

“THE ECHO, NOT THE SHOT”:
METAMORPHOSIS AND MEDIATION IN WILLIAM FAULKNER

by

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Abstract

This thesis is an attempt to situate and contextualize William Faulkner's novels of the 1930s within the framework of the emerging mass culture forms of that period, and to investigate this author's assimilation and inversion of the structures and the stylistic and formalistic devices afforded not only by film, but by animated cartoons, newsreels, and radio. Faulkner's works are fully immersed in and reflective of a world of metamorphosis and mediation engendered by these mass culture forms, a world when social and artistic hierarchies also fully enter the modernist period of incessant flux. Chapter One will offer a brief overview of the perceptual and literary effects engendered in the early days of media culture as it may apply to Faulkner and his contemporary Sherwood Anderson, including a growing loathing of what was seen as an increasing tendency toward "standardization" in both literature and life. For Faulkner however the media culture which was partially responsible for standardization also provided new formal possibilities through which the writer could address it. Chapter Two will focus on two of Faulkner's most beloved popular culture forms -the animated cartoon and the newsreel - and their relation to *Light in August*, *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Pylon* in particular. The interpolation and recuperation of mass culture devices and motifs and the concern with a standardized world reach an apotheosis in the 1939 novel *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem* (now known as *The Wild Palms*), a work which also can be seen as the culmination of Faulkner's decade-long experiments in the use of multiple narrative voices. Chapter Three of the thesis will examine this novel's and its narrators' relation to the contemporaneous culture of cacophony these media arts were producing, in particular that of radio's. As this book also functions as a cautionary tale as to the convergence of writing and mass culture, Chapter Four will discuss the double transfiguration of genre codes and restrictions found within *Jerusalem*, as well as briefly examine the acceleration of the culture of celebrity and the attendant fragmenting mediation of literary works found in the later media age (that of television).

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Preface

"It's not avocation that elects our vocations, it's respectability that makes chiropractors and clerks and billposters and motormen and pulp writers of us."

(Faulkner, *Jerusalem* 114)

In failed medical student turned confessions magazine writer Harry Wilbourne's above rationale as to his career choice, the implicit equivalency of the professions listed points to a rapidly growing force which would provide both opportunity and danger to writers in the first half of the twentieth century: mass culture. In this light, the thesis is an attempt to situate and contextualize William Faulkner's novels of the late 1920s through the late 1930s within the framework of the emerging mass culture forms of that period, more specifically to investigate this author's assimilation and inversion of both the structures and the stylistic and formalistic devices afforded by animated cartoons, newsreels, radio, and pre-Code Hollywood B movies. Faulkner's works are fully immersed in and reflective of a world of metamorphosis and mediation engendered by these popular culture forms, a world in which "rich and poor lined up outside ornate picture palaces to gawk at former factory hands playing millionaires and actual millionaires playing factory hands" (Early 146); in other words, this is a time when both artistic and social hierarchies fully enter the modernist period of incessant flux.

Accordingly, Chapter One will begin with a brief overview of the perceptual and possible literary effects engendered in the early days of mass media, specifically as it applies to Faulkner and his contemporary and intermittent friend Sherwood Anderson. The latter's non-fiction work and memoirs of the mid-1920s are important to the discussion not only in a general sense - their consummate if cranky encapsulation of the

authorial concerns of this period - but also for their specific resonance with Faulkner's later fiction. Many of Anderson's concerns, references and even particular motifs show up later in Faulkner's novels, especially, to use the term which particularly obsesses Anderson, a loathing of the increasing tendency toward "standardization", whether in literature, life, or, to cite but one perennial fear, food. Admittedly, it is difficult to find the actual term "standardization" in Faulkner's work: the closest one comes may be a scene in which when arranging an exchange of evening clothes, one of Harry Wilbourne's roommates does admit "'We are all three about standard.'" (*Jerusalem* 31). However, Faulkner's recurring term "desiccation" appears to substitute in this author's case as his novels also manifest an increasing antipathy toward the forces of social and artistic standardization, an antipathy which reaches a high-point in 1939's *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem*, a novel known today as *The Wild Palms*.

As a self-professed "serious" writer and guardian of the temple as well as a serious curmudgeon, what Anderson does not foresee is that the popular culture forms – films, magazines, radio and later cartoons, newsreels and comic books – which he saw as driving this process of standardization could also provide the means by which to address it, particularly in the stylistic and formal devices these forms use. By contrast Faulkner chose to use the tropes and ropes of mass culture as a means by which to hang it, absorbing, mutating and ultimately, it will be suggested, transfiguring the raw material provided by mass culture into his literary masterworks. In other words, if film etc. can, to use Walter Benjamin's term, "liquidate" the great memory and tradition of literature, then conversely, literature can and perhaps must begin liquidating the mass culture forms in return.

As the first example of this inverted appropriation, Chapter Two of the thesis will focus on two of Faulkner's most beloved popular culture forms, one of which is potentially the most potent and directly correlative in its effects on literature and visual art: the animated cartoon. These "drawings that move" (Shale 1), already in high ascendancy by the end of the 1920s, will be seen to inform many of Faulkner's 1930s novels such as *Light in August*, *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Pylon*, both in their overt verbal re-creations of visual cartoon effects, as well as the use of these re-creations in conveying the unstable and constantly metamorphosing world described above. A companion cinematic short form of this era – the newsreel – will also be examined with regard to its effect on the idea of the narratorial voice (over) and its role in furthering an increasingly mediated society, a form and process Faulkner addresses directly in *Pylon*.

Both the use of popular culture material and the concern with a standardized world reach an apotheosis in the 1939 novel *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem*, a work which can be seen as the culmination of Faulkner's decade-long experiments in the interpolation and recuperation of mass culture devices and motifs and also in his use of multiple narrative voices. Here the two are, it will be argued, inextricably related, these experiments automatically further intensified by virtue of the novel's bipartite structure: two independent but related stories are presented in alternating sections over the course of the book (and the citation complications entailed by this division will be addressed at the end of the Preface). Chapter Three of the thesis will explore in detail this novel's relation to the contemporaneous culture of cacophony that these media arts were producing, in particular those of the multitude of devices which amplified the human voice, the profusion of new media voices that radio has created, and the growing din from the mass

audience, sonic barrages which are formally echoed in the narratorial “cross-talk” within and between the book’s two alternating stories.

The concluding chapter of the thesis will deal with this novel’s assimilation and inversion, particularly as related to gender, of the stock plots of early 1930s B-pictures, otherwise known as “programmers”. This resonance with these films is particularly relevant here for it is in this novel that Faulkner completes his decade-long project in the redemption of “trash”; the book, it will be suggested, is both a scathing criticism and grudging celebration of these mass culture forms. This split-screen response is in turn manifested in the actual narrative, specifically in the transfiguration of the degraded confessions magazine writer Harry Wilbourne. Over the course of his story this character transforms from being a derided and self-deriding hack to a powerful and poetic serious writer, albeit a transformation, as the story illustrates in archetypal confessional mode, with a very high material price.

This reading of the novel does suggest some withstanding of the onslaught of the standardizing forces which Faulkner and Anderson so elaborately and forcefully articulate. In some ways *Jerusalem* can be seen as a subtle, sobering and powerful parable as to how the redemptive power of writing *may* still be able to survive in a media age. “May” is indeed the operative word here as the book also functions as a cautionary tale as to the convergence of writing and mass culture so the Conclusion of the thesis will also briefly examine the acceleration of the culture of celebrity and the attendant fragmenting mediation of literary works as it applies to writers in general and to Faulkner in particular which the later media age (that of television) begets.

The intrinsically mediating and self-referential figure of the hack writer is central to

the overall argument of this thesis, Faulkner's self-conception and work, and indeed to modernist writing as a whole as, for example, in Ezra Pound's 1920 epic poem "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley". This personification of standardization is a figure already demonized by Anderson in the early 1920s:

Perhaps at this very moment the man who has written so many stories of football games is writing another. In fancy I can hear the click of his typewriter machine. He is fighting, it seems, to maintain a certain position in life, a house by the sea, an automobile....he told me, with tears in his eyes, that he wanted to grow up, to let his fanciful life keep pace with his physical life but that the magazine editors would not let him. He blamed the editors of magazines – he blamed his wife and daughter -as I remember our conversation, he did not blame himself.

(Story Teller 440 –41)

The unresolved and increasingly destructive battle between "physical life" and "fanciful life" also lies at the heart of Faulkner's work. As this author will portray, there is plenty of blame to go around for the modern diminution of the latter, but perhaps chastened by his own "hack" experiences – those of a Hollywood script-writer – he is not quite so dismissive as Anderson of the complicated quandaries facing a writer in the early media age.

One note regarding terminology and one regarding citation form: to the first, for the purposes of this thesis, the term "early media age" will refer to the period from the beginning of the 1920s - the decade in which term "media" is first used in its current sense, in which silent film reaches its apotheosis and, by decade's end, radio, cartoons,

newsreels and the like have obtained a degree of common currency - to the end of the 1930s when these forms as well as sound film, pulps, and comic books had reached a stage of formal and technological stability. The end of the 1930s is also significant here as 1939 is both the year of *Jerusalem's* publication and what can be seen as the beginning of the second media age: its harbinger – television - will receive its formal public “coming out” at that year’s New York World’s Fair.

With regard to citation form: when discussing *Jerusalem*, the difficulty of dealing with this alternating current of a novel –the two “separate” stories within the book– has been compounded by the alternating of the title of the book as a whole. The author’s original title for the novel was *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem*, but for reasons discussed within the thesis it was first published as *The Wild Palms*. Within this book are the two stories *The Wild Palms* and *Old Man* which alternate throughout. Since the book’s original publication, the title of the overall volume has alternated between the original *Jerusalem* and *The Wild Palms*, the latter currently yet again the book’s title. However, this is of course is also the title of one of the stories which alternate *within* the book. To add to the confusion, both story titles are italicized within the text, the story title being the only heading each time a section of the respective story appears; no chapter numbers or other headings are used, compounding the feeling of a potential yet circumspect autonomy of each story within the whole, an autonomy undermined by the myriad of connections and echoes between the two.

Because much of this thesis deals with this interplay between the two tales, it is necessary to draw a sharp distinction with regard to reference and citation form between the two quasi-independent stories and any discussions of the book as a whole.

Accordingly, references to the totality of the work will use the author's original intended title *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem* for the first reference and simply *Jerusalem* for any further references or parenthetical citation; the corresponding terms "work", "book" or "novel" will be used when referring to the work as a whole.

Discussions of the specific stories – especially the interplay between them - will first use their full titles *The Wild Palms* or *Old Man* and refer to the "story" or "section" (as Faulkner seems to have assiduously avoided the idea of chapter by number); afterwards in the body of the thesis and for citations, they will be noted as simply *TWP* or *OM*. For the purposes of this particular discussion at least, this method is, it is hoped, the most consistent and straightforward. It seems clear that the book's bipartite structure was designed in part to be a taunt to critics and a conundrum to readers; one suspects Faulkner would be equally appreciative of the bedevilment caused to future MLA-bound academicians.

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Dedication

To Tristan and Isolda (the cats).

Chapter One: The Struggle with Standardization:

Anderson and Faulkner in the Early Media Age

Besides words he [my father] had – to help the telling of his tales – the advantage of being able to act out those parts for which he had no words. These were advantages that I had to give up if I was to write my tales rather than tell them and how often I cursed my fate. (359)

Sherwood Anderson – *A Story Teller's Story* (1924)

...cities seen rather than names heard, as if the listener(so enormous was the voice) were suspended in space watching the globy earth spin slowly out of its cradling cloud-wisp in fragmentary glimpses the evocative strange divisions of the sphere, spinning them into fog and cloud again before vision and comprehension could quite grasp them. (114)

William Faulkner – *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem* (1939)

The passages above are from works and authors that exemplify the varying approaches taken by writers when addressing the increasing interplay between literature and the new media arts in the first half of the twentieth century. Anderson's statement, from a memoir obsessed with the effects of the nascent mass culture industry and the attendant idea of "standardization" upon the serious writer, hearkens to the past and a return to a reclaimed if here nostalgically reconstructed oral tradition. Faulkner, on the other hand, perhaps with the benefit of both additional time to assimilate these new arts

and his own experience as a screenwriter working within them, points the way toward the future of literature's integrating and addressing these new forms through a more direct engagement with them. The imagery and perspective of this passage describing the effect of a loudspeaker in a bar are conspicuously reminiscent of another electrical sonic medium: the rotating globe in the RKO Radio Pictures film logo which opened their early sound films (Fig. 1). Between these two writers there is an acknowledgement that, no matter how different the process or result, the mass culture industries and in particular cinema will necessitate a reconfiguration of both writing and the external authorial voices of manifesto, interview (whether print or broadcast) and public lecture which would increasingly run alongside it.

By the 1910s – the second full decade of the silent film era - a reciprocal effect between cinema and fiction was already being recognized, theoretical discourses on this subject appearing in Germany by the start of the decade, and in the U.S. by the middle of it. The quickly escalating sophistication of film grammar in the early 1920s caused the relationship between film and serious writing to become more directly apparent and urgent. Perhaps inspired by the cinema's increasing use of slow-motion, reverse projection, repetitive loops, and replays, there was a simultaneous unleashing of experiments within the printed narrative, particularly with regard to a reconsideration of the veracity of memory, a disruption of the linear chronological narrative as a structure in which to convey these memories, and a re-positioning of the author's performative role within the new visual narrative medium of film.

The advent of "talking pictures" in the late 1920s bestowed upon cinema an additional performative narrative weight, rivaling that which Sherwood Anderson alludes to in the

above description of his father's oral storytelling performances. In addition, the concurrent arrival of radio, newsreels, sound cartoons etc. in this decade unleashes a plethora of new voices, voices which will contribute to a reconfiguration of the author figure. These trends can be seen in the generation of a new kind of writer whom we may call the parallel public author, one increasingly concerned with creating guiding authorial voice-overs to their fictions, whether through a fixation on narratorial interjections within the texts or through a growing tendency toward commentary outside of them, a process of metamorphosis and mediation that permeates the works of both Anderson and his contemporary and intermittent friend William Faulkner.

Even at the beginning of the silent era, there is a quick confluence between the new medium and the older storytelling devices of the oral tradition. Hanns Zischler writes of the role of "the explainer" in the movie houses of Prague circa 1907. Here live commentators furnished improvised narrative links and commentary on a silent film to a cinema audience puzzled but bemused with this new medium:

They accompanied the films as practiced 'explainers' or 'reciters'. The Ponrepos [the owners of the theatre] were participants in the action shown on the screen.

The Yiddish term for them is *Versteller* - a word that plays on both the German *verstellen*, to distort or disguise, and *vorstellen*, to imagine or present. (15)

Zischler then cites a contemporaneous review of a 1912 performance accompanying the standard melodrama *Girl Without a Heart* during which "...above it all [the film] the sound of the schmaltzy, emotional commentary of the explainer, every word a lie...the explainers sobbed, the audience clenched its fists, a tragedy sped by that was completely different from the one the film's manufacturer had seen...."(Rauscher qtd. in Zischler

15-16). Here already is an unexpected and mutated relation between the screen and the word, a movement into the idea of a parallel narrative in both form and content, the traditional power of the oral tradition in fact interpreting, informing, transforming and transmitting the wash of images projected on screen. This may be link number one, the near instantaneous start between a reciprocal tradition and a new performative narrative weight, the explainer a persona which nearly twenty years later Anderson would reformulate and integrate into his short story "Death in the Woods".¹

This kind of symbiotic resonance did not take long to be formally recognized; theoretical discourses on the reciprocity between cinema and fiction are first critically codified, in English at any rate, by the mid 1910s. But it is the German writer Hugo Münsterberg's 1916 opus *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* - the title neatly displaying the already existing triangulation between mass media (*Photo*), literature (*play*) and psychology - which may be seen as the initial relevant theoretical work on this subject.² In his introduction to the 2002 Routledge reprint, editor Allan Langdale claims "the book is regarded by many to be the first serious piece of film theory, and is one of the first books to argue for the potentialities of film as an independent art form" (2). An independent art form yes, but a great deal of Münsterberg's investigation is concerned with the fact that "the dramatic manipulation of time and space in the photoplay is its natural manner of telling the story" (Langdale 22), an implicit resonance with modernist fictional techniques. Much of the weight of Langdale's belief as to the work's importance, as well as the book's contemporaneous impact, is predicated on Münsterberg's standing as a psychologist, and his chapter titles give a good indication as to what Münsterberg sees as the perceptual shifts engendered by film: "Depth and

Movement”; “Attention”; “Emotions”; and “Memory and Imagination”. An excerpt from this last chapter mentioned gives a sense of his encapsulation of this new medium’s perceptual power. In discussing the visceral effect of the “cut-back” (the “going back to an earlier scene”), Munsterberg notes,

We have really an objectivation of our memory function. The case of the cut-back is there quite parallel to that of the close-up. In the one we must recognize the mental act of attending, in the other we must recognize the mental act of remembering. *In both cases the act which in the ordinary theatre would go on in our mind alone is here in the photoplay projected into the pictures themselves. It is as if reality has lost its own continuous connection and become shaped by the demands of our soul.* It is as if the outer world itself became molded in accordance with our fleeting turns of attention or with our passing memory ideas. (95 – emphasis in original)

“We must recognize the mental act of remembering”: implicit in the cut-back is a remembering of the remembering induced by the externalized and mechanized eidetic memory fixer of cinema. The effects of this reformulation and almost confrontational manifestation of memory on modernist writers is palpable in terms of establishing a new perceptual field, the inverse of Munsterberg’s process, a process in which, in turn, the inner world of one’s memories may be reformed and projected as internalized filmic images, imparting a new disembodied quality to one’s perception of self. It does take some time for these ideas to be assimilated, but they can be seen in the later distinctions by William Faulkner as to the difference between what he terms the “thinking” (the process) and the “thought” (the remembering and verbalization of this process) within the

consciousness of his characters, a perennial differentiation in this author's work. A resonance of this kind of tension in recollection can be found in the 1939 novel *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem* in which the confessions of the confessions magazine writer Harry Wilbourne seem to reveal the essence of Munsterberg's initial investigations: "*But memory. Surely memory exists independent of the flesh*" (*Jerusalem* 265). Harry then argues with himself: "*But this was wrong too. Because it wouldn't know it was memory he thought. It wouldn't know what it was it remembered*" (265). The point is, in film and beyond film, in the early media age memory is now indeed "independent of the flesh".

Munsterberg is equally lucid and directly positivist when discussing the more procedural or logistical effects of film on story telling:

Moreover the ease with which the scenes are altered allows us not only to hurry on to ever new spots, but to be at the same time in two or three places. The scenes become intertwined. We see the soldier on the battlefield and his beloved one at home in such steady alternation that we are simultaneously here and there. We see the man speaking into the telephone in New York and at the same time the woman who receives his message in Washington [i.e. the classic split-screen]. It is no difficulty at all for the photoplay to have the two alternate a score of times in the few minutes of the long-distance conversation. (Munsterberg 33)

Two terms jump out here – one directly related to the present discussion, the other at least tangentially so. First, this idea of "here and there" – this alternating current that extends beyond location to also include time - past and present and, somewhat less frequently, present and future- manifests itself in an ability to visually externalize one's

consciousness, memories, and perception of self. As the tall convict in Faulkner's *Jerusalem* notes, standing on one broken levee while gazing at the river's reflection of another: "*It's another levee* he thought quietly. *That's what we look like from there. That's what I am standing on looks like from there*" (*Jerusalem* 62). Secondly, although perhaps incidental in its inclusion above, the idea of "the long-distance conversation", particularly one further mediated by film, is also intriguing. Pamela Thurschwell, in her investigation of "the occult significance of teletechnologies" (87) of the late nineteenth century, touches on the ramifications of this increase in reception and disruption with respect to the possibilities for a writer, in this case the life and work of Henry James in which

new communication technologies such as the telegraph and the typewriter could be instrumental in creating transgressive fantasies of access to others who would be otherwise inaccessible to the fantasizing operators of these technologies, because of gender and class barriers, or that even more difficult to negotiate barrier between the living and the dead. (86 –87)

Quickly emerging, as Thurschwell implies, are some double-edged implications for these "teletechnologies" in which one could also include film: the propensity to mediate and perhaps simulate "intimacy" inside the works, but also the capacity to widen access outside of them, the capacity to transgress temporal barriers such as gender, class, and race as well as a means by which to broach more spiritual ones.³

In a manner similar to that of Thurschwell's claims regarding telegraph and typewriter, it is this almost occult nature of the cinema experience which also crosses over into literature. By the 1920s the discursive congruence and interplay among film and fiction is

not simply an internal formalistic matter of two competing forms; what is also crucial to the symbiosis is the growing sense of the dislocation of life as a whole which cinema, as it matures as a medium, plays a large part in engendering and reflecting. It is this idea of the ramping up of spectacle, through a combination of mysticism and mechanization or perhaps mysticism through mechanization, in this decade and the attendant destabilizing effects thereof that permeate the poet Vachel Lindsay's second treatise on film *The Progress and Poetry of the Movies* (1925). The first, *The Art of The Silent Picture* (1915), is a seminal although somewhat limited exploration of the visual poetry of cinema; however it is this lesser-known later work which contains a more advanced theoretical discussion as to the power and effect of this new medium, a power and an effect manifested in some unexpected ways. The essay "Hieroglyphics Through the Microscope and Telescope" is one of many of Lindsay's on the silent film *The Thief of Baghdad* (1924). Here Lindsay is definite as to "one of the overwhelming facts of the motion picture world. It is the setting in motion of things which we have assumed were forever motionless" to the point that "it is breathing life into inanimate objects"(178), a process that, as will be discussed in the next chapter, is of prime importance in Faulkner's novels of the 1930s with regard to techniques interpolated from animated cartoons. As to the possible end result of this "setting in motion of things", Lindsay concludes,

This way of thinking from picture to picture, of leaping from vision to vision, without sound, without [human] gesture, without the use of English with as little use of type as possible, this tendency increasing every hour must be ruled by the motion picture, if it is to have any direction and leading because the film art is

so much more powerful than all the rest, by reason of the occult elements of motion and light. (183)

Although perhaps influenced by contemporaneous future shock and mysticism, Lindsay's recognizing of an increasingly non-verbal, visually oriented culture – what he terms the “hieroglyphic mood” (182) - is prescient in its analysis. Already, this is a culture in which “the magazine stand becomes more and more of a riot of hieroglyphics, rather than a headquarters of printed matter in the old sense, good or bad” (183). This shift is not without its risks; in relation to the importance of film providing “direction and leading” as quoted above, Lindsay warns, “if we do not have some kind of continence and direction in this matter of speeded-up hieroglyphics, the brain of Man becomes in this modern hour a circus gone wrong, a Ringling circus, a gigantic spectacle...” (183).⁴

Lindsay though was soon to have a new spectacle with which to contend. The time of his statements (1925) can be seen as near the apotheosis of the American silent medium; within five years the form would be gone. Given their fixation on visual and narrative movement articulated above, the coming of sound (an uneven process which runs circa 1922 –29) was seen as catastrophic for silent purists like Lindsay and Munsterberg. Allan Langdale explains that “to the psychologist [Munsterberg] speech was a threat to the visual authenticity of the medium” and that “sound effects... were gimmicks” which were for Munsterberg simply “appeals to the imagination” (23). Langdale sees these kinds of appeals as being a prurient process to the psychologist, sonic diminishments which Munsterberg believes “have no right to an existence in a work of art that is composed of pictures” (qtd. in Langdale 23). The coming of sound to film was indeed as upsetting for the already purist film cognoscenti as the coming of film was to many

literary purists. As Gregory A. Waller notes, “in the late 1920s sound threatened to destroy the primacy of the image; movement and montage gave way to static mise-en-scene. The ‘purist’ critics responded with a barrage of vitriolic articles designed to curse the sound film out of existence” (51). One such example may be the 1934 complaint by “purist” critic Emile Vuillermos that “twenty years of struggle to make the cinema into something more than a succession of mimed themes, captured in animated photography, risked being lost under the assault of a technique that was still imperfect” (qtd. in O’Brien 41). The irony is plain here; some forty years after the invention of cinema there is a fear sound will do to film what film has done to novels: undercut and undermine the carefully constructed codes and artifice of representation.

But in the torrent of the aesthetic struggle that sound engendered within cinema was a not so expected side effect: the impact of sound on the relation of film and later “talking” mass culture as a whole to literature, as will be discussed with regard to both Anderson and Faulkner. In terms of writing, the talkies, sound newsreels, and radio unleashed a plethora of novel narrative voices and voice-overs, new narratorial tropes which would most certainly affect writers of printed fiction already struggling to reformulate their craft amidst an onslaught of celluloid images.

To give but one example: the newsreels. Although both the melodramatic narrating style and the newsreel format in general are today probably best remembered through their parodied replication in the opening moments of *Citizen Kane* (1941), the contemporaneous impact of this form (the *March of Time* et al.) should not be underestimated, the profile and prestige of *March* such that it was awarded a special Oscar in 1936.⁵ As Thomas Doherty points out, sound technology quickly became

standardized in this medium as well, as “between 1927 and 1930, the sound newsreel erased its mute antecedent with the same dispatch that the sound feature film terminated the silent film” (198). The speed was such that “by September 1930 Fox, Paramount, Pathe and Hearst all followed suit [that of Universal’s] with ‘off stage’ voices of their own” (198), Doherty determining “the two decisive aural innovations” of the early 1930s as being the “voice-over narration and commentative music” in which “the newsreel narrator evolved into a voice independent of intertitles and eventually supplanted them” (198). These standardizing innovations in turn lead to a new codified narrative voice:

Through deployment in the newsreel, and concurrently in archival documentaries and expeditionary films, the narrative voice-over, an omniscient speaker floating above the film text as an articulate guide, became an integral part of motion picture grammar. At first bombastic and portentous, he gradually modulated his Olympian declamations with a more common, conversational touch. (198).

There is an interesting by-product of the newsreels’ movement into “off-stage voices”: the coming of sound in newsreels and the attendant diminution or at least familiarization of the narrative voice can be seen to have been paralleled in the new fictive voices which were emerging in this period, a series of contrasting tones in the authorial and narratorial voices encompassing both “the Voice of God” and “a neighbor on the back porch” (Doherty 198), this kind of variegation also present in Anderson’s and Faulkner’s later narrational choices. Of course this is a neighbour often with the bully pulpit of a microphone, and the additional disjunction between these voices - the intimacy of the neighbour and the bombast of the broadcast – is central to the narrativization within

Jerusalem, as will be discussed in the second chapter of the thesis. In terms of an author's public persona, in the same way in which radio voices had already undergone the declension from "bombastic and portentous" to "a more common, conversational touch" by the end of the 1920s, this process can be applied to the formulation of the new role of the author-figure in this same decade of the early media age: a cross between explainer (mediating between the public and their writing) and voice-over (opining and analyzing both their own works and literary forms as a whole both within the primary works and in semi-autonomous secondary offerings). This cross-over results in a modern commentative voice, a new kind of literary announcer, whether one residing inside or outside of the texts.

Whether the works of this period inspired this voice or the voice necessitated these kinds of works is still difficult to determine, but nonetheless the increasing visibility and complexity of modernist writing and art can be seen to have required some mediating agent. This could sometimes be provided by a sympathetic critic or fellow writer as with Evelyn Scott's elegant 1929 treatise "On William Faulkner's 'The Sound and the Fury'", a "little book" (Scott 4) issued in an attempt to suggest, for a confused readership, a way through the four narrative voices found in the novel. Increasingly, as in the theoretical discourses and public letters of Yeats, Pound, Eliot et. al. or as in the artist's statements and manifestos of the Vorticists, Futurists, and Surrealists, this way into or through the work is provided by the creators themselves, often in a form external to the work proper. In other words, whether as a pre-emptive strike against criticism and incomprehension or as a genuine attempt to explore both their own work and their field as a whole, authors and artists were increasingly inclined to provide a mediating voice.

This of course was not a unilateral process and in the works of Anderson and Faulkner, the commentary – the mediating between writer and audience, between broadcast and reception - crosses over in varying degrees into the literary works themselves in a kind of simultaneous and self-referential self-commentary, an eventual voice-over in the primary works. This process can be seen to result in a running neo-literary commentary or play-by-play analysis on the actual literary work, whether by interview, autonomous non-fiction memoirs and treatises such as Anderson's, a secondary annotating narrator as in Faulkner's novels or, as we shall see, one delivered in a form external to the printed page: the public lecture process. These new authorial voices can indeed be seen to provide a necessary mediating voice between modernist artist and modern audiences, but this is but part of the process: this tendency toward external commentary is also crucial to the withstanding of a growing menace to literature and life alike: that of "standardization".

In the many factories where I have worked most men talked vilely to their fellows and long afterward I was beginning to understand that a little. It is the impotent man who is vile. His very impotence has made him vile and in the end I was to understand that when you take from a man the cunning of the hand, the opportunity to constantly create new forms in materials, you make him impotent.... "Standardization ! Standardization !" was to be the cry of my age and standardization is necessarily a standardization in impotence. (195)

Sherwood Anderson – *A Story Teller's Story* (1924)

Two complementary works by Sherwood Anderson exemplify this external mediating

form: the well-known *A Story Teller's Story* (1924) and the less discussed *Notebook* (1926 and never reprinted thereafter).⁶ These two books can be read as a two-part project, a unit united in their sometime obsessive and extremely cantankerous diatribe against the current state of affairs and literature's attendant role within it. There are four inter-related components to Anderson's tirade against the state of modern life and literature: (a) that there is an increasing erosion of art and craft by the forces of mass culture; (b) that this leads to a general diminution in the regard in which books are held in terms of the attendant audience reaction toward them; (c) in turn, there is a growing pressure on an author to enter the public show-business cycle which for the purposes of this paper will also entail an implicit movement toward performance in the printed page and (d) there is now an overall contemporary condition which is both cause and effect of (a) (b) and (c) – that of the trend towards, to use Anderson's term, "standardization" in all aspects of life. This trend is for Anderson responsible for the changing nature of storytelling in fiction as well as in the already competing mass culture industry. As to the eventual outcome of these symptoms manifested in the epigraph above, "impotence" – raging or otherwise – is, as even the casual reader of Faulkner comes to recognize, a motif threaded throughout his work of the 1930s, the cause and effect thereof in his books manifesting a similar fear of Anderson's term of horror a decade earlier: that standardization causes impotence and impotence allows for further standardization. *Jerusalem* in particular will fictionally manifest in a concrete literary manner the manifesto-like theorizing of Anderson's two non-fiction memoirs.⁷

The previous section of this introduction discussed the possible effects of the film *medium* upon fiction, but to Anderson this may be only the starting point of this form's

role in what he sees as literature's rapidly escalating diminution. Exemplary of his concerns are the fragmenting forces and fragmentary nature of the movie industry in both the process of production and the end product. To the first, Anderson describes his observations during his own "movie job" (in the late 1910s) in which he was "doing publicity for movie people, in order that I might have some income to write at my leisure":

As for the movie people I saw, they worked in a strange land of fragments of dreams. The parts they were to play were given to them in fragments. Everything was fragmentary and unfinished. A kind of insanity reigned....the result of all this perversion of workmanship and of emotional energy in the movie world seemed to me to reduce human beings to a state that most of all suggested to my mind angle-worms squirming in a boy's bait can... (*Story Teller* 26-27)

Anderson is also clear about this industry's unsuitability for the creative artist:

...and why any human being, under the conditions in which they must work and with the materials they must work, should want to be a movie actor or writer for the movies is beyond my comprehension.⁸ (26-27)

Films – whether process or product - are but one factor in Anderson's overriding concern however; in a series of ruminations and essays from his *Notebook* of 1926, Anderson decries the general decline in literacy, complexity, and the attention span of the reading public, all of which lead to the chief culprit as delineated in his "Notes on Standardization". The main targets of Anderson's jeremiad are the usual villains of this period, all of which receive their share of the writer's spleen: mass culture as movies, magazines, and newspaper headlines in particular are addressed frequently, often in

reference to “the young” and with a consistent tone of condescension and disgust; Henry Ford and his creation: “To me it seems that the Ford automobile is about the final and absolute expression of our terrible age – and is not the Ford car an ugly and ill-smelling thing ?”(154); and the typewriter along with what is seen as its accompanying mechanization of the writer (26).⁹ Anderson’s rant against machines and manufacturing is not wholly absolute: the real writer does need something to go with his quill and ink so accordingly the one mechanized process generously spared Anderson’s wrath is that of paper manufacturing – “Makers of paper, I exclude you from all the curses” (*Story Teller* 293). This one exclusion noted, Anderson’s onslaught continues, including, slightly less predictably: jazz, subways, the Twentieth Century Limited railroad car, and even nails! These last are singularly differentiated from their organic opposite of wooden pegs, a “foreman in a church organ factory” telling Anderson he quit his job as “he thought the nails affected, in a quite poisonous way, the tone of the instruments” (*Notebook* 158).

A partial answer or remedy to this world built by nails and Ford lies in the role of the modern (ist) visual artist, in this case the photographer Alfred Stieglitz. Anderson notes that although “born into a mechanical age and lived in an age when practically all American men followed the false gods of cheapness and expediency, he has kept the faith” (154). Photography as a modern art is one thing, but even the power of this form has repercussions for an author. In “A Note on Realism” (1924) Anderson sets out the growing futility of photographic representation as a writer’s goal: “No man can make himself a camera” (*Story Teller* 71) and “a stroke of the pen saves me from realism” (76), a concern later echoed by *Jerusalem*’s sculptor/marionette maker Charlotte Rittenmeyer in her explanation of her bizarre composite “figurines” – “I don’t want to copy a deer.

Anybody can do that” (87). For Anderson also, in contrast to photography, these more traditional arts do not so fare so well – “painters making advertising designs for soap, painters making portraits of banker’s wives” (*Story Teller* 187). The writer’s task is seen as being particularly unenviable, the diminution of literature manifested as “story-tellers striving wearily to ‘make’ the *Saturday Evening Post* or to be revolutionists in the arts. Artists everywhere striving for what?” (187). It is important to note that Anderson sees writers as complicit in this reduction, noting “surely we scribblers were no better [than actors]. The successful men of the arts talked of the market and little else. Writers even went into bookstores to see what kind of books were selling well in order to know what kind of books to write” (*Story Teller* 367). In the end Anderson’s outlook as to the future of culture is grim: “Were the great publishing houses of the city and the magazines but factories and were the writers and picture makers who worked for them but factory hands now?” (*Story Teller* 369).

Anderson, like Vachel Lindsay, is fearful as to where this new epoch will lead; he is however more definite as to the immediate effects. “There has been for a long time now...a tremendous standardization of life going on in every country of the western world....there have been these two things – the speeding up and standardization of life and thought, the one impulse no doubt the result of the other” (*Notebook* 139). In the particularly strange essay “King Coal”, Anderson laments the modern world, contrasting its vagaries to a rather Disneyland version of Main Street America circa the turn of the century: “Before us lay the short residence street and at the end of that the main street. The Ford [yes again] and the movies, products also of the Age of Progress, of the Age of Coal, had not yet come and automobiles were a rare sight” (211). This leads to

Anderson's central question as he asks himself:

Can a man love a coal-mine or a coal-mining town, a factory, a real-estate boomer,
the Twentieth Century Limited [although misspelled, likely the passenger train],
a Ford, a movie or a movie actress, a modern daily newspaper or freight car ?

(Story Teller 215)

This is indeed the problem of the early media age: how best to deal with this flood of the new? Love it, no – but ignore it? No, also. A decade before Walter Benjamin's now iconic "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", Anderson seems to sense the growing, to use Benjamin's term, "liquidation" of literature and the traditional arts as a whole: "What I really want to say is something about this modern disregard of books" which are now so "common place like Ford cars" (*Notebook 17*). In tandem with the decline of reading is the commodification of the book in which the content is superseded by the fetishized, packaged object and the author accordingly fetishized and packaged as celebrity: "We talked of books. The woman had a kind of admiration for me because I had written books that had been published. How foolish of her. Her husband had hard shrewd eyes and was a collector of first editions" (*Notebook 66*). Author, audience and object: all are reviled.¹⁰ In a desperate bathetic attempt to see the writer as a man of action, Anderson delineates the trance-like, peripatetic state required to avoid merely churning out "sweet words in a factory" when he recounts "often I go tramping in empty streets on such nights, myself more alive than in the day" (*Notebook 127*), this escape into perambulation another quality shared with *Jerusalem's* Harry Wilbourne. The idea of the factory approach to literature carries over to the loathed figure of "the popular novelist" who has "the newspaper headline point of view. Let a woman be murdered and

she automatically becomes beautiful. The cowboy is brave, the thief bold and dangerous” (*Notebook* 166). Although Anderson makes a later admission as to the vicarious power of the spectacle - “been sitting all day in the courtroom hearing a murder trial and, and half sick that nothing I write seems as vital” (*Letters* 64) – still he warns against any potential slumming by high-brow authors: “Nothing is more pitiful than the sight of a man trying to be popular who is not born to it” (*Notebook* 166).

But the movement to be “popular” or at least the writer’s role within it seems too powerful for even Anderson to fully withstand and the question of an author making a living within these confines – without their printed work succumbing to popular pressures – is paradoxically answered by another residual effect of mass culture and in particular Hollywood which is brought to bear upon writers in the 1920s: the star system. Although the rapid introduction of sound technology is major component of Hollywood’s quick (i.e. early to mid-1930s) dominance of the global film industry, equally important in this process is American cinema’s plethora of stars who have, by the late silent era, already set in motion the dominance which sound will consolidate. This parallel industry of star-making, including the poaching of the great European stars during this time – for example, “that living Garbo” (*Jerusalem* 126) – is crucial to the creation of box-office power based on actors and actresses as opposed to the European model which rested more on directors. Central to this industry is the attendant media support apparatus - *Photoplay*, newspapers, radio - which by the mid-1920s is already in a mature phase of star-making, transforming the waitress and delivery man into icons in the manner of “the broad strong Western girls got up out of Hollywood magazines” (*Jerusalem* 176), a reference point used by Harry for his description of his lover Charlotte. The culture of

mass celebrity has, by the time of Anderson's tirades, almost fully arrived; subsequently, sometimes almost consciously repressed, there is in Anderson's words a grudging acknowledgment of the necessity of the writer to adopt a public persona and a performance model for the new media age. This is manifested in two ways: the writer as celebrity (the public speaking figure, the interviewee) and the writer as performer, both within the texts as well as outside of it – primarily in the new role of lecturer and showman.

These concepts of writer as celebrity and lecturer form two of Anderson's most emphatic links with his great friend Gertrude Stein; both roles are often the subjects of the famous correspondence between them, in particular in their discussions of the links between writers, performance and celebrity, links which are already becoming extant. To the first (celebrity), from Anderson's 1922 introduction to a volume of Stein's work:

It was generally agreed that the author [Stein] had done something we Americans call "putting something across" - the meaning being that she had, by a strange freakish performance, managed to attract attention to herself, to get herself discussed in the newspapers, become for a time a figure in our hurried, harried lives.¹¹ (*Anderson/Stein* 15)

To the second - the movement into performance, it seems this idea of the public and oral conveyance, the personal and personable transmission of written fiction has been germinating in Anderson for some time. He first cites Carl Sandburg recently "speaking of his lecturing and reading his poetry aloud, to make a living – 'I give 'em a good show'" (*Story Teller* 25), but this performative impulse does not stem from purely contemporaneous sources; speaking of his father, Anderson reminisces, "The showman

was there, in him – it flowered within him – and it is in me too” (25).

My father when he told his tales walked up and down the room before his audience. He pushed out experimental little sentences and watched his audience narrowly. There was a dull-eyed old farmer sitting in the corner of the room. “I’ll get him,” he said to himself. He watched the farmer’s eyes.... (359).

Sherwood Anderson – *A Story Teller’s Story* (1924)

It is this desire to re-establish a direct engagement with the audience – to “give ‘em a good show” albeit one now filtered or mediated through cinema - for example even with a static camera and even more static performance the actor DeWolf Hopper Sr.’s 1922 Phonofilm recitation of “Casey at the Bat provoked fascination - which seems to both irk Anderson and yet drive him further toward a performance mode. The celebrity culture industry of print interviews, radio, and the aforementioned non-literary works which are now surrounding authors as well as actors can be seen as here constituting or reconstituting a regenerated oral tradition, one performed by the semi-fictional external public author figure. For Anderson this new figure is part Homer, part Father (cf. the epigraph above), and part Will Rogers, reconstituted in the new media figure of the lecturer-author and it is this media celebrity aspect which differentiates Anderson’s public formulation of the writer from that of earlier performing authors such as Dickens or Wilde. In Anderson’s foreword to his *Notebook*, he notes “we scribblers occasionally become preachers. We say this or that is so and so. Sometimes some of us in America go about delivering lectures to clubs. In one place I myself spoke to a thousand people, in another place to fifteen hundred. You might have thought I was running for Congress, but

I wasn't" (15).

In a particularly germane *Notebook* entry entitled "When the Writer Talks (about the business of lecturing)" Anderson simultaneously laments and celebrates a new show-business environment for the serious writer, first repining "But what an odd experience, this lecturing. There are a thousand young men and women in the hall where I have been speaking. What do they think of me, standing up there and trying to say bright wise things to them?" (172). Later, conversely, he enthuses: "This lecturing excites me. When I come out of the platform something happens. There is an actor sleeping in me and now he is awake" (172). From writer to actor: as with Anderson's previously discussed conflation of "scribblers" and actors, an evolution based on celebrity is implicit here as is his continuing ambivalence toward the popular. This tension extends to Anderson's self-admitted contradictory internal battle as to his sentiments toward his lecture tour, here formed as a series of "prayers" just before sleep: "This lecturing business is so exciting and interesting. I love it" / "This lecturing business is so terrible. It makes me feel so cheap" (177). Yet Anderson is clear as to which side wins; the showman cannot be repressed even if vicariously transplanted: "It is the showman in me who comes back and who takes command just before I float off to sleep" (177).¹²

Here of course is a second link to Stein: consolidating what Anderson sees as her talent for "strange freakish performance" and well as her own modernist avant-garde credentials is Stein's triumphant lecture tour of America in 1935; perhaps the decision to move to the lecture format can be seen to owe at least an indirect debt to these theoretical treatises of Anderson's a decade earlier. Another synchronicity may be found in her 1935 review of Anderson's work which she closes with the sentence, "Listen to this book and

you will see what I mean” (*Anderson/Stein* 97). “Listen to this book”: the convergence of the aural and the printed in this sentence points to the re-establishment of the oral tradition in Anderson’s and Stein’s writing and lecture work: a culmination and combination of these explainer/announcer/ lecturer figures which can be seen in his later work such as his 1933 story “Death in the Woods”. This story in particular can be seen as the seven page condensation and transmutation of the themes and motifs found within *Story Teller* and *Notebook*, a re-mediation of the already mediated meandering of the two lengthy non-fictional memoirs. “Death” also can be seen as Anderson’s self-riposte to his earlier criticism of his writing – too much realism – as this short story serves as a predictive manifesto of post-modern “story-telling”, functioning as some kind of unconscious ur-text for the fractured and fragmentary nature of the post-modern narrative that arrives more formally two or three decades later.¹³

Still, it is mostly Anderson’s plaintive non-fiction outbursts and his embrace of the lecturer-figure which can be seen to have provided one kind of path, one kind of encapsulation and address of these new kinds of media energies swirling around writers. But the problem remained: what was the end game for writers with regard to these kinds of interpolations of film techniques: confrontation, retreat, or an inevitable assimilation and surrender to the seduction of the forms of the early media age?

For William Faulkner, the strategy may have been to engage in all three, a strategy later discussed in a 1955 article/interview in a local Memphis newspaper the *Commercial Appeal*. Here the uncredited journalist reports

Television, radio, the screen, and the novel present separate problems and challenges to the writer, Mr. Faulkner said, but indicated he felt a competent

craftsman should be able to handle them all. (*Commercial* 116)

Of course what is unsaid here is that these “separate challenges and problems” often converge, virally leaping from one form to another, but “a competent craftsman” should be able to also make the leaps between. And there is in his great novels of the 1930s a feeling not only of a constant narrational movement within the texts, but of a constant infusion of new media forms as well: of moving pictures and moving perspectives, of cartoons and comic strips and mass culture as a whole, seen in *Jerusalem*’s tumult of references to the “*Detective’s Gazette*” (22) and “picture shows” (140), to “a coca cola sign” (230) and a “Klieg light” (251). In other words, one means by which to combat this onslaught is to take the enemy head on: this maelstrom of the contemporary which Anderson half-heartedly and haltingly enters is one into which Faulkner fully plunges with a direct engagement and address of these “standardizing” forces. In his novels one finds an assimilation and interpolation of the techniques not only of the seventh art of high cinema, but of the lower forms of movie-house and cultural material. Newspapers and newsreels, low-budget B pictures and radio commentators: all are poured into his overtly modernist project. Here is a world of constant transformation and transmutation, a reflection of the world of metamorphosis and mediation, where reality is replaced by the representation thereof and experience itself is increasingly mutated and mediated. This is a world in which the author-figure is moved from external interpretative explainer and tentative lecturer to an internalized but full fledged master of ceremonies of a shifting and composite world, an emcee who simultaneously excoriates the media age while maintaining a positive antagonism with the new formal possibilities for writers which this age has put into play. In their formalist frenzy, these novels can be

seen as the printed replications or re-creations of a multi-faceted media assault, an alternating embrace and castigation of the writer as celebrity-commodity and literature as part of the mass culture machine.

There are aspects to this process beyond shock value and stylistic novelty: the infusion of the low and contemporary will provide the means by which Faulkner will confront and combat a world in which, as Anderson notes in 1924, “books may be standardized – they are already almost that; painting may be standardized – it has often been done, and the standardization of poetry will be easy. Already I know a man who is working on a machine for the production of poetry” (*Story Teller* 196). Anderson then warns that reformulation or a mere self-conscious modernist pre-emption through formal tinkering will not forestall this process of the machine: “One feeds into it letters of the alphabet and out comes poetry and one may pull various levers for the production of poems either of the *vers libre* sort or poetry in the classic sense” (196). This strangling mechanisation and diminution of the process of writing is what Faulkner, the self-proclaimed “strangled poet” (qtd. in Longstreet 54), would seek so strongly to abjure.

Notes

¹ Today of course the explainer has resurfaced in its original medium via the audio commentary tracks on many DVD releases of films and TV shows.

² The O.E.D. cites the first use of the compound noun “photoplay” as being from 1909. It appears to attain a common and also specific usage by the early 1920s as evidenced by a trademark dispute between *Photoplay* magazine and a new competitor *Photo-play Journal*, the court upholding the former’s injunction: “while the word ‘Photoplay’, being primarily descriptive, could not be the subject of a registered trademark, it had acquired a secondary meaning such as to entitle the plaintiff to protection on the ground of unfair competition” (*Columbia Law Review* Vol. 21, No. 6 June 1921, pg. 607).

³ Faulkner appears to have a somewhat different view as to the potential of these devices. In his work the presence of these tele-technologies is also found, but usually in association with a degraded present – the time of “suspended wirehum” (*Jerusalem* 7). For example, letters in the old sense are usually found in episodes dealing with the past; by contrast, by 1937, letters have been supplanted by the telegram with its attendant public nature: Wilbourne dismisses his friend Flint’s apology for reading the “stereotyped birthday greetings” aloud, claiming “too many people have already seen a telegram for it to be very private” (*Jerusalem* 30). The other device to which Thurschwell refers – the typewriter – is seen by both Anderson and Faulkner as even more problematic, as will be discussed below.

⁴ Lindsay was scarcely alone in his worry as to the effect of the new media forms. The great modernist poets were more definite as to their detrimental effects, e.g. T.S. Eliot’s often cited remark in 1922 that “with the decay of the music hall, with the encroachment of the cheap and rapid-breeding cinema, the lower classes will tend to drop into the same state of protoplasm as the bourgeoisie” (qtd. in Rhode 32). W.B. Yeats was characteristically more succinct but no less dismissive, proclaiming “newspapers are the roar of the machine” (*Autobiography* 193). Ezra Pound takes care of radio, albeit almost two decades (1940) after the fact:

Blasted friends left a goddam radio here yester. Gift. God damn destructive and dispersive devil of invention. But got to be faced. Drammer has got to face it, not only face cinema. Anyone who can survive may strengthen inner life , but a mass of apes and worms will be further rejuiced to passivity. (qtd. in Heymann 92).

As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, Faulkner will address all three of these media forms in his novels, one the one hand equally as concerned as Pound as to their “destructive and dispersive” effects, but on the other quite fascinated with the new formalist devices they may afford.

⁵ The newsreel form was of particular interest to both Faulkner (as will be discussed in Chapter One) and Walter Benjamin. Regarding that which newsreels can portray and the effect thereof, the last footnote to “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” reads:

...with regard to newsreels, the propagandistic importance of which can hardly be overestimated. Mass reproduction is aided especially by the reproduction of the masses. In big parades and monster rallies, in sports events, and in war, all of which nowadays are captured by camera and sound recordings, the masses are brought face to face with themselves. (251)

That document of the apotheosis of “monster rallies”, *Triumph of the Will*, had, at the time of Benjamin’s writing, been released for a year. This ability of newsreels to capture and convey scenes of King Mob does have a resonance with the powerful use of the out-of-control crowd scenes in many of Faulkner’s novels, e.g. *Sanctuary*, *Light in August* and *Jerusalem*.

⁶ Given the nature of the discussion here, the books’ full subtitles are worth reproducing, despite or perhaps because of their length: the title page of *Story Teller* promises “*The tale of an American writer’s journey through his own imaginative world and through the world of facts, with many of his experiences and impressions among other writers – told in many notes in four books – and an epilogue*”. The *Notebook* is only slightly less lengthy in its statement of intent, perhaps compensating through the increased capitalization: “*Containing Articles Written During the Author’s life as a Story Teller and Notes of his Impressions from Life Scattered through the Book*”, the voice here (as per Doherty) seeming both conversational and portentous.

⁷ The number of terms, themes, and motifs consistent between Anderson's two memoirs and Faulkner's *Jerusalem* is quite astonishing – this paper will investigate some of them, but this confluence is worthy of separate independent study. Several writers have investigated the links between Anderson's and Faulkner's lives and works – H. Edward Richardson's "Anderson and Faulkner" (1964) and Thomas McHaney's "Anderson, Hemingway, and *The Wild Palms*" (1972) do a thorough job of looking at both the biographical and literary (i.e. fiction) interplay between these two writers. But aside from former's examination of the *Notebook's* "A Meeting South" (via its reprinting in Anderson's 1942 *Memoirs*), in which Richardson sees a roman à clef figure for Faulkner as well as some textual similarities with parts of the latter's *Sartoris*, these two early memoirs are not discussed. McHaney does put forth that *Jerusalem* "may be a form of homage to Anderson" (465) in its "acute allusions to Anderson's life and work" (467), but "work" here again applies only to Anderson's fiction.

⁸ This rather low opinion of the film industry is of course one which will later be voiced by Faulkner also, as is seemed - based on his numerous comments – that his long service as a film industry scriptwriter was often beyond his comprehension as well: "They worship death here [Hollywood]...they don't worship money, they worship death" (qtd. in Friedrich 237).

⁹ This is yet another concern shared which Faulkner later shares. The typewriter figures prominently in the *TWP* sections of *Jerusalem* in which the debased writer Harry Wilbourne, in a moment emblematic of his descent from abandoned attempts at art to hack journalism –writing for "the confession magazines" (103), laments, "I had even bought the typewriter at last – something I had got along without for twenty-eight years and so well I didn't even know it" (114). Now he would "sit down to the typewriter, entering without effort and without especial regret the anesthesia of his monotonous inventions" (104).

¹⁰ The author does take this self-reviling further. In one section containing the repeated correlation of authors to prostitutes, Anderson baldly states, "All prostitutes are morons. The clever alive prostitute of fiction does not exist in fact. Writers are prone to be sentimental about prostitution because they spend so much of their own lives walking close to the line of their own kind of prostitution" (60). This passage may

also speak to the mysterious current unavailability of this work given the historical and literary importance of the *Notebook*. One wonders if the Anderson estate perhaps is responsible for their non-reissue as the book contains numerous passages, some more offensive than the one above, passages which are, by today's standards, rather difficult.

¹¹ Michael Zeitlin, in reading an earlier draft of this chapter, mentioned the relevance of this section of the discussion to Faulkner's 1932 Introduction to *Sanctuary*, an Introduction which the author ordered withdrawn from subsequent re-printings. In the rather Anderson-like opening lines, Faulkner states, "This book was written three years ago. To me it is a cheap idea, because it was deliberately conceived to make money" (qtd. in Blotner 322). This is the beginning of three pages of broadsides at the publishing industry and the serious author's place within it. One side effect of the book, however, was that Faulkner did indeed, like Stein, "become for a time a figure in our hurried, harried lives" although not perhaps in quite so desirable a manner; Anne Goodwyn Jones cites "the public nickname that came to identify Faulkner after the publication of his shocking 1931 novel *Sanctuary*: the 'corn cob man'" (46).

¹² The contrast between Anderson and Faulkner in these matters is striking; the idea of being either celebrity or lecturer seemed genuinely appalling to the latter. His editor and friend Malcolm Cowley has noted, "among the writers of his time, Faulkner was altogether exceptional in the value that he placed on his privacy" (71). Cowley experienced this directly when attempting a 1948 *Life* piece on the writer. Although he suggested to Faulkner that "the biographical details might be limited to those already published" Cowley felt "Faulkner wasn't happy about the intrusion into his life, modest and circumspect as it promised to be" (107). After seeing a piece in the magazine on Hemingway, Faulkner's reticence increased, stating in a letter to Cowley "I will protest to the last: no photographs, no recorded documents. It is my ambition to be, as a private individual, abolished and voided from history...no refuse save the printed books" (qtd. in Cowley 126). Faulkner's displeasure with the piece which finally ran in 1953, although with no contribution from Cowley, was such that he published "a vehement piece" entitled "On Privacy – the American Dream" in *Harpers* two years later" (Cowley, *File* 132).

Faulkner's public speaking and appearances were generally no more forthcoming. Nancy Hale describes Faulkner's 1957 stint as Writer in Residence at the University of Virginia: "He would give no formal lectures" and cites Faulkner's dislike of the format, the writer telling a conference at which he was answering questions, "this is a dreadful habit to get into, where you can stand up in front of people and nobody can say 'Shut up and sit down'" (qtd. in Hale 137). Readings appeared to be no more enthusiastic on the part of the author as the "tiny, set-faced man with the grey moustache...would proceed to read, face buried in his book, in an almost inaudible tone for fifteen or twenty minutes" (137). Overall, the authorial correspondence in *The Faulkner-Cowley File* reveal an incredibly cagey author-figure, one who seems aware that his letters will one day be printed and who is either assiduously constructing a public persona in the celebrity age or attempting to preemptively deconstruct it. The contrast here with Anderson's self-proclaimed "showman" approach and overt manifestos is clear. Faulkner in fact can be seen to be formulating a prototype of the contradictory blank slate approach to a public persona which serves Andy Warhol and Bob Dylan so well in the 1960s.

¹³ The ongoing demotion of Anderson from the first rank of the literary canon is puzzling. Robert Dunne's introduction to his 2005 book *A New Book of the Grotesques: Contemporary Approaches to Sherwood Anderson's Early Fiction* insightfully charts the diminution of Anderson's reputation and representation in anthologies, arguing "when studied through the lens of postmodern theories of language and power, Anderson's fiction yields rewarding new insights" (111) and accordingly "the time has now come for that renaissance in studying [his] works" (115). In "Sherwood Anderson and the Postmodern Novel" David Stouck praises "the value and significance of Anderson's fictional experiments" concluding "in his experiments with fantasy, expressionist symbolism, and the self-conscious narrative voice, he provides an important link between the modernism of the first quarter of this century and American writing today" (316). I would go further and suggest, like W.H. Auden's, Anderson's work contains many of the qualities of post-modernism even though existing before this term and concept was constructed. Perhaps the final indignity, given Anderson's and Faulkner's tempestuous relationship, is that so often, as with this thesis, the former is discussed only as an adjunct or in relation to the latter.



Figure 1. “suspended in space watching the globy earth spin”: The RKO Studios logo of 1929 –the first full year of “talking pictures” with their potent and threatening mix of images and sound.

Chapter Two: “Like a Cartoon Comedy Centaur”:

The Animated Metamorphoses of William Faulkner

Such feats of arms, such deeds of do, are merest quid pro quos and bagatelles to the omnipotent protagonist of the animated cartoons....and we of the Like To Is era, we of the “standardization”, we of the “interchangeable parts” who have been summoned to conceive such subliminal sublimities as “the planetary electron” successfully avoiding itself like an eternal flea in a temporary nightshirt, are not uneasy when (before our very eyes) a head and its body successfully maintain separate existences, or elephants and other tiny objects successfully defy gravitation, or a cop successfully transforms himself into a six-piece orchestra to escape successfully from the very crook whom at the moment he is successfully pursuing, or (believe it or not) perfect emptiness generates absolute what-have-you – No indeed; we are not uneasy. (45)

e.e. cummings – “Miracles and Dreams” - 1930.

If, as seems to have been the general sentiment during this period, the world was becoming increasingly “standardized”, and if this tendency toward uniformity was instrumental in the consolidation of the industrial strictures and structures of both high art and mass culture, what was actually going on within the works high and low seemed to head in the opposite direction. To cite the animated cartoon in particular, as Cummings’s early celebration of the aesthetic power in this form makes clear, new metamorphic prerogatives were becoming widely available to the creator and were not limited to modernist art and writing. The artist Edward Munch, reacting to the painter’s fear of

photography, observed in 1889 that “the camera cannot compete with the brush and the palette so long as it cannot be used in heaven or hell” (qtd. in Høifødt). It is true these celestial extremes were also only partially attainable within early film given the then primitive nature of special effects; however, within cartoons - these “drawings that move” (Shale 1) – “heaven and hell” were suddenly much more easily available, quickly becoming a frequent cartoon motif along with the characteristic angels and devils which populated this form, one of each often floating on either side of a character’s head during a decisive moment of crisis.

This new form of visualization would indeed affect “serious” authors as much as serious painters: by the early 1930s, mass culture, and the incessant and accelerating mediation of experience therein, can be seen to be increasingly informing the structures of narrative fiction. For a writer like Faulkner, the question was becoming how would high culture survive the growing impetus of spectacle, not just from the obvious sources like cinema, but from the host of other storytelling forms now crowding the marketplace: the pulps, the cartoons, the radio detective dramas, “the Hollywood-magazine cod liver oil advertisements” (*Jerusalem* 93), these lowest of the low?

In terms of the criticism concerned with the relationship of mass culture to literature in the 1920s and 30s, film is still regarded as the form then most prominently affecting the other arts. In studies such as Bruce K. Kawin’s seminal *Faulkner and Film* (1977) and Peter Lurie’s recent *Vision’s Immanence* (2005), the importance of the cinema to this writer’s works, both as it relates to Faulkner’s distinctive narrative style and in terms of the novels’ specific references and allusions, is well explored. In terms of the more general and formal similarities between this writer and cinema, Kawin’s book does a

masterful job in charting the way in which Faulkner “used such visual tropes as montage, freeze-frame, superimposition, flashback, and perspective distortion, as well as sound-overlap and sound/image conflict in most of his novels” (145), key elements in the writer’s distinctive and sometimes alienating effect. With regard to a more specific and content driven interplay between film and fiction, Lurie’s discussion of *Absalom, Absalom!* is a superb exploration of the interplay between the literary and the cinematic in Faulkner’s writing, here via “a reading of Faulkner’s relationship to the movie industry that shows the way that several aspects of film practice and viewing, above all the relationship to the South’s past that historical film produced, inform his strategies in *Absalom, Absalom!*” (105).

But, as mentioned, the multitude of cinematic forms in existence by the late 1920s goes far beyond the “historical film” or indeed the feature film as a whole; by this time the shorter if not “lesser” forms such as animated cartoons, serials, newsreels, and even coming attractions (with that booming voice, those shimmering superimposed words, their absolute condensation of narrative) may be no less important in their impact on writers. These forms’ effect on the actual process of writing fiction, an effect compounded by the advent of sound on film at the end of that decade, can be seen as also integral to a fundamental shift in literary narrative construction. Yet the relation between animated cartoons in particular and some of Faulkner’s trademark motifs and stylistic approaches does not yet seem to occupy the same place of prominence as film in the huge critical canon which surrounds this writer. If cinema has been and continues to be a major focus in Faulkner criticism, not so well covered has been the writer’s relationship to, for example, animated cartoons and early sound newsreels, forms with which he was well

acquainted. When Faulkner first started working for MGM in 1932 “he had an idea, he said, for Mickey Mouse; the only films he watched, he said, were Disneys and newsreels” (Kawin 70). The above-mentioned lack of investigation to date of these forms in Faulkner’s work may also owe much to a previous difficulty in accessing the primary historical material, a difficulty no longer insurmountable in this era of DVD and Internet streaming. This new access to the 1910s to 1930s work of animators such as Winsor McCay, the Fleischer Bros, and Walt Disney will here form the basis for an investigation into the links between these cartoons and Faulkner’s novels, novels in which buildings and settings become living characters, where the “internal” landscape of characters can be mirrored by a mutation of their external physical features, and where there is often a rotoscopic disjunction between foreground “fluid” characters and background “static” ones.

With regard to cartoons, Faulkner’s above noted love of and desire to write “for Mickey Mouse” despite being employed by MGM should not be surprising. As animation historian Robert Sklar has noted:

The early Mickey Mouse and Silly Symphony cartoons [circa 1928 – 32] are magical. Freed from the burdens of time and responsibility, events are open-ended, reversible, episodic, without obvious point. Outlandish events occur without fear of consequences. There is no fixed order of things; the world is plastic to imagination and will. (61)

Beyond the idea of “events...without fear of consequences”, a trait which also can be found in some of the novels, Sklar’s comments can be read as a formalistic summary of Faulkner’s 1930s work, in particular some of his major narrative and narrativizing

devices which can also be described as “open-ended, reversible, episodic”. Other traits shared by these early cartoons and the novels include an interpolation and diminution of the classical world (such as Greek myths), a fundamental and escalating use of the process of metamorphosis both in terms of the characters’ transformations and in the fluctuating and destabilized narrative voices, and an assimilation of the tropes of cartoon logic and depiction. While it is possible that Faulkner was being ironical in his praise of Disney’s major star, both the direct use of animated tropes in his fiction and his own experience in producing printed cartoons and sketches lend some further credence to the author’s statement regarding his movie program preference; in an essay to be discussed further below M. Thomas Inge notes “there is evidence that William Faulkner –himself once an aspiring cartoonist – had a fondness for the funny papers” (153). But why would a writer of Faulkner’s stature be so enamoured with this form? First, there is a purely formal delight in being able to access new methods of storytelling. But there is something deeper here: Sklar’s comment that in Disney’s work “there is no fixed order of things” can be seen as both cause and effect; Faulkner’s novels convey a world where the fixed orders, whether of region or race or gender are rapidly decaying, partially due to these new mammoth forces of mass culture which also simultaneously provide some new means by which the writer can relay this decay. This idea of instability, both within forms and in terms of the division between high and low is already articulated by the early 1920s, Gilbert Seldes’s celebration of George Herriman’s comic strip *Krazy Kat* being particularly striking in this regard. From an article in the May 1922 issue of *Vanity Fair*:

I have claimed for Mr. Herriman a great imagination and a fine ironic humour;
at the risk of making all my claims seem ridiculous, I must add he is a fine

artist...pure expressionism is the end. His strange unnerving distorted trees, his totally unliveable houses, his magic carpets, his faery foam are items in a composition which is incredibly charged with unreality. Through them wanders Krazy, the most tender and the most foolish of creatures, a gentle monster of our new mythology. ("Golla, Golla" 72)

Two years later, Seldes is less guarded about the artistic quotient:

Krazy Kat, the daily comic strip of George Herriman is, to me, the most amusing and fantastic and satisfactory work of art produced in America today. With those who hold that a comic strip cannot be a work of art I shall not traffic.

(Introduction 15)

But a few brave souls such as Seldes or Cummings aside, the astonishing cultural impact of comics and animation was first noted by the European avant-garde well before the North American critics due perhaps as much to European disdain for American attempts at "high" culture as for any greater critical proclivities. Kavin notes that "Before he won the Nobel Prize in 1950, Faulkner's work was taken more seriously in France than in any other country" (146 – 47), and as with this writer and as with jazz, the cartoon and comic strip were for the most part initially lauded abroad. Gregory Waller summarizes this effect in the following manner: "'Europe's Highbrows Hail Mickey Mouse,' announced *The Literary Digest* in 1931, and the phrase became something of a cliché for the rest of the decade" (49); by 1934, Waller notes, the French critic Phillipe Lamour had proclaimed "Mickey is, quite simply, *a new mode of human expression*" (qtd. in Waller 49).

For the more perceptive and adventurous American creators such as Faulkner these

“new modes” were quick to infiltrate and take hold; in writing, for example, the contemporaneous novelist John Dos Passos’s “new techniques included ‘newsreel’ sections taken from contemporary headlines, popular songs, and advertisements” (VanSpanckeren). However, the critical reactions and evaluations of the popular culture components in these writers’ works seem to be much slower in emerging at least on this side of the Atlantic. In the case of Faulkner, over the years some commentators have noted the more overt comic and cartoon elements in *Pylon*, e.g.

The caricature of Jiggs owes much to comics and cartoons. Jiggs is described as a “cartoon comedy centaur” (*Pylon* 277) and he shares his name, and eventually a one-eyed squint as well, with the down-to-earth, nouveau-riche father of the comic strip “Bringing Up Father”. (Yamaguchi 195)

But following the trend that often seems to run through Faulkner criticism, the comic strip focus is given much greater weight than the cartoon one.¹ Although the lineage of Jiggs’s name is direct and well documented, the “cartoon comedy centaur” reference I have not been able to find directly addressed or traced in Faulkner criticism. The author’s choice of double composite - cartoon comedy/centaur - is an interesting one. By the 1930s, the use of creatures from Greek mythology had become quite widespread in both cartoons and mass culture as a whole (e.g. advertising); however it is possible that an earlier and more direct source for Faulkner’s animated description of Jiggs may be a cartoon short made by Winsor McCay circa 1918 –21 which now survives only in fragments. What remains of “The Centaurs” (Fig. 2) “very charmingly shows a family group of centaurs – an older couple, a younger couple, and the latter’s son – disporting themselves in a coastal glade” (Grant 148).²

As to the centaur himself, besides being of course a “fabulous creature, with the head, trunk, and arms of a man, joined to the body and legs of a horse”, figuratively he has come to represent “an unnatural hybrid creation” or “an intimate union of two diverse natures” (O.E.D. on-line). In the style of McCay’s short or Jiggs’s appearance, the notion of the hybrid or “the composite face” (*Jerusalem* 84) appears in many of Faulkner’s works: mulatto, androgen, or a high/low fusion such as Charlotte Rittenmeyer’s bizarre sculptures – “Cyrano with the face of a low-comedy Jew in vaudeville” (*Jerusalem* 78). Indeed in his stories, as author and narrator, Faulkner is himself a composite of mediated and mediator, his art often like this “cartoon comedy centaur” in its animated blend of the classic and modern, and the high and the low “like something out of an Eisenstein Dante” (*Jerusalem* 157), a conflation used to describe Harry and Charlotte’s initial perceptions of the frozen hell of a Utah coal mine. This kind of cycling between high and low is emblematic of the writer’s work, a convergence perhaps, following the centaur motif, consisting of an involuntary fusion enforced from on high.

In terms of the Faulkner criticism concerned with this particular hybrid of writing and comics/animation two articles of particular interest. D.M. Murray’s 1975 article “Faulkner, the Silent Comedies, and the Animated Cartoon” is a groundbreaking look at the relation of the three subjects in the title; as Murray correctly states in his introduction “No one, as far as I know, has done this” (241). The chief claim of the article concerns the fact “one can show is that the visual elements [listed below] of Faulkner’s humor often resemble effects in film comedy and cartoon” (243). Although more concerned with the comedies than the cartoons, Murray does provide a most useful catalogue of the visual effects associated with these cinematic forms, namely

1. Frantic Action....often organized into the plot patterns of futile endeavor or comic chase.
2. Comic distortion in description and characterization, which often compares human beings to animals and machines.
3. The kaleidoscopic or pinwheel image.
4. The sudden appearance of a character.
5. Delayed gravity.
6. The freeze shot. (243 – layout verbatim).

Examples of these effects are then given, almost exclusively from *The Hamlet* and *Go Down, Moses*. Curiously one of the most fertile grounds for Murray's discussion – the *Old Man* half of *Jerusalem* – is not addressed in the article. References to cartoon-like situations abound in this story: as the tall convict relates his story of trying to save the woman in the tree, the tall tale or even cartoon nature of the narrative becomes evident: "He told it, the unbelievable: hurry, hasten: the man falling from a cliff being told to catch onto something to save himself" (*OM* 144)– a description very similar to the first law of cartoon physics: that a character shall be able to run off a cliff and keep running on air so long as he is not aware that there is nothing beneath him; at the moment of realization of his situation, he must then fall, a cataclysm suffered by Wiley E. Coyote in almost every *Roadrunner* cartoon.

Not only the mechanics of cartoons but also some of the stock gags are interpolated into this book, again in the *Old Man* section. While the convict is holding on to a skiff, "the man...began to stamp at his hands", the convict "snatching his hands away one at a time to avoid the heavy shoes, then grasping the rail again" (142); later, in the same scene, "the convict squatted not in dismay but in that frantic and astonished outrage of a

man who, having just escaped a falling safe, is struck by the following two-ounce paper weight which was sitting on it” (196) – a cartoon paper weight often having a more deadly effect than would the safe or as so often in cartoons, the piano which has preceded it, both safe and piano being standbys of the Fleischer Bros. 1930s *Popeye* series.

Besides the puzzling omission of this story, one other major absence in the article is the lack of a conceptual or theoretical investigation into the reasons as to why Faulkner may have employed these techniques or what the implications of this employment might have been. Rather the essay is more catalogue than criticism, concluding only that “one can say that certain conventions of visual humor found in the Southwestern tradition [such as Twain] were carried on” (254) through comedies and cartoons into Faulkner’s work, Murray content in leaving it at that. Nonetheless, it is a valuable first salvo in the link between Faulkner and the animated film, particularly fine in its detailed delineation of this confluence of “visual” effects.

To both add to Murray’s list and to suggest the aesthetic and social implications possible with these devices, there is one more cartoon “effect” prominent in Faulkner’s work which should be addressed: the positive to negative transformation which is a staple of early black and white cartoons, a pictorial exemplum of tonal contrast which Faulkner also uses. Fittingly this transformation is first found in a novel concerned with racial identity and miscegenation: *Light in August* (1932). Miranda Burgess has discussed the importance of the racial and “self-spectacularization” (110) implications inherent in the protagonist Joe Christmas’s viewing and perception of himself as he “watched his body grow white out of the darkness like a kodak print emerging from the liquid” (*LIA* 108). Here is provided a photographic reference for an increased perception of the tonal

transposition of skin colour, Burgess noting “the metaphor collapses the dualism between white and black” (110), and Faulkner thought enough of this simile to give it a second version in *Jerusalem* in which a “stranger” is described as having “eyes almost white against his skin like a Kodak negative” (*Jerusalem* 90). In the negative required to make a “print”, black is of course white and white black, and the print/negative transposition is a staple of early 1930s black and white cartoons, a particularly valuable visual effect for a host of the studios still locked into monochrome as Disney at this time had a three year exclusive with Technicolor for its use in cartoons.

A prime example of this transposition is found in the Fleischer Bros. 1932 cartoon short “Betty Boop’s ‘Minnie the Moocher’”. During Betty’s and her dog friend Bimbo’s Dante-like wanderings through a forest, they are “frozen” and momentarily transformed into negative form (Figs. 3 and 4); as mentioned this is a common enough effect at the time. But the use of this device is particularly germane here in relation to Joe Christmas’s dichromatic self-perception and particularly relevant to the novel as a whole due to the cartoon’s own racialized subject matter and the animated manifestations thereof. The short begins with a filmed live action segment of Cab Calloway and his orchestra playing the title song (Fig. 5). Then, with no apparent reason or continuity, the piece switches to the cartoon proper, an animated scene inside Betty’s home. It is not until three minutes later, during the main characters’ aforementioned journey, that the song and Calloway re-emerge, he now in the form of a large, anthropomorphized , and conspicuously white (!) walrus (Fig. 6). In this mirroring of the live action and cartoon division between the African- American singer and his band and Betty’s very white and distinctly German based family, the medium divide here reflects the racial one, in a manner so “visually”

similar to that of Faulkner's "Kodak" positive print vs. negative.

To return to the chronology of criticism, ten years after Murray's initial exploration of the subject, M. Thomas Inge's "Faulkner Reads the Funny Papers", from the 1984 Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha conference (*Faulkner and Humor*) continues the discussion and can be seen as seminal in further breaking down the high/low division within the scholarship regarding the writer's works. In a sumptuously illustrated and often convincing essay, Inge sets forth both the biographical and artistic connections of Faulkner to the comic panels, strips, and popular visual art of his day. It is interesting to note that in 1984 there still seems, Seldes's and Cummings's earlier efforts notwithstanding, to be a need if not to excuse then at least to justify this line of inquiry, as seen in Inge's opening paragraph:

In assessing the work of a great writer of the twentieth century, it can be informative to examine the cultural context in which the author lived and worked. No writer works entirely in a vacuum, and a work of literature relates to and is influenced by regions, the things the writer reads, sees, and experiences. Since the century has witnessed the complex development of a massive media environment and new forms of popular culture that reach all people at all social and economic levels in all it is necessary to examine not only the classics and so called "high" culture of a writer's time but the popular and mass culture as well. (153)

This eloquent *raison d'être* for Inge's methodology seems almost quaint now in terms of its plea for taking popular culture seriously within an academic context, but the article as a whole is indeed foundational, especially superb in its research into and reproduction of Faulkner's own early attempts at cartoons and comics.

Yet “Faulkner Reads the Funny Papers” is also somewhat of a missed opportunity, devoting the majority of its last half to a manifesto on the greatness of E.C. Segar’s Thimble Theatre and Popeye cartoon strips. Segar’s genius is indisputable and any additional statement as to it always welcome but, as Inge admits, any relation between the comic strip sailor and the evil bootlegger of *Sanctuary* is chronologically very unlikely, and the entire section does seem somewhat off the mark. Inge does make a fine connection between “Faulkner’s slightly stilted use of urban backstreet dialect and criminal slang” and the “crude language” of many of the comic strips of the day (164-65) but he curiously bypasses perhaps the most pertinent “slang” of all: Shreve’s parting salutation to Quentin “*ta-ta see you in the funny paper*” (*The Sound and the Fury* 111). The association of Faulkner’s works with animated films, many of which after all were based on comic strips, is touched upon by Inge with the standard *Pylon* references (the centaur, the ostrich swallowing the alarm clock); what is perhaps most limiting about the essay however is exemplified by Inge’s assertion that in the comic strip references in *LIA* - “like the Katzenjammer kids in the funny paper” (353) and the “Alphonse and Gaston” section of the final chapter - “Faulkner seems merely to be using the two comic strips as idiomatic references since they have no integral relationship to the plot or action” (Inge 186).

Here, despite Inge’s opening protestations, there are still traces of a reductionism often found in academic approaches to popular culture; rather than their having “no integral relationship” I would suggest that the use of comics, animated cartoons, newsreels etc. in Faulkner’s novels is emblematic and deep-rooted, an acknowledgement of the fact that these forms are providing new ways of seeing, of perceiving, new ways that feed back

into the very process of writing. That is, beneath the specificity of certain references to cartoons and comic strips, there can be found some of the most important and foundational aspects of the novels, for example that of a mutable physical landscape, one which may mirror the internal states of the characters or be anthropomorphized, such as the protean river of *Old Man* in which the convict sees “its crest frothed and shredded like fangs” (144). One also finds in the novels one object or person constantly metamorphosing into another and back again, a transformation mirrored in the new narrational strategies and voicing within these works, both manifestations of a fundamental shift in consciousness itself engendered by these new media forms, and one emblematic of the rapidly shifting and unstable world of the Great Depression which itself was a prime accelerant in the blurring of high and low.

To be fair some critics have moved to further investigate the comic and cartoon aspects in a deeper manner, but these attempts are somewhat sporadic and solitary. For example, in an extended entry in an alphabetical Faulkner glossary, Calvin S. Brown does further address the importance of Faulkner’s use of the “Katzenjammer” simile:

The Katzenjammer Kids was a popular comic strip originated by Rudolph Dirks, in which two brats of German extraction, by traps and trickery, performed various sorts of mayhem against their father and other characters. The balloon with a face and hat was one of their favourite ruses; they would paint balloons with their own features and then tie them up as if peering over a fence or hedge in order to avert suspicion while they themselves were off performing some sort of bedevilment.

(113)

Leaving aside the “mayhem against the father” (although interestingly another staple of

these novels), this above process is a perfect example of the bi-partite person and faces that run rampant through *LLA*, in this case apparently in relation to Doc Hine's wife who "looked like somebody had sneaked up and set a toy balloon with a face painted on it and a comic hat [the one with the 'plume'] set on top of it" (353). Brown also notes "Faulkner seems to have had this balloon trick in mind in the recurring imagery of the slick, unreal, non-human balloon face in *Absalom, Absalom!*" (113). The Katzenjammer Kids also formed the basis for a number of cartoon series, beginning in the late 1910s, and this "balloon trick" and all that it entails is a substantial movement toward full cartoon metamorphosis proper. It is this new visual recognition of the process of transformations which was one of the most extant effects of the by the late 1920s widely seen cartoon form. As Leonard Maltin has painstakingly documented, "metamorphosis – the evolution of one object into another" (Maltin 91) forms one of the visual foundations of the early years of animation (from about 1915 - 1935); this process will be discussed below with regard to its echo in the continual "evolution" of Faulkner's characters' bodies and consciousness from one "into another" which is found in *Light in August* and *Absalom, Absalom!*, as transformations of faces, places, settings, pasts, presents and, of course, narratorial voices permeate the very heart of these works.³

Again, Faulkner's previously mentioned desire to write for Disney may be relevant here as recognition of the elemental power of this animator's work was not limited to French critics. As elucidated by the Russian director Sergei Eisenstein - he of the "Eisenstein Dante" reference cited above - in his 1940s writings on Walt Disney: "I'm sometimes frightened when I watch his films...he creates on the conceptual level of man not yet shackled by logic, reason, or experience"(2). The reasons for Eisenstein's awe are

well articulated in the passage below, reasons particularly relevant in their relation to some of Faulkner's similar devices:

As an unforgettable symbol of his [Disney's] whole creative work, there stands before me a family of octopuses on four legs, with a fifth serving as a tail, and a sixth – a trunk. How much (imaginary!) divine omnipotence there is in this! What a magic of reconstructing the world according to one's fantasy and will! A fictitious world. A world of lines and colors which subjugates and alters itself to your command. You tell a mountain: move, and it moves. You tell an octopus: be an elephant, and the octopus becomes an elephant. You tell the sun: "Stop !" and it stops. (3)

Of course writers from Ovid to Apuleius to Poe to Kafka have always been able to *describe* metamorphoses.⁴ The point here is that, by the 1930s, twenty years of cartoon portrayals of the process thereof have affected both the writer's and the audience's proclivity towards believing in and a more instinctual and one could add visual acceptance of it, the innately episodic constantly morphing nature of animation abetting a new way of reading within a shifting human consciousness. It is sometimes difficult to now recreate the initial cataclysmic visual effect of these "drawings that move" (Shale 1): while "live action films capture *real* movement", in contrast "animated films create *apparent* movement" (Shale 1). Perhaps the words that should be italicised here are "capture" vs. "create" as the latter is the revolution inherent in animation. This form not only provided the means by which to portray internal psychological mechanisms, to literally "get inside the head" of the cartoon characters, but also had the capability to depict an external landscape that can be infinitely calibrated so as to reflect these

emotional states of the characters. Again there are some structural parallels with more traditional literature: Robert Frost's remarkable string of poems in the 1920s and 30s – "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening", "Acquainted with the Night", "Desert Places" et. al. - are grounded in a reflected symmetry between an internal landscape of those emotions the narrator is experiencing and the external physical landscape in which he is experiencing them.

However with Frost's outer environments, there is always an attempt at verisimilitude. In the case of the Benji section of *TSATF*, the cartoon aspects of a symbiosis between internal and external landscape are more overt. In a manner uncannily similar to Eisenstein's above cited statement, "You tell a mountain: move and it moves", Benji's description of "the cellar steps [that] ran up the hill in the moonlight", of "T.P. [who] fell up the hill, in the moonlight" (40), and especially his assertions that "the room went away" (44) and that T.P., Quentin, and Benji "went toward the barn. Then the barn wasn't there and we had to wait until it came back" (21) may be verbally plausible only in the mind of an idiot, but are now visually depictable and even an expected norm in a cartoon. And as Eisenstein makes clear, it is this huge jump from static forms to drawings that move that endows Disney's hybrid creations with such power, creating

the unstable hero with purely protean greed [who] seeks ever newer and newer forms of embodiment...In one of his [Disney's] black and white films, the waves, thus playing, tousle a steamship, gathering into puffs of foam, puffs which suddenly become...fists in boxing gloves, delivering punches to the poor sides of steamships.

(23)

So landscapes can now not only mirror the mood of the characters, as within the narrative consciousness of *Sanctuary* in which the constantly changing personified light in of Miss Reba's house is described as having "a weary quality. A spent quality, defunctive, exhausted..." (144), but to a cartoon literate audience of the 1920s and 30s, as with Benji's barn and the Tall Convict's river, it is quite plausible for landscapes to actually become characters! Eisenstein nicely summarizes the ultimate aesthetic effect of this process, no matter the medium in which it occurs: "*Metamorphoses* is a direct protest against the standardly immutable" (43). As with Faulkner, this is where his admiration for Disney's work can be seen as going beyond the simply aesthetic; it may also rest in this idea of the necessity of undermining the "standardly immutable" as the ultimate rationale or effect of this mutating process. Like Anderson and Cummings, the Russian director has concerns regarding the continual march of standardization, albeit concerns expressed somewhat more lyrically than Anderson's, even if poor Ford shows up yet again. Here Eisenstein sets forth, almost twenty years after Anderson, the descent into uniformity as well as the importance of Disney's work in withstanding it:

Disney is a marvelous lullaby for the suffering and unfortunate, the oppressed and deprived. For those who are shackled by hours of work and regulated moments of rest, by a mathematical precision of time, whose lives are graphed by the cent and dollar...as the carcasses of pigs are dismembered by the conveyor belts of Chicago slaughterhouses, and the separate pieces of cars are assembled into mechanical organisms by Ford's conveyor belts. That's why Disney's films blaze with colour...that's why the imagination in them is limitless, for Disney's films are a revolt against partitioning and legislating, against spiritual stagnation

and greyness. (3-4).

As both *LIA* and *Abs* also may be seen as a “protest against the standardly immutable” and in fact a raging and rampant deconstruction of it, what is being suggested here is that Faulkner often addresses the concerns of Anderson and Eisenstein using the methods of Disney as the means for depicting both escapes from and a revolt against standardization.

For example, metamorphic transformations - whether seen by the characters in others or themselves- pervade *Light in August*. While it is true that perception always entails a metamorphic quality – for example Joe Christmas’s multiple formulations of self particularly with regard to his alternating black and white identities – what is striking in this book is the number of externally visualized perceptions thereof in relation to the characters, the pace of these processes really accelerating in Chapter 20, a section that can be termed as “Hightower’s vision”. As Eisenstein has pointed out, the animator has the power to “tell an octopus: be an elephant, and the octopus becomes an elephant”. Faulkner continues in this vein: if he tells a Hightower to become a Christmas, or a Grimm, or both, and then transform back to a Hightower, so it is done. In this chapter, past and present, reality and memory, faces and places combine, disintwine and recombine at a feverish rate:

He [Hightower] seems to watch himself among faces, always among, enclosed, and surrounded by, faces, as though he watched himself in his own pulpit... And more than that: the faces seem to be mirrors in which he watches himself... (488)

These are faces that first combine into “the final and supreme Face itself” (488). The faces then split off again so that “he can distinguish them from one another” all except for

that of the man called Christmas. This face alone is not clear. It is more confused than any other, as though now in the throes of a more recent, more inextricable, compositeness. Then he can see it is two faces which seem to strive...in turn to free themselves one from the other, then fade and blend again. (492)

The second face, the one that combines with Christmas's, does seem to be Percy Grimm's –“that....boy. With that black Pistol automatic” (492), an almost cartoon-like manifestation of that angel on one side and that devil on the other, struggling within Hightower's “dying” vision, before being reconciled in their “compositeness”. The point here is not only to suggest the symbolic resonance of these transformations but also to emphasize the reader's ability to visualize and follow them; although still aware of their wondrous qualities, both writer and audience are now able to draw on a pooled public knowledge of having actually *seen* these kinds of transformations take place in cartoons.

However, within *LIA* these kinds of metamorphoses are still ambiguously couched within the perceptions of the characters, almost rotoscope-like in their use of an animated foreground super-imposed on a “real-life” background.⁵ By the time of Faulkner's creating of the unstable world of *Absalom, Absalom!* four years later (1936), the transformations are fully externalized; perhaps the only quality that is still “standardly immutable” is a pervading fluidity. As in Shelley's famous 1816 poem in which “naught may endure but mutability” virtually nothing is “fixed” in this novel, whether in terms of character consistency as in the multiple characterizations of Thomas Sutpen - villainous robber baron, heroic conqueror of the elements, or a bit of both; “a demon” or “an impotent old man” or a mix of the two (147) etc. - or in the splintered narrative points of view. The complex shifting of perspective within this book is perhaps best encapsulated

by Cleanth Brooks in his charting of “The Narrative Structure of *Absalom, Absalom!*” in which he describes the narratorial levels as “the various strata of Quentin’s knowledge” of which there are, according to Brooks, six layers, termed “Stratum A” through “F” (203).

Accordingly, through these filtering strata, the motif of and references to a “metamorphosis”, a “phase” or a “lustrum” reach an obsessive pitch throughout *Absalom, Absalom!* Two quick examples, the first now taking place within the actual narrative:

In fact perhaps this is the pure and perfect incest; the brother realising that the sister’s virginity must be destroyed in order to have existed at all, taking that virginity in the person of the brother-in-law, the man whom he would be if he could become, metamorphose into, the lover, the husband; by whom he would be despoiled, choose for despoiler, if he could become, metamorphose into the sister, the mistress, the bride. (77)

This scene goes a step further than the previously discussed Joe Christmas/Cab Calloway transformations. Here Henry Sutpen fantasizes a double metamorphosis, this time not only of race but also of gender, first by projecting a transformation into his half-black half-brother Charles Bon (“the lover”) and then mutating again, this time into his sister Judith.

The second is with regard to the narrators’ relation to the characters they are describing as found in the words of Quentin’s father (Mr Compson) describing Charles Bon’s “octoroon” mistress:

(your grandfather said you did not wonder what became of the mother [of Valery Bon], you did not even care: death or elopement or marriage: who would not

grow from one metamorphosis-dissolution or adultery –to the next carrying along with her all the old rubbish years we call memory, the recognizable *I*, but changing from phase to phase as the butterfly changes once the cocoon is cleared, carrying nothing of what was into what is... (159)

In addition to attempting to follow or decode the numerous transformations to and from implied within these passages, the more important or immediate point may be simply that the reader becomes dizzy with the back and forth action, a visceral re-creation of a cartoon consciousness and a world in constant flux, a world where it is perfectly normal that an Ellen Sutpen “had produced two children and then rose like the swamp-hatched butterfly” (55). After her marriage to Sutpen, Ellen does indeed undergo a rapid change – “at this time Ellen went through a complete metamorphosis, emerging into her next lustrum with the complete finality of actual re-birth” (59). The visual effects of ongoing transformations are also present in this novel as in the description of “young girls” in “that transition stage between childhood and womanhood” (52) who are “in nebulous suspension held, strange and unpredictable, even in their very shapes fluid and delicate and without substance” (55). Faulkner’s description of his characters here again parallels that which can be seen in Disney’s animation; as Eisenstein notes in the cartoons’ “mobility of contour” (23) one sees that “not only the character trembles, but a wavering line runs along the contour of its drawn image” (57). This Disney-like trembling and shape-shifting is balanced or juxtaposed with other more traditional forms of metamorphosis throughout the novel as seen in some much simpler transformations, ones perhaps out of blues songs. In one case, during Thomas and Ellen’s ill-fated wedding day, tears literally become rain as in the blues-like conflation “Yes, she was weeping again

now; it did indeed rain on that marriage” (45); in another we are given simply that most basic image of metamorphic regeneration: “a shedding snake” (47). Of course, this being Faulkner, there is also a mention of a standard metamorphic desiccation: “a vampire” (68). Even the sage elderly aunt Rosa Coldfield speaks with this imagery, mentioning the “*soft insulated and unscathed cocoon stages*” (125).

That there is another kind of cross-transformation throughout the story in its use of multiple narrative voices would seem to be key to untangling both these shifting narrators and also the actual dialogue sections. These sections often concern the character-narrators (Rosa, Quentin, Shreve etc.) speaking about and involved in the meta-fictional speculations and commentary as to how their actor-characters’ (the Sutpens, Bon etc.) dialogue is recounted or recovered or created or re-created. Joseph Urgo’s “*Absalom, Absalom! The Movie*” convincingly argues this process in fact represents an elaborate scriptwriting session. But there is another more transcendental and trance-like level concurrently at play here: it is within the accelerated transformations and transposing of the actual actor-characters with these narrators that Faulkner hits metamorphic over-drive, moving to his highest degree of animated metamorphoses. To compare, one can first examine Eisenstein’s critique of the Disney short “Hawaiian Holiday” (1937), a work he considers an exemplum of “the rich fantasy of transformations” that Mickey Mouse often undergoes:

how easily and gracefully these four fingers on both of Mickey’s hands, playing a Hawaiian guitar, suddenly dissolve into...two pairs of extremities. The two middle fingers become little legs, the two outer fingers- little hands. The second hand becomes its partner. And suddenly there are no longer two hands, but two

funny little white people, elegantly dancing along the strings of the Hawaiian guitar... (39).

Although the specific cartoon Eisenstein references here is released the year after the novel, the numeric variations and mutations which are mentioned above are by the time of *Absalom, Absalom!* already well codified in the cartoon lexicon. So like Mickey's hands in the above passage, in the metamorphic obsessions of *Abs!* "the four into two" scenario reaches a climax in the almost dizzying transmutations of "Charles-Shreve" and "Quentin- Henry" (267) in Chapter 8. At first "there was now not two of them but four" (236) – which quickly changes to the "four of them and then just two" (267) until finally "both of them were Henry Sutpen and both of them were Bon" (280) which can make two, four, or six figures present in the room depending upon, as with Mickey's fingers, how or at what point one counts these combinations. By this point, the metamorphosis, transference, or prototypical method acting adoption of their characters by the sub-narrators Quentin and Shreve appears irreversible: "First, two of them, then four, now two again" (275) leads to a repeat observation on the following page –"two, four, now two again." In typical Faulkner fashion the character of these multiples is finally clarified yet later still: "since now both of them were Henry Sutpen and both were Bon" (280), a devastating and enlightening transformation in terms of the narrative structure of the story even if a recipe for disaster in terms of coming up with a cohesive and coherent tale, Faulkner apparently no fan of the collaborative writing process with regard to film; however within his fiction these kinds of unresolved juxtapositions or unexplainable contradictions and the confusion they engender in the reader often seem to be a desired end result.

These metamorphoses, these constant changes cycling between the actual characters within the narrative and the narrator's shifting relation to them in combination also impart an overall mediated quality to Faulkner's novels, the feeling of an indirect experience, of reality and representation continually morphing from one to another, the difference being increasingly difficult to define. As Guy Debord so clearly announces in the opening lines of *Society of the Spectacle*, "in societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation" (2). Where Faulkner is especially prescient is first his recognition of this some three decades before Debord, as well as in his almost simultaneous realization of the importance of the "production" of the popular culture industry in this process, a process which was just beginning. This feeling of distancing in the narrative and narration of *Absalom* is palpable:

They stared – glared- at one another, their voices (it was Shreve speaking, though save for the slight difference which the intervening degrees of latitude had inculcated in them (differences not in tone or pitch but of turns of phrase and usage of words), it might have been either of them and was in a sense both: both thinking as one, the voice that happened to be speaking the thought only the thinking became audible, vocal; the two of them creating between them, out of the rag-tag and bob-ends of old tales and talking, people who perhaps had 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 (to one of the at least, to Shreve) shades too) quiet as the invisible murmur of their vaporising breath. (243).

There is of course an amazing stylistic similarity here in the imagery to James Joyce's "The Dead" in which Gabriel Conroy senses that the persons he thought close are fading away from him as "one by one they were all becoming shades" (Joyce 160), but the difference in narrative levels between the two stories is equally enlightening. Whereas in *The Dead*, the shades are shadows of "real" people within Gabriel Conroy's believable fictional world, here the narrator is quite candid about the fact that the very people on whom the previous 250 pages have been based may not have "existed" at all! Here is the literary equivalent of this new society of mediated and re-created experience, from Roosevelt's fireside chats to "the confession magazines" (*TWP* 103) that *Jerusalem's* Harry Wilbourne writes for, a dwindling condition of certainty and a double negative furthered by, as the narrator of *Old Man* terms the pulp writers of crime and detective magazines, "shades who had written about shades" (22).

This idea of mediation also relates directly to the other half of Faulkner's desired destination for his Hollywood writing: newsreels, the advent of sound in the late 1920s having a large effect on their veracity. Much as the cumbersome nature of sound recording altered the way in which motion pictures were staged and shot, newsreel production was similarly affected. By the early 1930s, as Thomas Doherty claims, one direct effect of sound recording was:

It [the newsreel] also lost some of its accuracy as a record of history.

Virtually every public event or formal ceremony witnessed by the early sound newsreel was staged or re-enacted for the benefit of the cameras and microphones. Common practice was to rehearse an event before hand or to repeat the event afterwards, with the newsreel cameraman

and sound man acting as directors of a playlet featuring politicians and businessmen who compliantly repeated lines and repeated gestures. (203)

This is indeed the world of *Pylon*, with its double mention of “newsreels” on the same page (91), the double mention suitable as not only are newsreels a mirror and mediation of an event, but they are also cause and effect thereof, the public’s desire for the spectacle of the new setting in motion the process of realizing it which is to be documented - in the novel’s case the sending of the locomotive to the shops for modernization - and then, in the process documenting and disseminating it, perpetrating and perpetuating the spectacle effect of “horseshoe rose wreaths and congressmen and thirty- six highschool girls out of the beauty show in bathing suits” (91). In other words, increasingly any kind of art-making and other attempts at representation is becoming art-producing, a massive production and a collaborative one at that.

These devices as employed by Faulkner are of particular interest when placed within the 1930s context of this growing media-oriented and mediated experience. It is perhaps too easy to correlate the growing number of pop culture forms seen in the 1930s with yet another crisis in literature and the arts, but it does seem that the growing prominence of mass culture, along with the innately self-destructive aspects of creation inherent in modernism, do bring some feelings of panic to a head. As Walter Benjamin noted in the middle of this decade, “that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art” (221) and the maddening problem for early modernist writers is how to recover this lost “aura” of the classical world without appearing doddering and nostalgic. In *The Dehumanization of Art* (1925) Jose Ortega Gasset delineates the dilemma further: “it is easy to protest that it is always possible to produce art within the

bounds of a given tradition. But this comforting phrase is of no use to the artist who, pen or chisel in hand, sits waiting for a concrete inspiration” (54). As Gasset warns, it is never any use for the artist to tread “the beaten and worn-out paths” (54), paths which, as Sherwood Anderson has warned, will, in the case of writing, inevitably end at the hack. Faulkner as a writer is uniquely positioned in his bipartite straddling of the worlds of high and low, of literature and screenplays, of publishers and producers, to see the new formal and stylistic possibilities as well as the social effects afforded by these low forms. In other words, if film etc. can, to use Walter Benjamin’s term, “liquidate” the great memory and tradition of literature, then conversely, literature can and perhaps must begin liquidating the mass culture forms in return.

So it is in this accessing, assimilating, and addressing these new modes of both artistic and social discourse, these worlds of metamorphosis and mediation, that Faulkner avoids the “worn-out paths” of both the head-in-the-sand reactionary and a fashionable yet superficial “modern”. These methods can often offer a puzzling result, a result that is to Hugh Kenner proof of the author’s “incoherence” (107), in both the individual stories and the overall cosmology, and his “miserable narrative technique” (111). But as Malcolm Cowley notes at the end of his published correspondence with Faulkner: “His actions did not seem inexplicable to me as they did to others. They were his own solutions, fresh and simple ones, as if he were acting without precedents, to problems that almost of all the writers of our time had to face” (151). Faulkner’s “solutions” may be thought of as the deconstruction and erratic reassembly of narrative form, a reformulation or a deliberate confusion and deception, necessary by the 1930s, so as to confound the codification and easy translation of the printed fictive form, a strategy necessary to keep literature from

becoming simply another “new hat which even yet had the appearance of resting exactly as the machine stamped and molded it” (*Pylon* 78).

The idea that ideas, like hats, are becoming mass produced is not an oversimplification or an elitist meandering, but a very real manifestation of the march of mass culture, an effect that serious writers in Faulkner’s time had begun to feel on a visceral level. Accordingly, the threat of the mass institutionalization and standardization of artistic vision is also very real by this time and no more is this effect more present than in the then omnipresent productions of Walt Disney. As Robert Sklar bittersweetly concludes:

No account of Disney’s later 1930s cartoon shorts would be complete without paying tribute to their remarkable feats of sound, color, and animation, their sustained inventiveness, their frequent brilliance of design and conception....

But one should not lose sight of what their style signifies; there is one right way to imagine (as elsewhere there is one right way to behave). The borders to imagination are closed now. The time has come to lay aside one’s own imagination, and together all shall dream Walt Disney’s dreams. (65)

Here are the cartoon cloying centaurs of *Fantasia*, the world of mass and mechanized culture, both high and low, feared by Anderson, foreshadowed in *Pylon* and fully delved into in *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem*, a book which will be discussed in the next chapter. It is important to note, as Sklar does, that this kind of culture is not without its seductive charms. These addresses and interpolations of mass culture may be the bestial half of Faulkner’s own centaur; the more desperate cries of *Light in August* and *Absalom, Absalom!* are still an attempt to explore those “old verities and truths of the human heart”

(Faulkner, "Address" 723) even if it means using the enemy's tools to do so. The previously mentioned idiomatic leave-taking given by Shreve to Quentin -"ta-ta see you in the funny paper" (*TSATF* 111) is a contemporaneous send-off, "a smarty catch-phrase for 'I'll be seeing you'" (Brown 172), but given Faulkner's predictions, circa 1956, on the paths still open to literature:

INTERVIEWER: Would you comment on the future of the novel?

FAULKNER: I imagine as long as people read novels, people will continue to write them, or vice versa; unless of course the pictorial magazines and comic strips finally atrophy man's capacity to read, and literature is finally on its way back to picture writing in the Neanderthal cave. (Stein 79)

Shreve's slangy phrase may be the start of the author's deep farewell to the audiences of the future, rather than simply a tossed-off and temporary adieu.⁶

Notes

¹ By comparison, both the original early comic strips and an acceptable amount of secondary material have been available since the institutionalization of comic fandom in the late 1950s. The artistic canonization of certain newspaper strips beloved by both critics and artists (for example “Little Nemo in Slumberland” and *Krazy Kat*) is virtually concurrent with their inception (1905 and 1913 respectively), although the ephemeral physicality of their form still presented difficulty in access until their eventual reprinting in comic or book form.

² John Canemaker notes that “McCay chose mythological beasts again to prove to his critics that he worked independently of photographs and models” (Fig. 1) and that the much more famous “centaurs and ‘centaurettes’ in Walt Disney’s *Fantasia* some two decades later may have been inspired by McCay’s character designs for this film” (21); as will be discussed below, the neutered saccharine cuteness of Disney’s later beasts are a stark contrast to the classical charm of McCay’s. It is also worth noting here McCay’s heritage as the dominant figure of early animation and comic strips. “Gertie the Dinosaur” (1914) is now often referred to the first “real” cartoon; interestingly in Faulkner/hybrid terms it is actually an astonishingly accomplished live action/animation blend. In terms of hallucinogenic dream-visions, McCay’s metamorphic extravaganza “Little Nemo in Slumberland” - both comic strip (1905–13) and prototypical cartoon (1911) - bears no small resemblance to Joe Christmas’s and Hightower’s rather fluid perceptions of reality, particularly when it comes to re-defining physical appearance, perspective, and boundaries, traits of the novel which will be discussed below.

³ Any discussion of both metamorphosis and the most important early cartoons would be incomplete if it did not further mention the Fleischer Brothers Studio, as their 1920s *Out of the Inkwell* series and the already discussed 1930s *Betty Boops* are often aesthetically superior and metamorphically even more revolutionary than the contemporaneous Disney cartoons (although with the exception of one Betty cartoon, all are in black and white). As Leonard Maltin observes “the Fleischer animators’ use of this device [metamorphosis] bordered on the surreal” (91), citing and elaborately explaining both an *Inkwell* and *Boop* cartoon. Although the Pre-code Disney works do have a harder edge than his later productions,

the ribald humour, sexual puns and subversive transformations found in the Fleischer's work would seem to be closer in spirit to Faulkner than the increasingly saccharine Disney shorts of the mid to late 1930s.

⁴ This is not to suggest that metamorphic depictions or quick shifts in perspective are anything new in American literature. In his discussion of the antebellum era, David Reynolds describes "the American Subversive Style" of this period as one characterized by "weird juxtapositions of incongruous images and by rapid shifts in time, place, and perspective" (442). As an example Reynolds cites the 1840s work of popular novelist George Lippard in which "inanimate objects come to life and behave like human beings...[and] people in turn seem like strange pastiches of heterogeneous objects" (460-61). Reynolds also notes the way in which Melville's work can be seen within this "subversive" context. What this thesis is suggesting is that Faulkner is one of the first writers to interpolate the techniques of visual metamorphic depictions found in the media arts, in particular those of the cartoon.

⁵ The rotoscope is another technological innovation of animation that may inform Faulkner's writing, especially in terms of the relation between the fore-grounded characters and the back-grounded settings. Although today the best-known example may be Disney's *Snow White* (1937), the device was patented and popularized some twenty years earlier by Max Fleischer:

...Max was intrigued with idea of using a machine to create lifelike movement...
[and] his idea was patented as the rotoscope [in 1915]...a camera projects a piece of
live-action film, one frame at a time, onto a light-table, enabling the artist to trace
live-action movement onto animation paper and achieve completely realistic results.

Thus, a cartoon character could move and gesture just like a live actor. (Maltin 80) First used to full effect in the 1919 cartoon series *Out of the Inkwell*, its impact, as Maltin points out, was immediate, citing a contemporaneous *New York Times* review that raves, "After a deluge of pen and ink 'comedies' in which the figures move with mechanical jerks with little or no wit to guide them, it is a treat to watch the smooth motion of Mr. Fleischer's figure [KoKo the Clown] and enjoy the cleverness that animates it" (Anonymous qtd. in Maltin 81). The rotoscope process is perhaps maximized in the aforementioned Betty Boop cartoons "Minnie the Moocher" and "Snow White" (1933) with regard to the Cab Calloway

metamorphic sequences (Figs. 5 and 6) discussed previously. This process results in a strange perceptual effect which is created by viewing a central, rotoscoped character, who is based on a live-action model and whose actions are fluid, move across a more standard cartoon background that includes all the secondary characters who are conventionally animated and more “mechanical” in their movements. This contrast creates an effect that is almost dream-like in the dislocation that it creates, an effect taken to its ultimate point in the Fleischer’s 1939 feature failure *Gulliver’s Travels*.

⁶ The movement toward what is termed, to use the new buzzword, “visual literacy” has shockingly accelerated in the present century due to the digital revolution. To cite but one of many such claims, see James Paul Gee’s argument in 2004’s *What Video Games Have to Teach Us about Learning and Literacy* that “in the modern world, language is not the only important communicational system. Today images, symbols, graphs, diagrams, artefacts and many other visual symbols are particularly significant” (14). That the rise in visual literacy may correspond with a decline in verbal literacy is of course no small side effect: a *New York Times* article from the same year – “The Closing of the American Book” - notes a National Endowment for the Arts survey reports “reading for pleasure is way down in America among every group – old and young, wealthy and poor, educated and uneducated, men and women, Hispanic, black and white” (Andrew Solomon). Of course video games, digital cameras and YouTube are instrumental in this process, but once again, cinema is playing its part, particularly with regard to fiction and Sklar’s “borders of imagination”. If cartoons were the first to show Munch’s “heaven and hell”, so now too can movies of course via CGI visual effects. This possibility has not gone unnoticed by present day film adapters of Faulkner’s work. A 2006 *Los Angeles Times* article announced that the “exclusive representative of the William Faulkner Literary Estate” Lee Caplin will be producing a film of a recently discovered Faulkner “vampire saga” which has “a high-end computer- graphics firm on the hook to dress it up with modern effects” (Fernandez). The article also notes a forthcoming adaptation of *The Sound and the Fury* and that Oprah Winfrey is “seeking to make *Light in August*”. Numerous other Faulkner projects are in the works; it does seem plausible that the availability and increasingly lower cost of CGI will provide an important tool in solving some of the adaptation problems the novels’ complexities entail; as to Faulkner’s fear of a

reductive post-literary future, one may look no further than Caplin's pitching of one Faulkner story as "*American Beauty* on steroids" (Fernandez).



Figure 2. “like a cartoon comedy centaur”: Winsor McCay’s cartoon fragment *The Centaurs* (circa 1918-21).



Figure 3: “like a kodak print” I: The Fleischer Brothers’ “Minnie the Moocher” (1932).



Figure 4. “like a Kodak negative” I: Betty’s and Bimbo’s negative effect.



Figure 5. “like a kodak print” II: the rotoscopic transformation of Cab Calloway.



Figure 6. “he watched his body grow white out of the darkness” (*LIA* 108).

Chapter Three

“The Megaphone’s Bellowing and Bodiless Profanity”:

If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem and the Culture of Cacophony

Not for me the standardized little pellets of opinion, the little neatly wrapped packages of sentiment the magazine writers had learned to do up, I told myself. In modern factories food was packed in convenient standard-sized packages and I half suspected that behind the high-sounding labels the food was often enough sawdust or something of the sort.

(Anderson, *Story Teller* 231)

two people...who born and bred in sight of the sea, had for taste in fish a predilection for the tuna, the salmon, the sardines bought in cans, immolated and embalmed three thousand miles away in the oil of machinery and commerce (Faulkner, *TWP* 9)

The truck crawled on, the guard and the trusty feeling out the road ahead with the reversed shovels, the second guard at the wheel, the twenty-two convicts packed like sardines into the truck bed and padlocked by the ankles to the body of the truck itself.

(Faulkner, *OM* 55)

From factory (whether that of food or fiction) to market to chain gang: these seem to be but small, incremental steps, all now part of the sequential march toward being

“submerged in anonymous lockstep with the teeming anonymous myriads of our time and

generation” (*TWP* 46 – italics verbatim). The movement toward standardization does indeed become increasingly monolithic as the 1930s progress; accordingly, so does Faulkner’s concern with the decline of serious reading and the potentially catastrophic effects thereof. So although the metamorphic qualities continue apace in his last novel of this decade -the double-storied *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem* - here the linking ur-motif shifts to a second, complementary aspect of an increasingly media-fed existence discussed with regard to metamorphosis: that of mediation, of living in what is more and more a world of initially resounding but subsequently diminishing echoes, whether of “second hand invitations” (*TWP* 38), second hand art, or second hand love.

Accordingly, the transformational shifts within the stories are here largely subsumed into concrete objects, as opposed to the previously discussed perceptions within the characters. Emblematic of this shift are the artist/window dresser Charlotte Rittenmeyer’s bizarre sculptures - her “puppets” (77) and “figurines” (101) - in *The Wild Palms* sections. These cartoon composites can be seen as a cross between the commercial and the avant-garde, a confluence which is one of this story’s prime obsessions: “Mrs. O’ Leary with Nero’s face and the cow with a ukulele, Kit Carson with legs like Nijinsky and no face, just two eyes and a shelf of forehead to shade them with, buffalo cows with the heads and flanks of Arabian mares” (74). These kinds of physical metamorphoses are balanced in the book’s other story by the eternally shifting River in *Old Man*, as well as this half’s direct cartoon references discussed in the previous chapter. But in this novel as a whole the instability factor is shifted beyond the individual stories and their narrative to the bi-partite structure of the book itself and the elusive, eliding narration within and between the two tales. Both the structure and attendant narration are crucial in Faulkner’s

conveying of the cause and effects of this new world of magazines, newspapers, photos, and movies, forms which constitute Anderson's "little neatly wrapped packages of sentiment" and which so inform this book. There is herein a feeling of direct experience slipping away, of a full and unstoppable movement into Vachel Lindsay's earlier fears about a media-based world: "a circus gone wrong...a gigantic spectacle..." (183).

This shift is mirrored in the increasingly puzzling and shifting narrator(s) within the novel who permeate the two stories; often it is increasingly difficult to tell where the narrator is at all. These narrators sometimes shout from afar, and sometimes whisper intimately, a combination of excitable play-by-play man and suave radio announcer, twin masters of ceremonies presiding over this bizarre festival of composites and mediation. Like the structure of the book itself there is now manifest in the narrative and narrators an unrelenting split-screen world. In terms of the novel as a whole, what we see here is this world manifested in the following: (1) the book's bi-partite structure; (2) in the introduction of new narrative voices, in particular those then new ones stemming from newsreels, radio and film; (3) in the cinematic antecedents and references and resonance thereto in both content and form which permeate the book; and (4) in the meta-narrative that binds the two stories, that of, in common with Sherwood Anderson, a seething disgust with the emerging chains of "standardization". These are the chains which bind and choke modern life, whether its food, love, literature, art, or, in one of the book's more singular motifs, that which is now seen as the "apotheosis of the bourgeoisie" (110): the celebration of Christmas. This is a season which has already been endowed with a special significance by the author in his naming of the protagonist of *Light in August* (Joe Christmas) and its prominence in the ill-fated meeting of *Absalom*'s Judith Sutpen and

Charles Bon.

First to the two-part structure of the novel: as discussed in the thesis Introduction, despite an interim restoration of Faulkner's original long, Biblically allusive title, *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem* is today more popularly known as *The Wild Palms*.¹ As the albeit unintentionally alternating title reflects, the book has a alternating structure, one story looking to the past in an almost Biblical parable about the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927, the other looking forward to the emerging world of mass culture and bohemians founded in a 1937 America. The "earlier" half of the novel in terms of time period - *Old Man* - concerns a nameless "tall convict" who is temporarily released from his prison farm in order to help with the rescue efforts in the cataclysmic 1927 Mississippi flood. The other half - *The Wild Palms* - is the story of Harry and Charlotte, a man and a woman in an illicit relationship on the run in a decaying 1930s America.

The first two sections of Faulkner's novel introduce, in an alternating sequence, these two contrapuntal stories which comprise the book as a whole, a sequence which will continue throughout the book. Perhaps fittingly given the novel's propensity toward chronological disruption of narrative, the later set story is the first section to appear. *The Wild Palms* begins in 1937 and introduces the two protagonists Harry Wilbourne and Charlotte Rittenmeyer. Their story begins almost at the end of their narrative as Faulkner will then loop back as their sections progress, going back in time to the start of their adventures before eventually returning to this first section's fictional "present", the characters' initial situation being resolved, somewhat, in their final sections of the novel. It is important to note that this "program already in progress" beginning at first offers little information as to who Harry and Charlotte are and what has happened to them. In

fact, most of the observations within this section are mediated through a 48-year-old Doctor's consciousness in a manner akin to an introductory voiceover in a movie. So what is known? The setting is "a beach cottage" fronting "this coast" (*TWP* 3) of what appears to be Louisiana - a state where "the doctor had lived here all his life" (4). The Doctor seems to be the epitome of bored, middle-aged, middle-class stasis, a situation that is in stark contrast to the rather wild wanderings of Harry and Charlotte which later chapters depict. Predicated on this structure is the fact that it is impossible to understand these kinds of contrast without having read the whole book, immediately indicative as to how Faulkner's narrative construction here is predicated upon a re-reading. A parallel here may be a very complex detective story – one does not pick up on all the clues until the murderer is revealed; the reader is then tempted, if the book is good enough, to go back and go over them again.

Even this very chapter follows this looping technique, beginning with a knock on a door, moving back to that which preceded this action, and then picking the initial story up again eight pages later. In terms of the arc of the section as a whole, what is being set up is a contrast between a safe and apparently none too satisfying way of life of one couple (the middle-aged doctor's and his wife's) and what seems to be the more illicit and dangerous, one could say "wild", life of the younger couple. "The doctor or the doctor in the Doctor" (5) – his profession here fused with his consciousness, a stark contrast to the unemployed Harry and Charlotte - has already determined something is not right with this young woman who along with her (non) "husband" have rented his beachfront cottage. Of course, this is not the usual kind of couple the doctor and his wife are used to seeing here– "She's got on pants' the agent said. 'I mean not these ladies' slacks, but pants,

man's pants'" (6). Androgyny in both people and animals is another subset of the "standardization" motif that permeates *Jerusalem*, a continuation of *Pylon*'s world in which defined gender roles are starting to dissolve, and a motif which is counterweighted in the book's other story as rushing by in the flood the tall convict sees "does or bucks he did not know which since they were all antlerless in May" (*OM* 193). Fittingly the doctor is told of Charlotte's styling over the phone – the world of "wirehum" (7), of disembodied communication. Also, as the agent speculates in what turns out to be an accurate observation, this "young couple ain't married, she ain't married to him" (7), a first glimpse of Harry and Charlotte's incendiary situation. Nonetheless, in another foreshadowing of a motif that runs through this story, money supersedes morality and the Doctor agrees to rent "the shack" to them even if his wife Miss Martha disagrees.

However, something is physically wrong with the young woman as the doctor has already surmised, but it is not her "heart" – the poetic seat of love - as previously thought, but tellingly it is instead a bleeding, a haemorrhage the location of which is identified only by Harry's curt answer to the doctor, "'Where do women bleed?'" (14). Some additional back-story occurs as the doctor attends to the patient. It is still the Depression or perhaps simply the poor timeless South. When questioned as to his occupation Harry claims himself to be a "painter" (15). At first the doctor takes this to mean a "housepainter", apparently a puzzling choice of profession to him: "'A painter? But there is no building, no boom, no development anymore. That died nine years ago'"(15). This confusion is then apparently corrected by Harry when he states "'I paint pictures....At least I think I do'" (15). This may be an artist then, but an uncertain and amateur one, the first of many in the story and a type whom Faulkner portrays in a consistently unflattering

manner. Here however even the medium classification is inaccurate; Harry does not really paint, a point later revealed by his lover Charlotte who “found out he was color blind and didn’t even know it” (96); if Harry fits into any creative category it is that of, technically, a writer, one of magazine confession stories. But the larger point here may be painter, writer, what does it matter? A self-proclaimed artistic status – whether here, in the novel’s later depiction of 1930s New Orleans bohemia or as in today’s ubiquitous actor/artist/ singer/ writer/ - is meaningless, and the relation of this story to the exploding worlds of mass culture and bohemian art - the two perhaps already being more or less the same in Faulkner’s view - will become overt as the couple’s history unfolds in the next few sections. This section ends with Harry and Charlotte arguing about her having a drink before letting the doctor enter the room where Charlotte is lying.

Beyond the narrative, what is also being set up here is the structural idea of boundaries and division: in the sixth line of *TWP*, not only is the reader alerted to the fact that it is set at “a beach cottage”, but also to the fact that the cottage is, in what can be seen as an architectural foreshadowing of the novel’s structure, described, somewhat strangely in terms of syntax, as being “even though of two stories” (3). This notion of the doubled edifice is later echoed, albeit in a slightly altered form, in Harry’s ultimate destination – the jail -which also “was of two storeys” (258). In the doctor’s initial viewing of Charlotte, “he watched the woman through the screen of oleander bushes which separated the two lots” (5). Later, the doctor walks “across his own somewhat sheltered yard and through the dividing oleander hedge and so into the full sweep of the unimpeded sea-wind which thrashed among the unseen palms” (13). “Two stories” – “through the screen” – “the dividing oleander hedge”: in this division between the tame and the wild, a

neat coming attraction is provided of both this major motif of the two alternating stories as well as the reader's subsequent crossing back and forth between them.

This leads into the second story *Old Man*, its title also italicized by the author. Here, the popular culture links are perhaps initially more obvious, beginning with the title, perhaps a reference to "Old Man River" from Kern's and Hammerstein's 1927 musical *Showboat* or simply to the southern African-American lore on which Hammerstein based his lyrics. This story is, at first, more straight ahead in terms of both narrative and chronology, not to mention considerably shorter a section the first time around.² More straight ahead that is until narratorial prerogative begins to overwhelm the actual story, but initially as opposed to the previous section the *Old Man* sections proceed in a chronological straight line. It is Mississippi 1927, a historical time already passed at the time of the novel's writing, and involving a situation also based on a "real-life" event: the great flood when, to paraphrase Memphis Minnie's 1929 song, the levees do indeed break, from both natural causes and later from man-made explosions. The actual narrative at this point is more easily discernible than the preceding story: a convict in Mississippi who is "about twenty-five, flat-stomached, with a sunburned face and Indian-black hair and pale" (20) is, as often was the case at this time, serving much of his sentence "on a cotton plantation which the convicts work under the shotguns of guards and trustees" (21) What is also relevant to the argument here is the way that the convict's life, both past and present, has been mediated by and through media, a word that had only recently (the 1920s) attained its current meaning. The reason he is in jail for "fifteen years" for "an attempted train robbery" (21) is because he believed in the celebrity myths the mass media was already propagating. These were found in "the stories, the paper novels, the

paperbacks and pamphlets” (20 –21), the convict taking both his inspiration - “the Diamond Dicks and Jesse James and such”- and his actual “plans” for the robbery from the world of pulp fiction as he “followed his printed (and false) authority to the letter” (21). It is here, rather than to the “men who foiled his crime, the lawyers, the judges” that his “outrage” is directed, albeit an outrage of “raging impotence” (22), a verbal motif which spans the entire story. Even the money for the gun used in the robbery was earned by “peddling to his pine-hill neighbors subscriptions to the *Detective’s Gazette*” (22). For the tall convict not only the inspiration for the crime but also the means by which to enact it are provided by the mass culture industry. Like a hack writer, he has assembled his material for his failed performance of self from a collage of already mediated second-rate fiction manufactured by what the text terms, with Faulkner’s usual acerbic bitterness toward writers of this sort, “shades who had written about shades” (22), an echo of the Shreve/ Quentin conversation discussed in the previous chapter.

The second part of this *OM* section concerns the Parchman convicts finding out about the potential flood and what it might mean for them from newspapers, or more precisely, the headlines – “those black staccato slashes of ink which, it would almost seem, even the illiterate should be able to read” (25).³ This then is a world in which mass culture is becoming increasingly pervasive and influential among both the high and the low and perhaps as an atonement for his sin, not of robbery, but of bad reading habits, this convict along with his fellow prisoners will now face that most Biblical of catastrophes: The Flood. A mound on which the convict temporarily escapes the water is seen as “that earthen ark out of Genesis” (194) although one suitably updated in terms of both cause, as it is both God and man responsible for the torrent, and time span: in this accelerated

modern world, the deluge has built up for a mere “some forty hours” (133) as opposed to the forty days found in the original Genesis.

As both stories progress, all roads and rivers (and there will be many) lead to the same place: prison and death, a world which is, to use one of Faulkner’s favourite words, “desiccated”: dried up or dried out, as in the milkless breast. In *The Wild Palms*, Charlotte dies from the botched abortion which has caused her condition seen in the first chapter, and Harry is tried and convicted for her murder, ignoring her estranged husband Rat’s rather strange offers of assisted escape or suicide through cyanide. The last part of Wilbourne’s story which is told fully as an interior monologue sounds suspiciously like the confessions articles Harry was writing earlier: very Old Testament or the post-Code contemporaneous Hollywood in its morality of commit the sin and pay the price, in this case life imprisonment.⁴ However, to Wilbourne, the price may be worth it as evidenced by the famous last line of the story: “Yes he thought *Between grief and nothing I will take grief*” (273). By contrast, the *Old Man* section ends on an almost farcical note. As the state had already decreed the tall convict dead in the flood, to keep him in prison a new sentence must be imposed: “Attempted escape from the Penitentiary, ten years additional sentence” (279). In this very Kafka-like motif, the crime must be made to fit the punishment rather than the other way around, and in an even more Kafkaesque resolution, the convict seems quite content with the way things turn out – back to the monastic prison, his story ending with a more simple and directly expressed realization: “‘Women, shit,’ the tall convict said” (287).

As mentioned above and delineated with regard to pagination in an endnote below, these two parts are presented in an alternating, contrapuntal sequence; what the direct or

indirect connection between them might be is still a source of debate. Faulkner's comments on the matter had their own metamorphic quality, exhibiting his usual evasive and contradictory self. In terms of the author's first recorded discussion of the alternating structure, Cleanth Brooks notes a much-quoted 1939 interview in which Faulkner states

[I] wrote one story and thought it was good but not enough. So [I] wrote another and slipped the chapters of the two between each other like shuffling a deck of cards, only not so haphazardly. I played them against each other...Contrapuntally. (qtd. in Brooks 206 – addenda and condensing verbatim)

Some later statements downplay the contrapuntal aspect, the author instead attempting to dismiss any inherent relation as in, for example, a response to a question in a rarely cited 1947 interview:

Q. What reason did you have for arranging the chapters of *The Wild Palms* [the novel] as you did ?

A. It was merely a technical device to bring out the story I was telling, which was one of two types of love. I did send both stories to the publisher separately, but they were too short. So I alternated the chapters of them. (Roscoe 66).

He was later somewhat more forthcoming or at least less dismissive of his interviewer, telling the *Paris Review* in 1956 in what is now the standard reference in Faulkner criticism:

When I reached the end of what is now the first section of *TWP*, I realized suddenly that something was missing, it needed emphasis, something to lift it like counterpoint in music. So I wrote on the “Old Man” story until “The Wild Palms

story rose back to pitch. (qtd. in Cowley 480) ⁵

Perhaps the two-decade time lapse between the novel's writing and this interview allowed an openness on Faulkner's part as this last statement would seem to be the most accurate in relation to the text. Thomas McHaney's exhaustive study of the novel and the manuscript versions thereof claims "he wrote the chapters alternately as the surviving manuscript sheets and the full typescript at the University of Virginia bear out" (*A Study* 19), giving the example of the way "Faulkner recast part of the typescript to make these endings [of each story's first section] coincide the way they do" (45). But such bibliographical sleuthing aside, McHaney correctly notes an examination simply of "the book itself...plainly reveals...these two tales are too closely connected for anyone to assume that they were written at different times and brought together by casual shuffling" (19-20).

By the late 1950s, buoyed by the external authorial clarifications, the idea of a deliberate attempt at a contrapuntal effect has been solidified and institutionalized. Accordingly, there followed a multitude of readings as to the cause and effects of this structural division, the two-part structure seemingly doubling the number of articles one might expect on this subject. W.T Jewke's 1961 "Counterpoint in Faulkner's *The Wild Palms*", may be seen as a foundational article in the discussion. Playing off the author's *Paris Review* "counterpoint" statement above, Jewkes references the earlier efforts of Cowley, Irving Howe, and W.R. Moses on the matter of the division, before embarking on a mostly thematic comparison of the two sections which he sees as united in the sense that "the author manages, *chapter for chapter*, to make the plot and central and thematic issues of the one story echo and complement the particular emphases and details of the

other story” (40 emphasis in original). The chapters of each are then closely compared as to the concurrent major themes of each numerically corresponding section; for example, both first chapters contain “two distinctly different and aggressively opposed worlds, which we may call, for convenience, the world of the *ordinary* people...and the world of the *excluded* people” (41). Jewkes continues through the chapters sequentially in a similar vein with a very detailed textual interweaving, usually quite convincingly, as to the thematic confluence between the two stories. Less addressed, however, are the formal connections and patterns, the narrational juxtapositions, and, beyond Faulkner’s idea of “counterpoint” cited above, the overall rationale and effect of the novel’s unusual structure.

Still Jewkes does introduce one key observation regarding the novel’s overall formal effect, one still couched in the language of music: for Jewkes, the effect of the alternating chapters is “also musical in the sense that only Ch. 1 of *WP* is free from the influence of *OM*; after that, the *OM* chapters not only complement and criticize the *preceding* chapters, they also foreshadow certain developments and resonances in the *succeeding* chapters of *WP*” (48 emphasis in original). A few examples of this foreshadowing – again thematically related - are given before Jewke’s concludes this one-page section with the observation that “in such ways, the stories echo and re-echo against each other, building up a remarkable architecture of sonority” (48). The article then returns to the thematic counterpoints. Perhaps 1961 is too early, in terms of post-modern literary theory, reading effects, or Lacanian mirror stages, to expect a further investigation of this quite brilliant point, but here it shall be used as a basis for an investigation of both the intersecting narrative voices of the two stories as well as the bi-partite structure’s relation

to contemporaneous examples from popular culture.

"We have the radio in place of God's voice..."

(Faulkner, *TWP* 115)

One effect of the bifurcated structure within the novel is immediately and intuitively palpable to even a casual reader. The two stories together create a bookend effect or perhaps more aptly a hall of mirrors, an effect replicated within the novel, as in the bar in which Harry meets the journalist McCord where "the gleaming pyramid of glasses, mirror-repeated, the mirror aping the antic jackets of the barmen" (*TWP* 104). The image of a world which is "mirror-repeated" is an apt reflection of the self-enclosed, looping world of media-fed media that the novel is so obsessed with, a world which in turn is reflected in the bi-partite structure of novel. The alternating stories can be seen as creating an isolation chamber or oscillating feedback loop which then seals off any extensions of the temporal and chronological world outside of the book. To the convict of 1927, there is no glowing or absolving future, no rectification of the conditions which brought him to his overwrought sentence; in fact, as the story of Charlotte and Harry ten years later confirms, things will only get worse and end up in the same place: prison or death. Charlotte is dead, and in both stories the male protagonists are left languishing in "the State Penitentiary at Parchman [Farm]" (*TWP* 270). In a complementary manner, even the notion of a glorious, pre-Depression past preceding Harry's and Charlotte's misadventures is intuitively dispelled by the convict's tale: there are no retroactive sources of strength on which to draw - Harry notes "if Venus returned [today] she would be a soiled man in a subway lavatory with a palm full of postcards" (*TWP* 115). The past,

far or near, is already debased and the convict's predicament provides a parallel proof; cumulatively, the two stories suggest that the world the characters inhabit has always been and will always be this way –diluted, degraded, and desiccated.

It is not just a world of reflected and distorted images present in the bi-partite structure however; it is also one of echoed sounds. In a world of multiple and conflictive voices, authors attempting to portray or verbally replicate this world may themselves be tempted to use multiple voices in order to be heard above the fray. This idea of an oral multiplicity is, by 1937, already a contemporaneous rubric in mass culture. As Thomas Doherty has noted, one immediate effect of the arrival of the talkies and the concurrent rise of radio is the arrival of non-stop talking as if to compensate for the assumed deficiency or incompleteness of the silent form:

In the cacophony of voices that competed for attention in American culture in the 1930s, two of the loudest were heard but not seen. One emanated from the the atmosphere itself [i.e. radio], the other from the offscreen space of the motion picture. For radio and screen wits, quick and dull alike, filling the dead air became the main objective and shooting off wisecracks the ammunition with the highest caliber. On radio, talk was the coin of the realm, cheaper than music, so the aural medium nourished the verbal shenanigans of solo monologists, comedy duos, and babbling ensembles. On screen, talkers worked in junior partner-ship with images as voice-over narration. Competing with what was before the eye, they had to speak up boldly to get attention. (Doherty 174).

“Competing with what was before the eye”; voices that “were heard but not seen”; the parallels with literary narrative are apparent here. Remembering the earlier discussions of

the explainer and Stein's comment on "listening" to Anderson's book, the idea of the aural and oral confusion engendered by a competing multitude of voices is both a thematic and structural foundation of *Jerusalem*. The continuum here with the increasingly destabilised narration that one finds in the chronological sequence of Faulkner's novels from *TSATF* (1929) to *Jerusalem* is striking. In this last novel there is a further decay in the authority of the overall narrator figure, a decay which may be presaged in the earlier *Absalom, Absalom!*. Daniel Singal has noted that in this novel it takes both Quentin and Shreve ("the two of them" discussed in Chapter One) to do justice to the tale of Thomas Sutpen and that by the end of the novel "the two have merged, making possible a moment of supreme vision" (Singal 217); in *Jerusalem*, the very structure dictates there can be no merger, but rather a constant chatter of transmission-like "cross-talk" between the overall narrators of the two stories, compounded by the shifting narratorial perspective within each. In fact it is the opportunity afforded by having two alternating stories that allows Faulkner to exponentially increase (i.e. narrators squared) the shifts in narratorial voices so in addition to the previously discussed vertical shifts in earlier novels— the strata Cleanth Brooks finds in *Absalom, Absalom* here resembling the River in *Old Man* in which it is "as if the water itself were in three strata" (53) - there is now the chance for a horizontal strata as well, a new kind of narratorial transference between two distinct voices, separate but equal. Accordingly, the echo chamber effect of the bipartite structure can also be seen in these contrasting narratorial styles found between the two sections (as will be discussed further below).

But the decision to split and amplify the voices is both solution and problem; amplification – whether in film, fiction, or general public speaking – leads to more noise

and noise leads, inevitably, to incomprehensibility, like apartment neighbours engaged in an escalating music war.⁶ Likewise within *Jerusalem*'s stories, echoing the narrational buzzing, the cross-talk effect created by these dual tales, there is a constant motif of cacophony – whether natural or amplified and disrupted; a barrage and assault of voices and their attendant incomprehensibility runs rampant throughout the novel. Sometimes this is manifested in the device, which spans the two stories, of foreign languages: the miner Poles of *TWP* are described as having “blind birdlike incomprehensible voices” (162) as “they huddled, jabbering in that harsh incomprehensible tongue” (167), sounds which have a residual effect on Harry’s consciousness. Even as he escapes into the solitude of the mine, “it still seemed to him that he could hear the voices, the blind birds, the echoes of that frenzied and incomprehensible human speech” (174). Similarly, the Cajuns of *Old Man* have a similar bewildering effect upon the tall convict: “‘That’s the way they talked,’ the tall one said. ‘Gobble-gobble, whang, caw-caw-to-to’ – and he sat there and watched them gobbling at one another, and then looking at him again” (201). In fact, there is only one lexicon that is now definitive and universal. Referring to the Cajuns a fellow convict asks the central character of the Tall one: “‘Halvers ?...how could you make a business agreement with a man you couldn’t even talk to?’ ‘I never had to talk to him,’ the tall one said. ‘Money ain’t got but one language’” (213).

The Esperanto of money aside, frenzy and incomprehensibility are omnipresent and not limited to foreign tongues. This is a world of involuntary “hearing, but not listening” (*TWP* 106) and even though ostensibly in English, it is the amplified voices which exacerbate this confusion: the “loudspeaker”, the “radio”, and of course the “man with a megaphone”, the last, as noted, appearing in both stories. His double placement only

twenty pages apart (*TWP* 181 / *OM* 199) would seem to ensure a dual recognition on the part of the reader and this synchronous appearance of this figure is a further glimpse of the counterpoint engineered between the two stories. There is on the one hand the implicit overall eventual unity of the novel created by this cross-over reference; however, the difference in representation is equally important, the man with the megaphone experienced directly and in real time by Harry, but only recalled, represented and retold by the *OM* narrator in his tale of the convict. In other words, any unity between the stories in this book is by design subtle and shifting and perhaps ultimately secondary, a feeling exacerbated by the different situations in which this pronouncing figure is placed. In *OM*, this man is the captain of a riverboat and a megaphone would be the natural instrument for both time and place; within *TWP* there is instead a deliberately disruptive aspect to this image. For reasons which will be discussed further in the next chapter, Faulkner's use of the megaphone in this scene is noticeably parachronistic; technically by the mid 1930s, the emcee of the dance marathon which Harry and Charlotte attend would be a man with a microphone - the megaphone being more a roaring 20s Rudy Vallee than the late 1930s Depression San Antonio in which this scene is set (181 –84). But be it megaphone or microphone, radio or loudspeaker, what is also important is that a voice must be amplified to be heard, to compete, a world in which "the air was filled with the bellowing megaphone" (*TWP* 181) or a world of "the megaphone's bellowing and bodiless profanity" (*OM* 200).⁷

What is paramount in the new cacophony of voices is amplification, especially an electrically aided one: as Harry drinks with the journalist McCord in a Chicago train-station, "there was a loudspeaker in the bar, a voice cavernous and sourceless roared

deliberately, a sentence in which could be recognized a word now and then” (114).

Amplification is also of course the first stage of broadcasting and the natural radio allusions are then introduced in the following paragraph: “as if the listener (so enormous was the voice) were suspended in space watching the globy earth spin...in fragmentary glimpses the evocative strange divisions of the sphere...” (114). This rather florid proclamation is told from the narrative consciousness, and remembering the discussion earlier in the paper of the visual resonance of this passage with the RKO Radio Pictures logo, Harry’s following direct dialogue makes the global/broadcast relation more succinct: “We have the radio in place of God’s voice...” (115). This is a world in which “God’s voice” or the overarching narrator or indeed any kind of unified and harmonious speaker is overthrown and banished.

This is fitting as this novel can be seen as the apotheosis of Faulkner’s decade-long experiment in multiple narrative voices; here the structure of having two quasi-independent stories fully rives the narrative voices, as opposed to merely partitioning them by section as the author had done in *The Sound and the Fury* a decade earlier. So who - or more precisely where - are the narrators in *Jerusalem*? In truth, it is difficult to fully tell. There are two distinct voices who move and weave throughout each of the stories and between the stories, a constant shifting from the ostensibly limited omniscient viewpoint of Harry in *TWP* to the mutated omniscient voice in *OM*. Both voices however are interrupted by a secondary self-identifying sub-narrator throughout each story, the two like Quentin and Shreve becoming “first, two of them, then four, now two again” (*Absalom* 275).

In *TWP*, directly contradicting the almost real-time chronology implicit in the

standard limited omniscient form, the sub-narrator also possesses a full view of past, present, and future: “Then for the first of two times in her life he saw her cry” (42), a statement resolved some hundred pages later: “then for the last time in his life he saw her cry” (185). The narrational intrusion that these two statements create cannot be overstated: if this is from Harry’s consciousness, it is an omniscience which is hardly limited. This degree of external narrative control is also displayed in the statement “Then one day something happened to him” (94). This statement would fit the usual limited paradigm if the “thing” was then immediately further elucidated; however, it is not until a full four pages later, after a multitude of flashbacks and digressions, that the thread is picked up again – “That was when the thing happened to him” (97). This limited voice often does not proceed in real chronological time. Sitting forlornly outside the mine “he [Harry] suspected nothing, though later it seemed incredible to him that he had not” (171); later in the description of Charlotte’s emergency visit to the hospital “the doctor looked at the pistol, then Wilbourne seemed to remember him stowing it methodically into the scuffed bag” (246). In other words, the entire story is either through Harry’s recollected consciousness – a jailhouse reflection perhaps – or this is an admission that the story is a deliberate reconstruction of events already happened, the sub-narrator directly clashing with the usual forward progression of both Harry’s thoughts and the narrative (and the nature of Harry’s own “writing” throughout the story will be discussed in the next chapter of this thesis).

This disjunction is amplified by the consistent and curious elisions by the narrator – in the case of this story, perhaps a deliberately contrapuntal effect in one so obsessed with numbers and laced with economic theory, it is usually one of money, the mine owner

Callaghan telling Harry “ ‘All right. You will be given transportation out to the mine at once. Your pay will be—’ he named a sum” (109), the jarring movement out of the former’s direct speech emphasizing the selectivity of information provided. Sometimes however it is an elision of confessions, very curious for a “confessions” writer: in explaining to Charlotte their lack of money due to his only pretending to have a job, the non-dialogue voice notes “Then it [the confession] came, it was too late now”; after a further journey into Harry’s thoughts as to why he lied, the narrative returns only to Charlotte’s reaction to his admission “‘Look at me. You mean you haven’t been to the hospital in two months’ ” (81); the actual words used in this moment of truth are never imparted to the reader.

These different voices perhaps ultimately fuse in an overall authorial tone we can call the “neo-noir” voice, one as much out of detective radio shows and the pulps as from the literary canon, a movement into the second person form which is one of the strangest aspects of this half of the book’s narration. For example, this sub-speaker slips out of Harry’ consciousness to sometimes directly address the reader in an informal almost cloying manner, replicating the now standardized audience identification form so prevalent on radio and in film voice-overs. A note from Charlotte is described as looking as if written in “a big sprawling hand such as *you associate* at first glance with a man until *you realize* an instant later it is profoundly feminine with a man” (*TWP* 69 – emphasis added) and later, describing bachelor food which “some can actually produce though, *you would have said* at first glance, nor McCord” (*TWP* 88 – emphasis added). Within the text these kinds of statements are not enclosed in quotation marks as dialogue nor in italics, as Harry’s thoughts usually are. This kind of external direct address of

course breaks the fourth wall inherent in the limited omniscient form and in tandem with those time shifts and projections into the future mentioned previously can be seen as a variation of the parallel performative public author previously discussed with regard to Anderson's memoirs and lectures. But unlike Anderson's external effusions, here the parallel author is sublimated *within* the text.⁸

If the narrator(s) of *TWP* are skewed in their inconsistent focalization then they are at least identifiable or traceable; the narrator in *OM* is even more problematic and although the motif of internal performance is continued in *OM*, here the sub-narrator is not cloying or comforting –although the second person address does make one jarring appearance (137) - but rather confrontational and evasive in both tone and placement. These sections do at least initially have some kind of conventional omniscient third person narration, but there is soon another consciousness infiltrating here: the conspicuous elisions, jumps, and implicit modifying the recounting of the convict's own telling of his adventures in the flood – “This is how he told it about seven weeks later” (*OM* 134) -predicate the existence of an external identifiable consciousness in both the vast, highly literate perceptions of the river given as the convict's thoughts, thoughts which vastly belie the previously discussed meagre reading habits of the character, and the consistent commenting on the sceptical reception of the convict's story by the other prisoners. As with the previous story, elision also plays a major role in establishing a secondary voice. The virtual flaunting of the story's absence of the convict's name (65, 67) is one conspicuous motif in this regard. More subtle is the elision of race, except for a few contradictory hints: at first the convict is depicted as “with a sunburned face and Indian-black hair and pale” (20); later (much later) described as having a “lean dark aquiline

shaven face” (203); the juxtaposition is pertinent here as the prison setting plainly entails the intermingling of whites and blacks in which the tall convict may be either, or perhaps, in that Faulknerian favourite of composites, a mulatto.

This concept of the composite can be furthered as in *Old Man*, as in *The Wild Palms*, there appears to be at least two narrators; in addition to the first primary voice, there is a voice-over atop him, one who, to use Roger Auerbach’s formulation regarding Edgar Allen Poe’s narratorial strategies “simultaneously plays the part of anguished participant and dispassionate observer”, that is, “the narrated self and the narrating self” (5). Auerbach’s delineation of this kind of particular bifurcation - “Participant”/“observer”, “the narrated”/“the narrating” – in which there is an interplay consisting of a narratorial commenting on what is being narrated and how it is being done is helpful in drawing together one last example of echo and re-echo, of cacophony and incomprehensibility which is intrinsic to Faulkner’s novel: its portrayals of the loop-like interplay between art and audience.

She worked usually with an audience now...

(Faulkner, *TWP* 75)

In his comments on the author as lecturer cited earlier, Anderson also implicitly acknowledges a *de facto* increase in the involvement of the audience in the creative process. The refracted assimilation of the spectator’s or reader’s reaction back into the work is in turn a fundamental motif of *Jerusalem*’s narrative. In this cycling configuration, the increasing pressure of the audience response especially in their lackadaisical and intermittent reactions to the works before them and the attendant

depiction thereof, is echoed by an author's awareness, engagement and baiting of the audience that is hinted at in *TWP*'s use of the second person form of address discussed above.

There are artistic precedents at work here: an incorporation of an audience "response" into the work proper has by the 1930s become an integral part of the modernist conceit, although at this point perhaps more in the worlds of art and music than literature. Tellingly, Faulkner will address both of the former in his novel. Morris Eckstein has argued convincingly as to the perhaps accidental beginnings of the importance of the audience effect in the initial reception and continued perception of Stravinsky's *La Sacre du Printemps* (*The Rite of Spring*). At its premiere in Paris in 1913 "shortly after the wistful bassoon melody of the opening bars, the protests began, first with whistling" (11-12). These were followed by "howling and hissing" and a scene in which "personal insults were certainly exchanged; probably some punches too....of outrage and excitement, there was plenty. Indeed there was such a din that the music may have been almost drowned out at times" (12). What Ekstein rightly suggests is that this response and most importantly the *documentation* thereof – first in newspapers and later in books – has been fed back into the work and is now an intrinsic part of it, a quality which is in itself an intrinsic part of twentieth century art (13 – 16).⁹

Perhaps this absorption of external reactions is the first step towards pre-emptively addressing audience response in the work proper; the "din" of the crowd is indeed the new cacophony with which creators in the early media age were faced; the clamouring of the audience, whether direct and in person as with *La Sacre*, or mediated, but no less insidious, as in the Nielsen ratings established for radio in the 1930s can be seen as

instrumental in furthering the self-referential self-consciousness of the works of this era.¹⁰ Accordingly, the idea of depicting both artist and audience and more importantly the energy exchange between them – the loop - is a fundamental motif of *Jerusalem*, another system of echo and re-echo which runs throughout the book. The first telling example is Harry's visit to a Bohemian party in New Orleans given by what appears to be a wealthy but slumming painter (*TWP* 31-36). It is here that he first directly encounters modern art, modern artists, and Charlotte who is of course inextricably tied to both. Upon entering the party, Harry finds a house in which "the walls completely covered with unframed paintings" (31). This aspect of direct physical engagement with the work is emphasized by the narrator for although Harry "had seen photographs and reproductions of such in magazines before, at which he had looked completely without curiosity because it was completely without belief, as a yokel might look at a drawing of a dinosaur" (33). Now, however, proximity breeds a more sustained interest. Perhaps like many whose initial reaction to the new art of the twentieth century was a mixture of stupefaction and disdain, the direct engagement or confrontation with the work engenders a more intense yet dismissive reaction:

But now the yokel was looking at the monster itself and Wilbourne stood before the paintings in complete absorption. It was not what they portrayed, the method, or the coloring; they meant nothing to him. It was in a bemusement without heat or envy at a condition which could supply a man with the obvious leisure to spend his days painting such as this and his evenings playing the piano and feeding liquor to people whom he ignored....(33).

The switch in emphasis in this section from creature (in both senses of the word) to

creator is telling, as is the phrase “the monster itself”, as this shift is indicative of the early media age’s modern freak show which Anderson so feared with regard to the expansion of the author-figure at the cost of the diminishment of the work. But in a manner similar to Anderson’s previously cited comments regarding the author as lecturer, public creation may be the new necessary norm. While Quentin and Shreve’s storytelling “performances” discussed previously are mainly for the benefit of each other, Charlotte Rittenmeyer’s composite figurines, although initially constructed in private, soon move to a public exhibition of process. As the couple’s Chicago studio/apartment became “a sort of evening club” similar though downmarket in comparison to the one Harry attended in New Orleans, Charlotte “worked usually with an audience now” (75) when combining “the twists of wires and pots of glue and paint and plaster which transformed steadily and endlessly beneath the deft untiring hands into the effigies elegant, bizarre, fantastic and perverse” (76).

This incursion of audience expectation and involvement with regard to books and literary creation is at one point rather curiously addressed by Harry in a quite bizarre turning inside- out of the notion of reader response. As he attempts to kill some time before his night shift as an orderly, Harry thinks in an *Alice Through the Looking-Glass* moment:

Maybe I can read he thought. Then he cursed, thinking, *That’s it. It’s all exactly backward. It should be the books, the people in the books inventing and reading about us – the Does and Roes and Wilbournes and Smiths – males and females, but without the pricks and cunts”*. (44-45)

In this parodying inversion of writer/reader response, one may find the ultimate authorial

nightmare of audience subjugation and neutering (here castrating the “authors”), for the distress the crowd creates in noise and numbers is compounded by their corresponding lack of depth and attention span. In Harry’s daydream, the cycle is reversed in polarity as some kind of authorial defence mechanism, an inversion of the loop of engagement with the dumbstruck audience. So while Sherwood Anderson is ebullient by his standards as to the excitement and gratification that an audience may give when an author reads to them in his “lectures”, there is a dangerous downside when things do not go so well: an audience’s nervous incomprehension may feed back into the storyteller, deepening a lapse into nerve-induced stumbling which in turn feeds a further breakdown in terms of audience reaction and so on, a downward spiral similar to a classroom lecture gone horribly awry. This kind of negative feedback effect is seen throughout the meta-fictional Section Three of the *Old Man*, a section which in terms of page count is the structural centre of the novel. This chapter is as much about the telling of the tale and the subsequent boredom, heckling and disbelief of the audience of other convicts as it is about the actual story being told. The performance and aural qualities as well as the gulf inherent in this process are emphasized in the narrative as “the subsequent part of his narrative seemed to reach his listeners as though from beyond a sheet of slightly milky though still transparent glass, as something not heard but seen....” (147). This is a tough crowd: throughout the tall convict’s performance of his adventures in the flood, the audience is not easily persuaded or impressed: “‘Darkness?’ the plump convict said. ‘I thought you said it was already daylight’” (136). The difficulties in adequately conveying a tale of this magnitude are littered throughout these chapters, the narrator noting “He tried to tell that too –” (143) as the primary storyteller attempts to deal with a distracted,

ignorant and unruly audience:

The tall convict had his cigarette going now, his body jackknifed backward into the coffinlike space between the upper and lower bunks, lean, clean, motionless, the blue smoke wreathing across his lean dark aquiline shaven face. "That's a calf, that's a bull and a cow at the same time."

"No it ain't," a third convict said. "It's a calf or colt that ain't neither one."

"Hell fire," the plump one said. "He's got to be one or the other to keep from drowning." (203)

These problems with the telling are a concern constantly reiterated: "He did not tell it that way" (211) and "That's what he said, told" (210), the latter a puzzling comparative combination, perhaps implying a variable veracity. Moments later the narrative shifts to what is elided: "He didn't tell how he got the skiff single-handed up the revetment" (210). There are also references to that foundation of storytelling – the primal event "as it probably appeared in actuality" (145), no matter what the eventual mutations and subsequent difficulties and deletions in the recounting of it: "he did not tell it that way, just as he apparently did not consider it worth the breath to tell...but he remembered it" (211). What to put in and what to leave out: in other words, the convict's tale has been told, has been observed in its telling, and now is being retold by someone, this secondary level of relation being documented by the author and observed by the reader.

This is a telling reflection of the early media age: in a newsreel, recording, and magazine culture there is a sense that even if not everything is yet documented, there is the possibility that anything could be: it is with these kinds of formal pressures from the new mediums and technology that fiction was behoved to attempt to participate in the

era of the full blown media assault. In these new voices of newsreels, narrative film, and radio, there is paramount the fear of “dead air” creating in turn in printed fiction a reaction to these forces, forces to which poetry will also respond, albeit in different ways. So outside the two simultaneous stories there is one more set of voices with which to contend- these different voices of the two stories, who echo and re-echo, or, to use a more modern and mechanical term, amplify the noise. There is no longer space for the quiet confidante, or even for the genteel “lecturer” on a stage of which Anderson is so enthralled. Here Faulkner as overarching author of the novel is indeed “the man with a megaphone” (*TWP* 181 / *OM* 199) – a figure of amplification and bellowing, an authorial formulation which spans and to some degree formally unites the two stories. That the air must be filled is paramount; what cannot be tolerated now is silence and the continuous rush of the “thinking” and “thought” (to cite Faulkner’s frequent if puzzling division between the two), the long elliptical sentences that so characterize Faulkner’s prose style are in *Jerusalem* amplified in their avoidance of silence by having the two differing narrators continually amplify and disrupt their own receptions, both between and within the bi-partite structure. Here is printed fiction’s mirroring of trying to keep up with multiple serials at the cinema or switching the dials between one’s favourite radio shows broadcast at the same time, trying to follow the dual stories during the commercial breaks in each, while having to try to keep track of the overall flow of both. Indeed, the book as a whole can be seen as an attempt at a verbal replication of the contemporaneous aural media barrage, a constant cycling between two programs already in progress.

In Faulkner’s choices of multiple voices for this novel, both the “Radio” and the “Pictures” proudly proclaimed in RKO’s early talkies logo are addressed: just as the

device of different POV camera shots make the idea of multiple narrative perspectives a perceptual given, so too do the airwaves' contrasting voices smoothly facilitate the tonal disparities within each "network" of the novel as a whole. In a split-screen world, one camera and one voice, especially a static one, is by the 1930s no longer enough, but again further speculation as to who, what, and where may continue ad infinitum and in the end be missing a larger point. Faulkner designed these narrators to be confusing and difficult to fully identify or pin down; what is perhaps of more immediate or visceral effect is the way in which these narrators create a chorus of disharmonious voices within the stories which in turn is amplified in the alternating between stories in the novel as a whole. These disparities and clashing tones may well unite in the reader *after* the novel and narrative's conclusion, a final question the author leaves hanging as to the notion of the potential effect of writing on the reader and one this thesis will attempt to address in its conclusion.

This quality of "echo and re-echo" may be seen as part of Faulkner's testament to this mediated world, especially the way in which, like the man with a megaphone, the book continually transforms and amplifies itself, confounding a sequential reading and offering a pre-emptive disruption pattern and self-protective distancing from both readers and critics in the process. It is in this double-feature quality of the novel that Faulkner also spans the two sections of the book, as the man with the megaphone beckoning the rubes to enter the circus or the dance marathon tent. In the end, the question may be not so much why Faulkner wrote the novel in alternating sections, but rather why he had to. A novel so despondent about a standardized world should itself be as non-standardized as possible in its form. On one level the bisection may be simply a taunt to critics, a pre-

emptive confabulation and distraction from the other more damning elements of the book's incredible venom. But when dealing with a split-screen world, the two-part structure takes on the form of necessity, a compulsion toward disrupting conventional reading and narrative. And as a structural resonance of the work as a whole, the bi-partite form is an apt reflection of both an author and a world steeped in growing binaries and dualities: conscious/ unconscious, black/ white, north/south, rich/ poor. Again, the point here is not only which binary is prevalent at what point in the book, but rather that the twentieth century at this point by nature involves an incessant parade of them.

However, there is one binary above all which permeates this book: to return to the novel and its time, it is telling that the onset of The Great Depression falls in-between the two stories' ten-year span, the Depression an accelerant in the mixing up of high and low, both socially and within art. What will be argued in the next chapter is that the novel's bi-partite structure is also cannily and eerily prescient of the increasingly close but still fractured relationship between high and low art that will develop throughout the rest of the 20th century; reflecting this, Faulkner's joint participation in both serious literature and mass culture will manifest itself in the tense and tenuous interplay which is played out in the two actual narratives of the novel as well as in the ghostly relationship between them.

Notes

¹ Thomas McHaney notes “during copy-editing at the publishers, apparently, Faulkner’s title was removed by editorial fiat and replaced by what had been the subtitle designating the main plot of the book” (McHaney xiii). The original *Jerusalem* title was restored in a brief interregnum but once again the replacement title of *The Wild Palms* is the title used in the most recent editions of the book.

² To give some idea of the ebb and flow, and overall balance, between the stories, the page count for the sections of each story is as follows (based on the standard Vintage paperback):

<i>The Wild Palms</i>	<i>Old Man</i>
17	7
25	17
52	29
42	42
30	17
<hr/>	
Totals: 176	112

³ As per the Introduction’s discussion of the importance of the newspaper headline form (cf. Lindsay et. al), Faulkner had a characteristic bi-partite use of this potent form, as a fiction writer castigating it in both *Pylon* and *Jerusalem*, but as a screenwriter fully inclined to use this visually seductive and narratively effective format (which was already a Hollywood staple). His script for the unmade *Mythical Latin-American Kingdom Story* (1933) has Faulkner’s blocking directions specify that the characters “walk through DOUBLE EXPOSURE of news paper headlines” which then “turn to personal column” before transforming back to headlines. (*MGM Screenplays* 455), both mediation and metamorphosis used to full effect here.

⁴ “Six reels of sin and one of condemnation” was the 1930s Hollywood mantra (each reel lasting 10 to 12 minutes); even if Faulkner is slightly short on this septuple formula (i.e. 5 “reels” for each story) and even

if the last section in each story is as much contemplation as condemnation, the basic rhythm and arc of the two stories can be seen to follow this formulaic pattern, a pattern encapsulated in a popular 1937 film's title: *Live, Love and Learn*.

⁵ Rather curiously Malcolm Cowley includes this comment in his brief preface to a section of the revised (1966) *The Portable Faulkner*. Curious because this canonical volume includes only the *OM* portions of the novel; immediately after quoting the author's remarks regarding the interplay of the two parts, Cowley sets forth his rationale for the selection: "the second story, however, is more effective than the first, and I think that it gains by standing alone, as in the present volume", manifesting his editorial belief that the stories are "completely separate" (480). It is somehow deliciously fitting that the *TWP* sections – which deal so tellingly with the effect of the culture industry on artists and writers – are in effect themselves bowdlerised from *The Portable Faulkner*, a volume which serves to re-establish and resuscitate Faulkner's pre-Nobel Prize reputation. It must be noted however that the author seemed rather indifferent to this particular cleaving.

⁶ The noisy, mechanized modern world is another prime modernist concern (see the Yeats comment re the "roar of the machine" in the previous chapter). The convergence of machinery and music is seen as particularly appalling, cf. Pound's lament in 1920 as to how "the pianola 'replaces' Sappho's barbitos" (*HSM* lines 35-36). This idea of music also becoming part of the noise, particularly when from mechanical or recorded sources as opposed to live and natural sounds, is a motif which also occurs consistently in Faulkner's work, even in the earlier novels. For example, musical references and commentaries thereon abound in *Sanctuary* (1929), especially with regard to its becoming, due to the radio and phonograph, increasingly an incessant and intrusive everyday soundtrack. In the novel, a sharp distinction seems to be drawn between music from sources such as "the mechanical piano" (158) and "competitive radios and phonographs in the doors of drug and music stores" (112) with those of gospel song and "spirituals" (115) sung by the Greek like chorus in front of the jail. Here "the pieces that moved them were ballads" (112) as opposed to "the remote blaring of victrola or radio music" (202) that Horace Benbow hears in the background of Snope's telephone call to him, music described by Benbow's consciousness at least as

“obscene, facile”(202). This idea of the world becoming simply too noisy seems to have been a contemporaneous rubric, as in Yeats’s invocation (from the same year as *Jerusalem*’s publication) as to the necessity of solitude and quiet to the contemplative element that artistic activity requires, describing Michaelangelo in the act of painting the Sistine Chapel: “*Like a long-legged fly upon the stream/his mind moves upon silence*” (“Long” lines 35-36). The modern world was indeed becoming inescapably cacophonous; in *Jerusalem*, as will be discussed in the next chapter, silence and contemplation are to be found in only one place: the jail cell.

⁷ These qualities of “bellowing” and “bodiless” would also be a logical outgrowth of the surrounding aural culture. By the 1930s, there are, besides the narrative voice of film discussed earlier, other distinctly new voices already well formed, chattering and competing: the newsreel narrator, the film voice-over and, perhaps most strikingly at the time that of the radio voice: both that of the announcer, as Doherty indicates, but also those already highly stylized narrative voices of radio dramas and advertising. These voices can be seen as encapsulated the increasingly ubiquitous master of ceremonies, whether on-air –the live hotel ballroom big band broadcasts – or in person at a dance marathon or a prize fight. hotel ball room big band broadcasts. The central pronouncing figure of this period is indeed like “the man with a megaphone”, one well disposed to using the new bully pulpit in their bellowing. A contemporaneous cinematic parallel: in the minor 1933 film *Hard to Handle*, a film set amid Depression dance marathons and scams, a tuxedo-clad and smooth, unctuous radio announcer standing statically on the stage is soft-soaping the dance marathon crowd. This first man with the microphone is then pushed and thrown to the side much to the delight of the audience by the nattily dressed, rambunctious and quick-talking, wise-cracking James Cagney character, a character emblematic of this new era where the master of ceremonies becomes more of a play by play announcer, a cross between a describer and explainer subordinate, gesticulating to the commercial interests that surround him and the event and to the constant desire for movement and sound, a desire which also is reflected in Faulkner’s narratorial strategies in this novel.

⁸ Again there may be another contemporaneous media parallel at play here: the idea of not simply of competing voices, but also of deliberately contrasting ones as seen, for example, in Depression radio advertising:

When the 1929 crash came, the grip of the advertiser on the networks began to tighten....Sales talk became still brisker and brasher and highly supercharged. To save their audiences from becoming punch-drunk under this kind of attack, some networks began to limit the number of words which could be spoken in a minute. A contrasting technique was to hire a voice which was lush, leisured, plummy, and avuncular, seemingly steeped in worldly wisdom. (Turner 270).

This same alternating and contrasting of voices is to be found within the two stories as well as between them.

⁹ A more contemporary example would be Bob Dylan's 1965 "electric" performance at the usually acoustic-music oriented Newport Folk Festival or the "Judas" performance of "Like a Rolling Stone" at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester in 1966. Here, as with Stravinsky's symphony, there is a reciprocal element now embedded in the work (although in both these later cases an electronically documented one as well). Again the audience reaction is seen as completing the work and completing the loop, a process taken one step further by the performance artists of the 1960s and 70s in which the participation or reaction of the audience is factored in as an intrinsic part of the work before it is even realized; the documentation thereof is equally as important, e.g. Yves Klein's *Anthropometries* (1960) and Chris Burden's *Icarus* (1973).

¹⁰ Today this process has been extrapolated and transferred to the literary arena in that system most anticipated, feared, and secretive of book publishers: the Nielsen BookScan system of sales tabulation.

Chapter Four

Faulkner and “the Man with a Megaphone”:

Master of Ceremonies of a Mediated World

A sort of continual and terrible perversion of life goes on. After all there are human men and women in America. Where among us live these creatures of the popular magazine short story or the moving picture?

(Anderson, *Notebook* 143)

There is one other element which should be discussed with regard to both the contrapuntal structure of the novel and the figure of the man with the megaphone, an element stemming not from theories of narratology or modernist aesthetics, but from the contemporaneous popular culture in which a bi-partite structure in both form and content was already taken as a matter of course.¹ As the cartoon allusions and the “Kodak negative’ image in *Light in August* discussed in Chapter Two suggest, Faulkner’s work often exhibits an awareness of the effects of mass culture on audience perception and reception as well as his willingness as a writer to interpolate these. It is this willingness to engage in a literary interaction with these popular forms that can be seen in both the structure and narrative of *Jerusalem* beyond simply its cleaved format. It is here that the primacy of the man with the megaphone motif may become more apparent. The most direct reference and one that would have been perhaps obvious to a contemporaneous audience is to that of the figure of the film director (Fig. 7), particularly the lionized tyrannical ones: Griffith, De Mille and especially Eric Von Stroheim (Fig. 8). This amplified and amplifying figure is indeed emblematic of the cross-over with cinema that wends through this novel, the filmic aspects of Faulkner’s unique style here at its most

overt; although the progression of time is rarely linear in his books, in *Jerusalem* this chronological shifting reaches an apotheosis in its series of jump cuts, flashbacks, dissolves, loops and fades discussed previously. The novel's cross-fertilization with cinema is not, however, limited to the new narrative tools that film bestows upon fiction; it is also found in the book's incorporation of the standard plots and devices often associated with the monolithic numbing effect of spectacle, in particular the quickly standardized genre formulas of the early Pre-code talking pictures (1929–34), a tyranny of genre already codified by the early 1930s. Ten years earlier, in the late silent era, Sherwood Anderson was clear as to his fear of the institutionalization of plot engendered by mass culture:

The magazines were filled with these plot stories and most of the plays on our stage were plot plays. "The Poison Plot" I called it in conversation with my friends as the plot notion did seem to me to poison all storytelling. What I wanted I thought was form, not plot, an altogether more elusive and difficult thing to come at. (Anderson, *Story Teller* 352).

This formalization of plot which Anderson had already decried in films, plays, and magazines was exacerbated and consolidated by the coming of sound on film. Charles O'Brien has argued as to the uniformity which sound synchronization imposed on cinematic structure:

Beyond the pervasive commercialism of sound-era film culture, the formal properties of the sound-synch image inhibited the development of idiosyncratic, personal styles – as filmmakers and theorists of the time were well aware....
Inevitably three-dimensional and relentlessly linear in temporality, synch-sound

images entailed a straightforward , naturalistic narration and visual style. As one critic [Jacques Vivien in 1929] wrote, “The silent film, despite an excess of intertitles, had a power of suggestion, leaving the viewer open to the realm of dreams. The talking film offers a concrete world.” (O’Brien 7)

Although both Vivien and O’Brien perhaps overstate the case - the early 1930s Busby Berkeley musicals are, for example, very far from “a concrete world” - nonetheless the closing of the “realm of dreams” which sound entails corresponds to Anderson’s earlier concerns as to the effect of the media arts on storytelling as a whole. This author’s particular question in this section’s epigraph regarding the shallowness of the characters spawned by the “poison plot” - “these creatures of the popular magazine short story or the moving picture” - is however eventually addressed by Faulkner, albeit a few years later, the response being they are re-constituted and re-interpolated and are now living in Faulkner’s contemporaneously, as opposed to historically, set novels, e.g. *Sanctuary*, *Pylon*, and *Jerusalem*.² It is this last book’s relation to and interpolation of contemporaneous films, its re-mediation of what is seen to be an already mediated form, which so informs the book’s two-part structure, a novel in which the realm of dreams is re-opened by force by confronting and mutating the standardizing impetus of mass media. Throughout the novel one finds a transfiguration of “trash culture”, a process of the redemption of the low, a redemption which is mirrored in the character of Harry Wilbourne. Through the course of *The Wild Palms*, Harry is seen to progress as a writer from being a debased hack writer of magazine confession stories- in the journalist McCord’s words “ a bloody hell kind of ninth rate Teasdale” (86) - into, particularly in his own concluding jailhouse confession story, a writer, or perhaps more accurately a

composer with words, of powerful and evocative strengths.

To this discussion, the bipartite nature of Faulkner's own writing practice is relevant.

As Ted Atkinson has noted this author

offers us remarkable insight into Depression history and culture on the basis of his expansive social vision as well as his forays into both "highbrow" literary style and the popular culture industry. During this time, Faulkner maintained a far-reaching network of experiences and associations, encompassing the hills of Mississippi, the studio front offices and back lots of Hollywood, and the inner circles of New York's literati. (Atkinson 8).

Like the perpetual movie industry struggle between front office and back lots, *Jerusalem* in particular can be seen as representative of Faulkner's artistic duality within his creative output as a whole: writer vs. scriptwriter, novel vs. screenplay, and author vs. director.

The timeline is supportive here. After recounting Faulkner's now iconic 1930s misadventures in Hollywood, Otto Friedrich points out "in 1937, Faulkner was fired again [from M-G-M] and returned to Mississippi to write *The Wild Palms*" (237).

Jerusalem can be seen as both a reaction to Faulkner's screenwriting dilemmas – i.e. the books can do what the films can't, both artistically and logistically – as well as, if not revenge *per se*, at least Faulkner's truce with or purgation of the aesthetic and logistical difficulties of the film form. So while it may be tempting to read the book as a vengeful manifesto decrying a "Hollywood which is no longer in Hollywood but is stippled by a billion feet of burning colored gas across the fact of the American earth" (*TWP* 176), despite the anathema that Faulkner may have considered the film industry to be, it is also true that he worked within it. As this novel makes painfully clear, the world of mass

culture is now too prevalent for there to be any full escape from it; the madam of a brothel that Harry visits is well aware the customers' taste in women is in perpetual flux according to which female star is in vogue, explaining to him "it's the influence of the moving pictures, I always say" (*TWP* 177).

Critics such as Thomas McHaney have well documented many of the literary, biographical and philosophical references in the novel which McHaney sees as ranging from Dante to Schopenhauer, but there is another parallel pool of "influence" hovering over *Jerusalem*: that of Hollywood cinema, both silent and sound. In his brilliant work "Screening Readerly Pleasures: Modernism, Melodrama and Mass Markets in *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem*", Peter Lurie makes a forceful case as to the resonance and implications of some of the mass culture mechanisms within the novel. As he points out, many portions of the "*Old Man*" sections – particularly those dealing with the river - can be seen as reflective of and referential to the silent cinema. Particularly compelling is his association of the descriptions of the River as a signifier of the silent movie screen, Lurie claiming "in addition to resembling a mirror (or to performing like one), the descriptions of the flood recall the movie screen – another flat two dimensional surface..." (136). The viewing of this watery "screen" is seen as having associations with the act of viewing film in general, but "in particular the silent film that he knew and that he viewed so assiduously when he [Faulkner] was young" as "like the film screen, the descriptions of the River provide an innocuous, blank surface onto which the convict projects his own imagination or longing" (Lurie 136).

Setting aside for the moment that it may not be the convict, but rather the narrator, doing the projecting here ³, Lurie's point – particularly in terms of the silent cinema trope

–meshes perfectly with this thesis’s stated view that these sections are the “traditional” half of the novel. Where I would differ with Lurie is in his claim that *TWP* also contains an encapsulation of “the conventions of domestic melodrama, both cinematic and theatrical” (131), in particular “the classical film melodrama” of the early silent period (147). In keeping with the contrapuntal aspects of the novel, if it is the silent cinema which now can be seen as classic and traditional and so fittingly appearing in the *OM* sections, it is the early days of sound pictures that appropriately resonate throughout *The Wild Palms*, a story concerned to the point of obsession with contemporaneous – that is 1937 – mass culture. By contrast, the *OM* sections- the “Thuringian” chapter on the bayou in particular (192 – 233)– often read as an elegy for telescoping plethora of lost worlds to which can be added one more lost world – that of silent cinema, of Ricciotto Canudo’s beloved “seventh art” discussed in the first chapter of the thesis. Lurie cites the story’s passage in which the convict’s

subsequent part of his narrative seemed to reach his listeners as though from beyond a sheet of slightly milky though still transparent glass, as something not heard but seen, a series of shadows, edgeless, yet distinct, and smoothly flowing, logical and unfrantic and making no sound. (*OM* 147)

rightly seeing this as directly reflective of the silent cinema. But to this interpretation I would add and emphasize the element of lament for this lost art which also resonates within this passage, “smoothly flowing, logical, and unfrantic” being a description which is the antithesis of the world of sound films of the 1930s, as discussed in the previous chapter’s comments regarding the film *Hard to Handle*, and the world of *TWP* as a whole.⁴

This passage's lament in fact can be directly juxtaposed with the more contemporaneous sound film references in the later story, in particular the *TWP* sections' twisted assimilation and combination of any number of low-budget genre pictures from the early days of sound – the programmers and “B” pictures so prevalent during the Depression, a combination in stark contrast to the unified silent Biblical epic nature of *Old Man*. This half of the novel can be seen as both homage to and parody of the early sound era, an aspect not yet critically examined due perhaps to, in a manner similar to early cartoons, the difficulty until recently of viewing the primary material, situation now remedied by both the current easy access to and wealth of scholarship on Pre-code (before 1934) cinema. Except for the anomalous, in both narrative and narrative consciousness, first establishing section, it is possible for virtually every plot point and situation of *TWP* to themselves be plotted as variants of contemporaneous Hollywood genre formulas: Anderson's “poison plot”. But in keeping with the story's constant abjuring of formula and standardization, *The Wild Palms* section of the novel is a wild, inverted amalgam of these stock devices and formulaic pitches, often inverted in the sense of the aforementioned androgyny implied in the character of Charlotte.⁵

Much of *TWP* is predicated on gender confusion and inversion and Faulkner grounds this theme in the patchwork of “little pictures” which permeate this half of his novel, pictures with a gender switch subverting the Hollywood formulas. In this story, chapter by chapter, one can find the codified situations of numerous 1930s genre pictures turned upside down, for example:

- (a) the cohabitation comedies involving a male bohemian artist and straight working woman sharing the same apartment, for example 1933's *Rafter Romance* - the title

cards for the original trailer (capitalization and punctuation verbatim) beckoning :
“Come to gaudy Greenwich Village - where Art is long - and Love lasts but a stolen night ! Move in on this gang of loveable maniacs!” then offering a double titillation: **“An artist...and a young girl sharing the same apartment!”** before closing with the very *TWP* sounding premise: **“Romance in a garret -! Step into Bohemia where starving genius feeds on Love!”** (Fig. 9).

- (b) Harry’s medical misadventures – both in his putative job and later with Charlotte’s botched abortion and subsequent hospital visit mirrors the behind-the-scenes medical melodrama such as 1931’s *Night Nurse* – again with the appropriate gender inversion: **“THE THINGS THEY KNOW – THE THINGS THEY SEE – THE THINGS THEY SEE – the NIGHT NURSE! – If they would talk! If they could talk! The things they would tell! Now! At Last! Behind the scene with the Night Nurse...”** (*Night*).
- (c) There are episodes in the story encapsulating or perhaps functioning as bizarre treatments thereof the con man vs. the depression genre as in the previously discussed *Hard to Handle* and the attendant dance marathon scene in the novel. Central to the story as a whole is that still most beloved of Hollywood pitches “the fish out of water” scenario, in *TWP* realized in both its heads and tails form: the hicks in the big city (the couple’s first trip to Chicago) as well as its inverse, the city slickers in the rube- infested wilderness manifested in Harry’s and Charlotte’s misadventures at the Utah mine after their own “slicking” Chicago experience.

While it is true that the breadth of Hollywood output by the end of the 1930s was such that virtually any combination of plots could be seen to reference these genre codes, it is

this story's consistent condensed episodic catenation of them that so conveys a feeling of a script-room catalogue or festival of coming attractions, a sentiment consolidated by the theatrical "set-piece" mood set forth in some of the scenes within the narrative. For example, the courtroom drama in *TWP*'s final section is very particular in its staged qualities, feeling very much like a movie set: in a scene out of many a film from this period (e.g. Fritz Lang's 1936 *Fury*), Faulkner differentiates sharply between the controlled logic of a court portrayed as if being on a sound stage - the District Attorney fitting the call sheet with "a lawyer's face, a handsome face, almost noble, cast for footlights" (267) - and the external location shots of the baying of the lynch mob for Wilbourne's blood, here perhaps also a little swipe at the dangers of the mob mentality implicit in a mass audience. Here is Faulkner producing genre movies the way he would like to see them - inverted, subverted, anarchic and crammed together in a surreal parade. The man with the megaphone is now the director in total tyrannical control of these altered programmers that make up the text of *TWP*, an unleashed wish-fulfilment of every neglected screen-writer whose scripts will never be produced in the way he or she has envisioned them. In particular, there can be seen to be one especially egregious flaunting of cinematic boundaries within the story: given the then explicit sexual content of the story, in Charlotte's repeated exhortations to the sexually stunted Harry "Get your clothes off...I can still bitch" (79) - one finds a gender-switched poke in the eye of the Hays Code whose sudden 1934 enforcement of all matters sexual neutered many of these genres to the point of ludicrousness.

It is not only these formal devices which are infused into the novel; there is in the brothel madam's aforementioned comments also an acknowledgement of the increasing

social impact which film is having and congruent to this the decreasing importance of literature, the former economically and aesthetically displacing the latter, a realization of Anderson's earlier fears. One film from this period in particular serves as an example of both the aesthetic and social potential found in Depression-era cinema: the 1932 feature *I Am a Fugitive from A Chain Gang*. As with the contrapuntal stories within *Jerusalem*, the movie is both road movie and prison picture, and all other genres – including the ones detailed above with regard to *The Wild Palms* - can be subsumed in the catchment of these two Hollywood uber-genres. Fittingly coming from the film factory extreme of Warner Brothers, acknowledged masters of the cheap genre picture, *Chain Gang* was a contemporaneously iconic 1930s film, a fictionalized account of real life fugitive Robert E. Burns's unjust incarceration on a Southern prison farm and his two escapes from it. When he is discovered leading a successful life in Chicago under an alias (in a fittingly Faulkneresque reversal James Allen becomes Allen James), after the first escape he voluntarily returns to the prison in return for a nominal one-year sentence. This promise of course is undermined by the authorities' betrayal, and in a more concrete example of the "lockstep" motif of which Harry Wilbourne expresses such fear, the prospect of a life sentence on the chain gang necessitates another more desperate escape and one last hidden run on the road. *Chain Gang* ends in a manner similar to the two male protagonists of *Jerusalem* with an infinite, almost existential, incarceration of the film's protagonist albeit here in the larger prison of society as whole.

Accordingly, the film ends with a brief coda, one that is surely one of Hollywood's least happy endings. A scruffy and bearded Allen/James is seen hovering in the shadows outside his former girlfriend's home. She spots him and then runs to him sobbing:

Helen: It was all going to be so different.

Allan: It is different. They've made it different.⁶

As Allan moves further into the darkness, he rather than the screen fading into black, Helen asks “How do you live?” to which, in a simple two word sentence much like the tall convict’s final sentence of the book, Allan responds “I steal”. This is an ending almost existential by Hollywood standards and a glaring deviation from the standard formula of sin and redemption and perhaps a starting point as to what can be done and the power inherent in genre inversion in terms of audience expectations. Robert McElvaine, in his now standard text on *The Great Depression*, emphasizes the resonance this scene had with 1930s filmgoers:

No other thirties movie has an ending so cold and depressing. *I Am a Fugitive* was the perfect expression of the national mood in 1932: despair, suffering, hopelessness. Few movies have ever represented a year so well. Le Roy’s film was 1932: hopelessness. America had hit bottom. (213).

Although a greater hopelessness and a further bottom perhaps is found in the 1937 *America* of Faulkner’s novel, it should be noted that the feeling of powerlessness engendered by the film is not limited to its unhappy ending; as film historian Richard Jewell has pointed out, much of the film’s contemporaneous impact lies in the multitude of chain gangs beyond prison which the audience, like Allen, had to endure: the army, family, work, and of course the Depression itself (Jewell).

This social power within the film’s narrative is further consolidated by the visceral appeal and innate verisimilitude created by its being based on a “real-life” story: as the trailer proclaims “**a True Autobiography of Robert E. Burns Who Is Now A**

Fugitive...But Fiction Has Never Matched This Story For DRAMATIC

INTENSITY – THRILLING LOVE INTEREST – TERRIFIC SUSPENSE.” By the 1930s it was indeed becoming increasingly difficult for fiction to “match” these kinds of stories in this kind of film remembering, by contrast, the devastating influence the tall convict’s “real life” crime stories have on him in *Old Man*. This is a sentiment manifested in the general ineffectuality of fiction and books seen throughout *The Wild Palms*. At the height of Charlotte’s post-abortion trauma, “he [Harry] was trying to remember something out of a book, years ago, of Owen Wisters...remembering and forgetting it at the same instant as it would not help him” (241). Juxtaposed with the growing impotence of literature is the growing social impact of film, “the influence” cited in this chapter’s title; *Chain Gang* instigated and consolidated public revulsion against the chain gang system resulting in some amelioration of its deplorable conditions, even if not its outright abolition. If *Jerusalem* as a whole can be seen often as a manifesto as to the diminishing power of literature and the destructive effects of mass culture as well as the overall uselessness of books in general, it would definitely be noticeable to a serious fiction writer, particularly one like Faulkner so concerned with the decline in literacy and reading, that it is a film such as *Chain Gang* – low budget, disjointed and directed by one of Warners’ utility directors– that can actually engender a positive social change of sorts.

It is the social and artistic impact of films such as this which provides another example of what Sherwood Anderson also did not foresee in his otherwise prescient criticism of mass culture: that one of the main forces of standardization might also mutate to become a powerful source against it, in fact more powerful than the supposedly unstandardized

high art which it was displacing, as has also been suggested here with regard to cartoons and metamorphosis. Conversely, in Faulkner's case, there is an innate acknowledgement that there is no turning back the clock as to shifting artistic conditions, an awareness which may be found in the novel's dual conclusions. In these final two sections, the two stories converge and almost merge – both Harry and the Tall Convict are condemned to Parchman Farm prison, and both are portrayed as swimming upstream against currents that they cannot possibly hope to overcome. This ending first reinforces the relationship of the two stories: here is the reciprocity of cause and effect, although one suitably chronologically inverted. The tall convict is the *result* of the new culture industry in which Harry and Charlotte participate but in somewhat typical Faulkner fashion the timeline is reversed, that is, the convict's story occurs ten years before Charlotte's and Harry's. In other words, we are given effect before cause, chronology in the book being like the bi-directional flooded river which has "that quality truncated anachronic and unreal as the waxing and waning of lights in a theatre scene" (*OM* 144).

Faulkner's career decision to situate himself in the penumbra between high art and mass culture, a tactic which so escapes Anderson, is exemplified by the ending of *TWP*. In a manner similar to the transfiguration of mass culture within the novel's interpolation of low-budget genre film plots, there is an aspect of redemption to be found within the last section of the novel similar to the "condemnation" or moral realization found in a programmer's last reel. In this case it is Harry Wilbourne's metamorphosis from a very poor writer and user of words in general to, by the story's conclusion, a very good, almost transcendent, one.

A quick comparison of his four sequential "stories" will illustrate this and the text is

very clear that these are not simply interior monologues, but conscious attempts at fictive construction. The first, Harry's attempt to imagine the way in which her husband Rat will hand off Charlotte to him (her new lover) is short, repetitive, and quickly aborted (47); the second – an attempt to describe the sadness of autumn in almost excruciating “poetic” terms – “the red and yellow leaves drifting down, the double leaves” etc. (85) earns Harry the “Teasdale” dismissal previously noted along with McCord's more famous expression of disgust “For sweet Jesus Schopenhauer” – see McHaney et. al. for the philosophical ramifications; the third – Harry's imagining of Charlotte's final visit to her husband and children is lengthy, dialogue heavy and natural – here, as his creative powers attain a new power of performance-like envisioning, Harry “could see them, he could hear them” (186) and the compelling and believable relation of this tale begins to manifest a new narrational power and control; finally, in the entire last section of the story, in particular the jailhouse reflections in which “now he could see the light”(272), there is a profound sorrow and slow rhythmic beauty to the prose which here is plainly focalized through Harry's consciousness. The prison cell certainly provides one necessity for a writer in an age of distraction, that of solitude, and reinforcing the self-referential, writerly aspect of this section, two other necessary amenities are also here found to be in plentiful supply as the text repeatedly stresses: the discussion of “coffee” and “cigarettes”, those then indispensable adjuncts of the writer-figure, dominates the better part of three early pages of this section (259-61).

The prerequisites for masterly creation now in place, Harry's “story” then becomes quite stunning in its descriptive and evocative qualities, a far cry from the debased output of the confessions writer of the earlier pages who haphazardly attempted to force the

words in an appeal to prurient interests in his peddled magazine stories. By contrast to those efforts “beginning ‘I had the body and desires of a woman’” and which were written in “one sustained frenzied agonizing rush” (103), there is now a quality of focus and fluidity and effortlessness in his prose here described as a Faulkneresque “simple falling of a jumbled pattern” (270) through which Harry articulates his thoughts. In this re-working and redemption of his life’s events, the flotsam and jetsam of bohemian and trash culture have reformed over time in the writer’s consciousness leading to a transmutation of life into art: a true confession story, one with subtlety, depth, and pathos:

Now he could see the light on the concrete hulk, in the poop porthole which he had called the kitchen for weeks now, as if he lived there, and now with a preliminary murmur in the palm the light offshore breeze began, bringing with the smell of swamps and wild jasmine, blowing on under the dying west and the bright star; it was the night. So it wasn’t just memory. Memory was just half of it, it wasn’t enough. (272)

The other half may of course be the writerly reconfiguration of memory, manifested in the astral projection of himself from jail cell to “the concrete hulk” outside his window. This projection is then combined with that of another character: the dead Charlotte.

Let it anyone thinking of, remembering, the body, the broad thighs and the hands that liked bitching and making things. it seemed so little to want, to ask. With all the old graveyard creeping, the old wrinkled withered defeated clinging not even to the defeat but just to an old habit... (272)

The metrical cadence of the italicized portion above and the planterly personification of

the “*defeated*” in this passage above also point to a sophisticated poetic process at work. Unlike the shifting narratorial perspectives found in the previous parts of the story, this last section consists solely of Harry speaking (thinking? writing?) purely within his consciousness, a unity and reconciliation of sorts, the passage and story ending with the now iconic sentence, “*Yes he thought Between grief and nothing I will take grief*” (273). Again, the poetic metre and concentrated simplicity of this last line which render it so memorable are a far cry from Harry’s rather stilted earlier attempts to express “the old verities and truths of the human heart” Faulkner so emphasizes as his art’s goal in his Nobel Prize address; in this story’s closing passage of eloquent melancholy, it is perhaps Faulkner’s mutated take on one last Hollywood staple: the jailhouse epiphany. In or through his suffering, here in prison Harry is now a real artist, not the self-proclaimed dilettante or magazine hack portrayed earlier, but finally a serious writer. To fully consolidate this fusion and redemption, there is concurrently one other more meta-fictional hybridization as well, a conflation of the film trope with another genre, this time from a different medium; in one final Faulknerian loop, it is the confession story which here is also being redeemed.⁷

This proposition leads to a final crossover and fusion to be found in the novel: the distinct possibility that Harry is the overarching narrator of the *Old Man* section. The text does not preclude this. Both he and the tall convict simultaneously reside at Parchman farm; Harry has the relevant knowledge, both literarily and verbally, for the complexity of the metaphors and allusions implanted into the consciousness of the convict; the closing words of this section - “Women, shit” - would certainly fit Wilbourne’s situation as aptly as the convict’s. Most importantly, the entire *OM* section can be read as a

confession story *par excellence*, one immaculately constructed, even to the constant conspicuous eliding of the convict's name, i.e. that standard disclaimer of the confession tale: that the names have been changed or omitted to protect the innocent and the guilty.

Harry's transfiguration as to his verbal abilities also confirms that if plot, that is story, can be seen as a whirling fusion and re-fusion of already codified developments, it is within the formal aspects as Anderson has implied, and in particular in the use and misuse and abuse of the narrative voice and the recombinant approach toward high and low, that there is still work to be done, still room for the writer to move. In other words, if the tyranny of genre may now preclude any further surprises and development of content *per se* -plot being reduced to simply a three-line pitch or formula - and if only formal challenges remain as has been argued earlier through Anderson's manifestos, then it is in the transmutation of genre and code into art, whether in Faulkner's use of the movies and cartoons or in Harry's recasting of his life story, in the writer's embellishments of these increasingly rigid structures that both the creative and redemptive powers possible in fiction still lie. This is a process that underlies the story, the form, and indeed the entire structure of *Jerusalem*; here the man with a megaphone can be seen as a figure of solitary longing, shouting toward the last lonely outposts left to serious fiction.

"We're all three about standard."

(Faulkner, *TWP* 31)

In this reading, despite the previously discussed aura of pessimism which permeates the novel with regard to the future of writing, there is still the possibility of redemption, albeit if not for writing, then at least for the writer within the act of writing. Here this act

serves as a purgation and a shaping of the world in a manner similar to Robert Frost's claim that his poems function as "an arrest of disorder", as a "momentary stay against confusion" (qtd. in Geddes 46). Prison is a fine place for solitude, silence (cf. the first half of this chapter's discussion of cacophony), soul-searching, and attempts at redemption if not of one's life, then perhaps at least of one's art. "Bad" writers do become "good" writers - or to rephrase, "low" writers do become "high" ones - Melville and Whitman being two examples which spring to mind, often with, as in the case of both Melville and Wilbourne, an attendant material price. Of course the reverse is true - Hemingway and to a lesser extent Sherwood Anderson perhaps fitting the bill in Faulkner's eyes.

But sadly, if typically with this author, what is given with one hand is taken away with the other; Harry's redemption through writing here is an individual and solitary act, and a *post facto* one at that and perhaps equally as noticeable, one now conspicuously without an audience and the attendant concerns it brings, concerns discussed in the previous chapter of the thesis. The real fear is Faulkner's book is not as to the future of art which may always survive as a transformational, albeit solitary and autonomous, activity. What is most perilous now is the packaging and distribution of cultural material, the strangulation of the artistic impulse at the source of its engagement with the audience. Faulkner does not hate movies or newsreels or cartoons or radio or indeed any of the popular arts (admittedly Anderson's reaction may be another matter). Both his life and work are testament to the fact that Faulkner was intimately aware of and appreciative of popular culture. What he does despise is two-fold and applies to culture both high and low: bad art of any kind and the industry structures - be they those of film or of

publishing – which were increasingly constricting the culture of his time. These structures are responsible for the vicious circle which is both the cause and effect of bad art, of this “moron’s pap” (*TWP* 103) in the “moronic fables” (104) created by a writer’s or artist’s “moron pandering” (107), the repetitive effect engendered by these phrases’ proximity of pagination a neat formal reiteration of the growing pressure from and attention deficit of the mass audience. The question now is to where literature will fit into the new institutions and culture of the mass market, the new culture factories of both high and low.

For it is the culture *industry* and the consumerist bent which it has wrought which is so castigated in the novel, the institutional mechanisms and pressures which for Faulkner, as with Anderson, are causing a breakdown between the creation and reception of serious work. Indeed it is here that Faulkner’s link with Anderson’s earlier concerns becomes most overt: together, like bookends of an epoch, these two authors hammer out in bell-like tones the fear and threat of standardized life and standardized literature and most importantly the congruence between the two, this double negative effect creating a vague, mediated world, one of style over substance, exemplified in the description of Charlotte’s Christmas presents for the children she has left living with their father:

Two days before Christmas when she entered the bar she carried a parcel. It contained Christmas gifts for her children. They had no workbench now and no skylight. She unwrapped and rewrapped them on the bed...she sitting on the end of it surrounded by holly-stippled paper and the fatuous fragile red-and-green cord and gummed labels, the two gifts she had chosen reasonably costly but unremarkable, she looking at them with a sort of grim bemusement above the

hands otherwise and at nearly every other human action unhesitating and swift.

(106)

It is no mistake that in the description above the narrator, like Charlotte, spends much time on the wrapping and the packaging of the gifts, but despite their being “reasonably costly” the presents themselves are conspicuously and continuously elided. In this nascent period of mass marketing, it is the dressing, the packaging that determines the effect, whether of presents or of poets; as Charlotte pointedly remarks to Harry regarding the gifts, “Anything, any bauble will do. Presents don’t mean anything to them until they get big enough to calculate what it probably cost” (106). This is an emblematic remark in a story with a character such as Harry so obsessed with counting, numbers, and money. Here is the movement toward a culture which knows the price of everything and the value of nothing, whether manifested in Christmas gifts or in literature; as Anderson warned and as *Jerusalem* makes clear, by the 1930s, the pulverising forces of the mass market and the writer’s relation thereto are already leading toward the world of Chip Kidd cover design, of big box bookstores and Frankfurt book fairs, of Oprah’s Book Clubs and authors’ publicity tours.

As displayed by Harry’s jailhouse constructions, this is not to say there is no room in which to move and create; prison, as argued, may be one, although one hopes not the last, space remaining. But the borders are becoming increasingly tighter: as Charlotte’s presents will be judged –by both recipient and reader –by the wrapping, increasingly so one can, does, and must judge the film by its trailer, the book by its cover and the author by his public persona and speaking, men and women now with microphones and not megaphones flooding the airwaves. In this light, it is no coincidence that the journalist

McCord's initial dismissal of Harry's writing efforts includes a swipe at the by-then celebrity author Ernest Hemingway; McCord's drunken imperative "Set, ye armoured sons, in a sea of Hemingwaves" (*TWP* 82) has often been cited in Faulkner criticism. Not so well explored is the etymological basis of the pun: "...waves" perhaps in a broadcast sense, emanating, disseminating and ultimately fading into the atmosphere in the form of the ephemeral radio and later television transmissions. Waves of writers, talking not writing, moving from dispersion, as in Pound's dismissal of radio cited earlier, to dilution to degradation to desiccation.

It is also no coincidence that the horrific concept of literary tourism rears its head in this same section of *TWP*,

the sons of London brokers and Mid-land shoe peg knights and South African senators come to look at Chicago because they had read Whitman and Masters and Sandburg in Oxford and Cambridge – members of that race which without tact for exploration and armed with notebooks and cameras and sponge bags... (101).

Despite Faulkner's later avowal that *Jerusalem* is a story of "one of two types of love" (qtd. in Roscoe 66), this is so often a novel of seething hatred and scattershot unleashing of loathing as to the effects of the mass culture *machine* on literature. As with Anderson's earlier castigation of the books and collectors, in this confluence of design, marketing, and celebrity necessitated by the culture industries, it is increasingly difficult to see where the writing will fit in. The time of "wirehum", of "moron pandering" has, by the 1930s, begun in earnest; while the man with the megaphone's voice may be amplified, it will be increasingly difficult to hear with all the other megaphones which surround it; high or

low or in-between, all become part of the noise.

Later statements from Faulkner in the 1950s attest to the fact that this earlier concern with the decline in reading was not unwarranted, that in fact in his eyes things would go from bad to worse. In a 1954 Interview with *Time* the author lamented “American literature and poetry are being killed by our mechanical civilization. We Americans once had the beautiful dream of every man’s being free. What happened to the dream?... We failed in that we forgot the needs of the rest of mankind, perhaps because we are too self contented and too rich” (*Time* 103). And if it is the creator being undermined by the “mechanical civilization”, to Faulkner it is also reflected in the audience: “Reading is something that is in a way necessary like Heaven or a clean collar, but not important. We want culture but don’t want to go to any trouble to get it. We prefer reading condensations” (qtd. in Roscoe 67). Here again is the author in the midst of the titanic struggle against enforced brevity and diluted literacy that so characterizes the twentieth century. In 1920 Ezra Pound warned against this creeping concept of condensation: “better mendacities/Than the classics in paraphrase!” (“Maunderley” lines 27-28); two decades later Pound’s fears were fully realized: by the 1940s classics paraphrased were now further condensed as Classics Illustrated, as in the famous comic book series of this name.

Faulkner’s own fears as to an increased mechanical culture and the attendant decreased attention spans are further realized as the later television-based media age takes hold; less attention to the works is subsequently compensated for and reinforced by a greater attention on the creators, an inevitable effect of the media/celebrity age and the mass market upon the writer’s relation to their audience. If *Jerusalem* can be seen as a

series of alternating currents - between the handmade and the mass reproduced, between high culture and low, between author and audience - then the era of writer as media celebrity that begins in earnest in the television culture of the 1950s reverses the polarity, a restoring of sorts of a direct current between author/persona and public as in Robert Frost's 1957 appearance on *Meet the Press*, fittingly for the Fifties an attempt to embrace rather than renounce standardization.⁸

To this end, Faulkner, unlike Anderson, eventually recognized the futility of attempting any sort of external control or retention of the work; the tense loop between writer and reader discussed earlier has been broken in favour of the autonomous authority of the mass culture market and mechanisms. Faulkner told his translator Maurice Edgar Coindreau in 1959 that the author was aware that any effect a writer has over reception or even the "infamous [film] adaptations" (Coindreau 24) of his work is illusory: "As soon as my books are put on sale, they no longer belong to me. They belong to those who buy them. They can do as they please with them. I am no longer their owner" (qtd. in Coindreau 24). This process of relinquishment is evidenced in the same year in Jean Luc-Godard's "adaptation" of *The Wild Palms* in the French New Wave film *Breathless* (1959) - the famous last line of the *TWP* story "*Between grief and nothing I will take grief.*" used in *Breathless* is increasingly cited using the film as the primary source - already one level of mediation in beyond! This kind amputation even if, as in this case, a sympathetic one is emblematic of the last echoes of the titanic and unified authorial voice as the later media age takes hold, a posthumous whisper of the parallel author and an appropriately contemporary mediation of the author's voice - drifting fragments of literary works, detached and reassembled at will.

In the beginning of *Absalom, Absalom!*, in a tone as much of resignation as pride, the elderly Southern woman Rosa Coldfield makes a sage prediction to her nephew Quentin Compson: “so maybe you will enter the literary profession as so many Southern gentlemen and gentlewomen are doing now...” (5). Of course by the time of the writing of this novel and given Faulkner’s own Hollywood experiences, the parameters of just what the literary profession is was changing drastically as was the audience relation to its output. These devices of metamorphosis and mediation, of transformation and transfiguration, employed by Faulkner speak to the 1930s world of growing media oriented and mediated experience, a world where much like Rosa’s fragmented recounting of the shooting death of Judith Sutpen’s fiancée Charles Bon - “You see I never saw him. I never even saw him dead” (*Absalom* 121) - direct engagement of any kind is increasingly bypassed in favour of fractured facsimile glimpses, whether of life or of art. As the early media age progresses and expands, the modern audience’s experience in terms of a serious writer’s work increasingly resembles that of Rosa’s distanciated condition, the audience becoming more and more but removed witnesses of literature, ones who, like Rosa, will have to abide with simply having “heard an echo, but not the shot” (121).

Notes

¹ By the early 1930s, the mass audience was naturally accepting of two part structures: the A and B sides of records for example, the A-Side the planned commercial “hit” and the B-Side often completely unrelated, a tossed-off experiment, designed to complete the package while saving precious studio time. In terms of cinema, the transitional period (1927 – 29) between silent and sound often resulted in strange hybrid pictures, sometimes half silent/half sound - *The Jazz Singer*, despite its now erroneous status as the first talkie, being but one –or half black and white/half colour, an alternating format usually reserved for musicals, e.g. 1929’s *Rio Rita* (and later used to more deliberate effect in 1939’s *The Wizard of Oz*). A composite quality was also common in animation: the aforementioned Betty Boop cartoon “Minnie the Moocher” has is sometimes arbitrary and today jarring in its juxtaposition of live-action footage and animated footage, a disjunction which did not phase the audience of its day. Although usually a financial choice rather than an aesthetic one, this split screen approach was quite commonplace in early 1930s popular culture.

² Following, the B-side reference above, this kind of interpolation of film plots and motifs may also have been worked out four years earlier in *Pylon*, a novel which in many ways can be seen as a prototype for *Jerusalem*. In its depiction of the intersection of press and aerial spectacle, the novel often has a strong resonance with the 1933 RKO film *King Kong*. Central to the film is growing importance of the press and reporters in creating spectacle. Kong is presented “with the ballyhoo of a gala premiere” while “reporters crowd about backstage photographers with flash cameras jostle for the next shot” (Doherty 290) an image very much in keeping with the vulture like press portrayed in the Faulkner’s novel with their morbid headlines “**FIRST FATALITY OF AIR MEET. PILOT BURNED ALIVE**” (39) or fixation with gossip: ““I thought women’s bedhabits were always news’, the reporter said” (48). While Kong rages out of control on top of the Empire State Building , it is “the squadron of Army Air Corps biplanes [that] buzzes about him like gnats and finally the machine gun bullets take their toll” (291); by the time of *Pylon*’s writing the air-show seems firmly established as the new high tech carnival, freak show and all; the RKO

film *The Lost Squadron* cited earlier is also instrumental in this establishment of the spectacle of fliers and flight which so dominate this novel.

³ The convict is simply not sufficiently knowledgeable or educated (as his background will attest) for the complexity of the impressions which are claimed for or attributed to his consciousness.

⁴ The contradictory nature of Faulkner's relationship with sound film is relevant here. Despite his later becoming a screenwriter, the early days of sound film with their attendant verbal overkill do not seem to have impressed the author much. Anthony Buttitta recounts a 1931 visit with Faulkner: "We went to a movie, at his suggestion. Bill listened five minutes and said, 'Let's go outside. Too much talking. I want to talk.'" (Buttitta 15).

⁵ Once again *Pylon* (1935) can be seen as a dry run for *Jerusalem* in its germination of this aspect of standardization. Androgyny is another theme set into motion in the earlier novel and fully realized in the later one, another manifestation of Faulkner's continuing interest in centaur-like blending. In the novel's depiction of the modern "garblement which was the city" (*Pylon* 213) everything is mixed up in a manner, like the reporter's experience of flying, of "terrific motion – not speed and not progress- just blind furious motion" (22). If it were race being hybridised in *Light in August*, then in *Pylon* the mix-ups often centre around gender – emblematically portrayed in the scene in which the reporter Schumann, in a contemporaneous city sandwich store, notices "a man and a woman, both wrapped in shawls and distinguishable by gender only because the man wore a cap" (188). Often this blending is focused on a stunt flyer's wife Laverne:

She's his wife...out there in the hangar this morning in dungarees like the rest of them, with her hands full of wrenches and machinery and a gob of cotter keys in her mouth like they tell how women used to do with pins and needles before General Motors begun to make their clothes for them.(41)

The sameness of a world of mass production and reproduction and an attendant growing sameness of gender roles and appearances are both set forth here, themes continued when, in the Market, the reporter

sees “a broad low brilliant wallless cavern filled with ranked vegetables as bright and impervious in appearance as artificial flowers, among which men in sweaters and women in men’s sweaters and hats” (107). This intersection of standardization and gender blending is then further elaborated upon in *Jersusalem* in both a general sense but also in the way in which something new is born out of this cross- breeding: the novel’s overall inversion of Hollywood gender stereotypes. For example, Charlotte’s strength, drive, and certainty of purpose are continually contrasted with Harry’s vacillating weakness and overall impotence (sexual or otherwise).

⁶ This nameless, referentless pronoun as causal attribution is later echoed by Harry Wilbourne: “They will have to find something else to force us to conform....Because They are smart and shrewd” (118 –119, capitalization verbatim).

⁷ As with the fictional depictions of metamorphosis, the literary transmutation of coal into diamonds also has its historical precedence, a transmutation which is the foundation of David Reynolds’s study *Beneath the American Renaissance*. In this examination of 19th century American literature Reynolds notes that “the attraction to the savage and sensational [e.g. newspapers, crime pamphlets, popular novels] is found in the work of Poe, Hawthorne, Whitman, Dickinson, and in particular Melville” (225). What Reynolds suggests is that these images and references were “purposely removed from neutral and chaotic realm to which they were debased in many of their popular manifestations” (226). Subsequent to this material’s transplanting, “in numerous literary works they gained a depth, an intensity, and sometimes even a beauty that was almost wholly lacking in popular sensationalism” (226). The result is found in “this ability of literary texts to absorb the subversive images of its contemporary culture but at the same time redirect these elements toward the suggestive and genuinely human that accounts for their universality and enduring appeal” (226).

The same kind of “redirection” can be applied to Faulkner’s use of both the techniques and content of the mass culture of his epoch, although he must by necessity engage in a far more convoluted alchemy of transmutation. First, Faulkner has many more forms from which to draw, complicated by the fact that film in particular as medium is simultaneously capable “a depth, an intensity, and sometimes even a beauty” which Reynolds correctly notes is absent in antebellum mass culture; this is why Faulkner’s choice to use

the lower forms of cartoons, b-movies etc. is so effective and radical as these are the “savage and sensational” equivalents of his time. Additionally, as discussed previously with regard to twentieth century metamorphoses vs. nineteenth century ones, the previous century’s writing is engaged in a transfiguration of printed material, whereas Faulkner is transforming the visual into the verbal, an extremely interesting reversal of the dominant experiential process of his time, a mission reminiscent of the Tall Convict’s repeated attempts to swim upstream. The earlier cited statement by the author regarding “television, radio, the screen, and the novel” - that Faulkner “felt a competent craftsman should be able to handle them all” (*Commercial* 116)- is germane here.

The second point is that by the 1930s this relation of high and low is no longer a one-way but rather a dynamic process. Eric Hobsbawm has discussed this interplay with regard to newsreels and photo-journalism:

In the hands of the avant-garde Left ‘documentary film’ became a self-conscious movement, but in the 1930s even the hard-headed professionals of the news and magazine business claimed a higher intellectual and creative status by upgrading some movie newsreels, usually undemanding space fillers, into the more grandiose ‘March of Time’ documentaries, and borrowing the technical innovations of the avant-garde photographers as pioneered in the communist AIZ of the 1920s to create a golden age of the picture magazine: *Life* in the USA, *Picture Post* in Britain, *Vu* in France. (192).

So what Faulkner is dealing with in this decade is not a simple lifting and altering of the material of mass culture but instead an accelerated and never-ending loop between high and low with which the writer must sometimes perilously engage.

One other note on this matter of cross-fertilization: mention must be made of 1940s producer (and Faulkner Los Angeles dinner companion) Val Lewton who exemplifies this reverse process, achieving his transfiguration of his debased medium of low-budget horror films by drawing on the vast storehouse of high culture; his fusion of art, literature and folklore transforms and recuperates the horror picture and B-movies in general. See *Cat People*, *Bedlam* and especially *I Walked With a Zombie* as well as Alexander Nemerov’s superlative study of Lewton’s films *Icons of Grief*.

⁸ The example of Frost does provide a corresponding case study re writers and celebrity. What radio and magazines begin, television of course exacerbates as in Frost's re-packaging as the prime time poet of the people. According to Alfred C. Edwards, his liaison at publisher Henry Holt & Co:

We eventually of course made him a public figure, more than just a person who'd spoken at colleges or selective audiences. We put him on television for the first time and brought him out with recordings of his work. He was delighted with this. At first he stepped back from it. He didn't want that kind of image. Showbiz was not his thing he said...but he loved the public aspects of it. ("Voices")

Again, this is a chancy scenario: in the same decade, W.H. Auden warns as to the danger of the serious writer being moved into the popular: "The sophisticated "highbrow" artist survives and can still work as he did a thousand years ago, because his audience is too small to interest mass media. But the audience of the popular artist is the majority and the mass media must steal from him if they are not to go bankrupt" (786). Frost, like Faulkner, may exemplify the danger of desiccation through popular, piecemeal mediation.



Figure 7. “the man with the megaphone” I: *Lost Squadron* (RKO Studios 1932)...by the 1930s the megaphone was but one of many devices with which to amplify the human voice, here in the service of a unit director urging his cast on.



Figure 8. “the man with the megaphone” II: Eric Von Stroheim as actor parodying his reputation as a tyrannical director, here as Mr. Von Furst. By the 1920s, this was a figure then already so codified that the last episode of Kevin Brownlow’s seminal documentary on early Hollywood film directors would be entitled “The Men With the Megaphone”.



Figure 9. "it's the influence of the movies I always say": RKO's trailer for *Rafter Romance* (1933). For authors, another potent blend: the "hieroglyphic" headlines and condensed narrative of the coming attraction.

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