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The purpose of this thesis is to examine two of American modernism's more successful authors (and the unconventional pairing of two of their more recognized characters) in an attempt to provide a new regionalist argument for the rejection of socially created local values when those values are transferred across imagined regional lines. Chapter I presents the argument based on research in American regionalism, American modernism, and criticism of the mass market culture that developed at the turn of the twentieth-century.

Chapter II examines William Faulkner's Quentin Compson and his role as a mobile narrative that moves from the South of Faulkner's Mississippi in *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!* to Cambridge, MA through close readings of both novels in conjunction with recent and traditional criticism of both Faulkner and Quentin. Chapter III examines Sinclair Lewis's Martin Arrowsmith and his role as a mobile narrative that represents a group of politicized American values, and the effects of his travels through different regions within the text of *Arrowsmith*.

The result of this thesis will be to expose a critical approach to modern regionalism that has not been effectively used to its fullest potential in literary scholarship of the past.

TRANSFERRING CULTURES ACROSS IMAGINED BORDERS:

A LOOK AT QUENTIN COMPSON AND

MARTIN ARROWSMITH

by

Brian Foster Barbour

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Approved by

____
Committee Chair

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For Dr. Jim Booth

“It was you who broke the new wood,

Now is a time for carving”

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The New Mass Market

In *The 42nd Parallel*, John Dos Passos writes "[t]he twentieth century will be American. American thought will dominate it. American progress will give it color and direction. American deeds will make it illustrious" (3). Through this passage Dos Passos presents a national identity as a unified vision of "America," but was there a truly unified national consciousness that would dominate the twentieth century? Within the first four decades of the century, the US witnessed the birth of a mass market culture through radio, motion pictures, and the automobile, all of which conveyed a new knowledge base that promoted a new national singularity: an American-ness. In response to this newly revised national awareness (and realizing the opportunities that this new culture might provide), many of the Modern artists of the period, according to Mark Morrison, "argued vehemently…in favor of a cultural revolution or renaissance…that would sweep away stifling, empty American conventions and replace them with a truly vibrant indigenous culture" (Morrison 13)[1]. Writers such as Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, and Gertrude Stein

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[1] Daniel Joseph Singal argues that "Modernism should properly be seen as a *culture* – a constellation of related ideas, beliefs, values, and modes of perception – that came into existence during the mid to late nineteenth century, and that has had a powerful influence on art and thought on both sides of the Atlantic since roughly 1900. Modernization, by contrast, denotes a *process* of social and economic development, involving the rise of industry, technology, urbanization, and bureaucratic institutions, that can be traced back as far as the seventeenth century. The relationship between these two important historical phenomena is exceedingly complex, with Modernism arising in part as a counter response to the triumph of modernization, especially its norms of rationally and efficiency, in nineteenth-century Europe and America. "Towards a Definition of American Modernism," *American Quarterly*: 39.1 (1987) 7.

sought the creation of a new art form centered on what Pound called the “mongrel” nature of America: its unique diversity through its evolving population and constant state of flux (Morrison 15). Pound’s Renaissance model, outlined in his “Patria Mia” essay from 1912[2], insisted on a rededication to the arts in America. He complains that the country lacks what he calls “capital” in the arts, and insisted that America was ripe for a re-discovery of literature and poetry. He argued that there was “more artistic impulse in America than in any country in Europe” and regarded America as the “great rich, Western province which has sent one or two notable artists to the Eastern capital…the double city of London and Paris” (Pound 112, 114). He continues by noting America’s reluctance to teach artists true interpretation in various forms of art, and points to the nation’s great architectural achievements as proof that the U.S. was indeed ready for a renaissance that would give American artists their first real stake in western expression. Pound’s model was a vision of a heterogeneous conglomeration of the sub-cultures that made up America, forming a new uniquely American art form that would separate itself from Europe and its artistically rich heritage.

However, while Pound’s goal was to take the numerous styles of American art and combine them into a singular mosaic that would represent the diversity of the culture, the texts of some authors who remained stateside worked to solve the basic question of “what is America?” They explored how local cultures would translate either against the emerging ideal of a homogenous national culture or if the local cultures would survive

[2] In the book *Ezra Pound: Selected Prose*, editor William Cookson notes that the essay originally appeared as installments in *The New Age* between September and November, 1912. Pound would address the idea of a “renaissance” again in 1915 with three more articles for *Poetry* entitled “The Renaissance I: The Palette,” “The Renaissance II,” and “The Renaissance III” from issues 5.5 (227-234), 5.6 (283-287) and 6.2 (84-91) respectively.

the institution of a rapidly developing mass market. As Rita Barnard observes, "it was certainly an age of new technologies and lifestyles, of the automobile, the movies, the flappers, and the cynical 'Lost Generation,' but it was also a time when many Americans tried to turn the clock back from the ideas and the progressive spirit of the pre-war years" as it became "a time when insecurity imposed a certain conformity and…a homegrown idea of 'culture' thrived" (Modern 44)[3]. In his book *Culture as History,* Warren Susman articulates what writers of the period were grappling with as the nation attempted to convert itself from a fragmented group of imagined regions into a single unified entity: "Thus the great fear that runs through much of the writing of the 1920s and 1930s is whether any great industrial and democratic mass society can maintain a significant level of civilization, and whether mass education and mass communication will allow any civilization to survive" (Susman, 107). The anxiety Susman alludes to is rooted in what he describes as a conflict between different "moral orders," noting that "[t]he battle was between rival perceptions of the world, different visions of life" (xx). Adding to this argument, Leigh Anne Duck explains that "[a]nxieties about national culture also became increasingly prominent among policy makers, who feared public ambivalence concerning the nation's structure, values and principles of affiliation" (Duck 55).

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[3] In her book *The Great Depression and the Culture of Abundance: Kenneth Fearing, Nathaniel West, and Mass Culture in the 1930's* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), Barnard also investigates how a mass market blurred the lines of high and low brow art, noting in her introduction that "high culture itself became a kind of mass culture, a prestige commodity offered for wide-scale consumption" (6). She uses works by Fearing and West to further the argument through readings that examine a commercialization of thirties culture that threatened to devalue the social commodity of "high" art as American culture was reinvented in the market place.

The formation of a new middle class[4] born out of the emerging mass market led to this collection of anxieties among policy makers and writers as each group struggled with the problem of rapid cultural change. This new social class was creating its own culture and values as a result of the revolution in communications and what Susman details as the rise of an "Organizational Revolution," which introduced the U.S to the office and office building in larger scales than previously seen before (xxi). Critics and historians also point to the larger mass media markets that came of age during the 1920s, as well as the revamping of older institutions such as newspaper and printing houses which enabled vast amounts of information to be processed and conveyed over greater distances at faster speeds, creating a new avenue for a nationalist movement that could exploit the virtual shrinking of the nation's landscape[5][6].

Individuals from all over the continent were exposed to images and icons in a very limited amount of time as telephone services, movie news, and mass transit had all become reliable, affective ways to convey information over vast spaces. Susman articulates the point more clearly when he invokes the images of Mickey Mouse and Franklin D. Roosevelt and explains "[w]hen I argue that Mickey Mouse may in fact be

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[4] Michael Augspurger notes that this new class consisted of professionals that "promised an escape from traditionally planned society" as "the twentieth century brought an explosion in the size and importance of the professional class" that separated itself ideologically from the smaller professional class of the nineteenth century by organizing themselves into groups that could "wield political and social power." - "Sinclair Lewis' Primers for the Professional Managerial Class: *Babbit, Arrowsmith,* and *Dodsworth*" *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, 34.2 (2001) 73-97.

[5] Along with Susman and Duck see also Susan Hegeman "The Culture of the Middle" *Patterns for America: Modernism and the Concept of Culture*, Princeton University Press, (1999) 126-157 and "Haunted by Mass Culture" *American Literary History* 12.1/2 (2000) 298-317; Michael North "Visual Culture" *The Cambridge Companion to American Modernism* Cambridge University Press, 2005. 177-194; Benedict Anderson "Cultural Roots" *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (1991) 9-36. Each of these examine the effects of a new mass media outlet and mass transportation in relation to the "average" American, and how it changed the way and speed that Americans received the same information on a national scale.

[6] See also Angela Miller "Everywhere and Nowhere: The Making of the National Landscape," *American Literary History*, 4.2 (1992) 207-229 which offers a unique perspective on the development of the idea of the national landscape in art and literature.

more important to an understanding of the 1930's than Franklin Roosevelt, audiences snicker. The shaping of government remains a significant thing, …[b]ut if we want to know how people experienced the world, FDR had his role but so did Mickey Mouse" (Susman 103). This vision of a nation coming closer to itself through a mass media culture induced a reaction from writers of the period who explored traditional sectional cultures which could be threatened by a national progressive movement if it was fully realized. A sense of national urbanization (that would contribute to fulfilling a unification of the nation) appeared detrimental to authors who tended to yield to the perception of a loss of local values. Stephanie Foote states that "[i]f urbanization motivated a sense that a generic version of 'the country' represented a culture in itself…it also produced the sense that there were new and emerging cultures in the national polity" (Cultural Work 30). The response from writers of the period was to create regional discourses that served as social commentaries on the effects of a national culture that would impinge on local histories.

These writers, which would later be classified as "regionalist," constructed narratives that examined what America was in relation to the nation's geographic sections, while simultaneously evaluating the local histories of each section against the backdrop of an emergent mass culture calling itself "American."[7] Out of the local histories and idiosyncratic traits of each section, these writers manufactured and promoted regional spaces that could be used to exploit the problems of a mass market culture and its homogeneous push. Edward Ayers and Peter Onuf argue that the cognitive

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[7] See also Stephanie Foote "What Difference Does Regional Writing Make?" *Regional Fictions: Culture and Identity in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, The University of Wisconsin Press, 2001. 3-16.

map of America itself is an "imaginative construction, an icon of nationhood" that serves to contain a set of regions who culturally work to characterize themselves as distinct communities, a conception that reveals itself in regional narratives of the period as authors dissected the effects of the emerging mass culture on the local communities (Preface vii). Barnard points to this as being a movement to "return," noting that it was "more likely to involve the discovery of forms which a sense of being out of place or off-center could be turned to aesthetic advantage. Modern American fiction…is characterized by a sense of 'alienation *on* native grounds'" (Modern 47).

The problem then becomes one of alienation within a regional construct. Barnard's "native grounds," when considered within the regionalist scope, is relegated to a space confined within the imagined architecture of the nation's geographic traits. Modernism's romance with alienation played perfectly into the concerns of regionalist writers who saw the emerging culture as a threat or as a progression from diverse communities to a single ideal, as Susan Hegeman notes: "[when] the individual who feels alienated, exterior to the society in which he or she lives, the problem might be that there is something wrong with that *society*" (Hegeman 66). And so, once a writer was able to enclose their protagonists within a region (defined by the narrative) where their values and traditions could then be threatened by a larger, homogeneous mass culture through alienation of those values, they could expose the problems of local nostalgic loss to the rapid expansion of the national mass market. The very idea of regionalism is in fact alienation within the national construct. The nationalism promoted by the mass market was homogenous in nature, forcing sectional consciousness (a phenomenon of the later

part of the previous century) to either die away or regroup to defend the traditions of local communities in the face of a homogenous progressive movement.

As Hegeman explains, what resulted out of the regionally conscious movement (that would take up the banner of protecting sectional tradition) was a resistance in rural communities that were "slowly becoming linked to urban centers via infrastructural improvements and a nascent mass media" as they "expressed [their] horror over the social changes brought about by modernization, and doubtless also [their] resentment over the cultural and political power of the urban centers" (Hegeman 23). Regionalism of the nineteenth-century, which Stephanie Foote writes as being a "presentation of people and places that seemed to have 'escaped' the dubious improvements of a stronger and more integrated urban economy (*Regional Fictions* 3) [8]," changed dramatically with the introduction of the mass market and its mass transportation, communications, and media. Instead of promoting locals who had escaped urbanization, modern regionalism became a genre that theorized what would happen once urbanization reached rural centers which had not been modernized[9].

But what happens when the values of a region (that have been constructed through a local resistance to a national ideal, therefore alienating the region) are transferred across imagined boarders into a different region that has either progressed

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[8] Leigh Anne Duck goes further than Foote by noting that "[d]uring and after Reconstruction, as the United States consolidated its identity as a nation devoted to capitalist expansion, the role of regionalism in national culture shifted, serving less as a mode of contestation and more as a way of demonstrating the presence of binding traditions within the nation." *The Nation's Region*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press: 2006. 30.

[9] Mark Storey argues: "The somewhat uncertain concept of 'the region' is here pitched into a battle against an equally amorphous and rather sinister 'national culture.' The effort to restitute regional writing in its political and social context is frequently built on the assumption that the works in question resist a marauding modernity intent on the hostile takeover of a purer, more humane local identity." – "Country Matters: Rural Fiction, Urban Modernity, and the Problem of American Regionalism," *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 65.2 (2010) 192-213.

further into modernity, or has yet to witness progressive modern industrialism? That is the fundamental question I will engage in with this thesis[10] by examining the narratives of two of the period's literary characters: William Faulkner's Quentin Compson and Sinclair Lewis's Martin Arrowsmith. In each, Faulkner and Lewis critique how historically local principles lose value through a conglomerated push for a singular national culture by constructing regional spaces where both Quentin and Martin become manufactured narratives of their local values. Each character then crosses sectional boundaries where they are then disaffected by the cultures of opposing regions. By using Faulkner and Lewis (two writers who have rarely [if ever] been paired together), I plan to engage with an aspect of regionalism that has received little substantial value: the study of transferring regional cultures across sectional boundaries and the response of such movement within Modern literature. These two characters, presented as repositories for specific cultural values, represent the works of authors from two very distinct sections of the U.S. Faulkner's South and Lewis's Midwest present different views over the effects of a Northeastern promoted nationalist push, yet they each are concerned with the reactions formed when alien values are brought into opposing regional spaces.

In Quentin, Faulkner debates the cultural currency of a traditional set of Southern values and the perceptions of Southern legacies as a homogeneous mass market, fueled by continuing industrialization and technological revolutions in communications, swept over the diverse landscape of the U.S. With Martin, Lewis critiques the moral

[10] "The trouble nationalisms cause, both practically and theoretically, has to do with the fact that political entities we call nations are not static at all but change all the time, in relation to each other as well as internally, as certain borders become more permeable. In response to such permeability, nations try to limit our ability to imagine kinship beyond familial boundaries." – Vera M. Kutzinski. "Borders, Bodies, and Regions: The United States and the Caribbean," *A Companion to The Regional Literatures of America*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003. 17.

deterioration of the new mass market economy as it opened the door for widespread economic corruption and the erosion of historically unique traits found in the geographic sections of the U.S. More interestingly, each author critiques the effects of a mass market as a symbolic death to sectional traditions and values through processes of regional alienation.

Quentin's narrative, as related through *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!*, constructs a set of Southern values born out of antebellum myth that end with Quentin's own suicide in the Northeast. The examination of these values, and the currency that Quentin gives them, erects regional boundaries between the North and South that can then be threatened by an outside mass market cultural ideal as represented by other characters and events in the two novels (such as Shreve, Julio, etc.). Quentin then commits suicide in Cambridge, MA rather than his home of Jefferson which becomes, as I will argue, a symbolic end to Quentin's imagined Southern ethics in the area of the nation where an industrialized New England hegemony (adopted by first the Northeast, then later the nation as industrialization spread) was traditionally rooted.

Martin Arrowsmith represents a reversal of what Quentin becomes by taking an idealized set of "American" values created through the modernization of the nation, and traversing across the Midwest, Northeast, and South where those values (created in an imagined region) are rejected. At the outset of the novel, Lewis introduces the imagined state of Winnemac as an idealized version of a conglomerated America, where both agrarian and industrial cultures exist in a harmonious social space. Martin calls this area home, and obtains his education through the state's university which itself is a symbolic

icon of a "culture of abundance" [11] taken up by the new middle class. Martin then travels across the diverse sectional landscape of the nation as a vestige of the "modern" pioneer where he meets continued resistance to his modern values, allowing the narrative to create regional caricatures that can present resistance to modernity and its social effects. However, one of the most important moments of the novel comes when Martin carries a possible cure for bubonic plague from the industrialized North to the tropical South only to lose his wife to the very disease he has set out to cure. The death of Leora Arrowsmith acts to illustrate how the South, like the Midwest in earlier portions of the novel, rejects Northeastern driven modernization and industrial ambitions.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how Faulkner and Lewis both reflect and define regional narratives by portraying the opposing cultures of a modernized North, rural Midwest, and a backward South as geographic spaces where contrasting social values are rejected. I will present the historical constructions of these narratives and detail how both authors interact with these constructions through their novels. The thesis will also look at how each author examines the issue of the pressing nationalism of the period and how each of their narratives considers the national movement from a group of local cultures to a larger homogeneous identity. The figure of death within the modern American novel, and how Faulkner and Lewis demonstrate death as Alan Friedman defines: "narrative as well as event: a process created, ordered, and performed by survivors, or sometimes non-survivors" (Friedman 5), will be examined in relation to the

[11] See Warren Susman "Introduction: Toward a History of the Culture of Abundance" *Culture as History*, Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press (2003) xix – xxx; Sarah Way Sherman "Mapping the Culture of Abundance: Literary Narratives and Consumer Culture," *A Companion to American Fiction, 1865-1914* Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing 2005. 318-339.

characters of Quentin Compson and Leora Arrowsmith. This pursuit will yield a detailed review of how the narratives adjust after these deaths and project the anxiety expressed within the culture in which each novel was written.

By constructing regional boundaries, both authors are able to represent an opposition between the North, South, and Midwest that illustrates a tension between local color and the mass market society. Through the deaths of Quentin Compson and Leora Arrowsmith, the tension of opposing cultures separated by conceptualized geographic boundaries is used by each author to critique the possible results of a homogenous culture brought on by a rapidly expanding national mass market.

Regional Consciousness in the Modern American Novel

Faulkner and Lewis's demonstration of regional recognition exhibits the argument set forth in the Introduction of the book *All Over the Map: Rethinking American Regions*. In it, Edward Ayers and Peter Onuf argue that

> [w]e[12] are skeptical of those who want to lay claim to some kind of ownership of regional identity, to identify *their* 'heritage' as the genuine one…[w]hile regional identity can and often does involve an explicit or implicit critique of people elsewhere in the nation…regional identity is usually more about belonging rather than exclusion. (Introduction 4 emphasis original)

The view of regional inclusion and attempts to understand each region from an outsider's perspective promotes the very core of regional literary studies. As Stephanie Foote explains in her essay "The Cultural Work of American Regionalism," "regional writing is

[12] The "we" here is referring to the general population of the U.S. in context to the native region of the individuals.

an object lesson in how national traditions are constructed through powerful, ideologically driven mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion" (25). She outlines how regional writing works and its value in understanding the cultural schematics of the region it describes, illustrating regional writing as a way to understand "the meaning of local lives, local ideas, and local traditions…asking what place local knowledges have in construction of a national tradition" (25).

The establishment of the mass market's new middle class and their ideologies lead to a conscious development of place and heritage in rural areas, generating a struggle to understand the individual's space within either their native section (whose past has become a romantic myth), or within a section that stands opposite (both geographically and socially) of their native area of the nation[13]. Authors exploited former animosities (both real and mythic) between sections in order to create regional discussions that would validate their own anxious feelings towards the homogenization of the U.S. Leigh Duck sees this as a product of regionalists using historical geopolitical interests within the formation of the nation as a means to establish their unique spatial identity (Duck 29) but also notes: "the United States was perceived, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as a collection of communities moving at different rates of trajectories characterized by different customs, goals, and belief systems" (5).

Modernization within the different geographic sections of the nation caused tension as the industrial Northeastern states were exponentially growing through

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[13] Edward Said simplifies this as a natural phenomena by writing: "A group of people living on a few acres of land will set up boundaries between their land and its immediate surroundings and the territory beyond, which they will call 'the land of the barbarians.' In other words, this universal practice of designating in one's mind a familiar space which is "ours" and an unfamiliar space beyond 'ours' which is 'theirs' is a way of making geographical distinctions that *can be* entirely arbitrary." *Orientalism: 25th Anniversary Edition.* New York, NY: Random House, Inc:, 2004. 54.

obtaining vast amounts of capital and an increased influx of European immigrants, while the South and Midwest witnessed a much more conservative growth that led to a gap in technological and social relations with the Northeast. The best example of a reaction to the regional tensions modernity caused is seen with the Agrarians of the South whose *I'll Take my Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition* (1930) which critiqued the advancement of a Northern industrial society, the effects of materialism and abundance, and the results of modernity on a Southern agrarian society[14]. Susan Hegeman summarizes the Agrarian movement as one which sought to provide an argument for the South to "pursue its own social, political, and cultural destiny" since it "possessed a culture distinct from that of the rest of the United States" (Hegeman 129-130)[15].

At the same time, writers from the Midwest (basing their views on Fredrick Jackson Turner's Frontier thesis) were also establishing a regional culture that took pride in its unique identity as the place where East met West. Hegeman condenses the efforts of these writers by stating:

> Meanwhile, a number of the Midwest's literary sons were quick to understand the complexities of their, and their region's provincialism, and to in effect mythologize it as a regional trait. While Southern writers cherished their own myths of cultural autonomy, their unique "agrarian" identity, or even their gothic-tinged history, [Midwestern writers] tended to emphasize the dynamics of modernization, placing the Midwest in a relational drama of rural and urban, East and Midwest. (Hegeman 135)

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[14] For a general census of what the Agrarians promoted, see John Duvall, "Regionalism in American Modernism" *The Cambridge Companion to American Modernism*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, (2005) 242-260 and Farrell O'Gorman, "The Fugitive-Agrarians and the Twentieth-Century Southern Canon." *A Companion to The Regional Literatures of America*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003. 286-305.

[15] Michael Kreyling notes that they accomplished this argument by "more or less [manipulating] the image of the problem their time and place embodied so that their solution seemed unavoidable." - *Inventing Southern Literature*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1998. 5.

Writers from both the South and Midwest understood the distinction between their local cultures and that of the progressing Northern industrial culture, and used the unique traits of their regions as a means to first establish a boundary between themselves and the Northeast, then secondly establish a boundary between each other. In essence, each of these two regions fought to, according to Stephanie Foote, find the "importance of culture itself, [by committing themselves] to finding a language to express political and social difference in the discourse of cultural variation" (Cultural Work 28).

New England Hegemony

At the core of these regional constructions was the national adaptation of the New England origin tale that had been instilled into the Northeast during the previous century. Stephen Nissenbaum documents that the leading agenda of Northern politics during the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century was based on the concept that the "best solution to the problem of the survival and prosperity of the rapidly expanding republic was to establish New England writ large" (50). He also notes that writers of the nineteenth-century "described their version of New England…as if it went all the way back to the days of colonization. And they reappropriated the early cultural history of the region as well" (50). By constructing a New England culture that could be translated as the origin story of America, writers of the nineteenth-century were able to establish a version of history that celebrated the Northeast as the cultural center of the nation. Lawrence Buell reinforces this idea by noting "American values became to a large extent a nationalized version of what was once the ideology of the tribe that had become

dominant in the New England region" (196), while Nissenbaum continues his critique by establishing the New England hegemony as one that was translated into the dominant culture taught within the classroom:

> New England culture in a broader sense had become inextricably linked to the national culture. Even today students may study William Faulkner or William Gilmore Simms as Southern writers, or Willa Cather as a Midwesterner; but when it comes to Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, and Dickinson, they are studying *American* literature. (40)

Nina Baym also analyzes how the dominant New England culture was adopted by America as the central origin tale when she argues that by "[c]onstructing history in a shape to further the purpose of schooling, the textbook writers made literary works and authors display the virtues and achievements of an Anglo-Saxon United States founded by New England Puritans" (459)[16]. By creating a dominant culture through a constructed history based on the Puritans and Pilgrims of New England, the Northeast was able to offer the nation a single origin tale that, according to Buell, "won out over the claims of less conspicuous victims of persecution[17]…[as] New England, on balance, seemed to furnish an ennobling self-image, and that…ensured its perpetuation" (197).

Once a New England hegemony was established and given strength through the Northeastern writers of the nineteenth-century, America at large adopted the tale as a

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[16] In Chapter IV of his book *Inventing Southern Literature*, Michael Kreyling details how Southern anthologies came into being in response to the largely dominating Northern anthologies, noting that "[m]ore traditional American Literature anthologies establish 'relations with authority' between the New England canon and social/political traditions and other regional U.S. writing" (56) which led to the publishing of *The Literature of the South* (1952) that Kreyling states "set out to valorize the neo-Agrarian invention of southern cultural meaning" as the foreword "specifically echoes, and condenses, the cultural blueprint of the South as it was promulgated in *I'll Take My Stand*" (61).

[17] Buell notes these as being the South Carolina Huguenots, Pennsylvania Quakers, "or less high-minded founders such as the more avowedly opportunistic colonists of Virginia." (197)

common history that all could share no matter the regional position of the individual within the constructed map of the U.S. Warren Susman articulates how the New England origin tale gained such prominence within the national dialogue by stating "Americans could find in history a way to become immortal: being part of history meant being part of eternity. History was and persisted in being a way to position oneself and one's group and community in the world, now and forever" (3). He continues by explaining the value of the Puritan to society after the image of the Puritan was refined during the nineteenth-century:

> Throughout most of the century, the function of history was largely mythic. That is, the past was called upon to furnish the present – a period of intense social, economic, and political change – with a set of values, standards of personal and institutional behavior designed to maintain what could be maintained of the status quo…[the Puritans] represent the origins of our liberties; their institutions are the basis of our democracy. Their conduct showed us the proper standards of personal and social behavior, the proper moral code…(42)

However, as the Puritan origin tale was promoted as the origin of American idealism and moral conduct, writers outside of the Northeast viewed its construction and continuing national presence as a mechanism that would wash over the local histories and their own moral codes. This reaction is best seen in the South where groups took critical looks at the state of the South and what it needed in order to become a productive, economically viable, region once again. In several instances, the root of the Southern problem was noted to have been created and sustained by Northeastern politics which enabled a New England hegemony to instill itself within the culture of the nation. By 1930, the Agrarians released the collection of essays *I'll Take My Stand* where twelve writers voiced these

very complaints. One great example comes from Frank Lawrence Owsley, who writes in "The Irrepressible Conflict":

> The rising generations read Northern literature shot through with the New England tradition…that the Puritans and Pilgrim fathers were the ancestors of every self-respecting American. Southern children spoke of "our Puritan fathers." No child ever heard of the Southern Puritan fathers…who had pushed to the Mississippi River and far north of the Ohio before the New England population had got a hundred miles west of Boston. (64-65)

At the same time, the Northeast projected an understanding of the South as a region that appeared more foreign than domestic. Natalie Ring argues that the perceptions of the South were constructed from a "transnational circulation of colonial discourses and models of rule and reform (that) encouraged cultural imperialists to construct the U.S. South as a tropical space in need of colonial uplift" (Ring 620)[18]. In doing so, perceptions of Southern culture took on a more backward appearance, a fact that different groups from the South fought to deconstruct.

The Agrarians described the effects of a New England hegemony adopted and promoted by the Northeast, and how they perceived the politics and culture of the Northeast as it pressured the non-industrialized South in the post-Civil War years. Owsley saw the cultural push by the Northeast as a second war against the South, where the adopted New England culture was used to diminish the Southern culture in an effort to assimilate the South into a national polity:

[18] "…earlier moments in national history attempted to globalize the idea of the U.S. South in more directly political, economic, and cultural ways. At the turn of the 'American Century,' the United States began exporting forms of authority over 'foreign' territories first practiced domestically in the years following federal Reconstruction of the American South: governance from afar, racial segregation, commercial plantation agriculture, prolartarianized labor, and cultural hegemony." – John T. Matthews. "Globalizing the U.S. South: Modernity and Modernism," *American Literature*. 78.4 (2006) 719.

> …so there commenced a second war of conquest, the conquest of the Southern mind, calculated to remake every Southern opinion, to impose the Northern way of life and thought upon the South, write "error" across the pages of Southern history which were out of keeping with the Northern legend, and set the rising and unborn generations upon stools of everlasting repentance. (63)

The results of the cultural assault on the South, and the animosity held by groups like the Agrarians over this attack, developed a greater sense of regional identity and a re-evaluation of cultural values held within the South.

The tension between the North and South at the turn of the 20th century can best be generalized, as Duck notes, as one in which "[the] northern states more generally depicted the South as undeveloped, brutal, and antidemocratic, and southerners represented the North as a site of unbridled and inherently radical change" (Duck 30). Stark Young, in his essay "Not in Memoriam, But in Defense" (also from *I'll Take My Stand*) demonstrates the tension between the regions as still resonant in the 1920s and 1930s:

> If anything is clear, it is that we can never go back, and neither this essay nor any intelligent person that I know in the South desires a literal restoration of the old Southern life, even if that were possible; dead days are gone… [however] There was a Southern civilization whose course was halted with those conventions of 1867 by which the negro suffrage in the South – not in the North – was planned, and the *pillaging* began. (Young 328 emphasis mine)

The pillaging, referring to the move of Northern natives to the South in search of financial gains, exemplifies Duck's "unbridled and inherently radical change" that was perceived as being forced onto the South by Young and his Agrarian counterparts. The fact that Young is still citing this move by the North in 1930 affirms that there were those

in the South that were still resisting cultural ambitions established within the Northeastern states.

In an article from 1936, Broadus Mitchell describes the Agrarian movement as one that championed "the 'little man' of agriculture and industry" (Mitchell 119), while Ellen Caldwell notes further that they "battled the influences of a Northern technology and its devaluation of human dignity in the machine age" (207). However, with their desire to re-establish the farmer as a viable player within the market place, Mitchell critically notes that "they fail to understand…the evolution of capitalism, mainly through the application of power machinery, with all of its imperatives in mass production, the standardization of processes and goods, and the widening of markets" (Mitchell 120). It's the Agrarians cynical view of the Northeast and its vast industrial network that allows the gap between the Northeastern and Southern cultures to remain open as their doctrine becomes a point of debate, not only within the confines of the national dialogue, but also within the South itself as they were rejected by their peers who accepted a more progressive stance.

What becomes clear in sectionalist motivated literature of the time is that the Northeast, Midwest, and South viewed each other as opposing communities where their own locally cherished values were lost or de-valued. Young's notion that "dead days are gone," and the conscious understanding that the old ways of the South were lost to Reconstruction, strengthens Ring's argument that the North's perception of the South was "diseased and degenerative." In effect, it offered the view of a region that was extremely fertile while at the same time ridden with disease and poverty that could erode Northern

values (Ring 621-622). The tension between the sections was further increased by a new culture that was adopting the constructed New England origin tale and discarding local origins that could not be used to affect the emerging national vision, and adopted the Puritan's Protestant work ethic which as well.

In response, Sinclair Lewis and William Faulkner wrote narratives that exposed Martin Arrowsmith and Quentin Compson to a hypothetical homogenous culture that threatened to devalue and eradicate local traditions. Each author created regional boundaries based on sectional geographies and histories that provided a space that could be threatened by the mass market culture. They then used the regional tensions each narrative promoted to illustrate how a homogenous mass market culture could enforce a national ideal onto diverse subcultures of the U.S. through key deaths that take place within the dichotomy of a presumed regional antagonisms.

Alan Freidman's book *Fictional Death and the Modernist Enterprise* examines the role of death within the modern aesthetic, arguing that "[s]uch investigations [of death] convincingly argue that there is nothing 'natural' about how people tell their stories of sex or death. Both are products of culture: mediated, made, symbolic" (7). In the deaths of Quentin Compson and Leora Arrowsmith, Faulkner and Lewis contemplate the subconscious symbolism of regional conflicts that (60 years after the Civil War) was still considered relevant to the local cultures who made up the opposing regions of America.

CHAPTER II

QUENTINIAN ETHICS

Faulkner's South

In the essay "The Southern Myth and William Faulkner," Irving Howe examined the effects of a "Southern Myth," or an understood narrative based on a "story or cluster of stories" that reflects the "most fundamental experiences of a people…in this case, the fate of a ruined homeland" (360). He argues that the basis of this myth came from the South's relation to a post-reconstruction world where national industrialization and a mass market culture transformed other sections of the country leaving the South to lag behind:

> After its defeat in the Civil War, the South could not participate fully and freely in the "normal" development of American society – that is, industrialization and large-scale capitalism arrived there later and with far less force than in the North or West…the South, because it was a pariah region or because its reluctance in defeat forced the rest of the nation to treat it as such, felt its sectional identity most acutely during the very decades when the United States was becoming a self-conscious nation. While other regions meekly submitted to dissolution, the South worked desperately to keep itself intact. Through an exercise of the will, it insisted that the regional memory be the main shaper of its life. (357)

The South, then, made the conscious effort to establish regional boundaries between itself and the rest of the nation in order to preserve itself. It did so while modernization and industrialization made it possible for a mass market culture to sweep over the landscape

of the U.S. and attempt to convert sections of the country from individual regional customs and histories to portions of a homogenous conglomerated culture[19][20][21].

Through this understanding of the South and how it perceived itself, William Faulkner's Quentin Compson becomes a vehicle in which to examine the Southern myth in both its strength as a reflection of a sub-culture, and its weakness through misunderstood perceptions of its own past. Howe notes that Faulkner "writes in opposition to his tradition as well as in acceptance…he struggles with the Southern myth even as he acknowledges it" (360). Quentin's dilemma in both *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!* revolves around this tension to simultaneously accept and refute the Southern myth as it was reframed in the early decades of the twentieth-century. In Quentin, Faulkner exemplifies a stress of losing the local past to a national progressive future (one that relegated former cultures to a set of idiosyncratic actions and characteristics) in Quentin's struggle to understand Southern heritage, Northern

[19] "[T]wentieth-century U.S. nationalism repeatedly celebrated the latter paradigm [of associating the nation with democracy and change and the region with racism and tradition], failing either to address its incongruity with liberalism or to analyze the desires that rendered this restrictive model of collectivity attractive to so many national audiances. Concomitantly, when national discourse has acknowledged the conflict between southern conservatism and national democracy, it has typically done so in ways that localize this conflict – a 'backward South' and a modern or 'enlightened nation' – Leigh Anne Duck, *The Nations Region*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2006. 3.

[20] "Throughout American history, the South has been represented as a place apart from mainstream American culture. In the popular imagination the region has been understood to be hotter, more exotic, more mythic, more romantic, more unified, more anachronistic, and more brutal that the rest of the country. And this image of Southern excess has served in the creation of a national identity. At times, this image of the South has forged a sense of national unity by giving the nation something to react against; all of that excess can allow the North (or the non-South, the rest of the country) to understand itself as kinder, gentler, as superior because of its modernization" – Lori Robison, "Region and Race: National Identity and the Southern Past," *A Companion to The Regional Literatures of America*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003. 58.

[21] "In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a competing set of ideas about Southern backwardness, poverty, and racial degeneracy(known as the 'Southern Problem') gained currency in American culture, complicating the nation's efforts to reunite the North and South in the wake of the Civil War. Attempts to rehabilitate the Problem South included efforts to improve the economic welfare of the Southern farmer, develop a healthy industrial labor force by eliminating such diseases as malaria and hookworm, stabilize the brewing race problem, nad educate the Southern populace in the hope of creating a more prosperous body of democratic citizens. What is significant is that the idea of the South as a distinctive place in need of reform was not simply reinforced by comparing it with the rest of the country. Americans also located the U.S. South with other foreign countries as deviant geographical spaces in the broader transnational world" – Natalie J. Ring, "Linking Regional and Global Spaces in Pursuit of Southern Distinctiveness," *American Literature*. 78.4 (2006) 712.

perceptions and expectations of Southerners, and the role of an antebellum "chivalry" in a space that devalued its sanctity. This space is built throughout the course of both *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!* where Quentin's character becomes the center piece of a commentary by Faulkner where the Southern myth is set against not only the continued expansion of modern industrialization and capitalization, but also the birth of a "New South."[22] This commentary provides a unique look at Faulkner and his two novels by exposing the author as trying to reconcile where the South's past (in both its real and imagined mythical forms) belongs in relation to what was an emerging social consciousness of heritage and place.

Faulkner begins constructing imagined borders of regional separation (that would allow a Southern mythos to exist within Quentin's narrative) at the outset of *Absalom, Absalom!* by showing Quentin "preparing for Harvard in the South, the deep South dead since 1865 and peopled with the garrulous outraged baffled ghosts, listening…to one of the ghosts…telling him about old ghost times" (4) [23]. Faulkner's use of the "ghosts" comes again when Quentin is described as being "an empty hall echoing with sonorous defeated names…[h]e was a barracks filled with stubborn back-looking ghosts still recovering, even forty-three years afterward, from the fever which had cured the disease," and again when Quentin's father claims "[y]ears ago we in the South made our

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[22] In the introduction for the 75th anniversary edition of *I'll Take My Stand*, Susan Donaldson defines this New South as "rapidly acquiring all the worst characteristics of the urban industrial North – scientism, materialism, endless economic expansion, dissolving communities, and social fluidity." (xx)

[23] Lee Anne Fennell's article "Unquiet Ghosts: Memory and Determinism in Faulkner" sets forth the argument that these ghosts represent memories shared by either families or communities that are "passed down through an unconscious or preconscious process of absorption…[y]et memories are never simply transmitted from mind to mind through the generations like an object passed from hand to hand. Instead each act of recalling and retelling transforms. Interprets, selects, and reshapes the remembered material; each act of listening (or absorbing) reshapes the material anew." *The Southern Literary Journal.* 31.2 (1999) 38.

women into ladies…[t]hen the war came and made our ladies into ghosts" (*Absalom* 7). In beginning the novel with a dead South "peopled with the garrulous outraged baffled ghosts," Faulkner's narrative creates a tension between the South and an outside force that had reduced Southern traditions to dead actions practiced by "ghosts" of an old world now forgotten to those outside of Faulkner's deep South. The novel is constructing regional boundaries between the South and the North (which has progressed forward, leaving the dead South behind), and the formation of these boundaries is key to understanding how Quentin's character participates with and within the myth in each novel[24].

Miss Rosa Coldfield continues this theme in addressing Quentin"…you are going away to attend the college at Harvard they tell me…[s]o I don't imagine you will ever come back here and settle down as a country lawyer in a little town like Jefferson since Northern people have already seen to it that there is little left in the South for a young man" (5). Miss Coldfield, and her quick remark about what the North has taken away from Southern young men, becomes the narrative's embodiment of the backward-looking Southern ghost who realizes that her world is dead and gone. She then addresses the future of her history (and that of the South) when she tells Quentin:

> So maybe you will enter the literary profession as so many Southern gentlemen and gentlewomen too are doing now and maybe someday you will remember this and write about it. You will be married then I expect and perhaps your wife will

[24] Ben Railton makes the observation that "[f]or Quentin, this regional heritage means much more than just an accent or even a shared group of cultural values – it literally defines him…[m]ore exactly, the past through which his southern predecessors lived, the tragic and terrible past of the Civil War and Reconstruction, lives on in Quentin…this figurative tie exists for Quentin whether he likes it or not." – "'What Else Could a Southern Gentleman Do?': Quentin Compson, Rhett Butler, and Miscegenation," *The Southern Literary Journal*. 35.2 (2003) 45.

> want a new gown or a new chair for the home and you can write this and submit it to the magazines. (*Absalom* 5)

Quentin too acknowledges her desire to record the dead past when he notes to himself that "*[i]t's because she wants it told* he thought *so that people whom she will never see and whose names she will never hear and who have never heard her name nor seen her face will read it and know at last why God let us lose the War:*" (6). Miss Coldfield also cynically references that this past will be conveyed only when there is an economic need for it, pointing to her understanding of its value being lost culturally to the rest of the nation. She understands that the South, as Howe notes in his essay, has been left behind because of its insistence to hold onto the past as a way to distinguish itself from the rest of the nation. For her, the South's individuality (and its reluctance to progress along with the rest of the nation) has lead to its impaired state and depreciated values associated with an imagined antebellum South.

Quentin's narrative role emerges from this opening exchange as the space within the novel where the past is recorded and kept; Quentin becomes the place where the narrative is written and later transferred north. This role is seen more clearly when Harvard classmates barrage Quentin "*[t]ell about the South. What's it like there. What do they do there. Why do they live there. Why do they live at all*" (*Absalom* 142). In asking these questions, Quentin's Northern peers enable his position as the myth's vessel, and the text acknowledges Quentin's role as narrative in action. Quentin carries a Southern history and set of values into the Northeast (the binary opposite of his Southern home and embodiment of a modernized America) where they are devalued, mocked, and rejected as

seen when Shreve (in addressing Deacon's parade march) tells Quentin "[j]ust look at what your grandpa did to that poor old nigger" to which Quentin responds "[y]es…[n]ow he can spend day after day marching in parades. If it hadn't been for my grandfather, he'd have to work like whitefolks" (*Sound* 82).

In *Absalom, Absalom!*, Faulkner goes beyond Quentin's original monologue from *The Sound and the Fury* by developing Quentin's internal struggle further through a running dialogue with Shreve. In several passages, the Canadian mocks the South and its mythic heritage. Yet, as the narrative continues, Shreve becomes more and more invested in the outcome of Quentin's tale and how it defines a past that he himself does not have. When Quentin tells of Rosa Coldfield's death, Shreve responds "[y]ou mean she was no kin to you, no kin to you at all, that there was actually one Southern Bayard or Guinevere who was no kin to you? then what did she die for?" (*Absalom* 142). Shreve later attempts to understand how the Southern past works to carry value when he asks Quentin: "What is it? something you live and breathe in like air? a kind of vacuum filled with a wraithlike and indomitable anger and pride and glory at and in happenings that occurred and ceased fifty years ago?" (*Absalom* 289). Shreve's satirical line of questions attempt to understand what it means to embody the Southern history, a history which Quentin's father notes as being nothing more than a "few old mouth to mouth tales" and letters taken from old trunks and boxes built on memories of "people in whose living blood and seed we ourselves lay dormant and waiting…" (*Absalom* 80).

Through Shreve's interrogation and Quentin's attempt at a definition of his heritage, Faulkner is exposing more than just a history of the South and its people. He is

recognizing the devalued past of the South as it is transformed from regional significance to a social memory, void of significant capital, within an emerging national narrative. Micahel Kreyling states that Shreve, in constantly questioning Quentin's heritage, is "accusing his roommate of being not much more than the 'imaginary' created by an arbitrary set of social formations intent on keeping itself in business" (Kreyling 6). Shreve's satirical view of the South textually devalues the past Quentin embodies; in effect, Shreve is not only deconstructing the Southern myth, he is removing any and all social capital Quentin's character has within the narrative.

Quentin at Harvard: Perceptions of the South in the North as Translated by a Southerner

Faulkner's awareness and manipulation of regional difference between the North and the South is complicated further when Quentin becomes aware of, and notes, the various roles that the North has placed upon the South and its natives[25][26]. Most notably, Quentin is aware of how he is supposed to regard blacks in accordance to what he thinks Northerners expect of him. He states in *The Sound and the Fury* that he "used to think that a Southerner had to be always conscious of niggers. I thought that Northerners would expect him to. When I first came East I kept thinking You've got to think of them as

[25] Edward Ayers explains that "Americans believe, hope the South is different and so tend to look for differences to confirm that belief, that 'knowledge.' White Southerners are, until proven otherwise, traditional, backward, obsessed with the past, friendly, potentially violent, racist, and polite" – "What We Talk about When We Talk about the South," *All Over the Map: Rethinking American Regions*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1996. 66.

[26] In his novel *The Southerner*, Walter Hines Page calls this the Southern Shadow which "is a dead man which every living man of us has to carry. He is the old defensive man. Nor does he cling to us at home only. He follows us wherever we go in the United States." - New York, NY: Double Day, Page and Company: *www.googlebooks.com*, 1909. 390.

colored people, not niggers…" (86). Later in the section, Faulkner introduces the reader to Deacon, a black man who serves the dorms at Harvard.

When a Southerner first arrives at Harvard, Deacon finds them out, and puts on a show that is meant to represent a fantastic stereotype of the Southern black[27]. Quentin notes that when Deacon first greets these young gentlemen of the South, he "could pick out a Southerner with one glance. He never missed, and once he had heard you speak, he could name your state. He had a regular uniform he met trains in, a sort of Uncle Tom's cabin outfit, patches and all" (*Sound* 97). Quentin then describes how Deacon eventually becomes more comfortable with the Southerners, and his act fades into one where "his manner moved northward as his raiment improved" (97). Faulkner contrasts Deacon with a black man Quentin sees as he is leaving Virginia, who is meant to represent the "real" Southern black with his mule, ragged clothes, and humble demeaner. The encounter between he and Quentin triggers a realization in the Harvard bound Southerner that he "really had missed Roskus and Dilsey," two of the Compson's black servants (*Sound* 86). Deacon, the Northern black who manipulates perceived Southern idiosyncratic traits, in turn becomes Quentin's revised definition of a "nigger," which he describes as being "not a person so much as a form of behavior; a sort of obverse reflection of the white people he lives among" (*Sound* 86).

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[27] This idea of the Northern Black putting on a Southern "show" is an old narrative device that can be traced back to antebellum and reconstruction novels as seen in an example from Frank Webb's *The Garies and their Friends* (1857) when Winston, a freed slave who is mistaken as a white Southerner by two black servants in Philadelphia, exposes the men as caricatures of idealized sterotypes: "(they) would tell…the most astonishing and distressing tales of their destitution, expressing, almost with tears in their eyes, their deep desire to return to their former masters; whilst perhaps the person from whose mouth this tale of woe proceeded had been born in a neighboring street, and had never been south of Mason and Dixon's line." (41)

Faulkner uses the juxtaposition of the two black men, and Quentin's self conscious battle of his understood heritage and the preconceived idea he thinks Northerners have, as a space within the text where the Southern myth is simultaneously appreciated and mocked. As Quentin debates internally on how he is to project himself in accordance to Northern expectations, he is actively participating in reconstructing the Southern myth into what Edward Ayers notes as being a "fiction of a geographically bounded coherent set of attributes to be set off against a mythical non-South" (64-65). By making Quentin conscious of the North's view of the South and how they interpreted the ways of Southern life, Faulkner was able to comment specifically on how the two regions misinterpreted each other, using fictitious models of social idiosyncrasies as platforms to build divides between the two subcultures. Ayers comments on this when he argues in his essay "What We Talk about When We Talk about the South":

> When the South is portrayed as a "culture" or "society," even as a "civilization," that stands as the binary opposite of the North, a relative situation tends to become an absolute characteristic; Southern differences with the North are transformed into traits that mark the very soul of the Southern people. (65)

The problem is obscured even more when Quentin describes the Kentuckian Gerald Bland. He states that on the day he met Gerald he "believed that God was not only a gentleman and a sport, he was a Kentuckian too," then continues on by noting that Gerald's mother "approved of Gerald associating with me because I at least revealed a blundering sense of noblesse oblige by getting myself born below Mason and Dixon" (*Sound* 91). In the passages involving Quentin's appraisal of Kentucky, Faulkner is

expressing a sense that there are multiple Souths that are bound only by the fact that they are all within a geographic space due south of Pennsylvania.

As Quentin describes Bland and his mother, the text illustrates the two as more of a product of an aristocratic space outside of the South Quentin experiences. Bland himself is characterized as "sitting on his attitudes of princely boredom, with his curly yellow hair and his violet eyes and his eyelashes and his New York clothes" (*Sound* 91). Quentin continues by noting that both Bland and his mother have apartments "in town" on top of Bland's "rooms in college," as well as referencing how the mother was closely invested with Bland's dealings in Cambridge as she is always near him (91). Through his observations, Quentin communicates Bland as representing a South that has abandoned the myth Quentin himself was constructed within. The differences between the South of Kentucky and the South of Mississippi is distinguished again when Bland's attitude towards women is exposed as an object based aesthetic in contrast to Quentin's chivalric reverence of women and their purity. The moment happens when Shreve relays the fight between Quentin and Bland in *The Sound and the Fury*: "Ah, he was blowing off as usual…about his women. You know: like he does, before girls, so they don't know exactly what he's saying…Talking about the body's beauty and the sorry ends thereof and how tough women have it, without anything else they can do except lie on their backs" (*Sound* 167). Quentin then turns to Bland and asks him if he has any sisters, and when Bland answers no, Quentin throws a punch. The attack becomes an attempt by Quentin to defend his sister Caddy's virginal honor which May Brown argues is the "equivalent of family honor" for Quentin (Brown 546).

If Quentin is defending a form of his familial honor through a representation of Caddy's virginity, then Faulkner uses Bland to represent a type of South whose values are rejected by Quentin and his myth. Unfortunately Quentin fails by losing the fight he begins, which serves as a point in the text where the narrative recognizes the South represented by Bland as the stronger, "New South" that is ready for modernization. It is the second fight in the novel where Quentin attempts to defend an imagined chivalric code constructed by the Southern myth. The first fight comes against Dalton Ames who actually takes Caddy's virginity. This fight also ends with Quentin embarrassingly unable to fully defend his sister's de-flowering. Both fights represent a rejection of Quentin's perceived honor code as Nathaniel Miller notes, "the society around Quentin is no longer a place where honor objectively exists" which leads to what Miller sees as a problem of identity where Quentin loses focus on a genuine role for himself to act within (Miller 3). By using two native Southerners as the figures that Quentin fights in defense of Caddy, Faulkner and his text illustrate the progression of a New South that has moved beyond Quentin's myth driven Old South[28].

Da Pape'

> I use Quentin because it is just before he is to commit suicide because of his sister. And I use his bitterness which he has projected on the South in the form of hatred of it and its people to get more out of the story itself. - William Faulkner

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[28] John Matthews notes that Quentin "drifts through *The Sound and the Fury*, no longer a Southerner, since the South he knows belongs to the past, and not yet a modern American, to whom regions hardly matter." "Whose America? Faulkner, Modernism, and National Identity" *Faulkner at 100: Retrospect and Prospect*. Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press (2000) 70.

Most scholarly discussions of Quentin's suicide in *The Sound and the Fury* invariably link it to the loss of Caddy's virginity and Quentin's failure to protect it[29]. However, what these and other scholars fail to treat adequately is that Quentin's death occurs in the Northeast. Faulkner's decision to locate Quentin's suicide in Cambridge (rather than Jefferson) provides a distinct message from the author about concerns of a mass market culture, the redefinition of the national culture, and the response from the South through the construction of a myth meant to perpetuate a Southern culture that felt threatened. Quentin's actions on the day before his suicide, and consequent death in New England, translate into how Faulkner envisioned a pre-Civil War Southern culture (which was outlined and defended by the narrative's "outraged and baffled ghosts") as it was endangered by the national origin narrative.

As seen in the previous sections, Faulkner uses Quentin as a vehicle to expose the sectional tension between the North and South in the earlier years of the twentieth century. Quentin is constructed by his narrative as the space in which a Southern myth is written and stored before being transferred North where the myth is then examined and

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[29] See Lee Anne Fennell, "Unquiet Ghosts: Memory and Determism in Faulkner," *The Southern Literary Journal* 31.2 (1999) 35-49 where she argues that it is the memories of Caddy and the lost virginity that lead Quentin to suicide because "suicide obliterates both memory and pain; it is the ultimate act of forgetting." (45); Nathaniel A. Miller, "'Felt, Not Seen Not Heard:' Quentin Compson, Modernist Suicide and Southern History," *Studies in the Novel* 37.1 (2005) 37-49 which presents the argument that *The Sound and the Fury* encounters four deaths, one of which is Quentin's "which the reader does not see, and which revolves around Caddy" (38) leading to "a cultural notion of femininity [that] internally shapes Quentin [and] – because of what Caddy does – he cannot live with himself" (49); May Cameron Brown, "The Language of Chaos: Quentin Compson in *The Sound and the Fury*," *American Literature*, 51.4 (1980) 544-553 in which the author argues that Quentin cannot go backwards in time and stop Caddy from losing her virginity so what he "must do is to defeat time by destroying himself" (546); John F. Desmond, "From Suicide to Ex-Suicide: Notes on the Southern Writer as Hero in the Age of Despair," *The Southern Literary Journal*, 25.1 (1992) 89-105 where Quentin's suicide is linked to the traditional "language" of his father Jason, and how it breaks down when Caddy loses her virginity; Betina Entzminger, "'Listen to them being ghosts': Rosa's Words of Madness that Quentin Can't Hear," *College Literature*, 25.2 (1998) 108-120 in which the argument of Quentin not being able to save Caddy's virginity, a problem only because Quentin lives by a social code that no longer exists, leads to his inability to cope with life and so commits suicide; Margaret D. Bauer, "'I Have Sinned in that I Have Betrayed the Innocent Blood': Quentin's Recognition of his Guilt," *The Southern Literary Journal*, 32.2 (2000) 70-89 which connects Quentin's suicide with the fact that he and his family are to blame for Caddy's loss of virginity, and so commits suicide to relieve his guilt.

devalued. So when Faulkner decides to physically remove Quentin from the narrative, it is in order to symbolically expose the Southern myth as a fiction that has been created only to perpetuate Southern values that have no place in a modern world. Throughout both his section in *The Sound and the Fury* and the entire text of *Absalom, Absalom!*, Quentin acts as the location within the text(s) where the reader can access the Southern past that he both values and tries to reconstruct in his present day. He simultaneously is tortured by this same past as he tries to reconcile the events of the present through roles defined by a history that has since become nothing more than a set of cultural traits.

In order for Quentin's exit from the narrative to work as a metaphoric rejection of the Southern myth, Faulkner exposes Quentin's relation to the national culture as foreign when Quentin is repeatedly revealed as the alien rather than the native. *The Sound and the Fury* uses the anecdote of the Italian girl from the bread shop to define different social roles within an understood national frame by first drawing a distinct line between native-ness and foreign-ness, then exposing Quentin's relation to each as non-existent or as a third party.

When Quentin first comes into the town, he meets a group of boys fishing off a bridge, and when he begins asking them about the town and where he can find the town clock, the boys recognize his foreign-ness to the area and ask if he is a Canadian before noting that he "talks like they do in the minstrel shows" (*Sound* 120)[30]. When he reaches the town, and attempts to take the little girl home, he is exposed repeatedly to the idea of

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[30] See John T. Matthews "Whose America? Faulkner, Modernism, and National Identity" *Faulkner at 100: Retrospect and Prospect*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2000. 70-92 in which Matthews argues that *The Sound and the Fury* represents Faulkner's use of "vocal blackface" language as a means in which Faulkner signaled "his own complex alienation from the South's dominant social and cultural traditions." (80)

distinct lines between foreigners and natives by the bread shop lady (127), the old men in front of the store (130), and the man at the post office (130) who all regard the Italians as "them foreigners" in an attempt to distinguish and separate themselves socially from their Italian neighbors.

Quentin's own foreign-ness is exposed further when his perceived noble action of escorting the girl home is seen as kidnapping, and it's the word of the girl's brother Julio, one of "them foreigners," that the local authorities take as fact rather than Quentin's. Once Quentin is brought before the squire, his dorm mate Spoade defends him by telling the squire that Quentin is "just a country boy in school up here. He dont mean any harm. I think the marshal'll will find it's a mistake" (*Sound* 143). Although the defense is satirical, it shows how Quentin's own peers regard his heritage and sectional origin as a foreign space that exists outside of the boundaries of an urban Northeast.

However, it's when Julio exclaims that he is "American" because he "gotta da pape'" that differentiates the foreign Italian and the Southern Quentin by exposing him as the foreigner rather than the native since he does not have the "pape'." Faulkner revisits the question of who is American and who is not when Quentin's brother Jason notes later in the novel that he is American, distinguishing himself not as a Southerner, but rather as a member of a larger national social order (*Sound* 191). Faulkner uses these distinctions to further complicate the construction of a homogeneous national archetype by recognizing not only that Southern gentility and etiquette hold little value in the national construction, but also by providing a political reason for a single homogenous set of values. Through the inclusion of foreign immigrants into the narrative who (like the

Canadian Shreve) merit little (if any) importance in the regional pasts of the nation, Faulkner suggests that a common set of values and a common history are better served than separated regional morals. The passages represent moments when Faulkner explores the rejection of Southern hospitality in the emerging nationhood that is constructing a single set of values that can be easily interpreted and understood by foreign outsiders who are looking for native inclusion.

To supplement Quentin's political foreign-ness in the Northeast, Faulkner uses Shreve (and his perspective on Southern culture) to reduce Quentin's heritage to a set of theatrical fictions which leads to revealing Quentin's social foreign-ness. He tells Quentin "Jesus the South is fine, isn't it. It's better than the theatre, isn't it. It's better than Ben Hur, isn't it" (*Absalom* 176), then later he stops Quentin from his re-telling of Sutpen's death by saying "you wait. Let me play a while now" (225). In these instances, Shreve is deconstructing the regional boundaries the myth has created by turning it into a fantastic tale. Shreve also corrects Quentin's knowledge when dealing with this tale by using historical facts to edit Sutpen's story:

> Because he was born in West Virginia, in the mountains where – ("Not in West Virginia," Shreve said. – "What?" Quentin said. "Not in West Virginia," Shreve said. "Because if he was twenty-five years old in Mississippi in 1833, he was born in 1808. And there wasn't any West Virginia in 1808 because –" "All right," Quentin said. " – West Virginia wasn't admitted –" "All right all right," Quentin said. " – into the United States until – " "All right all right all right," Quentin said.) (*Absalom* 179)

But then turns around and obscures facts that hold significant value to the South's memory of the Civil War as seen when he mistakes the location of Pickett's charge

(*Absalom* 289). In both cases, Shreve is desperately trying to understand a phenomenon that he admits to not having. But as he continues to break the myth down into terms he himself can understand, he exposes it for what it really is: a myth –

> I just want to understand it if I can and I don't know how to say it better. Because it's something my people haven't got. Or if we have got it, it all happened long ago across the water and so now there ain't anything to look at every day to remind us of it. We don't live among defeated grandfathers and freed slaves…and bullets in the dining room table and such, to be always reminding us to never forget. What is it? something you live and breathe in like air? a kind of vacuum filled with the wraithlike and indomitable anger and pride and glory at and in happenings that occurred and ceased fifty years ago? a kind of entailed birthright father and son and father and son of never forgiving Sherman, so that forever more as long as your children's children produce children you wont be anything but a descendant of a long line of colonels killed in Pickett's charge at Manassas? (*Absalom* 289)

Quentin's response is simple when he states, "[y]ou can't understand it. You would have to be born there" (*Absalom* 289). When Quentin makes this statement, the text is revealing that the myth only holds value in the South. The fact that Shreve corrects Quentin about the state of West Virginia (a political fact rooted within the history of the nation as a whole) but misplaces Picket's charge (a historical fact that Quentin's South values as significant) adds to the construction of Shreve's character as more native to the rising national conglomeration while, at the same time, manifests Quentin and his heritage as foreign and removed.

Once Quentin has been exposed as a foreign entity within the text, Faulkner allows him to commit suicide off stage without the reader having the satisfaction of witnessing the act first hand. Alan Friedman points to this as a modernist phenomena, stating that fictional death in the modern novel "became attenuated, denied, or horrific:

initiatory or evaded rather than climactic" (18). But Faulkner does not evade Quentin's death by not showing it; instead he removes it from the visibility of the reader in order to demonstrate how he sees the Southern myth as not having social value within the national construct. By making Quentin's death an event not seen, the narrative that Quentin represents moves from being a textual fact to a voiceless fiction, and Quentin becomes a memory that the surviving Compson's are left to struggle with.

Faulkner uses the memory of Quentin in the rest of the novel as a reminder of where the South failed in its ability to make itself viable in a new industrial-centered world. Edward Ayers argues that although the South has lost its once grand society, it does "play a key role in the nation's self-image: the role of evil tendencies overcome, mistakes atoned for, progress yet to be made" (Ayers 66). Quentin and Caddy both represent this role for Jason in the rest of the novel as he blames Caddy for his lost opportunity as a banker, and is constantly reminded of Quentin and Quentin's advantages through Caddy's daughter Miss Quentin. Numerous times in *The Sound and the Fury*, Jason sneeringly notes that he was never offered the opportunity to go to Harvard: "I never had the time to go to Harvard or drink myself into the ground. I had to work" (*Sound* 181), and again when he comments "At least I never heard of him [Jason Sr.] offering to sell anything to send me to Harvard" (*Sound* 197).

Faulkner's critique through Quentin's death in the North also represents what Edward Ayers provides as the South's other role in the nation's overall image:

> Stories about the South tend to be stories about what it means to be modern. The South often appears as the locus of the nonmodern, or of the modern world gone bad. People have long projected onto the South their longing for a place free from

> the pressures of making a profit,…for just as long, others have projected onto the South the disgust, and maybe anxiety, they feel toward those who are unable or unwilling to keep up with the headlong rush into the future. The South is made to bear a lot of metaphorical baggage. (70)

Leigh Anne Duck understands this as being a product of the national identification of what roles the regions are to play once a unity is realized. She states that "[i]ncreasingly, after the Civil War, the dominant national time was understood to be that of capitalist modernity – a linear, progressive temporality allowing new mobility and opportunity" (5). She continues by noting the change in the U.S. from a "collective based on shared customs" to an "administrative or economic unit" that valued capitalist exchange over regional and local cultural values (5). When consolidated with Ayers, Duck's point allows Faulkner's critique to carry validity, and his narrative agenda (with Quentin's suicide in the North) gains important rhetorical value. If the regional culture that Quentin values as nostalgic is replaced by an industrial system that promotes a mass culture of abundance, and the Southern myth which Quentin represents is void of any importance that a new mass market culture can assimilate, then there is no need for a Quentinian set of values, nor is there need for a Quentin.

CHAPTER III

PHAGEMAN

Winnemac as America

Although *Arrowsmith* is not traditionally considered a regionalist novel[31], the basic construction of the narrative and the events of the novel offer vast elements of interpretation through regionalism, which (as I will argue) brings new perceptions of what Sinclair Lewis was trying to convey with his protagonist Martin Arrowsmith. The opening of *Arrowsmith* takes place in the Ohio "wilderness" where Lewis depicts Marin Arrowsmith's great-grandmother driving the family wagon west into the frontier. The purpose of this opening is to show where Martin will inherit his pioneering spirit as seen when the fourteen-year-old girl tells her father that they're "[g]oing West! They's a whole lot of new things I aim to be seeing!" (Lewis 1)[32]. However, the opening serves another purpose which involves a critical look at America's regions. By opening the novel with one of the Arrowsmith family matriarchs crossing through the Ohio Valley, Lewis sets up a narrative that will investigate how a national commercial culture will

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[31] In what is possibly the most recognized article on the book, "Martin Arrowsmith: The Scientist as Hero," Charles Rosenberg defines Martin as "a new kind of hero, one appropriate to twentieth-century America" where "[h]is scientific calling is not a concession to material values, but a means of overcoming them" (447). He then notes that "Sinclair Lewis was very much a novelist of society, very much bound to the particular." (448). This perception of Martin's narrative, and his author, would become the general view of the book making *Arrowsmith* more of a "popular" rather than a regionalist novel for critics, unlike two of Lewis's previous works *Main Street* and, to a lesser extent, *Babbit*. - *American Quarterly* 15.3 (1963) 447-458.

[32] Michael Augspurger argues that it is in *Arrowsmith* that "the pioneer tradition regains the power to reform the future" as Martin's "professional integrity and rejection of middle-class social restraints provide the model for a modern pioneer…" – "Sinclair Lewis' Primers for the Professional Managerial Class: *Babbit*, *Arrowsmith*, and *Dodsworth*," *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, 34.2 (2001) 74.

affect the regional sub-cultures that support it, and whether those sub-cultures will in fact accept a modernized mass market.

Lewis would have been influenced by Fredrick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis[33] which proposed that the Ohio Valley developed into a "Middle Kingdom between the East and the West, between the northern area, which was occupied by a greater New England…and the southern area of the 'Cotton Kingdom'" (Turner 162). Lewis also understood Turner's idea that the Ohio Valley became a highway to the further expansion into the West where the "Ohio river played an important part in the movements of the earlier men in America" as they pushed into the frontier (Turner 162). It's a strategic move by Lewis, then, to place not only the opening lines of the novel in the Ohio Valley as Martin's great-grandmother travels west, but also by building the fictional state of Winnemac at the physical center of the valley where it can act as the gateway between the modern industrialized Northeast, the recently cultivated West, and the rapidly growing rural centers of the Midwest.

The novel maps Martin's home state as being bordered by "Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, and Indiana" while culturally Winnemac is described as being "half Eastern, half Midwestern" (Lewis 6). The narrative continues by describing Winnemac as having a "feeling of New England in its brick and sycamore buildings,…stable industries, and tradition which goes back to the Revolutionary War," while simultaneously noting the natural juxtaposition of its Midwestern "fields of corn and wheat, red barns and silos" (6).

[33] Susan Hegeman explains this thesis as one that re-configured "the pioneers into important cultural heroes [that] represented the spirit of adventure and entrepreneurship which had transformed the United States not only into a transcontinental power, but into a modern, industrialized nation" *Patterns for America: Modernism and the Concept of Culture,* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999. 71.

By constructing Winnemac in this fashion, Lewis creates an environment where commercial expansion, both industrial and agrarian, is inevitable. In this way, Winnemac represents a microcosm of what was being promoted as the ideal America at the turn of the twentieth-century, something Turner recognized as the Ohio Valley's natural role within the national construct. Turner stated that "[i]t was the Ohio Valley which forced the nation away from a narrow colonial attitude into its career as a nation among other nations with an adequate physical basis for future growth" (Turner 167). Winnemac, then, becomes an imagined embodiment of Turner's thesis, producing citizens who are engrained with a pioneer spirit by the physical environment that surrounds them.

Martin Arrowsmith is born and raised in this environment, and adapts his local culture's drive to push further into the expanding frontier just as his great-grandmother had done when she brought the family west. Warren Susman articulates Lewis' reason for this construction when he notes that "[t]hroughout the analysis of this past, the 'pioneer type' has been made the equivalent of the American type" (Susman 33)[34]. The Winnemac origin that Martin carries throughout the novel allows him to become an "everyman" as his native region is depicted as the perfect culmination of all things American, a key role for the development of Lewis's satirical critique. Martin becomes a pioneer in the frontier of medical science, a new and fast growing field in the early years of the twentieth-century. He is a character who holds his native principles of pioneering close while

[34] James Lea notes that in *Arrowsmith*, Lewis is "treating modern science in much the same way he treated the physical wilderness in *The God-Seeker* and the cultural wilderness in *Main Street* – that is, as an untracked space in which man could leave prints as deep and as permanent as he could make them. Martin Arrowsmith remains the regional pioneer in this open domain." – "Sinclair Lewis and the implied America," *Critical Essays on Sinclair Lewis*. Boston, MA: G.K.Hall & Co., 1986. 191.

throwing himself into the absorption and consequent promotion of modern medicine and its advantages.

In choosing the Ohio Valley as the originating region for the novel, and creating Winnemac as the state in which American ideals and values appear to come together, Lewis constructs a region that is (at least on the surface) a physical representation of both Turner's Ohio Valley and the cultural values of a modernized mass culture. Because Martin is raised and then educated in Winnemac, the text (like *Absalom, Absalom!* of Quentin) establishes Martin as the space within the narrative where the values of the region (the values of an imaginary area that acts to represent the politicized "American" culture) are created and stored. Martin can then transfer these values across imagined boundaries that only come to fruition through an opposition to Martin and his modernized culture. Unlike Faulkner, who presents Quentin's narrative within the dichotomy of a recognized North-South antithesis, Lewis takes all of the "positive" aspects promoted by the new mass culture, and places them (through the vessel of Martin's character) within the regions of the Midwest, North, and finally the South. Each region then rejects the very values that were seen as the means to nationalize the U.S. during the earlier part of the twentieth-century.

What the Ohio Valley possessed as an advantage (according to Turner) is a history of setting "the course of our national progress" through issues of public domain, roads and canals, tariffs, banking, and interstate commerce (Turner 170). Lewis understood this role as Turner explained it, and exploits it by questioning the commercial fascination of America in the early decades of the century. Nowhere in the novel is this

critique of America's commercial desires more evident than in the description of the University of Winnemac:

> There are twelve thousand students;…The University has a baseball field under glass; its buildings are measured by the mile; it hires hundreds of young Doctors of Philosophy to give rapid instruction in Sanskrit, navigation, accountancy, spectacle-fitting, sanitary engineering, Provencal poetry, tariff schedules, rutabaga-growing, motor-car designing, the history of Voronezh, the style of Matthew Arnold,…and department-store advertising…and Winnemac was the first school in the world to conduct its extension courses by radio. (Lewis 6)

Although the passage is classic Lewis satire, the University represents the growing American fascination for all things excessive. Lewis notices the trend in the emerging mass market society to bypass economically conservative lifestyles, and instead exploit the apparent unlimited amount of monetary freedoms. It's a theme that repeats itself throughout the narrative as Martin continuously attempts to dodge commercial success in order to dedicate himself fully to his research. He is repeatedly confronted with the temptations of economic prosperity through a commercialized version of medical practices which he sees as detrimental to the aims of pure research.

By establishing early on that Winnemac is America personified, Lewis satirically recognizes the rising national culture that was developing. At the same time, his protagonist actually moves in reverse direction of the national procession West as he makes his way professionally from the rural Dakotas, through the emerging Great Lakes region, and eventually into New York before ending the novel secluded in Vermont. Martin's journey through the different regions allows Lewis to diversify the American experience Winnemac originally represents, and it gives Martin the opportunity to grow

into the hero he becomes at the end of the novel by moving in and out of the different stages of national growth.

The Significance of the Midwest in Arrowsmith

Unlike Faulkner, who takes Quentin (the symbol of an outdated Southern idealism) and places him in the heart of the Northeast, Lewis establishes a character devoid of any specific regional stereotype, and distributes him across the sectional landscape of the U.S. Martin is meant to represent the national ideal of an American in accordance with the rhetoric of the early mass media movement and the push for a national homogeneous ideal, reversing the effects of regional traits commuting across imagined borders as it is the values of the conglomerated mass market culture that is moving between regions. Arrowsmith's travels lead him through every facet of a developing U.S. wherein each section represents not only the numerous sub-cultures that make up America, but simultaneously work actively in Martin's professional development, creating a commentary that works to expose the corruption of America's new commercially centered capitalist society while at the same time exposing Martin to different regional concepts of American culture.

How *Arrowsmith* deals with this transition between cultures is directly seen in Martin and his career. Martin's greatest failures[35] come in areas of America where industrialization and a cult of abundance have either yet to establish a viable stronghold

[35] Lucy Lockwood Hazard comments on Martin's failures by noting that "*Arrowsmith* is a record of many failures – and of an unquenchable idealism that frustrated all attempts of environment, all resolves of Arrowsmith himself to stifle it and play the game the easy popular way that leads to the approbation of his fellows, to immediate results and publicity and profits." *The Frontier in American Literature*. New York, NY: Fredrick Ungar Publishing Co., 1961. 282.

on the local subculture, or in an area where commercial success in the wake of a mass market boom has just recently been realized. The first comes in Wheatsylvania, North Dakota, where Martin establishes himself as the town physician, and loses a young girl to what he diagnoses as diphtheria. In these brief few pages of the novel, Lewis pits Martin's scientific education against the cold realities of a rural setting where modern medicine has yet to penetrate.

When Martin first diagnoses the child, he is confronted by a barrage of images from the past: "Silva the healer bulked in the room, crowding out Gottlieb the inhuman perfectionist…He felt helpless without the equipment of Zenith General, its nurses and Angus Duer's sure advice…He had a sudden respect for the lone country doctor" (Lewis 157). It's at this moment when Martin understands that the science of modern medicine must give way to the humanity of being a caregiver. It's a stark contrast for Martin as he has been trained that research is king while practice is menial.

In "*Arrowsmith* and the Political Economy of Medicine," James Hutchisson calls the novel a "critique of [a] suspect alliance between medicine and capitalism, an analysis of what was arguably the pivotal historical moment in the development of modern medicine," which offers a reliable reason for Martin's failure as a country doctor (Hutchisson 111). In a new modern world that was changing from a personal "comforter in time of need" to a "more impersonal health care system that furthered the goals of capitalism," the doctor-role that Martin assumes in Wheatsylvania has already become outdated by the university system, as evident when he tries to apply modern medical practices to the rural space Wheatsylvania occupies (Hutchisson 111). By noting that

"Sylva[36] the healer bulked in the room" and that Martin missed the "equipment of Zenith General, its nurses and Angus Duer's[37] sure advice," Lewis reinforces Martin as a product of the "new" medicine, leaving him clueless to the needs of a rural community that was unfamiliar with his more modern approach to practicing medicine.

Martin's failure, then, becomes a natural rejection of the new medicine by the rural sub-cultures to which Martin is trying to apply. When the child dies, the mother exclaims to Arrowsmith "[y]ou killed her with that needle thing! And not even tell us so we could call the Priest!"(160). Lewis uses the mother's lament as a moment to expose the rural community's ignorance to modern medicine and its newer practices by using the mother's specific pointing to the needle as the object of her child's demise. She immediately follows her blame of the needle with a reference to the inability to call a priest in, motioning to the fact that not only did Martin's modern instrument take the child's life, but it has now jeopardized the girl's afterlife. This leaves Martin understanding that he made the wrong choice (both in the girl's case and in taking up a practice in a region where he is unfamiliar with how the culture operates). He tells his wife Leora afterwards "I shall never practice medicine again. I'm through. I'm no good. I should have operated" (Lewis 160). Martin understands that he has made an error in judgment on a larger scale than just the little girl. He knows he must abandon modern technique if he is going to succeed in his new rural setting.

[36] Arrowsmith's Dean who holds traditional medicine as more valuable than research.
[37] Martin's opposite (and arch-rival while in Medical school) who values commercial success in Medicine

Martin finds success only when he abandons his rigid stance against practicing non-modern medicine and adopting the traditional ways of rural medical practices. This moment comes when he saves a child from choking while on a fishing trip:

> He had gone fishing, in the spring. As he passed a farmhouse a woman ran out shrieking that her baby had swallowed a thimble and was choking to death. Martin had for a surgical kit a large jack-knife. He sharpened it on the farmer's oilstone, sterilized it in the tea-kettle, operated on the baby's throat, and saved its life. (Lewis 163)

Afterward, Martin cures a hypochondriac by accidentally overdosing her, and once she recovers, she tells the whole town of her miraculous salvation at the hands of Dr. Arrowsmith (Lewis 163).

When Martin becomes dissatisfied at having to conform to this more rural practice, he seeks out another local doctor with whom he can "talk of his work." After asking his colleague Hesselink if the doctor finds it hard to stay up to date with medical developments when all he has is "routine practice among a lot of farmers," the response Martin receives is disheartening for his ambitions:

> You think that if you were only in the city with libraries and medical meetings and everything, you'd develop. Well I don't know of anything to prevent your studying at home!...Personally, I'm extremely well satisfied. My people pay me an excellent living wage, they appreciate my work, and they honor me by election to the schoolboard. I find that a good many of these farmers think a lot harder and squarer than the swells I meet in the city. (Lewis 168)

This moment becomes pivotal for Martin as he finds new reason to remove himself from the area and return to his first love of research. He understands that the old ways of rural life and secluded regional differentiation are dying, giving way to a more homogeneous

national ideal built on new technologies. But he also understands that he must leave the rural Midwest to achieve his professional ambitions until modern technology has a chance to re-invent the small town culture. He tells Leora that he has "learned a little something. I've failed here. I've antagonized too many people…I know what I can do! Gottlieb saw it! And I want to get to work" (Lewis 188). In the passage, Martin admits his inability to cope with the locals and the small town practice which leads him back to a desire for pure research. This want for change lands Martin and Leora in the Iowa city of Nautilus where Martin becomes the second full time physician in the city's public clinic.

However, the Nautilus portion of the novel exposes the more ridiculous nature of medical practice and an overly saturated culture of "better health" while Martin is introduced to several forms of political corruption for the first time. Martin's boss, Dr. Pickerbaugh, is presented as a large, boisterous man who uses poetry to convey messages of better health as well as exploiting his standing in the community as a means to establish a political career. Pickerbaugh represents what Hutchinson argues as a motivation to further science in order to reap the rewards of political gain. Because of Pickerbaugh's deep relationship with the community, many of the local industries are able to skirt (or even ignore) health policies in order to protect losses. An example of this is seen when Martin discovers a potential outbreak of streptococcus at the Klopchuk dairy. When Martin demands to Pickerbaugh that they quarantine an infected worker and three cows while additionally closing the dairy until all signs if the disease are gone, Pickerbaugh responds, "[n]onsense!, Why that's the cleanest place in the city" and then asks "[c]an't we just treat the fellow that has the strep infection and not make everybody

uncomfortable?" (Lewis 239). Martin realizes that the dire matter of a breakout is not going to convince Pickerbaugh to further investigate the situation without playing to his boss's future ambitions, and makes the aside to Pickerbaugh "[a]ll right, if you want a bad epidemic here, toward the end of your campaign!" (Lewis 239). After a short protest, Pickerbaugh agrees to having someone else come in and run tests again. The results, which confirm Martin's warning, leads to the dairy being closed down for a short period of time while Martin and Pickerbaugh treat the infected victims.

The incident, instead of helping Martin's career as a trusted physician, acts as a detriment to Martin and his public standing. The owner of the factory, Mr. Klopchuk, assumes that Martin has a political motivation behind his insistence of closing the plant, and informs many others in Nautilus that "this fellow Arrowsmith was in the pay of labor-union thugs" (Lewis 240). However, once Pickerbaugh is elected to Congress and a new head of the clinic is needed, Martin becomes the benefactor of crooked politics (much to his blissful ignorance), an act that he himself condemns in other portions of the novel. As Klopchuk leads a campaign to block his appointment, Martin goes to his friend Tredgold and worries, "[d]o the people want me? Shall I fight Jordon or get out?" to which his friend replies, "[f]ight? I own a good share of the bank that's lent various handy little sums to Mayor Pugh. You leave it to me" (Lewis 255). Martin gets the appointment as "acting director," yet Lewis notes the fact "[t]hat he had been put in by… 'crooked politics' did not occur to him" (255). The occurrences that surround the dairy farm incident, and the implications and active participation of corrupt politics that come from the incident, act within the narrative as a means to place political capital before the

health of the community. Pickerbaugh's healthy city, which had become the poster child of his campaign for Congress, is revealed as no different than any other major city in the nation with its corrupted local government controlled by a few elite citizens.

Probably the most telling portion of the Nautilus section comes at Pickerbaugh's "Health Fair," which on the surface takes the appearance of benefitting the community. It actually becomes a tool for successfully electing Pickerbaugh to Congress, but Lewis uses it to distinctly point out the tarnish right beneath Nautilus's gold plated community with the Eugenic family:

> They were father, mother and five children, all so beautiful and powerful that they had recently been presenting refined acrobatic exhibitions on the Chautauqua Circuit. None of them smoked, drank, spit upon pavements, used foul language, or ate meat. Pickerbaugh assigned to them the chief booth on the platform once sacerdotally occupied by the Reverend Mr. Sunday. (Lewis 248)

The wholesome family, with their picturesque vision of perfectly healthy living, are exposed later by the detective sergeant who informs Pickerbaugh that "they're the Holton gang. The man and woman ain't married and only one of the kids is theirs. They've done time for selling licker to the Indians…" (249-250). Lewis continues by noting "except that once he caught the father of the Eugenic Family relieving the strain of being publicly healthy by taking a long, gurgling, ecstatic drink from a flask, Pickerbaugh found nothing wrong in their conduct" (250). The ironic position of the Eugenic family as the portrait of a healthy family is a microcosmic vision of Nautilus and its community. The larger than life health director who uses the clinic to build powerful alliances within the community in order to further a political career; the control of the mayor through bank ties; the

private tarnishing of Martin by the non-unionized businesses after Martin does his job successfully and threatens capital gain; these are all moments that expose the picturesque city as a corrupted space that has turned the newly realized mass media outlet into a propaganda tool used as a cover for its corruption. Lewis uses the Eugenics to show how thin the cover is, as well as how Pickerbaugh is more ignorant of his community than he publically shows.

Martin, inevitably, is forced to leave Nautilus after all of the different political factions in Nautilus turn against him and destroy his public image. Lewis's hero, who is meant to represent the new modern American, is rejected again. His ideas of free public health are turned into socialist tendencies by the ruling medical class of Nautilus leaving Martin as unpatriotic and a detriment to the community. In the end, Martin is led away because of corrupt democratic capitalism in a city where his only loyal followers are the poor who have no political power to defend him properly.

However, Martin's greatest failure comes at the expense of his wife Leora and her death at the hands of bubonic plague. Where Wheatsylvania shows how Susman's "culture of abundance" has no place within the rural Midwest, and Nautilus becomes a commentary on the ease of political corruption within the growing population of a mass market society, Arrowsmith's trip south into the tropics becomes a symbol of how the South as a region was understood as a waste land riddled with amorality and disease. Natalie Ring's article "Inventing the Tropical South: Race Region, and the Colonial Model" reflects the reasons for Lewis's perception of the South and his associating it with a tropical space:

> Americans located the U.S. South and many foreign countries as deviant geographical spaces in the broader transatlantic world. Ironically, this complicated the project of reconciliation between the New South and the modern industrializing North at the turn of the century. The development of what might be called a Southern neo-orientalism rendered the process of sectional reunification – the formation of a homogenous nation-state – unstable.

Although Martin has to travel to the literal tropics to find a case of plague large enough to test his new bacterio-phage, the physical move South by Arrowsmith is congruent with the symbolism of the rest of the novel: He must deal with the challenges of the traditional figure of the country doctor in a rural setting, the most newly rural setting at the time of the novel being the upper Midwest. He serves time in a newly emerging metropolis that is being constructed in the image of the new national ideal, represented by his time in Nautilus where he is exposed to political corruption as a result of the new commercially driven culture. His final appointment is to the McGurk institute in New York, the commercial center of the U.S. where Hutchisson's argument of commercialized medicine is fully realized[38]. The fact that he must travel South to participate in his greatest failure of the novel simply reflects Lewis's continuing critique of the "New America" that was emerging. Martin must attempt to introduce modern science into the nation's most degraded and unstable region represented by an island constructed textually by a group of regional stereotypes.

[38] In *The Rise of Sinclair Lewis, 1920-1930*, James Hutchisson documents that Martin's character was loosely based on Dr. Paul De Kruif, who (after publishing the book *Our Medicine Men* which mocked some of his former colleagues) had been fired from the Rockefeller Institute in New York. De Kruif became Lewis's main source of medical research for the book, and it is the McGurk Institute of the novel that represents De Kruif's former employer.

Death in a Tropical South

As noted in the previous chapter, Quentin Compson's death in New England represented the Southern perception of the North and how a perceived nostalgic past was being washed away by a New England based national culture. With Lewis and his novel, the opposite critique is in play. The South becomes a region where progress and advances in technology die, disclosing the South as a region where industrialization is needed in order for the new mass culture to fulfill unification of the nation. Edward Ayers notes that when Americans look to the South, they rarely portray the region as industrial or modern; instead "it appears as the tropical corner of the nation, as the Latin America of North America" (73). Natalie Ring adds that a "transnational circulation of colonial discourses and models of rule and reform encouraged American cultural imperialists to construct the U.S. South as a tropical space in need of colonial uplift, much like the tropical possessions acquired as a result of American imperialism" (620)[39].

In the space of the fictional St. Hubert, Lewis creates a cultural model based heavily on the perceptions of the South with its old world charm, racial consciousness, and tropical climate. Physically, the South is the only region that is omitted from the novel. The North and Midwest play major physical roles, and the West is recognized through verbal acknowledgement and its invoked pioneer tradition. In the same text, however, the South is never mentioned (even in passing conversation) nor is it understood to exist within the narrative's frame. And so, when Martin decides to test his

[39] See also Randy Boyagoda, "Just Where and What Is 'the (Comparatively Speaking) South'?: Caribbean Writers on Melville and Falkner," *Mississippi Quarterly* 57.1 (2003-2004) 65-73; Vera M. Kutzinski, "Borders, Bodies, and Regions: The United States and the Caribbean," *A Companion to The Regional Literatures of America*. Ed. Charles L. Crow. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003. 171-191;

newly discovered bacterio-phage in the Caribbean, it is clear that Lewis is projecting the understood stereotypes of an entire region (the South) onto one small convenient space allowing it to take the place of a region that Lewis had little knowledge about.

Ignorance of the South is manifested through Martin himself when he arrives in St. Hubert and meets the first named black character of the novel, Dr. Marchand:

> Martin was perplexed by their first caller. He was a singularly handsome young Negro, quick moving, intelligent of the eye. Like most white Americans, Martin had talked a great deal about the inferiority of Negroes and had learned nothing whatever about them. (Lewis 369)

After they discuss the state of the island and Martin's plans for his test of the phage, the black doctor exits, leaving Martin to exclaim "I never thought a Negro doctor – I wish people wouldn't keep showing me how much I don't know!" (370). Martin's small epiphany and reconstruction of the racial construct as he understood it echoes Duck's argument that narratives of Southern culture in the early twentieth-century "reveal some of the contradictions in U.S. nationalism, which seeks to facilitate passionate attachment to a political entity" (36). The fact that the first named black character of the novel appears only when Martin goes south adds to the narrative's ignorance of the region and its culture by insinuating the idea that black's can only be found in the South.

Ring notes that the South, after being constructed in the national discourse as a tropical region, took on the role of harboring deadly tropical diseases due to its heavy black population:

> In the U.S. South, the significant presence of African Americans – almost ninety percent of the total black population in the United States through the first decade

> of the twentieth century – reinforced the idea of a pathological disease-carrying region of non-white people. The confluence of race, place, and disease animated the discursive interpretations of tropical geographies. (629)

In the novel, St. Hubert is depicted as an island where blacks make up the majority of the population and victims of the plague. Throughout the section, Lewis weaves the word "black" in and out of the text, keeping the mind of the reader focused on the blackness of both the disease and the majority that are being affected by it: he notes the port of St. Hubert as being called "Blackwater" (362); the reference of a coal yard where "here was the stillness not of sleep but of an ancient death" and near it a "plaster house hung with black crape" (368); the "black wreathed huts, without doors, without windows, from whose recesses dark faces looked at them resentfully" (368); the "colored driver," "Negro policeman," and the black doctor (368-369); the black tongue of the young "exquisite" female victim, (374); and the numerous conjuring of the plague's popular name "Black Death." The text, riddled with repeated references to the word and image of the color black, invokes a dire place where fear, confusion, and a near anarchical political system are fed by a disease for which Martin believes he has found a cure. Arrowsmith's final transfer of his instilled cultural narrative happens within the space reserved for the South: a disease ridden, backward, racially diverse region that values agrarian cultures over modernization.

The climax of the novel comes not when he cures the plague with his celebrated bacterio-phage, but when his wife Leora dies of the plague after he has abandoned her to treat the city of Carib on another part of the island. Leora actually contracts the disease from a half-smoked cigarette that has been accidently coated with the plague:

> …she fled into Martin's laboratory. It seemed filled with his jerky presence. She kept away from the flasks of plague germs, but she picked up, because it was his, a half-smoked cigarette and lighted it…there was a slight crack in her lips; and that morning, fumbling at dusting – here in the laboratory meant as a fortress against disease – a maid had knocked over a test-tube, which had trickled. The cigarette seemed dry enough, but in it there were enough plague germs to kill a regiment. (390)

The fact that it is a cigarette, coated with enough plague germs to "kill a regiment," that transmits Leora's fatal disease is Lewis's way of signifying importance with the object. Just as the needle represents the rejection of modern medical technologies in Martin's episode with the girl from Wheatsylvania, and the Eugenic family's healthy lifestyle persona acting as a cover for their fugitive status, the ironic moment of presenting a cigarette as the catalyst to Martin's greatest failure of the novel turns into Lewis's critique of how an agrarian South not only rejects Northern modernization, but forces Martin to finally abandon the pursuit of his Modern ethical code. Following Leora's death, Martin disregards practical scientific procedures, and gives his phage to everyone on the island without a control group to base his findings against. Like his acceptance of rural medical practices in Wheatsylvania, the abandonment of a control group is Martin's way of surrendering modern practices in order to better serve the region.

Leora's death from an infected cigarette exemplifies a social understanding from the period where the North and South are separated both politically and culturally. The idea that an industrial North can attempt to reinvent an agrarian South with modern technology and advanced science is rejected through the simplest product that represents a Southern agrarian tradition. Lewis, like Faulkner and Quentin's suicide in New

England, understood that as a national identity was being created, regional perceptions of "the other" caused fundamental problems in achieving a homogeneous society. The sub-cultures of the regions were resisting the move, relying on their traditional differences to become too much for a national conglomeration to overcome.

However, Lewis comes to the problem of regional relations with a mass culture at a different angle than Faulkner. His satire, which drives the novel's progression, becomes the tool in which he affectively exposes the problem of a national homogeneous ideal. As Martin moves from region to region introducing the proposed principles of the new culture, he is forced each time to surrender his modern tendencies, and instead adopt the regional values of the area. In this manner, Lewis exhibits the flaws of a commercialized mass culture and the sectional rejections of the new nationalist ideal.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION: FAULKNER AND LEWIS AND THE PROBLEM OF THE NEW MASS MARKET

Transferring Cultures Across Imagined Borders

Throughout this thesis I have argued that William Faulkner and Sinclair Lewis recognized a cultural deficit that formed in reaction to a newly realized mass market culture. This culture promoted a single national homogenous social construction that could be adopted and used within the numerous diverse regions of the nation. In response, both authors created distinct narratives that regionalized the American experience exposing the problems of a national culture in relation with local subcultures. Although Faulkner and Lewis were not the only writers that critiqued the emerging nationalism, their novels represent local reactions of opposing regions and cultures to the rapidly growing mass market culture. What Faulkner and Lewis argue in their narratives is that when "the other" is invoked, it is represented as a place where local values and histories are lost. The authors use Quentin and Martin as spaces within the narratives that act as places where knowledge is stored and transferred into different sections of the country where regional difference is critiqued.

In Quentin, the Southern myth, a nostalgic view of the Southern past, is imparted by Miss Coldfield and Qunetin's father Jason before being transferred North where the myth is evaluated and rejected by a culture that does not understand the social value it holds. With Martin, Lewis establishes a character that is born out of a

culture meant to represent a perfect conglomeration of modern America, is instilled with all of the modern knowledge of medicine and science, and is then sent out to establish this knowledge among different regions of the US. In each episode, however, Martin finds resistance to his modern science as seen when he travels to the rural Midwest and tropical South.

Regional writers, such as Lewis and Faulkner, argued against a national narrative citing the diversity of the regions as being too great to meld together as a single, homogeneous narrative. The deaths of Quentin and Leora represent lost ideals that have no place in the evolving narrative and its capitalist agenda, forcing an evaluation of the nationalist model in regards to cultural diversity among the different regions that make up the whole. The result of their representations reflects instead a model based on a patch work of local traditions that oppose each other in fundamental values.

The tension between the North, Midwest, and South in the early twentieth-century acted as a hindrance to national cohesion, and by 1930, the struggle to assimilate the South and Midwest into the industrial hegemonic culture of the Northeast produced a small critical backlashes that validated Faulkner and Lewis's concerns from a few years before. In his essay "Reconstructed but Unregenerate," John Crowe Ransom points to the effort of industrializing the South as evolving from a rejection of "Northern aggression" (as seen in the post-Civil War years) to a matter of survival. He argues that "[t]he South must be industrialized – but to a certain extent only, in moderation," and that it is up to the leadership of the Southern states to make sure that the South is "physically reconstructed" in a way that conserves the "old ways that are threatened" (22). However,

he also questions how the Southern culture will be affected in regards to allowing the Northern hegemonic ideals of industrialization to permeate the Southern political landscape:

> The question at issue is whether the South will permit herself to be so industrialized as to lose entirely her historic identity, and to remove the last substantial barrier that has stood in the way of American progressivism; or will accept industrialism, but with very bad grace, and will manage to maintain a good deal of her traditional philosophy. (22)

In Lewis's narrative, the rejection of modernization in the South reflects the concerns Ransom is conveying in his argument, while Faulkner sees the loss of the South's "historic identity" as already happening through the collapse of the traditional familial roles in Southern culture. In each case, however, there is a notable concern that the hegemonic philosophies of an industrialized Northeast (and its New England based origin tale) were progressing America towards a homogeneous state. What Faulkner and Lewis ask is not how this progression can be stopped, but instead how progression towards national conformity will affect the individual citizen in relation to local histories and cultural values. In each novel, the authors answer their questions with an understood despondency in regards to regional cultures: death was coming for the historic pasts of the nation's regions, and success within the national frame depended on acceptance within the smaller, more rural subcultures.

American writers of the period saw the values of the Victorian years of the nineteenth-century erode to a new nationalist machine that was redefining values for the nation as a whole. Lewis and Faulkner, through the deaths of Quentin Compson and

Leora Arrowsmith, recognized this trend happening. Faulkner saw a New England hegemony that threatened to replace Southern nostalgic values. Lewis saw a South and Midwest that rejected the industrialization and commercialization of the capitalist North. Both authors understood that something was being lost with the new mass market and it's Communications Revolution, and each attempted to argue that regional subcultures were quietly rebelling against this new movement towards a homogeneous national culture.

They did so while engaging with the new mass media as their outlet. All three novels that were studied within this thesis sold tremendously well, and helped to establish both writers in their time. *Arrowsmith* was awarded the Pulitzer Prize which Lewis turned down[40], and each author received the Nobel Prize for literature[41]. What is significant about these events is that both authors received tremendous recognition for these novels in a mass media age. Mass communications worked as the means by which a mass market culture could convey its values nationally. However, as Rita Barnard points out, "all artistic practices were becoming commodified or "mass" in the way they were produced, or consumed, or marketed, or distributed, or discussed" (*Great Depression* 7). So, in the end, Faulkner and Lewis's regionalism became a mass marketed idea, transferring constructed regional values across imagined boundaries and thus becoming fictional cultures that a mass market would not assimilate.

"It's better than the theatre, isn't it. It's better than Ben Hur, isn't it" (*Absalom* 176).

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[40] In his letter to the Pulitzer committee, Lewis wrote "All prizes, like all titles, are dangerous. The seekers for the prizes tend to labor not for inherent excellence but for alien rewards: they tend to write this, or timorously to avoid writing that, in order to tickle the prejudices of a haphazard committee. And the Pulitzer Prize for novels is peculiarly objectionable because the terms of it have been constantly and grievously misrepresented." - Sinclair Lewis, *Go East, Young Man.* New York, NY: Signet Classics, 2005.
[41] Lewis won in 1930; Faulkner won in 1949.

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