English Faculty Publications

English

2004

Cultural-Studies Criticism

Peter Lurie
University of Richmond, plurie@richmond.edu

Recommended Citation

7

Cultural-Studies Criticism

Peter Lurie

Faulkner's "career" within cultural studies began, within the history of the cultural-studies movement itself, comparatively late. This is not an especially remarkable point about Faulkner or any one particular writer; as a critical movement, cultural studies was never concerned more with any one figure than another, and was always concerned with an interdisciplinary and interdiscursive focus rather than a writer's singularity. It is a point worth noting, however, because of the specific ways in which Faulkner's work seems hospitable to cultural studies' concerns. From his earliest stages of writing, Faulkner was aware of his work's position within a field of cultural production, as well as within a series of interrelated cultural meanings and social structures. The fact that there is a strong body of work on Faulkner that bears several common elements of a culturalist approach is perhaps less striking than that it took Faulkner studies time to make use of them.

TOWARD DEFINITION

Before suggesting the reasons for this critical lag, as well as providing an account of the most effective examples of culturalist Faulkner criticism, it is useful to consider a brief history of the cultural-studies movement and an effort at an overall definition. (As we will see, and for reasons having to do with its aims, the movement is difficult to define in a straightforward, summary way.) One challenge in describing the study of culture more precisely as an academic field is the fact that the various approaches cultural studies takes each define culture differently. Traditional literary and cultural criticism defined culture as the

rarefied products and refined expressions of trained, gifted, or visionary artists; the various modes of cultural studies depart markedly in their terms for approaching culture as both an entity and a term. Marxist modes of analysis stress the impact on culture's production by vested, economic interests (publishing houses, film studios, or magazine editors), as well as its depiction of class differences and struggle. Ethnographers study culture as the empirically observable rituals of a particular ethnic, religious, or national group. Sociology describes a culture's institutions and their regulation of culture from distant, centralized sites of production.[1] Cultural studies combines (and questions) all of these definitions, drawing from them what it finds useful in identifying what culture is, what it says, and—importantly—what culture may be said to *do*. For throughout its various incarnations, cultural studies seeks to intervene in the political, social, and material experience of those individuals and groups that it sees culture in all its modes affecting.

In its progressive orientation, cultural studies seeks to give voice to individuals and groups that are not in possession of the means of protest or social redress, to those "who have the least resources" (During 2). Unlike earlier forms of cultural analysis, cultural studies sees social reality and, most importantly, its inequities as central to understanding literature. As Simon During puts it, "Most individuals aspire and struggle the greater part of their lives and it is easier to forget this if one is just interpreting texts rather than thinking about [cultural activity] as a life-practice" (2). Social-scientific studies of culture, which sought objectivity or neutrality, or earlier forms of criticism that appreciated the unique or formal beauty of art (to the exclusion of its political content) are thus seen by cultural studies as distinctly limited. By contrast, cultural studies directly addresses the political dimensions of literature and culture.

An important aspect of this approach is the treatment of subjectivity. Cultural studies treats subjectivity as constructed by individuals' interactions with influences and agencies that exist independently of personal autonomy. Assumptions about social positioning or personal behavior, for instance, perpetrated in the form of dominant images, messages, or codes exert tremendous pressure on the formation of our sense of self. Sexuality, racial identity, class biases—all, according to cultural studies, are conditioned largely by our interactions with(in) the social and cultural field. In light of this recognition, culturalist work traces the interactions of the private self with public or "official" discourse. As Richard Johnson says, "It is because we know we are not in control of our own subjectivities, that we need so badly to identify their forms and trace their histories and future possibilities" (61). Referring to Marx's "preoccupation with those social forces through which human beings produce and reproduce their material life," Johnson declares: "*Our* project is to . . . describe and reconstitute in concrete studies the social forms through which human beings 'live,' become conscious, sustain themselves subjectively" (45).

Obviously the early New Critical readers of Faulkner had little interest in such deliberate "reconstituting" of the author or his work's "social forms." Admittedly, Faulkner's formal experiments and stylistic richness lend themselves well

to the kind of formalist readings encouraged by the Vanderbilt group. And as we shall see, formalism remains an important aspect of much culturalist criticism. Yet for cultural studies this is only one component of an approach to writers that deliberately seeks to break down the divisions between a text and its surroundings in cultural and social life. More purely formalist readings like the New Critics' avoided that breakdown scrupulously, offering instead "pure," **aestheticist** appreciations and explications of Faulkner's complicated language and plot constructions. Even when informed by discourses outside of the texts themselves, such as Freudian psychoanalysis or considerations of Southern history, they used those considerations largely in the service of a well-wrought declamation of a text's internal or hermeneutic meaning, beautiful and forceful in its completeness. Surely, Faulkner's often misleading claim to being the "sole owner and proprietor" of Yoknapatawpha County—and straightforward readings of him as such—contributed to this view of the major fiction as a Balzacian chronicle or self-sufficient world.

Before turning to demonstrations of the ways in which Faulkner scholarship manifests various lines of culturalist analysis, it is helpful to see the roots of those approaches in the movement's history. Cultural studies in its earliest form grew out of a British literary study current in the 1950s named after the critic F. R. Leavis. "Leavisism" was committed to a cultural project that, in many ways, differs significantly from many common understandings of cultural studies today. Yet in its motives, Leavisism may be seen to also share an interest in the same equalizing or democratizing motives of contemporary culturalist work.

Leavis sought to unify English cultural life and sensibility through a common, traditional canon, propagated to a wide public through the educational system (During 2). Subverting what Leavis saw as the profound moral and intellectual value of readings from the Western tradition (which included figures such as Pope or Austen, but discarded early twentieth-century experimental writing) was the influence of then-contemporary mass culture. Leavisism stands in direct opposition to what would become cultural studies' later emphasis on the importance of mass art to considerations of cultural life. Yet Leavis's thinking also included a component that attracted two later English critics who were to have a profound impact on the development of cultural studies as it came to be practiced. Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams, with *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) and *Culture and Society* (1958), respectively, took up Leavis's notion of culture as a way to both identify and unify members of a particular social group or "subculture" and define culture as a "whole way of life," one that included practices not ordinarily considered as culture, per se—such as work, family experience, social and racial identity, sexual orientation and experience, and gender roles.[2] In these early books, Hoggart and Williams pioneered studies that stressed the importance of reading "culture" alongside and as integrated with social life.

The Uses of Literacy offers this sense of engagement with the world that produced both culture *and* experience (or "life") in its celebration of older, industrial working-class communities in Britain. Related to this celebration was Hoggart's assault on then-contemporary mass culture. For like another system Hoggart

opposed (state-run education), commercial art posed a threat to Hoggart's image of the traditional English working class. In this, Hoggart shared with Leavis a distrust of modern commercial culture. Unlike Leavis, however, he opposed a uniform educational system. Hoggart's affinities with Williams more clearly mark the direction cultural studies was to take. With Williams, Hoggart shared a broadened definition of culture, one that saw it not as a canonical set of "high cultural" texts but as a "way of life" that bound peoples together and that included its own modes, values, and terms for identity. (Both Hoggart and Williams drew from Leavis a focus on social groups' way of living as a vital definition of modern cultural experience.) This could include activities in a British working-class context like pub life or watching soccer, as well as club songs that reflected a sense of solidarity between a group's members. In its move away from high culture and its attention to culture defined more broadly, including, in its later versions, popular and commercial art, cultural studies (following Hoggart and Williams) began to acquire the position it takes today [see chapter 11].

One of the most significant developments historically for cultural studies was a shift in the way social classes identified themselves. Following the advent of mass-cultural means of addressing and, arguably, unifying national populations (such as television), members of distinct classes within those populations stopped seeing themselves as part of a discrete, self-sustaining culture with its own ways of life, connected to specific material and political interests. This shift contributed to the development of a phenomenon described by the Italian social theorist Antonio Gramsci as "hegemony." **Hegemony** describes the processes by which a disadvantaged segment of the population participates, apparently willingly, in its own oppression. Identifying with the existing purveyors of power, rather than with others within their social class, members of oppressed groups fail to see their complicity in their own domination. Gramsci's thinking is important to cultural studies because it stresses the way in which groups within a society often with opposed interests and positions—but without the ability to exercise power—maintain a shared view of the way social reality "should be." Members of an oppressed working class in England, for instance, or post–Civil War blacks suffering under the privations of Jim Crow laws, are encouraged to see their position as part of a natural (or naturalized) system, one that is not readily subject to intervention or change.[3]

Along this line, cultural studies notes the connection between a dominant ideology and the formation of identity. Louis Althusser defines ideology as "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence."[4] Within this imaginary sense, individuals see themselves addressed (interpellated or "hailed," in Althusser's terminology) by the dominant ideology in ways they find flattering. Encouraging members of a society to see themselves as fully autonomous or self-determining agents, for instance, suppresses their awareness of the ways in which their lives are more frequently determined by forces—usually economic and political—that function beyond their control. "Dominant ideology turn[s] what [is] in fact political, partial, and open to change into something seemingly 'natural,' universal and eternal" (During 5).

A brief example of the kind of approach to Faulkner that illustrates Althusser's thinking is Thadious Davis's early work. Though she does not identify it as such, Davis's approach to *The Sound and the Fury,* for instance, suggests Althusserian notions of ideology formations. In her book *Faulkner's "Negro": Art and the Southern Context,* Davis focuses on a highly suggestive passage involving Quentin on his return home to Mississippi from the North and Harvard. She seizes on the account Quentin offers of an older, African American man he encounters sitting astride a mule outside Quentin's stalled train. Seeing the man outside his window, Quentin reveals a perspective that, Davis points out, is clearly marked by an ideological belief in the "naturalness" of black servitude. " . . . he sat straddle of the mule, his head wrapped in a piece of blanket, as if they had been built there with the fence and the road, or with the hill, carved out of the hill itself, like a sign put there saying [to Quentin] You are home again."[5] Davis does not invoke Althusser, but her analysis of this passage points to how Quentin demonstrates his understanding of the African American man (who addresses Quentin as "young marster" and who demonstrates a "shabby and timeless patience") as part of the natural scene, "carved out of the hill itself" (Davis 77).

Another main feature of cultural studies is its opening up of the whole category and field of what constitutes culture. The motive for this is the recognition that culture is not limited to "high" culture and its academic or elitist modes but is rather produced by several parties and at different levels of a society. Within an ethnographic practice, this latter aspect led to culturalist attention to ritual, primitive, or folk art. It has also led to impressions of cultural studies as being committed to readings of "low" forms of contemporary culture (television programming, advertising, newspaper copy, magazine articles, commercial film, gossip columns, pornography, cartoons) as being as serious or important as "high" culture (Shakespeare, Dante, or Monet). The relevance of such claims is that cultural studies does in fact avoid evaluative approaches to its material or objects of study. This is not to say, however, that it seeks a flattening of all value or that it tries to replace established cultural texts with others. Rather it asks questions about the *ways* in which the value of culture is determined. As an important part of the category "culture," then, popular, commercial, or mass art needs to be considered alongside—not necessarily in the place of—high culture.

The field of cultural studies promulgates a definition of culture at odds with not only traditional conceptions of art, but with approaches to individual artists or writers. As Richard Johnson sees it, culture should be "understood as a social product, [and] not a matter of individual creativity only" (53). In this respect, the notion of a Faulknerian cultural studies is, on its face, something of a misnomer or an impossibility. Culturalist approaches to Faulkner succeed to the extent that they take Faulkner or his text(s) as an orienting point, an object of study that shares prominence with other concerns such as the contexts for that work's production; its reception by its various readers—including critics, "the public," and later reworkings of Faulkner's work; and the experience of those individuals and groups his fiction endeavors to represent [see chapter 10].

A final, but key aspect of cultural studies is its urge to see itself as a spontaneous, loosely defined movement more than a codified methodology (Johnson 38–40). Allowing itself a sense of orthodoxy or program, cultural studies would become part of an academic life that it sets itself very much against, concerned as it is with questioning traditional hierarchies and structures of value. It follows from this resistance that cultural studies does not ally itself strictly with any one discourse or academic discipline. Used by several disciplines, including English and literary studies; sociology, ethnography, and anthropology; political science and history; media and film studies; studies of race, gender, and sexuality; as well as various Marxist currents, including Althusserian and Gramscian modes of thought, cultural studies is perhaps above all interdisciplinary—even antidisciplinary.

By its own account, then, cultural studies is a far messier affair than traditional approaches to literature and art. Most often this "dirt" is identified as the formerly less seriously considered realm of popular culture or as areas of experience not generally considered culture at all (dating; the way people drive; the Balinese cockfight). Inimical to cultural studies, though, is the impulse to question categories of cultural distinction in an effort to discover the effects of such distinctions and their implied hierarchy. As a paradigmatic modernist, Faulkner appeared to provide earlier critics with a model for the ways in which high art sought to separate itself from the consumer and mass culture that developed contemporaneously with it. Yet, as much of the work described below asserts, such a distinction about modernism, and about Faulkner in particular, overlooked his work's deep involvement in the practices and effects of contemporary life, including mass and commercial art.

Additionally, from its beginning Faulkner's work made clear its intention to make cultural conflicts, as well as those conflicts' often violent consequences, its central focus. This attention to the unresolved tensions of his period and region marks Faulkner's fiction as directly engaged with phenomena and events that existed beyond the boundaries of his texts and which his texts sought to change. For all their insistence on formal and narrative experimentation, Faulkner's stories and novels implicated themselves, and often their reader, in the dissonance of racial, gender, and class antagonisms, painful or ugly realties about contemporary social reality in which he saw his texts intervening. Furthermore, those texts often use formal properties to comment on themselves as a certain kind of cultural product—high or low—as well as on readers' experience of them. In these ways, Faulkner's work may be said to be tainted or "dirtied" with the problems of the social world around it.

Culturalist readings of Faulkner pay particular attention to those workings. Of primary interest to culturalist readings are moments in Faulkner's work that show Faulkner as inconsistent or divided about the concerns he addresses. Contradictory treatments of the often marginal subjects of his society or of troubled social relations reveal the pressures Faulkner experienced in his own position in the early twentieth century as a white male writer in the South. Later reworkings of his earlier material, as well, often bear the signs of

Faulkner's change in perspective about his work's cultural meanings. Finally, his work written especially for or with an eye toward the culture industry—film scripts, short stories, and particular novels—bear the marks of Faulkner's critical regard of that industry in general and, specifically, its treatment of Faulkner's "native" subjects: rural blacks, poor white farmers, Reconstruction and the New South, and the Civil War. As such, that work is of particular interest to cultural studies.

One thing helpful in identifying a Faulknerian cultural studies may be to show an example of what it is not. Several early critics avow to doing something like what cultural studies attempts: placing Faulkner in his social and cultural context and drawing interpretations from that positioning. Yet in their efforts, these readers perform the very detachment, "abstraction," and mystification of Faulkner and his world that cultural studies denies in its approaches to literature.

Well before the New Critics, and in the very midst of Faulkner's most forceful and prolific period of writing, George Marion O'Donnell attempted to situate Faulkner culturally. Referring to him as "a traditional man in a modern South" in an essay from 1939 ("Faulkner's Mythology" 23), O'Donnell treats Faulkner in some of the ways I have described above: as reflecting on a society defined by its conflicts and tensions. Yet O'Donnell does something very different with Faulkner's troubled historical context than does culturalist work. Rather than describe the reasons for the cultural changes Faulkner faced, or how his fiction elaborates the effects of these changes on his characters' interactions or understanding of their world, O'Donnell retreats from that world and its material reality. The Snopes/Sartoris interaction, for instance, O'Donnell sees simply "as a universal conflict" (24). The nature of this conflict is not the widespread and historically specific one between an owning and a managing (or bourgeois) class, or between a residual and an emergent social group, but, in O'Donnell's view, is rather between moral abstractions. "The Sartorises act traditionally. . . . They represent vital morality, humanism" (24). The Snopeses, on the other hand, are not even human—let alone part of a meaningful human history. "The Snopeses . . . acknowledge no ethical duty. Really, then, they are amoral; they represent naturalism or animalism" (24). Certainly O'Donnell is right in characterizing the Snopes as amoral, even evil. Yet he casts his argument in terms that are the antithesis of cultural studies' efforts at an active engagement with their subject, "abstracting" (27) Faulkner's characters to a mythical status or principle.

Granville Hicks, another contemporary reader of Faulkner, performs a similar disengagement with Faulkner's world. In describing Faulkner's approach to his culture's violence, for instance, Hicks sees only Faulkner's effort to shock readers throughout his work with a pervasive, uncritical vision of corruption, "horror," suffering, and disgust. This generalized quality, Hicks writes in *The Great Tradition,* prevents Faulkner from coming to terms with the causes for his characters' suffering—or even from trying to. To Hicks, Faulkner can show superficially the degradations of fallen families like the Compsons, Sartorises, or

Hightowers, or the abject squalor—moral as well as physical—of the Bundrens, Hineses, or Groveses (265). But he maintains that this is all Faulkner does. "Faulkner has . . . watched the people of the South carefully; he is one of them and he knows them from the inside. But he will not write realistically of southern life. He is not primarily interested in representative men and women; certainly he is not interested in the forces that have shaped them" (265–66). In pursuing his supposedly detached "bitterness" and unassimilated "hatred" towards his region (266), Faulkner produces merely an undifferentiated gloss or projection.[6] In doing so, Faulkner presents readers with a violence that he (or rather, as Hicks demonstrates, readers like himself) fails to analyze. "If he tried to see why life is horrible, he might be willing to give a more representative description of life, might be willing to occupy himself with . . . suffering. . . . As it is, he can only pile violence upon violence in order to convey a mood that he will not or cannot analyze" (266).

Culturalist readings of Faulkner reveal precisely Faulkner's willingness to "occupy himself with suffering" and to analyze the forces and moods that produced it. In a vastly different tenor from critics like O'Donnell and Hicks, culturalist readings of Faulkner show him strenuously and penetratingly analyzing the losses and suffering of his characters' world. Where the readings in this first wave of criticism were right in recognizing the harsh vision and even violent mood of his fiction, and later, second-generation schools like the New Critics recognized the beauty and force of Faulkner's formal experiment and psychological probing, it was a later group of scholars that combined an attention to formal complexity with Faulkner's deep, critical engagement with social and historical reality. In their use of such analytical strategies, several "newer" Faulknerians exemplify this mode.

A Faulknerian strand of cultural studies, it should be pointed out, is not exactly new. While there is not an exemplary single text of a cultural-studies approach to Faulkner, there have been several collections or editions of journals that offer a common, culturalist approach to his work. One of them, the special issue of the *Faulkner Journal* (volume 7) entitled "Faulkner and Cultural Studies," edited by John T. Matthews, is already 10 years old. Additionally, the Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference at Oxford, Mississippi, annually publishes editions of the conference proceedings; these volumes offer a number of collections that are of a culturalist orientation. Among them are the volumes *Faulkner and Popular Culture* (1990), *Faulkner and Ideology* (1995), and most recently—and most thoroughly a version of cultural studies—*Faulkner in Cultural Context* (1997).[7] In the discussion of representative culturalist criticism of Faulkner that follows, I refer to several of the essays from these and Matthews's collections. Now an established way of reading Faulkner, if not an actual discipline (as we have seen, it manifests unease toward the very notion of disciplinarity), cultural studies has provided a supple and vigorous set of terms for interpreting Faulkner. If no longer new, it has moved Faulkner scholarship well beyond the terms offered by his first readers and has produced an area of study that was and continues to be highly versatile and productive.

THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL POWER OF GENDER AND RACE

Cultural studies' interest in gender and its cultural construction is a pervasive element of the field, and it is taken up by several recent approaches to Faulkner, works, for instance, that make use of Judith Butler's work in cultural and gender theory, in particular her book *Gender Trouble.*[8] Accounts of Faulkner's challenge to or exploration of gender construction include scenarios of gender performance (and its undermining); instances of female "hysteria"; examples of the "containing" of female characters; the transcending of female victimization; and the "policing" of lines of gender identity.

More specifically, theories of sexuality, homosexuality, and gender crossing have flourished in recent years, and cultural studies has made lively use of them. Although Faulkner can hardly be said to foreground issues related to gay culture and thought, certain of his works—particularly *Mosquitoes* and "Divorce in Naples"—have elicited cultural studies' interest in queer identity and its potential for questioning heterosexual behavior and modes of socialization that present themselves as "natural." These readings have also seen gender transgression in the context of Faulkner's broader questionings of patriarchy.

Such topics invite, as Richard Johnson points up, cultural studies' emphasis on "critique in the fullest sense: not criticism merely, nor even polemic, but procedures by which other traditions are approached both for what they may yield and what they inhibit. Critique involves stealing away the more useful elements and rejecting the rest. From this point of view cultural studies is a process. . . . codify it and you might halt its reactions" (38). Anne Goodwyn Jones's essay "'Like a Virgin': Faulkner, Sexual Cultures, and the Romance of Resistance" offers an example of scholarship as "process" and as this kind of selective critique. As such, it is a useful place to begin a survey of what we may provisionally term Faulknerian cultural studies. Written fairly recently, it addresses a central culturalist concern (the cultural construction of sexuality) and it uses a culturalist method (referring to a popular text for an elucidation of its terms). It also reveals a self-consciousness about cultural studies' position and strategies. Resisting the dominance of the term "resistance," Jones seeks to avoid allowing an aspect of culturalist thought to rigidify into a form of orthodoxy. She also questions Faulkner's apparent social critique.

Suggesting that authors' well-intentioned critical strategies can mask their own reactionary motives, Jones examines Faulkner's negotiation in *Sanctuary* of traditional Southern, Victorian sexual mores with what she terms modern and "national" developments and attitudes. Challenging the notion of Temple Drake as a virgin, Jones endeavors to demonstrate that Faulkner challenges ("resists") Southern cultural hegemony through his depiction of her as sexually experienced. Ultimately, however, Jones argues that Faulkner's own cultural resistance is limited, that it itself falsely romanticizes the notion of resistance to more conservative ends. She makes use of contemporary Southern social discourse, such as behavior manuals, to suggest Faulkner's and the South's acceptance of a lim-

ited and unidirectional "crossing" of gender lines. Southern discourse about gender roles reveals the ways that men of the 1920s and 1930s could allow themselves to be "feminized" and otherwise modernized—for instance, by allowing their wives a more active sexual desire. (Jones analogizes this gesture of male feminizing to the Southern valuation of a heroic and "noble" acceptance of loss after the Civil War.) One such source that Jones cites, Judge Ben Lindsey's *Companionate Marriage,* offers an image of a modern, vital woman who embraces an active sexual identity. And it does so without casting such a woman as deviant or trangsressive.

For Jones, Faulkner's treatments of sexuality and gender in key texts like *Sanctuary* and the "Wild Palms" section of *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem* may be said to partake of this newer, national model of behavior and thus resist earlier paternalistic sexual mores. Yet Jones argues this resistance is more apparent than real. Faulkner presents Temple's sexuality, especially when she is presumed to possess a history other than the traditional Southern status of virgin, as dissipated, problematic, or unhealthy (49, 66)—nothing like Judge Lindsey's liberated "flapper." And Jones reads Faulkner's depiction of a Southern "feminized" man as similarly resistant to accounts of modern male-female union. The values endorsed by Lindsey's image of the companionate marriage, and which the relationship of Harry and Charlotte Rittenmeyer resembles, end up being violently punished. Similarly, the idea of a different cross-gendered move—toward a "masculinized" woman—is consistently demonized in other Faulkner texts. Temple Drake, Caddy Compson, Joanna Burden, Drusilla Hawk—examples of a modern, potentially resistant female sexuality—are all reduced or "punished" by Faulkner's narratives, Jones claims.

An important fault line running through culturalist approaches to Faulkner separates two distinct positions. On one side are readings like Jones's that see Faulkner reproduce systems of power, belief, or cultural hierarchy, such as patriarchy. Another example of this perspective is Deborah Wilson's in "'A Shape to Fill a Lack': *Absalom, Absalom!* and the Pattern of History." Wilson sees *Absalom, Absalom!* as a means by which Faulkner reconstitutes a male narrative power and commensurate power over history. Describing her sense that Rosa Coldfield is silenced or her language appropriated by male narrators, Wilson sees Faulkner's novel as asserting the act of narrating history as a male prerogative. In doing so, she situates Faulkner as the last—and most definitively authoritarian—in the line of male "narrators" of the Sutpen story. In Wilson's terms, the novel's conclusion appears to offer an unsettling, and therefore progressive, stance. In failing to finish the story or show the succession of Sutpen's patriarchal design, the narrative fractures the vision of a "pure" Sutpen legacy (and a white South) because the mixed-race heir Jim Bond is still at large (76). Against this sense of disruptive openness to the end of the novel, however, Wilson asserts that Faulkner himself restores the patriarchal order lost to the Old South by virtue of his own form of ordering: the book's various narrators as versions of Faulkner's own "master" voice. In doing so, Faulkner "constructs a world even more patriarchal than the Old South he has lost" (78).

Though attentive to potential limits in Faulkner's political horizon, approaches like those of Jones and Wilson may neglect Faulkner's extranovelistic position. As a result, some critics read him in the same category and through the same terms as those they use to read the characters he's created. Thadious Davis, for instance, in the book cited earlier, collapses Faulkner's perspective on the "natural" state of the African American man on the mule with Quentin's, as though by describing him through Quentin's eyes, Faulkner shared his vision. Readings of moments like these might well consider the inherent separation between Faulkner and the fabricated Yoknapatawpha world, a distance that is a key element of Faulkner's strategy throughout his fiction. Faulkner's depictions of Quentin's (or Thomas Sutpen's or Horace Benbow's) ideologically tainted attitudes are deliberately set at a distance, one that allows readers to see their workings critically.

Some such awareness is needed if we are to approach the works as they deal with any topic but most especially as they deal with Faulkner's ongoing and varied treatment of race, arguably the broadest and deepest realm of Faulkner's work that commands culturalist thinking. So much of Faulkner's fiction suggests the complicated ways race is constructed culturally that it is difficult to limit readings of this central fact of his world to cultural-studies approaches. However, several works make use of theoretical terms or ways of configuring race and culture that are most specific to cultural-studies practice. Among those terms are the following: concerns with the way race informs the exercise of power, especially as that power informs other social relations (class- or gender-based); connections of race to definitions of sexuality; attention to Faulkner's awareness of conflict in racial identity that reflects on its broader social and cultural bases; events or developments in African American historical experience that affect white cultural expression and historical thought; treatments of racialized "categories" and cultural acts like ritual, performance, violence, and blood; and the control and definition of racial identity and race relations through the management of surveillance, mirroring, and the look.

A major tenet of culturalist Faulkner scholarship is Faulkner's critical awareness of the gender, class, and racial assumptions of his characters. Of course, this awareness does not always obtain; Faulkner certainly possessed biases that show up in his writing. Yet despite the very real presence of ideological blind spots in Faulkner's handling of his characters and narratives, culturalist readings evince Faulkner's much sharper critical capacity toward Southern social life than some readings allow.

Karen Andrews uses Gramsci's theory of hegemony to show this perspective in her essay "Toward a Culturalist Approach to Faulkner Studies: Making Connections in *Flags in the Dust*." In it, Andrews examines various reactions of African Americans in the novel to white domination, particularly Capsey's challenge to the Jim Crow systems of the South. Most important to Andrews is Caspey's objections to his and other blacks' treatment by whites after the First World War, in which many of them served to help defeat Germany only to return to an American caste system that refused to recognize their war contribution or their status as full citizens.

I dont take nothin' f'um no white folks no mo' . . . War done changed all dat. If us colored folks is good enough to save France f'um de Germans, den us good enough to have de same rights de Germans has. French folks thinks so, anyhow, and if America dont, dey's ways of learnin' um. (*Flags in the Dust* 53; quoted in Andrews 20)

Caspey's thinly veiled threat to white power seems to evidence Faulkner's anti-hegemonic stance with the novel: Caspey (unlike other black characters) refuses to submit to the docile position expected of him. The fact that Caspey and his threat are forcibly recontained within a position of submission reveals, however, what Andrews claims to be Faulkner's mixed feelings about African American rebellion (Andrews 19).[9] Describing Caspey's statements as a "pseudo-rebellion," Andrews points to his reinscription by the novel into a position of subservience as well as his eventual return to a hegemonic stance, one in which he "is portrayed as an accommodating black servant" (21).

Ultimately, however, Andrews offers a more subtle analysis: she connects the miscegenist aspect of Caspey's other, more challenging threat (to "have" a white woman in the American South, as he has in France) to Faulkner's short story, "There Was a Queen." In *Flags,* there is only a hint of the actual occurrence of the racial admixing that Caspey threatens. In "There Was a Queen," Andrews points out, this fact is more clearly articulated (22). Violent white opposition to threats to its power emerges in a comparison of *Flags* and "Queen" as a manifestation of white Southern guilt over its own miscegenist past—that is, instances of white slave owners fathering mixed-race children. This fact of Southern history is made explicit in the later story, a perspective that explains the pattern of strident white opposition to black male sexual involvement with white women in the South. It also, as Andrews puts it, "circles back to Caspey's original criticism of the double standards of the dominant caste" (22). Her reading exposes the way that Caspey's punishment in *Flags* emerges through a reading of "There Was a Queen" as an effort to silence "the reality of miscegenation affecting black women while adamantly prohibiting the other form involving white women" (24).

In "Reading Faulkner Reading Cowley Reading Faulkner: Authority and Gender in the Compson Appendix," Susan Donaldson offers a similar reading of Faulkner's ability to question Southern male impulses toward control over white women, as well as black men. She uses the trope of watching, and she examines the connections between vision, narrative, and gender in *The Sound and the Fury,* locating in all three Compson brothers a longing to contain Caddy within their (narrative) vision. Although Donaldson contends that Faulkner reveals this to be a male purview in his own "masculine," totalizing perspective in the book's closing section, she suggests that Faulkner later revises his impulse toward mastery in his work on the Compson appendix. Here, Donaldson sees Faulkner resist his editor Malcolm Cowley and Cowley's editorial surveillance, what Donaldson calls a repeated gesture of male "domain building." Faulkner avoids the mantle of totalized authority, first in his and Cowley's correspondence, which includes Cowley's efforts to push Faulkner towards greater legibility

about the Compson story. Donaldson points to Faulkner's reticence to engage in acts of narrative clarifying and control, especially through vision, in his approach to the appendix. These are evident in his refusal to allow Caddy's imagined photograph to be used to control her, as had her brothers' surveilling gaze(s) in the novel. In Faulkner's evasions of consistency with the appendix, as well as what Donaldson sees as his identifying with Caddy, he offers a (culturalist) corrective to Cowley's cultural-editorial suasions.[10]

These issues of gazing, gender construction, narration, and the male control of female sexuality pervade other Faulkner novels, particularly *Sanctuary* and the novel's criticism. *Sanctuary* offers a useful way to gather several discussions of Faulkner's treatment of sexuality and patriarchy, as well as of commercialism. Because of the novel's popular success (and its resemblance to and use of popular-culture models), *Sanctuary* holds particular interest for critics of a cultural-studies bent. Some of these essays, such as D. Matthew Ramsey's "'Lifting the Fog': Faulkners, Reputations, and *The Story of Temple Drake*" ask important questions about the definition of culture as it applies to our understanding of Faulkner's cultural positioning. Ramsey suggests a more fluid definition of the terms "low" and "high" culture in the 1920s and 1930s than we often allow in discourse about the period. As well, he examines the casting of Miriam Hopkins in the film's role of Temple Drake, a decision that, Ramsey suggests, reflected the studio's equating of Hopkins's supposed lesbianism with contemporary discourse about what was labeled as unnatural or perverse. Ramsey looks at the film's advertising as a way in which the studio sought to capitalize on interest in outré subject matter and to present Temple, like the presumably gay Hopkins, as an illicit pleasure while also appearing to judge women's "aberrant" sexual behavior.

Ramsey's essay shares certain concerns with a much earlier treatment of the novel, Leslie Fiedler's "Pop Goes the Faulkner: In Quest of *Sanctuary*." Like Ramsey, Fiedler traces the two "grounds" of the novel's success—commercial and critical—as well as the fact that Faulkner worked assiduously to manage both. Fiedler's "quest" in the essay is to prove that Faulkner was, in fact, no modernist, but rather an "entertainer" on the order of a Dickens or Twain, that his popular novel *Sanctuary* lay close to "the essence, the very center of his achievement" as a novelist (77). As such, for Fiedler *Sanctuary* more closely resembles Faulkner's work in a novel like *The Sound and the Fury*. Fiedler's reasoning has to do with what he sees as Faulkner's use in *The Sound and the Fury* of racial clichés, or what he elsewhere describes as Faulkner's melodramatic and bathetic war fictions (79).

Despite the provocative nature of such views, Fieldler foregoes examining the reasons for the success of the representations of history, gender, or race he attributes to Faulkner's various novels. Referring to the "stock of misogynist platitudes current in [Faulkner's] time and place" (81) that inform *The Sound and the Fury* as well as *Sanctuary*, Fiedler avoids analyzing what particular cultural work the use of such platitudes might have accomplished. He also neglects to consider what a writer's movement between the categories of high and low

culture could afford.[11] Asserting that Temple is "responsible for all the deaths that occur in [*Sanctuary's*] pages" (87), Fiedler fails to examine what sorts of attitudes (including his own) lie behind considering women "responsible" for the violence that surrounds them.

Fiedler's essay does, however, anticipate cultural analyses of *Sanctuary* when he refers to the generalized dread of sexualized women in Faulkner and in this novel in particular. One of those is Kevin Railey's "The Social Psychology of Paternalism: *Sanctuary's* Cultural Context." Fiedler's attention to the "flipside" of Faulkner's sentimentalizing of women like Dilsey or Ruby Lamar, namely what Fiedler called his "misogynist . . . nauseated rage at" the "reality" of women (Fiedler 80) is strikingly similar to Railey's theorizing of *Sanctuary's* paternalist ideology. In an essay that squarely addresses the two sides of paternalistic thought in the book (Horace's protective and idealizing, nonphysical approach to Southern women, and Popeye's violent, perverted sexual punishment of them), Railey points out the connections between intimately held sexual attitudes and social positioning. Drawing on Klaus Thewelit's studies of male fantasy, Railey finds in Horace a troubling connection to his inverse reflection in Popeye, as well as an aristocratic tendency towards sexual repression. To Railey, Horace shares with the German Friekorpsmen of post–World War I Germany (who, like Horace, saw themselves as the upholders of a threatened aristocratic and civilized tradition) an aversion to any suggestion of femininity or desire, as well as its manifestations in images of fluidity, movement, or social collectives.[12] Women like Temple, with their overtly unsettling sexuality and motion, arouse men's desire and their reaction to it: the impulse to fix women within rigid social categories of behavior.

What distinguishes Railey's essay as an example of cultural studies is its consistent efforts to avoid the kind of strict Freudianism that characterizes earlier readings of Horace and to connect private psychology (or subjectivity) to its manifestations in and projections onto bodies—social *and* physical. As he puts it, *Sanctuary* demonstrates the ways in which "neuroses . . . are never simply 'private'" (85), particularly when they belong to members of the ruling class who have a vested interest in making the effects of those neuroses felt in the broader public sphere. Thus Horace's treatment of women, in particular Temple (and that treatment's violence, manifested in inverted form in Popeye), shows this working out of a paternalistic mentality. In his reading of the end of the novel, Railey offers a way out of the usual manner of implicating Faulkner in the novel's effort at containing women. Noting that Temple's forced stasis at *Sanctuary's* close occurs in Europe and in "the season of death," Railey sees Faulkner here marking Horace and his ideology's need for control of women as impossible in the changing world of the twentieth-century South, colored as it was by changes that allowed for the more mobile, fully realized female subjectivity that we'd seen in Temple in the novel earlier.

Running through considerations of Faulkner's treatment of women in *Sanctuary* is the awareness of Faulkner's conflict over the cultural meaning of femininity, expressed generally as a split between emulation and horror. Railey, for

instance, sees a strict division between, on the one hand, the novel's depictions of Temple and Narcissa Benbow, images of women as virginal, pure idealizations, and on the other Miss Reba or Ruby Lamar, lamentably fallen and therefore "dirtied" prostitutes. But Anne Goodwyn Jones sees Faulkner find a way out of his depiction of female duality in *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem*. With Charlotte Rittenmeyer, Jones claims that Faulkner finds a third position, one that "he uses to explore and contest the ontological certainty of the gender dichotomy itself" ("The Kotex Age" 143). Part of that exploration involves a variation on the negative association of women with popular culture and commercial success. In Jones's view, *Jerusalem* is atypical in showing a woman in Charlotte with an avowedly sexual activity and lively intelligence, as well as in the novel's unapologetic use of popular-culture materials and strategies.

Jones refers to the "masculine fears" that underscore the interests and needs of a patriarchal ideology and that find expression in *Jerusalem*. Here Jones uses Janice Radway's study *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* to describe Faulkner's novel as a "male romance." As a study of the culture or "whole way of life" of middle-class, married women, Radway's book identifies the reasons for the romance's immense popularity. Radway points to the romance as a model for women's freedom from cultural constraints: in it, the heroine is loved "for herself," not for her conformity to a cultural construction. Their reading of romances also provides women at least temporary relief in their role as wives and mothers from the work of caring, largely, for others. Due to the fact that this relief is only temporary, however, women reread the plots of these novels continuously in different books, consuming them as "as [they] might any other drug" (Jones, "The Kotex Age" 151). Jones offers "Wild Palms" as a kind of "male romance," one that cautions male readers of the threat of engulfment in sexuality, liquidity, and a collateral loss of self. In "Old Man" she finds a case of another "hooked" reader. Like Radway's readers of female romance, the Tall Convict, due to his naïve and overly literal reading, fails to find his way to real freedom though his acceptance of his dime novels as well as his increased sentence (both of which Faulkner reveals to be transparently constructed fictions [160]).

Jones posits, though, that Faulkner ultimately questions the gender-biased, male fantasy of self-protection and the disavowal of the feminine, present in both "Wild Palms" and "Old Man." In the novel's modernist, contrapuntal form, *If I Forget Thee* critiques modernist and masculinist assertions of autonomy from the feminine, figured as the popular, the bodily, and the collective. For Jones the novel's form belies the capacity for "isolation"—that of the book's discrete narratives and the male characters in them. As such, *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem* "presents an alternative to the loneliness and anxieties of the men in it who fear not only women but, more importantly, their own deepest feelings" (161).

FAULKNER AND POPULAR LITERATURE

Faulkner's work has been read by critics as both remote from and, conversely, deeply engaged with modernism's supposed "Other": contemporary commer-

cial and popular art. The latter view obviously reflects a cultural-studies per-
spective, and Faulknerians who pursue it have produced imaginative and ani-
mated work, as well as a strong argument for Faulkner's contextualizing within
cultural history. Areas of Faulkner's own cultural production, such as stories or
screenplays written ostensibly as a source of needed income, are shown in sev-
eral essays to reveal a sharply critical and self-reflexive eye toward both them-
selves and the cultural market. From the opposite side, as well, are culturalist
readings that see Faulkner's "high-art" works as both influenced by and critical
of mass-cultural modes. Faulkner's use of indigenous, popular, or folk genres as
well take on substantive or political meanings in culturalist work.

   At first glance, Faulkner appears an unlikely candidate for analyses of his
work's intersection with "low" or mass art and a commensurate questioning, on
critics' part, of the construction of categories like "high" or refined literature
[see chapter 11]. Yet recent work in Faulkner studies aggressively pursues these
very intersections, seeking to show the extent not only of Faulkner's awareness
of popular-culture strategies, formulas, and techniques, but his critical use of
them in his writing. These approaches identify mass-market consumption and
tastes as the (oblique) subject of a portion of Faulkner's mature writing. Accord-
ing to several studies, Faulkner incorporated into the thematics [see chapter 13]
and formal strategies of his work the subject matter of popular novels, stories,
journalism, and film. Above all, his own short stories—written specifically for
the mass audience of magazines like *Scribner's* and, more invidiously, the *Sat-
urday Evening Post*—reveal Faulkner's critical awareness and foregrounding of
the ways in which short stories fashioned themselves in order to conform to
market formulas and imperatives.

   In "Dismantling the *Saturday Evening Post* Reader: *The Unvanquished* and
'Changing Horizons of Expectations,'" Susan Donaldson takes up the notion of
Faulkner's address to a mass readership. In her reading of Faulkner's revisions of
The Unvanquished, Donaldson sees Faulkner producing a critical distance in
Bayard Sartoris and in the *Post's* readers (where the *Unvanquished* stories orig-
inally appeared) from what had become a formulaic and commodified "horizon
of expectations." Refusing to avenge the death of his father, a Civil War hero, at
the end of "An Odor of Verbena," as his family and the "audience" of Jefferson
onlookers expect him to, Bayard offers an alternative ending to those that
Faulkner's reading audience expected of popular Civil War fiction. Because of
what was considered the "peculiar" ending of "An Odor of Verbena," one noted
by both defenders and detractors of the book, *The Unvanquished* becomes in
Donaldson's analysis a much more provocative, unsettling novel than other
mass-market fare, and than the novel itself has often been considered to be.

   She also describes the position of the *Unvanquished* stories as they appeared
in the *Post.* Donaldson points to the magazine's advertisements of dutiful black
servants and whites in blackface, images that suggest the *Post's* aversion to story
material like Faulkner's that would force readers to question assumptions about
race associated with the Civil War South. In directing readers toward an exami-
nation of the values that informed and undergirded their consumption of earlier

Southern fiction and of magazines like the *Post,* Donaldson avers, Faulkner took "vengeance" on a periodical that more often than not refused his stories, and one that had forced him to conform to the magazine's formulas. In doing so, however, Faulkner included his own, ultimately more disquieting revisions. As a result, he ultimately rewrote not only the stories themselves, but "the magazine's readers as well" (194).

In two essays on Faulkner's short stories, John T. Matthews examines the intersection of Faulkner's writing for the cultural market and his literary or "art" fiction. "Faulkner and the Culture Industry" shows Faulkner using short stories and screenplays written ostensibly as a source of quick, easy money to comment on the conventions and formulas of commercial fare. The story "Turnabout," which he reworked into a screenplay for *Today We Live,* shows evidence of Faulkner's awareness of the story as potential fodder for Hollywood, addressing as it does the popular themes of honor and male companionship during wartime that were popular in the period. Matthews points out, however, that this awareness included a sharply critical edge, evident in both the story's antiwar rhetoric (in a period of jingoistic militarism), its questioning of technology,[13] and its homoerotic or, as he describes it, using Eve Sedgewick's term, "homosocial" undertones (63). He also shows Faulkner working with the changes imposed on him by the studio when the story became a movie—such as creating a role for Joan Crawford in a story without a female character to complicate its wartime and "buddy" themes. Matthews's approach is important in that it discovers an alertness on the part of the stories toward themselves as (potential) products, one that comments on the nature of mass-market inclinations and tastes.[14]

Matthews's essay "Shortened Stories: Faulkner and the Market" makes an even stronger claim for the singularity of the short fiction as revealing Faulkner's culturally critical eye. Describing Faulkner's "segregating" of his novel and short-story work, Matthews claims that the shorter form allowed Faulkner access to a more direct, immediate engagement with his historical and cultural situations than did the novels, in which various critical impulses were collapsed into these works' larger engagement with Southern mythology (5–6). Matthews also suggests that the form of the short story may be seen as manifesting objectively the conditions of the characters it depicts, particularly those marginalized members of Southern society. "The broken, brief form of the short story," he posits, "accommodates the heterogeneity of the lives of the underclasses" (14). Isom and Elnora in "There Was a Queen"; the customers at the Texan's horse auction in "Spotted Horses"; Henry Armstid, as well as his audience of hill folk who watch him dig for gold on the Old Frenchmen's place in "Lizards in Jamshyd's Courtyard"—all of these characters represent classes and social groups that, Matthews claims, are well represented in the short story's stunted, distended form.

Matthews here also sees Faulkner use the stories to comment on the circumstances of their production. Like Susan Donaldson, he finds several traces, for instance, of resistance to the demands of the very market the stories sought to satisfy. Stories such as "There Was a Queen," "Dry September," and "Spotted

Horses" directly or indirectly present scenarios of commodification, consumption, or the production of acquisitive desire through modern practices like advertising and "the mystifying power of group desire" (18). In "Spotted Horses," Matthews sees the intense longing of the auction's farmer customers and the empty "promise [of] gratification" held forth by the "spirited, almost otherworldly" ponies the Texan sells (18). Elsewhere, in an analysis of "Red Leaves," Matthews finds potential representatives of popular-magazine readers (and of magazines themselves, "fat" with their advertising and its attendant revenue) in the story's depiction of its obese, slave-breeding Indians. The image of the story's condemned and starving slave gorging himself on his last meal, only to then arrest and deny his insatiable appetite, becomes self-reflexive; it evokes the "marginal man in a senselessly acquisitive society" (21). Like a Marxist version of Kafka's Hunger Artist, Faulkner's slave in this story rejects his modern, sensationalist, and acquisitive culture, reflected in the aggressive marketing and advertising of the magazines.

In addition to these gestures, Matthews points to an important dimension of Faulkner's depiction of Southern rural life: his willingness to "retail" it, like the sewing-machine salesman Surrat in the comical anecdotes he tells to prospective customers. This example of Faulkner's self-criticism is key. Pointing to Faulkner's own complicity in the market he critiques, Matthews does not present Faulkner as superior and aloof to it. At such moments, Matthews avoids remystifying Faulkner's modernist position as transcending the cultural market that he resisted—but which he also needed and used.

CLASS, HISTORY, AND IDENTITY

Another strong intersection of Faulkner scholarship and cultural studies includes attention to class, both class struggle and economic forces as a determinant aspect of identity. In a similar mode are perspectives that recognize the intervention of other Marxist-defined, "superstructure" factors such as the state and public institutions in areas of personal, private experience. As with many examples of cultural studies, the field of inquiry in these works often overlaps with others: concerns with gender, race, sexuality, or the body arise in the context of considerations of labor, employment, wage systems, or politics. Of particular interest to Faulkner critics concerned with class are instances in his work that reflect on aspects of American cultural life such as 1930s debates about socialism, class solidarity, and collectives.

One fascinating tendency among culturalist readings of Faulkner is the attention to specifically modernist aspects of his work that have been used to criticize modernism as ahistorical. Those aspects include modernism's "excessive" formalism, its insistence on its originality or historical presentness, or its focus on individual psychology and social isolation. Though this strategy of "redeeming" modernism's historicity shares much with the New Historicism, it also pursues specifically culturalist goals.

High on the culturalist agenda is attention to culture defined as not only aes-
thetic production and encounters with works of art, but as part of everyday, quo-
tidian life. Particularly as that experience may be seen to express personal
agency or, conversely, the ways that agency is "seized," placed within culturally
defined constraints or impinged upon from sources of power (such as institu-
tional or state agencies), it compels cultural studies' attention. Faulkner's treat-
ment of these intersections informs many of his narratives. As with other
categories, this branch of Faulknerian cultural studies shares concerns with
related phenomena: gender, health care, the separation of public and private
spheres, and cross-cultural encounters and education.

The attention in the following group of essays to formal and stylistic matters,
as well as their treatment of questions of state and economic power, mark them
forcefully as versions of cultural studies.

Charles Hannon demonstrates this approach convincingly in "Signification,
Stimulation, and Containment in *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem*." He opens his
essay with an elaboration of Faulkner's "freeing" himself from modernist
assumptions—namely its "programmatic distancing of art from political, eco-
nomic, and social concerns" (137). "Dismantling" the analogy between the Tall
Convict ("captive" to a nineteenth-century faith in realism) and himself
(theretofore "imprisoned" in modernist ideas about writing), Faulkner shows
himself in this novel to be deeply engaged with historical processes, especially
as they intersected with the individual exercise of independence and freedom.

One way Hannon shows Faulkner doing this is to suggest that Faulkner makes
use of changes in the South's penal system during the 1930s. Declaring his
"concern with modern and modernist modes of producing and containing the
subject" (134), Hannon uses Foucaultian analyses of discipline to analyze the
Tall Convict's treatment by Parchman and the state. He points out that the use of
prison chain gangs, for instance, was nearly obsolete by the late 1930s (when
Jerusalem was published) and was already in decline in the period of the novel's
events (140). Formerly, chain gangs had been used as an instance of what Fou-
cault calls the "political investment of the body," an exercise of state power that
visits itself on the condemned man's physical self. As with other archaic forms
of punishment (such as public execution or dismemberment), the use of chain
gangs had diminished due to the "degrading" nature of such spectacles—for
both prisoners and those who observe them. In moments of natural and political
crises, however, like the flood (when it loses its "natural" markers of power at
the Parchman plantation), the state reverts to external markings on prisoners'
bodies and their physical, corporeal management such as the chain gang and the
Convict's "prison billboards." At the same time, the Tall Convict elsewhere
demonstrates the state's modern exercise of power on a prisoner's interiority or
"soul." Here Hannon connects his analysis of discipline to his reading of the
novel as "a commentary on crisis conditions within the modern capitalist State"
(134). He points to episodes of the Tall Convict alligator hunting, for in this sec-
tion the convict perceives—as modern penal systems have taught him to—his

imprisonment as a denial of what is rightfully his "freedom": his own marketable capital, the ability to labor and wage earn.[15]

Another way Hannon sees Faulkner's modernism as engaged with history is Faulkner's departure, in the "Wild Palms" section, from modernist modes of signification. This part of the novel shows Faulkner's strategy resembling a postmodern culture in that it relies on simulation and a willful "emptying" of signifying structures and strategies. Harry and Charlotte's narrative resembles a Hollywood film, Hannon asserts, in its simulation of marriage, as well as in its reliance on terms peculiar to photographic and cinematic technology. He points out that their relationship refers not to an elemental truth but offers only a postmodern structure of referring to other signs. In this respect their story effects an alteration in the relationship between the object (their simulated "marriage") and the viewer (the reader, say, or the doctor of the novel's frame)—an alteration similar to that of film from earlier, static art forms such as painting.[16] Thus the novel opens with filmic "effects" such as the doctor descending the stairwell and his flashlight that resembles a film projector, or the anachronic "flashbacks" in the early sections or "frames" of "Wild Palms." This emulation of modern mass media combines with the influence of market economics on Charlotte's art in "Wild Palms" to instigate another disavowal of modernist assumptions: the "separation of aesthetics from the lived experience of everyday life" (143). Hannon links Walter Benjamin's concept of *aura* to modernist aesthetics, and he points to the eventual use of Charlotte's objects as the source for magazine and advertising photos as evidence of their shift from a position of modernist significance and **auratic** self-presence to a postmodern assimilation of a "depthless," purely commercial functioning.

Hannon uses the concept of simulation to describe a range of functions within the novel as well as their implications for its depiction of state power. Harry and Charlotte's simulated marriage, for example, seeks to overturn cultural containments and legal definitions of women like mother and wife, as well as husband and wage earner. Hannon claims that Charlotte's powerful negation of the role of wife and mother, as well as the "domesticating bonds of [the birth metaphor] of female creativity" in her decision to abort her and Harry's child frees her to maintain an autonomy that such metaphoric and socialized meanings deny her (146). It also resists the state mandates towards family life and unfettered reproduction as a source for capitalism's labor pool (147).[17]

In many ways, Hannon sees the novel operate pessimistically. For he sees it repeat the binary opposition and dependence that initially it seeks to overcome. Modernism, he points out, usually manifests a limited form of historical autonomy precisely because of its reliance on discursive and textual practices from earlier literary history, against which it defines itself (most specifically, nineteenth-century realism). Charlotte's death appears as a reiteration of a similar dilemma. For it, too, is the result of an effort to deny the containing system of marriage through a sustained simulation of that very system: marital life. Hannon reads the novel's two conclusions as showing a similarly painful end to different acts of cultural and ideological transgression. Both Charlotte's and the

Tall Convict's efforts at transgression, however—analogous to efforts to escape cultural containment, such as modernism—initiate the state's reassertion of power and control, evident in the convict's and Harry's incarceration.

In a mode similar to Hannon's, but more optimistically, John T. Matthews rigorously treats Faulkner's 1930s novels and their oblique historicity and engagement with class. In two essays—"*As I Lay Dying* and the Machine Age" and "Faulkner and Proletarian Literature"—Matthews initiates a traditional realist-leftist critique of modernism. He points to Faulkner's formal abstractions and focus on characters' interiority as indications of a difference from a more materialist and Marxist depiction of social reality and class conflict. Although he admits the relevance of accounts of modernism as apolitical, Matthews reveals how Faulkner's novels of the 1930s actively engage the very issue of class antagonism central to the decade's chief political debate: "the widespread effort of artists and intellectuals to imagine and instigate a class revolution" ("Faulkner and Proletarian" 167). Strikingly, Matthews reveals how in Faulkner's case that enterprise is tied to his novels' formal complexities—precisely those elements of literary modernism that drew the attack of varied leftists like Georg Lúkacs and Mike Gold (Matthews 168–69).[18] "Wash," for instance, appears to be a relatively realistic narrative; however it possesses a "modest wrinkle in narrative temporality" that allows Matthews to connect the story to *Absalom, Absalom!*'s more full-blown experimentation and Faulkner's "multivariant analysis of the South's system of exploitation" (172). Although "Wash" appears to omit a recognition of class solidarity or the connections of the South's various disempowered groups, moments like Milly's cry of protest at Wash's murder suggest her connection to women like Addie Bundren and Rosa Coldfield who, though not oppressed as violently, also protest Southern patriarchal prerogatives through sustained voices or "cries."

Matthews uses a decidedly Adornian approach to *Absalom, Absalom!* in the "Faulkner and Proletarian Literature" essay. Describing that "a kind of violence governs [the] process" in which consumer goods are "converted into some common measure in order to be exchanged" and in which "ideas distill essences and eliminate particularity," Matthews traces the connections of brutality and genocide to "the project of rational enlightenment" (183).[19] Matthews connects Faulkner's critique of instrumental reason in nineteenth-century American capitalist development, evident in Sutpen's failed "logic" about his design, to proletarian literature of resistance and revolution. He finds the unsettling power of Guy Endore's 1934 historical novel *Babouk,* about black uprisings in Haiti, in the novel's account of the "obdurateness" of bodies—black bodies, specifically, that rupture the abstract logic of capitalist equivalency *and* the white superiority it subsidizes. *Absalom, Absalom!* becomes in Matthews's analysis a novel that similarly shows itself as marked bodily: tics, folds, and "scars" abound in Faulkner's stylistic and formal excess. This strategy, ultimately, is where Matthews finds Faulkner's greatest capacity for a "modernist social critique." In its insistence on its bodily presence and materiality—its "particularity"—*Absalom, Absalom!* eschews the process of abstraction whereby whites like Sutpen

and, more damagingly, the capitalist system of equivalence abstracts out the presence and physical suffering of others.

With his discussion of *As I Lay Dying*, Matthews similarly demonstrates how modernist formal abstraction, rather than denying history and social reality, in fact compellingly mediates and thus reveals it. No less than other realist or socially oriented 1930s novels, Faulkner's particular modernism in *As I Lay Dying* shows his capacity to allow social experience and conflict into his work as a vital part of its organizing. One of those historical realities is the process of **reification** accompanying modernity, examples of which abound in the novel's depictions of labor, personal relations, and the money economy. The novel's signs of the empirical reality surrounding it also include examples of the commodification of social and economic life, mass-market goods (evident in the family's longing for consumer products), as well as the increased role in the Bundrens' consciousness of mechanization and technology.[20]

Matthews's interest in the novel is with Faulkner's capacity to maintain and express an active and dialectical ambivalence toward the various strands of modernization it depicts. Women's, blacks', and poor whites' emancipation through modern developments in the post-Reconstruction era (including wage as opposed to slave labor; suffrage; and crop rotation and agricultural cooperatives) provided causes for optimism as well as the spur to the displacements and alienation attendant on capitalist social and economic organizing. The processes of social disintegration and relocation that the novel incorporates emerge obliquely, Matthews suggests, in the novel's formal complexity—notably, its manifestation of disembodiment and disintegration. Matthews describes *As I Lay Dying*'s means of resisting the corrupting forces of modernism such as the commodification of experience or labor, as well as of cultural products (like novels), by maintaining a disintegrative, noncoherent form. In its radical insistence on its own de-composition, its simultaneous critique and celebration of modernity, and its "exorcism" of its own "effete" formal and stylistic lavishness (figured by Darl's lyrical voice and meditations) (93), *As I Lay Dying* remains a book that retains a powerful emotional and analytic edge.

Patrick O'Donnell also notes Faulkner's treatment of Darl as a self-conscious departure from his own modernism in his compelling essay "Between the Family and the State: Nomadism and Authority in *As I Lay Dying*." Conceived generally as a novel about the private longings or secret bonds of individuals and between family members, and as such a novel that typifies Faulkner's meditations on the family romance, *As I Lay Dying* also "publicizes the inadequacies of 'romance' . . . to [an] understand[ing of] the cultural contexts of family dynamics" (83–84). O'Donnell presents those contexts specifically as the state's public mediation and control of desire, here as an ironic consequence of the Bundren's effort to fulfill Addie's private wish to be buried in Jefferson. Fulfilling a private "contract" with Addie, Anse and the Bundren children move from their isolation at home to the public realm as consumers and participants in the public spaces of town, marketplace, and road. Drawing Addie's putrefying body through the streets of Jefferson and defying orders of the police, the Bundrens

appear as unlawful, alien nomads, arriving in the public sphere from outside its purview. As such, they force a recognition of the way that the state and its manifestations of power seek to maintain what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari see as the essential function of state authority: its act of "striating " the masses.[21] Allowed to fulfill their "contract" with Addie, the Bundrens are also successfully integrated into the public and state-authorized functions of consumer culture and lawful, capitalist exchange.

That integration, however, comes at a price. In Darl's institutionalization at the novel's end, he appears as a kind of sacrifice on the family's part, made to ensure its "continuance within the bounds of state authority" (84). Positioned "within" the society and the law's power at Jackson, Darl is at the same time marginalized, placed outside its terms of normalcy and social belonging. As a representative of the psychological depth we are accustomed to seeing in modernism, Darl's removal from the space of the novel allows for a recognition of historically determined realities that determine the life of the Bundren family. Rather grimly, but forcefully, O'Donnell summarizes those realities as the fact that "the expression of desire necessarily leads to its commodification and confinement under the law" (93).[22]

A similar approach to that of Hannon and Matthews, and one that draws together several culturalist strands, is Michael Grimwood's treatment of *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem* in *Heart in Conflict: Faulkner's Struggles with Vocation.* Grimwood asserts that both the novel's stories take up subject matter and motifs that were popular in the period in which Faulkner wrote it, specifically in order to question the reasons for their appeal. Imagery such as floods, chain gangs, and lovers escaping society were appealing to Faulkner precisely because they had proven to be readily consumable in commercial cultural fare. Images of flooding themselves were significant for their suggestions both of the overwhelming cataclysm of the Depression itself, as well as the suggestion of a purifying wiping out of the decade's economic hardship. Grimwood also sees Faulkner coin a new kind of "symbolic documentary" method, offering in images of a devastated rural scene in Mississippi a figure for a national "Depression-scape" (121).[23] Grounding Faulkner in his social and historical reality, Grimwood sees him conflate chain gangs and sharecroppers. This emerges in Grimwood's sense that the 1930s realities of tenant farming produced situations in which sharecropping farmers were—like incarcerated prisoners—bound to the land.

Grimwood also shows Faulkner's novel reflecting on cultural as well as economic history. He cites several examples of popular disaster narratives, in both literature and film, as inspirations for Faulkner's depiction of the flooded Mississippi and Parchman prison in "Old Man." Here he shows Faulkner taking on popular genres in order to reveal to readers their own expectations—and stubbornly refusing to satisfy them. In particular he refers to two very different 1937 film depictions of flooding: Pare Lorentz's documentary *The River,* produced by the Farm Security Administration to document projects of the New Deal, and John Ford's commercial release *The Hurricane,* based on the novel by the same

name by Charles Nordhoff and James Hall (1935). Though Faulkner's novel indeed shares several elements with its possible sources, Grimwood shows Faulkner avoiding the kinds of positive and sentimental endings associated with early documentary and commercial film models. Contrary to the romantic close of Ford's movie, and the political rhetoric about the New Deal of Lortenz's film, Faulkner offers a deliberately downbeat ending of reincarceration. His motives, Grimwood claims, were culturally critical: "fretful attunement to the American public's taste for artful, and thus safe, disasters" (119).

Grimwood takes up two final examples of generic narrative in fiction and film from the 1930s that, he claims, Faulkner "burlesques" in *Jerusalem* for specific ends. He points to a wide range of travel works from the period, all of which manifest an awareness of the Depression. The interest of Grimwood's analysis is his attention to the difference between other forms of travel literature and what he calls "Depression Picaresque," which the lovers' peripatetic wanderings in "Wild Palms" exemplifies. "Wild Palms" is a significant example of the genre, he claims, for its protagonists' disavowal of conspicuous consumption. Like the characters and writers of other 1930s road books, they do not seek pleasure in landscape, architecture, or a return to nature. Grimwood points out, however, a significant variation in Faulkner's version of this genre: Harry and Charlotte's strict avoidance of security and work, an anomaly during the Depression. Grimwood provocatively ends his discussion of Faulkner's perhaps most complex novel about class, economics, and labor by suggesting that it stands as a kind of anti- or inverted proletarian novel. He points out that Harry and Charlotte, for instance, diffuse the Utah miners' rage at their exploitation, an aspect of "Wild Palms" that makes Faulkner appear conservative. But Grimwood suggests that there is a powerful, negative charge in Faulkner's inversions of generic expectations. As he puts it, "A 'sharecropper' documentary [in "Old Man"] that is not ameliorative, a travel book that subordinates economics to romance, and a strike novel that is defeatist" all suggest Faulkner's nonleftist politics. They also, however, perform an important gesture of resistance toward what, by the end of the decade, had become to Grimwood a form of artistic orthodoxy in political and class-based literature.

FAULKNER AND FILM

Faulkner and his work's contact with the visual and film culture of Hollywood offers a final grouping of culturalist scholarship on Faulkner. Several readings of this type take up the complex relationship between Faulkner's novels and film adaptations of them; more recently, they point to Faulkner's incorporating of the methods of film representation in his novels. Read as moving in either "direction," the novel/film connection has allowed Faulknerians to raise provocative questions about how cinema both responded to and shaped Faulkner's modernism.

Charles Hannon's essay "Race Fantasies: The Filming of *Intruder in the Dust*" shows the way Faulkner's novel and the filming of it play out cultural attitudes

and their ideological securing in the South's national and self-image. As such, he refers to the film as the third in a sequence of cinematic, "consumable" images of the South (after *Gone With the Wind* and *Birth of a Nation*) that perform a strenuous act of cultural work. He favors the novel, as it includes details the film suppresses in maintaining its ideological coherence. Hannon nevertheless uses the film to question Faulkner's book, as he traces several acts of social and historical "erasure" enacted by various cultural apparatuses. At the heart of both Faulkner's novel and the film of it, he claims, are efforts to deny a black presence at the protected "white center" of Oxford. These efforts include refusing Lucas Beauchamp a mixed-race identity and the construction, within the film and the novel, of a Jefferson that is emptied of its black presence due to fears produced by the lynching. This unified, homogenized social space, the "object of desire" for the novel, is reproduced in the film's spatial and visual field—which offers its idealized viewer a sense of mastery over its perspectival positioning and constructions.[24] As well, it offers a deferred, future moment of fulfillment: the screening of the movie in Oxford's (and the country's) segregated cinemas.

Hannon further points to journalistic and historiographic accounts of Southern life that similarly desubjectivize blacks. He cites the Oxford *Eagle's* 1908 account of the Nelse Patton murder and lynching—notably ambiguous and without detail, particularly concerning Patton himself—to suggest this process of denial; he also refers to a body of historiography that ignores blacks' historical experience and role in the region. From his discussion of real and fictionalized blacks like Patton and Beauchamp, Hannon points out other subgroups of the South that Faulkner's novel and the film "erase" and marginalize. Politically mobilized Southern white women, working for Progressive causes like anti-lynching laws, as well as poor white farmers and laborers, are smoothed over into stereotypes like the spinster and, more generally, a white middle and professional class in the imagined Oxford. Particularly in the case of the film and its reception, the distancing of Oxford's rising middle class from what were often its own roots in the labor classes allowed it to scapegoat poor whites for much of their own racism.

In a similar mode, Stephanie Li reads the novel version of *Intruder* as more reflective—and critical—of the ways white Southern men construct their sense of self through a reliance on conceptions of black subservience. In *"Intruder in the Dust* from Novel to Movie: The Development of Chick Mallison," Li sees Lucas offering a clear challenge to Chick's process of individuation and maturity—but only, she claims, in the novel. As such, Faulkner's own version of the story possesses a far more powerful and culturally critical charge than the film, which simply presents again the very codes of blackness and racial stereotype that the novel examines. One crucial difference Li sees is in the novel's attributing to both Chick and Lucas an "understanding [of social codes] derived from an experience outside of adult social conventions and a white dominated space" (112). The film replaces the novel's emphasis on this type of awareness by positing Gavin Stevens as its central consciousness. Li points out that in the novel, episodes such as the decision to exhume the Gowrie grave demonstrate Chick's

ambivalence over his sense of self and the dim, but powerful recognition that he needs Aleck Sander's help.[25] She closes the article on a note similar to Hannon's by pointing to the novel's and the film's shared "abstraction" of blacks in the "maintenance of white identity" (117).

Other critics have seen Faulkner's relationship to film move in the other direction: not in adaptations of his work for the film industry, but as an influencing factor in his supposedly more rarefied literary high modernism. As indicated in my recent article, "'Some Trashy Myth of Reality's Escape': Romance, History, and Film Viewing in *Absalom, Absalom!*," the novel's repeated references to characters' "watching" the Sutpen narrative, as well as the romanticizing and visualizing tendencies of Rosa's section, suggest the novel's awareness of historical film. *Birth of a Nation* figures specifically in my analysis of Faulkner's effort in the novel to depict the damaging consequences, personally and culturally, of a morbid and romantic vision of the Old South, one effected by both Griffith's film and the novel's characters in their treatment of Sutpen's narrative.

The earliest and most sustained analysis of this kind is Bruce Kawin's. No account of the symbiotic relationship of Faulkner's screenplay and novelistic work would be complete without reference to Kawin's extensive studies in this area, particularly his book *Faulkner and Film*. Though not strictly speaking an example of cultural studies, Kawin's work took seriously Faulkner's own writing for Hollywood and showed strong evidence of Faulkner's influence by cinematic technique. The montage techniques of the Russian formalist Sergei Eisenstein figure especially, Kawin shows, as a way of understanding Faulkner's modernism. In his innovative approach, Kawin made possible later considerations of Faulkner's Hollywood work, as well as the use of film theory to talk about his fiction. Several later commentators who pursue culturalist readings of Faulkner have followed Kawin's lead in this respect, including Lurie ("'Some Trashy Myth'") and Miranda J. Burgess in her "Watching Jefferson Watching: *Light in August* and the Aestheticization of Gender."

The most recent volume of work on Faulkner that seeks to relate his work to the cinema is the special edition of the *Faulkner Journal,* "Faulkner and Film" (volume 16). Edited by Edwin T. Arnold, the issue collects a range of essays that show Faulkner's awareness of and potential involvement with the film culture that developed around him, particularly as he experienced it as a screenwriter in Hollywood in the 1930s. Most often, the articles in this issue tend toward a fairly straightforward textual and formal analysis of the cinematic aspect of Faulkner's narrative experiment. Doug Baldwin's essay "Putting Images Into Words: Elements of the 'Cinematic' in William Faulkner's Prose," for example, reveals several effects of Faulkner's verbal inventiveness that show a striking resemblance to the visual language of film. Despite Baldwin's subtle observations about these affinities, though, he offers little by way of analysis of their possible cultural meanings. There are also discussions of the shifts in emphasis in Faulkner's screen adaptations of his story material, such as Dallas Hulsey's, "'I don't seem to remember a girl in the story': Hollywood's Disruption of Faulkner's All-Male Narrative in *Today We Live*."[26] Even where Hulsey comments on the shift in

emphasis in the film versions of stories, however, he declines to analyze what such a revision would suggest about the effects of Hollywood on either Faulkner's anticipated readers or viewers.

More productively, Robert Hamblin moves to a consideration of Faulkner and film in a contemporary European context. In "The Curious Case of Faulkner's 'The De Gaulle Story,'" his essay on a long-deferred Faulkner script for Warner Brothers, Hamblin demonstrates thematic similarities between "The De Gaulle Story" and later Faulkner projects such as the screenplay for *To Have and Have Not* and the novel *A Fable*. (He notes the recasting of Hemingway's novel as an episode of the French resistance in World War II, and the use of a Christ allegory and allusion in *A Fable* and "The De Gaulle Story," respectively). He also traces the political reasons for the various deferrals of the project as well as its eventual production by French television.

CULTURAL CRITICISM AT WORK

A number of works and critics deserve mention for their specific use of culturalist approaches to Faulkner that have not, otherwise, been represented in this discussion. Richard Godden's recent book *Fictions of Labor: William Faulkner and the South's Long Revolution* is more New Historicist in its treatment of the shift in the South from slavery to a wage economy. Godden's extraordinarily subtle reading of this move and the way it produced occlusive tendencies in the ways the South's planter class thought about itself and labor, tendencies reproduced in Faulkner's prose, extends from a consideration of *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!* to what Godden calls Quentin and Henry Sutpen's revenant, Harry Wilbourne in *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem*. In Godden's final chapter, he reprises work from "Degraded Culture, Devalued Texts," an essay he coauthored with Pamela Rhodes Knight [see chapter 10] in which they identify Hollywood as Faulkner's "Babylon," the setting where Faulkner feared he would "forget" his real writing while pandering to a "degraded" consumer culture. Citing the shared prison-cell endings of *Jerusalem* with earlier noir novels like James Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice* and Horace McCoy's *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?*, Godden suggests that the prison genre's confessional format encourages readers' empathy and "absorption" into the imagined world of the text. Such absorption, Godden goes on to show, implicates Faulkner's own readers but also reveals to them their pleasure in generic fare.

In a very different mode, but demonstrating cultural studies' interest in social scientific discourse like anthropology, Carey Wall in "*Go Down, Moses:* The Collective Action of Redress," offers an example of a (literally) "culturalist" reading. Drawing on the cultural anthropology of Victor Turner and Clifford Geertz, she calls for a radical rereading of Ike McCaslin's efforts toward a shift in cultural assumptions—specifically the history of white racial domination. She draws heavily on concepts such as "communitas" and "liminality" to argue that Ike participates in a "pacific," nonrational act of resistance at the novel's end in denying his patrimony. Disagreeing with critics who see Ike's act as a failure

in efficacy, Wall argues that Ike's action holds meaning in its participation in a collective, "effervescent" affirmation of systems of thought that run contrary to his culture's own. Ike occupies a key position in the novel because, socially, he is located between the privileged, white, members of the owning class (the adult hunters of "The Bear") and the not overly rational and nonhierarchical consciousness of Sam Fathers.

As a Faulknerian with a particularly culturalist bent, Jay Watson deserves mention. His position at the close of this essay belies the imaginative and significant work he has offered in several essays that defy easy categorization but that bear the marks of a keen eye toward different cultural problems and concerns. For example, his fascinating article "Writing Blood: The Art of the Literal in *Light in August*" orients its argument about the novel's "decisive" moments of bloodletting (such as Christmas's mutilation) from an analysis of San Francisco's gay S&M culture. Using theories of racial ideology, Watson seeks to restore the "literal" meanings of blood (and blood sports) to metaphorical, cultural definitions of race. In his essay about Southern male identity, "Overdoing Masculinity in *Light in August;* or, Joe Christmas and the Gender Guard," Watson uses Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* to describe Joe Christmas's troubling evasions of Jefferson's "policing" of cultural dictates about race, gender, marriage, and incest.

Finally, several collections exhibit methods and concerns of culturalist studies. There are first the Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference anthologies: *Faulkner and Popular Culture, Faulkner and Ideology, Faulkner in Cultural Context,* and, most notably, *Faulkner and the Natural World: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1996.*[27] Several of the essays here take the conference topic as a way to treat the cultural construction of race and gender as part of what are understood as "natural" categories. In doing so, they attribute to Faulkner's project a resistance to noncorporeal (i.e., cultural) definitions of the "natural." They point to Faulkner's traditional associations of women with the natural world and its "silence," for instance, but see him offer as well powerful alternatives to that association. They also treat Joe Christmas's racializing as a function of his culture's punitive treatment of female (or "natural") sexual activity.

Also, a number of anthologies offer useful gatherings of culturalist perspectives and concerns, most notably *The Cambridge Companion to William Faulkner,* edited by Philip Weinstein. The essays in this collection generally seek to relate Faulkner to his work's theoretical, cultural, and ideological contexts, with emphases on definitions of modernism and postmodernism, popular culture, postcolonialism, Southern patriarchy, and the cultural construction of race.

Finally, there are comparative studies, prominently *Unflinching Gaze: Morrison and Faulkner Re-Envisioned,* edited by Carol A. Kolmerten, Stephen M. Ross, and Judith Bryant Wittenberg, that show a culturalist bent.

As an interdisciplinary practice, cultural studies finds particular interest in Faulkner's relationship to other forms of culture. We have seen the extensive ways that culturalist critics have decentered Faulkner in the cultural field and have brought other discourses and texts to bear on his work. *Unflinching Gaze* is

important among intertextual studies of Faulkner (such as *Intertextuality in Faulkner*[28]). For unlike earlier collections that stress Faulkner's own use of other writers and (largely) his connection to a traditional or European canon, *Unflinching Gaze* shows Faulkner's capacity for reworking by a writer positioned nearly opposite him culturally (as an African American woman writing in the postmodern period), but one who is also, arguably, his most important literary reinterpreter and heir.

One issue that the volume takes up is the questioning of evaluative terms for social identity, especially since the categories of cultural, ethnic, and gender difference are so extensive in Faulkner and Morrison's work. Other essays pose questions that are central to cultural studies, such as the ways that academic discourse uses writers differently, and at different times, to define cultural value. They also examine the various cultural issues embedded in influence and "fathering"—both within the texts, and as a way of considering Faulkner's and Morrison's relationship. Finally, the critics here use Faulkner's and Morrison's placement within the categories "modernist" and "postmodernist" to uncover the function within both categories of historical remembrance, but also, particularly in modernism, of historical erasure and forgetting.

RANGES OF CULTURAL MEANING

As we have seen, cultural studies has made its presence felt in Faulkner scholarship. Though calling the body of work that I have described in this essay a "Faulknerian" branch of the cultural studies movement is, for reasons having to do with the methodology's sense of itself, problematic, nevertheless readers of Faulkner have used a culturalist approach to produce new, provocative readings of his fiction. If the vitality of cultural studies lies in large part in its very lack of disciplinary method or definition, it is also the case that its flexibility has allowed it to add to original thinking about twentieth-century American literature's most analyzed figure. If there is an American writer whose readers would stand to benefit from a still-emerging critical methodology, particularly one that allows for ways to return to material that has been read carefully, meticulously, and scrupulously by several generations of critics, that writer is Faulkner.

One of the benefits of culturalist work in general, and on Faulkner in particular, seems to me its opening up a critical discourse that is imposing in its breadth and weight. In particular, work of a culturalist bent is exciting in that it draws its energy from the very places that earlier criticism of Faulkner, or of modernism generally, overlooked or closed off from the possibility of bearing meaning. Several voices and currents—and not all of them as sensitive to Faulkner's linguistic and structural genius as the New Critics—have prevented considering some of Faulkner's most trenchant social and cultural critique. Modernism's detractors in the social realist movement of the 1930s; first-generation readers who saw in Faulkner's work a detached violence or purified myth; feminist readers who targeted Faulkner's (not solely) disdainful treatment of women; critics who viewed Faulkner as an apologist for his region or as a largely unreconstructed nostalgist

of the Old South—cultural studies has found ways of not only responding sensitively to these laments, but often of using the very texts, even the same passages that would seem to betray Faulkner's misogyny, race bias, or political conservatism. In doing so, they have suggested those works' progressive, at times opposite meanings. Critics like Charles Hannon, Susan Donaldson, Michael Grimwood, Richard Godden, John T. Matthews, and Anne Goodwyn Jones all have looked closely at key moments in Faulkner's work that provide pivotal or revisionist readings of it. Seeing Faulkner's formalism as in fact part of a deep engagement with his social and historical reality, Matthews, Godden, and Hannon manage to do more than turn the tables on leftist critics who saw formalist practices as signs of indifference to the hard realities existing outside of texts. They have changed the way that formal considerations of a text's meaning can be thought of generally, and beyond specific examples in Faulkner. Readings of the critical dialectic of Faulkner and popular culture, like Donaldson's, Grimwood's, and Jones's, add to both the interest of Faulkner's "culture industry" material and another dimension of Faulkner's historicity: his work's inflection by cultural as well as social history.

As a writer who confronted cultural definitions of masculinity within the South and who was born and lived in a period that witnessed the vestigial effects of Reconstruction, the development of the New South, Jim Crow, the Depression, national foment over two world wars, and a period of both radical literary experimentation and a rapidly increasing consumer culture, Faulkner poured an enormous range of cultural "meanings" (and meanings of culture) into his writing. Faulkner's definitions of culture—that which he lived as well as that which he made, thought about, and saw—reflected its position within the incredible period of transformation he observed, a result of which is that cultural studies has reinterpreted it in the light of what those definitions allow us to say about his work. This adds new shape and dimension to our understanding of Faulkner's writing. As the work discussed here suggests, Faulkner's fiction offers an encompassing vision of high-literary and mass culture, and of culture as lived and felt—most often painfully. Cultural studies, finally, sees Yoknapatawpha County as a still-evolving, variegated social world, one that manifests issues and extremes that are part of both Southern and national life and in which Faulkner expresses its inhabitants' conflicting perspectives and needs. It also sees Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha as incredibly open to discourses that are neither specifically traditional nor Southern. If Faulkner is that imaginative country's "sole owner and proprietor," cultural studies shows him to be generous in his depiction of it—welcoming to visitors, that is, but often critical, and even willing to give parts of it away.

NOTES

1. This overview draws largely from the accounts of cultural studies offered by Simon During in his comprehensive introduction to *The Cultural Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge,

1999) and Richard Johnson's narrative essay about the movement's development, "What Is Cultural Studies, Anyway?" (*Social Text* 16 [1987]: 38–80). Subsequent references are to these editions and will appear parenthetically in the text.

2. Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1957); Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780–1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958).

3. For an example of this kind of thinking in the context of educational theory, see Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1986), and especially the chapter "The 'Banking' Concept of Education."

4. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus" (*Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Trans. Ben Brewster. New York: New Left Books, 1971. 18).

5. William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury* (2nd Critical ed. New York: W. W. Norton, 1994. 55).

6. This sense of Faulkner's own violent impulse informed some contemporary discussion of his writing. Henry Seidel Canby, reviewing *Sanctuary,* referred to Faulkner's "sadism" that, in this novel, "reached its American peak" (*Saturday Review of Literature* 7 [May 21, 1931]; qtd. in Joseph Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography,* 1-vol. ed. New York: Random House, 1974. 275).

7. These references are to the anthologies' publication dates. The years for the conferences themselves, which appear in the title of each of the collections, are 1988, 1992, and 1995.

8. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

9. We might say, somewhat differently than Andrews, that Caspey's recontainment represents Faulkner's sense that, historically, post–World War I rebellion was recontained *socially* by Jim Crow and did not re-emerge as a political force until the Civil Rights movement.

10. Donaldson's critique would also engage Leslie Fiedler's claim that the appendix traffics in sentimentality and cliché. See Fiedler's "Pop Goes the Faulkner: In Quest of *Sanctuary*" (*Faulkner and Popular Culture: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1988.* Ed. Doreen Fowler and Ann J. Abadie. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1990. 75–92).

11. He points out, for instance, that Faulkner likely saw the irony in the way another modern, but immensely popular, writer like S. S. Van Dine could scorn the masses in his critical study *The Creative Will* while profiting from them in his commercial writing. Yet Fiedler comes short of suggesting how or why a writer, Faulkner or Van Dine, may have sought to use such commentary to position himself within the cultural field—as both of them did.

12. Andreas Huyssen traces the connection in the modernist imagination between women's role in modern political and economic life such as suffrage and, more pervasively, women as early consumers of mass-market fiction. In their capacity as consumers, women became for male writers a figure for the fears of "the wrong kind of [literary] success"—commercial success, as opposed to the supposedly modernist imperatives of difficulty and indifference to the market (*After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986. 53).

13. Like Matthews's other readings of Faulkner's culturally critical bent, this essay uses Theodor Adorno to suggest Faulkner's critique of instrumental reason as it is manifest in capitalism and technology, such as modern weaponry. It also rigorously grounds itself in Adorno and Max Horkheimer's thinking about Enlightenment values and modern, commercial entertainment in their essay "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" (*Dialectic of Enlightenment.* Trans. John Cumming. New York: Verso, 1987). (See Matthews, "Faulkner and the Culture Industry," 51–57; 62; 64).

14. One ready analysis that Matthews avoids would be the suggestion that Faulkner uses these aspects of the stories as a way to wholly subvert their potential for consumption. He does partly make this claim, but Matthews also points out that Faulkner was not naïve about the cultural market or his own dependence on it, and he suggests that the self-critical parts of the stories reveal Faulkner's savvy toward his position as a writer in a particular cultural climate and period. Rather than a dilettantism or quietude towards the market (only available if he chose not to make money on his writing at all), Matthews suggests, Faulkner demonstrates a hard-nosed professionalism in

his commercial writing while including elements in it that took critical stock of its positioning and financial value.

15. Hannon relies for these readings on Foucault's influential book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage, 1979). A range of culturalist readings have used Foucault's work in this text, particularly its elaborate analysis of the development of different modes of coercion and subject formation.

16. Hannon refers to Walter Benjamin's seminal essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (see *Illuminations,* ed. Hannah Arendt [New York: Shocken Books, 1968], 217–52) in making these points about the different relationship between viewer and object in modern, technological media.

17. Hannon draws on the key text of women's history that asserts this aspect of debate about reproductive rights, Linda Gordon's *Women's Body, Women's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America* (New York: Grossman, 1976).

18. In this regard, Matthews cites Georg Lúkacs's book *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* (Trans. John Mander and Necke Mander. London: Merlin Press, 1963).

19. Matthews makes his essay's connection to Adorno's *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* explicit when he states, "Horkheimer and Adorno want to trace the inner dynamic of brutality within the project of rational enlightenment, ultimately to explain how Western culture could have produced the barbarity of the Holocaust. In the case of another genocide, New World slavery, Faulkner helps us see that 'the peculiar institution' did not prove a helpful instrument to Southern plantation agriculture. Rather, the brutal mastery of humans grotesquely magnifies a logic that depends on commodification" (183).

20. See also Charles Peek's essay on *As I Lay Dying* in *Faulkner and America,* ed. Urgo and Abadie, for a similar reading of the Bundrens' melancholy longings for modern commodities.

21. O'Donnell uses Deleuze and Guatarri's book *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1987) to point to "culture" as "a series of 'flows' and circulations." Against this disorderly flow "there must be a regulation of . . . nomadic forces and energies: [in response to which] the state organizes itself as a network of 'striations' . . . that channels these energies" (O'Donnell 85). Here, O'Donnell deepens his account of the Bundrens as representatives of what lies "outside" the order of public space by way of Julia Kristeva's conception of the "abject": "something that threatens the public" realm with that "which [the social body] recognizes as other than itself" (88).

22. Here, modernism's acute preoccupation with interiority, though undeniably an aspect of *As I Lay Dying,* becomes part of an ironic strategy on Faulkner's part of addressing directly that private, subjective realm's opposite: the control by or intervention in private life of public or state authority. Like Matthews, O'Donnell sees Faulkner perform a kind of "exorcism" of one of modernism's (and Faulkner's own) preferred modes—the privileging of the individual and troubled psyche—in the interests of engaging social or historical considerations. This occurs through his treatment of Darl.

23. Grimwood here shows Faulkner pointing to his readers' vicarious pleasure in scenarios of suffering and abjection (similar to Matthews's discussion of the onlookers in "Lizards in Jamshyd's Courtyard"). Grimwood reads the appeal of disaster stories in two directions, as stories that both reflected economic and social cataclysms of the decade and offered distraction and escape from those very circumstances.

24. Hannon relies here on Slavoj Zizek and his cultural theory in *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991) and *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989).

25. This image corresponded to whites' need to countenance images of black weakness, one that Li points out black viewers of the film noted and protested. She cites contemporary issues of *Ebony* magazine to point up blacks' rejection of the movie's distortions of Aleck's character (115).

26. In "Faulkner and Film" (Spec. issue of *Faulkner Journal* 16 [Fall 2000/Spring 2001]: 65–77).

27. *Faulkner and Popular Culture: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1988* (published 1990) is edited by Doreen Fowler and Ann J. Abadie. *Faulkner and Ideology: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1992* (published 1995), *Faulkner in Cultural Context: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1995* (published 1997), and *Faulkner and the Natural World: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1996* (published 1999) are edited by Donald M. Kartiganer and Ann J. Abadie.

28. Ed. Michel Gresset and Noel Polk (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1985).