

ROLAND DESCHAIN, QUENTIN COMPSON, AND
THE OVERLOOK: COMPARING WILLIAM
FAULKNER TO STEPHEN KING

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for Departmental Honors
in the Department of Writing
Texas Christian University
Fort Worth, TX

May 3, 2013

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INTRODUCTION

Stephen King and William Faulkner are in many ways as dissimilar as two authors can be. King focuses on the grotesque and macabre, while Faulkner shifts his attention to realism and historicity. In a more specific example, King recognizes women as rounded, full-bodied characters and portrays them as such, while Faulkner uses women as two halves of a dichotomous duality—on the one hand, the Southern belle, thrust onto a chaste pedestal of innocence in a society composed of gyneolatric men; and on the other hand the harlot, existing only to serve man, deposed of the purity that once served as her status symbol and relegated to the most base form of cruelty. Whereas King moves in and out of dimensions in time and space, Faulkner stays fully ensconced in the culture in which he is writing, going more for depth than King's relative breadth of characters. However, despite these marked differences in approach and execution, the two authors share striking similarities in other aspects of their work. Indeed, King has said on multiple occasions that Faulkner is a favorite novelist of his, and Faulkner's influence shines through in several aspects of King's canon.

Through the utilization of stream-of-consciousness narrative, the respective geocentricities of Yoknapatawpha County and Maine, and the recurrence of different characters in separate novels, Stephen King and William Faulkner piece together their separate visions of the plagues of the world in which they live, and in doing so highlight the humanity of the individual characters within the skewed and corrupt collectives in which their authors place them. Some canonical works of Faulkner's included in this comparison include *The Sound and the Fury*, *Light in August*, *Sanctuary*, *Absalom, Absalom!*, and *Go Down, Moses*; the works of King's that will be examined include but

are not limited to *The Stand*, *IT*, *The Shining*, *Hearts in Atlantis*, and the *Dark Tower* series.

Influence and Quasi-Conflation

Faulkner and King had been destined to dance with each other in a literary sense since their geneses. Though each has a definitive and starkly different lens through which to view their narratives, both have remarkably similar upbringings, life events, and literary foci. To begin the comparison of their respective works and methods, it is only fitting to contextualize their writings through observing their lives' similarities and dissimilarities.

Faulkner, born William Cuthbert Falkner in 1897, was named after his great-grandfather, a former Civil War colonel who had met his end eight years previously as the loser of a Mississippi duel with an earlier business partner (Padgett, par. 2). Moving to Oxford at the age of five with the rest of his family, he grew to demonstrate an early affinity for poetry and the dramatic arts (par. 3-4). Later, in 1919, he attempted to enlist in the United States Air Force but was rejected due to his height (a relatively short 5 feet, 6 inches); this led him to apply for the Royal Canadian Air Force—and thereby brought about the changed spelling of his last name in an attempt to appear more British (par. 8). After receiving an honorable discharge, he returned to Oxford, enrolled in Ole Miss for three semesters, and after being published several times in the college's newspaper quit to focus on his writing (par. 11).

Stephen Edwin King, on the other hand, was born in Maine precisely fifty years after Faulkner's birth, with a middle name taken from his father. Though he spent many years of his childhood in the general New England area, at the age of eleven he moved

back to the city of Durham in Maine (T. King, par. 1). Graduating from high school in 1966, King then attended the Orono campus of the University of Maine, and beginning his sophomore year of college wrote a weekly column for his campus newspaper as well (par. 2). John Gatta, in an essay, says of the relationship between the two: “William Faulkner has remained one of King’s favorite novelists from his days as an undergraduate” (par. 7). After graduating with a bachelor’s degree in English in 1970, he qualified to teach at the high school level but almost simultaneously was summarily rejected by a draft board on account of “high blood pressure, limited vision, flat feet, and punctured eardrums” (T. King par. 2). A mere three years after his graduation, Doubleday & Company picked up King’s debut novel, *Carrie*; shortly afterward he was able to focus entirely on writing (par. 6).

Both Faulkner and King were able to overcome physical detriments that denied them a military position and hone their craft in their campus newspapers until their writing abilities were able to support them as a reasonable source of income. Both had childhoods that were geographically in flux, at least for a short time, and both take portions of their names from their paternal ancestries. However, the similarities of these two wordsmiths reach far beyond cursory biographical parallelisms; indeed, their devices and praxes are also stunningly coincident.

STREAM-OF-CONSCIOUSNESS NARRATIVE: THOUGHTS UNCHAINED

Stream-of-consciousness narrative plays a key role in both Faulkner and King: through both authors’ prolonged and repeated usage of subconscious-driven, grammar-and-syntax-free passages, one is able to glean valuable insights into the inner machinations and frazzled, stretched psyches of the portrayed character. Not only is this a

reality, but the differences in the ways Faulkner and King choose to display this totality of thought also provide a distinct, author-specific flair to each work. King keeps his streams of consciousness to small, digestible paragraphs, whereas Faulkner uses the same methodology in extended passages as a way to pursue larger parts of the narrative. However, both use it ultimately for the same purpose of a pseudo-psychological “magnet,” a device that instantly induces empathy in the reader and provides a keyhole through which the character’s paradigm can be viewed in the most intimate way possible—through the thoughts of the characters as they occur to them. This can be explained using two relatively small excerpts from both authors, using both as representative of their writing styles as wholes—analyzing both synecdochic passages in the knowledge that these incidences are true for more than the portion of the author’s work that is being utilized: that they are indicative of a psychologically precise pattern within each author’s respective canon.

King’s Structured Chaos

A key example of the difference between Faulkner and King in this regard is found in the opening of King’s *The Shining*, in which Danny Torrance internalizes his mental abilities into a nebulous foreshadowing of the horror that is to come later in the work:

Crash. Crash. Crash. Splintering wood. A bellow of rage and satisfaction.
 REDRUM. Coming. Drifting across the room. Pictures torn off the walls.
 A record player (?Mommy’s record player?) overturned on the floor . . .
 No oh no oh no—(oh please Tony, you’re scaring me) REDRUM
 REDRUM REDRUM (stop it Tony stop it) Fading. (47-48)

King's use of fragmentation and repetition and his omission of punctuation in the above passage are key factors in noting Danny's dual nature. In those few sentences he is able to deftly introduce Danny's fractal mindset, moving from A to B to C in mere moments. At the same time, the fragmented sentences give pause to the events unfolding rather than letting them meld together. The repetitious "Crash. Crash. Crash" implies a rhythm and spacing between each destructive incidence; this contrasts sharply with the fluidity, osmotic permeability, and frenzy of "REDRUM" that continues throughout the novel. Also of equal weight is the use of the pre-emptive question mark in "(?Mommy's record player?)," symbolic of the intrinsically questioning nature of the thought itself. King knows that his character has a question, but more importantly the mind of the character forms the feeling of questioning before the thought is finally realized. In these myriad and interconnected authorial touches, the reader is able to more fully understand the psychology of Danny Torrance, delineate the events to come as Danny sees them, and empathize with the character in his state of panic.

Faulkner's Osmotic Flow

Faulkner, on the other hand, uses stream-of-consciousness narrative in what many consider to be his magnum opus, *The Sound and the Fury*, as the main fulcrum behind the narrative of the neurotic, addled Quentin Compson. Perhaps the most evocative moment in regards to stream-of-consciousness narration in Faulkner is Quentin's final internal soliloquy, raging at himself and the world, while at the same time recounting his confrontation with his father, the patriarch of his family acting surprisingly aloof in response to the younger Compson's admittance of suicidal tendencies and incest:

i could hear whispers secret surges smell the beating of hot blood under wild unsecret flesh watching against red eyelids the swine untethered in pairs rushing coupled into the sea and he we must just stay awake and see evil done for a little while its not always and i it doesn't even have to be that long for a man of courage and he do you consider that courage and i yes sir don't you and he every man is the arbiter of his own virtues whether or not you consider it courageous is of more importance than the act itself than any act otherwise you could not be in earnest. (176)

Faulkner chooses to eschew entirely the rules of grammar, sentence structure, and punctuation in preference of a more fluid narration; he sees the dialogue's natural timely flow as of more importance than the rules that govern the language he wields. Quentin Compson's flashback to the conversation between himself and Father Compson needs no punctuation and sees no necessity for structure. It simply happens in the mind, and the speaker shifts with the changing of pronouns with a dexterity as aqueous as Quentin's thought process. The use of "he" and "i" to denote changes in speaker denotes that Quentin and his father are not nearly as important as the dialogue they pursue in this instance. While Quentin prefaces his speech with a vague, yet brutal outlining of his rage, his mind is so panicked and frenetic that he moves from one speaker to another and from one concept to another in rapid, unannounced bursts of thought. Also of note is Quentin's use of litotes, in the strangely negative diction of "unsecret"—affording the reader to note that Quentin doesn't see things for what they are, but rather for what they lack. His sister has become impure, the object of her affections, Dalton Ames, has acted in a decidedly ungentlemanly fashion, and soon Quentin will be "unalive" and thereby freed from the

constraints of his mortality. Faulkner also weaves in a Biblical allusion (“the swine untethered in pairs rushing coupled into the sea”) and—through this means—allows the reader to sense the importance of Christianity to the lifestyle of not just Quentin, but the whole of the postbellum Deep South. Faulkner draws Quentin Compson as a complex, brilliant, and deeply troubled individual whose sole wish is to turn back time and see his sister’s honor (and thereby his family’s reputation) restored to its former glory; using stream-of-consciousness gives the reader the ability to live in Quentin’s state of panic and feel his boiling rage against the vicissitudes of fate.

REDRUM and He and I

However, Faulkner and King both are similar in their writing styles in these isolated internal moments of their nascent male characters. King and Faulkner both appeal to the senses to begin their streams of consciousness—King’s onomatopoeia as opposed to Faulkner’s evocation of smell, sound, and touch—and both rely entirely on portions of the scene to portray the whole in a sort of novelistic synecdoche, though in entirely opposite fashions: King uses image without sound, and Faulkner uses sound without image. Each scene portrays a pivotal moment in the narratives of the characters, and yet each character’s maturity level is portrayed in the diction and style of their consciousness. Whereas Danny Torrance’s short, choppy sentences and gerund-driven sentences indicate a more childlike paradigm, Quentin’s fluidity and eloquence indicate a more mature, though still in many aspects naïve, narrator. Yet it is also relevant to note the function of each in the context of the work. King’s narrative choices bring into sharp immediacy the reality of the horror facing the Torrance family, and Faulkner gives the reader an opportunity to intimately understand the dysfunction of the Compson family

from an insider's perspective. Another point to be taken into consideration is that the styles of King's streams of consciousness vary in their permeability and style in the rest of his novels. Danny's more fluid and momentous thought-speech is provided on a more grandiose level in the character of Carrie White in King's eponymous novel (in that Carrie's supernatural abilities allow her thoughts to be projected into the minds of others and not in the Faulknerian sense of extended, solely stream-of-consciousness narrative) which can be easily paralleled to Faulkner's styling. Antipodally, Benjy Compson in *The Sound and the Fury* has a choppy, less connected thought-stream in his narrative, separated by milestone events and paying no mind to the actual passage of time, which bears a resemblance to King's flavoring.

Finally, King and Faulkner show the motive behind the actions of their characters—Danny's trepidation to enter the Overlook Hotel later in the novel, and Quentin's obsession with water, courage, and the human perspective are both brought into relief by the inclusion of these stream-of-consciousness narratives. Without this crucial perspicacity into both Torrance and Compson, the narration would not resonate with nearly the empathic response gleaned from the reader. In viewing the innermost processes of a character, readers are drawn to create parallels between themselves and said character. Stream-of-consciousness narrative is part of why we care so deeply for Danny's fate at the hands of his father, and why we root for Quentin against himself and his circumstance: not only do we not wish to see a child die nor a sister's honor impugned, we know these characters so intimately through their thoughts that in a way, it would be like viewing the death of a portion of the self, like seeing one's own child die or one's own sister deflowered. King and Faulkner are both keenly aware of the power of

stream-of-consciousness narrative and therefore are able to brandish it with a delicacy that only feels necessary, rather than ham-fisted or forced.

GEOCENTRICITY: IMPLOSION IN LOCUS

In addition to the use of analogous—yet divergent—writing styles, William Faulkner and Stephen King each have a nexus to which their characters and settings are repeatedly drawn. Faulkner, in the course of his writing, created his fictional Yoknapatawpha County in Mississippi, and King elected to settle in his home state of Maine, creating three towns of his own: Derry, Castle Rock, and Jerusalem’s Lot. A distinction to make from Faulkner is that King does not limit himself to the towns and hamlets of his own making to the Faulknerian extent; rather, he uses them as parts of the general geography of Maine, while almost eighty percent of Faulkner’s stories and novels are set in his county, and more specifically the city of Jefferson. The use of a repeated geographic simulacrum is incredibly implicative for an author—choosing to focus on a single place says much about the author himself and at the same time allows for less flexibility in one’s narratives. However, if one has enough material from only one microcosm, as Faulkner and King both seem to have, one is able to create a lush, multilayered authorial universe wherein the town and the collective that it makes apparent is as much a character as the people in it. Also of note is the importance that both King and Faulkner place on the formative years (i.e., childhood) and their effect along with a centralized location upon a character’s psyche.

Stephen King’s *IT* is perhaps the best-known—and best-documented—example of this “recursive locus” stratagem in his canon. Over the course of the novel, six childhood friends are brought back to their hometown of Derry, ME, to do battle with the evil that

they encountered there in the throes of their childhood. Before delving into the Derry hub and juxtaposing it against Faulkner's Mississippi, the uses of childhood in King's and Faulkner's work, and specifically how it shapes the characters' reactions to location, should be examined.

Childhood in King vs. Faulkner

Stephen King's childhood was just as painful as some of the characters in his and Faulkner's work—due in no small part to issues of abandonment with his father. According to an interview with noted author Neil Gaiman, Donald Edwin King “went out for cigarettes when King was four, and he never came back, leaving King to be brought up by his mother” (par. 37). For this reason, much of King's work is focused on childhood. Jonathan P. Davis elaborates in his essay:

This preoccupation with youth in his fiction becomes both significant and inspirational when seen from the light that King is writing in an America that attempts to desensitize its young by exposing it continuously to violence and sex in both the entertainment and news media, *forcing it to mature at too early an age* (par. 1; emphasis mine)

Faulkner's canonical children mature before their time as well: Joe Christmas, after eating toothpaste at the age of five in *Light in August*, develops a loathing for any and all expressions of sexuality. Rather than desensitized, he becomes hypersensitive, which make sense in its chronological context in that Faulkner was writing in an age wherein sex was far more of a taboo than in the modernist era. Jason Compson IV, in *The Sound and the Fury*, has to grow up rather quickly to become the father figure to his younger siblings and niece, stunting his developmental growth and instilling a deep misogyny. In

Sanctuary, Temple Drake's childhood and adulthood are separated by her rape at the hands of Popeye, but she takes that sexual baton and sets off at a full sprint by becoming a prostitute in Memphis. And Isaac McCaslin in a sense will always be that teenage woodsman shooting his first buck in "The Old People."

Conversely, the child character of King's who matures (indeed, is forced to mature) at the fastest pace is Jake Chambers, of the *Dark Tower* series. After his exposure to countless acts of horrible, albeit necessary, violence, he becomes a fierce warrior—a 'gunslinger' in his own right—and yet is able to mature enough to accept his own death, *three times*. King is able to display the darkest possible outcome of the violence-based desensitization of children by showing us a child's iterating death. A character from each of the respective authors endures a similar situation, as outlined by Davis:

Faulkner's Sarty [Snopes, of "Barn Burning"] comes of age when he turns in his father for having burned a neighbor's farm after Sarty had repressed the truth of his father's evil acts for many years; in a similar situation, King's Danny Torrance (*The Shining*) confronts his father after deciding he is too enveloped in his own selfishly evil impulses to save himself.

(par. 42)

And in perhaps the most blatant example of rapid maturity, King's novella *The Body* concerns itself with four young boys searching for a corpse—looking for death outright, instead of solely being exposed to it—and their coming of age along the way.

Clearly, formative years are prevalent in the books of both Faulkner and King, but questions still remain. What weight might all of this focus on childhood and maturity

have in both novelists' work? Why would this shape their characters' attitudes about their location? And most importantly, why would the authors choose to repeatedly use this setting?

Development and Location: The Intractable Knot

Faulkner and King seem to vaguely know that life events become inextricable from the location in which one is placed during said event—an especially mild form of associative regression—and due to this, the area in which one was a child takes on a semi-mystical quality, bleeding nostalgia and imagination into a mirific synthesis of fact and fiction. Because characters grew up and experienced formative years in a certain place, their latent emotions in those formative years become more tangible in their older iteration. It should already have been clear that Faulkner's and King's actual childhood homes became the progenitors for their fictional towns, and thus both authors are able to recreate the experience of a New England or Southern town with relative accuracy. The "character" of their location morphs into a sort of terministic screen, by which the actions of the characters are determined. The authors'—and human characters'—childhoods become part of their adulthoods, and they are able to merge their past and their present while separating the fact from the fiction. The inability to synthesize the entirety of her experience is partially why Temple Drake adjusts to adulthood so poorly—she changes location from Jackson's childhood association to the entirely adult, crime-ridden Memphis and is unable to continue being an adult in the place that she has always associated with her childhood. This is also indicative of the boys' journey in *The Body*, Jake Chambers' growth, and Isaac McCaslin's progress through his years—all of them start out in one space developmentally and geographically, and by the end of their

narrative they are in a different locale or have changed location at least once over the course of their narrative.

But the law of reciprocity is still in effect. The rules that govern the growth of characters are in play just as often in Joe Christmas's perpetual state of developmental limbo and Jason Compson's dark, destructive *puer aeternus* complex. Location becomes central to these characters' development and maturing—staying static in the canon of Faulkner and King implies a constant retention of the emotional and developmental state which one possesses at the inception of their stagnation at that area; consider it a Purgatory of adolescence, where one must grow up in order to grow out.

However, when a character starts and ends a narrative in the same location, that does not necessarily imply developmental stagnation. That is why the idea of geocentricity in King's and Faulkner's fiction is so important. Because the characters go away, they must come back as different from their earlier selves yet able to synthesize their past and present lives, the entirety of their experiences as parts of a whole. This principle is precisely why the six main characters in *IT* work so well—while as adults they regress to childlike tendencies, as evidenced by the resurgence of Bill's stutter and the use of Richie's impressions as a weapon, they are still able to vanquish the nightmare and return to a semblance of their normal adult lives.

“Like a Terrible Fish”: Reflection and Comprisal

The recursive loci of Yoknapatawpha County and the Derry/Jerusalem's Lot/Castle Rock trine are also indicative of Faulkner and King's view of their immediate surroundings as indicative of a much larger whole—of the entirety of America. Indeed, Tony Magistrale, in an essay, says of Stephen King that he “perhaps best approximates

William Faulkner's bifurcated vision of the regional merging into the transcendent" (par. 4). Both authors create a dense history of their fictional settings in order to give the reader a sense of familiarity, of synthesis—if Yoknapatawpha and Maine are functioning as epicenters for these characters, it can just as easily be argued that their repeated implementation implies an authorial desire to expand a created universe for the sake of deepening the impact of their message. Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Light in August* would have had a respectable amount of resonance were they completely isolated from each other, but as they both revolve around the Southern censure of miscegenation and are both set in Yoknapatawpha, Faulkner creates a greater impact in the collective American psyche by folding the injustices of *Absalom, Absalom!* over the continued vigilantism and inherent racism in *Light in August*. Similarly, King's Derry—also the setting of *Insomnia*—provides a transcendent microcosm through the layering of evil act upon evil act, through the repeated reinforcement of Derry as unsettling, as strangely and uneasily alive. The cohesion created by King and Faulkner in these nexuses evokes a more profound understanding of their microcosms and—through that understanding—provides the reader with a mirror, a reflection of their most unspoken prejudices and fears.

It is through *IT*, *Light in August*, and *Sanctuary*, though, that the idea of town (and thereby society) as character becomes most fully fleshed. In *IT*, the characters become aware of IT's power over Derry—going so far as to equate the existence of IT with the lifeblood of the town. *Light in August* implies a vindictive Foucauldian *panopticon*, in which every citizen is both watching and watched, governed by strict religious morality. And finally, *Sanctuary* shows the triumph of society in Horace Benbow's shame and

Popeye's subsequent execution; at the same time, it highlights corruption and reputation instead of that aforementioned morality as disgusting (yet entirely normalized) motivators in the Yoknapatawpha justice system—displaying the cracks in the genteel Southern veneer of Mississippi. This leads to the conclusion that both Yoknapatawpha's and Derry's operations are governed by an abstraction, and both collectives act as fallibly and distortedly as the individuals that comprise them. This makes King's Maine and Faulkner's county that much more compelling as microcosms through which to expand single universes—it is equal parts character study and local familiarity, equally concerning the faceless majority as the space they inhabit.

RECURRENCE OF CHARACTER: WE MEET AGAIN

The final major point of conflation between Faulkner and King is their implementation of characters in separate novels. An easy argument to make is that this deepens the interconnectedness of Faulkner's and King's respective canonical works, and indeed that is a partial reality. While the continually reappearing region reinforces the general similarity of their novels and motifs, the reemergence of characters pushes the reader to recall their role in certain events, to relive the history of their existence in the authorial universe, as it were. Both authors use this technique lightly, for the most part: Faulkner implements Ivy League attorney Gavin Stevens in both *Light in August* and *Go Down, Moses* as a supplementary character at best—never a crux of action or advancement of plot. The demonic car in King's *Christine* and Dick Hallorann from *The Shining* both reappear in *IT*, but they are simple nods to the greater myth (Gatta par. 7). These delicate touches of character recurrence are Faulkner's and King's acknowledgement of the greater universe they have constructed through the rest of their

novels and a more intimate view of the geographic epicenter—through the inclusion of specific people, they are able to create an interwoven history, a link between novels that helps weave the overarching narrative of their bodies of work. For Faulkner, that narrative is a traditional history of Yoknapatawpha as a metaphor for the entirety of the Deep South, but King’s body of work all revolves around the defeat of evil in its many manifestations, whether it is made apparent as an abstraction or a physical being. Over the course of discussing the smattering of people that occur and reoccur in King and Faulkner, the authorial motifs of persecuted minorities and antiheroes as character archetypes will also be considered.

The Shape-shifter and the Southern Autumn

Both authors have exceptions to their impressionistic brushstroke norm, and their tendency to link chronologies and places to single, keystone characters or families reflects upon their desire to deepen the worlds they chronicle, to create backgrounds and untold stories in the mythos of their canons. But they are also largely representative of their authors’ general view of antagonism. The nebulosity and seemingly unspoken omnipresence of both Colonel John Sartoris and Randall Flagg displays an abstract quality, a manifestation of the concepts of evil or prejudices as ideas and therefore impossible to completely eradicate.

Faulkner’s Colonel John Sartoris appears in several novels and short stories of Faulkner’s as the patriarch of one of Yoknapatawpha County’s most preeminent families, and his progeny go on to factor heavily into Jefferson’s history. Most of these mentions are only in passing—he takes the role of mayor and benefactor to Emily Grierson in “A Rose for Emily,” kills Joanna Burden’s grandfather in *Light in August*, and raises

Confederate soldiers alongside Thomas Sutpen in *Absalom, Absalom!*. Joseph Blotner remarks that Faulkner “drew upon his own family, especially Colonel William C. Faulkner [sic], in the creation of Colonel John Sartoris and his troubled descendants” (par. 1). This is telling of Faulkner’s ideology and accuracy—basing characters on his own family ensured an accurate representation of Southern life. And in viewing the Sartoris family, from Colonel John to Narcissa Benbow, we find the same sense of antebellum gentility, of a level of nostalgia similar to Gail Hightower’s final scene in *Light in August*.

The Sartoris family, headed by the old Colonel, is entirely representative of the old world, aggressively race-based, entitled paradigm that Faulkner so often condemns in his work. Colonel Sartoris’s appearance in “A Rose for Emily” was no mere inclusion for the sake of inclusion—rather, it was to represent him as analogous to Miss Emily, as resistant to change and the progression of time, at least mentally. And his murder-by-duel (the exact cause of death of Faulkner’s namesake) in *The Unvanquished* was symbolic as well—a metaphor for Faulkner’s hope for the death of pre-war values and mindsets. Blotner points out that Faulkner detailed the fall of the Sartoris family and the rise of their rivals—the Snopes—as metaphors for a constantly progressing social change (par. 9). Colonel Sartoris’s recursion serves to portray him as this figurehead, as a scapegoat for the sins and social constructs of the past.

King, however, uses the chameleonic, morphic Randall Flagg as a purely evil character. First appearing as the main antagonist in *The Stand*, Flagg pops up in several other works, including *Hearts in Atlantis*, albeit quite cursorily in the latter—in fact, appearing under the almost completely different name of Raymond Fiegler (serving this

time as the leader of a rogue student activist group) (*Hearts* 585). Flagg acts as main antagonist in *The Stand*, appearing first as a creature of nightmare—indeed, described as having “no soul, but a sense of humor. There was that; a kind of dancing, lunatic glee” (236). Subjecting his disloyal subjects to such tortures up to and even including crucifixion, he embodies evil to the point of representing—and acting with the same methodology as—Satan himself. In a more microcosmic appearance, it can easily be argued that Flagg appears as Leland Gaunt in *Needful Things*, gleaning much of the mannerisms and verbal predilections of Flagg, while manipulating people in much the same fashion that Flagg did in *The Stand*.

In the *Dark Tower* series, Flagg is portrayed as one of the primary antagonists to Roland Deschain, attempting to thwart the gunslinger on his quest to the Dark Tower and apotheosize. The recurrence of Flagg as a minion and manifestation of purest evil is similar to Faulkner’s Sartoris but on a much more malevolent scale in that Flagg has an incredibly vague back-story: no one seems to know from whence he came. That solidifies Flagg as representative of an abstraction—and therefore, he can be considered as even more powerful of an antagonist than the evil Crimson King himself, due to the series’ Nietzschean, recursive ending. This is telling: considering that the “low men” in the first section of *Hearts in Atlantis* say, “all things serve the King” (283). However, the recursion also leads us to believe in the fulfillment of a theme of Stephen King’s: that, no matter how bleak or horrible the world may be, good will ultimately conquer evil—if only temporarily. It’s a theme repeated in *IT*, in *The Stand*, and it seems to be the entire point of the *Dark Tower* series. Flagg serves as an ambiguity, a concrete stand-in for the idea of unadulterated evil in many of its forms.

However, these recursions (of Sartoris and Flagg) are not the only things that return, time and time again, in the works of Faulkner and King. Character archetypes seem to pervade much of both of their works, both on an individual basis and a collective one, although the collective is marginalized to timely controversial minority groups.

One Drop in the Ocean: Persecuted Minorities and Anti-Heroes

The antihero is perhaps the most easily identifiable motif in Faulkner's and King's works. Joe Christmas and Rider (of "Pantaloon in Black") are prime examples in Faulkner's work, while King makes use of the archetype with Roland Deschain, Johnny Smith (from *The Dead Zone*), and Barton George Dawes (in a more obscure novel from King's "Richard Bachmann" collection, *Roadwork*). The use of a flawed hero, one even outright morally wrong at times, is particularly interesting when juxtaposed against the minority complex of which both authors are also quite fond. But whereas Faulkner uses race-based caste segregation, King—in his more modern chronological setting—focuses on sexual orientation. In any case, their highlighting of the moral grey areas of a more civilized society serves to juxtapose itself against man's brutality, while at the same time giving the reader a common lynchpin in the cognizance of continued injustice.

Joe Christmas: murderer, fugitive—and protagonist. We as readers are given access to his backstory, but, even knowing his circumstance, the actions he undertakes should make it nearly impossible to root for him at all. He beats women regularly, destroys property, kills a lover, escapes from jail—and yet, because he has been treated so unjustly by the corrupt, racist society of Yoknapatawpha County, he finds redemption in the eyes of the reader with a thoroughly Messianic death—sacrificing himself for the warped ideals of the society that so rudely snubbed him. His mixed-race ancestry, to the

people surrounding him, justifies his lifelong relegation to the dustbin of their affection. With his continued ostracism and alienation—themes focused upon quite heavily in Faulkner—Joe Christmas finds it simpler to rage against the society that finds fault with him rather than to suffer like others with similar racial composition. Rider lives in a similar vein: his drunkenness and murder of Birdsong are incredibly empathetic actions for the reader due to their knowledge of his wife's recent death. Knowing that his anger and grief control his actions is enough to put him in a category of objectively-morally-wrong, subjectively-morally-fine. Both Joe Christmas and Rider simply want to live in happiness, but are bogged down by their contexts and choose violence while still retaining good intentions.

Nowhere in King would we find a more stereotypical antihero than the gunslinger, Roland Deschain. Embarking upon killing sprees more often than not, Roland is rightly justified in his violence. His goal of reaching the Dark Tower and deposing the Crimson King is a weighty endeavor indeed; to fail would be to bring about the end of the Universe itself. In the first book of the series, he is so incredibly violent and depraved that a preacher refers to him as “the Interloper”; however, he solely wishes to keep the *ka* of the Universe intact. His intentions are good, but he must sometimes dip into a morally grey territory in order to achieve his ends. Johnny Smith has a similar goal—his precognition enables him to see that Presidential candidate Greg Stillson would bring about worldwide nuclear war as the leader of the free world and thus conspires to kill him. While Stillson is no more admirable—animal abuse and blackmail being two of his more reprehensible actions in the plot—it becomes quite difficult to support an assassination attempt on a candidate for the Presidency, and yet the reader knows the

outcome, should Smith fail, and by that token hopes for his success. In a sense, Johnny is a Roland Deschain for the real world. And finally the antihero beyond antiheroes, Barton George Dawes—while going completely insane and buying all manner of destructive weaponry, the reader is aware that this is a man in the throes of grief. Unable to extricate his home from the memories of his recently deceased son, and finding himself jobless, spouseless, and imminently homeless due to a highway extension project, Dawes’s mind quickly spirals downward—and yet, because we as readers understand his motivation, we are hopeful for something to go better for him: for anything, really, regardless of what it is, which turns out to be his suicide and the destruction of his house.

Christmas, Deschain, and Smith are easily paralleled, while Rider and Dawes are similarly interconnected in the motivation behind their actions. All of these characters are deeply flawed, and in some cases literally insane, but their role as protagonist is unquestioned; their morality, while unstable at best and completely objectionable at worst, is always put into a more sympathetic light by their circumstances. It’s a Nietzschean principle of the individual against the tribe, of the civilized man living in a circumstance so outside society that he transcends that collective in his individuality. Faulkner and King know of the pressure society places upon their heroes, as well as the pressure upon the outcasts of that same society. Indeed, the outcasts were some of the closer figures in both Faulkner and King’s life.

In a Faulknerian universe, it’s safe to say that if a character identifies as anything other than Caucasian, he or she is set up for a horrible life, either in slavery or complete isolation. Faulkner’s black childhood maid, housekeeper, and nanny, “Mammie Callie,” was more likely than not the catalyst for his more progressive attitude regarding race, and

his closeness with her is made apparent by his naming of characters in different ethnic groups. Non-white characters are given individual weight by Faulkner as a way of humanizing them—Dilsey (*The Sound and the Fury*), Charles Bon (*Absalom, Absalom!*), and Sam Fathers (*Go Down, Moses*) are only a few examples—but at the same time the society of Yoknapatawpha County refuses to allow them to live at the Caucasian standard. Faulkner implicitly defines race and racism as the primary conflict of modern America: non-whites are a group set apart, made to live in a separate world. The reader recognizes that perpetual injustice throughout his work as the primary compass for their morality. John Jeremiah Sullivan, in an article for the *New York Times*, says that with race in his novels, Faulkner attempted “to dramatize historical consciousness itself, not just human lives but the forest of time in which the whole notion of human life must find its only meaning” (par. 25). The turnstile of race, around which moral conflict revolves in Faulkner, is that of a persecuted minority—one that in some cases is persecuted even today.

King is less one-track in his moral conflict, meaning that the LGBTQ community does not inhabit every novel of his, nor does he place it at the forefront of any novel. However, the instances in which he uses gay or lesbian characters do place them at odds with the heterosexual community and thereby make them a persecuted minority in their own right. Adrian Mellon and Don Haggarty, at the beginning of *IT*, encountered deadly homophobia, and the lesbian couple in *The Stand*, Dayna Jurgens and Susan Stern, is seen as “different,” whether through the implication of the narration or the characters surrounding them. In the King universe, it is hard to find a group of characters more persecuted than those characters with aberrant sexualities. King is well versed in LGBTQ

culture, as his daughter, Naomi, is gay herself. His utilization of their plight in a modern context paints them as a minority group similar to blacks in Faulkner and pits them at odds with a heteronormative society.

Characters and character types recur often and with varying degrees of success in the universes of Faulkner and King; whether they serve to expand a universe or cause a reader to question the morality of their own society, they maintain an importance in both novelists' canon. Randall Flagg and Colonel Sartoris play pivotal roles as osmotic villains, figures that transcend their corporeality—one metaphorically, the other quite literally—to provide an antithesis to the hero's quest, no matter how flawed, and the antiheroes of both authors' work also call upon morally ambiguous methodologies to attain their desires.

CONCLUSION

The respective bodies of work of Stephen King and William Faulkner have vastly different subject matter; comparing the grotesquerie of King to the sublimity of Faulkner has proved itself a task both daunting and exhilarating. However, in viewing these authors through the same lens, it has become apparent that the two share similar predilections. Faulkner's influence upon King is blatantly obvious when reading his writing—one immediately notices the geocentric locale of Maine and can almost instinctively parallel Derry to Jefferson, New England representing the Northern equivalent of Yoknapatawpha. In reading Faulkner's stream-of-consciousness narratives, an avid King reader would be able to spot certain qualities of writing that manifest itself in King's work. And the recursion of characters in both novelists' books and short stories calls into focus the universe that both authors have been tirelessly expanding throughout

their careers to express their thoughts about their country's past and its future. Whether modifying their messages through the lens of childhood, questioning the morality of their own protagonists, or utilizing persecuted minority groups to chronicle the attitude of their respective time period, Faulkner and King present different sides of the same coin, showing their "little worlds" as symptomatic of the whole—and thereby transcending their context to become indicative of the American paradigm. Through their work, they create mirrors for their audience to see themselves at their worst, and thus provide said audience with an avenue by which to become their best.

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ABSTRACT

William Faulkner and Stephen King write about different subject matter, but their lives and methodologies are incredibly similar. Through the use of stream-of-consciousness narrative, they show the motivation and inner machinations of their characters. Providing a recursive location, whether it's Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County in Mississippi or King's Derry/Castle Rock/Jerusalem's Lot triad in Maine, informs an author's work with a greater depth. And reappearing characters act as a literary "bookmark" for readers, giving them an overarching narrative through which they are able to see greater themes in the canon. Finally, the authors' respective views of childhood and development, repeated character archetypes, and utilization of persecuted minorities reveal significant affinities in their novels and short stories. Through these devices, Faulkner and King mirror the sociopolitical and psychological landscape of America within the respective eras in which each author lived through their work. They show readers the monsters of society—both fictional and not so fictional—in order to give them a common moral counterweight; pitting their morally grey characters against these manifestations of pure evil allows them to literarily recreate an allegorical America.