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### Popular modernism: representations of modernist literature in popular culture

Loontjens, J.

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## Chapter 2

### Time: Oprah's Faulkner

In the present chapter, I continue studying the assumption that today modernism has become exemplary for literary writing in general by analyzing the reappearance of another icon of modernist literature: William Faulkner. In 2005, Oprah Winfrey selected three novels by Faulkner for her book club. As Catherine Gunther Kodat writes, “the summer 2005 reading selection for Oprah Winfrey’s book club is probably the strongest (*if not also the strangest*) indicator that something is afoot” (added italics, 2007: 180). Kodat’s remark aptly illustrates the mix of wonder, praise and disdain in the reactions of scholars and literary critics to Winfrey’s book club.

As early as 1996, Winfrey started *Oprah’s Book Club*, for which she monthly selected a work by a contemporary writer until she cancelled the club in 2002. In 2003, after a break of one year, Winfrey announced that she would resume the club; only now she would select the “great” books from the canon of world literature. The first classic she chose was John Steinbeck’s *East of Eden* (1952), followed by novels such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) and Leo Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* (1877). Faulkner’s three novels were the last selection of Winfrey’s turn to the classics.

In *Reading with Oprah* (2008), Kathleen Rooney argues that Winfrey’s decision to turn to the classics was perhaps partly motivated to contest the prejudice that she chose too many feel-good books and that her audience could only digest light weight literature. It is tempting to define Oprah Winfrey as the personification of popular culture, or of what Theodor W. Adorno calls the “culture industry,” which transforms everyone into an anonymous customer; thus taking Winfrey’s selection of Faulkner’s work as a starting point for a discussion on high and low culture (2005: 200). However, instead of

emphasizing the dichotomy, I prefer to analyze how low and high culture merge; in what way Faulkner's work becomes part of Winfrey's format.<sup>72</sup>

The three novels for the book club's "A Summer of Faulkner" – *The Sound and the Fury* (1990 [1929]), *As I lay dying* (1990 [1930]), *Light in August* (1990 [1932]) – are not the most accessible ones in Faulkner's oeuvre.<sup>73</sup> Especially *The Sound and the Fury* is known for its unparalleled dense beginning. Faulkner's use of various narrators and streams of consciousnesses shows a fascination with the subjective experience of time, which often clouds clear chronology and flusters reader's expectations. In *The Sound and the Fury* measurable time is challenged, for instance, by the opening narration of Benjy, a mentally retarded boy, who does not make understandable distinctions between what happens in the present and what he remembers from the past. Time is also a recurring theme in the section narrated by the older brother Quentin, who is preoccupied with watching shadows and speculating what time these shadows indicate; he listens to clocks striking and destroys his watch, which nevertheless keeps on ticking.

Frequently, the obsession with temporality has been defined as a characteristic of modernist literature. According to Fredric Jameson the obsession marks an epochal change: he argues that the modernists were focused on time, while the postmodernists focus on space (2003: 696). Paul de Man also argues that modernists are preoccupied with time; yet, he defines this preoccupation as an inclination to forget the past and affirm the present, which concurs with the modernist wish to be radically new (1983: 148). However, de Man also emphasizes that precisely the wish to re-invent literature is accompanied by a sense of loss and mourning, which Jean-Michel Rabaté also points out as central to modernity. Like de Man, Rabaté argues that modernism is

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<sup>72</sup> The complexity of Faulkner's work has been analyzed by a vast amount of scholars and thinkers. Arthur F. Kinney states that "in the past few years, critical work on Faulkner has exceeded that of any author in English save Shakespeare" (1982: 34). Twenty-five years after Kinney wrote this, numerous other studies of Faulkner have appeared, and Faulkner's work is still undergoing re-examination. Commentary on Faulkner's use of stream of consciousness and his representation of time is too extensive to mention fully. Here follow three of many titles: Humphrey, Robert. *Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel*. Berkely: University of California Press, 1954. Kawin, Bruce F. *The Mind of the Novel: Reflexive Fiction and the Ineffable*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982. Weinstein, Philip M. *Faulkner's Subject: A Cosmos No One Owns*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

<sup>73</sup>In *Reading with Oprah* (2008), Kathleen Rooney observes that the responses of "belletrist 'professionals'" to *Oprah's Book Club* after her turn to the classics "have remained far more in the realm of sincere curiosity than self-righteous condescension" (192).

by no means a-historical; on the contrary, modernism is haunted by history (1996: 4). While Rabaté analyses the phantoms that haunt modernist writings and art, I study how modernism itself has become a ghost, or a collection of ghosts, haunting contemporary culture.

In this chapter, I particularly focus on the modernist obsession with time in Faulkner's work and on the manner in which Oprah Winfrey deals with this matter. I will not analyze the various tenses on a linguistic level; rather, I look at the role of time in Faulkner's narration and the representation of the awareness of its passing. Winfrey's focus on the present moment, which she propagates in her show and on her website, seems contradictory with the reflections on the passing of time and the ever looming past in Faulkner's fiction. Winfrey's presentism, however, conforms with the temporality generally associated with pop culture. Like postmodernism, Jameson argues, pop culture reduces the past to mere citation. Jameson claims that the postmodern era can be defined by "a consequent weakening of historicity, both in our relationship to public History and in the new forms of our private temporality" (2004: 193).

Yet, it appears that Winfrey's selection of Faulkner is largely based on a historical and political interest in a particular part of American history; the history of the segregated South. While studies such as Cecilia Konchar Farr's *Reading Oprah: How Oprah's Book Club Changed the Way America Reads* (2005) argue emphatically that Winfrey is a passionate reader and that she promotes the importance of reading, Winfrey's choice for Faulkner does not have much to do with the enjoyment of his unique style of writing, nor with his literary voice or the rhythm of his sentences, nor his use of multiple narrators, but mainly with his portrayal of racism in the southern states of America. This could be read as an affirmation of Pierre Bourdieu's well known observation that working class taste is focused on content rather than form (2010: 172 / 289). However, Winfrey's approach of Faulkner represents a way of reading that might be associated with popular culture, but which is certainly not limited to a working class way of reading.

Although Faulkner made up a fictional state that he called "Yoknapatawpha," he confided that he would always write about the "little postage stamp of native soil" that he knew so well (1980: 255). Consequently, his

novels largely show the virulence of prejudice and the violence of racism and sexism in the southern states of America.<sup>74</sup> On the webpage “The South and the Fury,” on Oprah.com, Thadious Davis argues: “In the best-case scenario, we can say that Faulkner, born in 1897, was a product of his time and place, the Mississippi of his birth and heritage.”<sup>75</sup> By beginning this sentence with the cautionary words “in the best case scenario,” Davis refers not only to the racist characters in his work but also to Faulkner’s biography.<sup>76</sup> Similarly, Winfrey often focuses on the life and hardships of the author or the fictional characters instead of on the literary qualities of the books. Consequently, she has often been blamed for integrating the books of her book club too much into the rhetoric of the rest of her show.<sup>77</sup>

Though Winfrey includes his novels in her passionate rhetoric about literature and American history, his work nevertheless reappears as a ghostly figure in the unfamiliar surroundings of her format. In Faulkner’s work reflections on time are inextricably bound up with harsh confrontations with death or memories of the dead. For Winfrey, however, death is a highly sanitized event, which generally does not intrude upon her presentism; perhaps only as a reminder that one should live in the present because one never knows when life will end. If a ghost is something that is present and not present, dead and alive, Faulkner’s work may be seen to take on precisely such a role on Oprah.com, as if the work itself is reluctant in the face of its own representation. The novels remain radically other in the context of Winfrey’s show and website, almost as if

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<sup>74</sup> Simultaneously, the most memorable and goodhearted characters in his books, the few persons in Faulkner’s oeuvre that are not corrupted, are mostly black; for instance, the nanny and servant Dilsey in *The Sound and the Fury*, about whom Faulkner said in an interview: “Dilsey is one of my own favorite characters because she is brave, courageous, generous, gentle and honest. She’s much more brave and honest and generous than me” (1994: 232).

<sup>75</sup><http://www.oprah.com/oprahbookclub/Faulkner-101-Race-in-the-Novels-of-William-Faulkner>

<sup>76</sup> Davis continues: “He did not believe in the equality of black people, and during the school desegregation battles, he sided with those who would prevent blacks from gaining access to ‘White Only’ schools. He knew black people as servers and laborers, but not as equals. And yet, being a product of his times also meant that he shared intimate space with black people, including his childhood nanny, whom he called ‘Mammy’ until her death in 1940.” As I will discuss in chapter three, author’s lives are increasingly exposed in relation to their work; a tendency from which long-dead authors are not excluded.

<http://www.oprah.com/oprahbookclub/Faulkner-101-Race-in-the-Novels-of-William-Faulkner>

<sup>77</sup> In “Faulkner and ‘Faulkner,’” Kodat discusses the tendency among a former generation of literary scholars to dismiss Faulkner as “simply racist” or as the “Dead White Male of the so-called culture wars” (2003: 189).

they are only there because a book club cannot avoid modernist literature if it takes itself seriously. Hence, Faulkner's work appears as this phantom of modernism, the symbol of high literature.<sup>78</sup>

After Winfrey announced her book club selection "A Summer of Faulkner," on June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2005, she decided not to dedicate the usual televised segment to this particular reading. Instead she offered extensive background information on her website Oprah.com, including video lectures by Faulkner scholars Thadious Davis, Arnold Weinstein and Robert Hamblin.<sup>79</sup> In one of those video lectures, the Director of the Center of Faulkner Studies, Robert Hamblin, gives advice about how best to approach a Faulkner novel. His first tip is "Be Patient." He starts by comparing Faulkner's work with a suspense or mystery story or a jury trial. Considering the framework of Winfrey's website, his advice fits Winfrey's habit of absorbing the erratic into the general, combining uniqueness and normality, individuality and mass audiences. However, Hamblin succeeds in anticipating at least two senses of time: firstly, the reader's experience of time – one should be patient and "willing to suspend the need for instant gratification" – and secondly, Faulkner's use of time, which includes "varying and sometimes contradictory testimonies" of the same event.<sup>80</sup>

The idea that one should imagine to be a detective or a juror, as Hamblin argues, "knowing that finally you'll have to make up your own mind about what actually happened and who is and is not telling the truth," touches on another aspect of Faulkner's work: the epistemological dominant. In *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987), McHale distinguishes between a modernist and a postmodernist dominant, arguing that the modernist dominant is preoccupied with epistemological ways of relating to the world, concerning questions such as:

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<sup>78</sup> In studying the role of death in Faulkner's work I make use of Martin Heidegger's theory, as well as of Walter Benjamin's; especially Benjamin's relevant analysis of the connection between the changing face of death and the decline of storytelling.

<sup>79</sup> The website also provides numerous links to other pages where the curious reader can find more information on the book or the author. In line with the mode of presentation my focus is on Winfrey's website instead of her show. Unfortunately, however, a large part of the Faulkner archive on Oprah.com disappeared when Oprah.com was restyled in July 2008. Before its restyling, the web visitor could also engage in a Q&A with the professors on the website, where long and thorough answers of the professors to earlier questions could be read as well.

<sup>80</sup> The video lectures disappeared after the restyling of Oprah.com in 2008. However, the text by Hamblin can still be read at the website: <http://www.oprah.com/oprahsbookclub/Faulkner-101-How-to-Read-William-Faulkner/2>

“How can I interpret this world of which I am a part? And what am I in it?” (9).<sup>81</sup> The postmodernist dominant, instead, focuses on the mode of being of the world itself: “Which world is this? What is to be done in it?” (10). Epistemological questions are inescapably interconnected with questions of time, at least with the interior experience of time, represented by streams of consciousness. Faulkner’s use of streams of consciousness has frequently been associated with the French philosopher Henry Bergson’s concept of subjective time. However, McHale, like Hamblin, compares Faulkner’s novels with detective stories, arguing that the logic of the detective is primordially concerned with questions of knowing.<sup>82</sup>

While modernist writers turned away from realist descriptions of an assumed objective reality, Jameson argues that postmodernists return to the object world, the “exterior reality” (2003: 697). Yet, after the exploration of interior logic in modernity the world is transformed into a scattered exteriority. In this fragmented world, the present consists of a being present with oneself, something that Winfrey calls the “most important gift you can have.” This presence does not concern a thorough understanding of the self; rather, it entails a conscious presence with the space one inhabits, one’s body. The “now” should be experienced as new at each moment. Such a frantic focus on the present not only implies a particular take on time, but also the ability to switch from one opinion to the next, from one belief or identity to the next. It implies that one can leave one’s past behind, as Winfrey recommends we do, and change opinion, taste, and identity from one moment to the next. Hence, it is not a contradiction when, on the one hand, Winfrey advertises for products and on the other hand dedicates shows and lectures to spirituality, convincing her audience not to attach oneself to material acquisitions. Likewise, she can praise Faulkner’s books

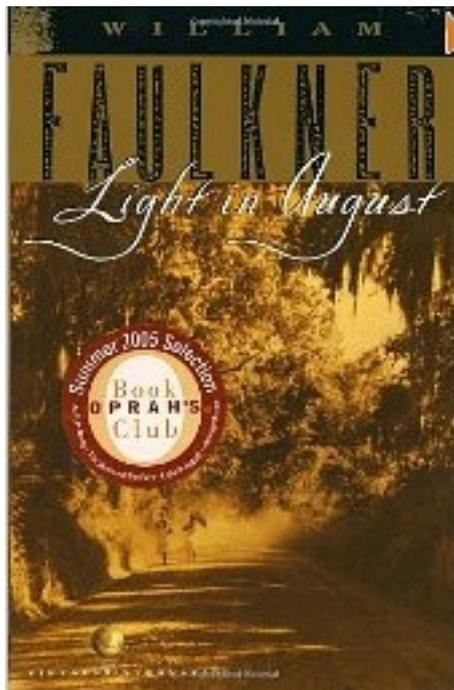
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<sup>81</sup> Debrah Raschke writes: “Repeatedly, within a variety of venues, modernism has been defined as manifesting epistemological uncertainty” (2004: 103). Michael Levenson also defines modernism by the “disintegration of stable balanced relations between subject and object” (1984: 22).

<sup>82</sup> McHale argues that Faulkner’s novel *Absalom, Absalom!* is verging from modernist to postmodernist fiction. He writes that the novel “has been designated to raise just such epistemological questions ...; Its logic is that of a detective story, the epistemological genre *par excellence*” (9). However, in chapter 8 of *Absalom, Absalom!*, McHale observes a shift in the dominant, moving from “problems of *knowing*” to “problems of *modes of being*” (10).

as enthusiastically as self-help books.<sup>83</sup> Such transitory values are emblematic for what Giorgio Agamben calls the disappearance of “experience,” referring to Walter Benjamin’s analysis of modernity (2007: 15-17).

Akin to Winfrey’s ability of combining almost opposite topics, she succeeds in simultaneously propagating her presentism and foregrounding the history of slavery and racism in the founding and developing of the United States. Hence, I start this chapter with an analysis of the different historical periods that Faulkner and Winfrey represent and of how Winfrey relates to the history with which Faulkner’s novels are concerned. Through my discussion of their different temporalities, connected to their historical periods and the varied relations to the passing of time and death, the subjective experience of time repeatedly appears as an essential part of texts that belong to the realm of literature.



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<sup>83</sup> In *Oprah Winfrey and the Glamour of Misery*, Eva Illouz argues that if Oprah’s talk show is amoral it is so “not because it has forsaken morality but, to the contrary, because it contains *all* moralities” (2003: 76).

### *Live Your Best Life*

Oprah Winfrey's best-known slogan is: "Live Your Best life." If one accesses her website or receives her newsletter, this slogan appears at the top.<sup>84</sup> This immediately creates a curious contrast with the presentation of Faulkner's novels. For, in Faulkner's novels, the characters are utterly unable to escape from the forces in their lives – political, racial and economical. The entrapment of the characters in their conditions is the result of rigorous social categories that do not allow for ambiguity. If there seems any possibility to escape in Faulkner's fiction, or if there is any uncertainty considering a character's race, sexual preference, descent or moral standards, it leads to severe distrust and often to violence.

The protagonist Joe Christmas, in *Light in August* (1990 [1932]), for instance, does not know if he is white or black. He looks white, yet rumors have it that he has black blood. Eventually he is killed as an "uppity nigger." In *The Sound and the Fury* (1990 [1929]), the suffocation of the proper rules of conduct is represented by Caddy, who is callously sent away by her mother after she has given birth to a child without being married. Caddy is not allowed to ever see her child.<sup>85</sup> What interests me is how Winfrey includes her discussion of Faulkner's work and the fate of the fictional characters in her rhetoric of change and self-improvement.<sup>86</sup>

Winfrey propagates her belief that in order to live one's best life, one has to take responsibility and live in the "now." On her website, she writes:

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<sup>84</sup> At least, the slogan used to appear at the top until 2009. Now, it is often included in a text or announcement.

<sup>85</sup> Faulkner's presentation of women has often been called misogynist. Caroline Carvill sums up the responses of critics, who argue that "he negatively presents women who move outside their 'proper role,' that he uses the traditional views of the Old South and Southern women to uphold the system" (2004: 218). However, I concur with Carvill when she resists any simple categorization and argues that the large amount of different opinions about the representation of women in Faulkner's work actually shows how varied his portrayals of women are. Furthermore, Carvill argues, "the paradoxical position of women in the South (both on the pedestal and inferior) creates similarly paradoxical patterns of representation in Faulkner's fiction" (231).

<sup>86</sup> The election of Barack Obama as president was an immense support for and a strong confirmation of Winfrey's decree that one should never give up hope and her belief in *change*, the word that dominated Obama's campaign. The message that Winfrey sent around via her *Mission Calendar Inspiration* on November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2008, one day after Obama was elected, was an aphorism by the Buddhist woman monk Pema Chödrön: "This very moment is the perfect teacher, and, lucky for us, it's with us wherever we are." If the moment in which we live indeed is the perfect teacher, the day that Obama was elected was an extraordinary example and provided Winfrey with even stronger motives to propagate the idea that the past will be redeemed.

You will notice that there's a resounding theme I often speak of in this column: Live in the moment and treasure every breath. I know for sure that to be present with yourself is the most important gift you can have. Appreciate *now*, so that the next hour and the next year don't slip away unnoticed. Every moment matters.<sup>87</sup>

For Winfrey the *now* is not a tiny present: on the contrary, it is an everlasting moment. On the one hand she claims that being present with yourself adds a value to life that enhances the experienced present time; on the other hand, she promises, slightly paradoxically, that through being present to yourself "the next hour and the next year don't slip away unnoticed." The appreciation of the "now" stretches into the future, consisting of an endless now that has to be valued as such. This shows that there is a hierarchy in Winfrey's temporality: the present is granted the most important place, followed by the future, consisting of present moments to come, whereas the past lags behind, having lost all potentiality of becoming present.

Since Winfrey's presentism can hardly be seen as a preoccupation with time, rather as an attempt to forget time, her choice for Faulkner is hard to understand. Yet, what clearly interests Winfrey is the specific history that Faulkner's novels represent: the history of the segregated South. In Faulkner's work one can read how racism operated on different levels: the way in which white people talked about black people becomes dreadfully clear. In that sense, Winfrey's selection of Faulkner cannot be seen separately from the role of Toni Morrison's appearances on *Oprah*. On Oprah.com, Philip Weinstein writes: "The novels of Toni Morrison and William Faulkner join together to form the most remarkable meditations on race written by American novelists in the century just ended."<sup>88</sup> Winfrey's discussion of Morrison's books has been frequently analyzed as an "important merger of 'high' art with 'low' media," as well as a merger of separate white and black readerships, John Young argues (2001: 182). While Morrison's novel *Paradise* "generated some of the lowest ratings for any

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<sup>87</sup> <http://www.oprah.com/omagazine/May-2005-What-Oprah-Knows-for-Sure>

<sup>88</sup> <http://www.oprah.com/oprahbookclub/Faulkner-101-Toni-Morrison-and-William-Faulkner>

'Oprah' book," Young writes, Winfrey selected another book by Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, reassuring her audience that this book is the "'shortest' and 'simplest' of [Morrison's] books" (2001: 194).

The question of race in Faulkner's work is inextricably bound up with the protagonists' incapacity to undergo or accept anything unexpected or unknown. Regarding Faulkner's representation of the Civil War, Cleanth Brooks argues that the issues of this war were "too complicated to be accommodated under the rubric 'a crusade to free the slaves'" (1979: 271). He quotes Faulkner's character Isaac McCaslin in *Go Down, Moses*, who observes that the Southerners

had fought for four years and lost to preserve [slavery] ... not because they were opposed to freedom as freedom but for the old reasons for which man (not the generals and the politicians but man) has always fought and died in wars: to preserve a status quo ... (271)

This fragment suggests that racist thought is a symptom of the fear of change. When fearing change, one fears the unknown future, wishing that the future will be similar to the past, a wish that is dominant in the lives of many of Faulkner's protagonists. In *The Sound and the Fury*, for instance, Quentin's obsession with time and his inability to cope with the deflowering of his sister can be explained as an inability to manage any sort of change, which enhances the sense of entrapment in his state of being.<sup>89</sup>

One of the earliest reflections on the dominance of the past in Faulkner's work is Jean-Paul Sartre's essay "On *The Sound and the Fury*: Time in the Work of Faulkner" (1994 [1947]). Sartre argues that "in Faulkner's work there is never any progression, never anything which comes from the future" (266). He contests Faulkner's focus on the past by referring to Heidegger, who describes the future as "the silent force of the possible" (271). Sartre argues that we can only understand the present by projecting what it will be in the future. Whereas Sartre in his essay uses Heidegger's philosophy to tackle what he calls Faulkner's "metaphysics," I am inclined instead to read the reflections expressed in

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<sup>89</sup> As Richard C. Moreland discusses in *Faulkner and Modernism* (1990), Faulkner's temporality has largely been analyzed as focused on and disturbed by the past, represented, for instance, by Faulkner's frequent use of repetition.

Faulkner's fiction as agreeing with Heidegger's philosophy of time and being, as we will see below.

Though Faulkner's characters often are obsessed with the past and "an interesting and, indeed, symptomatic lack of discussion has dwelt upon the construction of the future in [Faulkner's] novels," as Patrick O'Donnel writes in his article "Faulkner's Future Tense," the future is not as categorically absent in Faulkner's work as Sartre suggests (2003:107). In *The Sound and the Fury*, Jason, for instance, secretly saves the money he steals from Quentin for a future purpose, and in *As I Lay Dying* the daughter Dewey Dell is extremely worried about her future, since she is pregnant and attempts to find a doctor who can perform an abortion. However dark and prone to failure and unhappiness, both examples imply projections of the present into the future. Hence, in my point of view, it is not so much the future but rather the hope of and the belief in a *better* future that is absent.<sup>90</sup>

Brooks argues that Sartre's analysis might well apply to Quentin in *The Sound and the Fury*, but not to most of Faulkner's characters. Brooks suggests a more "accurate way of stating the truth that inheres in Sartre's view ... : man's very freedom is bound up with his sense of having some kind of future. Unless he can look ahead to the future, he is not free" (1963: 329). He continues that, for instance, the impeded brother Benjy who "is locked almost completely into a timeless present, ... has not much more sense of time than an animal has, and therefore he possesses not much more freedom than an animal does" (329). Brooks is right to associate awareness of time with freedom.<sup>91</sup> In fact, this sense of freedom, the ability to reflect on the future and the past and to create one's

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<sup>90</sup>According to O'Donnel, Agamben's theory of the modern experience of time is reflected in Faulkner's future tense. O'Donnel interprets Faulkner's sense of time and future as one that Agamben describes in "Critique of the Instant and the Continuum" (1993). In this essay, however, Agamben analyses how the Greek experience of time has dominated Western representation of time. However, as I see it, the representation of atomized instances that O'Donnel finds in Faulkner's work is disconnected from a clear perspective on the future. Moreover, even if Faulkner's characters project a simulation of an epoch against the screen of atomized instances, as O'Donnel argues, Faulkner's characters remain entrapped by their past, while the modern loss of experience that Agamben defines is a result of the immersion in everyday meaningless events; in the "'banality' of the quotidian" (16). Because of the engagement with rather meaningless everyday events, experience has become "something one can only undergo but never have" (38). In my point of view, Winfrey's show and website mirror this dedication to the everyday far more than Faulkner's novels. However, this might also be a point where Winfrey and Faulkner meet.

<sup>91</sup> Brooks's comments on Sartre's essay in fact come closer to Heidegger's theory than Sartre's own use of Heidegger.

own stories, is crucial not only for man, but especially for literature.<sup>92</sup>

As we will see later in this chapter, Walter Benjamin argues that ambiguity and amplitude of meanings in a story also entails a form of freedom: the openness that is needed to find with each reading a different truth. Although Benjamin observes a lack of such freedom in novels, I venture to say that fiction is necessarily preoccupied with such an openness and the awareness of changing meanings in time, since fiction always includes various modes of time at once. To mention a few senses of time that merge in literature: the narrator's presence in a particular period of time, the narrator's perspective on a certain time, the story's temporality, the reader's presence in (historical) time that is passing while reading. In short, literature cannot be reduced to Oprah's presentism. On the contrary, it is necessarily preoccupied with the past, as each story, even those taking part in the future, is told as if the events, at least partly, already have taken place; how would the narrator otherwise be able to recount anything in depth?

Yet, Sartre is concerned about the lack of future in Faulkner's work. He writes that while Faulkner's characters have no sense of future at all, "the nature of consciousness implies, on the contrary, that it projects itself in the future" (271). Heidegger argues similarly that such projection in the future is a basic constitution of *Dasein*, as *Dasein* is always "ahead-of-itself" (1962: 279). Sartre concludes his essay with the statement that Faulkner is wrong when he portrays his characters as being obsessed with the past, since, as Heidegger makes clear, even hopelessness is a way of relating to the possibilities that come from the future. However, instead of underpinning Sartre's point, his use of Heidegger makes clear that even those who seem completely desperate still relate to the future: their turning away from the future is still a mode of "*being towards*" future potentiality, though it does not include a better future.<sup>93</sup>

To be sure, the complete lack of hope and belief in change stands in stark contrast to Winfrey's decrees. Their different perspectives on life can be

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<sup>92</sup> The connection between the absence of a future and the absence of freedom, the experience of feeling free to choose, seems appropriate considering Sartre, as his work time and again concerns a quest for the possibility of freedom within the human condition.

<sup>93</sup> Sartre ends his essay with the following quotation from Heidegger: "Even when [Dasein] still exists but has nothing more 'before it' and has 'settled [abgeschlossen] its account,' its Being is still determined by the 'ahead-of-itself.' Hopelessness, for instance, does not tear Dasein away from its possibilities, but is only one of its own modes of *Being towards* these possibilities" (1960: 279).

connected to the history of the United States and the division between the North and the South. While Winfrey's show represents the modern, developed country of the United States, Faulkner's characters are entrapped in the frustrations of the South, where there is not much hope. In "The Irony of the Southern History" (1994), C. Vann Woodward writes that as "a standpoint from which to write American history" the South is regarded as "something of a handicap to be overcome" (241). Vann Woodward explains that the South does not really take part in the American legend of success and victory – strengthened by abundant resources, technological developments, and force of arms – as it is the region where most people met frustrations and failures that are unknown to the rest of the country.

With her selection of Faulkner's books Winfrey foregrounds this painful history. Thus, while she repeatedly emphasizes the importance of living in the present, her interest in literature betrays her own preoccupation with the past. Perhaps this seems an incongruity and perhaps an inappropriate motive to select Faulkner's novels for her book club reading; on the other hand, however, it saved her book club. Although she propagates the belief that presentism will enhance one's life, her choice for Faulkner's, as well as Morrison's novels, proves that she is able to merge her wish to enjoy the present with a genuine interest in history and literature; literature which is directed to a painful past, without offering any hope for a better future.

### *Exposure*

The obsession with the past is not the only characteristic of Faulkner's work that contradicts Winfrey's principles. Also, Faulkner's ideas about press and publicity stand in contrast to her show and her approach of literature. In his essay "On Privacy" (2004 [1955]), Faulkner argues that the exposure of one's personal life deprives one of one's identity. Faulkner is clear about what he thinks of articles that describe authors' lives: they help reducing the author to "one more identityless integer in that identityless anonymous unprivacied mass which seems to be our goal" (71). Faulkner connects the tendency to write about the private life of authors with a failure of the American Dream, which according to him stands for the condition that "every individual man – not the mass of men

but individual men – has inalienable right to individual dignity and freedom” (62).<sup>94</sup>

Winfrey shows a different interpretation of the American Dream. Jaap Kooijman argues that Winfrey’s show presents America as the Beacon of Freedom and Opportunity, emphasizing “the values of meritocracy such as individual agency and self-reliance” (2008: 52). For Faulkner individual freedom includes a reciprocal respect for each other’s choices and privacy. For Winfrey, however, individual freedom is mainly connected to the possibility of personal success and the opportunity of climbing the social ladder. When success is achieved, it becomes public property, just like her own life story has become a public example of the American Dream, being a “formerly overweight African American woman who became one of the most powerful individuals in the American media industry,” as Kooijman writes (48).

The process through which the private becomes public and the highly personal becomes impersonal is closely connected to her perspective on temporality. Winfrey’s message that one should live in the moment and be present with oneself appears to affirm individuality. However, precisely this cherishing of the present moment and the forgetting of one’s troubled past makes the present into a general moment. Whereas Winfrey argues that one should learn from one’s past experiences, this learning includes a sense of overcoming and “letting go.” She repeatedly emphasizes that the past has no power over the present moment.<sup>95</sup>

Her advice to let go of the past that controls your life assumes that one can decide oneself what one remembers and what not, as if one’s memory can be organized the way one chooses, while one is often haunted by memories that one

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<sup>94</sup> The subtitle of the essay, printed in between brackets, is: “(The American Dream: What Happened to It?).” The essay opens as follows: “This was the American Dream: a sanctuary on the earth for individual man: a condition in which he could be free not only of the old established closed-corporation hierarchies of arbitrary power which had oppressed him as a mass, but free of that mass into which the hierarchies of church and state had compressed and held him individually thrilled and individually impotent” (62).

<sup>95</sup> In her comments on her book club selection of Eckhart Tolle’s *A New Earth* (2008), she says: “The only thing that matters is the present moment. The past is just a thought in your head. It has no power over what is happening right now. Loose the thought; you loose this power that controls your life from the past. The past has no power over the present moment. The only thing that matters is what happens right now.” See: [http://www.oprah.com/package/oprahsbookclub/anewearth/pkganewearthwebcast/20080130\\_obc\\_webcast\\_anewearth](http://www.oprah.com/package/oprahsbookclub/anewearth/pkganewearthwebcast/20080130_obc_webcast_anewearth)

would prefer to forget. The emphasis on the “unique subjectivity and unique existence in the present,” using Jameson’s words, creates the impression that the realization of one’s uniqueness is naturally connected to the “now” (2003: 709). Yet, it is not the present that makes one unique, on the contrary, it is one’s past. The “now” is the only moment that one can directly share; as such it is the most communal moment, if one can speak in such terms.

One could say that the emphasis on the “now” ignores one’s privacy, in the sense of having a personal past, and stresses the moment in which everyone “is.” If one was able to isolate the now from the past, the now would be the tiniest and most general moment, which would only consist of sharing that precise moment with everyone who lives at that same instant. In short, the way in which the private becomes public is mirrored by the emphasis on the uniqueness of the present moment that becomes part of a shared uniqueness that ends up neutralizing itself.<sup>96</sup>

Winfrey has often been blamed for integrating the books of her book club into the rhetoric of the rest of her show to too great an extent, effectively discussing the ethical and psychological issues of the fictional characters rather than the literary qualities of the books. Although the period in which Winfrey turned to the Classics was initially seen as an exception to her approach of literature that had a self-help therapeutic message to it, the motives and problems of the fictional protagonists are still analyzed as if they were guests on her show. This approach to literature can be seen as part of a larger change in the literary landscape. In reaction to Theodor W. Adorno’s analysis of modernism, Peter Bürger argues:

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<sup>96</sup> Winfrey’s belief that everyone is unique is a message that she also emphatically brings across via her “Mission Calendar Inspiration” mailing list. On June 4<sup>th</sup> 2008, for example, I received such an e-mail containing the following quote by Lee Damsky: “My beauty comes from having my own style, living my own way and knowing my own mind.” The quote apparently promotes individuality; yet, the receiver who should be inspired by this quote shares his/her source of inspiration with millions of people who read the same quote on the same day. Again, it reaffirms how Winfrey propagates that uniqueness is desirable, yet, preferably under the reassuring guise of shared thoughts. As I mentioned in the introduction, Oprah.com tries to seduce readers by comparing Faulkner’s novels with general known phenomena, such as suspense stories or jury trials. By linking the particular with the general, the particular appears to be less odd and less difficult. This strategy makes some critics fear that literature will be framed as mass-entertainment.

Among younger persons today one can often notice a way of dealing with literary works that can only be characterized as low-brow from Adorno's standpoint. I mean the widespread renunciation of any discussion of aesthetic form in favor of a discussion of the norms and patterns of behavior which are the basis of the actions of the characters portrayed. The questions which are asked of the work then do not read: How are the aesthetic form and content of the work communicated? but: Did this or that character act correctly in this situation? How would I have behaved in a comparable situation? (1992: 41).

Many critics decry Winfrey's way of discussing literature precisely because of what Bürger describes, she does not spend enough attention on the aesthetic form and content and analyzes rather if and how a character acted correctly. Following Adorno, Bürger argues that this can be judged as a cultural decline. Yet, he continues: "one can also ask whether the reading of a realistic novel that is interested mainly in procedures of narrative technique does not miss precisely its specific achievement" (41). This is a relevant question that touches on the discussion about highbrow and lowbrow literature, which accelerated when Jonathan Franzen's novel *The Corrections* was selected for Winfrey's book club in 2001.

In the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Franzen appeared concerned about the selection of his book, saying that it is "first and foremost, ... a literary book," with which he "had some hope of actually reaching a male audience," assuming that Winfrey's book club would mainly reach woman readers, about which Franzen said it "is a hard book for that audience" (Rooney, 2008: 44). Furthermore, he said that it "heightens this sense of split I feel. I feel like I'm solidly in the high-art literary tradition, but I like to read entertaining books and this maybe helps bridge the gap, but it also heightens these feelings of being misunderstood" (41). Shortly after these remarks, Franzen was disinvited from the *Oprah Winfrey Show*.

In his remarks, Franzen confirms the cliché image of lowbrow culture. In *After the Great Divide* (1986), the German literary scholar Andreas Huyssen argues that as early as in the 19<sup>th</sup> century mass culture is associated with women,

“while real, authentic culture remains the prerogative of men” (47). With regard to modernity, Huyssen describes Flaubert’s character Emma Bovary as the stereotype of how people thought of the female reader: a reader of inferior literature, naïve, emotional, driven by irrational desires, believing in the kitsch of cheap novels. Franzen’s distinction between on the one hand a woman audience and entertainment, and on the other hand the literary high art tradition, raises the impression that there has not changed much regarding the connotations of high and lowbrow readerships.

Franzen clearly did not want to be associated with Winfrey’s therapeutic approach of literature. His objections relate to the distinction that Bürger makes: Franzen prefers a discussion about aesthetic narrative techniques instead of psychological discussions of the right or wrong of the actions of his protagonists. Yet, *The Corrections* is a realistic family story, to which many people can relate and in which many will recognize their own dilemmas. Moreover, Rooney argues with regard to an article Franzen wrote for the *New Yorker* about his experience with *Oprah* that

Television, [Franzen] suggests – and rightly so – is frequently sappy, sentimental and emotionally false. Nonetheless, he still seems willing to disclose a lot more, specifically a lot more emotionally intimate information and almost human interest detail to the audience of the *New Yorker* than he was to that of the *Oprah Winfrey Show* (64).

In short, not the information itself, but the context determines if a certain piece of information is sentimental or not. The context of the *New Yorker* allows Franzen to disclose private information without appearing sappy and sentimental. Still, disclosure of intimate information is all too easily associated with lowbrow media. Rooney argues against such “book snobbery,” and writes that “more than any other cultural authority, Winfrey promoted the bridging of the high-low chasm that cleaves the American literary landscape” (14).<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> For an analysis of the way in which the audience feels intimate with Oprah in spite of “the distance created by television as a mass medium,” see Laurie L. Haag’s “Oprah Winfrey: The Construction of Intimacy in the Talk Show Setting” (1993: 115).

Faulkner does not distinguish between different forms of publicity, perhaps due to the fact that there were not as many different media in his days. More important are his principled objections to the disappearing border between public and private life. Different from Franzen, Faulkner is not concerned with the type of publicity, but with the topic that receives attention. He writes that every author “must accept whatever the public wished to say or do about them from praise to burning” (66). Whether books are praised for the wrong reasons, as they are, always, burnt for the wrong reasons, does not seem of any concern to Faulkner. Exposure is simply part of the choice to publish. However, the author does not choose to make his private life public and this should in turn also be respected, Faulkner argues.

Faulkner does not judge the journalists who wrote about his life, but he interprets their articles as a sign that the dream that once formed the foundation of the United States has failed. Faulkner argues that the American Dream was born from the wish to have the opportunity to lead one’s life as an individual without having to be part of a certain mass, a nation or religion. By writing about private lives, the basis of this dream is being destroyed; individuals become part of an unprivacied mass, whether they like it or not (2004: 62).

On the one hand, the emphasis on Faulkner’s life and background on Oprah.com seems to confirm Winfrey’s incapability to escape from lowbrow culture; regardless whether she discusses Faulkner or a self-help book, her attention will first go out to the lessons for life. Yet, on the other hand, Winfrey’s choice for Faulkner and the texts on her website also show the narrow-mindedness of the dichotomy of high and low culture. In general, the fading distinction between private and public is probably most visible on Internet, including a fading distinction between high and low culture. Perhaps this does result in an “identityless anonymous unprivacied mass,” as Faulkner predicted. However, it also shows the complexity of the cultural web through which we all travel daily.

With regard to the topic of time, certain forms of culture demand time, concentration and study, while pop culture in general focuses not only on the now, but also can be consumed more easily; in a fleeting moment, after which it disappears as fast as it appeared. However, simultaneously, cultural products

become part of one another: modernist works are no longer only represented in university courses, but also in tourist guides, museums and commercials, literary magazines and on *Oprah*. In the Faulkner-archive on Oprah.com one can also find links to university websites or literary magazines. Of course there exist undeniable differences in talent, refinement, cleverness, intricacy, erudition, style and taste, but the act of dividing all these differences in two poles denies the complexity of the interconnected web of divergent cultural manifestations. In the next section, I analyze a webpage of Oprah.com, on which various aspects of culture and literature merge and collide, all concerning different approaches of literature and time.

### *Tap into Your Stream of Consciousness*

Although Faulkner's stories reside in a traditional world and his characters largely dwell in the past, Faulkner's style of writing is directed to an unknown future. In contrast to the characters in his novels his style of writing is groundbreaking, as it embodies a "new" perspective on literature. His use of multiple streams of consciousness, from the viewpoint of various narrators, sometimes with overlapping focalizations, is still today viewed as highly innovative.<sup>98</sup>

To give the reader a greater understanding of Faulkner's literary technique, and specifically the stream of consciousness, Oprah.com offers a page titled "Tap Into Your Stream of Consciousness." The page opens with the following definition:

Stream of Consciousness: 1. A literary technique that presents the thoughts and feelings of a character as they occur. 2. *Psychology* The conscious experience of an individual regarded as a continuous, flowing

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<sup>98</sup> In "Modernity versus Postmodernity" (1981), Jürgen Habermas summarizes the connection between the preoccupation with time and the striving to create something new as follows: "Aesthetic modernity is characterized by attitudes, which find a common focus in a changed consciousness of time. This time consciousness expresses itself through metaphors of the vanguard and the avant-garde. The avant-garde understands itself as invading unknown territory, exposing itself to dangers of sudden, shocking encounters, conquering an as yet unoccupied future" (4). The rebelling and exploring character is neither something that ended with modernity; in fact it is regarded to be an important trait of modern art in general. From Habermas's text one can also conclude that precisely the antimodernist tendencies of "young conservatives," "old conservatives" or "neoconservatives," as Habermas defines them, prove that cultural modernity has not at all ended but in fact still forms the framework for cultural disputes.

series of images and ideas running through the mind. —The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition. Copyright © 2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company.

Juxtaposing the literary technique and the psychological definition one risks mistaking the narrator for the author. At first sight, there does not seem to be a great difference between the literary technique and the psychological term in this definition. The psychological stream of consciousness, which concerns an experience of an individual, implying a spontaneous stream, seems to equate the “thoughts and feelings of a character as they occur.” Yet, an important difference is that while the thoughts of a character might seem arbitrary or unsystematic, this does not mean that the author’s writing has been unsystematic, jotting down whatever came to his/her mind. While I not always agree with Georg Lukács’s analysis of modernist literature, in this respect he rightly observes: “The stream of association is only apparently free. The monologue is composed with the utmost artistic rigor” (1964: 18).

However, it is not surprising that the psychological and the literary definition are easily confused. Anne Fernihough argues that May Sinclair, who was the first writer who used the phrase “stream of consciousness,” is “generally thought to have taken the phrase from James” (2007: 68). William James was a distinguished American psychologist, who in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890) also used the phrase “mind wandering” to describe a “mental state in which we open ourselves up to the swarm of sense data bombarding our consciousness at any given moment,” Fernihough writes (66). The French philosopher Henri Bergson was an admirer of James. In the preface that he wrote for James’s *Pragmatism* (1907), he observes overlapping developments in the field of psychology, literature and philosophy (2002: 268).

The definition on the website is followed by an example from Faulkner’s work:

Faulkner uses a literary technique called “stream of consciousness” to explore and expose the unspoken thoughts of his characters. For example, Darl Bundren in *As I Lay Dying* thinks: “*I am I and you are you and I know*

*it and you dont know it and you could do so much for me if you just would and if you just would then I could tell you and then nobody would have to know it except you and me and Darl"* (p. 51). ...<sup>99</sup>

The fragment stems indeed from a chapter that is narrated by Darl. However, precisely in this part Darl imagines what his sister Dewey Dell might think. This is also the reason for the last words "me and Darl," as well as the reason for the use of italics. One could say that it is a stream of consciousness within a stream of consciousness, or that this part of the stream of consciousness is focalized by Dewey Dell, though narrated by Darl.<sup>100</sup>

Apart from this explanation, the webpage also provides an exercise that starts with the announcement:

We think *you* can write just like Faulkner! Follow this step-by-step exercise and see where your stream of consciousness takes you!<sup>101</sup>

It is almost preposterous to claim that anyone – you! – can write *just* like Faulkner, denying the particularity of his work. The announcement also confirms Jameson's opinion that the end of the modernist category of the individual solitary monad implies the end of style: "in the sense of the unique and personal, the end of the distinctive individual brushstroke (as symbolized by the emergent primacy of the mechanical reproduction)" (2004: 200). Likewise, Adorno and Bourdieu, each in different ways, repeatedly stress the tendency of people to conform, causing the individual to disappear in its impersonal surroundings. Indeed, the "you" in this sentence is as anonymous as the virtual "we." "We" in "we think *you* can write just like Faulkner!" indicates a group of people, at least two, who are associated with Oprah Winfrey. Who they precisely are will remain unknown to the "you" that reads the statement; similarly the "you" can be anybody for the "we" who wrote the sentence. In short, this "we" does not really

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<sup>99</sup> <http://www.oprah.com/oprahsbookclub/Faulkner-101-Stream-of-Consciousness-Journal>

<sup>100</sup> For clarification about the distinction between the narration and focalization see Mieke Bal's *Narratology* (1994). Bal argues that the narrator can inhabit perspectives of various characters; hence the narrator cannot be identified with one voice. The terms focalization and narration allows one to distinguish between visions of various characters narrated by one voice (142-60).

<sup>101</sup> <http://www.oprah.com/oprahsbookclub/Faulkner-101-Stream-of-Consciousness-Journal>

*think* anything specific about the “you,” who will always be unknown, yet it asserts a general positive belief in the capacity of the visitors of Oprah.com.

The use of these personal pronouns strikes me as so general and overarching because of its extreme contrast with the short Faulkner quotation. In those few sentences of Darl’s and/or Dewey Dell’s interior monologue the “you” is directed to the father. Darl imagines how his sister Dewey Dell speaks inwardly to her father, who does not notice the intimate and essential meaning of their presence in the room of her deceased mother. Darl thinks that Dewey Dell thinks that their father is not really aware of the situation: *“I am I and you are you and I know it and you dont know it and you could do so much for me if you just would and if you just would.”* Whereas the website mentions an impersonal “we,” Dewey Dell wishes that her father would see her as she is present at that very moment. Thus, Darl makes the “I” and the “you” extremely personal, especially because Dewey Dell, at least according to Darl, wishes that her father became part of her secret (her pregnancy), if he just would see her.

In short, while Darl appropriates the “I” of Dewey Dell, his use of the personal pronouns concern two concrete persons, whereas the “you” on Oprah.com is an impersonal you, directed to an unknown public. Nevertheless, perhaps the possibility exists that a yet unknown *you* can write like Faulkner. Still, if this person exists, it remains questionable if s/he would benefit from this exercise. Yet, I wish to take the exercise seriously and not, as easily done, read it as a frivolous, but meaningless part of Winfrey’s website. The exercise is offered as study material to learn to understand Faulkner’s work and I attempt to read it as such:

**What You’ll Need:**

20 minutes without interruptions

A timer—avoid using a clock since this can be a distraction.

Set your timer for 10 minutes and clear your head. Take a short walk, contemplate the view outside your window, or browse our [Breathing Space Gallery](#).

When your time is up, find a peaceful place to [log in to the Oprah.com online journal](#) (or if you feel more comfortable, use a pen and paper.)

Relax, close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. Reflect on what you saw during your walk or in the Breathing Space Gallery, but don't plan what you're going to write!

Once you feel ready, set your timer for 10 minutes again. Begin writing as soon as you start your timer, and write continuously until your time is up. Don't worry about writing in complete sentences. Don't worry about spelling, grammar or even making sense. Jot down any and all words, images and ideas that come to mind.

Once your time is up, take a moment to review your writing. If your thoughts seem to flow together in random ways, congratulations—you've found your stream! Circle the words or phrases that stand out as the most interesting and engaging. You may be surprised by what you find!<sup>102</sup>

The first elements the exercise mentions is “twenty minutes” and a “timer;” which both imply measurable time. The stream of consciousness as a literary technique is usually interpreted as an expression of the subjective experience of time that cannot be measured by the time of the clock, in correspondence with Henry Bergson’s theory of time. According to Bergson, the time of the clock presents a materialist approach of time, as if time were something tangible, a substance that can be controlled and divided in similar intervals, which has little in common with the way people experience time. The famous fragment in *The Sound and the Fury* that describes Quentin’s act of destroying his watch, attempting to arrest time, in which he does not succeed – the watch continues ticking without its hands – can be read as a foreshadowing of his act of committing suicide as well as an affirmation of Bergson’s view.<sup>103</sup>

Whereas the exercise uses the word “time,” also as part of “timer,” no fewer than eight times, it also stresses that one should not use a “clock,” since a clock “can be a distraction.” Thus, one has to measure time without noticing what

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<sup>102</sup> <http://www.oprah.com/oprahsbookclub/Faulkner-101-Stream-of-Consciousness-Journal>

<sup>103</sup> In an interview Faulkner says: “I agree pretty much with Bergson’s theory of the fluidity of time” (1968: 70). Yet, this does not seem convincing to all scholars. In *William Faulkner: Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond* (1978) Cleanth Brooks, for instance, comments: “I doubt that Faulkner read Bergson very deeply or thoroughly. I believe that the influence of Bergson on Faulkner has been generally overestimated and that its importance has been occasionally pushed to absurd lengths” (255).

time it is. That could interfere with one's concentration on what one saw during one's walk or while browsing Oprah's "Breathing Space Gallery," in which one can admire idyllic pictures of sun sets, landscapes, flowers and butterflies. The exercise apparently seeks to stimulate a pleasant stream of thoughts; not thoughts that concern work pressure, dinnertime or other moments in the planning of a day that could be brought to mind by observing the clock. One needs measurable time to control the exercise and, perhaps, not to lose *too much* time on it. In other words, the twenty minutes on the timer concern a measurable type of time that stands outside of the time of the clock that presents the hour of the day and is connected to the week and month one is living in. Even if the exercise stimulates one to free oneself for a moment from the ongoing time of the clock by concentrating on time as an interval, following Bergson's analysis of time, one has to conclude that the website presents what he would call a "materialist" perspective.

After having prepared for the exercise, one should "write continuously," without worrying about "spelling, grammar or even making sense," just "jot down any and all words." Like the definition, this description leaves the impression that the practice of writing a stream of consciousness is a highly random and unstructured process, which most likely is unfair to Faulkner's way of writing. In addition, while the stream of consciousness describes inner life, Faulkner's narrators alternate and sometimes create more of a cacophony of voices than a clear picture of one individual mind, as the exercise seems to suggest. Darl imagines what Dewey Dell might think, but also what Jewel or their father might think. Consequently the subjective perspective extends to a complex jumble of impressions and focalizations. Moreover, in these multi-voiced streams of consciousness temporalities also mix. Memories influence and merge with perceptions that take place in the moment of thinking.

Concurring with Bergson's analysis of time, Faulkner's work shows how different modes of thought mingle in our perception of the present moment. While past and present, interiority and exteriority, memory and perception, are often approached as oppositional pairs, Bergson discusses the crisscrossing relation between those apparent oppositions. One could read his book *Matter and Memory* (2004 [1896]) as an early attempt at deconstruction. By turning and

twisting around the binary pairs, Bergson divests them of their fixed positions and argues that our consciousness includes those apparent oppositions that are as related as freedom and necessity, objectivity and subjectivity. Different modes of thought, sensation and perception continuously mix, fight, influence, change and contaminate one another. Bergson argues that from his insight in the combined processes of memory and perception follows that soul and body, mind and matter, or subjectivity and objectivity cannot be understood separately: the one is always part of the other and always in the process of influencing, intruding and transforming the other.

Taking into consideration Bergson's perspective on the inner experience of time, one can ask oneself whether it is even possible to "clear your head" for ten minutes, as the exercise prescribes, after which one writes for another ten minutes. Between these two sets of ten minutes, you can "reflects on what you saw during your walk or in the Breathing Space Gallery," but you are not supposed to "plan" what you will write ("don't plan what you're going to write!"). The remark indicates that the writing takes place in the "now," as a direct blueprint of one's thoughts at that moment, in line with Winfrey's presentism. Furthermore, it suggests that a stream of consciousness is not concerned with wishes or expectations, especially not of the text itself. To not allow oneself to plan what one will write almost forces one to dwell on the past. However, when thinking about the past and remembering a particular moment, the thought might sneak in that one could perhaps write about that particular memory; thus one starts planning. Whereas thoughts often come up by themselves while writing, it is still impossible to completely block out the thought of what one will write. As Bergson argues, our sense of time does not allow us to purely focus on the present.

The present always "has one foot in [the] past and another in [the] future," he writes (2004: 177). More precisely, the moment of which the "present" consists always already is gone the moment that one thinks of it – "the moment in which I am speaking is already far from me" – and thus, while disappearing in the past, it is always directed to the future (177). Following Bergson, to ask someone to write during ten minutes, one cannot simultaneously ask her or him to completely refrain from planning what to write about. That

would be the same as not allowing one to think about what one writes while writing.

Moreover, Winfrey's website is otherwise filled with advice of how to organize and plan one's life better, concerning diet, stress, work and leisure time. Besides, one could argue that the use of a timer does include planning, even if it does not concern the content of writing. Of course it is only a small, perhaps unimportant part of the exercise; yet, it again makes clear that it implies a perspective on stream of consciousness that at first sight seems to focus on literary writing, whereas it in fact mainly becomes a psychological exercise. In order to shift the focus from the reader's psychology to Faulkner's work, I take a look at a stream of consciousness fragment from *As I Lay Dying*. I continue to focus on the reflection and presentation of time, which allows me to eventually return to Oprah.com.

#### *Wishing to Forget*

In the fragment below one follows Darl's thoughts in *As I Lay Dying*. Darl is one of the Bundren children whose mother, Addie Bundren, has just passed away. To briefly sketch the circumstances, I mention that Cash, the eldest of the Bundren children, was already making the coffin while his mother was laying in her bed in the process of dying. Cash finished the coffin shortly before Darl's following interior monologue. The next day the father and the children will take the coffin on the wagon and bring the body of the deceased mother to Jefferson to be buried. Jewel is a half brother, born from Addie's extramarital relation with the local priest.

In a strange room you must empty yourself for sleep. And before you are emptied for sleep, what are you. And when you are emptied for sleep, you are not. And when you are filled with sleep, you never were. I dont know what I am. I dont know if I am or not. Jewel knows he is, because he does not know that he does not know whether he is or not. He cannot empty himself for sleep because he is not what he is and he is what he is not. Beyond the unlamped wall I can hear the rain shaping the wagon that is ours, the load that is not longer theirs that felled and sawed it not yet theirs that bought it and which is not ours either, lie on our wagon though

it does, since only the wind and the rain shape it only to Jewel and me, that are not asleep. And since sleep is is-not and rain and wind are *was*, it is not. Yet, the wagon *is*, because when the wagon is *was*, Addie Bundren will not be. And Jewel *is*, so Addie Bundren must be. And then I must be, or I could not empty myself for sleep in a strange room. And so if I am not emptied yet, I am *is*.

How often have I lain beneath rain on a strange roof, thinking of home (80-81).

The “strange room” Darl mentions at the beginning of this passage could be a reference to the coffin that was just brought into the house and in which his mother has to “empty [herself] for sleep.” Thus, sleep would be death, as sleep is when “you are not.” However, sleep can also be Darl’s own night’s rest, just as the room can be the room in which he himself is laying, although he is not in a strange room in the sense of an unknown room. Perhaps he easily feels alienated and even in a familiar room longs for home, which could be a sense of home that he does not even find at home, as the last sentence of the fragment suggests.

Precisely because the words are linked up the way they are, they easily signify different levels of thought, so that one does not have to choose between one meaning and the other. Whether Darl thinks of death when mentioning sleep or of sleep as a moment of rest, for Darl sleep is a condition in which one is empty and in which one “is not.” In the first chapter I argued that the state of falling asleep, waking up and lying half asleep, may be read as a metaphor for the originating moment of writing. In this context, however, it can be recognized as a moment that is perhaps the most natural condition for the stream of consciousness. Emptying oneself can also be a form of letting go of rational control. If one reads it thus, this passage is not only an example of a literary stream of consciousness, but on a meta-level also has as its topic the relinquishing of a controlling mind; hence describing a stream of consciousness that within the fictional framework would comply with the psychological definition.

Darl thinks not only about sleep, but also about being, when one is and when one “is not.” The ultimate abandonment of thought is when one “is not,”

when one sleeps or dies. In *Being and Time* (1962 [1926]), Martin Heidegger famously argues that the human way of being – *Dasein* – distinguishes itself from other beings because man not only “is,” he also observes that he is and questions his own “being” (26-27). According to Heidegger the possibility of that questioning is essential to *Dasein* and simultaneously forms the topic of the questioning itself. The questioning of one’s own being includes a deep sense of doubt, as is expressed by Darl, who is not only unsure about “what” he is, but also whether he “is” at all or not: “I dont know what I am. I dont know if I am or not.” In Darl’s point of view Jewel, however, knows that he “is” precisely because he does *not* question his own being and does not reflect on his own mortality: “Jewel knows he is, because he does not know that he does not know whether he is or not.” According to Darl, Jewel lacks the awareness and reflection that forms the essence of human being, as Heidegger describes it. If one applied Heidegger’s definition of *Dasein* to Darl’s account of Jewel, his manner of “being” would come closer to animal kind than mankind.

One must not forget that Darl’s opinion of Jewel is quite harsh and influenced by feelings of distrust and envy, and probably tells us more about Darl himself than about Jewel. For instance, in the thoughts that Darl attributes to Dewey Dell in the fragment that serves as an example of a stream of consciousness on Oprah.com, Dewey Dell thinks about their father in the same terms as Darl thinks of Jewel. Dewey Dell’s thoughts, according to Darl, include: “*I am I and you are you and I know it and you dont know it...*” The lack of awareness and self-reflection that Darl attributes to their father and Jewel is a characteristic that can be found in protagonists of other Faulkner novels as well, for example the unscrupulous older brother Jason in *The Sound and the Fury*, or the cold and ruthless Popeye in *Sanctuary* (1993 [1931]).<sup>104</sup>

Jewel, however, is not necessarily a cold or ruthless character; he is rather pragmatic and lives more in the present compared to Darl, who continuously reflects on what has happened, is happening and likely to happen. Darl tortures himself with his self-awareness and endless doubts and feelings of shame, guilt and incapability; whereas Jewel appears to be a more clear-headed and free

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<sup>104</sup>The villain’s name “Popeye” in *Sanctuary* is one of Faulkner’s references to comic-strips. For other popular culture references in Faulkner’s work see M. Thomas Inge’s article “Popular-Culture Criticism” (1984).

character, less haunted by his past. If we relate *As I Lay Dying* to the context of Oprah.com, we could say that Jewel is much more capable of “being present with himself” and living in the moment than Darl is. The expression “being present with oneself” puts the emphasis on one’s presence; however, in order to be present with oneself, one also needs to “let go,” one needs to let go of worries concerning the past and the future, worries with which Darl torments himself. In short, being present with oneself demands a considerable talent for forgetting.

I already mentioned that the wish to forget and live in the now, an attitude to life that Winfrey defends, is often distinguished as a trait of popular culture.<sup>105</sup> The preoccupation with popular, mass and commercial culture within highbrow literature in turn often has been called postmodernist. In “Literary History and Literary Modernity” (1983), Paul de Man, however, discusses the ability to forget and focus on the now as a symptom of modernity. In the article, de Man discusses Nietzsche’s writings on history. He quotes Nietzsche’s statement:

Man says “I remember,” and envies the animal that forgets at once, and watches each moment die, disappear in night and mist, and disappear forever. Thus, the animal lives unhistorically: It hides nothing and coincides at all moments exactly with that which it is; it is bound to be truthful at all times, unable to be anything else (146).

Like Heidegger, Nietzsche also associates a lack of awareness of time with animality. Benjy’s way of perceiving the world in *The Sound and the Fury* is also compared to that of an animal, as I mentioned above. De Man, however, argues that

[t]his ability to forget and to live without historical awareness exists not only on an animal level. Since “life” has an ontological as well as biological

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<sup>105</sup> In Jameson’s view the concentration on the present, which involves a “sense of unique subjectivity and unique existence in the present,” is a form of reduction, as the present moment seems to shrink, excluding as much as possible one’s awareness of the past and the future. Jameson also connects the shift from destiny to the insistence on the present to the “modern American concealment and sanitization of death” (2003: 709).

meaning, the condition of animality persists as a constitutive part of man. Not only are there moments when it governs his actions, but these are also the moments when he reestablishes contact with his spontaneity and allows his truly human nature to assert itself (146).

De Man connects this spontaneity with the spirit of modernity. For him the wish to live in the present and forget the past is not typically postmodernist, as Jameson has it, but rather belongs to modernism, since “modernity exists in the form of a desire to wipe out whatever came earlier” (148).

Thus, De Man associates the wish to be original and mark a new departure with the “hope of reaching at last a point that could be called a true present” (148). However, he also argues that the desire to be absolutely modern, absolutely original, is always caught in a paradox, because of its implied historical awareness. With respect to Nietzsche, De Man makes clear that “modernity and history seem condemned to being linked together in a self-destroying union that threatens the survival of both” (151). Thus, the modernist wish to forget is still different from the radical loss of historical awareness that Jameson distinguishes as a postmodern trait.<sup>106</sup> Following Nietzsche, the modernist forgetting is rather a conscious denial, a combination of a condemning and destroying the past. As De Man writes, “The more radical the rejection of anything that came before, the greater the dependence on the past” (161).

While Darl and Jewel both are modernist characters, Jewel could be seen as a character that responds to the contemporary idea of living in the now and leaving behind what can be left behind. Jewel would do well in Winfrey’s show, while Darl would not fit at all. Darl is trapped in the vertiginous back and forth movement of wishing to leave behind the past as well as the present, but time and again finding oneself in it, simultaneously fearing and longing for a fresh

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<sup>106</sup> While Jameson defines the focus on the present as a crucial characteristic of postmodern experience, he also defines a continuum between modernism and postmodernism: that of capitalism. This might also explain why Georg Simmel’s observations of capitalist society sometimes approach Jameson’s observations of postmodernist society. Already in 1900, Simmel for instance writes: “We are supposed to treat life as if each of its moments were a final purpose; every moment is supposed to be taken to be so important as if life existed for its sake. At the same time, we are supposed to live as if none of its moments are final, as if our sense of value did not stop with any moment and each should be a transitional point and a means to higher and higher stages” (2003: 232).

future. Darl's thoughts of his mortality and the passing of time, his radical questioning of being, whether he is or he is not, make the present into such a compound experience that it hardly can be called an instant. For Heidegger the possibility of reflection on one's own mortality is central to one's experience of time. This is something that Darl thinks about as well. However, as we will see below, such thoughts are often seen as a sign of insecurity; of cowardly fear.

### *Sanitization of Death*

Walter Benjamin connects the decline of the presence of death in our lives with the decline of storytelling. In his essay "The Storyteller" (1985), Benjamin writes about the loss of experience in modernity, in relation to the shift from storytelling to novel writing. He argues that we have lost "the ability to exchange experiences" and defines the rise of the novel at the beginning of modern times as one of the symptoms of the decline of shared experience (83).<sup>107</sup> He continues: "The birthplace of the novel is the solitary individual, who is no longer able to express himself by giving examples of his most important concerns, is himself uncounseled and cannot counsel others" (87). I am not sure whether Faulkner's novels are good representatives of what Benjamin defines as novels. I tend to think that Faulkner's work is perhaps still part of Benjamin's definition of storytelling. To be sure, Faulkner's multiple use of voices is indebted to the art of storytelling. Davis recounts on Oprah.com:

[Faulkner] states that his writing was not coming together until he remembered the black voices he has listened to as a youth, and with that memory he could concentrate on writing his novel with the sounds of those voices and stories in the background.

The plural voices in Faulkner's work make it impossible to deduce a singular and

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<sup>107</sup> In *Infancy and History: On the Destruction of Experience* (1993), Giorgio Agamben also describes modern time as being deprived of experience. For him "experience" signifies a certain kind of knowledge that each generation used to transmit to the next. However, according to Agamben, such experience does not exist any longer. He writes that "modern man's average day contains virtually nothing that can still be translated into experience" (15). He argues that the primary feature of modernity is manifest in this change of experience and time, of which he finds signs in the work of Charles Baudelaire, Walter Benjamin and Martin Heidegger.

undeniable explanation of what happens in the story. According to Benjamin such ambiguity is an important trait of storytelling. He explains his point by discussing Leskov's art of storytelling:

The most extraordinary things, marvelous things, are related with the greatest accuracy, but the psychological connection of the events is not forced on the reader. It is left up to him to interpret things the way he understands them, and thus the narrative achieves an amplitude that information lacks (89).

Benjamin formulates this observation with regard to the distinction between information in newspapers and traditional storytelling. However, the distinction he makes regarding ambiguity and amplitude, also counts for the difference in the sharing of stories in for instance Faulkner's work and a format like the *Oprah Winfrey Show*. While in *Oprah* after each discussion a reassuring conclusion is reached, storytelling is never univocal, but open to different interpretations. Each time the story is told anew it reveals another meaning; another lesson for life.

According to Benjamin, people are able to share experiences and give counsel to one another precisely because of the openness of the stories they tell each other. When ambiguity is lost, experience turns flat and loses its power to inspire thought. Benjamin argues that the same happens to death. We no longer share the experience and fear of death; it has become something that is avoided in modern times. He writes: "It turns out that this change is identical with the one that has diminished the communicability of experience to the same extent as the art of storytelling has declined" (93). Instead, Benjamin argues, one searches for a portrayal of death in the anonymity of novels. "What draws the reader to the novel," he writes, "is the hope of warming his shivering life with a death he reads about" (101).

Death certainly is at the centre of many of Faulkner's books, especially *As I Lay Dying*. Yet, it is not death as a remembrance, or a certainty, as Benjamin defines death in novel writing. In *As I Lay Dying*, Darl is the one who most extensively reflects on what it means to die. In his eyes Jewel does not even

understand what death implies, since he does not contemplate the difference between being and death. For Darl dying is connected to his own condition, his own being, as well as to his understanding of time and appearance of things. Let us take another look at the last part of the fragment that I quoted above, from “Beyond the unlamped wall I can hear the rain shaping the wagon that is ours” until “thinking of home” (80-81).

Darl’s first thoughts about the absence of being concern sleep, but it seems that the absence of being also is connected to perception. Darl thinks that the rain and wind shape the wagon, as one can hear the rain and wind beating against it, only for Jewel and himself, because they are the only ones who are awake. When they fall asleep the wagon would not “be” any longer. Yet, precisely this prospect proves that the wagon “is.” Thus, the underlying question could be: when one does not perceive the world does it still exist? Following Darl’s peculiar kind of logic, the wagon only “is” in the sense that it soon “was”: “the wagon *is*, because the wagon *is was*.” For Darl this means that his mother, Addie Bundrun, “will not be”. What this boils down to is the following: if persons or things do not have a new past waiting for them they “are not.” The future thus exists insofar as it is a past to come. This does not mean that the future does not exist. It exists in the form of a paradox: it is as long as it is not yet and simultaneously can only be known as it has already disappeared and no longer belongs to the future.

In Darl’s interior monologue, he thinks: “rain and wind are *was*.” They “are” in the sense that they will be gone. One can interpret this as a metaphor for the present. The present always is “*was*,” sliding into the past the moment that one thinks of it as present. Bergson takes this aspect of time as one of the principles that show that a mathematical approach of time is false. One cannot fix a moment and therefore cannot really measure time, one can only measure “a number of simultaneities of a certain kind” (3). According to Bergson a number of intervals do not tell us anything since these simultaneities are empty without the experience of a person who lives through them.

The rain and the wind Darl mentions are appropriate metaphors for time because they “are” in the sense that they come and go at the same time. As Heidegger describes in his lectures on Friedrich Hölderlin’s poem “Andenken,”

the wind “is” when the wind blows; the wind blows when it goes, which means that it is in that it goes and it goes in that it comes (1992: 48). The same could be said about the falling of rain. However, in this coming and going of the rain and the wind, Darl as well as most of Faulkner’s other characters are focused on its “going.” Darl says the “rain and wind are *was*.” He also connects this to an awareness of the passing of time and the realization of one’s mortality. When one lacks this awareness, one simply “is,” like a wagon, or a dead body “is.” This unaware kind of being, is also the way Jewel “is,” in Darl’s focalization.

One could conclude that Jewel approaches his life as something ready at hand, as something that lacks the vulnerability of living beings, in short, as something material. According to Heidegger this is a quite common way of relating to one’s mortality. He writes that the everyday experience of *Dasein* largely consists of a “fleeing in the face of death” (298). Only because one ignores, at least partly, the continuous threat of a sudden death, one can have the idea that one “controls” life. This feeling of having control, in Heidegger’s perspective, often leads to a materialist approach of life. In other words, concentration on tangible things distracts from the incompleteness and continuous vulnerability of life itself and creates the illusion that one’s life is of a similar kind as the objects with which one surrounds oneself.<sup>108</sup>

Benjamin observes something similar in the temporal logic of historical materialism. One could say that his analysis of the relation between modern man and history is mirrored by Heidegger’s analysis of the individual’s perspective on death. According to Benjamin we approach historical events as commodity products. In historical materialism “historical events appear, indifferently, as ‘mass-produced articles,’” Peter Osborn summarizes, “each one new, yet, in terms of the character of the time it occupies and hence its relation to the present, ‘ever-always-the-same’” (83).

Heidegger argues that human beings relate to the future as to a variety of possibilities, among which death is one of the possibilities. Since death *always* is among these possibilities, human beings find themselves in a permanent state of

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<sup>108</sup> In the essay “What Are Poets For?” (1971), Heidegger argues that what threatens *Dasein* in its very nature is not something like the atomic bomb, but the belief of people that by transformation, storage and channeling of objects, they can make their lives “tolerable for everybody and happy in all respects” (116).

insecurity (1962: 294). He argues that, in order not to let this insecurity get the upper hand, *Dasein* often ignores mortality and approaches life as something complete, a thing among other things. When being confronted with someone's death, as Darl and Jewel are, most people prefer to approach it as an exception. Everyone knows that "one dies," but Heidegger argues, this is experienced with regard to an impersonal "one" or "they" that does not concern the self (297). He writes, "it is already a matter of public acceptance that 'thinking about death' is a cowardly fear, a sign of insecurity" (298). Following Heidegger, one could argue that people are too anxious to allow themselves to fear death. Or, as he formulates it: "the 'they' does not permit us the courage for anxiety in the face of death" (298).

On *Oprah*, fear, and especially fear of death, is usually approached as something that has to be controlled or used as a positive source, judging by shows such as "How the Gift of Fear Can Save Your Life" (29-01-2008). Death is treated as an exception or bad luck. In contrast to the environment of the characters in *As I Lay Dying*, for whom death diffuses their experience as the whole family travels days on end with the corps that smells and attracts flies, in Winfrey's environment death is highly sanitized and impersonalized. She emphasizes that one is responsible for one's life, in which death is not much more than an unfortunate twist of fate: one should avoid thinking of death too much; instead one should focus on the numerous opportunities that the American citizen has in life. Kooijman argues that even relatives of casualties of 9/11 were treated as victims of bad luck, instead of international politics. Moreover, their suffering was presented as being of a psychic character, concerning the self that needed therapeutic counseling to cope with the pain that hindered the person's self-actualization (46-53). Reading Faulkner and *Oprah.com* in the light of Heidegger's thoughts underscores the differences concerning death and time between Faulkner's and Winfrey's work, respectively presenting death as an essential and cruel part of life or a sad but sanitized event.

Within the framework of *Oprah.com*, Faulkner's work becomes a phantom that reminds us of an old approach and meaning of death. Still, the novels do not necessarily remind us of the terrifying presence of death: the ghostly appearance of Faulkner's literature in Winfrey's framework is visible, yet invisible.

Faulkner's approach of time and death hides behind the recognizable design of Winfrey's website and the words "Summer 2005 Selection," which can be read on the cover of the novels, making the books recognizable as part of Winfrey's format. Thus, the novels become commodity products associated not only with Faulkner's oeuvre or modernist writing, but with everything for which Oprah Winfrey stands. With *Oprah's* sticker on the cover, the novels have become mass products more than ever before, part and parcel of the increasing mechanization of art products that Benjamin famously analyzes in his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1985).

Benjamin argues that the actual presence in time and space, and the ritual of visiting the work of art, creates an "aura" that is lost in its reproductions. A novel does not demand such a presence in time and space. In that sense a novel is almost opposite to a work of art. It moves through time and space and can be reproduced without losing its meaning or content, as long as the words are printed in the same order. Still, although the existence of novels is dependent on the art of reproduction, of printing, it is almost as if *Oprah's Book Club* presents a reproduction of Faulkner's work. By this paradoxical statement, I mean to say that I have the impression that a specific value of Faulkner's work is lost in the way he is represented on Oprah.com and that this value can be compared to Benjamin's concept of aura: a value that concerns a particular perspective on the passing of time and death, which can only be expressed in a specific style of literary writing; Faulkner's style.

With regard to Benjamin's theory of history Rabaté argues that the "concept of aesthetic experience ... falls into the category of haunting, which is produced less by the loss of an object than by the awareness that it was always, in its ravishing uniqueness, destined to have been lost" (xxii). Similarly, the presentation of Faulkner's work on Oprah.com is haunting. Faulkner's literary writing is not lost; on the contrary, it reappears, but a certain aspect of its "ravishing uniqueness" seems to evaporate. The phantom of that uniqueness reappears and disappears behind the label "Summer 2005 Selection." Still, something might be gained: another unorthodox reading of Faulkner, a manner of reading in which the historical and anecdotal character of Faulkner's work is underlined. While this is a perspective that literary critics and theorists easily

decry, it is nevertheless one of the many possible ways of making sense of Faulkner's work.

### *Conclusion*

Although Winfrey presents herself as a passionate reader, an important aspect of literature seems to be overlooked in her book club, especially concerning Faulkner. What is overlooked is perhaps precisely Faulkner's particular representation of time, which is so crucial to his literature and which is always accompanied by a sense of mourning. This painful aspect of the realization of one's position in time, a time that passes, but of which the past also keeps pulling the characters away from hope, is neglected in Winfrey's presentation. Winfrey does not omit everything that is upsetting. On the contrary, as I have shown, she foregrounds the history of slavery and racism. Yet, by focusing on that history, the general anguish concerning the past and the future, and the loneliness regarding the singularity of individual perception, gets lost. This anguish and loneliness is what is at the heart of Faulkner's work, and I contend to say, at the heart of all modernist literature. Whereas this aspect is lost in the presentation of his work in the format of *Oprah's Book Club*, it reappears in the form of a ghost. The ghost of modernism that haunts the discussions about Faulkner's fiction, and perhaps haunts all literature discussed in her book club.

Winfrey rather foregrounds another ghost that she finds in Faulkner's work: the ghost of the history of the Southern States of America. It seems paradoxical that she combines this particular interest in history with her presentism. However, it is not as paradoxical as it may seem, since her approach of history still concurs with her temporality that includes a large variety of interests. While her presentism is focused on the now and the new, it has become clear that it should be distinguished from the manner in which the modernists wanted to embrace the present and be radically new. If the modernists related to history through condemning it and through their wish to break with tradition, pop culture's presentism has no intention to force a break, nor to destroy or radically leave behind history. On the contrary, it rather plays with history and tradition, eclectically and ironically. Perhaps Jameson is right that history is thus reduced to mere citation, yet, on the other hand, through *Oprah's Book Club*

Faulkner's work reaches a new readership, instigating discussions on literature and history and challenging clear distinctions between high, low, modernist and popular culture.

Winfrey's reading of Faulkner sometimes results in surprising explanations of his work, as we have seen, for instance, with regard to stream of consciousness. While stream of consciousness – the modernist technique *par excellence* – usually is understood as a stream in which past, present and future flow together and produce a cross-temporal narrative, on Oprah.com the stream of consciousness is presented as a blueprint of the now, hence concurring with her presentism. Winfrey's focus on the present moment is tantamount to her focus on the uniqueness of individual subjective experience. However, while she calls attention to the uniqueness of individual experiences, she simultaneously addresses a "you" that can include anybody. Similarly the "we" that is used on her website simulates an intimate atmosphere of a small group of kindred spirits, but in fact is an anonymous "we" that functions in the public sphere of the World Wide Web. While the dualism of private/subjective and public/objective became manifest in modernist time-thinking, in Winfrey's shows and website this dualism is blown up by making the private public, or the other way around, by incorporating the public in the private.

Faulkner's emphasis on a rigorous distinction between the author's life and the work is a distinction that other modernist writers, like T.S. Eliot or Marcel Proust, also value highly and that is a key issue in the theory of the New Critics. This distinction is challenged by postmodernist and popular culture that combines public and private, politics and consumption in formats like *Oprah's Book Club*. In the following chapter I discuss the role of the author in modernist and contemporary literature. Consequently, I continue exploring the dualisms of private and public, subjective and objective that are emphasized in modernist literature, and to which literary critics still cling today, but which appear to play ambiguous roles in the literary milieu that has become inseparable from popular culture.