultures' tendency to think in terms of written format diverted attention from the abundance and variety of already existing oral forms of literature. This chapter is a tribute to the relevance of native presence in the American scene. True, European and Hungarian interest also encouraged the incorporation of such literary products, yet one my be surprised to find such entries on literary products so much debated by those responsible for the formation of the American Canon.

The same chapter explores Black folklore and a comparative view of the two subtitles suggests much about how Hungarian social acceptance of minority cultures, with special focus on their literary

acceptance developed in the twentieth century. While American Indian folklore translations are all published in the 1970s, black folklore precedes it by forty years. *Bibliography*, as these two subchapters demonstrate reestablishes not only the literary but also the social climate of opinion. Knowing that the folk pieces had been filtered by the American audience before they reached Hungary, they provide an insight into both countries' literary scenes.

The last section, which proportionally almost equals the first, offers a general bibliography arranged according to genres. One significant and useful phenomenon is the inclusion of book reviews of all the fields discussed in this section. It is especially invaluable help for scholarly research and opens new possibilities for scholars to pursue. Part of the general bibliography section is the subchapter on Hungarian-American relations, which is the reinforcement of the idea already suggested by the title. It strengthens the mutual bond of the two countries' literary world.

The sixty two page appendix by its extent suggests the variety of periodicals examined by the author. Listed in alphabetical order they are easy to check when in need of further information based on earlier entries in any of the first four sections. With the titles of periodicals the author truly proves that his research was thoroughly designed and carried out in a scholarly manner. The variety of periodicals leaves no doubt that in no sense had there been bias in employing sources. Neither in terms of time, some may consider early periodicals outdated, nor in academic expectations. Hungarian reception of American literature is not confined to exclusively scholarly publications. This latter fact also sets a new challenge to today's students to broaden the scope of their research.

Even though the table of contents and the introduction provide clear instructions on how to utilize *Bibliography*, the amount of data calls for a detailed index. The one forming the last part of this work is invaluable as much of the information appear in multiple numbers. Due to the variety of literary categorization an entry may be listed under different headings. The main theme of any given publication determines its place in the relevant chapters, yet those with multiple focuses are placed in all the categories they are related to.

Dedicated to László Országh, founder of American studies in Hungary, *Bibliography* pays tribute not only to Lehel Vadon's

professor but also is an outstanding academic achievement. The field of American studies is enriched by the insight *Bibliography* offers and opens new prospects for future researchers.