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CUNNINGLY SWEATED: CREATION, MEMORY, AND TIME IN FAULKNER'S *MOSQUITOES*

by

JOSEPH MORECRAFT, IV

Under the Direction of Pearl McHaney, PhD

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the early fiction of William Faulkner, particularly *Mosquitoes*. Understood in critical context, this novel suffers from retrospective bias. That is, I believe that the brilliant work that immediately (and continually) succeeded this novel provided a critical comparison that made it impossible to ascribe the appropriate value that this second novel truly deserves. *Mosquitoes* was not only a necessary portal and stepping stone to his later/greater fiction, but it also stands on its own as a brilliant experiment allowing Faulkner to free himself from bonds of fragmented mimesis by submerging himself in his own social, literary, theological, and psychological influences, both past and present. Faulkner created a balance between the tension he felt of a traditional Christianity that was deeply ingrained into his southern psyche and a modern influence that consisted of Nietzsche, Freud, Bergson, and others. Although *Mosquitoes* is now often considered Faulkner's weakest work, I argue that it is a coherent statement about the South, the past, and important human values, human values that

find their origins in the rich religious soil of southern Christianity. *Mosquitoes* is more than a necessary step toward Faulkner's later success; it is a literary philosophical leap into genius.

INDEX WORDS: *As I Lay Dying*, Bergson, Bible, Christian, Faulkner, Freud, memory, *Mosquitoes*, Nietzsche, time, *The Sound and the Fury*

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by

JOSEPH MORECRAFT, IV

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2017

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2017

CUNNINGLY SWEATED: CREATION, MEMORY, AND TIME IN FAULKNER'S

MOSQUITOES

by

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DEDICATION

Flannery O'Connor is said to have commented that "All literature is Christian literature," and that "while the South is hardly Christ-centered, it is most certainly Christ-Haunted." This dissertation is no exception. The same Christ that haunted those southern fiction writers has both haunted and guided me through this dissertation process, and I thank Him.

Without the support and love of my beautiful and intelligent wife, Jennifer, this dissertation would not only have never finished, it most likely would never have even begun. Thank you for always pushing me and holding me to this giant task. Thank you also for all the mornings, evenings, and afternoons that you sacrificed what you wanted to do for me to complete this endeavor. You are the love of my life!

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Dr. LeAnne Richardson helped me discover another love: literature of the British *fin de siècle* ... particularly that of the Jago. Dr. Richardson also allowed me to realize that levity exists in academia and that this process can involve some of the same irreverence for which so many of these authors have become renowned, and I thank her.

Two more people inspire me every day to live life and get this paper done: my two sons and heroes, Charlie and Myles. I cannot image life without them. They bring joy to me every day. I also want to thank my parents, Joe and Becky Morecraft, for showing me that loving God and his stories with all of my mind is not empty rhetoric but a vivid reality. And I want to thank Grandmamma (Great mamma these days) for all the stories in the blue room and the woods. She instilled in me a love of the kind of story that rarely gets made into movies but that compels life.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Mosquitoes begins and ends in the New Orleans "French Quarter"—also known as a the *Vieux Carré*—among characters who represent the arts—fiction, poetry, sculpture, and painting—and some hangers on from the world of business and newspaper publishing. This crowd looked quite similar to the one Faulkner lived among for short times in the mid-1920s and, with his friend Bill Spratling, an art professor, had already satirized in a little booklet titled "Sherwood Anderson and Other Famous Creoles" (1926). That small book is itself a parody of a now little-known satire, "The Prince of Wales and Other Famous Creoles" (1925) by Miguel Covarrubias, a Mexican cartoonist who worked for the popular arts magazine *Vanity Fair*. Covarrubias's book features several dozen black-and-white caricatures of famous Americans (mostly New York-based personalities from the 1920s) first published in *Vanity Fair* magazine, which employed Covarrubias as a staff cartoonist. "The Prince of Wales and Other Famous Creoles" introduction is authored by Carl Van Vechten, arts critic and champion of many black writers of the day who also wrote novels and later became a notable photographer active in the first half of the twentieth century. Van Vechten published a controversial novel about Harlem life titled *Nigger Heaven*, the same year Faulkner published his first novel *Soldiers' Pay* (1925). Covarrubias's volume features such contemporary notable figures as Willa Cather, Jack Dempsey, Charlie Chaplin, H. L. Mencken, Theodore Dreiser, George Gershwin, Rudolph Valentino, Babe Ruth, Carl Van Vechten, Joseph Hergesheimer, Calvin Coolidge, John D. Rockefeller, and Al Smith, among others. Spratling and Faulkner's little self-published book thus became a similar guide to the lesser American notables in the nonetheless very important New Orleans arts and literary scene. *Mosquitoes,* in one sense, is a kind of expansion of the little book done with Spratling's caricatures and Faulkner's brief, parodic, word portraits of the

"creoles" of local literati. *Mosquitoes*, however, became both a *tour de force* and a portrait of the culture that nurtured Faulkner's art as a writer of fiction. Clearly, he did not "celebrate" everything in that culture, and although Sherwood Anderson—among others—took offence at how he was presented, Faulkner contextualizes Anderson in the frame of a discussion about the role of religion in the meaning of life and gives him what may be the best lines and the best point of view in the book near its closure, words expressing an idea that, among many others, Faulkner would use in his first great novel, *The Sound and the Fury*.[1]

Though the ground zero of the book is the New Orleans French Quarter, primarily within the area near Jackson Square, with its large equestrian state of the "hero" of the swamp battles of the War of 1812, Andrew Jackson, this is also the religious center of old New Orleans. While Faulkner knew well the Roman Catholic St. Louis cathedral there—he lived and wrote his first two novels in its shadow on what is now called Pirate's Alley next door—this historic spiritual edifice is missing from the novel. Faulkner's characters are artists, intellectuals, and what might be called uncomprehending hangers-on in the vibrant New Orleans art scene of that early twentieth century "Renaissance" period. They are, as noted, drawn essentially from a cast of characters about whom Faulkner had written satirical profiles for his and Spratling's little *jeu d'esprit* mentioned above. There is much talk of religion and God in the first third of the book, ten short chapters introducing many of the characters and explaining their relationships with a flighty rich patron of the arts, Mrs. Patricia Maurier, who is organizing an excursion for everyone on nearby Lake Pontchartrain in her apparently very large yacht. In *The Achievement of William Faulkner*, Michael Millgate points out that *Mosquitoes* is a *roman a clef* that derives from Faulkner's personal involvement in just such a 1925 cruise (Millgate 68). Regardless of the

[1] This passage in the Epilogue—"passion week of the heart"—will be taken up later in this study. (*Mosquitoes* 339).

catalyst of a real event, *Mosquitoes* includes much of what became Faulkner's later greatness, including his masterful use of language and his serious exploration of important themes from the realm of Christian religion. His scornful commentary on the New Orleans literati is evident as well as on some of the shallow religious practices of the period, such as Bruce Fairchild Barton's portrait of Jesus as a modern businessman in *The Man Nobody Knows* (1925).

A central figure is the character Dawson Fairchild, based on Faulkner's (and Hemingway's) first real literary patron and instructor, Sherwood Anderson. Though Fairchild's characterization is perhaps ambiguous—although it certainly offended Anderson—in the context of almost all the other characters who represent different aesthetic, spiritual, and social positions of the day, Anderson/Fairchild may be allowed the most important spiritual lines in the novel. Anderson was then still basking in the success of his novel *Winesburg, Ohio*, in which he explored—similarly to Faulkner—the personal and spiritual struggles of a cast of sometimes unusual small-town characters. Several other characters, as Millgate and others have observed, are drawn from Faulkner's social group during his 1925-1926 sojourn in New Orleans. Millgate notes that the character Mark Frost—whose name seems to reflect poets Mark Van Doren and Robert Frost—could be Faulkner's "attempt at a satirical self-portrait" (69). Like *Winesburg, Ohio*, *Mosquitoes* brings together people from different social strata, interests, and points of view regarding the mysteries of society, religion, and the meaning of life, producing a religio-temporal experiment. Many of the conversations that take place in *Mosquitoes* concern God and the meaning of human existence in the context of a critique of the contemporary social scene as well as a complex exploration of deeper musings, sometimes indirect, about art and life. From the strict temporal structure of the novel to the fluid narration of the nearly silent musings of the only "true" artist in the group, *Mosquitoes* becomes a canvas on which Faulkner addresses his own

aspirations as an artist and his meditations on the role of religious expression and its history in a meaningful life. In another important character, the artist Gordon, in fact, Faulkner may be expressing his own posture toward both organized religion in its various manifestations and searching for, and perhaps encountering, what will become his own frame of reference, expressed later in his fiction as well as in interviews given over the years, under a belief in God.

As we will see, though almost invariably silent, Gordon compares artists to Christ (48) and constantly identifies himself as an "Israfel" (whether poetic or religious), a reference to the Angel who will blow the horn at the end of the world and again at the resurrection. Other characters repeatedly discuss religion and the meaning of existence, or they act in a way that reveals their rootlessness in any religious experience, while Faulkner creates moments and images clearly meant to conjure religious experience or pose religious questions. His treatment of time, spirituality, and creation are deeper than Lake Pontchartrain.

Mosquitoes is not merely a stepping-stone to Faulkner's greater works, it was a necessary step in the direction of *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*, his first two truly remarkable novels. Those two novels in particular echo many of the themes and characters that Faulkner was working through in *Mosquitoes.* Part of the reason *Mosquitoes* has been so harshly criticized is the rapidity with which Faulkner moved on to achieve greatness only two years later in *The Sound and the Fury*. *Mosquitoes*, however, deserves a serious reading in comparison with its greater successor which, it might be said, concerns an equally questioning and lost group of people marooned in a small town and dominated by their past history.

To begin, notice the many religious references in the pre-cruise chapters alone. While there are many other more contemporary allusions, Faulkner firmly establishes this novel as more than just a modern jaunt in that languages and ideas of the 1920s. From the Prologue alone Faulkner

makes multiple references to the Bible or at least to religious experiences/icons. For instance, Mrs. Maurier is carrying a "dull lead plaque from which in dim bas-relief of faded red and blue simpered a Madonna with an expression of infantile astonishment identical with that of Mrs. Maurier and a Child somehow smug and complacent looking as an old man" and later speaks of her, Mr. Talliaferro's, and Gordon's souls (*M* 17, 21). (Talliaferro is a decidedly Prufrockian character in the novel who repeatedly ingratiates himself into the favor of both the artists and non artists throughout *Mosquitoes.*) In contrast to her garrulous aunt Mrs. Maurier, Patricia Robyn does not understand the world "soulless" (*M* 25). In speaking of Pat, Mrs. Maurier, and himself, Talliaferro says, "We all desire until our mouths are stopped with dust," but contrasts that sharply in the same conversation with an Aesthetic contemplation: "We must accept it for what it is: pure form untrammeled by any relation to a familiar utilitarian object" (*M* 26). In the very next paragraph, Mrs. Maurier says, "...about pausing on Life's busy highroad to kneel for a moment at the Master's feet?" an explicit reference to the New Testament. Faulkner has a bit of fun with the passage in which Hooper, the Rotarian, speaks of religion, "You boys are carrying on the good work ... I might say, the Master's work, for it is only by taking the Lord into our daily lives –" (*M* 35). This passage, as mentioned above, may have direct cultural reference, but it also establishes a more foundational reality in Faulkner's development of his structure and themes. His criticism here is of the shallowness of contemporary Christianity, not of Christianity itself. Soon thereafter, the narrator describes the waiter as "cherubic" after Fairchild mentions "proverbs" and makes a subtle allusion to John 1:1 (*M* 37). Faulkner creates an entertaining conversation about religion in general, at one point having the art critic Julius Kauffman remark, "Many people produced Jesus, your people Christianized him. And ever since you have been trying to get him out of your church" (*M* 40). As the conversation comes to a close, Julius's

criticism of church on Sunday makes Talliaferro think of Gordon: "By the way, I saw Gordon to-day [sic]" who may be said to be making false images, an inference to the ten commandments (*M* 42). While this is just a few of the references to spirituality and religion, we see the significant role that it plays even in the Prologue of *Mosquitoes*.

This study exposes a complexity and genius found in *Mosquitoes* that as yet has been undiscovered. Through the specific word choice and etymological significance of Faulkner's diction and the symbolism found both in his narratological structure and in his characters and their speeches, Faulkner was accomplishing far more in *Mosquitoes* than literary criticism has heretofore given him credit. Faulkner was far more aware of his own aesthetic contemplation as well as his spiritual and ideological influences than it may at first seem. He knew his own genius, but he was not totally sure how to use it. In this way, he wrote *Mosquitoes* in which the insects are omnipresent but never named save in the novel's title.

One of the problems with much of the criticism of this novel is what I call retrospective bias. That is, critics have seen the well-developed genius of Faulkner's later fiction and either ignored *Mosquitoes* because of it, or thought poorly of it by comparison. However, I use this very idea to prove the opposite. I intentionally use retrospective bias, both in analyzing *Mosquitoes* as well as in viewing Faulkner's career as a whole, in order to elevate *Mosquitoes* as a literary success. It is both "cunningly sweated" (Faulkner, *Mosquitoes* 47) as well as "trashily smart" (Faulkner, *Lion in the Garden* 40) in that the work that Faulkner was writing into *Mosquitoes* was far more complex than people noticed or that he intimated. It was also scathingly and cleverly critical of a particular set of New Orleans artists while at the same time exposing deep theological tensions of which Faulkner would write for a lifetime in his fiction. I will exemplify this retrospective bias both in the overall structure of this study as well as in the

construction of many of my analyses, seemingly working backwards rather than in a teleological direction.

I will show that in *Mosquitoes,* Faulkner attempts to find balance between his desire to throw off tradition as a thoroughly modern author and his inextricable intimacy with a tradition so old that it began the world. Faulkner's tension between the old of traditional Christianity/ Judaism and the new of living and writing in the 1920s is revealed through an intricate set of contrasts between young and old, present and past, movement and stasis, the spiritual and the physical. *Mosquitoes* is certainly not the most evident of each of these tensions in Faulkner's corpus (as realized more obviously in *As I Lay Dying* and *The Sound and the Fury*) , but it is perhaps the first example of these tensions culminating in one coherent and thoughtful struggle for a balance of them all in one piece of art.

2 CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES OF *MOSQUITOES*

William Faulkner, whether consciously or not, was working out his beliefs about God, time, and memory through his fiction. Beginning with *Mosquitoes* (1927) and becoming even more evident—and successful—in both *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*, Faulkner makes coherent, albeit symbolic, statements about how God exists and interacts in and through human history. While he famously credited the Bible and Shakespeare as the sources with the most significant influence on his writing, he read widely and probably remembered much. Some of that reading included work by Friedrich Nietzsche, Henri Bergson, and Sigmund Freud. These thinkers inform much of Faulkner's writing starting with his early fiction, including *Soldiers' Pay* and *Mosquitoes*, in which the young author makes esoteric allusions to a rich blend of texts; however, Faulkner used these influences, particularly the three mentioned, as a platform on

which to wrestle with his own belief. Although *Mosquitoes* is now often considered his weakest work, I argue that it is a coherent statement about the South, the past, and important human values, human values that find their origins in the rich religious soil of southern Christianity. *Mosquitoes* is the drawing board upon which many of Faulkner's greatest characters and themes were sketched. The influences of the Bible, Augustine, and Calvin are strikingly apparent in his later more developed work, *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*; however, Faulkner experiments with these influences in his early novel, *Mosquitoes* that was an imperative stepping stone for his later successes. Complex characters like Candace Compson may not have ever been created had it not been for Patricia Robyn, the carefree niece of the yacht owner. I argue that temporality within the context of the narrative of *Mosquitoes* as well as in the reader's response to it are portals into understanding Faulkner's spiritual and philosophical beliefs. *Mosquitoes* is more than a necessary step toward Faulkner's later success; it is a literary philosophical leap into genius. It is not a latent, unexplored, flaccid genius, but an intentional use of significant philosophical and ideological cargo that find their sources in Nietzsche, Bergson, Freud, and, ultimately, the theology of Calvin and God.

In order to understand the scope of what I propose, it is important to have a thorough understanding of how *Mosquitoes* has been received since it was written. While this is not an exhaustive survey of the criticism of *Mosquitoes*, it is an analytical glimpse at the critical trends focused either directly or indirectly at Faulkner's second novel.

2.1 CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

2.1.1 1927

"There is much cruelty in the book," states John McClure in the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* on July 3, 1927, "And it may be remarked in passing, a good deal to affront the Puritan imagination" (21).[2] While this could be construed as a compliment,[3] McClure began his criticism of *Mosquitoes*: "William Faulkner, who aroused the hopes of fine things to come with his extraordinary first novel, *Soldiers' Pay*, still has that promise to fulfill" (21). Although McClure does not expand on his praise of Faulkner's first novel, he gives us his undiluted opinion: "The novel [*Mosquitoes*] lacks the integrity of *Soldiers' Pay*. It is brilliant, but not profound" (21). He saw *Mosquitoes* for what it was in 1927.

Mosquitoes was Faulkner's second published novel after *Soldiers' Pay.* Although he had already written poetry; written, illustrated, and self-published a play entitled *Marionettes;* and had written many short sketches and a few stories. Contemporary reception of the 1927 novel was mixed. Critics were both amazed and disappointed in *Mosquitoes*. For instance, Lillian Hellman in June of 1927 noticed a shift from the first novel but attributed it to "a proof of the man's versatility" (19) and made one of the first published connections between *Mosquitoes* and Aldous Huxley. She connects *Mosquitoes* to *Antic Hay*:

> which I think must still stand as the most brilliant book of the last few years. Since then there have been a host of people who have followed, or attempted to follow, in his footsteps. In most cases their literary worth has been as ephemeral as it was temporarily interesting. If any of these has approached *Antic Hay* and

---

[2] McClure was also the editor of *The Double Dealer*, which published Faulkner's poems and sketches.

[3] Had Faulkner read this, he may have seen in it the irony of the phrase "Puritan imagination" and assumed that Mr. McClure was in favor, as was Faulkner, of challenging a rather rigid social and religious system of morality.

> more closely than *Mosquitoes*, it must be now forgotten. (qtd in Bassett, *William Faulkner: A Critical Heritage* 66)

Hellman saw in *Mosquitoes* what the rest of the world would soon see in *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*. Donald Davidson, in July of the same year, was also reverent of Faulkner's talent but placed him in the "seat of the scornful," and "as he sits, he does dispatch mayhem, assault and battery upon the bodies of numerous persons with such gracious ease that you almost overlooks his savagery. His device is simple in conception, but complicated in practice" (20). This tension between simplicity and complexity remains throughout Faulkner's writing life. Davidson went on to say that he noticed a "manner somewhat reminiscent of James Joyce, but with the easy languorousness befitting a Mississippian" (20). However, *Mosquitoes* did not escape Davidson's pejorative pen:

> The novel runs on to its inconsequential end, and in spite of a really wonderful dexterity in the technical management of words to convey certain "slices of life," Mr. Faulkner makes us most aware, not of the people whom he is busy slaying, but of his own remorseless mind, most painfully ill at ease in Zion, wrenching his mortal world into a beautifully distorted cast, leaving us full of admiration for the skill of the performance, but conscious of some discomfort before the performer. (qtd in Bassett, *William Faulkner: A Critical Heritage* 69)

Even Conrad Aiken (who was to win a Pulitzer Prize two years later) wrote, "...without a shadow of reluctance, that the book is a delightful one. And one adds Mr. Faulkner's name to the small list of those from whom one might reasonably expect, in the course of a few years, a really first-rate piece of fiction" (65). Aiken makes this seeming prophetic observation only after saying, "He has, distinctly, the fault of many young writers of today … a desire to shock, a desire to see

how naughty he can be, and how very, very sophisticated he can appear" (64). If Faulkner read this review, it may have made him smile. But when Aiken wrote, "... he has the gift, rare enough in writers of fiction, of making scenes and people come vividly before us ...." (64), it could be that Faulkner never forgot it because we hear echoes of this particular quote in an interview with Faulkner almost thirty years later and we see Faulkner doing that very thing.

While the initial reception of *Mosquitoes* was qualifyingly positive, criticism grew harsher as Faulkner developed, and his novels displayed the genius that he would discover he possessed. One such criticism was given in 1927 by Ruth Suckow: "Mr. Faulkner works so diligently at being brilliant, causal and profound that it is impossible not to give him the faint little spatter of kindly applause that always follows the perspiring efforts of the comedian who has labored too hard to raise a laugh" (69). Nonetheless, in *Mosquitoes* we see the spark of a genius that later burst into flame.

2.1.2 1939

As Faulkner grew and developed and began to expose his undeniable talent, the criticisms that focused on *Mosquitoes* (admittedly comparatively few in number) became increasingly negative. In *The Kenyon Review*, George O'Donnell wrote simply, "*Mosquitoes* fails .... He [Faulkner] is a myth-maker; and there can be no satiric myth" (296). O'Donnell wrote this review after *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying*, *Sanctuary*, *Light in August*, and *Absalom! Absalom!* had already been published. While he wrote much more reverently of Faulkner's other novels, he failed to see that an overwhelming myth was staring O'Donnell square in the face.

2.2 PRE-1980 PERSPECTIVES

2.2.1 1946

In his monumentally significant "Introduction" to *The Portable Faulkner*, Malcolm Cowley both critiqued and praised Faulkner's early writing, "The poems he wrote in those days were wholly derivative, but his prose was from the beginning a form of poetry, and in spite of the echoes it was always his own" (ix). But with regards to *Mosquitoes* in particular, he wrote, "There were six months in New Orleans where he lived near Sherwood Anderson and met the literary crowd—he even satirized them in a bad early novel, *Mosquitoes*" (ix). By this time Faulkner had written arguably his greatest works, so criticism of *Mosquitoes* was sparse and harsh, and Cowley's particular opinion bore great critical and influential weight.

2.2.2 1957

Being awarded the 1949 Nobel Prize in December 1950, made even more public what had already been widely known: William Faulkner was one of the greatest writers of all time. With this notoriety came renewed critical interest in all of Faulkner's works, *Mosquitoes* included. In "The Theme of Rigidity," Irving Malin takes a very strong (perhaps even antagonistic) view of Faulkner's use of Calvinism in the general sense. Malin acknowledges that Faulkner was not a theologian and even admits that he probably never read Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Malin makes the argument that the rigidity that Faulkner saw in Puritan ideas was everything that Faulkner hated about traditional religion. Malin points out that Faulkner appreciated the idea and necessity of faith but reviled how Puritan practice replaced its "warmth" with a "conviction of righteousness" (8). Malin believes that the Calvinist gets pleasure from knowing that much of mankind will burn in hell and even has trouble

understanding, or rather, pitying Christ or even understanding Christ's reason for his own sacrifice. His argument eventually leads him to a rather sound conclusion that the Calvinist cannot live in the present because he is so focused on what he was not able to do in the past and that Faulkner is trying to find a "balance necessary for the critical evaluation of history" (11). This argument assumes much about both Faulkner's assessment of Puritanism as well as his artistic aim which begins most clearly with *Mosquitoes*.

2.2.3 1959

Hyatt Waggoner wrote *William Faulkner: From Jefferson to the World* and focused one chapter on Faulkner's first two novels. Like many other critics, he draws a loose comparison to Joyce. However, Waggoner seems to have a rather particular understanding of what fiction ought to be. He even draws on other critics to agree: "There is far more talk than action in the book, and the plot is, as the critics have been nearly unanimous in pointing out, negligible indeed" (9). While he does see value in the wordsmithing in *Mosquitoes*, "more serious is the lack of a clear controlling purpose capable of supplying unity to the book" (9). Of the narratological dynamism of Taliaferro and Mrs. Maurier (among others), Waggoner writes, "She ceases to be a target and becomes a human being, taking her place in that crowd of tortured and possessed human beings who people Faulkner's novels" (10). This, however, is not a compliment: "this transformation [in the presentation of Mrs. Maurier] weakens the unity of the book…" (10). While I think Waggoner was not yet aware of the significance of this novel to all of Faulkner's later works, he was one of only a few who began to recognize in retrospect Faulkner's genius: "When we reread *Soldiers' Pay* and *Mosquitoes* today, we are likely to be struck not so much by their immaturity...as by their surprisingly complete foreshadowing of the great works which followed

them….Without taking this step Faulkner could not have kept *The Sound and the Fury* free of sentimentality: it would have become a simple elegy, a heart-felt lament" (15-16, 16-17). Waggoner begins to see that the later novels come out of *Mosquitoes* as opposed to being written in spite of the early work.

2.2.4 1962-3

Edward Richardson, in "Faulkner, Anderson, and Their Tall Tale," published what he believed was the most significant and perhaps most obvious (to him) single literary effect of Anderson and Faulkner's friendship: the Jackson Tall Tale in the closing hours of *Mosquitoes*. This tall tale is often credited with being a (or the) highlight of this "weak" novel. It is an extended traditional tall tale about a man named Al Jackson and his sons who move to New Orleans in order to raise sheep, who become alligators, as does his son. This tale was evidently developed in personal letters written between Faulkner and Anderson over a period of time. The contention is between who was the actual originator of this tale and Richardson gives Anderson quite a bit of credit. Walter Rideout and James Meriwether, however, provide compelling evidence to disprove Richardson's claim. In "On the Collaboration of Faulkner and Anderson," Rideout and Meriwether establish firmly that the worth of this tall tale is in Faulkner's genius not in his imitation or borrowing from Anderson: "Although it is impossible to determine now which of the two men originally conceived the idea of the Jackson tales, the letters show that Faulkner played a major part in creating them" (87). This indirect criticism of the novel by Rideout and Meriwether as well as Richardson is in the fact that one of the (if not the only) redeeming qualities of this novel, may not have even been a function of the author's genius but of his collaboration, at least, and his interpretation, at best.

2.2.5 1964

In the opening chapter of her book *The Novels of William Faulkner: A Critical Interpretation,* Olga W. Vickery exposes Faulkner's first two novels as psychologically autobiographical. Agreeing with the general belief that these are his weakest novels, she, nevertheless, finds in them universality. She places each character in *Mosquitoes* in an almost archetypal journey through and around expressions of Faulkner's consciousness. However, Vickery places the value directly on the consciousness as opposed to the expressions of it.

Richardson, on the other hand, addresses, more generally (and factually) than he had in 1962, the influence of Anderson on Faulkner, particularly in his short stories and first two novels while making vague reference to the origin of the Jackson tall tales. "Anderson and Faulkner" seems to be a defense or perhaps addendum to his previously published article that Rideout and Meriwether addressed. Richardson now writes that *Mosquitoes*

> [t]hematically, perhaps more than *Soldiers' Pay*, lacks the rich depth of life, the tragedy and lovely enigma of human existence which Anderson portrayed in *Winesburg*, *Triumph* and *Horses*….The action, characterization, and theme of *Mosquitoes*, despite its satirical elements, show that the author was still occupied with the world-weary, sensitive young men of the *fin de siecle* tradition" (311).

2.2.6 1966

Michael Millgate in the iconic *Achievement of William Faulkner* dedicates only a few pages to *Mosquitoes* and treats it as a sort of forgettable preface to Faulkner's successful prose. He makes some very important observations, however. While he believes that the concept of the

book is very simple, and it is basically a *roman á clef*, it is an important step in "shaking the dust of New Orleans from his shoes" (69). For Millgate, *Mosquitoes* is a necessary break with the significant influence of Anderson in order to forge a new path. Millgate also points out many of the sexual themes "because it has perhaps been insufficiently emphasized in the past, and because it shows Faulkner's early attempt to tackle problems which he dealt with much more successfully in later novels" (71). But it was not for nothing that Faulkner wrote this novel; according to Millgate: "The importance of *Mosquitoes* in Faulkner's career has not been properly estimated. It is not a good novel, but it was an essential step in Faulkner's progress toward the great achievements of the later 'twenties and early 'thirties" (75). I agree *Mosquitoes* is not his best novel, but I argue that it is good for what it is and, perhaps, for what Faulkner wanted it to be.

2.2.7 1968

Richard Adams also understood that *Mosquitoes* was an important development in Faulkner's literary journey as is evident in *Faulkner: Myth and Motion*; he, like many others, thought that, "In itself, it is a failure, dealing mostly with materials, settings, and people that Faulkner could not handle then and never succeeded in handling later. However, it also deals with ideas and problems that the apprentice had to work his way through before he could work effectively as an artist of fiction" (40-41). Adam's observations about sex and art are significant to my study in that he exposes a contrapuntal motif in *Mosquitoes* that persists throughout Faulkner's literary career. That is, his novels often struggle with balance or the lack thereof. Adams points out:

> Another problem that emerges with more force than clarity in *Mosquitoes* is the relation between art and sex, which seems roughly parallel to the relation between art and nature, but which is involved with some puzzling inconsistencies. Gordon seems to be sexually as well as artistically the most potent of the major male characters, and Mr. Talliaferro is again at the other end of the scale. But it is Mr. Talliaferro who is attracted to Jenny Steinbauer, a personification of fertility, and Gordon who unwillingly becomes obsessed with the boylike, "sexless" Patricia Robyn. Moreover, the marble statue Gordon has carved is an image, as Fairchild observes, of timeless and inviolable virginity. (43-44)

Adams sees in *Mosquitoes* the possibility of Faulkner's greatness, but admits that Faulkner does not take his own advice from the novel. Adams notes, "[T]he swamp and its primitive forms of life are rendered in a more artistically convincing and satisfactory way than anything else in the book" (45). Faulkner's use and portrayal of nature as a symbol continued to develop throughout his literary career. But Adams also points out:

> *Mosquitoes* fails to arrive at the full effect because the structure does not develop a sufficiently powerful and concentrated confrontation between the motion of life and the stasis of the artificially timeless moment. There are occasional effective images of dynamic stasis in the text, as we have seen; but they dribble away in a chaos of insufficiently related details, instead of converging to support an effective symbolic structure. (48)

Ultimately, Adams asserts, Faulkner had to find balance in his own work "by the consistent use of dependable organizing patterns" (48-9), patterns that become far more apparent and complex in later novels such as *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*.

2.2.8 1974

Joseph Blotner, in *Faulkner: A Biography*, sets *Mosquitoes* and its characters in meticulous historical context. Giving much credit to Faulkner's fascination with the unattainable Helen Baird,[4] Blotner does make some mild criticism. He notes, "*Mosquitoes* was the most self-consciously literary novel he would ever write. Like its predecessor, it was loaded with epigrams in the manner of Wilde, though here they were assigned to characters rather than the authorial voice." Blotner also rightly associates *The Winged Victory of Samothrace* as a muse for Faulkner's feminine ideal. While Blotner's book is not a critical biography like Richard Gray's, Blotner does succeed in perpetuating the myth of *Mosquitoes* as an early failure.

2.2.9 1975

Amidst the criticism claiming that Faulkner was experimenting with little success, John Irwin in *Doubling and Incest / Repetition and Revenge* spends few but very powerful pages on *Mosquitoes*. He writes, "What is remarkable is that Faulkner's conscious understanding of his structure as a metaphor for his art seems to have been complete almost from the beginning" (160). Irwin is less concerned about the success of the novel as a whole than he is about exposing Faulkner's various themes converging in Irwin's psychoanalytic interpretation: "[W]riting a book, creating a work of art, is not so much an alternative to suicide as a kind of alternative suicide: writing as an act of autoerotic self-destruction" (162). Art, sex, creation, and religion converge in this novel according to Irwin, who writes, "In Gordon's thoughts, incest,

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[4] Blotner goes so far as to say: "In *Mosquitoes*, David West is as vulnerable to Pat Robyn as Faulkner was to Helen" (186). This is not to parallel the pairs, but Blotner does point out the autobiographical nature of the name "David" in Faulkner's literary past, "Although [David] was tall, with a striking body, he had characteristics that suggested his creator. One was his name, which Faulkner used at times for characters who had certain affinities with himself" (185).

autoeroticism, and self-destruction all merge in the images of the artist as a Christ-figure who, because of the self's love for the self, sacrifices the personal self to that objectified other self in the work of art. Describing the essence of the creative act, Fairchild compares it to Christ's suffering and death as an active willing of passivity" (163-4). This image of the centrality of the Biblical story of creation (including the creation of time) ripples throughout Faulkner's fiction for decades.

2.2.10 1978

Originally published in 1977 in *The Georgia Review* as "Faulkner's *Mosquitoes*," Cleanth Brooks republished it a year later as a chapter entitled "A Fine Volley of Words (*Mosquitoes*)" in *William Faulkner: Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond*. Brooks calls *Mosquitoes* a *Love's Labor's Lost* and while he calls it Faulkner's "least respected work" (*Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond* 213), he expounds on the aspects of the novel that show glimmers of Faulkner's genius. Brooks is most interested in Faulkner's "zest for language and power to handle it" (*Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond* 129) and admits that Faulkner was aware of his capability with words. Brooks also argues that *Mosquitoes* is a novel of balance. Faulkner sets in contrast a deep romantic ideal and a much more modern, temporal experience and sees Gordon in the middle of the scale. Then he thrusts Faulkner's own perspective into that balance:

> Faulkner's own romanticism is again worth stressing, for in spite of his early fascination with the innovating writers of the twentieth century, his growth to artistic maturity is largely the story of his taming of his romantic tendencies and his bringing them into fruitful relation with the counter-forces emanating from the

> new literature of the twentieth century. (*Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond* 222)

Most interesting to this study is Brooks' observation that Faulkner was significantly influenced both by his modern context, but also by "romanticism that emphasized the search for the infinite, love as an idealizing force, and woman as either pure spirituality or else tempting sensuality" (222), and Brooks adds, "My own guess is that when Faulkner was writing *Mosquitoes* he was still a more or less unregenerate romantic" (230). Brooks's assumptions held years of critical weight, but some have begun to lighten with age.

2.3 POST-1980 PERSPECTIVES

2.3.1 1980

John Bassett begins his treatment of *Mosquitoes* with a brief but pointed overview of significant criticism. Through specific exemplification, he asserts that "Critics generally agree on *Mosquitoes*' themes, and usually suggest that through both satire and argument Faulkner develops a personal aesthetic, using the devices of Huxley, Eliot, Joyce, and the Symbolists. They also believe that this novel is probably his weakest" ("Faulkner's *Mosquitoes*" 49). Bassett spends a few words on each major character exposing what he believes creates Faulkner's personal artistic aesthetic. He claims a commonality with the earlier criticism when each character is contrasted with Faulkner's ideal. He writes, "The character most critics connect with Faulkner is Gordon the sculptor. In the course of the novel his work seems to develop from a sterile artistry to a more complex and full accomplishment" (52). However, Bassett points out that much of Gordon's characterization and much of the dialogue in the book arises from Faulkner's own sexual frustration and frustration with words as an artistic medium:

> What is clearer is that sexual failure and artistic failure are closely linked in the consciousness that shaped the book, that the weaknesses of the male characters suggest a composite lack of boldness, vitality, maturity, perception, and control in whatever measures requisite for success in either. (63)

As Bassett closes the article, he implies *Mosquitoes*' necessary failure for Faulkner: "Like his other apprentice fiction *Mosquitoes* was Faulkner's means of working through a series of personal problems, of putting behind him concerns that were blocking his creation of more significant work" (64). This novel, to Bassett, was an obstacle that had to be overrun.

2.3.2 1982

In "'The Whole Burden of Man's History of His Impossible Heart's Desire': The Early Life of William Faulkner," Jay Martin dedicates several pages to the subject of time and memory particularly as it changes for Faulkner from his early work to his later work. Specifically, Martin mentions 1926 as the year of the transition from Faulkner's literary "display of repression" to "exuberant release of expression, its tumultuous flow and freedom of movement" (610). He goes on to point out the significant role that gender and creativity have in collecting and recollecting time and even the expression of that recollection.

2.3.3 1983

Philip Castille in "From Pontchartrain to Yoknapatawpha: Faulkner's *Mosquitoes*" speculates that Faulkner was using *Mosquitoes* as social criticism of the distance that culture had created for itself from a healthy perspective of sexuality.

Perhaps one of the most scathing criticisms that suffers from retrospective bias is the chapter entitled "Variations Without Progress: From *Soldiers' Pay* to *Mosquitoes*" is Martin Kreiswirth's book *William Faulkner: The Making of a Novelist*. Kreiswirth's nonchalant surety is appealing, assuming the readers agree. For example, he notes:

> the relative ease with which he drafted *Mosquitoes* seems to be due more to his reliance on an essentially derivative narrative strategy and existing materials than to any real advance in outlook, philosophical perspective, or fictional technique. (81-2)

Kreiswirth also places himself in an agreeable critical context, "The finished novel, *as practically every critic has noted*, is closely patterned on the fashionable 'novel of ideas' and is particularly indebted to the extremely popular early works of Aldous Huxley" (82; emphasis added). Kreiswirth even goes so far as to speculate that Faulkner "quite possibly had an eye toward financial prospects when he began what he himself called his 'trashily smart' novel" (82). [5] This seems to be unintentionally ironic considering the book to which he is referring so meticulously establishes art as a function of genius and not a commodification of talent. By the end of the chapter, Kreiswirth does expose his bias, writing that what he calls Faulkner's "indulgence in an extravagant variety of literary styles and narrative strategies can be seen retrospectively as an indication that he would indulge them no more" (98). He realizes and even admits that his interpretation of *Mosquitoes* is through the lense of Faulkner's greater works.

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[5] Meriwether, James B. and Michael Millgate, eds. *Lion in the Garden: Interviews with William Faulkner 1926-1962*. New York: Random House, 1968.

2.3.4 1984

Alan Friedman's overall summary of *Mosquitoes* is less than complimentary. "[T]his is the novel's basic rhythm: rare moments of energy trailing off into bathos and talk—much of it epigrammatic, self-consciously clever, watered-down Oscar Wilde—about art, life, death, sex and drink, with all except the drink reduced to eneffectual [*sic*] stratagem and conversational gambits" (176). In his book *William Faulkner*, Friedman spends a very few pages characterizing *Mosquitoes* as having little redeemable value:

> Only two things in this novel—the ubiquitous eponymous mosquitoes and Gordon's sculpture of a female torso—escape the general malaise....Faulkner's insects … represent the lust of whose fulfillment is the novel's central nonaction: the pseudophallic in vain pursuit of the nonfeminine, for the women are masculine, resistant, or indifferent, and therefore unattainable even when to hand. (177-8)

The only part of the book to which Friedman ascribes artistic value, because it accomplishes some sort of end, is the epigraph:

> The novel's only fully realized action occurs in its most assured piece of writing, a deceptive preamble on the mosquito's life cycle...The preamble's deceit lies in its implying a pattern—first the young birds of spring, then images of predation and lust, and finally, Autumnal "decay and death"—that will be repeated in the novel as a whole. But, in fact, the latter offers neither spring's vitality not its

> decline.[6] Rather, the lethargy and empty romanticism of its end are established at the very beginning...and sustained throughout. (179)

The success or failure of any of Faulkner's novels, in Friedman's estimation, is heavily derived from the accomplishment of action. He does offer the possibility that Faulkner was perhaps more intentional about this failure: "Faulkner's failure to structure *Mosquitoes* on the model of the preamble may well have been purposeful: a way of initiating the novel's theme of frustration, its focus on endless, empty chatter" (179). While this statement does not cast into shadow his entire argument, it does allow for the possibility of structural intentionality from the beginning of Faulkner's career. In other words, the very aspect of this novel that Friedman is attempting to criticize, may be another example of Faulkner's narratological genius even in 1927.

2.3.5 1985

Another critic who dedicated several pages to *Mosquitoes* was Max Putzel. In his book, *Genius of Place: William Faulkner's Triumphant Beginnings*, he further reinforces the opinion that "*Mosquitoes* was a misguided attempt"; however, he mentions that because this is Faulkner's only novel to explicitly contemplate artistic aesthetics, it is "worth a long hard look" (77). He sees in this novel clear talent, but more importantly, he sees an expression of the author's aesthetic philosophy in a fragmented way. The task is the reader's to piece together the parts of this novel that are worth taking away: "Even if one must stipulate that it is successful neither as a comedy, as satire, nor as a cohesive, unified work of any kind, one can nevertheless find much that is instructive in its various parts" (77). Putzel spends several pages exemplifying the snippets of conversation that expose what he believes is Faulkner's aesthetic ideology. He

[6] While Friedman's distaste for this novel is palpable, his reading of it is misdirected. Perhaps because his bias clouded his judgement or he read the criticism of *Mosquitoes* more carefully than he read the novel. But whatever the reason, Friedman missed much of the genius of this little respected novel.

also exposes his bias: “At its best, however, the pattern of antithesis has the fascination one might derive from watching a talented boy challenge a grand master at chess” (83). The rest of Faulkner’s canon may be the grand master, and *Mosquitoes* is the young boy, but Putzel actually uses chess as a particular metaphor for many of the characters in the book. While the metaphor is more whimsical than it is critical, it does create a picture for one of Putzel’s final assessments: “The most ambitious effort Faulkner made to pull the main threads together occurs in the Epilogue, where each character is accounted for, following the yacht’s hasty overnight return to New Orleans” (84).

2.3.6 1987

Critical attention has also been paid to the aspects of, influences on, and effects from religion in Faulkner’s early work. For instance, in *On the Prejudices, Predilections, and Firm Beliefs of William Faulkner,* Cleanth Brooks begins by quoting John Hunt’s 1965 conclusion that Faulkner tended toward stoicism although he remained close to “Christian revelation” (16). The stoic in Faulkner’s stories often plays out through his focus on endurance and “little concern for God’s grace” (17). However, Brooks believes that Faulkner exposes his own belief that man is not inherently good but is responsible for his own choices and decisions. He returns to Hunt in stating that “Faulkner’s religion is...Stoic Christianity” (24). While this perspective of Faulkner’s religiosity is established over the entirety of his literary career, Brooks’s and Hunt’s observations that his spiritual influences began very early in Faulkner’s childhood and definitely impacted his early work are just.

Chris LaLonde sees Faulkner’s failure text not as *Mosquitoes* but as “Elmer”: “The image is fitting: Elmer is no more able to confront his child than Faulkner is able to confront the reality

of his 'offspring,' the fictive text" (39). LaLonde is one of the few critics to consider *Mosquitoes* without assuming the position of so many other critics. In "Story, Myth, Rite of Passage and *Mosquitoes*" he writes, "A careful look at the talk in the novel will enable us to see that the talk, what it is and what it is about, is fundamentally important to the novel's form and structure rather than a liability….*Mosquitoes* is a better and more carefully formed work than critics have previously noted" (43). Where other critics have found weakness in *Mosquitoes*, LaLonde finds strength. "[T]he novel has an important metaliterary aspect, as Faulkner also seems to be attempting to write out his own specific consideration of the rites of passage of the artist—perhaps so that he might in some sense define himself and the artistic space he was to inhabit" (44). LaLonde uses two specific stories within the novel as exemplification of this observation. He writes:

> When the reader sees the importance of both the stories Dawson Fairchild tells and the allusion to Orion in one of the stories, then he/she sees that Faulkner has greater formal and stylistic control of his novel than most critics have heretofore acknowledged. For instance, Dawson Fairchild's tale of his aborted attempt to join a college fraternity is followed by the first meeting between David West and Patricia. The contrapuntal nature of the text compels the reader to read the latter in light of the former and see the relationship between David and Patricia in light of the failed attempt at a rite of passage. (49)

LaLonde sees an intentionality in both Faulkner's content and structure that had not been seen before. As a matter of fact, he believed that "The denial of the viability of either the Orion or the Israfel role model suggests a maturation on Faulkner's part, a willingness to see male/female relationships in a more complex, and consequently more truthful, light" (59). LaLonde is not just

concerned with what Faulkner is doing on a textual level, "At the metaliterary level, what Faulkner works to in *Mosquitoes* is an understanding of both the procreative and transformative powers of art and the need for those powers to be directed at something more than male/female relationships and sexual fetishism" (59-60). This assessment serves to begin to legitimize the possibility of genius in the novel and to pull *Mosquitoes* out of the shadows of later greatness, sixty years after the novel's publication.

2.3.7 1989

Michel Gresset's chapter entitled "Perversion" in *Fascination* may have some of the most significant parallels with my study of *Mosquitoes*. He begins with this observation: "*Mosquitoes* is a novel constructed with an extreme care that borders on cleverness and discloses the lingering influence of late French symbolism" (90). While this is not a new observation, it is an important critical context for Gresset to establish. If art were elevated in significance as it was to the French symbolists, and the artist was almost prophetic, liberating the art from both utility as well as connectivity to the artist himself, then Gresset's comment is all the more weighty: "*Mosquitoes* is a book in which the sophisticated tone and verbal veneer conceal poorly what one senses to be the author's personal involvement in his subject" (93). Unlike Friedman's assessment of the novel based on whether or not action is accomplished, Gresset projects what action might be: "For Faulkner before being a form of conduct, that is, before having moral implications, every act is a form of behavior, which the body inscribed in what is always in the process of becoming the individual's history, or History in general" (94). This conflation of unique human experience and universal history as fiction is much more consistent with Faulkner's later work. Gresset continues, "Thus, in *Mosquitoes*, instead of allowing his characters to live in his own moment

(he was just turning thirty in 1927), he cast them either in an earlier period, for which he already nurtured a poignant nostalgia, or in a later period, which he imagined in a satirical light with a mixture of irony (Mark Frost) and confidence (Gordon)" (94). The act in this novel is intentionally withheld. The characters on the *Nausikaa* are always on the cusp of saying or doing "something" worthwhile.

Interestingly, Gresset (just like Faulkner) offers a conflated sexual/religious explanation for inaction:

> There is no doubt that the motivations for their ballet have a sexual origin, but the space that separates the desire and the act, all the characters soon come to a stop as if frozen mentally: the Word by which they live catches them in its snare, and the whole show leaves the impression that they are afraid of sexuality. In other words they do act, but they do not act out all that is in a human being. They even refrain from doing so....The Word is obstinately opposed to experience, the Logos to practice. (97-8)

While Gresset is referring to that actual word (language, especially written expression), his capitalization of it echoes the apostle John's description of the Christ in the New Testament. This allusion (intentional or not) provides a Biblical backdrop for Gresset's later comment that "Evil, for Faulkner, first of all signals a perverted relation between two beings (or, worse, between an individual and his own consciousness)" (102). Those two beings, in *Mosquitoes*, are often a man and a woman, "if we consider that Woman becomes an emblem of the real and that words are the writer's only way of approaching it, calling Talliaferro the Great Illusion may also appear to be a way of putting one's earlier understanding of art in a critical perspective" (103). The perversion, in this sense, becomes the artistic creation itself:

> Faulkner's creation of Talliaferro...demonstrates a need to display and get rid of a spurious relationship with literature. The creation of Fairchild expresses the will to put on the same stage as Talliaferro someone who can see through this relationship. The creation of Gordon transcends that of the latter two and is meant to embody true, active relationship implicit in the "Keatsian" relationship to art. Thus the trinity is complete, and Faulkner, rather the writing subject, although fragmented, is totally involved in it. (103)

Gresset, like Faulkner, especially in *Mosquitoes*, cannot escape a biblical haunting in both content and structure.

2.3.8 1991

In a much larger context of Faulkner's modernity, Virginia V. James Hlavsa in *Faulkner and the Thoroughly Modern Novel* draws a parallel between the southern novelist and Jesus: both are "frequently denouncing the dead forms of religion" (31). Hlavsa argues that the modernists believed that they were far more religious than preceding generations because of their exposure to tragedy and evil. Hlavsa makes clear that Faulkner was not so much focused on—"obsessed with" (34)—conventional religion as he was defining—vaguely—his own religion and placing it in a larger, even universal context "because ultimately Faulkner believed we are one" (35). This religion, while not traditional denominational Christianity, was an attempt to intellectualize a spiritual reality Faulkner knew existed.

2.3.9 1997

Claus Dauffenbach in "A Portrait of the Modernist as a Young Aesthete: Faulkner's *Mosquitoes*" does not sweep *Mosquitoes* into the shadows of Faulkner's greater later work. On the contrary, he establishes *Mosquitoes* in particular as a structural and linguistic success and necessary portal into the prose of his later literary life. His argument's central focus is on the way that Faulkner presented the New Orleans artistic set as well as the centrality of sculpture as a representation of art.

John Sykes in "Faulkner, Calvinism, and Religion" grounds Faulkner's use of Calvinism in both ancestry as well as community. Much of the "white evangelical Christianity" with which Faulkner was familiar emerged from this background (44). Sykes writes that Faulkner's understanding of Calvinism was "a caricature of the sixteenth century reformer's intentions" and reflected a "corrupted Calvinism" (44). Sykes argues that even in his corrupted view, Faulkner does point out very real weaknesses into which this tradition often falls. In Faulkner, the Calvinists are the ones giving "ideological backing for an oppressive social order" (47). Most poignantly, Sykes points out that Faulkner's "Puritans are so obsessively concerned with their own damnation or salvation that they hardly know those they live with" (48). This stunted community and self-isolation blocks the flow of time and makes growth impossible. Sykes's (and Irving Malin's, 1957) attention to the religious influence on Faulkner assumes an understanding of sin and sexuality as it related to the South in Faulkner's time.

2.3.10 1999

Others critics relegate Faulkner's early fiction to a poor mimesis of aesthetic and decadent sentimentality. Daniel J. Singal emerges from this group in *William Faulkner: The*

Making of a Modernist. He starts a chapter with Faulkner in Paris and focuses his critical aim at the three early "novels": "Elmer," *Soldiers' Pay*, and *Mosquitoes.* He links Faulkner's "quest for transcendent beauty" in *Mayday* with his characters' search for aesthetic creation and contemplation in *Mosquitoes* (81). He claims that these early works are evidence of Faulkner working out his thoughts about aesthetics and artistic creation. While Singal does point out that most critics think *Mosquitoes* is Faulkner's weakest novel, he admits its distinct charm. This backhanded compliment begins Singal's discussion of each of the characters in *Mosquitoes* linking them with both philosophical and historical sources, spending the lion's share of this part of the chapter on Sherwood Anderson and Dawson Fairchild. The most interesting part of the chapter, however, is Singal's treatment of Gordon either as Faulkner's ideal artist or as a failed member of the community of the human race.

Thomas McHaney presents a very different perspective on sexuality in *Mosquitoes* in "Oversexing the Natural World: *Mosquitoes* and *If I Forget Thee Jerusalem* [*The Wild Palms*]." McHaney and Millgate both see in Faulkner's depiction of the natural world a decadent sexuality inherent in both the novel's language and the characters' actions.

2.3.11 2009

In another article entitled, "What Faulkner Read at the P.O.," McHaney assumes the significance of memory in Faulkner's fiction. Faulkner, McHaney argues, internalized every word that he ever read, and he read much. Although Joseph Blotner and others have painstakingly detailed every book in the Rowan Oak library and many others that Faulkner has supposed to have read (apart from the Bible and Shakespeare), probably the most significant to this study is what we do not have record of him reading. Certainly Faulkner was sifting through

page after page of periodicals and magazines but McHaney here shows what would have been available and quite likely what filled Faulkner's mind while he was taking up space at the Post Office, including *The Saturday Evening Post*, *The Double Dealer,* and other popular magazines with which he would have mixed success in publishing his fiction. Each of these could have influenced his writing in ways that we may never directly know but about which we may critically speculate.

2.4 Critical Contrast: *Mosquitoes* as Overlooked Genius

Faulkner and his contemporaries were encountering a world in which pain and death were a constant but in a place that was supposed to be "civilized," "[O]ften the modernists believed themselves to be more, not less, religious. Having experienced the first world war, they believed they struggled with a scale of evil unknown to their elders" (Hlavsa 33). Perhaps the disillusionment that many of the modernists felt was that they were confronted with so much evil and did not "reckon with God." Faulkner, on the other hand, not only confronted this problem, he recognized in it a subtle and significant interplay between what he could see and what he could not, the "real" world and the "not real" world, the narrative and the metanarrative. The way that Faulkner dealt with these two worlds was by creating fiction. But this fiction was also a prisoner to time: both the time in which the creation was created and the time created in the fiction itself. Faulkner was acutely aware of both of these requisite temporal prison houses. A primary way in which Faulkner communicates this deterministic march in and through time is through his understanding of time and memory as significantly influenced by both Nietzsche and Henri Bergson. Through his fiction, Faulkner portrayed a belief that time—traditionally portrayed as rigid and deterministic—was fluid and that the past was a burden on the present in both positive

and negative ways. The ever moving present made community building virtually impossible because humanity is constantly and consistently shifting; no stasis is available in which to focus and connect. We can only accumulate moments of connection, believing that those moments will eventually create sufficient momentary capital to be considered communal. However, the only means of encountering this capital outside of human consciousness—if this is even possible—is to create something to represent it. The problem is that in order to accurately portray this fundamental human longing to connect—whether through acceptance, love, or power—the creator /author would need to use mediums and images that constantly fall short: fragments that attempt to represent a fluid temporal or spatial whole. Faulkner, as suggested in his fiction, seemed to believe in a God that at His core, on one hand, was relational and was in stark contrast to the living sculptures He had molded, while on the other, was intimately a part of the images He had sculpted ... as if His hands were both the material and the means by which the creation emerged. This genius that is so glaringly obvious in Faulkner's fiction after 1928, has been crouched and hiding in 1927 as well.

3 TENSIONS BETWEEN MODERNITY AND ANTIQUITY IN THE CREATION OF ART

While Faulkner was living and writing in the modern period—in particular to this study, in the 1920s—by his own admission, he was a present tense product of all that had influenced and shaped him up until that point. He had no hesitation to, as Ezra Pound said, "Make it new." The novelty and complexity and fragmentation of the modern way of thinking, was pulling him into a new present. However, the antiquity of the religious tradition in and about which he was raised was also pulling him back into an old present. He was making music with the hum of that

tension. In 1927, the hum was deafening and Faulkner had gotten a taste of novel creation with *Soldiers' Pay*. *Mosquitoes* is his attempt to create a balance, as tenuous as it may have been, in that tension which manifested itself in myriad different ways. His knowledge of Old Testament stories and New Testament ideas contrasted with his understanding of influential thinkers like Nietzsche, Freud, and Bergson exploded into *Mosquitoes*.

3.1 Creating Balance with Structure and Symbolism

If Faulkner was fighting for balance in his life and work, *Mosquitoes* is psychologically, structurally, influencially, spiritually, and literarily autobiographical. Not autobiographical in the sense that Michael Millgate and others have pointed out in calling this novel a *roman á clef* but more accidentally (Millgate 68). That is, whether intentionally or not, the tensions in this novel are pervasive. Richard Gray remarks, "Faulkner's literary project grew out of the tension between the tradition of old tales and talking he took from his region and the disruptive techniques of modernism" (78). Structurally, Faulkner hides his tension in time. As much of his later fiction and prose makes clear, Faulkner was interested in how we as humans interact in time: "There is no such thing as was because the past is" (*Faulkner in the University* 84). We see in *Mosquitoes* Faulkner's first calculated attempt to use time itself, not only as the organizing structure of the novel, but as a symbol or perhaps as a clue to the other symbols that he places carefully in the text. As previously noted, John Irwin writes, "What is remarkable is that Faulkner's conscious understanding of his structure as a metaphor for his art seems to have been complete almost from the beginning …. [In] *Mosquitoes* (1927), Faulkner's most extensive examination of the interaction between the artist and his creation, the influence of the structure is

immediately recognizable" (160). While this novel may well be a foray into artistic introspection, it is also a struggle with a spiritual past.

While the Bible and Shakespeare both play an integral part in this and most of Faulkner's fiction, other influences emerge in *Mosquitoes*. Edwin Arnold has identified many in *Mosquitoes: Annotations to the Novel* and in this work we can see some contemporary influences that recur. T.S. Eliot is most obvious in Talliaferro whose constant anxiety about himself and women reflects J. Alfred Prufrock. But also, as Lillian Hellman noticed in 1927, Aldous Huxley is echoed in *Mosquitoes*, whether *Antic Hay* or *Crome Yellow*. Faulkner was participating in social satire and the novel of ideas popular at the time. Faulkner was also heavily influenced by both Sherwood Anderson—who not only encouraged him to write novels, but wrote novels himself that inspired Faulkner to write—and Phil Stone.[7] However, these contemporary influences are only part of the weight in the writer's attempt at ideological balance. The influence of early 20th century ideas and art, both American and European, pull on Faulkner's mind while the Old and New Testaments pull in the opposite direction creating a humming tension in *Mosquitoes*. This study will expose some of that tension that sets his second novel in a much better light than has been shone on it before.

The action of *Mosquitoes* takes place in roughly four days. Within that time frame, forty-six of the possible hours are filled with action or conversation or wasted time. These forty-six hours are notated by a time of day.[8] Fifty of the waking hours between the first and the fourth day are not similarly notated. Faulkner could have labelled the missing four hours to balance the structure because several of the chapters could have been broken into the individual hours they seem to encompass. However, Faulkner chose to keep the longer chapters—or rather, the

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[7] See H. Edward Richardson's, "Anderson and Faulkner," 1964.

[8] Faulkner labels the sections by chronological days (e.g. "The First Day"), and within those sections/days, he labels the chapters with specific times of each day (e.g. "8 o'clock").

chapters that encompass more than the hour noted by the section title—under one title. For example, on Day 3, the chapter entitled "6 O'clock" is succeeded by the chapter entitled "9 O'clock." The action of "6 O'clock" includes the action of not only that hour but of the next two hours as well. While a particular thematic or narrative purpose may undergird the literary reasons that he kept the long chapters together, structurally, the missing four hours is important, in much the same way that the missing "hours" in the structure of *The Sound and the Fury* are important and will be addressed later in this study.

The symbolic, or rather, allusory significance of the missing or omitted four hours is layered. The first layer is tied to the Old Testament and God's chosen semitic people. In the Hebrew calendar,[9] the Feast of the Passover or the Feast of Unleavened Bread was a celebration of the salvation of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery. The Israelites were commanded by God to celebrate this feast for centuries: "And you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day, throughout your generations, as a statute forever" (Exodus 12:17 ESV).[10] Israel did celebrate this Feast every year with varying levels of fervency for centuries. Even during Jesus's lifetime, he and his family would caravan to Jerusalem to celebrate. The most significant connection between this feast and the structure of *Mosquitoes* is the days of Passover during the year that Jesus was crucified. Traditionally the feast of Passover began on Nisan 10 and continued for several days. Jesus was crucified four days later on Nisan 14 (Davis). Those intervening four days are commonly known as Passion Week, the week that Jesus was triumphantly brought to a humiliating crucifixion. The reason that the Passover is significant

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[9] The Hebrew calendar works differently than the traditional Gregorian calendar. Because of the creation account in Genesis, early Jews started each day at evening ("and there was morning and there was evening the first day…).
[10] This feast was so important that in the first verse of the same chapter of Exodus, Israel was commanded to begin the calendar year on the first day of the month in which they celebrated this memorial.

both to the Christian story as well as to *Mosquitoes* is that Christ was supposed to be the ultimate fulfillment of the Passover celebration. In *Mosquitoes* that sacrifice is for art and is explicitly mentioned in the Epilogue. The sacrificial lamb of the Passover was to be a reminder that God would one day send a Savior: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29 ESV). In other words, the sacrifice of Jesus would do away with this most important ritual in the Jewish calendar because he would render it useless or rather unnecessarily repetitive.

Of the waking hours that Faulkner addresses in these four days in *Mosquitoes*, the only hour that is missing a label from all four days is "Eight o'clock." This, too, is not irrelevant. The number eight holds significant religious symbolism, a symbolism of which Faulkner would have been acutely aware as a southerner raised in and around the Christian church as well as through his Jewish friends in New Orleans, one in particular (Julius Wise Friend) after whom Faulkner almost certainly patterned The Semitic Man (Julius Kauffman) of *Mosquitoes*. According to the Biblical account of creation, the eighth day would have been the first day of the rest of history. That is, in Genesis, Moses writes that God spoke the world into existence in six phases: one phase per day (light/dark, earth/water, etc…). At the end of each phase, God looked at his creation and declared it good. Not only does this establish the primacy of the "word"—spoken by God but only known after being then written—it ends with God resting on the seventh day from his "labor" of creating the earth, the universe, life and time, wherein it could all exist. So the eighth day was the first day of unspoken and unwritten history. This day is the space in between the stories in the Bible and history books that only fiction can recall. So Faulkner leaves out, structurally, the beginning of human creativity, temporally.

We often think of numerical Christological imagery swirling around the number three—the Trinity, the resurrection on the third day—a number which in *Mosquitoes* is rife and will be

addressed later. However, to understand the significance of the number “8” to the Judeo Christian tradition, we must again go back to the Old Testament. Faulkner himself admitted to his fondness for it:

> The Old Testament is full of people, perfectly ordinary, normal heroes and blackguards just like everybody else nowadays, and I—I like to read the Old Testament because it's full of people, not ideas … Just ordinary, everyday folks, people—that's why I like to read that. That's apart from the fine poetry of the—of the prose. (“Law School Wives”)

Faulkner’s familiarity with the Old Testament would have begun in his youth and continued as he grew up in the South and particularly as his friendships with Jewish men and women grew. In *Mosquitoes*, it is not accidental that he refers to Julius as the Semitic man far more often than he refers to him as Julius. So the significance of the number 8 has Old Testament resonance, but it is the combination of the Freudian notion of fear of castration and the biblical idea of circumcision that helps us understand the reason that the reference to eight o’clock is missing from each day.

First we will look at the biblical association. The eighth day in the Bible was the day that God told his chosen people to have their sons circumcised. After making a covenant with Abraham and identifying “his chosen people,” God provided Abraham with a physical identifier of this special ethnicity in Genesis 17:3-12 (ESV),

> Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, “Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations ... And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you....: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall be

> circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised.

Circumcision was not only a physical—albeit symbolical—representation of belonging to a chosen race, it was also a symbol of renewal and new life. Just as God gave Abraham a new name and a new purpose for his life and family, he gave him a new ritual as well to remind Abraham and his family that they were set apart by their God for great things. In this covenant, God promised that Abraham's descendants would become an enormous nation, even though at the time Abraham was in his nineties and childless. This physical ritual was to be continued for generations, and it served a couple of purposes, seemingly. It was a distinguishing characteristic for the Israelites from their cultural context, and it was also a reminder that the offspring of this particular nation would be the offspring that would bring the savior of the world: the Messiah. To assure that this ritual was not simply a physical practice, God mandated a specific day in which future generations would need to undergo circumcision. The eighth day of a new life was the day God chose for Abraham and his descendants to participate in this ritual for both religious as well as physiological reasons … reasons we have only just discovered in the last 100 years.[11] This covenant practice also foreshadows Christ. From the day that Jesus was chosen to be the sacrificial lamb—10 Nisan, the first day of Passover—to the day of his resurrection—Nisan 17—is eight days (Davis). Rituals were important in the Old Testament as well as in *Mosquitoes*. However, the rituals that Faulkner utilizes are empty versions (perhaps perversions) of the Old Testament rituals. For example, Mrs. Maurier believes that she must serve grapefruit at every meal. The ritual, meant to accomplish some goal (insect repellent, scurvy avoidance) becomes

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[11] In 1953, Holt and McIntosh in *Holt Pediatrics* (1953) established the fact that infants are prone to hemorrhage from days 3-7 but have an inordinately high level of prothrombin—a protein in the blood that is primarily responsible for coagulation—on on the eighth day, higher than on any other day of life.

the catalyst or excuse for another ritual: all of the men on the *Nausikaa* getting drunk in their berths. Faulkner has Fairchild explain, “It’s young people who put life into ritual by making conventions a living part of life: only old people destroy life by making it a ritual” (*M* 120). The ritual itself becomes a manifestation of the tension between the old and the young in *Mosquitoes*.

Religiously, the eighth day would have allowed the newborn to have experienced the Jewish Sabbath. This day was by far the most important day in the life of an Old Testament Israelite, and only once the child had experienced a Sabbath (Shabbat) —which 8 days would have ensured—could he be circumcised. However, according to Jonathan Sacks, the eighth day was much more significant and far reaching even than this. In recounting a midrash portrayal of a late first century conversation between a prominent Rabbi and the ruling governor of the area, Tyranus Rufus, Sacks writes:

> The Rabbi then set before the governor ears of corn and cakes. The unprocessed corn is the work of God. The cake is the work of man.[12] Is is not more pleasant to eat cake than raw ears of corn? Rufus then said, “If God really wants us to practice circumcision, why did He not arrange for babies to be born circumcised?” Rabbi Akiva replied, “God gave the commands to Israel to refine our character.”

This part of the conversation came after Rabbi Akiva had given a surprising answer to the governor’s question: “Whose works are better, those of God or of man?” The governor had assumed Akiva would say God. However, he replied: “Those of man.” As the interchange continued, Akiva explained that comparing man’s works to God was not a fair comparison because man was not capable of God’s power of creation. The implication here is that God does

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[12] Compare to the dialogue between Mrs. Wiseman and Mr. Fairchild in which the two utilize corn as a symbol for artistic creation (*M* 183).

not just give his people everything they need all at once. God provides man with the raw materials he needs to accomplish certain goals. Then God requires that those people act—something clearly lacking in *Mosquitoes*. That is, even the artists on the Nausikaa do not "act" in a creative way. They merely exist and converse and criticize the creations that have already been made. Similar to the focus on and lack of creative action in *Mosquitoes*, the significance of the creative ability of mankind is highlighted by this Old Testament reality. If Faulkner was trying to improve on God, then so is every artist on the *Nausikaa*. Rabbi Akiva makes clear that God gave man a required action to take part in the covenant. The conversation then turns to another biblical account: the sin of Adam and Eve. Sacks notes,

> According to the sages, Adam and Eve sinned by eating the forbidden fruit on that [the seventh] day and were sentenced to exile from the Garden of Eden. However, God delayed the execution of sentence for a day to allow them to spend Shabbat in the garden. As the day came to a close, the humans were about to be sent out into the world of darkness and night. God took pity on them and showed them how to make light. That is why we light a special candle at Havdalah, not just to mark the end of Shabbat but also to show that we begin the workday week in the light God taught us to make. The Havdalah candle therefore represents the light of the eighth day—which marks the beginning of human creativity. Just as God began the first day of creation with the words, "Let there be light," so the start of the eighth day He showed humans how they too could make light. Human creativity is thus conceived in Judaism as parallel to Divine creativity, and its symbol is the eighth day...*The eighth day is when we celebrate the human contribution to creation*.

Julius Kaufmann (the Semitic Man) and his sister Eva Kaufmann Wiseman certainly would have been aware of the significance of the eighth day. Faulkner made explicitly clear that the Kaufmann siblings were Jewish. Although the sister, Eva, shows very little interest in religion, Julius is consistently referred to as "the Semitic man" and speaks often of spiritual realities, even if in criticism. Eva is an artist of words who, if she does not create on the boat, she has created at least poetry because Fairchild reads some of it aloud. The eighth day grounds human creativity firmly in the Jewish tradition, not just as image bearers of a creative God, but through a ritual action. Circumcision, then, is man taking part in symbolically and literally improving on God's creation. Sacks also points out the parallels that Genesis and Exodus create between this Divine creation and human creation: "God's creation of the universe and the Israelites' creation of the sanctuary. The Mishkan [sanctuary] was a microcosm—a cosmos in miniature."

This idea of a human creation of a microcosm of life is also reminiscent of Faulkner's practice. Thomas Daniel Young in "The Past in the Present" wrote, "Yoknapatawpha is a microcosm of the western world" (26), and Richard Gray, in *Literature of Memory*, goes so far as to say that Faulkner was consciously trying "to create a microcosm of history" (206). Much like the people in the Old Testament whose stories he admitted to loving, Faulkner created a community even before he named it Yoknapatawpha County. His first version was the town of Charlestown, Georgia in *Soldiers' Pay*. His second was the *Nausikaa*, the boat on which the characters in *Mosquitoes* find themselves. In this novel, Faulkner also chose to underscore the tension between antique religion and contemporary psychology and their implications, partly through a play on numbers, including one significant for its absence rather than its presence. The beginning number, 8, that on its side, ∞, represents infinitude and bears the weight of human creativity in Old Testament narratives, but is "overlooked" in a novel about creativity.

While the significance of the Jewish Old Testament may be subliminal in *Mosquitoes*, Faulkner was also thinking about less antiquated ideas, but he was not willing to admit that he read much of modern ideology like Freud and others. Faulkner was not only using the novel's structure to imply the tension he felt; he was also exposing that tension through the language itself. His command of the English language has been well established as evidenced through his vast literary production as well as the criticism of it. Even in his second novel, Faulkner's incredible attention to linguistic detail creates a tentative balance between etymological allusion, denotative significance, and stylistic appropriation. Until recently, Faulkner's process of writing fiction was assumed to be something that it was not. Faulkner's process of writing seems to have begun with meticulously handwritten manuscripts, painfully and symmetrically lettered and edited in his small printed longhand. The discovery of *Mosquitoes'* manuscript had a significant impact on Faulkner scholarship: "scholars believed that [Faulkner's] first novels, finished and unfinished, were drafted and revised directly on the typewriter" (McHaney, "Preface" *v*). The transcription of *Mosquitoes* is evidence of just how particular Faulkner was regarding diction. For example, on the first leaf of the manuscript, Faulkner made thirty-two changes, the majority of which were linguistic or semantic.[13] While this manuscript version is incomplete, it stands to reason that Faulkner was just as precise with his diction and sentence structure in the missing sections as he was in the leaves that we do have.[14]

Faulkner's use of language is much like his use of symbolism. In response to a student at the University of Virginia, he remarked, "The writer does not purposely use symbolism but does it instinctively. The writer is like a carpenter. When he needs a tool, he just leans back and gets a

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[13] For example, in the first paragraph, Faulkner changed "indecision" to "fretted indecision." In the fourth paragraph on the same leaf, he changed "Lights slow and defunctive as bell-notes held" to "The violet dusk held in soft suspensions lights slow as bell-strokes" (*Mosquitoes* Facsimile and Transcription 3).

[14] The manuscript facsimile does not include sections one and two of the Prologue.

tool he thinks will work. He does not sit and think of which one to use" (Inge 166). This metaphor is poignant in that the superficial understanding of it makes sense.[15] He is telling that student that the best symbols *seem* to be automatic, although Faulkner's manuscripts demonstrate that they are not. If *sprezzatura* ever had a literary name, it is William Faulkner.[16]

Even though Faulkner denied reading Freud, Thomas McHaney and others notice that *Soldiers' Pay*, Faulkner's first novel, as well as *Mosquitoes* makes relatively clear the fact that Faulkner almost certainly not only read Freud, but that he also knew Freud's writings well enough, at the very least, to make constant allusion to them throughout his literary life.[17] Michael Zeitlin writes:

> *Soldiers' Pay*, *Elmer*, *Mosquitoes*, *Flags in the Dust*, *The Sound and the Fury*, *Sanctuary*, *As I Lay Dying*, *Light in August*, *If I Forget Thee Jerusalem*: These are the most fundamentally Freudian of Faulkner's novels. Each builds into its fictional definitions of psychological reality the logic of dreams and the fantasy work of the unconscious, the psychopathology of everyday life, and the determining power of childhood experience in shaping the pathways of adult being. (144)

McHaney observes, "Freud teaches us that there are no innocent jokes and that the fetichist [*sic*] clings to his slipper or female undergarment out of a suspicion, or fear, of castration" ("Oversexing" 22). David West, the steward aboard the *Nausikaa*, was found by Dawson

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[15] However, considering the amount of time and energy involved in retrieving Cash Bundren's tools from the surging river in *As I Lay Dying*, Faulkner's response (much like his fiction) seems to imply far more than what he states.

[16] *Sprezzatura* is an Italian word roughly translated, "effortless grace." Used in literary criticism to imply the use of a device or skill that is deftly executed, even in the estimation of someone also able to accomplish that skill well.

[17] The third endnote on page 42 of McHaney's "Oversexing the Natural World: *Mosquitoes* and *If I Forget Thee Jerusalem [The Wild Palms]*" reads: "As in his first novel, *Soldiers' Pay*, Faulkner demonstrates a well-controlled, if wry, awareness of Freud's *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* and *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*."

Fairchild holding Patricia Robyn's[18] slipper between his knees after returning from an aborted attempt at running away from the yachting party to go to Mandeville and eventually to Europe. David, who some critics suggest is partly Faulkner's representation of himself,[19] is certainly a representation of desire. From the handwritten manuscript, to the typescript, to the published novel, David's embodiment of raw animalistic desire remains unchanged: "'Catch my hands,' she [Patricia] said, extending them, but for a time he didn't move at all, but only clung to the gunwale and looked up at her with an utter longing, like that of a dog" and "[Patricia] added: 'I haven't got on a bathing suit. Go away a minute, David. But he didn't move. He leaned over the rail, looking at her with a dumb and utter longing and after a while she slid quickly and easily into the tender, and still he remained motionless, making no move to help her as her grave simple body came swiftly aboard the yacht" (*M* 163, 166). But Faulkner does not just create the desire in David. He provides the reader with another symbol that exposes Faulkner's familiarity with Freud:

> It was David, the steward. He sat on a coiled rope and he held something in his hands, between his knees. When Fairchild stopped beside him David raised his head slowly into the moonlight and gazed at the older man, making no effort to conceal that which he held. Fairchild leaned nearer to see. It was a slipper, a single slipper, cracked and stained with dried mud and disreputable, yet seeming still to hold in its mute shape something of that hard and sexless graveness of hers. (*M* 235)

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[18] Patricia Robyn is Mrs. Maurier's niece.

[19] Blotner writes of David West: "Although he was tall, with a striking body, he had characteristics that suggested his creator. One was his name [David], which Faulkner used at times for characters who had certain affinities with himself" (*Faulkner: A Biography* 185). Edward Richardson suggests that the David-Faulkner connection began with Sherwood Anderson: "Anderson produced a character named David, who is probably modeled on Faulkner" ("Anderson and Faulkner" 298).

This image of Freudian desire is important to the structure because Faulkner is trying to find balance between a strong biblical tradition and a powerfully modern sensibility.[20] This combination of the Freudian notion of fear of castration and the biblical idea of circumcision is one reason that the eight o'clock is missing from each day. McHaney notes that this image recurs when "Faulkner will later put it [slipper] into the hand of Benjy Compson" (*Oversexing* 29). In *Mosquitoes*, however, even though David's desire is thwarted, he acts: he leaves. He lets go of his object of desire—or projects it onto something/one else—and leaves the *Nausikaa*.

Here it is important to know how Nietzsche's understanding of the past influenced Faulkner and his attempt at "reckoning with God" and the Biblical story because it further illustrates the tension that Faulkner experiences between his historical, biological religious influence and his ideological intellectual development as a modernist. Faulkner, by implication, criticises existential stasis (you don't wind up anywhere) through interviews as well as characters such as David West. Faulkner exposes through his writings a value proposition that if humans are not actively moving toward a "destination," then their lives have less value. He implies that he believes it is important to do something with the time on earth. While this idea is not originally Nietzschean—finding purpose in life is central to the Biblical story of man—in the context of memory, time, and Faulkner's narratives, Nietzsche's influence on Faulkner, particularly Nietzsche's essay *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life*, bears significant weight.

Generally, Faulkner was very interested in the past; that is partly because he was born southern, partly because he grew up modern, and partly because he was Faulkner. Sally Wolff, in "William Faulkner and the Ledgers of History," identifies anecdotal evidence that exposes Faulkner's love for the past. She describes a multi-volume diary of an antebellum era slave

[20] The image of the rope itself connects the old and the new. It is at one time both a phallic image as well as an allusion to the serpent in the garden of Eden in Genesis.

owner that had been well preserved by his family. Wolff interviewed a descendent of the diarist who had been a child when Faulkner would come to their house and read it. Wolff writes, “At some point in his career Faulkner apparently turned to the diary for information. As he read and re-read, Faulkner encountered in these ledgers an entire world of philosophies, theories, ideas, concrete images, stories, fact, and cultural details of life in the antebellum South” (3). She goes on to explain how Faulkner returned and studied the volumes taking copious notes (2-5). Wolff’s account (which led to a book length publication), exemplifies Faulkner’s love for and concern with the past as he understood it in the present. Less anecdotally, David Cowart believes that Faulkner’s environment was the most influential: “Faulkner [is] writing about a culture obsessed with history” (89). This part of Faulkner was not individual, it was communal. He grew up in a context that was “obsessed with history.” Louis Rubin believed that this past was more than just legend; the past was a real burden on the present: “Southerners knew that history was not merely something in books” (150). While the South often looked up at God and back at history for explanations and guidance, Faulkner was not satisfied with what he read or what he heard. It lived and breathed in the stories of the older generation told through tales or through pages, but Faulkner’s past had to be created.

For Faulkner the past resides in the memory and the memory is not just a passive recollection. He needed it to get his story on the page. The past cannot be knowable outside of human experience and thought, yet that experience constantly affects the perception of the information being communicated. The mode of communication (written or spoken) also limits the understanding of the perception of the past. In so doing, the “actual” past recedes even further from the knowable past in the present. Faulkner creates his novels from memory—a force of will—and in recounting his characters’ pasts, he creates them. History (the past communicated

from memory), then, is fiction. The historian becomes storyteller and the novelist becomes historian.

Faulkner was not static in his experimentation with the past/fiction. He was not satisfied with stasis. He saw things in an ever-moving present tense with a present-tense goal. He said:

> To me, no man is himself, he is the sum of his past. There is no such thing really as was because the past is. It is a part of every man, every woman, and every moment. All of his and her ancestry, background, is all a part of himself and herself at any moment. And so a man, a character in a story at any moment of action is not just himself as he is then, he is all that made him, and the long sentence is an attempt to get his past and possibly his future into the instant in which he does something. (*Faulkner in the University* 84)

Faulkner understood the inextricable relationship between the past and the present: "There is no such thing as was because the past is" (84). Faulkner knew that thinking human beings could not separate the present from the past; the past was only a version of the present. Furthermore, he connected reality and fiction in the same way that he connected past and present: "And so a man, a character in a story" (84). Man, through art and history, is a representation of reality. This assimilation of fiction and reality is Faulkner's instrument for "God-reckoning." However, none of this has any consequence unless "he does something"; unless he winds up somewhere. That is, in discussing how we understand history and time, Faulkner underscores the significance of action. He believes that an understanding of the use of history (through memory) is only relevant if a person/character acts, and this action can only take place in "is."

These ideas have been well-developed in Faulkner's fiction after 1928, but his treatment of time and memory begins in his very first novel and continues in *Mosquitoes*. The usage of

Nietzsche, Freud, and Christian tradition are so quietly whispered in *Mosquitoes* and so seamlessly integrated into a seemingly frivolous novel of ideas, it may be tempting to overlook them. But Faulkner was writing this genius so simply into the text that it almost seems accidental.

3.2 Repetition in Prologue 1 & the Epigraph

The opening line of the novel in the Prologue begins, "'The sex instinct,' repeated Mr. Talliaferro ... 'is quite strong in me'" (*M* 9), and if we consider this an ideological juxtaposition of the Bible and Freud, we have a hint of what Faulkner is doing. Like Faulkner, Freud acknowledged, "My deep engrossment in the Bible story ... [which] had, as I recognized much later, an enduring effect upon the direction of my interest" (qtd in Scherer 106). The Old Testament story of Adam and Eve and their banishment from "paradise" makes the "sex instinct" the origin of mankind. In *Mosquitoes*, Faulkner begins with a statement identifying what was the impetus for the creation of life—"The sex instinct"—he may intend the irony of a picture of the human potential for creation as well as "sin." The simplicity of Genesis—thought leads to action which produces life—is contrasted with the complexity—or confusion—of the characters in *Mosquitoes*. While God first simply creates—*ex nihilo*: out of nothing—all of the raw material for poetry and art, Talliaferro is incapable of gaining the means necessary to create that which he desires, woman. Both God in Genesis and Talliaferro in *Mosquitoes* do speak in order to create; however, God's words contain power and fecundity; Talliaferro's do not. Even the sentence structure Faulkner employs for him implies Talliaferro's inability to perform. Rather than saying, "I am a virile male with many children from one or many women," he must utter the phrase "the sex instinct" which is a natural yet passive genetic trait. That is, even if Talliaferro were right

and the sex instinct were strong in him, it is not a matter of will. This instinct is an inborn primal, animalistic trait that lurks deep within the psyche.

That Genesis tells us of creation that "the *Spirit of God* was hovering over the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:2; emphasis mine) is suggestive of the events in Mosquitoes, as, regarding art, that "God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). Talliaferro believed (or at least stated his belief) that he had the innate quality necessary to create, but he lacked empowerment; ironically, he works in women's underwear in a department store. His lament is that "Surely a man would not be endowed with an impulse and yet be denied the ability to slake it" (*M* 347). The language here also betrays his powerlessness in that he was "endowed" and not only was he unable to create—partially because he was male[21] and partially because he was Talliaferro—he was also incapable of finding community that could help him succeed in his creative endeavor. He often consulted a group of men who were more interested in seeing a public colossal failure than that he actually succeed in taking the first step toward ultimate human creativity.

In *Mosquitoes*, Faulkner exposes his understanding for the necessity of community which he does in gathering the people on the Nausikaa, but at this point in his life, creates a perverse sort of community, perhaps resulting from his experience with love. While he had a relatively stable childhood, he lost both of his maternal grandparents whom he knew well, and Estelle Oldham, Faulkner's childhood sweetheart, rejected him for a wealthier man as would Helen Baird who is a source for the novel's Patricia Robyn. He even found that his relationships to his two mentors, Phil Stone and Sherwood Anderson, were becoming strained at about the time he was writing *Mosquitoes*.

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[21] Fairchild discusses this later in the novel as I will.

The title *Mosquitoes* is the only appearance of that word in the novel. Like a biblical plague, however, the insects are legion. Faulkner's repetition exposes ideological values and tensions, and this is clearly seen in the epigraph to *Mosquitoes*:

> *In the spring, the sweet young spring, decked out with little green, necklaced, braceleted with the song of idiotic birds, spurious and sweet and tawdry as a shopgirl in her cheap finery, like an idiot with money and no taste; they were little and young and trusting, you could kill them sometimes. But now, as August like a languorous replete bird winged slowly through the pale summer toward the moon of decay and death, they were bigger, vicious; ubiquitous as undertakers, cunning as pawnbrokers, confident and unavoidable as politicians. They came cityward lustful as country boys, as passionately integral as a college football squad; pervading and monstrous but without majesty: a biblical plague seen through the wrong end of a binocular: the majesty of Fate becomes contemptuous through ubiquity and sheer repetition.* (8)

In this epigraph alone, aside from simple articles, Faulkner repeats seven words[22] (*spring*, *sweet*, *idiot/ic*, *young*, *bird/s*, *majesty*, *ubiquity/ous*). Each one of these seven words, appears twice. Of these fourteen instances of repetition, there are twelve adjectives and two nouns. However, two of the seven (*idiot/ic* and *ubiquity/ous*) are first used as adjectives then as nouns. Many critics suppose that Faulkner's poetic language was as result of his desire to be a poet. Faulkner himself even touched on this subject in an interview in 1956, "I'm a failed poet. Maybe every novelist wants to write poetry first, finds he can't, and then tries the short story, which is the most demanding form after poetry. And, failing at that, only then does he take up novel writing"

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[22] Interestingly, according to biblical tradition, the number seven is the number of perfection, presumably because it encompasses all that has ever existed: the trinity and the four elements.

(Stein). While this may be partly why he chooses the language that he does, it is also that he was establishing a power over words, a power that few of his contemporaries possessed. For instance, *spring* has an interesting etymology. In the 14th century, the "spring," as "in the spring" replaced the previous word for this time of year which was the word "Lent" (Harper). This is significant because in the liturgical calendar, lent is celebrated as a imitation—albeit symbolic—of Christ's forty days in the desert preparing for his earthly ministry which lasted roughly three years and ended with his crucifixion. Lent also culminates on Easter Day, the end of Passion Week, a central motif in the Epilogue of *Mosquitoes*.[23] But this Lenten replacement word does not stand alone.

In Faulkner's description of spring as "young," he exposes the tension he has been creating within the language of *Mosquitoes*. Similarly, the word "young" (interestingly from *jung*) comes from the root *yeu* which means "vital force" (Harper). This is significant because, although Faulkner denied having read Freud or Jung, he also denied knowing much about Bergson, who in *Creative Evolution* coined the term *Élan vital* or "vital force." This "vital force" or "vital impulse" was imperative to Bergson's attempt to explain the creation and evolution of life from a philosophical standpoint. Faulkner uses his linguistic camouflage to leave inconspicuous clues to influences that he was reluctant to admit to in interviews or otherwise while at the same time creating a balance between the religious and modern in his mind.

He also uses this camouflage to gain balance in the novel. For instance, another word Faulkner repeats in the epigraph is the word "majesty." According to Douglas Harper, the original English usage of "majesty" was exclusively used as a descriptor for God. Similarly, Faulkner repeats "ubiquity" or "ubiquitous." While this word commonly refers to something that

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[23] The significance of Passion Week to *Mosquitoes* and to *The Sound and the Fury* will be taken up later in this study.

is physically, psychologically, or ideologically pervasive, the spiritual significance of "ubiquity" cannot be ignored. The religious usage of this term refers to a Protestant belief that the incarnation of Christ was comprised of two or three "natures" all of which were in some way omnipresent, including his physical, spacial nature (Christie).[24] Both of these words with very religious significance are subtly juxtaposed in the same sentence with "Fate." Regardless of whether we suppose Faulkner intended to allude to the Fates of Greek and Roman myth or the Fate of the Anglo Saxon period, this juxtaposition creates contrast. The idea of fate in either historical context is contrary or at the very least challenging to the Christian or Jewish understanding of the human spiritual experience. So here, Faulkner links the importance of repetition in the creation of balance in the epigraph to the first sentence of the Prologue. The last word in the epigraph is "repetition" and in the opening sentence, Faulkner writes, "'The sex instinct," *repeated* Mr. Talliaferro…" (*M* 9; emphasis mine). Faulkner makes clear from the beginning of this novel that repetition and the structure of words themselves are important elements of this particular piece of art.

While most of the critical attention to this novel has been dismissive, one thing that almost every critic has agreed upon is that *Mosquitoes*, more than any of his other novels, shows, as Brooks points out, Faulkner's "zest for language and his power to handle it" (*Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond* 129). The power that Faulkner has in this novel is not his ability to create a moving story. This novel's genius is in the craft of the most basic material of his art: words. In a novel that Faulkner himself called it "trashily smart" (*Lion in the Garden* 40). Not only does Faulkner refer to his own name as forgettable—"Faulkner? … Never heard of him" (*M* 145)—on several occasions in the novel the characters show an ironic disdain for words

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[24] Some believe that this doctrine is a strong argument for the Catholic idea of Transubstantiation. See Christie, Francis A. "Ubiquity." *Christian Classics Ethereal Library.* Calvin College. 10/3/03. http://www.ccel.org/s/schaff/encyc/encyc12/htm/ii.xvi.ii.htm.

themselves: “Well, it is a kind of sterility—Words … pretty soon the thing or the deed becomes just a kind of shadow of a certain sound you make by shaping your mouth a certain kind of way” (*M* 210). In *Mosquitoes*, Faulkner is intentionally playing with the power and connectivity of words to produce a novel that underscores the tensions of the human experience.

The tension is both syntagmatic—in that it is represented in the construction of sentences and paragraphs—as well as paradigmatic: it finds representation in both religious as well as modern ideological paradigms. Beyond the etymological and biblical significance of the epigraph and the subtle allusion to the Old Testament, Faulkner creates in the epigraph an irony and satire that rises above the denotative significance of the mosquitoes themselves. Primarily, the epigraph seems to be a poetic representation of the passage of time: “*In the spring.... But now, as August like a languorous replete bird ....*” (*M* 8). Within that time frame—seemingly about five months—the mosquitoes have transformed from “*little and young and trusting*” to “*a biblical plague seen through the wrong end of a binocular*” (*M* 8). The mosquitoes have grown from being a nuisance to being almost predatory. However, this is only just from a cursory glance.

If we read this epigraph with a retrospective bias—that is, looking back at the epigraph through the lens of the novel itself—we see in the epigraph a microcosm of the entire novel, a pattern that we will see repeated in Faulkner’s later works. For instance, the opening clause of the epigraph is convoluted because the sentence structure is apostrophic. The first two phrases read, “*In the spring*, *the sweet young spring*,” in which the second phrase seems to be an appositive giving more information about “the spring.” However, upon closer inspection, the rest of the clause does not contain a verb: “*decked out with little green, necklaced, braceleted with the song of idiotic birds, spurious and sweet and tawdry as a shopgirl in her cheap finery*.” If

that is the case, then the verb in the first clause is *spring*, "*in the spring* [season], *the sweet young* [people/children/mosquitoes] *spring* [jump]." This reading exposes another layer of tension Faulkner was creating between the old and the new—a tension that shows up repeatedly in his fiction. That is, this reading implies a Freudian element in that the young children/mosquitoes jump at others and each other in a sexual way. The epigraph contains in a very condensed form, most if not all of the themes that *Mosquitoes* contains. In that sense, the epigraph is a map for the rest of *Mosquitoes* and perhaps for the rest of Faulkner's career.

For instance, the diction in the first clause intimates a sexuality ("*spurious and sweet and tawdry as a shopgirl in her cheap finery"*) among the young. Particularly if we read *spring* in the second phrase as a verb, then the euphemism intimates Talliaferro's desire—the sex instinct—and the character Jenny's action—petting with Josh, willingness to have a sexual encounter with Talliaferro, and her sexual encounter with Patricia in the berth. Compare this phrase with the one immediately following that characterizes Mrs. Maurier almost as well as Gordon's sculpture does: "*an idiot with money and no taste"* (*M* 8). We also see the gender tension that emerges later in the novel. If in the first part of the epigraph the birds are both "*idiotic"* and "*tawdry as a shopgirl*" then we can assume the connection to this image of a bird is both feminine as well as Shakespearean: "it is a tale / told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / signifying nothing," an inference to Lady Macbeth's suicide (*Macbeth* 5.5). As time passes within the frame of the epigraph, the bird image becomes a representation of an identifier of time: August.[25] Because of this, the gender tension becomes problematic: the gender referred to in the second half of the epigraph is also Shakespearean but masculine. Faulkner alludes to Shakespeare by writing,

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[25] Perhaps this is also a reference to the twins Josh and Robin who refer to each other as Gus.

"*cunning .... lustful as country boys*." His connection to another of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies is important:

> Hamlet: I mean, my head upon your lap?
>
> Ophelia: Ay, my lord.
>
> Hamlet: Do you think I meant country matters?
>
> Ophelia: I think nothing, my lord. (*Hamlet*)

The overt sexual tension that Hamlet creates in this very public scene in the play is a clarifying backdrop to the epigraph when read as a roadmap for *Mosquitoes*' sexuality. Faulkner was pushing the bounds of publishable imagery in the allusion to "country matters."

The second half of the epigraph also characterizes Gordon: "*cunning ... confident ... unavoidable ... pervading ... monstrous*." This characterization is well suited to the artist found in the succeeding pages of *Mosquitoes*, but Faulkner also introduces irony as well. The *college football squad* is intended to imply an intimidating group of aggressors, but the allusion is more reminiscent of the pathetic narcissism of Tom Buchanan in *The Great Gatsby* or the drunken stupor of the Epilogue ... definitely "*without majesty*" (*M* 8). However, in the very next sentence Faulkner juxtaposes images of his traditional influence and more modern ones. He writes, "*a biblical plague seen through the wrong end of a binocular*." The obvious reference to the Old Testament stands in stark contrast to the more subtle reference to a Freudian phallic representation. Binocular is typically referred to as binoculars because they are used for both eyes. Faulkner, however, uses the singular in order to prepare the reader for the sexual tension that he is writing into the rest of the novel through relationships like Gordon and Patricia, Ernest and Jenny, and even Patricia and Jenny.

Robert Rogers, in "Freud and the Semiotics of Repetition," notes, "What Freud says in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is absurd. He says that 'the goal of life is death.'[26] He says that progress is regress, that 'an instinct is a compulsion inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things,'[27] like a salmon returning to spawn—and then to die—at the place of its birth" (580). While Rogers' assessment of Freud's idea as absurd may be common now, in 1926 Freud was a genius.[28] Faulkner said, "Everybody talked about Freud when I lived in New Orleans, but I have never read him. Neither did Shakespeare. I doubt if Melville did either, and I'm sure Moby Dick didn't" (*Lion* 251). Even if we trust Faulkner's statement—which his sarcasm indicates that we should not—Faulkner knew Freud. What's more, if he only knew Freud from a distance, that distance is the very type of memory that he gives to his characters. Faulkner would have enfolded what he heard or read of Freud into his already developing ideology about art, creation, time, and memory. Freud's idea that repetition (as relevant to a traumatic event) is a forward movement back in time in order to recreate an experience of the past would have appealed to Faulkner. Especially since this repetition is closely tied to instinct. Freud's theory about repetition establishes instinct as the motive for this repetition. Talliaferro, whose opening words are, "The sex instinct," continuously repeats the same activities—attempting to bed a woman—with the same disappointing results. Furthermore, if Fairchild is correct about the sterility of words, then Talliaferro's failure to create is bound in the words themselves.

As further evidence that Faulkner was more familiar with Freud than he was willing to admit and that he was utilizing language as a linguistic reference to his theme of tension and balance is found in his repetition of the simple word "frankness." Within the context of the

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[26] Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Trans. James Strachey. London: Hogarth Press. 1950. p 50. Print.
[27] Ibid. p. 47
[28] See Hunsberger, Ruth Pedersen. "The American Reception of Sigmund Freud." 2005.

novel, this repetition seems to merely establish character. The reader sees Talliaferro as a man who desperately wants this group of people/artists to have a particular perspective of him—refined, sophisticated, virile, daring. This group, however, does not care enough about him to have this perspective and even suspects that this particular perspective is quite far from actuality. "The sex instinct … is quite strong in me. Frankness, without which there can be no friendship, without which two people cannot really ever 'get' each other, as you artists say; frankness, as I was saying, I believe—" (*M* 9). This repetition is Talliaferro's attempt at being heard. Unfortunately, his attempt fails as he is promptly interrupted at the climax of his self-characterization: "'Yes,' his host agreed, 'Would you mind moving a little'" (*M* 9). Not only are Talliaferro's words unheard, he is physically displaced. Talliaferro then continues, "[F]rankness compels me to admit that the sex instinct is perhaps my most dominating compulsion" (*M* 9). The denotation of the word "frankness" is the "state of being french" (Harper). Biographically, Faulkner would have been in France in 1925 and his letters are evidence of his affinity for Parisian culture, especially French art, particularly French sculpture. The other significant association with the etymology of "frank" is that this word comes from the word for "javelin" or "lance," a decidedly Freudian discovery in a sentence solely dedicated to finishing with the dominating compulsion of Talliaferro's the sex instinct.

Another sentence in a succeeding paragraph infers a connection to Freud as well, "Wood scented gratefully slid from its mute flashing, and slapping vainly about himself with his handkerchief he moved in a Bluebeard's closet of blonde hair in severed clots, examining with concern the faint even powdering of dust upon his neat small patent leather shoes" (*M* 9). Talliaferro speaks of masturbation and repeats a word with a phallic history while being placed in a physical context that is described by the narrator as "a Bluebeard's closet," which was a

nineteenth century euphemism for “vagina” (“British Slang”). The language that Faulkner uses underscores Talliaferro’s inability to create even when linguistically surrounded by the poetical Other he needs to create, he is more concerned about the mess on his shoes.[29] Further, the narrator remarks that “Mr. Talliaferro believed that Conversation—not talk: Conversation—with an intellectual equal consisted of admitting as many so-called unpublishable facts as possible about oneself” (*M* 9-10). In the 16th century, “conversation” was a term commonly (even legally) used for “sexual intercourse” (Harper). If this implication is what Faulkner intended, this observation serves more than to characterize Talliaferro as a wannabe sophisticate; it identifies perhaps the source of his failure to create: Talliaferro always sees people as categories. That is, because he is so concerned with being the type of person he thinks he should be, he misses out on who he is. “Talk” that probably derives from the same root as “tale,” fails to see the story, the tale, in people (Harper). Talliaferro is unable to see that people, including himself, are walking breathing works of art: the very art that he so desperately wants to take part in creating. Faulkner’s “fine volley of words” is more than a volley … it is more like a well-choreographed symphonic melodrama of language itself (Brooks, *Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond* 129).

If Talliaferro is linguistically promiscuous, he is artistically impotent. Faulkner contrasts this characterization starkly in the person of Gordon. Faulkner’s narrator identifies Gordon as “host” five times in the first two pages of the Prologue (*M* 9-10). This nomenclature is an etymological foreshadowing of Gordon as a self-labeled Christ figure later in the novel (*M* 48): the word “host” historically referred to “the body of Christ” in medieval common religious usage (Harper). The subtlety and nuance with which he develops his characters began far earlier than

[29] Faulkner may be further alluding to a Catholic schoolboy “joke” of wearing patent leather shoes in order to see up their classmates’ skirts.

most critics have supposed, much like Faulkner's literary genius that begins with his first two novels.

Repetition re-commences on page eleven of the published novel. Faulkner's narrator repeats the phrase, "Thank God" in successive paragraphs and a form of "eternal" five times on the same page. This repetition occurs just after Faulkner makes a none-too-subtle allusion to Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Faulkner writes, "Spring and the cruellest months were gone, the cruel months, the wantons that break the fat hybernatant dullness and comfort of Time; August was on the wing, and September—a month of languorous days regretful as woodsmoke" (*M* 11). It is almost as if Faulkner is setting up "time" as his waste land. Mark McGurl sees in this homage to Eliot a kind of literary and cultural badge that Faulkner is flashing: "an adequate paraphrase of [this] sentence ... might be 'I, too, have read T.S. Eliot'" (153). Regardless, the timing of Faulkner's repetitions concerning eternity and God establish, once again, the tension that Faulkner is emphasizing. This paraphrase, as McGurl describes it, is of the opening lines of one of the most iconically (now) and brilliantly (then) written representations of modernist despair, "April is the cruelest month, breeding / lilacs out of the dead land, mixing / memory and desire, stirring / dull roots with spring rain" (Eliot 1). Faulkner pays conspicuous homage to Eliot's *The Waste Land* but then immediately juxtaposes this icon of disillusionment with a vain reference to God, "But Mr. Talliaferro's youth, or lack of it, troubled him no longer. Thank God" (*M* 11). This would seem like an empty idiom if it were not for the context. The next paragraph reveals one of the central symbols both in context of the story of *Mosquitoes*, but also from the perspective of the critic: "the virginal breastless torso of a girl, headless, armless, legless" (*M* 11). With this description of the marble sculpture, Faulkner brings together all of themes that he is trying to balance: sex, art, beauty, time, and religion.

After the first time Faulkner's narrator states, "Thank God," he establishes the physical space, "No youth to trouble the individual in this room at all. What this room troubled was something eternal in the race, something immortal. And youth is not deathless. Thank God" (*M* 11). The tension between youth and age in this novel is obvious. Faulkner sets up two disparate groups that, throughout the novel, cannot understand each other and do not even attempt to try. Those without youth—Fairchild, Talliaferro, Ayers, the Kaufmanns, Mrs. Maurier—sit and muse; the youth—Jenny, Josh, Patricia—act, but without reason or purpose. In an interview published in the *Paris Review*, Faulkner said, "The child has the capacity to do but it can't know" (Stein). The "children" on the *Nausikaa* exemplify this.

However, when we consider that Faulkner is stretching his linguistic capabilities in this novel, the language that he is using to create this more obvious tension uncovers, once again, more subtle ones. The repetition here of "God" and immortality is no accident. Faulkner is firmly establishing not only the existence of an eternal, immortal force; he associates that force/entity intimately with beauty and ultimately with art. He sets up the contrast: "This unevenly boarded floor, these rough stained walls broken by high small practically useless windows *beautifully set*" (*M* 11, emphasis mine). The aesthetic notion of liberating art from utility is present here. These windows, typically either symbolic or a mere practical utility, seem to the narrator to have no intended purpose, but he sees beauty in them and so they are worth mentioning.

The narrator continues to establish contrast through repetition later in the paragraph. Faulkner writes,

> these crouching lintels cutting the immaculate ruined pitch of walls which had housed slaves long ago, slaves long dead and dust with the age that had produced them and which they had served with a kind and gracious dignity—shades of

> servants and masters now in a more gracious region, lending dignity to eternity. After all, only a few chosen can accept service with dignity: it is man's impulse to do for himself. (*M* 11)

This passage bears an almost anachronistic tone. That is, the description of the past does not quite match the past as we know it. "Kind and gracious dignity" may not accurately portray the way that American slaves were able or forced to serve "long ago." So the intent of the these sentences seem less likely to be in the historical accuracy of the last 100 years. If we change the historical setting, however, the sentences make a little more sense. If "long ago" in a paragraph that makes repeated reference to eternity is actually several centuries earlier, then he could be alluding to Israel during their exile and enslavement in Egypt. For instance, the reference to the lintels is an allusion to the Biblical story of the Passover. In Exodus 12, God told His people that in order to be freed from the forced hard labor they were enduring in Egypt (since the Pharaoh would not relent even after several plagues), they would need to sacrifice a perfect lamb and wipe some of its blood on the door posts and lintels of their houses to escape judgement. Exodus 12:12-13 states:

> For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.[30]

While Israel was unhappy about being forced to work for overbearing Egyptian masters, they were required to serve in the way that Faulkner describes: "with a kind and gracious dignity."

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[30] We have already been prepared to make this connection in the epigraph in which Faulkner alludes to a "biblical plague."

Because Jewish law required a respectful obedience to authority, the Israelites were expected to serve "as unto the Lord" (Colossians 3:23), a New Testament articulation of an Old Testament expectation. Faulkner then alludes to "a more gracious region" wherein the slaves and masters now reside. Whether or not Faulkner actually believed in an afterlife is perhaps more difficult to prove, but the Israelites certainly did. This is where we see the tension between Faulkner's religious tendencies and his modern sensibilities reemerge. Historically, God's chosen people are the ones who would typically enjoy the eternal reward of Heaven and all of its glory. This allusion to the lentils, however, is not just about an Old Testament; it is another subtle indication of Christ. In the Bible, Christ became the final "Passover Lamb" that fulfilled all of the rituals of the Old Testament, and he did so during Passion Week.

In this passage of *Mosquitoes*, moreover, we see a modern implication. If the slave and the master both enjoy heaven, or rather a "more gracious region," that raises serious questions about the ultimate punishment of wrong, particularly considering the context of the Israelite enslavement.[31] The implication is that if there is no just punishment for wrongdoing (in other words, hell does not really exist), then either God does not exist or he is not the just and holy God that traditional Judaism and Christianity have espoused. Faulkner's next phrase, then, becomes a scathing critique of traditional Christianity: "lending dignity to eternity." Faulkner is saying in these four words that the God who damns people to hell is not dignified—a stark contrast to the traditional Jewish and Christian perspective of God.

Ironically, Faulkner speaks through his narrator, "It is man's impulse to do for himself" (*M* 11). This irony has several layers. First, if man's impulse is to do for himself, then slavery, both ancient and 19th century, would not have become so lucrative, nor so dehumanizing.

[31] Exodus 1 establishes the slavery of Israel as one of horribly inhumane treatment. The Pharaoh at the time was afraid that Israel would become a large nation and would be impossible to control. So he had them do incredibly hard labor in poor conditions, then tried to kill an entire generation of Jewish boys at birth.

Second, whether Faulkner believed that humanity evolved from single-celled organisms or from the spoken word of God, the creation of humanity was a passive experience … not sexual creation on man's part. Finally, while Talliaferro speaks as though he will "do for himself" because of the power of a primal "doing" instinct, he does not. Faulkner, however, does not stop at simple irony; he creates contrast. If man were to "do for himself" artistically, he would need to imitate God. He would need to overcome his natural tendency to allow someone else to do for him. He would need to kill the Talliaferro and summon the Gordon inside himself.

All of this talk of God and eternity in the preceding two paragraphs point directly to art: "As you entered the room the thing drew your eyes: you turned sharply as to a sound, expecting movement. But it was marble, it could not move" (*M* 11). Faulkner creates in the following scene the fictional equivalent to what he would say almost three decades later in an interview with Jean Stein of *The Paris Review*:

> The aim of every artist is to arrest motion, which is life, by artificial means and hold it fixed so that a hundred years later, when a stranger looks at it, it moves again since it is life. Since man is mortal, the only immortality possible for him is to leave something behind him that is immortal since it will always move.[32]

Faulkner knew in *Mosquitoes*, and perhaps before, what his art was meant to be. He describes Gordon's sculpture as, "passionately eternal—the virginal breastless torso of a girl, headless, armless, legless, in marble temporarily caught and hushed yet passionate still for escape, passionate and simple and eternal in equivocal derisive darkness of the world" (*M* 11). The

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[32] We see in this passage an echo of a slightly more modern influence. Joseph Conrad writes in the "Preface to *The Nigger of Narcissus*," in speaking of the aim of the artist, he writes, "To arrest, for the space of a breath, the hands busy about the work of the earth, and compel men entranced by the sight of distant goals to glance for a moment at the surrounding vision of form and color, of sunshine and shadows; to make them pause for a look, for a sigh, for a smile—such is the aim, difficult and evanescent, and reserved for only a few to achieve ... And when it is accomplished—behold!—all the truth of life is there: a moment of vision, a sigh, a smile—and the return to an eternal rest."

repetition here, especially considering the context, is paramount. The etymology of the word "passionate" (from "passion") is "the suffering of Christ" (Harper). So Faulkner's reference to Christ's suffering balances his modern sensibility of the centrality of the artist's interpretation of beauty and art without the need for utility, with the antique notion of creation and sacrifice, both symbolic and literal, in the description of his literary image: the sculpture. Linguistically, Faulkner places this marble sculpture in a tense balance of color and light. The white marble statue rises out of the dust of the studio and "equivocal derisive darkness of the world." Once again, Faulkner seems to have been inspired by what John the apostle wrote in the first chapter of his gospel:

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. (John 1:1-5 *King James Version*[33])

The obvious contrast of light and darkness, the elevated status of the "Word" in a novel primarily about words, and the centrality of artistic creation for both life and art all converge in this first chapter of *Mosquitoes*, even this one paragraph.[34]

The linguistic and symbolic significance of this paragraph is hinted at in another way as well. Until this point in the novel, Faulkner' narrator has used a first person voice, but that voice has sustained a distance from the reader by offering third person description. This may have been influenced by Robert Frost's poem "Birches" that Faulkner may have read when it was published

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[33] *King James Version* will be abbreviated *KJV* throughout.

[34] Interestingly, throughout the gospel of John, the author never mentions his own name even though he is participating in most of the action, much like the ubiquitous unnamed mosquitoes of Faulkner's novel.

in 1916.[35] The poem's narrator admits to his own self-awareness, "But I was going to say when Truth broke in / With all her matter-of-fact about the ice-storm." While Faulkner may not have admitted to reading Frost, he remembered him. In this paragraph in *Mosquitoes*, the subtle shift in perspective is not meant to so bluntly arrest the reader out of the flow of the narrative like Frost. The reader of *Mosquitoes*, thus far, is not meant to be a part of the story at all but to be a passive observer. However, in the paragraph in which the statue is just described, the narrator turns to the reader, "As you entered the room the thing drew your eyes: you turned sharply" (*M* 11). Faulkner pulls the reader into the conversation and into the studio. So the penultimate sentence in the paragraph, then, is directed to the reader, "Nothing to trouble your youth or lack of it: rather something to trouble the very fibrous integrity of your being" (*M* 11). This sentence applies to many of the characters in the novel as well: Gordon troubled by Pat and art, Talliaferro troubled by acceptance and victory, Dawson troubled by art and legacy, David troubled by desire. The implication of the second half of the sentence is the clue. The narrator states that what is in the room and in this paragraph will trouble the "fibrous integrity" of our beings as readers, much like the mosquitoes through their firey ubiquity trouble every passenger on the *Nausikaa*. Even though Faulkner divides the cast of characters into the older group and the younger group with little to no commonality except inaction, he implies here that regardless of age, this form of creation is troubling and the mosquitoes are not prejudice. Art and life are conflated as central to the human drive, the human instinct, that trouble the young by ambition and the old by regret.

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[35] Blotner, *William Faulkner: A Biography*, pp. 54-55. The likelihood that Faulkner had read much of Frost is high due to his habit of voracious reading, his relatively significant amount of spare time at the post office at the University of Mississippi, and that he had a copy of Frost's poems in his library at Rowan Oak (Blotner, *WF's Library* 33).

However, Faulkner does not want the reader to wallow in this symbolic pity party. He arrests us out of our reverie with the next sentence, "Mr. Talliaferro slapped his neck savagely" (*M* 11). This violent articulation of a common experience of attempting to kill a mosquito is both futile (Talliaferro cannot even seem to conquer a mosquito much less a woman) and arresting: "As though it had graciously waited for him to get done, the light faded quietly and abruptly: the room was like a bathtub after the drain had been opened" (*M* 12).[36]

4 GORDON AS THE EMBODIMENT OF ARTISTIC TENSION

Gordon emerges clearly as the central concern of *Mosquitoes*. While much of the best prose is reserved for Dawson Fairchild, the genius resides with Gordon. Like many artists and certainly Faulkner, Gordon is tortured. He is pulled by many forces: physical, psychological, and spiritual. He is the embodiment of much of the pain and exultation that Faulkner understood went into creating something worthwhile. By creating a character like Gordon—and others in his later fiction—Faulkner is proving that true artistic genius is not about overcoming tension or struggle, but it is finding a tenuous balance between them just long enough to create.

4.1 The Tension of Temporality

The themes introduced so obliquely in the opening pages of *Mosquitoes* persist throughout the novel and even throughout Faulkner's literary career. While many critics describe Faulkner's religious and spiritual allusions as a secularizing of faith, in *Mosquitoes* in particular, the tension created between the biblical tradition and modern thinking intimates more of a struggle than perhaps has been heretofore mentioned. The symbolic and allusory quality of many

[36] Much like his symbolism, the ubiquity and anonymity of the mosquitoes is troubling as well.

of Faulkner's stories, characters, and conversations is merely one way in which Faulkner attempts to understand God. He said, "God is. It is He who created man. If you don't reckon with God, you won't wind up anywhere" (*Lion in the Garden* 70). In this sentence, Faulkner does two successive things: he affirms the existence of God, and he identifies His most divine characteristic: He creates. Faulkner assumes that the first leads to the second and that if what the Bible says is accepted and man is made in God's image, then he (man/creation) must—to some degree—do the same. For Faulkner and other artists, that creative impulse is art. Most of the characters in *Mosquitoes* do not, in fact, "wind up" anywhere either literally (they return to where they started) or spiritually; that is, most of the characters in this novel do not "reckon with God." They are satisfied with a passive, non-vital existence (Nietzsche 31). Even the artists on the boat are not actively creating any art (neither on the boat nor, seemingly, anywhere else than in the past). The only Faulkner characters who create anything besides conversation are David West and his abortive attempt at creating a relationship and a future, Josh who spends most of the novel neurotically making a pipe, and Gordon whose internal monologue and marble sculpture are at the center of this symbolism. Faulkner creates a novel—many novels—that attempt to "reckon with God" and the writing of the books themselves does just that.

Central to many of the conversations in *Mosquitoes* are sex and art, which are often inseparable and almost, at times, indistinguishable. Ernest Taliaferro, a Prufrockian character, obsesses over his own desire for both sexual prowess and artistic ability; despite his misguided self-perceptions, he has neither. Gordon, on the other hand, has both in excess. Sex and art are not only recurring motifs in *Mosquitoes*, but Faulkner also often makes the accomplishment of either one mutually exclusive of the other, implying a sexual sublimation of sorts (another idea Faulkner may have gotten from reading either Freud or Nietzsche). David Rampton writes,

"Aesthetic aloofness is identified in some oblique way with sexual abstinence" (27). Gordon carries on an internal struggle from the moment he meets Mrs. Maurier's niece—Patricia Robyn—between a powerful physical desire for her and his desire to create art.[37] Even the name of the yacht, *Nausikaa*, underscores this conflict. In book six of Homer's *Odyssey*, Odysseus, shipwrecked and naked on a beach, is awaked by Athena and immediately sees the beautiful Nausicaa and her servants (who are also naked on a beach nearby) washing clothing in preparation for a suitor who had yet to appear. The conversation that ensues is one of mutual awe and restrained tension. Faulkner uses this same tension that the reader encounters in the *Odyssey* and sustains it throughout the entirety of *Mosquitoes*. This tension, however, is not just about people. It is also about God.

Faulkner's narrators are an important tie that binds many of these themes together. For instance, the narrator of *Mosquitoes* functions within a relatively rigid set of temporal boundaries: each chapter encompasses a set time frame. However, the fluidity with which this narrator interacts and even takes on each character's perspective at times provides a stark contrast to this temporal and structural determinism. This is not, however, a traditional third-person omniscient perspective. The narrator at times takes on the internal monologue of different characters without a break from the omniscient perspective. One of the first and more obvious examples of this contrast and tension is the stark and unsettling opening paragraph of the ninth and final section of the Prologue, in which the audience reads Gordon's internal monologue:

> fool fool you have work to do o cursed of god cursed and forgotten form shapes cunningly sweated cunning to simplicity shapes out of chaos more satisfactory

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[37] Once again, the source for this could be either Nietzsche or Freud. Ken Gemes writes, "Nietzsche, like Freud and like their common predecessor Schopenhauer, takes individual humans to be, at some fundamental level, collections of drives" (48). Often those drives are at odds.

> than bread to the belly form by madmans dream gat on the body of chaos le garçon vierge of the soul horned by utility o cuckold of derision. (*M* 47)

Faulkner accomplishes several things in this narratological switch before reverting to a third person objective point of view in the next paragraph which begins: "The warehouse, the dock, was a formal rectangle without perspective" (*M* 47). First, he exposes the tension within the "true artist" in the novel in presenting Gordon as the only artist in *Mosquitoes* who actively produces art. Faulkner also pays homage to many of his influences. While this is certainly not the first reference to T.S. Eliot, this passage echoes "The Hollow Men." What we might assign as Gordon's musing of "cursed and forgotten forms" evokes "Remember us—if at all—not as lost / violent souls, but only / as the hollow men / the stuffed men." The tension that exists in Eliot's poem between hollow and stuffed, emerges here in Gordon's thoughts as well. "Shape without form, shade without color" communicate an emptiness reminiscent of a thought almost remembered. That is, Faulkner seems to be interested in memory on several levels. In terms of the artist, he creates a form and is then forgotten. The art itself becomes all that is left of the artist. The art becomes memory made concrete, or clay, or words. Furthermore, the hollow men were all but forgotten in their groping at the gate of hell in Dante's Limbo while at the same time being paradoxically immortalized in Dante's art but without identification, like a face with a name almost remembered. The physical representation of a memory viewed through the lens of a creative mind. Faulkner does not just reference Dante; he subtly alludes to Eliot who was writing about Dante's *Inferno*, a fictional attempt at understanding a spiritual reality.

More subtly, Faulkner nods to James Joyce in the repetition of the word "cunning" in this same passage. This word is an exact synonym for the archaic word "daedal," the homophonetic origin of Joyces' main character's surname in *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen

Dedalus. Max Putzel offers an explication of Gordon's stream-of-consciousness rant, "The sculptor looks on himself as an ascetic, one who has taken a hermit's vows, dedicating himself to begetting new form—a madman's dream when one thinks of imposing shape on the shapelessness inherent in chaos" (87). The tension that Gordon feels is the tension that Faulkner is creating between the light and the dark of creation both the biblical tension in Genesis 1 (light/dark, water/land, earth/air, good/evil) and the creation of art. The implication of Gordon calling himself a "fool" is that to pursue someone such as Pat (less than his ideal since his ideal is his sculpture) would be foolish compared to his pursuit of the artist's ideal: artistic creation. This tension in art is much like the tension the monk feels who cloisters himself in the monastery in order to achieve his ideal: holiness akin to God's. This tension only begins here, however. Gordon juxtaposes several ideas as if he is trying to find the best combination in order to create balance, an ideal balance. In the second paragraph of the section, the fluidity of the narrative is evident again when the omniscient narrator, mid-paragraph, slips into Gordon's thoughts, "Form and utility, Gordon repeated to himself. Or form and chance. Or chance and utility" (*M* 47). Faulkner's rigid structure of time in the overall novel is juxtaposed with his fluid narration throughout the novel as a subtle but powerful allusion to the French philosopher Henri Bergson.

Many critics have established the connection between Faulkner and Bergson, and Faulkner himself said in a conversation with LoÏc Bouvard, "There isn't any time … In fact, I agree pretty much with Bergson's theory of the fluidity of time" (qtd. in Church 228). However, that conversation was in 1954 and no other critic has established a Faulkner-Bergson connection as early as 1927. The tension between time and the knowing of it is thoroughly Bergsonian. Bergson did not ignore the existence of a powerful, external being; as a matter of fact, he was

often criticized for his belief in a "vital force."[38] Faulkner seems to be interested most in the way Bergson attempted to explain the connection between the physical and the spiritual, the physiological and the psychical, and ultimately matter and memory. Bergson did not believe that memories were simply housed in the brain as Augustine and others attempted to understand them. Bergson made a distinction between inert matter and life. Matter, to Bergson, is something bound by time (the traditional notion of measurable time), yet the observation of that matter is more complicated:

> When we speak of material objects, we refer to the possibility of seeing and touching them; we localize them in space. In that case, no effort of the inventive faculty or of symbolical representation is necessary in order to count them; we have only to think them, at first separately, and then simultaneously, within the very medium in which they come under our observation. (*Time and Free Will* 95)

Human consciousness is not bound by a simple numeric value that we call time. That is, matter can be measured and observed in measured time, but time is not exactly what many believe it is. In *Mosquitoes*, while the days and hours can be numbered, the consciousness of the narrator cannot. The seeming inaction of the story in and of itself is the "symbolical representation" of the immeasurable consciousness. Bergson points out:

> For if time, as the reflective consciousness represents it, is a medium in which our conscious states form a discrete series so as to admit of being counted, and if on the other hand our conception of number ends in spreading out in space everything which can be directly counted, it is to be presumed that time,

[38] Also translated as "vital impetus," Bergson introduces this idea in *Creative Evolution* pp. 57-63.

> understood in the sense of a medium in which we make distinctions and count, is nothing but space. (91)

Time, then, is not "real" or at least not observably real. It is a space that the human consciousness invented in order to cope with something far more complex than space itself, a space out of which Gordon believes he can create:

> stars in my hair in my hair and beard i am crowned with stars christ by his own hand an autogethsemane *carved darkly out of pure space but not rigid* no no an unmuscled wallowing fecund and foul the placid tragic body of a woman who conceives without pleasure bears without pain. (*M* 47-48; emphasis mine)

So even the space out of which Gordon is creating is created. The rigidity of counted time identified by the chapters in *Mosquitoes* is only knowable or observable as a result of the space created by the conscious representation of it. Time, then, in and of itself is artifice. Time itself is a form or art. However, Faulkner's artist of time and space simply implies this Bergsonian connection. This contrasts starkly with Faulkner's more overt statements about the religion into which he was born and raised, exposing once again the tension undergirding *Mosquitoes* and internalized by Faulkner.

In contrast to this idea of time, Bergson suggested that lived "time" is not something numberable but is in constant flux—what he calls "duration." He wrote, "What is duration within us? A qualitative multiplicity, with no likeness to number; an inner dura-organic evolution which is yet not an increasing quantity; a pure heterogeneity within which there are no distinct qualities" (*Time and Free Will* 226). The present is in a constant state of flux and so is incapable of measurement. We see traces if this idea throughout *Mosquitoes*. This internal duration takes its first shape in the narration of Gordon. While it is a stream-of-consciousness narration, it is

also "cunningly sweated" as a symbolical representation of duration (*M* 47). Bergson makes a distinction, however, between internal and external duration: "Thus in consciousness we find states which succeed, without being distinguished from one another; and in space simultaneities which, without succeeding, are distinguished from one another, in the sense that one has ceased to exist when the other appears" (227). Change within the consciousness and change outside of the consciousness constitute two very different things; however, this very difference is central "because memory ... is just the intersection of mind and matter" (*Matter and Memory* xvi). Gordon believed (and so some have argued that Faulkner does as well) that this is the very simplest definition of art. Memory, whether it is governed by some version of "*elan vital*" or is just a fragmentary re-representation of a mosaic of past experiences, produces art, a physical representation (matter) of an ideal (mind). In this passage alone, Gordon contrasts the more primal and therefore less valuable appetite—"more satisfactory than bread to the belly"—with the "form by a madmans [*sic*] dream gat on the body of chaos" (*M* 47). The priority is placed on artificial creation not—as Talliaferro prioritizes—attempts at procreation. That is, the assimilation of chaos into a form by a madman/genius is the "true artist" at work.

Bergson believed that we cannot have a single memory that is not a compilation of many memories "actualized" in the duration. He writes:

> Memory, inseparable in practice from perception, imports the past into the present, contracts into a single intuition many moments of duration, and thus by a twofold operation compells [*sic*] us, *de facto*, to perceive matter in ourselves, whereas we, *de jure*, perceive matter within matter. (*Matter and Memory* 80)

In other words, we have no objective single memory but a memory bias that leans back toward all the memories we have had up to that point. In *Mosquitoes*, we see Faulkner struggling to

represent this tension of present and past, of perception and memory, and of praxis and stasis, all integral themes in Bergson and in Faulkner's later and admittedly more structurally and symbolically complex works, *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*. The fragments that Faulkner is pulling together in the people and the conversations (most of which are incomplete) in *Mosquitoes* reflect this fluidity in the duration, much like the mosquitoes that are ever present and never representable.

The fluidity of the narration amongst a clearly delineated temporal structure and Gordon's repetitive concern with "form" point directly to Henri Bergson in other ways as well. In *Creative Evolution*, Bergson writes, "The more we study the nature of time, the more we shall comprehend that duration means invention, the creation of forms, the continual elaboration of the absolutely new" (11). Gordon's thoughts in the beginning of section 9 already cited are the perfect example of the tension Faulkner feels and is creating linguistically, spiritually, thematically, and temporally. Faulkner creates a stream-of-consciousness narration that seemingly mimics the sculptor's random thoughts; however, a subtle structure exists, much like the one that Faulkner already created in the epigraph. In this speech, Faulkner writes Gordon's thoughts in exactly 10 clipped phrases with no separation:

1. fool fool you have work to do
2. o cursed of god
3. cursed and forgotten form
4. shapes cunningly sweated
5. cunning to simplicity
6. shapes out of chaos
7. more satisfactory than bread to the belly

8. form by madmans dream gat on the body of chaos
9. le garçon vierge of the soul horned by utility
10. o cuckold of derision. (*M* 47; formatting mine)

Considering the amount of biblical allusion thus far in the Prologue alone and the subsequent narration later on the same page, the number ten has enormous symbolic significance in the Bible. Throughout the Bible the number ten is used to signify completion.[39] In the first chapter of Genesis, the phrase "God said" appears 10 times ("Meaning of Numbers"), underscoring the primacy of language in the process of creativity. Furthermore, just as in the epigraph, there are exactly seven words that Faulkner repeats one time each. Once again, the number seven bears significant weight in the Bible. Seven, among other things, represents perfection in that it accounts for the members of the Trinity and the four elements that signifies the totality of existence. Historically, the Jewish calendar also identifies the number seven as having both symbolic as well as traditionally religious significance. For instance, according to the Genesis narrative, Adam was created as the first human, and according to the Jewish calendar, the number seven is a number that indicates cycles (e.g. the week) and dictates many of the dates including feasts and celebrations (not to mention the days of the week). One such date is the date that the Hebrew calendar identifies as the date of the creation of Adam: October 7, 3761 ("The Hebrew Calendar"). This day is not only the seventh day of the month, the Jewish month corresponding to October is Tishri, the seventh month of the Jewish calendar. While Faulkner alludes to significant numerical religious symbols in the Jewish and Christian traditions, the subtlety with which he makes these allusions speaks not only to his genius—not necessarily the type of which Mrs. Maurier (the possible Shakespearean fool of the novel) speaks often in

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[39] Some examples of the number ten in the Bible: the ten commandments, the number of generations before the flood, the day on which the Passover lamb was chosen ("Meaning of Numbers").

Mosquitoes—but it also reveals the tensions with which Faulkner is attempting to come to terms. The modernity of the stream-of-consciousness and the antiquity of tradition emerge out of Faulkner's experience in the world and influence in books.

As the narrator returns to a more distant (while not necessarily objective) third person, much of the diction and ideas of Gordon's thoughts are reiterated in a more traditional narrative form. However, we plunge quickly back into Gordon's thoughts for a much longer stay than before. This second foray into the sculptor's thoughts further highlights Faulkner's tenuous balance. As cited earlier to illustrate Gordon's link to temporality, this passage also connects Gordon to Christ:

> stars in my hair in my hair and beard i am crowned with stars christ by his own hand an autogesthemane carved darkly out of pure space but not rigid no no an unmuscled wallowing fecund and foul the placid tragic body of a woman who conceives without pleasure bears without pain (48)

On its surface, the Christological imagery relating to Gordon further underscores that Gordon is Faulkner's ideal artist. However, much like Gordon's other internal monologues, this reveals once again the tension Faulkner feels between his spiritual upbringing and modernistic tendencies. It is almost as if he wants to let his past go, but he is not able to do so because his art is memory. At first glance, Gordon's reference to Christ implies that either the artist sacrifices himself for the ideal art ("christ by his own hand") or that the crowning of Christ (the savior) as king is a self-crowning (a much more pitiful coronation).[40] Considering the next phrase, the latter explanation seems flat: "an autogesthemane." Gethsemane in the Bible was a garden where Jesus often went to pray alone and was the place where Judas betrayed him and turned him over to be

[40] Julius more flippantly addresses the connection between art and the suicidal aspect of Christ: "'No, no,' he repeated. 'You don't commit suicide when you are disappointed in love. You write a book" (*M* 228).

arrested.[41] It is also the location where Jesus seems to have struggled the most with what he had come to do. Luke 22:44 states, "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (*KJV*). These two allusions underscore Gordon's autonomy through the image of the willing sacrificial savior. Ultimately, in the Biblical account, Christ did sacrifice himself and willingly placed himself in agony in order to secure salvation for the world.[42]

John Irwin reads Faulkner's passage this way: "[W]hen Gordon looks at his image and thinks, 'christ by his own hand an autogethsemane,' the phrase 'by his own hand' simultaneously suggests a self-portrait, self-destruction, and self-abuse" (163). Both the image of Gordon created in this novel and the linguistic Christ created through Gordon's thoughts by Faulkner are borderline suicidal. However, this death-drive in either case is a sacrifice for something worthwhile: to salvage a creation. Gordon fights against his agony but willingly submits to it knowing that it may be at the expense of his art. That is, the agony he undergoes results from his desire for Patricia, knowing, or rather presuming that it will be at the expense of his art is intensified by Gordon willingly boarding the *Nausikaa* and remaining aboard.

Gordon expresses, at least through the narrator, his agony as a result of the tension between his creative urge through art and his creative urge through sexuality. Even in his immediately preceding thoughts concerned this dichotomy—or perhaps Faulkner was creating a linguistic foreshadowing; "form by a madmans dream gat on the body of chaos" not only alludes to Genesis, it signals Gethsemane. In the creation account of Genesis, God created something out of nothing. However, he did not just create all of it at the same time with a snap of his divine fingers. He spoke the creative words—whatever they were … perhaps, "form, solidity, color" (*M*

[41] The night he was betrayed by Judas Iscariot, he was with his disciples but was praying alone.
[42] John 3:16 states, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whomsoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

340) and matter was created. Looking retrospectively, the seventh day was a day of order. Flora, fauna, earth and sky were in their right places and natural phenomena were functioning at a high level of efficiency and productivity … at least that is what must be inferred from Genesis 1. That would mean that on day one, all that God had created was not ordered. It was in chaos: "a gaping void" (Harper). Genesis 1:2 states, "And the earth was without form, and void." Not only does Gordon associate his creative ability with the creative ability of God, his language intimates Christ, even before his overt statement. According to John Nuyen, the Hebrew word "GAT," the first of two Hebrew words that comprise the compound word Gethsemane, means "winepress": the most vital instrument in the creation of wine, the first creation (via a miracle) of Christ.[43]

The biblical allusion that Faulkner makes also signals a complex modern connection. Faulkner uses the word "gat" in a novel written almost one year after *The Great Gatsby* had been published. The significance of the name "Gatsby" is underscored by the fact that in Fitzgerald's novel we learn that this name is fictional:

> James Gatz—that was really, or at least legally, his name. He had changed it at the age of seventeen and a the specific moment that witnessed the beginning of his career .... The truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his platonic conception of himself. He was a son of a God—a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that—and he must be about His Father's business, the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty. (*The Great Gatsby* 97)

In much the same way that Faulkner writes biblical allusions into his characters both conspicuously and inconspicuously, Fitzgerald does the same. In this passage we learn that Jay's

[43] In the Biblical account in John 2, Jesus attended a wedding feast in Cana. They ran out of wine, so Jesus, miraculously, made exceptional wine out of barrels of water.

given name is James, the name of two of Christ's disciples in the new testament. However, the etymology of the name James reveals that it is a form of Jacob: the biblical character upon whom the entire Jewish ethnicity derives (Harper). Faulkner's use of this syllabic reference to one of the greatest novels of the 1920s exposes tension. This tension is planted firmly in Gordon who does not speak often, but when he does, his words and thoughts have heavy symbolic weight. Faulkner reveals through a multi-layered symbolic image the tension and struggle for balance that he is creating between the antique and the modern.

4.2 The Tension of Gender and Community

Perhaps Gordon's greatest agony is the tension he feels between the masculine ability to create artifice and the feminine ability create life.[44] Faulkner's narrator does not address this tension overtly in Gordon's thoughts; however, the implications of it are obvious. On the other hand, Faulkner does have his narrator indirectly identify Gordon's gender tension. In a symbolic representation of masculinity and femininity, the other artisan, with a radically different artistic aesthetic than Gordon, is Josh Robyn, Pat's male twin. On the surface, Josh is an aloof seeming pragmatic who spends the majority of his time and effort making a pipe. Faulkner's narrator plants Josh firmly in the place of the artist, "He had reached that impasse familiar to all *creators*, where he could not decide which of a number of things to do next" (*M* 88; emphasis mine), but using the nomenclature of the Bible in calling him "creator." Interestingly, while Gordon realizes that Patricia is the art that he was trying to create, Josh is only able to create a novel phallic artifice, the pipe. Again Faulkner's narrator associates Josh's creation explicitly with Gordon's thoughts: "The cylinder came in two sections, carved and fitted *cunningly*" (*M* 105; emphasis

[44] Of note is Ben Jonson's poem "On My First Son," in which the grieving poet writes of his recently dead son: "Rest in soft peace, and, ask'd, say, 'Here doth lie / Ben Jonson his best piece of poetry.'"

mine). This description may be accurate but is intended to echo Gordon's turmoil in the prologue, "shapes *cunningly* sweated … carved darkly out of pure space" (*M* 47, 48; emphasis mine). However, Josh does so not out of a desire to use the pipe or even to make money on the pipe, as Major Ayers would like to do. Josh says, "Say, I'm just making a pipe I tell you. A pipe. Just to be making it. For fun" (*M* 173).[45]

Ted Atkinson reads Josh as, "Fundamentally ... a counterpoint to Gordon in terms of the way he views his craft. Rather than a maker of the 'pure' form, the kind of artist that Gordon initially tries to be and that Talliaferro repeatedly exalts, Josh is a living example of what Gordon imagines in stream of consciousness as 'the soul horned by utility'" (78).[46] Atkinson goes further in reading Josh as Gordon's artistic foil because while Gordon is tortured by his art, "For Josh, the creative process yields simple pleasure" (78). Even with this compelling observation and the fact that it is one more tension that Faulkner plays out in his novel as it relates to the creative experience, something deeper exists in Faulkner's creation of Josh as artisan. John Irwin, in his brilliant work *Doubling and Incest / Repetition and Revenge: A Speculative Reading of Faulkner*, interprets Josh juxtaposed with Pat as a much more complex character than just an ironic foil of the "ideal" artist or as the fictional equivalent to Helen Baird's brother of the same name.[47] Irwin sees in the Robyn siblings almost a single character. At the very least, Irwin recognizes in these two characters a heightened sense of tension as it relates to gender. He writes, "There are the brother and sister, Josh and Pat Robyn, whose relationship not only has incestuous overtones but also explicit elements of twinning and masculine-feminine reversal" (160). As evidence, Irwin refers to the prologue of *Mosquitoes*, "He raised his face, suspending the knife

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[45] Perhaps *Mosquitoes* was the influence for Rene Magritte's *Ceci n'est pas un pipe* (1929).

[46] *Mosquitoes* p. 47

[47] Joseph Blotner writes, "Patricia Robyn, owed a good deal to Helen Baird, as her brother, Theodore 'Josh' Robyn, owed something to Josh Baird" (*WF: Biography* 166).

blade. They were twins: just as there was something masculine about her jaw, so was there something feminine about his" (*M* 46). This overt statement is a repetition of an exchange between Patricia and Gordon earlier in the novel that intimates the same thing:

> Her jaw in profile was heavy: there was something masculine about it …
>
> She said irreverently: "Why hasn't she anything here?" Her brown hand flashed slimly across the high unemphasis of the marble's breast, and withdrew.
>
> "You haven't much there yourself." She met his steady gaze steadily. "Why should it have anything there?" he asked.
>
> "You're right," she agreed with the judicial complaisance of an equal. (*M* 24)

Both Faulkner's narrator and the artist (Gordon) masculize Patricia and feminize Josh. For instance, later in the novel after Josh's character has been developed further, the narrator notes, "He [Josh] carved at his object with a rapt maternal absorption" (*M* 105). The fact that Josh is making a pipe, a phallic creation, further feminizes this artist, and Irwin points out, "As an emblem of this reversibility, both brother and sister call each other by the same nickname, Gus" (160). This gender "reversibility" is a function of Faulkner, either consciously or unconsciously, establishing another attempt to balance the tension he feels as an artist. Again, Irwin writes:

> The whole truth is that the artist's love for his work of art is not so much a substitute for his love for a real woman as that his love for a real woman is a substitute for, a symbol of his love for, the work of art, the work of art that is simply the embodiment of the feminine aspect of the artist's masculine self. (161)

Josh and Patricia together form the ideal artist on one hand, and the ideal art on the other, and if we could separate the two without damaging the ideal, then we could extract these ideals.

However, that is impossible. The relationship between Josh and Patricia communicates the artistic tension that is articulated in the Epilogue of *Mosquitoes*.

The gender tension is more important than just formulating a Freudian reading of the text, however. While Irwin does a masterful job of exposing the depth to which Faulkner was aware and understood the psychological ideology that was saturating the thinking of the first decades of the twentieth century, the tension is between both the traditional understanding of gender and the religious soil out of which this novelist is developing. Faulkner utilizes the names of his reverse-gender twins to underscore the fact that this tension is not just aesthetic. “Josh” is actually a nickname that Patricia uses and is a shortened version of the biblical name “Joshua” which means, “the Lord is salvation” (Harper), a conspicuous reference to Christ, the God-man. Josh’s given name is “Theodore” which means “a gift from God” (Harper). In stark contrast to these very biblical names that point to both the creator and the savior, “Patricia” derives from *patrician*, a “member of the ancient Roman noble order” (Harper). Faulkner utilizes thoroughly Christian nomenclature in Theodore “Josh,” and thoroughly non-Christian in Patricia. This juxtaposition does not posit opposites; however, it does underscore once again the tension that both tortures and pleases Faulkner and his characters. Furthermore, both Josh and Patricia call each other Gus which is a shortened version of Augustus or Augustine. The conflation of those to historical characters, once again, creates a spiritual/secular tension.

In the Epilogue of *Mosquitoes*, Fairchild, the worn out novelist, and Julius (the Semitic man) have disembarked the *Nausikaa* and have returned to Gordon’s studio. Julius remarks, “So I believe that if art served any purpose at all it would at least keep the artists themselves occupied” (*M* 320). To which Fairchild replies:

> It's more than that. It's getting into life, getting into it and wrapping it around you,[48] becoming a part of it. Women can do it without art—old biology takes care of that. But men, men … A woman conceives: does she care afterward whose seed it was? Not she. And bears, all the rest of her life—her young troubling years, that is—is filled … But in art, a man can create without any assistance at all: what he does is his. A perversion, I grant you, but a perversion that builds Chartres and invents Lear is a pretty good thing. (*M* 320)

Fairchild's implication here is that women are the true artists in that they are the only human beings capable of creating a living, breathing piece of art. The male creator is only able to capture a moment in time, or rather, the memory of a moment. Faulkner's aesthetic is more than just an understanding of art and the artist; it is, as he and Bergson have said, an understanding of the human experience in time. If woman is able to create, she is able to to do so in the present: a child is born and lives every second he or she is alive. In that sense, "there is no was" (Stein). A man, on the other hand, is only able to create in the past because while he is creating, the art is still becoming. When he paints the last stroke, or molds the last shape, the art is finished and is, therefore, no longer moving in the present. It is a representation of present movement captured in the past; it is a perversion.[49] The woman creates art in the duration while the man creates in measured time. So the Semitic man's rejoinder becomes significantly ironic, "Time? Time? Why worry about something that takes care of itself so well? You were born with the habit of consuming time. Be satisfied with that. Tom-O'-Bedlam had the only genius for consuming

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[48] Considering the fact that these same men have already discussed art as suicide, perhaps Faulkner had in mind the closing lines of the American romantic poem by William Cullen Bryant, "Thanatopsis": "Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch / About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."

[49] Faulkner develops the obsession of time very clearly in the Quentin section of *The Sound and the Fury* where Quentin even goes so far as to remove the hands of his watch in a vain attempt at stopping time.

time: that is, to be utterly unaware of it" (*M* 319).[50] Faulkner is "worrying about time" in that he is in the process of creating, "For writing a book, creating a work of art, is not so much an alternative to suicide as a kind of alternative suicide: writing as an act of autoerotic self-destruction" (Irwin 162). Fairchild asks, "Creation, reproduction from within…. Is the dominating impulse in the world feminine, after all …?" (*M* 320) He asks not because he wants to know the answer but because the question haunts the artistic part of him. He is an author who has spent a significant amount of time in this novel talking, talking, talking, often about the impotence of words. The question that he poses, seemingly to Julius, but really to himself, underscores a deep sense of emptiness as an artist, especially a male artist. Fairchild does very little but lounge and drink. He is the flaccid male artist. On the other hand, not only does Gordon create, he moves and stands and looks down (both literally and metaphorically) on all of the occupants of the yacht. He is the virile artist.

When Gordon believes that Patricia may have left the *Nausikaa* for good, he also leaves. When he runs into a "swamp rat" who had given Pat and David a ride back to the yacht, Gordon then also returns to the *Nausikaa*. On his return, the Semitic man wants to know why Gordon joined this yachting party in the first place. Gordon's reply was not with words, "Gordon stood against the wall, mudstained and silent. He raised his head and stared at them, and through them, with his harsh, uncomfortable stare. Fairchild touched the Semitic man's knee warningly" (266). While Gordon was fighting against his own desire, he is determined not to admit it with words, especially considering his earlier thoughts:

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[50] This is the second time that Julius has mentioned Tom O'Bedlam (*M* 248). Both passages in which this character is mentioned also mentions the genius, a word that in this novel is tossed about mostly by Mrs. Maurier. However, the etymologies of "Tom"—from Thomas meaning "twin"—and "bedlam"—an early mispronunciation/ misspelling of "The Hospital of St. Mary of *Bethlehem*"—intimate that Faulkner may have been just as concerned about their symbolic significance as he was in creating the balance between genius and insanity (Harper).

> Talk, talk, talk: the utter and heartbreaking stupidity of words. It seemed endless, as though it might go on forever. Ideas, thoughts, became mere sounds to be bandied about until they were dead. (*M* 186)

This nod to *Hamlet*[51] came to him as he was remembering again[52] Patricia on the deck of the *Nausikaa* after she had disappeared onto the shore with David West. While Gordon may have, in his mind, been giving in to a baser desire than his compulsion to create art, he was at least not going to sink to the level of words … another instance of Faulkner's self-deprecating humor tucked away in layered symbols. Regardless, after Fairchild silently warns Julius, Gordon and he step out of the room and Fairchild assures Gordon of Pat's presence on the boat. Faulkner's language surrounding this conversation is rife with allusion, as usual, but, once again, reveals the tension that Faulkner feels/creates in the novel. The allusion to *Cyrano de Bergerac* is well documented[53] and Faulkner himself makes reference to this personage and play on the next page. However, even though Edwin Arnold in his *Annotations to William Faulkner's Mosquitoes* gives the credit to *Cyrano* for another image in this passage, I believe that Faulkner had an altogether different set of verses in mind. While Gordon does not hesitate to show disdain for words either by his oppressive silence or by his expressive stream-of-consciousness narration, the tension is that words are the only way in which we can understand this dislike. Furthermore, when Gordon thinks about Patricia's presence on the *Nausikaa*, he cannot help but describe his feelings

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[51] "Words, words, words." *Hamlet*, Act 2, scene 1. This is perhaps an apt comparison between the tortured and torn Hamlet. While it is outside the scope of this paper, one may do well to find the consistent influence of *Hamlet* on *Mosquitoes*.

[52] Faulkner creates a recurring motif of Gordon's fear of the loss of his ideal come to life, "Then she was gone, and Gordon stood at the wet and simple prints of her naked feet on the deck" (*M* 82).

[53] Arnold, Edwin. *Annotations to William Faulkner's Mosquitoes*. p 127: "267.32-268.1 'your name is like a little golden bell hung in my heart': cf. *Cyrano de Bergerac*: 'your name is like a golden bell / hung in my heart; and when I think of you, / I tremble, and the bell swings and rings / Roxane! … / Roxane … along my veins, Roxane! [Act III, pp. 168-169]'"

poetically: "He went on down the passage with a singing lightness in his heart, a bright silver joy like wings" (*M* 268). A few paragraphs later, Faulkner writes:

> The sun was setting across the scudding water: the water was shot goldenly with it, as was the gleaming mahogany-and-brass elegance of the yacht, and the silver wings in his [Gordon's] heart were touched with pink and gold while he stood and looked downward upon the coarse crown of her head and at her body's grave and sexless replica of his own attitude against the rail—an unconscious aping both comical and heartshaking. (*M* 269)

This song and the image of silver wings echoes more of Noel Roden's poem "Music and the Child" than it does *Cyrano*[54]:

> What is it Lord? Can it be human?
> Song of child, or song of woman?
> Some loving Ariel doth toy
> In self-abandonment of joy …
> In bluest air the melody
> On silver wings appears to fly;
> And lo! In live germander blue
> A threefold flower-cluster flew,
> Child-seraphim, arrayed in white,
> Fair with dewy eyes of light …
> So on tender pulsing pinion
> Audibly the heaven's dominion

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[54] Arnold p. 127

> Many a threefold flower-band
>
> Of children clove, while in their bland
>
> Spirit-wreathing, when on passed,
>
> Shadow delicate fell fast
>
> From him upon a sister child,
>
> Softening to mood more mild
>
> Her raptured whiteness undefiled. (265-266)

While Roden's poetry covers a wide range of topics, he is most noted for his poems that either overtly or covertly express his sexual identity. Much like Faulkner, his tension was both identity and artifice.[55] In "Music and the Child," the "melody" flies on "silver wings" much like the melody in Gordon's thoughts: "with a singing lightness … a bright silver joy like wings" where Faulkner combines sensory stimuli "Deploying the Modernist technique of synesthesia" (*M* 268; Singal, *Making of a Modernist* 241).

Roden associates the song with Ariel while Gordon refers to himself over and over again as Israfel. This may seem like a happy angelic melodious coincidence, except that several critics have assumed that Gordon's persistent reference to Israfel is Faulkner's allusion to Poe. Basset is the most explicit, "Poe's Israfel is his muse" (*Faulkner's Mosquitoes* 54). As it happens, in the same year—1902—that Roden's complete works were published, *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe* was also published. Faulkner could have read these works before 1927. In the third chapter of the first of two volumes, James Harrison writes of Poe's early works:

> In their crude boyish metres one can feel the dancing Ariel spirit of his mother taking form in verse and reincarnating itself, Morella-like, in the work of the

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[55] Rictor Norton compares Roden's poem "The Two Friends" to Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily," both of which, he claims, have a theme of "spurned-and-repressed love."

> child. The elements of strangeness and beauty were all there; quaintness and witchery echo from "those unusual strings," and the harp of Israfel is already attuning itself to extraordinary harmonies. (67)

This is not to make the superficial assumption that Faulkner is in some way trying to out-Poe Poe in *Mosquitoes*; it is merely one more emergence of Faulkner's influences being woven into, not only his novel narration, but into the subtle thematic and philosophical subtext that runs through *Mosquitoes* and Faulkner's other fiction. The tension for balance that Faulkner writes into this novel is evident even here. The conflation of sensory experience, the contrast of spiritual mythologies, and as one critic espouses, the shift in aesthetic value all converge here in this text.

This convergence assumes a great deal. David Minter, in a chapter entitled "'Truths More Intense Than Knowledge': Notes on Faulkner and Creativity," implies that we as human beings are all trying to make contact with other human beings through our shared and individual histories,[56] but those histories are represented by chains of narratives connected only by memory (*Faulkner's Questioning Narratives* 55-70).[57] The implication of this is that human community is a fictional community. Not that community does not exist. If Minter's assertion is true, it necessarily changes our understanding of fiction, at least the understanding that we probably learned in grammar school: fiction is not real. To the contrary, if Minter is correct and history (the past) and our creation of it (memory) is central to human relationship, then fiction is reality. Yoknapatawpha County is as real to Faulkner as was his childhood. He creates places and people in his stories to express and attempt to explain the human need to connect.

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[56] He quotes an interview with Faulkner from *Lion in the Garden*, "But man keeps on trying endlessly...to make contact with other human beings" (70-71).

[57] The links in the fictional chain that Minter alludes to are evident in that many of Faulkner's short stories became single novels (e.g. *The Unvanquished*).

Faulkner lived in a religious context that believed that the reason humanity needed horizontal connections was that each human was created uniquely "in the image of God" by a unique Creator God. However, this God was complex. The idea of the Trinity (although not stated overtly in the Bible as the mosquitoes are not named in *Mosquitoes*) is the perfect, divine illustration of community. Faulkner may not have actually subscribed to this fourth century interpretation of the God of the Bible, but with his religious and often Calvinist influences as a child, he certainly would have been aware of it. His allusion to the Trinity and use of the idea of threes is a prevalent recurrence in Faulkner's fiction. This perfect divine community that was implied through the Old and New Testaments, then, must be found or reflected in a creation. So God, desiring a creature like Himself—communal—crafted a creation with the compulsion to connect and create. In *Confessions*, St. Augustine espouses the idea that humanity is both *in* the image of God and *an* imitation of this God, albeit a perverse, corrupt imitation: "All things thus imitate you—but pervertedly.... But, even in this act of perverse imitation, they acknowledge you to be the creator of all nature, and recognize that there is no place where they can altogether separate themselves from you" (25). In *Mosquitoes* where art is regularly defined as a "perversion" (*M* 220, 252, 320, 321; Hwang 31), Faulkner echoes Augustine. The Christianity in which Faulkner was immersed may not have been heavily theological, and perhaps not even practical; however, from Pastor King, the Faulkners' neighbors in Oxford, to Henry C. Niles, Estelle Oldham's maternal grandfather, with whom he would have spent a good amount of time at the Oldham house on the other side of Pastor King's, to his own Mammy Callie whose requisite Sunday church attendance was as frequent as it was influential, Faulkner was surrounded by people who had a sincere practicing belief in the God of the Bible (J. Faulkner 87; Williamson 149). This belief, like Augustine's, was in a God who through the written word

communicated His love for His unique creations; God's love finds its culmination in the ultimate paradox: a perfectly complex creative being taking part in the process that God has created by becoming both Creator and the created in order to develop real created community. Because of the corruption in the world, God became human in order to re-establish the community that had been broken.

Ted Atkinson in *Faulkner and the Great Depression: Aesthetics, Ideology, and Cultural Politics* notices that the character with whom Faulkner most closely associates, the ideal artist Gordon, undergoes an aesthetic revision closely associated with this idea of community. Through Gordon's experience on the *Nausikaa*—particularly in the scene in which Mrs. Maurier showers flattery on him and he responds by "Studying the contours of her face, 'learning the bones of her forehead and eyesockets and nose through her flesh" (Atkinson 77)—Gordon recognizes the significance and even necessity of community.[58] Atkinson writes, "Instead of believing that art emerges from the creative impulse of the solitary artist, he [Gordon] recognizes the role of social relations in artistic production...Gordon, in effect, chisels away the constructed facade that [Mrs. Maurier] presents to the external world" (77). Gordon's aesthetic revision is underscored here, according to Atkinson, in that this trip on the yacht, which is supposed to be a sort of retreat from the world, has the opposite effect on Gordon. When Gordon reappears on the boat after Patricia and David have returned, Julius Kauffman (the Semitic man) remarks, "Gordon ought to celebrate his resurrection" (*M* 267) as a thinly veiled reason to continue drinking. Atkinson identifies this as a symbol for the moment at which Gordon has realized, or at least the narrator is signaling for the reader to realize, that something in him has changed. This is further underscored by the timing of his return that

[58] *Mosquitoes* p. 154

> coincides with the appearance of the tugboat sent to free the *Nausikaa* from its stagnant position on the sandbar. On one level, the tugboat rescue has symbolic value: rescued from 'exile,' the *Nausikaa* and the guests it contains must now return from a rarefied environment to social relations. For the 'resurrected' Gordon, this transition occurs in terms of the relationship between life and art. (77)

Gordon may be undergoing a change in the novel. and it may be that he is recognizing what Faulkner had already been thinking about: community, or as Atkinson calls it "social relationships," that are a necessary part of artistic creation. Rather, artistic creation is a result of human interaction, and once again, this interaction echoes the New Testament inference of a Trinity.

The question that surfaces is whether or not there exists in Faulkner's work, specifically in *Mosquitoes* and even more so in *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*, a vertical/relational journey toward/with God that has the possibility of ending in redemption. Perhaps this vertical tension is evident in Gordon's constant reference to himself alternately as a king and as Israfel. The dual voices that seem to plague Gordon (and therefore Faulkner) manifest themselves in his monologue and ultimately his creations. Does Faulkner see these relationships between the vertical and horizontal as causal, correlative, impedimentary or something entirely different? Perhaps for Faulkner, that vertical, relational journey toward the divine is most effectively accomplished through imitation of (however, perversely) that perfect divine power of creation. While Faulkner may not be able to create *ex nihilo*—as a matter of fact, his creation reeks of corruption and *heteroglossia*—he is able to imitate. This imitation is not perfect either. It is filtered through a human consciousness and experience, and so it is perverted

from the original. It has not arms or legs. Considering the "others" with whom his imagination was in dialogue and how those "others" influenced the voice of Gordon, we must consider in this discussion what it was that Faulkner believed about artistic creation.

Faulkner was very interested in and influenced by the aesthetes and decadents of the late 19th century as is evident in *The Marionettes*, *Mayday*, and *Mosquitoes*. The illustrations in both *Marionettes* and *Mayday* show his fascination with Aubrey Beardsley and others. This fascination led to imitation on many levels. In *The Mauve Decade*, which Faulkner had in his library, Thomas Beer wrote:

> Artists are men who know that they must fail. They look up from the finished page and know it is not finished, for beyond the desk is a sexless, colourless statue without eyes that does not even grin at their defeat. Then they may run to whimper on some woman's knees, or nurse their sense of bruised inadequacy as best they can. (240)

Faulkner himself said in an interview: "All of us failed to match our dream of perfection. So I rate us on the basis of our splendid failure to do the impossible. In my opinion, if I could write all my work again, I am convinced that I would do it better, which is the healthiest condition for an artist" (Stein). Beer's artistic "failed" ideal becomes Faulkner-through-Gordon's ideal. Not only do these two statements together point to artists as community-oriented, they point to Faulkner's early depiction of the artist in *Mosquitoes*, Gordon.

Perhaps the most obvious and intentional exposure of Faulkner's struggle to balance the old and the new is found near the end of the novel in the Epilogue. While many critics identify the strong influence of Joyce in this section, I believe Faulkner was merely utilizing (perhaps camouflaging) his deeper influences of the Bible, Freud, and Bergson or perhaps utilizing Joyce

as a part of that tenuous balance. The swirling point-counterpoint of the end of this novel as the three drunken men—a perverse sort of trinity—hold each other up while they slur poetically about life and art and genius—yet another trinity. But even in the language of this scene, Faulkner's tensions re-emerge. As Gordon picks up the prostitute and disappears into the brothel, the image of the marble statue appears "passionately eternal" —the image of Christ. The narrator breaks from the italicized stream of consciousness, "(They went on. The Semitic man nursed the bottle against his breast.)" (*M* 339). The image of a bottle being nursed began in the hands of Ernest Talliaferro (*M* 13) and ends in the hands Julius Kaufmann, both about to encounter women who would require them to contemplate genius. Mrs. Maurier speaks of genius out of a fictional understanding of it. Beatrice embodies genius: "Dante invented Beatrice, creating himself a maid that life had not had time to create, and laid upon her frail and unbowed shoulders the whole burden of man's history of his impossible heart's desire" (*M* 339). The irony of this statement is clear: the masculine artifice of a feminine ideal was created outside of measured time. Beatrice existed in the duration which is why her shoulders were unbowed in carrying the weight of man's desire to create in the same way but only able to do so as a phantom. This desire is also fraught with the solutionless obstacles that Faulkner points to over and over again throughout *Mosquitoes* and in his later fiction. Irwin writes,

> In Gordon's thoughts, incest, autoeroticism, and self-destruction all merge in the image of the artist as a Christ-figure who, because of the self's love for the self, sacrifices the personal self to that objectified other self that is the work of art. Describing the essence of the creative act, Fairchild compares it to Christ's suffering and death as an active willing of passivity. (163-4)

This explication is of one of the most well-known passages in *Mosquitoes*. In the Epilogue, the narration has become frantic as the three men—Gordon, Julius, and Fairchild—stumble drunk through the streets of New Orleans. The perspective jumps back and forth from Gordon's internal monologue to a parenthetical third person—the parenthesis intimating that the narrator is interrupting. This passage is a Fairchild's contemplation of artistic genius and is often considered some of the best prose in the novel:

> It is that Passion Week of the heart, that instant of timeless beatitude which some never know, which some, I suppose, gain at will, which others gain through an outside agency like alcohol, like to-night—that passive state of the heart with which the mind, the brain, has nothing to do at all, in which the hackneyed accidents which make up this world—love and life and death and sex and sorrow—brought together by chance in perfect proportions, take on a kind of splendid and timeless beauty (*M* 339).[59]

Even in this passage, Faulkner is using his sway over words to expose tension. He uses in this passage the word "beatitude" very particularly, not just to allude to the gospel account of Jesus's sermon on the mount, but also to repeat the etymological significance of Beatrice. Both words have the same root that means "happiness" and in both passages this happiness is outside of time ("timeless" or "life had not time to create"). The creative act, the ability, the genius to create art and the actual accomplishment of that ability, is outside the bounds of time. Perhaps that is in part due to the feminine nature of artistic ability, but I believe that it has more to do with community and memory. The creative act of genius is not just a single individual putting paint

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[59] This passage will be echoed later in Faulkner's Nobel Prize Banquet Speech, 1950: " I believe that man will no merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal ... because he has a soul ... The poet's, the writer's, duty is to write about these things. It is his privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past."

on a canvas, words on a page, clay on a pedestal. For Faulkner the creative act is genius because it is all of life and history and interaction reduced to a medium whose conduits are the fingers of a being made in the image of God to imitate Him.

At the University of Virginia, Faulkner said, "That time is a—is a—not a fixed condition, that time is, in a way—in a way, the sum of the combined intelligences of all men who breathe at that moment" ("English Department"). Time then—measured time—is the function of the mind that, at least according to the narrator of *Mosquitoes*, has no part in the creative act (since it is timeless and a function not of the brain but of the heart). Bergson writes, "The more we study the nature of time, the more we shall comprehend that duration means invention, the creation of forms, the continual elaboration of the absolutely new" (*Creative Evolution* 11). The mosquitoes are never mentioned by name in this novel because then they could be measured. They exist in measured time. However, Faulkner leaves them out so that they can remain ubiquitous like Christ, but unnamed like the Trinity. The mosquitoes, then, must also be female[60] in that they are instinctively penetrating the pages and people of this novel to create a future for themselves.

Faulkner then, even as early as *Mosquitoes*, was creating something remarkable: a novel, that on its surface, was a precious and critical perspective of artistic New Orleans touching on real people and places in time, while at the same time he was writing something timeless and teetering on the edge of universal. His genius was like a newly broken horse, still not comfortable with its newfound self. But Faulkner realized quickly that he was not understood. He realized that the complexity of *Mosquitoes* was not at first recognized and soon became overshadowed, so he refused to characterize it as what he knew it was. Since the audience did not "get his joke," he was not going to stoop to explain it.

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[60] Only the female mosquito bites humans. She needs the nutrients in the blood in order to make her eggs and create more mosquitoes; the males only consume nectar ("Everyday Mysteries").

5 A RETROSPECTIVE BIAS

In order to properly appreciate what Faulkner is doing in *Mosquitoes*, we need to look at it through the lens of his later work, that is, with a retrospective bias. Intentional retrospective bias applied to the interpretation of *Mosquitoes* will magnify the skill that is more conspicuous in later texts. Unintentional bias will do just the opposite. Unintentional retrospective bias will actually make it much more difficult to understand the nuances of *Mosquitoes*. Having read and become more familiar with the themes and tensions with which Faulkner is dealing, we now have the opportunity to see those same tensions reverberating through his later fiction. However, in order to exemplify the strength of this retrospective bias, I will begin with *As I Lay Dying* (1930), the later of the two texts, and end with *The Sound and the Fury* (1929). In that way, we will be able to back into many of these themes and symbols as already significant to Faulkner.

5.1 Echoes of *Mosquitoes* in *As I Lay Dying*

Faulkner was indeed, as Richard Gray points out, attempting "to capture something of the collective memory of his region" (17). While Gray was referring specifically to Yoknapatawpha county, throughout his literary lifetime including *Mosquitoes*, Faulkner was writing words into existence that were pregnant with the weight of all of the past, all of his past, in every pen stroke. The retrospective bias with which Faulkner's critics dismissed *Mosquitoes* in comparison to his later work is the same bias that underscores genius with which Faulkner wrote through *Mosquitoes*. Irwin believes that "the reader's understanding of Faulkner's work must move backward as the work itself moves forward" (167). The revelation of the subtlety and nuance with which Faulkner both expressed and camouflaged the artistic and literary tension he felt in

1926 is testament to his genius, genius that had already developed and has only been identified in his later work. *Mosquitoes* also reveals that the influence that Faulkner may or may not have admitted to later in his life was actually at work in his earliest thinking and writing. In a letter to Horace Liveright, Faulkner called *Mosquitoes* "trashily smart" (*Selected Letters* 39-40). He even alluded to the fact that if he were to do it all over again, he would not have written it (Gwynn 257). However, Faulkner's well-documented relationship to the truth has been rocky, particularly as it relates to his own influence and work. If we assume that Faulkner's command of language reached far beyond the page and even that his utterances were far beyond merely clever, then his phrase "trashily smart" is said with more than just his tongue planted firmly in his cheek. Faulkner knew the amount of nuance and layered symbolism he had written into the novel, but he was certainly not going to explain it. Perhaps he would not have written it over again, not because it was not good, but because it was a failure, in his eyes, because the audience failed to see the arms and legs and head implied in the torso of the text. Perhaps, his young and brilliant bravado was too opaque. He needed to write more simply. The complexity of *Mosquitoes* was Faulkner attempting to challenge himself in writing something that looked simple that had hidden strength. It was smart because Faulkner had written it so painstakingly layered and so seemingly mimetic under the guise of a *roman à clef*. It was trashy because he had tricked his audience—a little too well. But *Mosquitoes* is how he came to discover Yoknapatawpha County.

Faulkner was not by any stretch done with these themes of fragmentation and decay after *Mosquitoes* and *The Sound and the Fury*. Only a year after *Mosquitoes* was published, after writing *Sartoris* (1929) / *Flags in the Dust* (1973), Faulkner took up the subject of the decline of a southern family, and after *The Sound and The Fury*, he wrote *As I Lay Dying*. While the Bundrens of that novel did not descend from the greatness that we are told the Compsons did,

nor is the decline recognized by anyone in the family, the reader recognizes the impending doom of this impoverished southern family. Faulkner breaks the book into fifty-nine chapters with fifteen different narrators. These chapters are identified by the perspective from which each is being told, so the reader carries the burden of inference and connection of all of the disparate parts of the story. Over fifty percent of the story is told by three narrators: Darl, Tull, and Vardaman (Mooney). As significant as all of the narrators are, these three in particular betray Faulkner's desire to create tension in his novels. Each of these three narrators do little to move the action of the novel along. While Darl is more of an omniscient narrator through his seeming clairvoyance, his aggressive bias against his brother Jewel, and perhaps even his sister, Dewey Dell, creates a tension between what may be happening and what Darl thinks is happening. This in addition to the fact that he has a psychotic break at the end of the novel. Tull is a much more sympathetic character in that even though mistreated by the Bundrens, he is still willing to help them, even at possible cost to himself. Tull is not a strong enough character, however, to move or sustain the action. He is all but ignored by the Bundrens and is essentially bullied by his wife. Furthermore, his knowledge of the Bundrens is mostly conjecture or hearsay. Finally, the youngest Bundren Vardaman's narrative voice contains traces of Benjy's narrations. While Vardaman is far more sentient and able to comprehend his social and physical context, he does appear to have a mental or emotional disability that causes him to free associate things in a way that confuses reality and perception. Any of the other characters would have "told the story" better, but Faulkner chose to create the tension involved in these three very different narrators, a tension that first emerges in *Mosquitoes*.

Perhaps the most effective proof of Faulkner's genius in 1926 and 1927 is the germination of the ideas he would simplify and streamline during the two years later when he

would write *The Sound and the Fury*. Faulkner did not simply make up his fictional county; he spent his entire lifetime working hard to create it. *Mosquitoes* is an important part of that work in that it is the novel which led Faulkner to the realization that community was vital to history and therefore vital to story and therefore vital to *his* story. By negation, the *Nausikaa* showed a perverse community of perverse creations conversing about perverse creating. This was necessary for Faulkner to see on paper how best to identify the problems, or rather represent the tensions he did in *Mosquitoes*. In Yoknapatawpha, Faulkner was able to find the place and community that he needed to find the balance for which he was searching in 1926.

One of the most obvious lenses through which we can see *Mosquitoes* echoed in Faulkner's later work is in its structure. The symbolic structure both temporally as well as ideologically is complex, but not as efficient as in later texts. For example, the narrative structure of *As I Lay Dying* (1930) reveals some of the same tensions present in *Mosquitoes*. For example, the only narration that Addie Bundren voices is the title of the novel and the fortieth chapter. Addie is both at the center of the conflict (if there is one primary conflict) as the embodiment of it, as well as the central symbolic ideologue. Faulkner juxtaposes a structural symbolism as well as a contextual symbolism. Faulkner organized *Mosquitoes* in ways similar to how he organizes *As I Lay Dying*. The difference, however, is temporality. In *Mosquitoes*, Faulkner uses the chapter and section titles to signify the passage of measured time while the narration is fluid. Contextually, on "The Fourth Day" at Six O'clock, Faulkner describes the unfolding sunset and the vague movement of the *Nausikaa*. The narrator jumps in and out of Gordon's stream-of-consciousness thinking that is as fluid as it is symbolic: "*And so he sat at dusk in his marble court filled with the sound of water and of birds and surrounded by the fixed gesturing of the palms, looking out across the hushed fading domes of his city and beyond, to the dreaming lilac*

barriers of his world" (*M* 269).[61] The entrance of this king in Gordon's thoughts has several possible interpretations, but the one most important to this study is really the significance of his lilac barrier because it intimates Freud. The Freudian quality of this image of a man of importance feeling surrounded by a pink barrier that must be overrun reflects the powerful tension between Gordon's drive for sex (a limited form of community) and his drive to create.

In *As I Lay Dying*,[62] Faulkner is narratologically more efficient. He sublimates the fluidity of the narration with the temporality of the novel's structure (chapters). That is, unlike *Mosquitoes*, the chapters in the 1930 novel are not numbered with titles or dates. He labels each chapter with the name of the character who narrates that particular chapter. This allows for a structure, but one that is not bound by measured time. For instance, for the majority of the novel, Addie is dead: "She [Addie] lies back and turns her head without so much as glancing at pa. She looks at Vardaman; her eyes, the life in them, rushing suddenly upon them; the two flames glare up for a steady instant. Then they go out as though someone had leaned down and blown upon them" (*AILD* 48). In the 213 pages of the novel that follow, the rest of the Bundren family finish her coffin and take her to the town of Jefferson—her hometown—to be buried. The narration jumps from perspective to perspective in a generally chronological order. That is, while the momentum of the "story" of the Bundren's trip to Jefferson moves in a forward direction in time, like the *Nausikaa* at times, "Water lapped and whispered ceaselessly in the pale darkness" (*M* 147), the narration in *As I Lay Dying* overlaps or is impossibly clairvoyant or is divergent.

For instance, in the chapter in which Addie dies, even though Darl is not narrating the chapter—rather, his name is not the name given to the chapter—the narration slips into italics[63]

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[61] This passage also bears a strong resemblance to the beach scenes in *The Wild Palms* [*If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem*]

[62] *As I Lay Dying* will be abbreviated *AILD* in citations throughout.

[63] Similar to the italics in Benjy's section of *The Sound and the Fury*.

and assumes Darl's perspective several times so that the reader is able to see that Darl knows, somehow, that Addie has died; he wants to make sure that Jewel knows. This chapter, like all the chapters in this novel has no number associated with it. However, much like in *Mosquitoes*, the order and placement of the chapters is significant. *As I Lay Dying* is comprised of fifty-nine chapters, the last of which is narrated by Cash. As I mentioned, Addie's narration is in the fortieth chapter. These choices are not random. Faulkner was so incredibly careful in the structure of his novels thus far in his literary career, he was certainly precise in placing the narrators where he did. Since the Bible was something that Faulkner could not forget, he makes conspicuous references to it through the characters, Cora and Whitfield. More subtly and ironically he refers to it through the structure. Psalm 40 begins, "I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry" (*KJV*). In a comparable fashion, Addie voices her complaint against life in her chapter—the fortieth of the novel—but unlike the writer of the psalm, Addie's waiting did not end with a response from a loving God: "One day I was talking to Cora. She prayed for me because she believed I was blind to sin, wanting me to kneel and pray too, because people to whom sin is just a matter of words, to them salvation is just words too" (*AILD* 176). Faulkner is not only nodding to the Biblical passage here overtly through Addie's words, he utilizes the structure to allude to the Bible as well.

The number 40 is not merely a loose ironic reference to a well-known Psalm, it also has symbolic significance in the Bible that spills over into this novel. Throughout both the Old and New Testaments, the number 40 "is used by God to represent a period of testing or judgment" (Dennis). In the Old Testament, the Israelites wandered in the wilderness after being liberated from Egypt for forty years before being allowed to enter into Canaan, the "promised land" (Numbers 14:33-34). According to Genesis 7, the rains that caused the flood of Noah lasted for

forty days. In the New Testament, Matthew 4:1-2 states, “Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered” (*KJV*) After the resurrection, Jesus remained on earth for forty days. Each one of these examples not only shows the import of the number forty but also connects symbolically and thematically to Addie’s chapter.

Addie’s chapter has been read in myriad different ways, but I am most interested in the echoes of *Mosquitoes*, or at least the polished brilliance that Faulkner utilizes in her chapter that may have been present and tarnished in 1926. Much like the tension present in *Mosquitoes*, Faulkner juxtaposes antiquity and modernity, spirituality and physicality, masculinity and femininity. However, in *As I Lay Dying* he has embraced the tension—much like he embraced his own “little postage stamp of native soil” (Stein) and leveraged it for narratological power. The antique notion of biblical trial juxtaposed to the modern predicament of the woman is heard in Addie’s voice and the fact that her chapter is chapter forty is a subtle reference to her children. The forty-week term of pregnancy was a crucible for Addie: “So I took Anse. And when I knew that I had Cash, I knew that living was terrible and that this was the answer to it” (*AILD* 171). It is as if Faulkner is offering a reverse negative of the hope of the New Testament.

Matthew, the first book of the New Testament containing the genealogy of Christ, is the fortieth book in the Bible. This book is the first book to tell the story of the “hope of Israel,” the savior of the world. The fortieth chapter of *As I Lay Dying* begins with a dead woman remembering “how my father used to say that the reason for living was to get ready to stay dead a long time” (169). Faulkner is not just creating contrast to biblical notions. Addie seems to be fighting against a religious ideology that had been poorly represented to her through Anse, Cora, and Whitfield. But she also affirms some of foundational tenants of that very ideology. For

instance, Addie says, "That was when I learned that words are no good; that words don't ever fit even what they are trying to say at … But I had been used to words for a long time. I knew that that word was like the others: just a shape to fill the lack" (171, 172). When Faulkner addresses this topic in *Mosquitoes*, he does so through conversation. He conspicuously sets up the irony of a novelist and a poet discussing words:

> Well, it is a kind of sterility—Words … You begin to substitute words for things and deeds, like the withered cuckhold husband that took the Decameron to bed with him every night, and pretty soon the thing or the deed becomes just a kind of shadow of a certain sound you make by shaping your mouth a certain way. But you have a confusion, too. I don't claim that words have life in themselves. (*M* 210)

In both passages, Faulkner negates the power of words but empowers them through their usage and symbolic and allusory significance. Part of that power is derived from symbolic weight. Furthermore, both Addie's and Fairchild's explanations of words have Freudian implications. Addie says that words are "just a shape to fill the lack." In a paragraph about the genesis of her marriage with Anse and her subsequent children, this description is, on a literary level, a diminution of the sex act (the active result of the "sex instinct") to "just" a shape filling a void resulting in a child: "then I found that I had Darl" (*AILD* 172).

In much the same way, the spirit filled the void in Genesis as it created the world. So the paradox for both Fairchild and Addie and, ultimately, Faulkner is that words are powerful and have life because these characters exist only through the very words they are underestimating. The primacy of written language and uttered language is at the center the Biblical ideology in

which Addie, Whitfield, and Faulkner are dressed.[64] In Genesis, God spoke the world into existence; in John 1, the one described as the Word was also in 6:68 the one who possesses "the words of eternal life" (*KJV*). Faulkner is attempting to "improve on God" using the same medium as God used. So Faulkner created Addie to realize what Fairchild had not:

> Words need not, however, be empty providing they are grounded in non-verbal experience. It is when this condition is not met that they tend to be separated from and ultimately to replace the act. There are, as Addie realizes, both "the words [that] are the deeds, and the other words that are not deeds that are just the gaps in people's lacks." (qtd in Vickery 53)

So when Addie repeats a version of the phrase "hearing the dark land talking," we must assume that in this dark and quiet force, there is a primal language that supersedes the words she knows or at least uses. The first time she uses the phrase "hearing the dark land talking of God's love and His beauty and His sin; hearing the dark voicelessness in which the words are the deeds, and the other words that are not the deeds, that are just gaps in people's lacks," she repeats it in the same sentence. The overall context of her thought process at this point is her relationship to Anse that found its meaning (if in fact it had one) in her bearing him children. She uses the phrase again when she is recounting her tryst in the woods with Whitfield. She represents it in her memory wrapped in sin and then thinks, "Then I would lay with Anse again—I did not lie to him: I just refused, just as I refused my breast to Cash and Darl after their time was up—hearing the dark land talking the voiceless speech" (*AILD* 175). The silent language is associated with both the earth and with sexuality. The irony, however, is that Faulkner gives Addie a command

[64] Addies thinks, "I would think of sin as I would think of the clothes we both wore in the world's face, of the circumspection necessary because he was he and I was I" (*AILD* 174). Psalm 109:18 states, "As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones" (King James Version).

of language that may not be conspicuous at first glance. Her word play in the quotation above using lay and lie correctly, is an ironic juxtaposition of a tension that first emerges in *Mosquitoes*.

The substitution of action with language is at the heart of Faulkner's second novel conspicuously in the character of Ernest Talliaferro. He opens the novel touting his sexual prowess, and as the narrative moves along, the audience sees him either fail or pull out of situations where he could accomplish his sexual goal. This same motif finds an important place in a central chapter of *As I Lay Dying* as well. In both novels, action is not requisite for worth; action is often sacrificed on the altar of linguistic substitution. The fact that Addie calls words "just a shape to fill the lack" assumes a lack that needs to be filled (*AILD* 174). Furthermore, this lack exists only in the present tense because "there is not was"; since at the time of her narration, she was already in the past tense—Addie *was*—she could only be represented in the present tense: a lack that needed to be filled. She explains how that is accomplished. "I would think: The shape of my body where I used to be a virgin is in the shape of a   and I couldn't think *Anse*, couldn't remember *Anse*. It was not that I could think of myself as no longer unvirgin, because I was three now" (*AILD* 173). The lack that was filled was emotional but it was also temporal. She was able to exist in the present tense because the lack that was filled by her death was filled by Cash and Darl. "I was three now" establishes not only a familial connection, it creates a temporal impossibility: "I *was* three *now*" (*AILD* 173, italics mine). The conflation of the past and the present in a sentence that evokes the trinity, established the connection to Faulkner's religious past.

This same thing is clearly evident in *Mosquitoes*. The section title "The Third Day" evokes both the beginning of time as well as each member of the trinity through linguistic inference:

> The morning waked in a quite fathomless mist .... now it was about the *Nausikaa* timelessly: the yacht was a thick jewel swaddled in soft gray wool, while in the wool somewhere dawn was like a suspended breath.[65] (*M* 164)

Because the mist is both fathomless and timeless, the usage of the word "now" creates temporal tension that is paradoxical or perhaps a representation of mystery.[66] The mystery that also surrounds the idea of the trinity. In these opening lines, Faulkner alludes to the the fog as a mist, similar to the one that "hovered over the waters" of the biblical creation story. This mist is also compared to wool, the shorn covering of a lamb, a common title for Jesus in the Bible: the sacrificial Lamb of God (John 1:29, Revelation 17:14). Faulkner underscores the eternal nature of the paragraph in the next sentence: "The first morning of Time might well be beyond this mist ... in it might be heard yet the voices of the Far Gods on the first morning saying, It is well: let there be light" (*M* 164). This sentence settles the paragraph in tension not only between the immediacy of the present tense and the possibility of an eternal other, but it also establishes tension through irony in the syntagmatic construction of the sentence. First, Faulkner refers the "Far Gods," a multiplicity of divinity, much like the multiplicity of meaning and symbolism in his fiction, that takes on the role of the traditional monotheistic role of the creator God of the Bible. Faulkner also reverses the traditional order of creation. Traditionally, God pronounced his creation "good" only after it had been created. Faulkner her prioritizes the observation that "It is well" before he creates light. It may be said that there was a "creation instinct." The paragraph

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[65] Perhaps this passage is also an origin of Jewel Bundren's name.
[66] Of note is the homophonetic association between MYST-ery and mist.

ends (before time within the context of the chapter begins since the opening paragraph does not have a time label) with another stark contrast: "the Nausikaa was rigidly fixed, and the yacht was motionless, swaddled in mist like a fat jewel" (*M* 164). The rigidity of the boat and the fluidity of the mist encased in an image of an infant savior, a plump and valuable symbol of salvation.

This notion of present action seen in both *Mosquitoes* and *As I Lay Dying* is a vital connection to Nietzsche's perspective on history and the study of it. He understood the necessity of history, but he loathed its "overuse" (*Use and Abuse*). He did not want humanity to be burdened by the weight of the past but to utilize it to live in the present, to will to power. He wrote, "we must in all seriousness despise instruction without vitality, knowledge which enervates activity, and history as an expensive surplus of knowledge and luxury" (*Use and Abuse* Foreword, par. 1). For Nietzsche, the man who lives too much in the past "braces himself against the large and ever-increasing burden of the past, which pushes him down or bows him over" (I, par. 3). This very burden Faulkner exemplifies in his characters, even in their names. For instance, in *Mosquitoes* many of the characters bear the weight of symbolic resonance. The Semitic man, Julius Kauffman, is intended to constantly remind the audience of the connection to the Old Testament; however, the irony in the etymology of his first name reestablishes the tension in the novel. The root of Julius is a Roman word which means "a descendent of Jove," decidedly not Jewish (Harper). Eva Kauffman Wiseman's—Julius's sister—first name is the Latinate equivalent to the Hebrew name Eve, "meaning living one" establishing another connection to the Old Testament (Harper). The fact that she is also a lesbian in the novel reveals the tension Faulkner is creating again between the old of the testaments and the new of his contemporary world.[67]

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[67] "Wiseman" is also either a critique of his culture's understanding of gay women or an attempt at a gender joke.

In *As I Lay Dying*, the Bundren family is burdened, both physically and ideologically. As a matter of fact, their burdens are variegated. The most obvious burden the Bundrens bear is Addie (a-d-D-I-E), a physical representation of a past tense life. She literally bows them down throughout the whole novel as they attempt to get her in one piece to the grave. In *Mosquitoes*, Mrs. Maurier is the burden the rest of the guests must bear, and ultimately, that Talliaferro literally bears as her fiancé. Patricia is also a burden to both David West literally—"He squatted before her and reached back and slid his hands under her knees, and as he straightened up she leaned forward onto his back and put her arms around his neck.... He rose slowly, hitching her legs further around his hips as the constriction of her skirt lessened" (*M* 202)—and to Gordon symbolically—"The deck was deserted as it had been on that first afternoon when he had caught her in midflight like a damp swallow ... and it was as though he yet saw upon the deck the wet and simple prints of her naked feet, and he seemed to feel about him like an odor that young hard graveness of hers" (*M* 187). Of note is the recurrence of the bird as feminine image as well as the imagination creating something—in this case a sensory stimuli—to fill the lack.

Another burden that the Bundrens carry is Vardaman. This young boy cannot function normally in his own social community and so is forced to rely on others to help him interpret the present tense experiences of which he is a part. Vardaman does not rely on the past and does not bear the same burden that the rest of the characters do. Like an animal perhaps, he is unable to understand the grief which is only a reactionary emotion pointing to his existence in a meta-historical or meta-temporal sense. That is, he is the only character in the novel to live vitally, in the Nietzschean sense. Vardaman often seems happy because "there is one way in which happiness becomes happiness: through forgetting or, to express the matter in a more scholarly fashion, through the capacity, for as long as the happiness lasts, to sense things *unhistorically*"

(Nietzsche I, par. 4). If he has a moment of sadness, he needs only to wait for the next moment (the constant cadence of "is") to forget to remember the burden of the unhappy past.

Faulkner's prototype for Vardaman is Josh Robyn, a sort of precursor to this type of Nietzschean historian— although Faulkner does not go as far with Josh as he does with Vardaman or Benjy in *The Sound and the Fury*. Josh finds happiness or contentment in his present tense creative act. While he does reveal vestiges of his past tense existence, he remains removed and unchanged by the past of others. For instance, when Fairchild shares with Josh his abortive and humiliating experience of trying to join a fraternity, Faulkner writes, "The nephew [Josh] sat clutching his knife and his cylinder, gazing after Fairchild's stocky back until the other passed from view. 'You poor goof,' the nephew said, resuming his work again" (*M* 120). Another character in Mosquitoes that prepares the way for Vardaman and perhaps Benjy is Patricia, partly because of her characterization but partly because she cannot be known fully without Josh. If Josh is undiluted by his past or the pasts of others, it is because of his solitary characterization: creator. Patricia, on the other hand, is the realization of the artist Gordon's aesthetic ideal. So her thoughtless present tense-ness is a function of her youth. She has no more significant purpose in the life of the novel except "something to trouble the very fibrous integrity of [Gordon's] being" (*M* 11).

A primary metamorphosis from *Mosquitoes* to *As I Lay Dying* is in how and perhaps why Faulkner uses the biblical/Christian imagery that he does. If in *Mosquitoes,* Faulkner was writing through the tension and pull that he felt between his own present and past, both ideologically and spiritually; in *As I Lay Dying* he has discovered that the antique and the modern are not at odds. He has found that, used deftly, they can actually lend mutual strength. Nanci Kincaid touches on this when she quotes Nietzsche:

> From the very first, Christianity spelled life loathing itself, and that loathing was simply disguised, tricked out, with notions of an "other" and "better" life. A hatred of the "world" a curse on the affective urges, a fear of beauty and sensuality, a transcendence rigged up to slander mortal existence, a yearning for extinction, cessation of all effort until the great "sabbath of sabbaths"—this whole cluster of distortions, together with the intransigent Christian assertion that nothing counts except moral values, had always struck me as being the most dangerous, most sinister form the will to destruction can take; at all events, as a sign of profound sickness, moroseness, exhaustion, biological etiolation. And since according to ethics (specifically Christian, absolute ethics) life will always be in the wrong, it followed quite naturally that one must smother it under a load of contempt and constant negation; must view it as an object not only unworthy of our desire but absolutely worthless in itself. (Kincaid 583)

Kincaid uses *AILD* as an example of the empathy she feels: "This is exactly what Faulkner shows us with the Bundren family … I hear Addie. I know this life on earth is, according to southern myth and Bible-beating, the place where I am supposed to work my way into the next life, the better place, the promised land" (583). While Kincaid's perspective makes clear the stifling patriarchal culture of both her personal past and Addie's past, her conspicuous disdain for the the southern religious soil from which Faulkner grew perhaps does not allow her to see the depth to which this southern ideological irony runs. In *As I Lay Dying*, Faulkner offers his audience a fragmented memoir of a dying and dead woman of the south who has searched for and—seemingly—not found happiness. The trial symbolized in the fortieth chapter is over, but the words that are to fill the lack of her existence succeed in underscoring the aesthetic ideal of

Mosquitoes: "This is my feminine ideal: a virgin with no legs to leave me, no arms to hold me, no head *to talk* to me" (*M* 26, italics mine). Gordon's sculpture, presents a stark contrast to the misery of the woman in the southern experience, but recognises the necessity of her existence as "a shape to fill the lack." Part of the reason for this is that Faulkner was a man and recognized in *Mosquitoes* that his creative ability was limited and even perverted, something over which he had no control. Addie, on the other hand, had the ability to create, and did, but was not allowed to think—or was manipulated into thinking that —the desire to create was secondary.

Another character who grew out of the pages of *Mosquitoes* was Darl. We do not see the round, dynamic clairvoyance of *As I Lay Dying*, but we see the seed of an idea. On the fourth day, Gordon and Patricia are in dialogue, and Patricia says, "You ought to get out of yourself. You'll either bust all of a sudden, or just dry up" (*M* 270). Faulkner has the young character Patricia use the language that in retrospect is an ironic characterization of a tragic character yet to be written. Another interesting example of Faulkner molding ideas for later use is the way in which he addresses the character's internal monologue, specifically when that monologue takes on a persona. Later on the fourth day, the narration jumps inside Gordon's head, "He [Gordon] continued to gaze at her [Pat] as though he had not heard. *–and the king spoke to a slave crouching at his feet –Halim—Lord?—I possess all things, do I not?—Thou are the Son of Morning, Lord*" (*M* 271). Gordon is represented in his own thoughts by a king (this continues throughout this section of the novel), a projection of his psychological self, an attempt at self-processing. This internal monologue rearranges Gordon's connection to the Bible as we have seen it so far in *Mosquitoes*. The phrase "Son of Morning" is used only once in the Bible in Isaiah 14:12, "How are thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How are thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!" (*KJV*) The idea of projection began

with Freud and "involves individuals attributing their own thoughts, feelings and motives to another person" ("Defense Mechanisms"). Once again, the representation is more than just a single projection: Gordon' projects his feelings onto the king who represents more than just those feelings. Gordon's association with Lucifer underscores both the tension between the antique and the modern as well as his self-loathing at allowing his sex instinct to drive him to board and remain on the *Nausikaa* and not create.

The Bundrens carry another burden of which they are unaware until the story draws to a close: Darl, whose strange clairvoyance becomes the source of his guilt at the end. Darl does not dry up, although he may have "bust all of a sudden" because he is the conduit of not only his own past but the past of his entire family in the present—compounded with his ability to see shadows of the future—Darl cannot live in the present. He cannot live unhistorically—meta-temporally. In his final chapter, he loses the ability to function in the world, not because he is crazy, even though it seems that he is when in his last narrated chapter from plural third person point of view he begins to refer to: himself, "Darl is our brother, our brother. Our brother Darl in a cage in Jackson where, his grimed hands lying light in the quiet interstices, looking out he foams" (*AILD* 254). Darl is looking at himself from the outside of himself, much like he has been looking at parts of the action of the novel from outside of the novel. Literarily, he is a conflation of both a first person narrator and a third person omniscient narrator. Darl cannot cope with his own historical burdens as he slips out of subjectivity. That is, he loses his own place in time; the distinction between history, memory, and time is blurred, or more accurately, time becomes more fluid so history and memory are caught up in the current. When Darl begins to refer to himself in the third person, Faulkner establishes him as an objective observer of his own past tense life. His consciousness dichotomizes into both narrator and character, and he cannot

handle the split. He becomes the fluid narrator that Vardaman and Benjy have the ability to be because they were born that way, but Darl has crossed into an unhistorical or meta-temporal perspective and his character cannot carry the burden of that perspective. The audience begins to see this dichotomy beginning to happen early in the narrative when Darl muses about sleep, "And since sleep is is-not and rain and wind are *was*, it is not. Yet the wagon *is*, because when the wagon is *was*, Addie Bundren will not be. And Jewel *is*, so Addie Bundren must be. And then I must be, or I could not empty myself for sleep in a strange room. And so if I am not emptied yet, I am *is*" (*AILD* 80-81). While Faulkner offers us insight into Darl's perspective shift, he also provides insight into the truth that he believed: "there is no was." The italicized words here seem to hold little significance—particularly since several other "to be" verbs are not italicized—except to tilt the scales in the present tense (*was* is italicized twice, and *is* is italicized three times—a number bearing significant symbolic weight).

Although this does not directly address Darl, Constance Pierce makes observations (interpretations) about Addie that might help to clarify Darl's burden:

> Being is an unselfconscious and therefore unfragmented response to the world—perhaps in the direction of what Sartre might call "Being-in-itself." When a person begins to perceive himself as an entity […] he has already left Being and translated it into thought—a thing of a different nature, which involves re-creating Being as an idea of the "real" self underlying all our social, articulated selves. Hence perceiving kills its catalyst and is in turn killed by the act of naming the perception: Addie calling the objectified thought of herself "Addie." Complicating it all is the argument that what is not perceived is not; thus Being is caught in a bind. To Be, it must be perceived; to be perceived is not to Be […]

> Thus there can be no Being, no subjectivity here. As Nietzsche points out, "The 'subject'…is something added and invented and projected behind what there is." (295)

While Pierce assumes that memory is a result of Being, Addie exemplifies the problem of both trying to live in the present and the past at the same time. If the present is an ever-moving existence, then it is immeasurable in time. That is, the present is not around long enough for a character to be in it. Therefore, to become an observer of our own present tense existence is to step outside of a time that is the only possible time in which we can exist. This is the point at which Darl loses his grounding in reality—reality in context of the novel. He cannot, as Nietzsche mentions, see beyond his own reflexive subjectivity.

5.2 Echoes of *Mosquitoes* in *The Sound and the Fury*

While the Bundrens' embody Nietzsche's man who lives in the past "so as to remind him what his existence basically is—a never completed past tense […] existence [as] only an uninterrupted living in the past" (*Use and Abuse*), the Compsons bear much the same burden of history. However, Faulkner finds in Benjy a perfectly Nietzschean historian. Marco Abel writes, "All of the characters are trapped in their own memory; the Compsons constantly remember what has been or what people long dead have said" (43). Although Abel focuses primarily on *The Sound and the Fury* as evidence for Nietzschean philosophy apart from a Nietzschean understanding of history, his study necessitates at least a partial understanding of both Nietzsche's and Faulkner's understandings of the past. In his comparison of the two authors, Abel points out a very interesting similarity, "Nietzschean philosophy is marked by its inherent lack of structure, the abundant use of paradoxes, and a general break with traditions, all cast in a

highly charged, often poetical style" (41). This type of writing began to emerge in Faulkner's *Mosquitoes* and became more powerful in his later novels. In *Mosquitoes*, the fluidity and stream-of-consciousness writing of Gordon's thoughts is the precursor to much of Faulkner's fiction. Gordon's thoughts allow Faulkner the paper space to drag his spiritual influence through the ground of modernity. However, we also see the poetic style that Faulkner was capable of: "Outside the window New Orleans, the vieux carre, brooded in a faintly tarnished languor like an aging yet still beautiful courtesan in a smokefilled room, avid yet weary too of ardent ways" (*M* 11).

While *Mosquitoes* was not merely stepping stone to Faulkner's greater works, it was a necessary step in the direction of *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*, his first two truly remarkable novels. As a matter of fact, those two novels in particular echo many of the themes and characters that Faulkner was working through in *Mosquitoes*. Part of the reason that *Mosquitoes* has been so harshly criticized is because of how quickly Faulkner achieved a much higher level of skill when he published *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) only two years after *Mosquitoes* (1927). *The Sound and the Fury* was a novel that altered American novel-writing forever. Since that novel was published, it has generated, arguably, the most critical attention of any of Faulkner's novels. While the plots of these two novels do not seem to have much in common, the similarities are important. Both novels bring a group of people together who would, for the most part, rather be apart. The setting of both novels is restrictive. Both novels utilize the Christian story in subtle and powerful ways. The story of *The Sound and the Fury* revolves around the Compson family, a once great southern family that has slipped from greatness. This greatness has been understood to represent the greatness of the Old South in America. Stella McNichol writes, "The distinctive feature of *The Sound and the Fury* and the following novel *As*

I Lay Dying (1930), is that they are internalized accounts of the disintegrating world of the South conveyed through the psychological experience of a few characters" (1242). While the themes of this novel are not altogether earth shattering, the structure, style, and handling of them was absolutely astounding. McNichol continues:

> The decline of the southern family in *The Sound and the Fury* becomes, through Faulkner's resonant use of symbol, and particularly through his exploration of the theme of time and elaborate experimental use of time structurally, an account of 20th-century unease and sense of disintegration, an exploration of the modern consciousness. (1242)

The Sound and the Fury is simply the story of Benjy, Quentin, Caddy, and Jason Compson and their attempts to survive in and through an unhealthy family environment. The genius is in the narratological and structural representation of that story. The novel's structure is comprised of four sections, each bearing a date as its title. Those dates, historically, are four days associated with Passion week, albeit not in chronological order. The days and even years are not consecutive or linear. These dates, while they contain certain narrative events and allude to calendar events, merely represent vague ticks in time that the characters walk in and through. Each narrative voice creates its own history. Each story recalls details from the past that link and intersect but are wholly different. This fragmented structure underscores Faulkner's interest in modernism. He presents this tragic story of decline rich with biblical allusions but often through the lense or portal of the modern mind.

Benjy, the novel's first narrator, is an "idiot." He has no concept of causality, and he jumps in his mind between past and present without acknowledging or realizing that he has done so. While this makes the story almost incomprehensible, the experience of reading the Benjy

section of *The Sound and the Fury* resembles the modernist psychological experience. Benjy is the closest to an unfiltered evidential historian as can be. He is almost like a camera…a camera always snapping away to try to get a shot of the only thing it wants to shoot: Caddy. In the process, he shoots life around him, unfiltered by the biases of his family and caretakers. But even this is problematic because the narrative voice that Benjy uses assumes a simplicity which negates the possibility of that very voice. However, even in this contradiction, Faulkner mimics memory. If memory is truly the fictive retelling of a filtered past through which we learn and create the future, then that creating is not real. We base our existence and learning on a self-imposed story. In much the same way, *The Waste Land* was the vocalization of the

> disillusionment and neurotic boredom in the period after the First World War …. Most of the critics are of the view that "The Waste Land" is a plight of a whole generation, an expression of disillusionment of the post war generation, that it expresses better than any other poem of that decade the sense of hopeless draft which afflicted the generation after the First World War, then it is vision of Europe, mainly of London, at the end of the First World War. (qtd in Venugopala 13)

Even the experience of reading *The Waste Land* and to an even greater extent Benjy's narrative, provides the reader with the same frustration which can lead to disillusionment on a small scale that had become so epidemic in the modern period. Benjy's narrative is really solely concerned with Caddy. One of the few things that Benjy knew, perhaps not even consciously, was that Caddy genuinely cared for him, unlike any other members of the Compson family.

Benjy was obsessed with Caddy, but Quentin was obsessed with Caddy in a very different way. The Quentin narration is a much more comprehensible and successful attempt at

stream-of-consciousness writing. The language's cadence and structure aligns with Quentin's psychological and emotional ebb and flow. But what emerges more conspicuously in the section, and through retrospect back into the Benjy section, is Faulkner's obsession with time. Quentin in particular was haunted by time; so conspicuously, in fact, that he broke his watch and took off its hands in a vain attempt to halt time. Quentin does, in fact, accomplish one of his goals in the novel: he stops time but through suicide. While the Jason section is far less concerned with the past than Quentin in that he is able to remain in his present tense context, Jason sets the tone of his section right from his first sentence, "Once a bitch always a bitch, what I say" (*TSATF* 223). Jason is also obsessed with Caddy in his own way, although it is more by projection onto Caddy's illegitimate daughter Quentin. This section is set on Good Friday (the day that Jesus was crucified), and, ironically, the only sacrifice Jason is willing to make is not his own. He steals Quentin's money and keeps it for himself. It is not until the fourth section and until the narration becomes third person—the narration is removed from the voice of a Compson—does the tone clarify. Not that the fourth section becomes any less tragic for the Compsons, but we are able to see more than just each brother's perspective. The reader is able to have some relief both in the narrative perspective, but also in that one of the main focuses of this last section is on Dilsey, the cook and servant of the Compson family. Her sons and grandson are Benjy's caretakers at different points in his life as well.

Perhaps Faulkner was referring to his early fiction in an interview in 1947 when he said, "I use a poetic quality in my writing. After all, prose is poetry" (Rascoe 69). Regardless, Abel's description of Nietzsche's philosophy could just as easily be a description of Faulkner's narrative style: "the very structure of the novel gives sufficient reason to interpret the end, and therefore the whole story, as pessimistic and nihilistic, for like Nietzsche's vision of the essential pattern

of life, namely eternal recurrence, the novel's structure is cyclic" (42). Unlike Nietzsche, Faulkner's pessimism—or perhaps criticism—is laced with hope springing, however lightly, from his religious upbringing. Continuing his analysis of the Nietzschean theme in *TSATF*, Abel draws a direct comparison between Nietzsche and Benjy. He notes that "Benjy is unable to differentiate between the past, present, and future, and even though he has a tremendous sense of loss, a loss which he can smell (Nietzsche once said 'I was the first to *discover* the truth by being the first to experience the lies as lies—*smelling* them out.—My genius is in my nostrils')" (43).[68] In both *Mosquitoes* and *The Sound and the Fury*, the olfactory sense seems to be the one most closely linked with memory production. In *Mosquitoes*, the characters identify Patricia, "the clean young odor of her, like that of young trees" (*M* 21). This prepares the reader for the association that Patricia will have with the forest in her abortive attempt to reach Mandeville—a forest that is consistently associated with timelessness.[69] In this way, Patricia is a precursor for one of Faulkner's most memorable characters: Caddy Compson. Abel goes little further in his discussion of memory except to say that Faulkner deals with how "one can get paralyzed by" memory as exemplified in the Compsons (44). However, I would argue that Benjy is not just an example of memory in stasis. He is quite the contrary.

In *The Use and Abuse of History*, Nietzsche extensively criticizes his contemporary Germany for either its apathy or it's over-exuberance concerning history. However, within (sometimes despite) that critique, Nietzsche lays out what he perceives to be a right view of history and the past. Much of this "correct" historical perspective Faulkner represents in the

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[68] *Ecce Homo* 782; second italic is Abel's

[69] "Trees heavy and ancient with moss .... these huge and silent trees might have been the first of living things, too recently born to know either fear or astonishment, dragging their sluggish umbilical cords from out the old miasmic womb of a nothingness latent and dreadful" (*M* 169). Cf. "Huge cypress roots thrust up like weathered bones out of a green scum and a quaking neither earth nor water, and always those bearded trees like gods regarding without alarm this puny desecration of a silence of air and earth and water ancient when hoary old Time himself was a pink and dreadful miracle in his mother's arms" (*M* 174).

character of Benjy. In contrast to the Bundrens and the rest of the Compsons, Benjy is not weighed down by the past. He is incapable of connecting the past with the present. Benjy's child-like perspective finds it origin in *Mosquitoes* as well: "Children are much more psychic than adults. More of a child's life goes on in its mind than people believe. A child can distil the whole gamut of experiences it has never actually known, into a single instant" (*M* 233). He, not unlike the beast who Nietzsche favors over the human for his ability to exist purely in the present, "[The] beast can be nothing other than honest" (*Use and Abuse*). Benjy cannot be "summoned out of his forgetfulness" to have to bear the weight of the past. Richard H. King notes, "Benjy is less an idiot than animal consciousness in human form. He neither remembers nor forgets in the conventional sense of those terms since past and present are scarcely distinguishable in his awareness" (81). Another echo of *Mosquitoes* is heard in Jenny Steinbauer. Jenny holds a similar place as Benjy's, albeit not as far down the spectrum nor as well-developed. She is a product of her own present tense life and has little concern for the past or the future. Her freedom from the burden of the past is not her only connection to *The Sound and the Fury*, however. Edwin Arnold points out passages in which Jenny foreshadows Caddy as well, "55.10-11 'a soft blonde girl in a slightly soiled green dress': … The identification of soiled clothes and female sexuality is most clearly made in *TS&TF*, with its central image of Caddy's soiled underwear" (57).

Benjy takes part of the methodological synthesis to which Nietzsche points. He is monumental[70] in that Caddy is his monument. He benefits from the past in that he has a "greatness" to hold on to but without the attendant weakness of this method. That is, he does not suffer too greatly from idealizing the past to the exclusion of the present. He is always ever in the

[70] Nietzsche points to three different methods of interpreting or analyzing history: monumental, antiquarian, and critical. The monumental focuses on heroes and great works in order to prepare for the future. The antiquarian method refers to those who see the greatness of the past and desire to retain that past in the present. The critical method sees the past as opportunity for learning and departure. Nietzsche purports in *The Use and Abuse of History for Life* that the ideal historian does not too heavily err in any one of these methodological directions.

present tense. Time does not even exist for him. He also partakes of the antiquarian method in that "each single thing is too important" (*Use and Abuse*). Everything Benjy wants or does is paramount. He cannot live outside of the intensity of the present tense. So everything he knows is subverted to the present desire/need. Benjy also possesses Nietzschean objectivity which is necessary for a right view of history. This objectivity is an understanding of the past in such a way that each spontaneous creative moment is the highest and most historical. King, quoting another critic,[71] points out, "We can trust Benjy's perceptions because they're never filtered through any conceptions" (81). Ironically, this is not true of Faulkner, for the conceptions that his characters filter through are many. As Thomas McHaney notes, "as far as *The Sound and the Fury* is concerned ... both the Bible and Shakespeare are among the bedrock allusions of the text" ("Personal Communication").

Another fundamental similarity between *Mosquitoes*, *The Sound and the Fury*, and Nietzsche is how both authors perceived children, or at least young people. Nietzsche wrote, "I trust in youth" (*Use and Abuse*). Faulkner himself said, "The child has the capacity to do but it can't know" (Stein). Benjy Compson, Vardaman Bundren, and almost half of the guests on the *Nausikaa* bear the weight of this youthful Nietzschean significance. Faulkner infused them with a profound simplicity necessary to embody a perspective that both criticizes culture and raises it up simultaneously. Art reminds us of our youth, of that age when life don't need to have her face lifted every so often for you to consider her beautiful .... And when it reminds us of youth, we remember grief and forget time. That's something" (*M* 319). The historian for which Nietzsche longed in Germany in the late 19th Century, Faulkner provided in the deep South hidden by "idiocy" and entrenched in familial and communal turmoil only to be brushed aside, as perhaps

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[71] Wise, Gene. *American Historical Explanations*. Dorsey Press, 1973, p. 13.

Nietzsche was, by his contemporaries. Finally, Nietzsche's historians, like Benjy, "must have the power of reshaping the universally known into what has never been heard and to announce what is universal so simply and deeply that people overlook the simplicity in the profundity and the profundity in the simplicity" (*Use and Abuse*). As McHaney observers, "Like all storytellers, he [Benjy] is a connoisseur of order. And he is not an idiot" ("Personal Communication"). The information that Faulkner communicates through these simple-minded, youthful characters is vital to the life of these novels. The history that he recreates in the stories thrives from the varied perspectives but relies on the simple constants that these historians provide.

History and *Mosquitoes* are both important to the structure of *The Sound and the Fury*. In *Mosquitoes*, the structure of the novel establishes contrast with the fluidity of the narrative and sets up the allusion to the Biblical story. In much the same way but in a much fuller and more developed way, the structure of *The Sound and the Fury* complements and deepens the symbolic strength of the novel as a whole. McHaney explains that each of the four dates that title each chapter of the novel have very specific symbolic and historical significance. "The first section is set on what is called Holy Saturday, and it is called holy because according to some liturgies it is the day that Jesus, after his death on the cross, harrows Hell," McHaney writes ("Personal Communication"). This is Benjy's section, "April Seventh, 1928." McHaney goes on to explain that the connotative naming in this section also bear symbolic weight specific to the Christian tradition (Versh=Virgil, Luster=Lucifer, T.P.=Thomas, Peter). The next chapter in *The Sound and the Fury* is Quentin's narration, dated, "June Second, 1910." McHaney comments, "Quentin's day is a Thursday, and although it is 18 years before the present year of 1928 for this Easter, and in June, it replicates the Thursday before Good Friday, called Maundy Thursday" ("Personal Communication"). This missing 18 years mimics the 18 years of Christ's life that is

unaccounted for in the Bible. Jason's narration is back in 1928, but a day earlier than Benjy's: Good Friday. McHaney writes, "Jason's day is Good Friday, and as another poor imitation of Christ his cross in life is his family, and his crown of thorns is the camphored rag he has to wrap around his head because he is allergic to the fumes from the car that he has sacrificed his family to acquire for himself" ("Personal Communication"). While he points out that the last chapter, from an omniscient perspective, is dated Easter Sunday in 1928, he notes, "there's much to be done to sort [out] all off [that] Faulkner did with the Christian story ... with enormous respect for what it truly speaks of—love and sacrifice" ("Personal Communication"). Faulkner is able to bring together the modern and the antique in the *The Sound and the Fury* in a way that he was only able to juxtapose in *Mosquitoes*. The allusions are biblical, but the dates are historical. While in *Mosquitoes*, the sections are broken up into days and the days into chapter titles that bear a time of day, in *The Sound and the Fury*, each chapter is labeled with a day, a month, and a year. The significance is that the audience is no longer able to see these chapters in the generic way offered in *Mosquitoes*. We are forced to reckon with the fact that each of the first three days are not only narrative devices but they are also historical tools, saws in the hand of yet another carpenter.

Another echo of *Mosquitoes* that we see in *The Sound and the Fury* is the use of missing hours. Faulkner often makes reference to things by saying what they are not (unvirgin as opposed to loss of virginity). He describes the lack instead of the shape that fills it. He does this temporally as well. Just as in *Mosquitoes*, he uses the missing hours to represent something far more significant than just lack. Faulkner intentionally leaves out four hours in his chronology of chapters. He also leaves out the eight o'clock hour from each day. Each of these has been shown

to have symbolic significance and lends to the tension Faulkner was creating. McHaney explains how he does the this in *The Sound and the Fury*:

> In Jefferson, Mississippi, as Easter Sunday approaches there is what seems like an anomaly—a traveling carnival with a musical show that attracts an audience to hear a man who plays music on a handsaw. In Christian culture, "carnival"—think Mardi Gras—precedes the celebration of Lent, a period of self-restraint and fasting prior to Easter. This tempting anachronistic carnival seems, on the one hand, among many examples of the lack of Christian mercy and love in the Compson household, where even the kitchen clock is a marker: when it chimes five times, Dilsey says, "eight o'clock," and we can assume, among all the other Christian allusions ... that the three missing hours are those that Christ is said to have spent on the cross. ("Personal Communication")

While Faulkner is certainly improving on *Mosquitoes* in *TSATF*, *Mosquitoes* is the gilt drawing board upon which Faulkner worked out his own genius. His literary life found its voice in *Mosquitoes*, even if was not much louder than a mosquito's hum. The power and restraint with which Faulkner created this novel and the layers upon layers of symbolism and influence that he wrote into each sentence and each word is evident, and this study has only begun to scratch the surface of what depths this 1926 "volley of words" contains (Brooks, "Faulkner's Mosquitoes" 213).

5.3 Conclusion

Faulkner was a man with a compulsion to create. He recognized in that compulsion both the force of will of his modern reality as well as the shadow of the image of a divine creative

being pressing on his spirituality. *Mosquitoes* is a novel that explicitly addresses this compulsion but through the symbolic and structural lens of memory and time. Faulkner successfully brings together in one novel—almost in its epigraph alone—many of the themes and tensions he address in more successful ways in *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying*, and every other novel he was to write in the succeeding decades. While the reception of *Mosquitoes* has suffered because of an unintentional retrospective bias, that very bias reveals the genius that is found in the pen and keystrokes of this novel. Faulkner wrote this novel out of his Christ haunted southern upbringing and through his voracious reading of much more modern ideas. Faulkner changed literary history not only because he chose to "make it new." He found a way to balance the universal and the personal. He found a way to conflate and balance the tensions that many of his peers were only able to express disillusionment over. Much like the epigraph to *Mosquitoes*, Faulkner's career matured into a force that only history has been able to reckon with. As we look back at Mosquitoes through *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*, we see not weak *roman a clef*, but a strong and wild experiment that became a portal into the literature that changed the way literature was written.

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