INTERRELATIONS OF FILM AND FICTION THEORY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE FICTION OF WILLIAM FAULKNER

The approaches to literature are many. While the conventional mode is to study literature as an entity unto itself, as a single, self-contained, self-existent art, increasingly popular trends in literary criticism take into account the fact that literature is becoming progressively more interdisciplinary as well as inter-literary. The relation between literature and film has, over the last few decades, become the object of increased attention among practitioners of both the art forms. A survey of the history of the novel after 1922 -- the year Joyce’s *Ulysses* appeared -- shows that it is to a large extent that of a development of a cinematic imagination in novelists. At the same time, there has been a distinctly ambivalent attitude towards the ‘liveliest art’ of the twentieth century. This interrelation, an entirely twentieth century phenomenon, is so much a product of the entire modern world-view, that the various movements of the modern period, like Post- Impressionism, Symbolism, Imagism, Futurism, Expressionism, however radically different they may be in kind and degree, can all be related to the cinema and many of its techniques. By the beginning of the 1920s, this modern movement afforded American writers the possibility of rediscovering and reconstructing their work in a totally different way, giving fiction especially, an innovative and experimental tradition to such a great extent that Malcolm Cowley called it “A Second Flowering.”¹ This congruity of art forms inevitably fascinates us and provokes us to more critical analysis and exploration.

One of the most interesting things about the early twentieth century is that the arts of literature, painting and film went through the modernist crisis at approximately the same time, despite the fact that film was a fledgling art and the others were well into their maturity. Whether they did so in response to each other (influence), or independently, in response to the state of Western culture (parallel development), is extremely difficult to establish. Andre Bazin has eloquently suggested that novelists have been influenced not by the specific films made in their times but by the idea of cinema:  

“If we maintain that the cinema influences the novel then we must suppose that it is a question of a potential image, existing exclusively behind the magnifying glass of the critic and seen only from where he sits. We would then be talking about the influence of a non-existent cinema, an ideal cinema, a cinema that the novelist would produce if he were a filmmaker; of an imaginary art that we are still awaiting.”²

Moving pictures in the silent era and after 1927, moving pictures with recorded sounds, could be used to tell stories, describe events, imitate human actions, expose problems, and urge reforms. It is not, therefore, surprising that such uses of motion pictures would provoke speculative comparisons with that other major human system for telling, describing, imitating, exposing and urging -- verbal language. The history of a conjunction of film and literature (novel or fiction in particular) has been a history of ‘splitters’ and ‘lumpers’³, of those who argue for the distinctness of the two media -- the effects, purposes, pleasures, and possibilities of two separate arts that are, ought to be, or must be, distinct -- as opposed to those who argue that the aims, effects, and means of the two media are similar, parallel or analogous. One of the earliest critics to publish an extended theoretical defense of the moving picture’s uniqueness was the American poet Vachel Lindsay, whose *The Art of the Moving Picture* (1915) loudly and lengthily proclaimed the legitimacy of the motion picture as a “great, high art” on the basis of the parallels it has with all the arts and its separateness from any one of them. On the other hand, one of the earliest critics to argue that making meaning with visual images paralleled making meaning with words was Sergei M. Eisenstein, the Russian filmmaker and theorist, whose essays of the ‘twenties and the ‘thirties defended the legitimacy of film as an art on the basis of its parallels with literary processes and literary works. It is interesting to remember here that in expounding his famous theory of juxtaposition or ‘montage’, Eisenstein admitted that the novelist who influenced him the most was Charles Dickens.⁴ Though he was hardly the first to connect American cinema to the nineteenth-century novel, his essay now serves as the *locus classicus* of an important strain of criticism stressing direct ties between the film and the novel. Although Lindsay and Eisenstein may have disagreed about the relation of film to literature, both wrote to assert the legitimacy of film as an art.

Films are generally divided by critics into four broad classes for practical and pedagogical purposes: - (a) narrative films (equated with fictional story telling), (b) documentary films (non-fictional or factual), (c)
experimental films (pertaining to the *avant-garde*) and (d) animation. Boundaries often overlap, yet, since the study that is to follow will be concerned with fiction, I would like to concentrate mainly on narrative films. Like a novel, a narrative film is narrative fiction, controlled by a narrative voice, a teller (the camera lens) that lets us see what it wishes. And like a novel, a film is capable of leaping nimbly in time and space, a common characteristic of narrated fiction. Practically every resource of the modern film - the close-up, the medium shot, the long shot, the moving camera, parallel editing, referential cross-cutting, color, and even sound recording - is to be found exemplified in the movies made before 1914. The various components of cinematographic form, namely visual emphasis, (cf. The famous “showing versus telling” controversy between Henry James and H.G. Wells), shifting points of view, adventitiousness, depthlessness, montage, and spatialization of time and space, the use of the ‘camera-eye’, are amply illustrated in modern fiction. Of course, it would be gross over-simplification to assume that all the writings of most of the modern novelists of the twentieth century were uniformly ‘cinematic’. Certain characteristics were expounded by some novelists, the remaining by others, and there, the nagging question always remained as to whether the literary transposition of cinematic techniques was done consciously or not. Without going into any controversy, it can be safely stated that the two arts running parallel in the same period of history had such an interesting interrelationship that Arnold Hauser, in his influential book, *The Social History of Art*, dubbed this age of ours, “The Film Age” and concluded that because of its treatment of time, cinema is an apt synecdoche for all the modern arts:

One has the feeling that the time categories of modern art altogether must have arisen from the spirit of cinematic form, and one is inclined to consider the film itself as the stylistically most representative, though qualitatively perhaps not the most fertile genre of contemporary art.5

When Virginia Woolf proclaimed that “in or about December, 1910, human character changed” (“Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” 320), it is doubtful that she was thinking of D.W. Griffith. In late 1910, the director had just moved his production company to Hollywood and made his first two-reeler, *His Trust*. Woolf was not enamored of the movies, though they would reflect, embody, and shape precisely the characteristic that she associated with modernism and with the novel. In 1907, just four years after the first sustained narrative film, Edwin S. Porter’s *The Great Train Robbery*, Henri Bergson was articulating the modernist conception of the mind as a function of movement and continuity. He explicitly drew upon the recent technology of the motion pictures to illustrate his theory, as if to think is to operate a cerebral movie projector. A decade earlier, William James in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890), had coined the term “stream of consciousness” to describe a new sense that the mind functions in and on flux. James did not, for obvious reasons, use the metaphor of the movies, but for an increasingly urban population a rapid sequence of still photographs would soon be more familiar than his image of a stream. And in describing these innovative novels that incorporated the insights of the elder James and of Bergson, others have frequently made comparisons with films. In 1932, for example, Joseph Warren Beach explained,

A more enlightened analogy is perhaps that of the moving picture, the sort cultivated in Germany, France and Russia, with its generous use of cut-back, of symbolic themes, of dissolving views, all meant to give the picture a wider and richer significance than that of a mere story told in chronological sequence. It is probable that the moving picture has had a very strong influence on the stream-of-consciousness technique.6

Equally interestingly, in his book-length study of that technique, Robert Humphrey records devices that were specifically cinematic:

The ingenious minds of the writers we have been considering, like their contemporaries in the sister arts, especially in the cinema, found techniques which were devised to project the duality and the flux of mental life. Montage, with its function of presenting either more than one object or more than one time simultaneously, was especially adaptable to fiction.7

By the time Wylie Sypher claimed that the cinema represents “the primary technique of the twentieth century”8 it was totally accepted into the sorority of the sister arts. Gertrude Stein saw the early part of the
Another critic, Claude-Edmonde Magny, designated the post World War Two era *L’Âge du roman americain* because of the influence of Dos Passos, Faulkner, Hemingway and Steinbeck. What she found so compelling about these American novelists was precisely their facsimile of cinematic construction. Films may or may not have dominated Western culture, but its vocabulary has certainly pervaded discussions of the other arts, particularly prose fiction. Yet it is interesting to note that Virginia, Woolf’s distaste for the new century’s infant medium and for novels that ape it has not prevented critics from describing her own novels as “cinematic.”

This seems ironic in the context of Woolf because she publicized a dislike for the medium. Praising the cinema for its “immense dexterity and enormous technical proficiency”, she expressed anguish at the “strange thing” that has happened -- “while all the other arts were born naked, this, the youngest, has been born fully clothed.”

Randomly chosen instances illustrate the mating of the arts. James Joyce in 1909, attempted unsuccessfully to open the first movie theatre in Dublin, and Wylie Sypher contends that “*Ulysses* illustrates the montage principle in its widest application”. Christopher Isherwood, writing a decade later, is considered to be one of the leading novelists who encouraged the new cinematic medium. Across the Atlantic, John Updike subtitled his novel, *Rabbit, Run*, “A Movie” and told an interviewer of his attempt at “an equivalent of the cinematic mode of narration”. The central section of John Dos Passos’s stream-of-memory autobiography *U.S.A.* comprises of the roughly chronologically ‘Camera Eyes’ chapters. The belief that “each clipped sentence, each prepositional phrase, is like a new frame in a strip of film” led Harry Levin to characterize Ernest Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms* as a “cinematographic presentation”. Another critic says of Thomas Pynchon in *Gravity’s Rainbow*: “He incorporates cinematic techniques into the texture itself so that the novel is like a movie.”

Such instances could be multiplied, but remarks are not analysis. A thorough attempt to dismiss the two terms of the analogy would end up crosscutting the history of the novel with the history of the cinema. Obviously, the term “cinematic” does not mean the same thing in 2002 as it did in 1950, before wide-screen technology or computer graphics, or as it did in 1940, before color became commonplace, as it did in 1925, before movies could talk, or even as it did in 1900, before cameras became mobile. It is undeniable that novels are being written differently now than they were before Lumière - and, successfully after Griffith, Welles, or Bergman. Critics and scholars have harped on the fact that the film media has often told similar stories and engaged in similar meditations; there is not that much difference between *U.S.A.* and *The Man with a Movie Camera*, between *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Citizen Kane*, between *Mutiny on the Bounty* and *Red River*, between *McTeague* and *Greed*, between *Song of Myself* and *Dog Star Man*, or even between the novel *Gone with the Wind* and *Gone with the Wind*, the film. The closer one comes to the present, the more difficult it becomes to discuss the achievements of the most significant films without some appeal to their parallels in modern literature. As mentioned earlier, the meaning of the often-traded term “cinematic novel” will be quite different according to whether the perspective of film is documentary, fictional, or animated, Expressionist, Surrealist, or Neo-realist, avant-garde or populist. Whether the term is applied pejoratively, honorifically, or neutrally, the film can be used to describe a book’s style, structure or content, and that is where its appeal lies.

In this article I propose to explore intensively the interaction of film and fiction, both thematic and stylistic, by focusing on the work of William Faulkner whose involvement with the film-world, Hollywood, and script-writing is too well-documented to be dismissed as either incidental or accidental. I have placed him in the broader perspective of his time and place so that he also becomes exemplar of the general trend in the writing of the period and will attempt to go beyond a discovery of stray visual resemblances between the scenic effects he creates and the *modus operandi* of the cinema. Faulkner was writing in a period when the new art form of filmmaking in all its gloss was rapidly expanding its horizons, especially in America and reaching out towards new techniques and innovations. The writers of the period were naturally excited by the heady discoveries of the cinema and attempted to borrow from and rival these in their own literary medium. Thus a subjective writer like William Faulkner, who, through his impact on New Wave cinema...
has influenced film as profoundly as he has influenced literature, turned indubitably to the various stylistic methods found in film.

Faulkner’s disgust for Hollywood -- both as a movie-town and as a symbol of the entire motion-picture industry of America -- in spite of his eleven visits there, and his repeated involvement in various kinds of script-writing jobs is too well-known. So, when he complains that Hollywood is the only place where one can “get stabbed in the back while climbing a ladder,”¹⁶ forcing him to go back to Oxford, Mississippi, to “get Hollywood out of his lungs,”¹⁷ it is clear that the place, both physically and metaphorically, is unassimilable to his imagination. Yet, many of his early stories conformed to the trend set by certain Hollywood genres. Later, when the 1930’s Hollywood film industry brought in a great surge of creativity in a wide range of styles: musicals, westerns, cartoons, romances, comedies, gangster films and horror films, parallels between the film and literature were once again replicated. Faulkner’s ambivalent attitude towards Hollywood in general and the film industry in particular, becomes even more interesting because of the fact that in spite of spending so many years there, he just wrote one short story “The Golden Land” based upon it. Yet, it is clear through numerous references, direct and indirect, that Hollywood did have a serious impact on his life and career. Questions can be raised as to whether Faulkner went to Hollywood with Eisenstein and Joyce on his mind, or was he, as Howard Hawks believes, ignorant of the film at that time. Recent critical opinion has tended to hold that Faulkner was not ambivalent about his time in Hollywood, that he hated it; yet such statements do not seem to give the full view of his feelings, nor of his accomplishments in Hollywood. As Bruce Kawin has pointed out, “the received myths about his Hollywood work include….but taken in a lump they are misleading.”¹⁸ In 1955, Faulkner had told the Japanese that he considered the film Rashomon uniquely good, and in the same year, he told an interviewer that he would have liked to make a film-version of George Orwell’s 1984, but he said to a third person in 1962 that he never went to the movies at all, because they would interfere with his supper.¹⁹ Further, students of Faulkner have been confronted with the puzzling conclusion by Edward Murray that “the pre-Hollywood The Sound and the Fury and Light in August are more cinematic than A Fable (1950), which was originally intended as a scenario.”²⁰ Perhaps because his settings are mainly rural, Faulkner rarely mentions Hollywood in his fiction. The mechanic Jiggs of Pylon is described as “a cartoon comedy centaur” (197); Joe Christmas’s horse in Light in August gallops with “a strange, dreamy effect, like a moving picture in slow motion”(196); a brothel madam in The Wild Palms says, “strangers like Spanish girls…..It’s the influence of the moving pictures…”(211); Caddie Compson is said to have been married, briefly, to a movie magnate. Indeed, in the period preceding his arrival in Hollywood, Faulkner had produced novels that, to many readers, appear to reflect the techniques of the cinema. While we cannot know precisely what attitudes he embraced towards film, the comments scattered throughout the first three novels and early short stories reveal a writer knowledgeable and interested, at times clearly fascinated, by the products of the young American film industry. Also practically every resource of the modern film -- the close-up, the medium shot, the long-shot, the moving camera, parallel editing, referential cross-cutting, color, and even sound recording, find ample illustration in his work.

VISUAL AND VERBAL DESCRIPTION

Being a visual medium, the film employs a multiplicity of techniques, but its greatest impact upon the novel is perhaps in this very visual aspect. Though present in pre-cinematic writers too, the emphasis on the visual gained a greater impetus in the early years of the twentieth century, especially with Impressionistic writers like Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. The predominance of the visual in the fiction of William Faulkner manifests itself in two different manners. On the one hand, the novelists’ emphasis is away from the object and towards the eye of the observer, a mode usually practiced by stream-of consciousness writers. On the other hand, there are direct occasions when the focus is more on the object as something seen, and therefore closer to the cinematographic form. As is a cliché, the primary distinction between the novel and the cinema arises from the fact that the former is a verbal medium, whereas the film is essentially visual. A study of the fiction of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries in general shows that an inclination towards visualization may be found in many writers of the period. The relation between the see-er (who may not be a seer), whether character or narrator, and the things he sees becomes therefore very significant. Much nineteenth century fiction was working in ways that either influenced or
simply anticipated the basic narrative structures of the cinema. With the twentieth century, however, the pervasiveness of the cinema became an unavoidable fact of modern life. Thus, we are not very surprised to discover in the work of certain exponents of the cinematographic form, an obvious intermingling between film consciousness and literary consciousness. As early as in 1852, Gustave Flaubert had announced his credo for visualization:

The less you feel a thing the fitter you are to express it as it is…. But you must have the capacity to make yourself feel it. This capacity is what we call genius: the ability to see, to have your model constantly posing in front of you.21

Though not influenced by the cinema, Flaubert’s declaration that he “derive(s) almost voluptuous sensations from the mere act of seeing”22 is reiterated by Henry James too when he wrote of Maupassant in 1888, “his eye selects unerringly…,” or later in 1914 when he concludes his own preliminary sketch for The Sense of the Past, with “Above all I see…”23 In the Jamesian view, therefore, narration in prose fiction was seen in terms of showing, of vision, of space, and so it seemed only natural to apply the traditional categories of literary point of view to film. In James Joyce’s Ulysses, Stephen Dedalus talks to himself as he wanders along Sandymount strand: “Ineluctable modality of the visible: at least that if no more, thought through my eyes.”24 This unvocalized soliloquy helps us to understand Stephen as a young man who needs to see, and as one of the great spectator-heroes of modern fiction - someone who is a non-participant and refuses to engage in any part of the living spectacle that passes before his eyes. By the end of A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, the visual modality has become for Stephen unavoidable and inevitable, that form of reality without which one cannot do or know or be. Another great exponent of visual immediacy was the pre-cinematic Joseph Conrad, whose famous dictum in the 1897 Preface to The Nigger of the Narcissus may be quoted with profit:

My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel—it is before all to make you see. That and no more and it is everything.25

Visual categorization – that is, a particular form of seeing—is not only a theme of the major novels and short stories of these writers; it is also a distinctive feature of their narrative style and technique. A good novelist writes scenes that are memorable, for his visual imagination and powers of description are directed by a keen determination to record fully and accurately a specific moment of perception. In his works, he uses verbal descriptions as a filmmaker uses the lens of his camera to select, to highlight, to distort, and to enhance – in short, to create a visualized world that is both recognizable and is yet more vivid, intense, and dramatically charged than actuality. A good film director is likewise sensitive to an artistic use of the camera and often creates unforgettable scenes in his films. The traffic is indeed a two-way one.

Faulkner’s early experiments with actual visual images extended to photography as well. As early as in 1918, he had begun what was to be a life-long manipulation of the camera eye as he played with the power of actual but trick photographs to alter viewers’ perceptions. The effect of visual emphasis on the major fiction of William Faulkner is equally significant. Early in The Sound and the Fury, Benjy’s vulnerability to change is enacted in his silent world of exaggerated motion in which images rush chaotically across the limited screen of vision:

I wasn’t crying, but I couldn’t stop. I wasn’t crying, but the ground wasn’t still, and then I was crying. The ground kept sloping up and the cows ran up the hill. T.P. tried to get up. He fell down again and the cows ran down the hill. Quentin held my arm and we went toward the barn. Then the barn wasn’t there and we had to wait until it came back. I didn’t see it come back. It came behind us and Quentin set me down in the trough where the cows ate. I held on to it. It was going away too, and I held it. The cows ran down the hill across the door, I couldn’t stop. Quentin and T.P. came up the hill, fighting. T.P. was falling down the hill and Quentin dragged him up the hill. Quentin hit T.P. I couldn’t stop.26

The disorienting effect of alcohol merges with the psychological loss that Benjy feels at Caddy’s wedding; the instability of the entire Compson household as the idiot intuitively grasps it underscores the sense that
the entire landscape and the people who inhabit it have in fact gone mad. Resembling the point of view shot in cinema, Benjy’s perception is treated as if the reader were looking through a camera, with Faulkner in effect having scripted a complex scene involving a mixture of ‘pans,’ ‘tilts,’ ‘dollies,’ and point of view shots. It is also an interesting fact that though a quarter of the novel is given to Benjy, he is a major ‘observer’, a part of the storytelling process rather than a major ‘character’ in the complete sense of the word.Elsewhere in the novel too, Faulkner describes an optimistic advertising sign, largely reminiscent of the unseeing billboard eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleberg in *The Great Gatsby*, when Jason Compson pursues Quentin and her lover to a town called Mottson that has erected its own sign of “progress”:

He led Jason on around the corner of the station, to the empty platform where an express truck stood, where grass grew rigidly in a plot bordered with rigid flowers and a sign in electric lights: Keep your on Mottson, the gap filled by a human eye with an electric pupil. (388)

This emphasis on the visual aspect of narration is found also in Faulkner’s later works. In *Intruder in the Dust*, with Chick Mallison, Faulkner watched as “the first of the crowd dribbled then flowed beneath the marquee blinking into the light and even fumbling a little for a second or even a minute or two yet, bringing back into the shabby earth a fading remnant of the heart’s celluloid and derring dream.” The same narrative mode was followed in the scripts he wrote for the motion-picture industry. In fact, when Howard Hawks was asked whether he thought Faulkner made any impress on the film art, he had replied on the affirmative, saying, “He has inventiveness, taste and great ability to characterize the visual imagination, to translate these qualities into the medium of the screen.” (emphasis added)

Most visual descriptions in Faulkner’s novels remind us of animated cartoons and silent comedies. Silent film, as a graphic pictorial medium chiefly concerned with gesture and visual detail, represented a contemporary form of narrative which subordinated language to physical action and gesture. Regardless of the extent to which Faulkner consciously resorted to the technique of silent film to convey his meaning, the aesthetic convergence of narrative methods in his fiction and those in silent films is a significant phenomenon. At times characters in the fictional work appear to pantomime their meaning in much the same way as silent film actors and actresses learnt to do. All the time the emphasis is on communication through intuition, pantomime, and action — emphasizing the visual. At one point in *Soldier’s Pay*, for instance, George Farr and Janarius Jones, in an attempt to elude one another and join Cecily Saunders, spend an entire night in the game of silent hide and seek:

He stood near a tree at the corner of the lawn and after a short time he saw something moving shapeless and slow across the faint grass, along a hedge. He strode out boldly and the other saw him and paused, then that one, too, stood erect and came boldly to meet him. Jones joined him, murmuring, “Oh, Hell,” and they stood in static dejection, side by side.

Analogies between the cinema and visual form in Faulkner’s fiction therefore, begin to emerge precisely at that moment when one recognizes that their initial point of intersection represents nothing less than a shared method of cognition. Like Joyce and Conrad, his manner of vision too, brings us farther away from the seen object— without losing sight of this object—and therefore closer to the subject himself. Erasing the gulf between the object and the eye of the subject, the observer often stands dumb before visual experience, but it is his visual experience before which he stands. This is precisely how the ‘eye’ of the camera also functions.

**THE THEORY OF THE CAMERA EYE AND THE FICTIONAL NARRATOR**

“Point of view” and the problems confronted by novelists has existed since the dawn of narration. Stated simply, point of view in fiction determines the relationship between the narrative material and the narrator, through whose eyes the events of a story are viewed. In other words, the ideas and incidents are sifted through the consciousness and language of the storyteller, who may or may not be a reliable guide for the reader to follow. To state somewhat simplistically, among the four basic types of point of view, namely, first person, the omniscient, the third person and the objective, it has, in general, been shown that the
“objective” or “impersonal” mode is naturally superior to any other that allows for direct appearance by the author or his reliable spokesman. “The art of fiction”, claims Percy Lubbock, “does not begin until the novelist thinks of his story as a matter to be shown, to be so exhibited that it will tell itself” [rather than being told by the author]... the thing has to look true, and that is all”. 30 In the movies, on the other hand, point of view tends to be less vigorous than in fiction, giving the director the freedom to adjust his camera lens according to his will. Here, the camera, like an eye, functions in a special way for a special purpose, seeing what the spectator could see if he were himself present at the event photographed. Thus, it can be said that a novelist who strives for the appearance of objectivity is actually attempting an approximation of the camera’s view of things. Moreover, whenever the director desires, he can focus his camera upon subjective details, rejecting what is not essential. This use of shifting points of view in the filmic mode depicts several similarities with the way in which multiple points of view are handled in the fiction of Faulkner, bringing the novels closer to the cinematographic form. Experiments in narration abound in Faulkner’s work. These include oscillation between subjective and objective viewpoints as well as multiple narration - a method of montage or dynamic juxtaposition which is the staple of cinematic narration.

In prose fiction, the fictional world is stipulated from without by a narrator separated from the counterfactual world either ontologically, in the case of the third-person narrator, or temporally, in the case of the first-person narrator. The fictional world is not directly represented to the reader; rather, it is signified by the narrator’s words. Unlike fiction, the film works by directly showing the fictional world to the spectator – ‘seen’ without narrational mediation. All that is seen in a film—the movements and gestures, the visual material selected to represent concepts, the variations and gradations in the lighting, and the performances of the actors—is, of course, photographed by a motion picture camera. Many critics have seen the film as telling through images captured by the camera. As early as 1894, H.G. Wells and Herbert Paul described the new art of cinema as “telling stories by means of pictures.” 31 In his perceptive history of the cinema, Louis Giannetti writes, “The cinematic equivalent to the ‘voice’ of the literary narrator is the ‘eye’ of the camera.” 32 Similarly, Gerald Mast states, “Like a novel, it [the film] uses focussed narration (lens parallels narrator)….” 33 James Monaco finds that both film and prose fiction tell stories by means of a narrator, the filmic narrator being the “objective image.” 34 Again, Joy Gould Boyum argues that the camera, by controlling the spectator’s attention, “becomes the equivalent of a narrator, a cinematic storyteller itself.” 35 Rejecting the traditional mimetic theories, Gerard Genette argues that point of view, which he terms “localization,” concerns the source and the type of information conveyed within the narrative, but not the source of the narration itself, that is, the narrator.

In “Point of View in Fiction: The Development of a Critical Concept,” 36 Norman Friedman writes that narrators can be distinguished on the basis of their angle on the narrative (above, center, front, shifting, periphery) and by the way they situate the reader at some distance from the story. Interestingly enough, even the term he uses to designate the narrator’s relationship to the story, “point of view,” is an optical metaphor and its visual consciousness manifests itself in the varied examples of literary equivalents of the cinematic ‘long shots’, ‘close-ups’, and ‘mid-shots’, and so on. In spite of such overt and covert similarities between the two art forms, Louis G. Giannetti warns us of certain basic differences also. In fiction, the distinction between the narrator and the reader is clear; it is as though the reader was listening to a friend tell a story. In the film, however, the viewer identifies himself with the lens, and thus tends to fuse with the narrator. This difference will be forever present:

In literature, the first-person and omniscient voice are mutually exclusive, for if a first-person character tells us his own thoughts directly, he can’t also tell us— with certainty—the thoughts of others. But in movies, the combination of first-person and omniscient narration is common. Each time the director moves his camera—either within a shot or between shots—we are offered a new point-of-view from which to evaluate the scene. He can easily cut from a subjective point-of-view shot (first person) to a variety of objective shots. He can concentrate on a single reaction (close-up) or the simultaneous reactions of social characters (long shot). 37

Elaborating on the idea that seeing is simply another way of telling, the novelist Robert Nathan also emphasized the novelistic qualities of a movie:
The picture has other characteristics of the novel; it ranges where it pleases, it studies the reaction of single characters, it deals in description and mood, it follows by means of the camera, the single unique vision of the writer. You will find in every novel, the counterparts of long shots and close-ups, trucking shots, and dissolves, but you will find them in words addressed to the ear instead of in pictures meant for the eye.

It is debatable whether such a correlation exists for every fictional work (as Nathan suggests), but it can be shown that the relationship undoubtedly applies to a cinematic writer as Faulkner whose visual techniques are analogous to those of a filmmaker who conveys the feel of his scenes, places, and people directly (and primarily) through perceivable, externalized images, and through manipulation of space and artful camera placement.

Visual art in film depends primarily on two things—composition and mise-en-scène, that is, on how objects and people inside a frame are brought together into a mutual relation, and on the texture of details in which such mutual relations are foregrounded. Originally the French term mise-en-scène literally meant “to place on stage” and referred to the arrangement of all visual elements in a theatre production. In a film it is used as an umbrella term for the various elements that constitute the frame, including camera distance, camera angles, lenses, lighting, as well as the positioning of persons and objects in relation to each other. Similarly, in fiction, visual sense is expressed through the writer’s combination of shapes and tonal values of objects, peoples and events, and locomotion of things. And while the objective of the best film visuals is an artful arrangement of elements in a scene or a succession of scenes which enables us to see the most with the least difficulty and the deepest feeling, the avowed aim of the fiction writer with a “seeing imagination” is to evoke the conditions and appearances, and to build in the subject in an attempt to render, in the words of Henry James, “the look of things, the look that conveys their meaning, to catch the color, the relief, the expression, the surface, the substance of the human spectacle he depicts on the written page.”

In his fiction, Faulkner uses space as a filmmaker does; his pen becomes camera, moving, describing, and recording cinematically. The visual technique he uses can be analyzed in cinematic terms: ‘long-shot’, ‘close-up’, ‘wide-angle’, ‘zoom’, ‘freeze-frame’, ‘soft-focus’, ‘dissolve’, ‘slow-motion’, ‘dolly-shots’, ‘panoramic shots’, and so on. Terms like “close-up”, “medium shot,” “long shot” refer to the distance of the camera from the object or to the choice of a particular section that object or person to be represented. For example, traditionally, a novelist would introduce guiding phrases when he wanted to switch over to scenes—“later at home, they thought, etc”-- but sometimes, in the modern novel, he uses literary equivalent of the cinematographic method of ‘fade out’ in which the shot simply blacks out upon the screen. Its effect is that of a pause in the rhythmic development of the film; it serves the same function as the pause or caesura in poetry and music. In the short story, “The Bear,” Faulkner describes a beautiful soundless ritual instant when the boy and Old Ben meet as man and beast, alone, the bear mysteriously appearing out of the brush for the long contemplative look, then fading, not walking back into the wilderness. A similar ‘fade-out’ scene occurs in The Hamlet, in V.K. Ratliff’s study of the marriage of Flem Snopes and Eula Varner. As he watches their train pull away, he sees “the calm beautiful mask” of Eula’s face behind the moving windowpane. It seems to him that her face faded slowly behind the glass to become that of Flem Snopes, superposed and steady: “and there remained only the straw bag, the minute tie, the constant jaw.”

When the camera moves away from the actors or the visual material in the shot, or when it travels across a wide distance, the effect is to expand the vision of the camera and to create a panorama which moves across the screen. The effect can be extremely moving. In Eisenstein’s Alexander Nevsky (1938) for example, the camera moves across a deserted battlefield at night to reveal a terrible panorama of men wounded and dying, bodies torn and mutilated, beasts slain, vultures careening among the corpses, the earth itself soaked with blood. Similarly in Victor Flemings’s Gone With The Wind (1939), when the camera focuses upon the hospital in which Scarlett O’Hara is working as a volunteer nurse, its range of vision expands and a ghastly panorama of wounded Confederate soldiers moves across the screen. In another scene of this film, the viewer gets to see the entire society at the ballroom through a ‘deep-focus,’ ‘wide angle’ shot. Examples of this kind can also be traced in the manner by which Faulkner handles similar descriptions through literary ‘panoramic shots.’ In Chapter 18 of Faulkner’s Light in August, Byron Bunch’s glimpse of Joe Brown’s escape from Lena’s cabin is reminiscent of a camera long-shot:
Then, as Byron watches, a man appears as though by magic at the rear of it, already running, in the act of running out from the rear of the cabin while the unsuspecting deputy sits quiet and motionless on the front step. For a while longer Byron too sits motionless, half turned in the saddle, and watches the tiny figure flee on across the barren slope behind the cabin, toward the woods.39

A similar distanced description, a cinematic panoramic shot occurs when Grimm first sights his prey; the verbs ‘saw’, ‘watched’ emphasize his observing perspective:

Then he saw Christmas. He saw the man, small with distance, appear out of the ditch, his hands close together. As Grimm watched he saw the fugitive’s hands glint once like the flash of a heliograph as the sun struck the handcuffs, and it seemed to him that even from here he could hear the panting and desperate breath of the man who even now was not free. Then the tiny figure ran again and vanished beyond the nearest negro cabin. (436)

MONTAGE: MULTIPLE POINTS OF VIEW

In the early twentieth century, the arts of literature, painting and film went through the modernist crisis at about the same time. Modernist writers, painters and filmmakers – Joyce and Proust, Picasso and Braque, Eisenstein and Ruttman, among others—used various types of montage to express the fragmentation they saw in the world around them. Since Harry Levin’s seminal work on James Joyce, it has become customary to speak of Joyce’s novels, to say nothing of the modern novel in general, in terms of montage. Montage provides a convenient starting point for discussing and evaluating what writers have seen as correspondences between fictional and cinematic space. Generally speaking, ‘montage’ has two distinct though allied meanings. The first involves the stylistic system of film, the way one shot is joined to another. Montage, or editing, in this sense, is concerned with the formal relations of shots; it includes such “rules” of continuity editing as matching eyelines and corresponding positions of objects within the frame, as well as Eisenstein’s principles of conflict among the graphic elements of shots. Technically speaking, ‘montage’ is the French term for editing or cutting; its sense is that shot A is “mounted” next to shot B, etc. Ezra Pound’s definition of the structure of the ideogram recognized montage as its central aesthetic principle. In the sense that Sergei Eisenstein uses the term, “dialectical montage” means simply that shot A collides with Shot B to generate C, a concept in the mind of the viewer. One can cite a simple example of this technique by considering the two opening shots of Chaplin’s film, Modern Times (1936). In the first shot we see a flock of sheep being driven through the gate of a sheep pen. Manifestly, this shot means virtually nothing by itself. If we examine shot two, we see a mob of workers emerging from a subway exit on their way to work. This also means little by itself. If, however, we examine these shots in their proper ideological relationship, they yield the apparent meaning: workers under modern industrial conditions are driven to work like a flock of sheep. This trope of montage therefore is useful because it is probably impossible to photograph an idea but it is also useful when one is trying to deal with a fragmented world and cannot simply name, even with the words, the integrating force. Montage enables the film director to endow his shots with a meaning beyond the scope of their apparent ideological content. It enables him to take the dead photographs from which a film is composed and breathe life into them. Thus montage, literally the art of mounting of a film’s shots in order to endow them with significance, depth and vitality, becomes the very essence of film technique.

The second meaning, is the basis of tables of montage devised by Rudolph Arnheim, V.I. Pudovkin, Christian Metz, and others. Such tables classify segments of film not in terms of shot relations per se but rather in terms of the way the film orders scenes or events. Montage tables are based upon narrative order; their categories are clear and non-controversial ways of establishing correspondences between film and prose fiction. For instance, Alan Spiegel quotes a passage from A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man to demonstrate the cinematic movement of modern fiction, which he calls “movement with a gap between its phases.” The passage concerns two brief enjambed scenes, one of Stephen’s meeting a prostitute on the roadway, the second of Stephen in her room. Thus, the way Joyce uses short scenes often in different locations that represent portions of an action is representative of the theory of ‘montage’ - -confirming that prose fiction and the film often order their narratives in much the same way. Literary and film critics have examined varieties of montage in a work of art -- these varieties take five basic and sometimes overlapping forms: the oxymoron ( a rhetorical device characterised by the juxtaposition of incongruous or
contradictory terms), dynamic unresolution, parallel plotting, rapid shifts in time and space, and multiple narration.

If he intends to do so within a matter of seconds, the film director can show us a cause and an effect, an action and a reaction. He can connect various points in time and place almost instantaneously through parallel editing just as he can literally superimpose different time periods through the use of ‘dissolve’ or ‘multiple exposure.’ This continual shifting of angle and distance in the camera-set-ups of cinematic narration results in the use of the montage technique. Pound’s The Cantos is certainly comparable to Eisenstein’s great film, October, Dos Passos admitted taking inspiration from both Joyce and Eisenstein, and Eisenstein and Ruttmann were the two directors Joyce considered capable of filming Ulysses. And although it is observed that D.W. Griffith took most of his inspiration from Belasco and Dickens, it is still evident that his Intolerance, with its four plots juxtaposed together, is a major influence on Russian theories of montage and one of the most accessible prototypes of modernist film. The closer one comes to the present, the more difficult it becomes to discuss the achievements of the most significant films without some appeal to their parallels in modern literature and vice versa.

In his authoritative book Film and Literature: An Introduction, Morris Beja defines ‘montage’ as “a term for editing, but one that has special connotation in regard to its skillful and imaginative use, or in regard to its manipulation for the presentation of a particular idea or set of connected impressions”. In the hands of the Russian film theorists, montage took on the more specialized meaning of dynamic juxtaposition. Believing that the essence of the cinema was editing, Dziga Vertov (1896-1954) and Lev Kuleshov (1899-1970) emphasized that the impression of an action taking place simultaneously at the same time and same place was more important than the writing of a script or the photography of actors. Kuleshov had demonstrated that it is not merely the images alone, but the juxtaposition of images that creates the emotional tone of a sequence. In 1929, the Russian director and theorist, V.I. Pudovkin described an experiment that has since passed into the mythology of film as “the Kuleshov effect.” While acknowledging the role of the viewer, this experiment by Kuleshov proclaimed the predominance of editing or montage. As early as 1903, Edwin S. Porter had introduced this sort of editing technique in The Great Train Robbery by introducing parallel (concurrent) action, showing simultaneous action at two or more locales, alternating them on the screen, thus heightening the film’s dramatic aspects. This principle was further propagated by Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948) whose overriding philosophy was that of kineticism – of jagged, intense movement within the frame and in the cutting between the shots. Considered to be one of the major architects of film language, he was aware of the need to revalue twentieth century aesthetics in the light of modernism. In the famous Odessa steps sequence of his film, Battleship Potemkin (1925), Eisenstein exemplified his theory in practical terms.

In America, the effort of increasing the subjective possibilities of the film had already been undertaken by D.W.Griffith. In his 1916 film, Intolerance, for example, Griffith tells us four stories from four different epochs all at once. Through effective cross-cutting and juxtaposition, the audience is moved from a Babylonian battle scene to a Reformation massacre to a contemporary cell on Death Row and finally to the crucifixion, with very little explanation of how the stories relate. This process of juxtaposition has a powerful kinetic effect, but it also has a meaning in that it forces the audience to explore the general nature of intolerance -- which is mainly for Griffith, the denial of another’s right to love or play or worship in new ways. But it would not be precise to insist on montage as an exclusively cinematic device; rather it is a structural principle used by writers and filmmakers throughout the century, and for approximately the same purposes -- to transcend or modify arbitrary and conventional time and space barriers and impart to their work of art a new, innovative method of narration. In the history of the novel critics have marked the original appearance of the montage principle with the crosscutting in the famous Agricultural Fair scene in Madame Bovary, and Eisenstein himself was pleased to point out montage precedents in the works of Zola, Maupassant and Dickens. It is however, only in the first quarter of this century that the montage principle came into its own, and fully emerged as the preeminent period style for modernist fiction in the twenties and early thirties. In this era, the widest variety of montage effects - in both their generalized and specific forms, temporalyzed space and spatialized time as well as multiple narrative views - appears in the art of Andrey Biely (St. Petersburg), Faulkner (The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying), Aldous Huxley (Point Counter Point), and David Jones (In Parenthesis); and as a generalized cinematic principle, but not as a visualized effect, in the fiction of Gide (The Counterfeiters) and in certain novels of the interior form, such
as those of Virginia Woolf (Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse). John Fell even compares Frank Norris’s juxtaposition of scenes in The Octopus to Edwin S. Porter’s use of parallel editing in The Kleptomaniac (1905). Montage also appears, perhaps most famously, in the work of John Dos Passos in Nineteen Nineteen (1932). The crosscutting of four different levels of American experience in his U.S.A trilogy (which was completed in 1937) – in sections of straight narrative (the individual view), “Newsreel” (the topical view), biography (the public view), and “Camera Eye” (the private view) – indicates the scope of the book’s technical advancement and also provides one of the few serious examples of sustained multiple perspective in the post-Joycean era. Even his Manhattan Transfer relies on the filmic technique of montage to cover a diverse range of activities of the urban society through a rapid transition of impressions.

This close relationship between the novel and the film in the use of the montage technique is evident in the novels of the stream-of-consciousness writers, especially those of James Joyce. In Ulysses, for instance, Harry Levin discerns the influence of the cinema in the use of montage-like effects. Bloom’s mind, he feels, is “neither a tabula rasa nor a photographic plate, but a motion picture, which has been ingeniously cut and carefully edited to emphasize the close-ups and fade-outs of flickering emotion, the angles of observation and the flashbacks of reminiscence”. When we come to William Faulkner’s use of multiple points of view, we see that though he did not start writing with Eisenstein’s or Joyce’s theories or for that matter any film theories of the time, nevertheless in his works he demonstrated how the montage technique can be a useful and effective means of evoking, defining, and illuminating human nature in all its complexity and variety. In his New Orleans Sketches (1925), he focuses on different characters of New Orleans society simultaneously – the artist, the beggar, the cop, the cobbler, the artist, the sailor, the priest. The Sound and the Fury, written in 1929, attempts to render reality in a way no traditional novel could hope to attempt, much less achieve. In this novel, the differing sensibilities of the three Compson brothers whose points of view are successively inhabited, throw light on the theme of the fall of the family through the brothers’ limited and biased responses to life and experience. The uniqueness of the novel lies in Faulkner’s attempt to render the reality behind facts in a new way. Since each section of the story portrays only biased versions of the truth and not the whole truth, it is left for the readers to make the connections and find out the whole truth, very much in the same way as in films of Griffith or Eisenstein mentioned earlier. Just as the four streams of action in Intolerance come together into a mainstream that engulfs the audience, in the fourth section of The Sound and the Fury, often interpreted as the reader’s section, Faulkner attempts, however objectively, to relate some of the multiple facets of experience.

Faulkner himself, in his lengthy and oft-quoted interview with Jean Stein in 1956, has told how The Sound and the Fury began and took shape through successive retelling of the same story from different points of view:

It began with a mental picture. I didn’t realize at the time it was symbolical. The picture was of the muddy seat of a little girl’s drawers in a pear tree where she could see through a window where her grandmother’s funeral was taking place and report what was happening to her brothers on the ground below. By the time I explained who they were and what they were doing and how her pants got muddy, I realized it would be impossible to get all of it into a short story and that it would have to be a book. And then I realized the symbolism of the soiled pants, and that image was replaced by the one of the fatherless and motherless girl climbing down the rain-pipe to escape from the only home she had, where she had never been offered love or affection or understanding. I had already begun to tell it through the eyes of the idiot child since I felt that it would be more effective as told by someone capable of knowing what happened, but not why, I saw that I had not told the story that time. I tried to tell it again, the same story through the eyes of another brother.... That was still not it. I told it for the third time through the eyes of the third brother. That was still not it. I tried to gather pieces together and fill in the gaps by making myself the spokesman....
Earlier, in an interview with the press in Japan in 1955, Faulkner had categorically stated his artistry in somewhat similar terms:

By that time I found out I couldn’t possibly tell that in a short story. And so I told the idiot’s experience of that day, and that was incomprehensible, even I could not have told what was going on then, so I had to write another chapter. Then I decided to let Quentin tell his version of that same day, or that same occasion, so he told it. Then there had to be the counterpoint which was the other brother Jason. By that time it was completely confusing. I knew that it was not anywhere near finished and that I had to write another section from the outside with an outsider, which was the writer, to tell what had happened on that particular day. And that’s how that book grew. That is, I wrote that same story four times. None of them were right but I had anguished so much that I could not throw any of it away and start over, so I printed it in the four sections. That was not a deliberate tour de force at all, the book just grew that way.43

Unlike *The Sound and the Fury*, which has the same story recycled or narrated from at least three angles, to move a critic to comment, “we cannot imagine this novel arranged otherwise than it is,”44 in *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), the story of Sutpen is gradually reconstructed from the facts of the past with the help of different viewpoints. While in the earlier novel, the different versions form integrated units, in this novel Faulkner intersperses and overlaps them. Rosa Coldfield’s point of view with which the novel opens does not form one continuous sequence;

Quentin’s observations are spread over almost all the narrative sections. Though bearing close proximity to the art of juxtaposition used in films, Faulkner uses a different method of applying multiple points of view probably because of the difference in the nature of subjects explored. In *Absalom, Absalom!*, the meaning of the career of Thomas Sutpen, his design, and its failure are imaginatively reconstructed mainly by those who never had a chance to know Sutpen at first hand. The facts are handed down to them by Quentin’s father who himself came to know them from his father. The only point of view character who knew Sutpen personally is Rosa Coldfield. Thus the gaps that remain in the story of Sutpen are filled by creative imagination and each of the nine chapters of the novel moves forward to a climactic surprise or revelation. As in the last section of the earlier novel, where Faulkner resorted to the writer’s point of view to impart an objective, third-person narration, in this novel, too, he involves the readers in the search for the truth about Sutpen, becoming as it were, another investigator participating in the search for meaning. Each of the points of view used by Faulkner, in the words of Hyatt H. Waggoner, “adds new facts as well as a new perspective and makes necessary a reinterpretation of the facts already known.....and it supplies the organizing principle of the novel”.45

Employing a simultaneity of vision, and sudden shifts in perspective in *The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom!* , Faulkner’s experiment with multiple points of view acquires further complexity in *As I Lay Dying* which abounds in rapidly shifting, kaleidoscopic perspectives. Portraying the furious passions and frenetic activity of the Bundrens generated by the death and funeral journey of Addie Bundren, the contradictions and incongruities in the human psyche find succinct expression through Faulkner’s method of constantly shifting the points of view within this tragi-comic tale. Throughout this novel, the focus changes intermittently from character to character, from the fifty-nine monologues of as many as fifteen characters, including the dead woman, Addie Bundren. Seven of these characters are members of the Bundren family and the remaining eight are neighbors or strangers who represent the public world as against the private world of the Bundrens. The reader is drawn into the consciousness of all these characters but he remains a detached observer. He is unable to identify with any one character, not even with Darl who comes nearest to being “the representative intelligence of the novel and the mouthpiece of the author”.46 Cash’s observation towards the end of the novel seems to pinpoint Faulkner’s concern in this novel:

But I ain’t so sho that ere a man has the right to say what is crazy and what ain’t. It’s like there was a fellow in every man that’s done a past the sanity or the insanity, that watches the sane and the insane doings of that man with that same horror and the same astonishment.47
The constant shifting from one mind to another stresses the wide gap between the individual perception and the need to have a whole vision in the midst of diverse attitudes and responses to life. The limited perspectives come into conflict with one another and the interaction resulting therefrom, along with the reader’s understanding and brings out the significance without the help of the authorial voice. It has to be remembered that the montage artist encompasses for himself, and restores to the reader, a totality of life experience, a whole truth – yet a totality and a truth comprised of fragments and limited perspectives. Faulkner’s statement about the nature of reality in his own work could apply equally well not only to Ulysses but to those other novels that also embody the montage principle:

I think that no one individual can look at truth. It blinds you. You look at it and you see one phase of it. Someone else looks at it and sees a slightly awry phase of it. But taken all together, the truth is in what they saw though nobody saw truth intact…It is…thirteen ways of looking at a blackbird. But the truth, I would like to think, comes out, that when the reader has all these thirteen different ways of looking at the blackbird, the reader has his own fourteenth image of that blackbird which I would like to think is the truth. 48

In the manner used by film directors, Faulkner, therefore, attempts in As I Lay Dying to explore and portray the incongruities of human attitudes through the individual’s perceptions, counterpointed by society’s attitudes and finally judged and evaluated by the reader. Every perceptive reader in reminded of Orson Welles’ effective use of point of view in Citizen Kane (1940), in which various aspects of Kane’s life come to us filtered through the perceptions of different people who knew him. Structured with a series of interlocking flashbacks, this film’s style bears close affinity with the fragmented manner in which Faulkner narrates his tales. For example, in Citizen Kane, the opening shots of Xanadu, of Kane’s room, Kane’s lips, the snowstorm paperweight, come right before the News on the March montage, and directly after this montage we see the discussion in the projection room which leads to the search for Rosebud. Writer and film-director were both, therefore, using the same technique to convey the same perception of the nature of experience.

Apart from the novels in which he overtly experimented with the use of multiple points of view, like Melville and Joyce, Faulkner also utilized narrative techniques that greatly violated traditional literary conventions. These include The Sanctuary, in which he uses doubling gestures that appear to be repetitive but also turn out to be polar -- the two trials at the end of the novel, for instance, in each of which the jury is out for the same eight minutes, and each jury finds the defendant to be guilty; The Reivers, which records the last breathless 300-page reminiscence of a single episode in young Lucius Priest’s life; the alternating but basically contrapuntal stories in The Wild Palms; the various “blend” novels like The Unvanquished, The Hamlet and Go Down, Moses; A Fable the unwieldy block structure; Requiem for a Nun (with its juxtaposition of drama and essay in Requiem for a Nun; the multiple-narrator novels The Town and The Mansion; novels that begin with denouement, like Light in August and Pylon, in which the central observer never has a name. Though the similarity may be considered accidental, each of these narrative techniques can be equated with similar ones used in films. For instance, when the interviewer asked him about the entangled nature of the two kinds of stories in The Wild Palms, Faulkner clarified his use of juxtaposition in unequivocal terms:

To tell a story I wanted to tell, which was the one of the intern and the woman who gave up her family and husband to run off with him. To tell it like that, somehow or another, I had to discover counterpoint for it, so I invented the other story, its complete antithesis, to use as counterpoint. And I did not write those two stories and then cut one into the other. I wrote them, as you read it, as the chapters. The chapter of “The Wild Palms”, chapter of the river story, another chapter of the “Wild Palms” and then I used the counterpoint of another chapter of the river story. I imagine as a musician would do to compose a piece of music in which he needed a balance, a counterpoint. 49

Montage in Faulkner’s work is then, not something added after the fact, nor the product of rearrangement, but integral to each fragment. Faulkner did not write the novella “Old Man” and the novella “Wild Palms” separately, but wrote them in alternation, chapter by chapter, letting each suggest the other. He used the terms “antithesis” and “counterpoint” to describe the ways these stories gave each other “emphasis.”50 Thus it appears that he had been “doing what the cinema was doing,” as he claimed in a 1931 interview.
contended that novelists should “let the characters tell their own stories instead of filling page after page with exposition.....In the future novel, there will be no straight exposition, but instead, objective presentation, by means of soliloquies or speeches of the characters, those of each character printed in a different colored ink. Something of the play technique will thus eliminate much of the author from the story.”

To elucidate this interrelationship between the novel and the drama form, Faulkner wrote *Requiem for a Nun* (1951) as a novel, not as a drama interrupted by prose prologues or as a play within a novel. He emphasized its novelistic form on several occasions: “It may be a novel as it is,” he wrote to Robert Haas in May 1950. Later the same month, he explained to Bennet Cerf, “It is not a play, will have to be rewritten as a play. It is now some kind of novel, can be printed as such, rewritten into a play.” To his editor Saxe Commins he wrote in June 1951, “to me the prose is not at all a prologue, but is an integrated part of the act itself.” Finally, in a brief introduction to the dramatic version published in 1959, he stated: “This play was written not to be a play but as what seemed to me the best way to tell the story in a novel”. It thus becomes clear that though the source of Faulkner's use of the montage technique was Eisenstein rather than Joyce, considering the aesthetic and technical unity of literature and film, it becomes apparent that Faulkner was using methods that are also found in the cinema.

TIME : CINEMATIC AND FICTIONAL

Any discussion of the correlation between fiction and film will necessarily include a consideration of the ways in which the dimension of time is handled by the filmmakers and fiction-writers of the same period. Understanding how time is treated in the cinema leads also to a comprehension of the novelists’ use of time in their fiction. A survey of the history of the modern novel shows that even in the fiction of the pre-cinematic era, the concept of time had undergone a great change with the introduction of Henri Bergson’s theory of “la durée réelle” and “la mémoire involontaire” of Marcel Proust. The Bergsonian concept of time as something never finishing and in a state of constant flux found expression in the writings of the stream-of-consciousness technique which strove to express the sense of life as a sequence of non-causal impressions and therefore not conforming to the normal temporal order of a narrative. In the filmic medium, on the other hand, the basic view held is that film operates only in the present tense. Because the motion-picture, as a time bound art, is concerned with the problem of how to present real or actual time-with the events happening in the present, past, or future, or simultaneously, or at different intervals -- the element of time is of major importance in achieving clarity and effectiveness of expression on the screen. With the help of camera devices, the unchanging nature of physical time can be slowed down, speeded up, telescoped, or stretched out to remarkable lengths, or even at moments ‘frozen’. The achronological handling of time by the modern novelists therefore finds suitable parallels in techniques like ‘flash-back’, ‘slow-motion’, ‘stasis’, ‘ellipsis’, ‘dissolve’ and ‘jump-cut’. Further, in keeping with the cinematic tradition of narrating in the present tense, Faulkner often uses the narrative ‘you’ in his fiction, deliberately inserting second-person passages into ‘normal’ novelistic practices. In such cases, the ‘you’ cannot be said to apply completely to either the protagonist or the reader, but becomes a merging of the two.

TIME AND SPACE/SPATIO-TEMPORAL PROBLEMS

Theorists have seen the film as a space/time art and prose fiction as a time art. Prose fiction narrative is comprised of actions, agents, and temporal and causal relationships. The only spatial component is that of the text itself, the level of representation. In the film, spatial context is crucial and a much more significant formative element than the novel. Here, a shot depicts action and this action must take place somewhere; in a physical space. The action must also take place at the same time. Because the action or ideological content of a shot must take place in a physical space, we sometimes refer to the ideological relationships between shots of a film as their spatial relationships, though in actual practice the relationships of time and space can never be separated. In the real world, the world as distinguished from the cinematic, there are certain laws of time and space which any person can verify from his own experience – first, the observation is that in the real world a given area of space is always the same size and hence one cannot alter its dimensions; second, in the real world time cannot be made either longer or shorter than it is; third, one cannot be in two different places at the same time; and fourth, in the real world time cannot be made to go backwards. All these observations can be termed the *laws of real space and time*. In the film, however paradoxical as it may seem, it is literally possible to expand and contract time and space. The technique of
balancing parallel images is central to the film’s structure, and is most consistently devoted to
demonstrating the relationship of the past and the present. As film theorists explain, time becomes a spatial
element on the screen, its passage indicated by a movement from point to point in space. Thus, in the film,
space loses its static quality, its serene passivity, and becomes dynamic and fluid. In other words, a certain
element of freedom is introduced in the succession of movements.

In prose fiction, we usually find two kinds of spatial relationships – that between narrator and his
surroundings, and the narrator and the work he is narrating. In some narratives, the space occupied by the
narrator is evoked and the space of composition is distinguished from the space of the narrated events. As
George Bluestone makes us aware, though both the film and fiction create the illusion of psychologically
distorted time and space, there is a basic difference between the two.

Both novel and film are time arts, but whereas the formative principle in the novel is
time, the formative principle in the film is space. Where the novel takes its space for
ganted and forms its narrative in a complex of time values, the film takes its time for
ganted and forms its narrative in arrangements of space….The novel renders the illusion of space by going from point to point in time; the film renders time by going from point
to point in space.56

Though Gerard Genette argues that narrative time is a more important consideration than narrative space,57
many modern novels attempt approximations of time-space fusions. In them, there exists an observable
struggle to subdue the patterns suggested by time in its accustomed sense to those existing in its new spatial
sense. Writers like Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and John Dos Passos, all show this
tendency to move in the direction of spatial form; all of them ideally intend the reader to apprehend their
work spatially, in a moment of time, rather than as a sequence. The discontinuity of plot and the scenic
development, the sudden emergence of the thought and moods, and the relativity and the inconsistency of
time standards in the works of these novelists reminds us of the cuttings, dissolves, and interpolations of the
film.

Just as montage is used in the case of editing or juxtaposing various stories, incidents, or moods together,
or a situation in which time remains fixed while the spatial element changes (which critics describe as
‘primary montage by attraction’ or ‘space-montage’); it may also define temporal order in both film and
fiction (labeled by critics as ‘simultaneous montage by attraction’ or ‘time-montage’). This means that
often, simultaneous events are presented simultaneously in the plot, or, successive events in the story are
presented as simultaneous events in the plot and space remains fixed while the interior monologue moves
freely in time. It seems simply film magic when Proust brings two incidents, which may lie thirty years
apart, as closely together as if there were a bare two hours between them. It is a well-known fact that D. W.
Griffith popularised this new development of parallel montage through his use of alternating shots that
were supposed to be simultaneously in time. In Alfred Hitchcock’s Marnie (1964), for example, such use of
parallel montage is witnessed in a scene in which on the right hand side of the screen we see Marnie
attempting to sneak out of the office after she has robbed a safe while on the left side of the screen a
cleaning woman mops the floor. Joseph Frank58 had described as ‘spatial’ narrative those novels that do not
proceed in linear or chronological time or derive their unity from narrative plot. In prose fiction, perhaps
the best example of this kind of spatialization of time occurs in the oft-quoted fair-scene in Madame
Bovary. Flaubert handles the scene cinematographically making the action move simultaneously on three
levels. He breaks up the temporal sequence by cutting back and forth between various levels of action, until
at the climax of the scene, Rodolphe’s phrases are read at almost the same moment as the names of prize
winners for raising the best pigs. In Alain Robbe-Grillet’s In the Labyrinth, too, spatialization of time has
the effect of turning the novel into an approximation of a film for it is a stream of visual images flowing
before the eyes with the effect of a continual present. In James Joyce’s short story, “Araby,” as the young
protagonist accompanies his aunt to the marketplace, the image of his beloved accompanies him in places
unimaginable for romance – the market is replete with the shrill litanies of shop boys, the nasal tone of the
singing, blind beggars, the jostling of laborers busy bargaining for their wares, the glowing neon signs of
shop display boards. Another brilliant example of the montage of time and space is observed in Faulkner’s
The Wild Palms in the paralleled stories,
……until after a while it no longer seemed to him that he was trying to put space and
distance behind him or shorten space and distance ahead but that both he and the waves
were now simultaneously hanging suspended simultaneous and unprogressive in ‘pure’
time….59

It must be mentioned here, of course, that though based on the same principle, certain basic differences in
the representation of simultaneity occur between its filmic and fictional rendering. When a novelist wishes
to convey the impression of simultaneity of external scene and internal reaction, he does not have at his
disposal the simultaneous montage devices of the movie director. So, he conveys the impression
sequentially. The advantages of the film in this respect are particularly apparent when the same
‘simultaneous’ impression, which the novelist must present sequentially, is presented simultaneously in the
film. The simultaneity of external scene and internal thoughts in a movie is presented through the
juxtaposition of picture with soundtrack. In the novel, therefore, ‘simultaneous montage’ can be applied to
those situations in the novel involving the contrast of an object, a situation, or a dialogue with the
subjective thoughts concerning them that arise in the mind of a character. As a critic elucidates,

I am aware that this “novelistic” simultaneous montage is not exactly equivalent to
cinematic simultaneous montage, nor can it be, but I think that the effects are somewhat
similar. Novelistic simultaneous montage, as I am using the term, involves no shift from
present to past or from reality to dream. The objective situation in novelistic simultaneous
montage is either described by a third-person narrator or presented rather objectively in
the consciousness of a character.60

TIME AS A CONTINUOUS PRESENT

In a number of statements before his death, Faulkner implied that the “successful” human being, “a spirit
capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance,” must first recognize and then accept the vital
correlation between a viable sustaining identity and the perception of self as a construct, in part at least, of
time, or one’s attitude towards or placement in time. In the best of his several interviews, Faulkner
described to Jean Stein his ‘invention’ of Yoknapatawpha County and his use of it since 1929 in his fiction:

…..I created a cosmos of my own. I can move these people around like God, not only in
space but in time too. The fact that I have moved my characters around in time
successfully, at least in my own estimation, proves to me my own theory that time is a
fluid condition which has no existence except in the momentary avatars of individual
people. There is no such thing as was—only is.61

Again, in a discussion with graduate students at the University of Virginia, Faulkner attempted to clarify
this concept of the interrelationship between time and human identity and repeated the earlier words almost
verbatim:

…..there is no such thing as was. That time is, and if there’s no such thing as was, then
there is no such thing as will be. That time is not a fixed condition, time is in a way the
sum of the combined intelligences of all men who breathe at that moment.62

Although an extremely wide range of attitudes towards the temporal dimension is exhibited by Faulkner’s
characters in the major novels, analysis shapes the continuum into two distinct groupings. The first group
consists of those who accept a natural, circular, cognitive time pattern. The second group, much larger,
containing the majority, consists of those who accept a mechanical or linear cognitive time pattern and,
therefore in partial cause, fail in their basic life quests. Characters who construct their identities around a
natural pattern, or a form of the natural cognitive pattern, share certain concepts. Time seems circular in
the sense of its basic relationship to natural rhythms: days, months, seasons, years and epochs. Identity, in
part, is structured by the belief that all time (past one through memory and the future one through
anticipation ) is contained in “now.” In contrast, those characters who accept a form of the mechanical or
linear cognitive pattern share a number of different concepts. Time seems linear in that sense of a straight
line from an irretrievably lost past to an all too often illusory future; man’s identity is structured only by his
existence in “now.” In one of his interviews, Faulkner tells us about The Sound and the Fury: “To that
idiot, time was not a continuation, it was an instant thee was no yesterday and no tomorrow—it is all in this
moment it all is (now) to him.”

This view of the use of the present tense is reiterated almost verbatim by Seymour Chatman when he explains:

> Narratives establish a sense of a present moment, narrative NOW, so to speak. If the narrative is overt, there are perforce two NOWs, that of the discourse, the moment occupied by the narrator in the present tense……and that of the story, the moment that the action began to transpire, usually in the preterite. If the narrator is totally absent or covert, only the story-NOW emerges clearly.

**FLASHBACKS**

William Faulkner’s use of the flashback technique is perhaps the most overt. His deep sense that reality is described fully only in the paralleling of the external flow of event and the internal flow of consciousness justifies his distinctive experiments with the form. Since the past is an important factor in understanding his fiction, the flashbacks are not simply functional, they are thematically necessary, and consequently they justify the montage structure of his work. Some flashbacks occasionally abandon the present for as much as a hundred pages, to rejoin the foreground when only a moment has elapsed. In *Light in August*, Faulkner took from *Sanctuary* the delayed flashback technique, in which he had finally told his readers why Popeye was such a misfit, and applied the method to a comprehensive treatment of Joe Christmas’s early history, depicting the reasons why Joe was abandoned. Instead of using interior monologues to expose the simultaneous existence of past and present events, the novelist depends largely on flashbacks to underscore causality. Sometimes, again, flashbacks occur as instants of reverie in the mind of a character, not as omniscient narrative. Each of the first three sections of *The Sound and the Fury* is an account of an instantaneous flash of memory; they are not really stream of consciousness because stream implies duration. The substance for the reverie or the flashback is the past because only the past is available for reverie. Faulkner’s method of using the flashback here reminds us of Resnais’ *Hiroshima Mon Amour* where action and flashbacks are not essentially independent of each other. In this film, past and present are interwoven within the narrative in such a way that the normal time perspective is annulled, creating an effect of simultaneity.

Closely connected with the method of ‘flashback’ is the use of dreams and the stream-of-consciousness technique. Dreams are perhaps the best method for annihilating the normal flux of time. In the film, inserting a dream sequence within a narrative is the easiest method of manipulating time. In Faulkner’s handling of the artistic, literal and emotional use of dreams, he comes closer to James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and the Surrealists. The aim of the surrealist writer was to create images and objects which in all their concrete character might give the human mind a representation of the infinite or eternal without relegating the vision to another world. Believing that the unconscious was the source of inspiration, they accepted the contradictory, absurd and discordant, in order to free the metaphor from its conventional structure, and in their work attempted to represent the world of fantasy and dreams. Frequently, the product of the surrealist image results in a distortion or rejection of time and space, and though their images were generally temporal, they were nevertheless in search of the discordant combination of visual-aural effects that would lend startling new dimensions to the world they revealed. Dreams, in which contradictions could be fused, bring a second or heightened reality. Faulkner’s *Light in August*, with its achronological narration, its structure of coincidence and juxtaposition, and its exploitation of the powerful play of association might be considered as a work situated on the border between dream and conscious perception, something that the Surrealists preached. It must be mentioned that though we do not have positive proof that Faulkner was directly influenced by the Surrealist and the Dadaists, he was doing exactly what his brothers were doing in the other arts. As a gifted amateur watercolorist and illustrator himself, Faulkner may well have been aware of the controversy surrounding the first American exhibition of surrealist art in Hartford, and the gift of Salvador Dali’s famous surrealist painting, “The Persistence of Memory,” to the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1931. In the absence of a more definitive connection, it is irresistible to speculate that Faulkner envisioned Dali’s melting clocks, swarming insects, grotesque humanoid equines, and nightmarish oddly-illuminated landscape when he composed *Light in August*. In fact, the interpenetration of fantastic and substantial gives even the most violent events of the novel a dreamlike quality. Further, a lot of Dadaist films made in the late 1910s and 1920s stressed unconscious elements, irrationalism, irreverent wit, and spontaneity. In fact, in 1928, the year Faulkner wrote *The Sound and the Fury*, Salvador Dali and
Bunuel had made *Un Chien Andalou (An Andalusian Dog)*, which was an amalgamation of dreams and images whose only ruling precept was that there be no rational explanation for any moment in the movie. Time in some of Faulkner’s novels is the time of dream where past, present and future have no meaning.

Again, Faulkner’s use of the stream-of-consciousness technique cannot be overestimated. His statement to a *Paris Review* interviewer that one should approach Joyce’s *Ulysses* “as the illiterate Baptist preacher approaches the Old Testament: with faith,”

acknowledges his indebtedness to the great master. Though at times his crosscutting within the stream of consciousness is even quicker and more dazzling than anything to be found in the fiction of his predecessors, certain sections of *The Sound and the Fury* reveal the influence of Joyce and D.W.Griffith. In his use of a near-subliminal stream of consciousness flow, Griffith came very close to replicating the workings of the human mind and imagination itself. Further, just as Joyce and Woolf rely on visual symbols as unifying devices for their stream-of-consciousness narration, so Faulkner uses fire, water, light, trees, flowers and clocks as recurrent images in an effort to impose order on his seemingly chaotic subject matter.

**MOTION VS STASIS**

The aesthetics of the cinema can be summarized in one word, movement. Motion in the film can be achieved in a number of ways. First, the camera can show the same moving action from a number of points of view. A second way by which the film achieves motion is by the movement of the camera itself. The other instance is by means of the camera lens. In this method, an illusion of motion is created through changing of the camera lens – the ‘zoom’ lens and the ‘close-up’ lens which change the focal length are very effective for suggesting motion. In the film, the director can not only create the impression of movement but its very sensation by his control over the rhythmic beat. Thus, in *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), Eisenstein, created the exact sensation of moving on a battleship; in *Berlin* (1927), Walter Ruttmann created the exact sensations of riding on a train moving between Berlin and one of its suburbs; in *Sunrise* (1927), F.W. Murnau evoked the exact sensation of riding in a roller-coaster at a carnival; and in *Stagecoach* (1939), John Ford created the exact rhythm of a stagecoach journeying across the western plains. The application of fast moving shots sometimes juxtaposed with still images or ‘frozen shots’ is such a commonly used technique in films that we often take it for granted. The situation becomes interesting when we witness a similar kind of exercise in the writing of William Faulkner.

In one of his most oft-quoted interviews, William Faulkner himself said, “Life is motion and motion is concerned with what makes man move—which is ambition, power, pleasure…..the aim of every artist is to arrest motion.”

We make take this to mean that for Faulkner the lack of motion had a purely negative connotation. His texts do not, however, present such a simple, straightforward picture. In certain action scenes where his characters in a hurry, and thus in motion, life nevertheless comes to a standstill. Although they possess the ‘ambition’ or ‘power’ necessary for motion, these characters are often partially or temporarily immobile. There are numerous instances throughout *Sanctuary* of Horace and others motionless, framed, looking out of windows of cars, houses, or jails. Horace has a compulsion to perceive or conceive of himself and others frozen in time and space:

And he thought at the time of the two of them—Popeye and himself—facing one another across the spring. Only the water seemed to move, to have any purpose…. Not only the air, but time, sunlight, silence, all appeared to stand still….the two figures facing one another decorously, were isolated out of all time…(23) Popeye and Goodwin and the woman…three figures fixed forever in the attitudes in which he had left them, waiting for him to return… (26)

Presently all sense of motion ceased. The truck seemed to be suspended motionless…. (30)

On the other hand, Faulkner juxtaposes these static moments with fast action. Moreover, in such scenes of hurry, the characters’ ties with their reality are also severed. The action of the characters appears to be blurred, and the setting and atmosphere of these scenes of hurry dissolve into almost surreal nightmarish
environments. The narrators of such scenes, in spite of their ostensible efforts to be clear, on the contrary grow obscure in their narration. For instance, in *Light in August*, Joe Christmas goes through a series of fast actions. On the night he attacks McEachern, in his urge to leave the dance hall, he reaches home to get money, and finally go to Bobbie’s house. After Joe takes the money from where it is hidden, he leaves the house, riding McEachern’s “now spent old horse.”68 The horse is too tired to move as fast as Joe would have it and both the horse and the rider “had a strange, dreamy effect, like a moving picture in slow motion as it galloped steady and flagging up the street.”(196) The resemblance of the horse and its rider to a slow motion picture prepares the reader for the next description, which brings all action to a standstill. The narrator suggests that the horse and the rider “might have been an equestrian statue strayed from its pedestal and come to rest in an attitude of ultimate exhaustion.” The horse stops in spite of Joe’s effort “to drag it into motion by main strength.” Due to the late hour, the street is deserted and filled with moon shadows that reinforce the dreamy quality of the scene. The horse and Joe face each other, in total solitude and stillness, “their heads quite near, as if carved in an attitude of listening or of prayer or of consultation”(197). This technique resembles the ‘freeze shot’ in film and like the other devices, is used in the animated cartoon to heighten the comedy as also at the close of serious films to stress a theme. It is interesting to note that key moments in Faulkner’s fiction are often those in which he freezes an image – he frequently uses such words as ‘immobile,’ ‘frozen,’ ‘static,’ ‘motionless,’ ‘transfixed,’ ‘statuelike,’ ‘as if in a photograph,’ ‘as if in a slow motion movie.’ Also significant is the fact that the most violent action in Faulkner often reaches a moment of stasis. Stasis is manifested equally well in a cluster of related images which are as familiar as his vocabulary.

The image of a man on his galloping horse often appears in Faulkner in relation to figures such as Thomas Sutpen or Hightower’s grandfather. Although this image denotes power in such characters, in *Light in August*, Joe’s galloping horse is as slow as a walking man. Joe’s willpower and determination to reach Bobbie only bring the animal to a standstill. The horse and Joe are thus in what must be called a “motionless action,” somewhat analogous to the figures on John Keats’ Grecian urn. However this still moment does not last for long. In *The Sound and the Fury*, Jason sees Quentin and “the red tie” in a car and chases them in an instance of the split between the physical and the mental similar to that of Joe. Jason’s rage and self-indulgent tone entirely dominate this section of the novel. The scene starts with “a ford coming helling” (297)towards Jason, and in spite of its incredible speed, the car comes to a sudden standstill before it manoeuvres back. At the moment of that sudden halt, the car is both moving and motionless (144-145). Recognizing the driver and his companion, Jason is driven nearly insane and chases them without realizing the significance of his own actions or thinking about his headache. (297). His actions are not preceded or accompanied by a conscious decision process. In *Absalom, Absalom!* as Miss Rosa conveys the story of her encounter with Clytie after Charles Bon’s murder (136-142), we have the same stylistic feature of projecting scenes of hurry which are reminiscent of film narration. Rosa does not follow a chronological order as she narrates the events of that afternoon and shifts between the past, the actions of that afternoon, and the future. She meets Clytie in the almost empty ‘Sutpen’s Hundred,’ a place which has a “thunderous silence.” Clytie is “rocklike and firm and antedating time and house and doom and all” as opposed to Miss Rosa who knows very little and sees even less after “running out of the bright afternoon” into this almost timeless dark hallway. (136) Once again, the hurried action of the character has split her identity into its physical and non-physical elements. As Miss Rosa explains, these two components need to be stopped by different agents: “and I (my body) not stopping yet (yes, it needed the hand, the touch, for that)” (138). However, even that explanation is not altogether correct and accurate, either, since, when Clytie eventually touches Miss Rosa, the latter is not sure whether she has stopped or not. As Miss Rosa tries to modify her narration, she ironically renders even more obscure the action she narrates. She then describes the encounter with Clytie in terms that offer another perfect example of the ‘freeze shot’:

We just stood there—I motionless in the attitude and action of running, she rigid in that furious immobility, the two of us joined by that hand and arm which held us, like a fierce rigid umbilical chord, twin sistered to the fell darkness which has produced her. (140)

In a hurry, Miss Rosa has run to come to a standstill, to find herself in “that dream-state in which you run without moving”(142). At the beginning of *The Hamlet* we are given two comic “still shots” of the Snopes girls, as Jody looks over towards the sell and sees them. It is one of these motionless girls, described above, who becomes mechanized when she starts to pull in harmony with the moving wheel. In other sections of
the novel too, Faulkner uses the technique of motion versus stasis. Flem Snopes is pictured as immobile, except for his chewing jaw (23,86); the spotted horses are shown motionless but ready to explode (275); and Jody once “points,” motionless as a bird dog (323). In “Mule In the Yard,” we are presented with “the static and astonished face of a cow,” and later the mule and the cow together become a frozen “tableau”:

The cow now stood in the center of the yard. She and the mule faced one another a few feet apart. Motionless, with lowered heads and braced forelegs, they looked like two book ends....

A moment later they are off and running. Here, as in the description of the Snopes girls, the contrast of stasis and motion, which is a piece of visual comedy recalls the start-and-stop of the comic films.

Another such ‘frozen moment’ that is reminiscent of the cinematic technique is also noticed in the short story “The Bear” in Go Down Moses in the young Ike McCaslin’s slow perception of the bear’s footprint in the mud—“...then he saw the bear. It did not emerge, appear: it was just there, immobile, fixed....” 71 Yet another illustrative example is that of the Negro and the mule and the plough of Intruder in the Dust, seen from the window of a car—“...the man and the mule and the wooden plow which coupled them furiously and solitary, fixed and without progress in the earth, leaning terrifically against nothing”(147-8).

According to Karl E. Zink, Faulkner’s use of images of stasis—which he terms a tableau vivant—is a “description of human action, sometimes concise and impressionistic, sometimes extended like a concise and impressionistic, sometimes extended like a conceit. It is an actual stoppage, a freezing of time and motion in order that a certain quality of the human experience may be held and contemplated – made ‘ponderable,’ as Faulkner puts it frequently.”72

Along with the fictional and cinematic handling of time comes in the concept of ‘spatializing time’. A ‘shot’ depicts action. This action must take place in a physical space. The action must also take place at some time. It therefore become obvious that space and time cannot exist without each. It is equally obvious that the cinema reveals a certain degree of simultaneity in handling time and space. This space-continuum, presented by the camera, reaches the viewer in a variety of camera shots. It becomes necessary, therefore, while discussing the fiction-writers’ treatment of time, to consider their “cinematic” telescoping of space and time and other literary versions of film devices

LANGUAGE AND STYLE

In our time-obsessed age, the writer, the painter, or the filmmaker, each tries to innovate techniques to express the modernist’s understanding of the sifting, fluxional, ambivalent nature of experience. Thus an interaction or an interdependence becomes not only necessary but inevitable. Notations are exchanged with each artist still retaining his uniqueness. In her erudite book, Double Exposure: Fiction into Film, Joy Gould Boyum clearly differentiates between the language of fiction and the language of film arguing that “style in film must be constructed out of totally different elements: pictorial décor and composition; camera movement and editing; transitional devices and lighting, score and sound effects, and so on.” Building her case on assumptions, she categorically states that “literary and cinematic languages are markedly different in their emotional and intellectual charge. Yet, for all Ms. Boyum’s assertions, differences between filmic and fictional ‘elements’ or components of style may not seem insurmountable, and emotional and intellectual content and direction may tend to coalesce. Even a casual glance at twentieth century literature, fiction in particular, will enable us to discern interesting borrowings from the language of the cinema. Infusions and symbioses are, in fact, unavoidable between the arts of any particular period since the worldview remains the same. And, if the thematic thrust is the same, though Ms. Boyum may dispute this point, other critics of standing, literary and cinematic, Mario Praz or Arnold Hauser, for instance, have established that in any given period; themes and subjects in all the arts tend to merge, and analogies will exist in the modes of expression.

Not unexpectedly, then, between the fiction writers of the American ‘twenties and ‘thirties, a common link exists in the hardly-concealed desire to draw upon the striking innovative “language” of the cinema in its early creative period. Familiarity with the film world did not breed immediate contempt in this case but Faulkner’s fluent use of the cinematic image, symbol or metaphor on the one hand, and jargon (or technical language, whichever way you choose to put it), on the other. Faulkner’s use of cinematic
language and style is also noteworthy. Another cinematic quality may be considered in the way the novelist deals with image clusters in his fiction, especially image clusters not primarily arranged in chronological or logical sequence. Finally, on a more superficial level, the use of technical terms related to films, like the ‘zoom’, the ‘cut’, the ‘fade-out’, or the ‘angle,’ signify the great impact that his several sojourns to Hollywood and his script-writing career had over the novels. The language of fiction and the language of the film are entirely different in nature, and constructed out of totally different elements: pictorial decor and composition, camera-movement and editing, the use of lighting, sound, silence and color. But certain similarities exist between them. These mainly revolve around the emphasis on action, dialogue, without much attention being given to simple narration. As in a film, the language used by the novelists is both visual and metaphorical, much depending on what is not said or simply conveyed with the help of gestures. Faulkner’s use of experimentation in narrative technique is also aptly expressed in his writings. Besides the reliance on action than on simple narration, sound is another area where similarities between the two art forms are discerned.

SOUND VS. SILENCE

In the film, the use of sound is very significant, especially in the way it relates to the visuals, whether synchronous, asynchronous, contrapuntal or ironic. Similarly, silence in the cinema is used to heighten fear, increase tension, or build suspense. Since sound in the film is essentially an element in the composition of the shot, it adds to the significance of the other elements in the shot – namely, visual material, movements and gestures, lighting and camera angles. When sound is used to convey specific meaning to the spectator – i.e., to express ideological content – it blends with all the other elements in the composition of the shot that serve the same function, so that the sound and the visual image form a perfect unity. From the beginning of his career, William Faulkner created crucial scenes that are often enacted in silence. This reliance on gestures is something borrowed from the cinematic medium. As mentioned earlier, at times mute characters in the fiction appear to pantomime their meaning in much the same way as silent film actors and actresses learned to do. Dialogue is perfunctory and often meaningless, while characters who speak easily are suspect, as are the socially accomplished Mrs. Maurice in Mosquitoes and the ‘erudite’ Januarius Jones in Soldier’s Pay. Perhaps one of the best instances of Faulkner’s use of silence occurs in Pylon:

He began to think now, now, NOW, and it came: the long nebulous swordstroke sweeping steadily up from beyond the other hangar until almost overhead and then accelerating with that illusion of terrific strength and speed which should have left a sound, a swish, behind it but did not.75

Again, in an opposite situation, Faulkner makes use of sound to present wonderfully humorous and sardonic vignettes of ordinary life when it is caught up in extraordinary events. For instance, in Light in August, we find a description of the sheriff’s frustrating use of bloodhounds to pursue Joe, and the different sounds that the dogs make, resembling opera singing, is contrasted with that of ringing church bells, signaling normalcy back in people’s lives.

LIGHT

As in the film, the novelists often use the variations in nuances and moods of his characters through the varied uses of light. As a part of the visual emphasis that has been mentioned earlier, the significance of light is noteworthy in the fiction of major novelists, too. In the film, generally, the director shifts and transposes the lighting tones in the various shots in accordance with variations in the mood of the film. This transposition, moreover, is in itself the instrument for the powerful expression of emotion in the film. For example, in Scarface (1932) by Howard Hawks, the racketeer – the protagonist of the film – dies, alone and deserted in a cheap room in a lodging house, while across the street the lights of an electric sign, hanging over the entrance to a nightclub, go on and off in rapid succession. Similarly, in many of Faulkner’s works, the mention of neon lights is significant. In Sanctuary, Faulkner uses the glittering electric lights of Memphis to convey his vision of the world. In this novel, he anticipates the film noir of the 1940s when he describes rooms illuminated by street signs from outside the window, as if to say that no boundaries exist between the street and the room. Cross-influences, one may remember, are not rare in the arts of the century. In Mosquitoes, Faulkner includes a scene in which an electric sign serves as a signifier of the American Dream, or rather, of the corruption of that Dream. The first and second generation Ginotta family
have built up their small neighbourhood Italian restaurant identities, and their Gatsby-like fulfilment of the American Dream:

That electric-sign with the family name on it had marked a climactic: the phoenix-like rise of the family fortunes from the dun ashes of respectability and a small restaurant catering to Italian working people, to the final and ultimate Americanization of the family, since this fortune, like most American ones, was built on the flouting of a statutory impediment(247).

In his Hollywood-as-Babylon short story, “Golden Land,” a red electric cemetery sign advertises Faulkner’s belief that California is a hell not a heaven. In The Wild Palms, the protagonists Harry Wilbourne and Charlotte Rittenmeyer are moral and spiritual waifs who uproot themselves from their past in the name of love and flee to Chicago determined to find a place for love in the modern Waste Land. In these Chicago scenes, Faulkner applies the symbol of neon lights to imply that his doomed lovers cannot “escape from the world” because they embody it. Thus neon light in August on a hot, Chicago night spotlights Harry and Charlotte glowing in the dark along with all the other urban corpses.

CONCLUSION

Mention must be made of the doubts that have been expressed by certain schools of critics as to whether Faulkner consciously used literary transpositions of cinematic techniques in his fiction. Such criticism points out that writers like Balzac, Flaubert, Hardy and Proust, and many other nineteenth century novelists, were also using many of the cinematic techniques long before the film as an art form had emerged. “Did one really need film, then, to account for the technique of Joyce or, for that matter, of any novelist?” asks Alan Spiegel and draws the conclusion that the later Joyce, Hemingway and Faulkner drew upon the nineteenth century novelists “for their own visualizations”, and that “finally the advent of the cinema itself could come to seem but the final fruition of intellectual tendencies developing in the culture for over half a century.” In a much more radical tone, Ingmar Bergman even declares that “Film Has Nothing To Do With Literature”:

The irrational dimension of a literary work, the germ of its existence, is often untranslatable into visual terms - and it, in turn destroys the special, irrational dimension of the film.78

In Faulkner’s case it must be reiterated that the concept of the ‘ideal’ cinema is reflected in his greatest novels and stories but only surfaces occasionally in the films he helped to write. At his best, Faulkner was thinking not in terms of movies but in tropes that are most convincingly explicated in cinematic terms. Ideally speaking, the term ‘cinema’ appeals to an archetype of kinetic and visual presentation and to modernist aesthetics, whose fundamental expression is found in the use of montage. Faulkner’s own need for Hollywood money, and his apparent lack of conviction that film was a major art, resulted in his desultory remarks about Hollywood and the motion-picture industry. Yet, interestingly enough, the nature of film clearly influenced his experimental fiction in a variety of ways, so much so that his novels have been an important influence on a lot of filmmakers, especially among the Europeans.

Long before movies got to be everything they were going to be, many writers and critics were quick to perceive that the techniques of the new art form would ultimately help to transform the older art forms. Leo Tolstoy had insisted at great length upon how the new areas of narrative technique opened up by the advent of film. His observation, made as early as 1908, seems equally applicable to the fiction writers under consideration:

You will see that this little clicking contraption with the revolving handle will make a revolution in our life – in the life of writers. It is a direct attack on the old methods of literary art. We shall have to adapt ourselves to the shadowy screen and to the cold machine. A new form of writing will be necessary. I have thought of that and I can feel what is coming. But I rather like it. This swift change of scene, this blending of emotion and experience – it is much better than the heavy, long-drawn-out kind of writing to which we are accustomed. It is close to life. In life, too, changes and transitions flash by
It is natural to conclude, then, that in resorting to the techniques used by the cinema, the twentieth century writers were bringing their fiction closer to the movies. Their narrative art of balancing the subjective and the objective developed as an analogue to the photographic art forms, but never in conscious imitation of them. Though they may not have self-consciously demonstrated their indebtedness to the movie camera as did some of their contemporaries like Aldous Huxley, John Dos Passos, Graham Greene, Alain Robbe-Grillet and others, it is clear that in their narrative technique, Faulkner was overwhelmingly influenced by the cinema. For Faulkner and Fitzgerald, this emphasis is even more symbolic since they actually participated in script writing for the movies. Though they do not define themselves as cultural hybrids - both as men of letters and as filmmakers - operating within each medium as did Norman Mailer, Robbe-Grillet, Susan Sontag and others, yet there is no doubt about the cinematic influence in their fiction. It may be countered that while we cannot claim that the novelists of the twentieth century, especially in America, learnt the multiple uses of the ‘ellipsis’ or absolute objective narration from the movies, we can surely say that in an age when the interdisciplinary study of the arts is encouraged, we can at least use the film as an avenue of approach to elucidate, appreciate and evaluate the fiction-writers’ oeuvre, recalling E.M. Forster’s observation that “the more the arts develop the more they depend on each other for definition”.

NOTES AND REFERENCES


10 Robert Humphrey, for example, makes a lengthy case for analysing the exposition of Mrs. Dalloway as if it were a “roving camera”. Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel. 58.


12 Rococo to Cubism in Art and Literature. 285.


22 Ibid. 35. Letter to Alfred Le Poilteven.

23 Henry James, The Notebooks of Henry James, ed, Matthissen and Murdock. 369.


26 William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury. 24. All further quotes from the text are noted in parenthesis


*Faulkner in the University*, eds. Gwynn and Blotner, 273-74.

*Lion in the Garden*, 131.


*Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, 215.


*Lion In the Garden: Interviews With William Faulkner*, 246.

63 *Lion in the Garden*, 147.


67 *Sanctuary*. All further quotes from this novel in parenthesis.


69 William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*. All further quotes noted in parenthesis.


75 *Pylon*. 247.


77 *Fiction and the Camera Eye*. xi-xii

