Reeling through Faulkner

The narrator of Joyce’s *Portrait* looks with sympathy and irony through the eyes of Stephen Dedalus, sometimes pulling back to undermine what Stephen says or feels, but never becoming involved. Faulkner’s narrator, on the contrary, is always involved. Amazed and outraged at the energy that drives his characters to creative and destructive ends, his narrative eye is in continual motion, and this motion becomes central to his most powerful novels. Of course, Faulkner was affected by a sense of movement that Joyce had only begun to experience—the development of the automobile and the airplane, the increased restlessness and social as well as physical mobility (especially in America), cubism, futurism, jazz—and, of course, the movies. Indeed, Faulkner worked in the movies, although his film scripts were far less cinematic than his novels. And moving pictures will provide a key to his kinetic power.

When Faulkner arrived in Hollywood in May of 1932, he was all ready to start writing. “I’ve got an idea for Mickey Mouse,” he told Sam Marx of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Faulkner would never write the Mickey Mouse script, which “Marx gently informed him . . . were written at the Walt Disney Studios”; but he had already indulged his impulse by cartooning the likes of Byron Snopes, Jason Compson, Anse Bundren, Eupheus Hines, and Popeye. He would continue to realize it in the variety of characters who run, hunt, gallop, fly, raid, chase, and escape throughout his novels.

Mickey Mouse, in the late twenties and thirties, was not the cute figure he would become, nor had his creator’s imagination yet sighted on Disneyland. Movement, as Erwin Panofsky points out, is what generated the universal interest in film—“the sheer delight in the fact that things seem to move, no matter what they were.” Disney realized the comic and fantastic possibilities of
movement in the speed of his chases, the speed of Mickey's wit, and the speed of his film's imaginative and surreal transformations.

Disney, of course, was not the first or most important artist to exploit the possibilities of movement. Cubism with its shifting perspectives, jazz with its syncopation, silent film with Griffith's last-minute rescue and Eisenstein's montage—all thrived on motion and seeded new possibilities. Faulkner was attracted to the *pictures of motion* in Disney's cartoons—the stylized running, driving, flying, chasing, and escaping. His novels also reflect what we might call the *pictures in motion* that artists and filmmakers had developed to realize the possibilities of movement in their mediums. Both kinds of motion inform the dynamic and disturbing vision that Faulkner was evolving when he arrived in Hollywood in 1932.

PICTURES OF MOTION, PICTURES IN MOTION

Faulkner's first attempt at a Yoknapatawpha County novel begins with old man Falls recalling less a story than an ideal vision—of the original John Sartoris as he pretends to be a lame cracker and escapes from a Yankee search party:

> Cunnel says that was the hardest thing he ever done in his life, walkin' on thar acrost that lot with his back to'ads that Yankee without breakin' into a run . . . . Then the Yank hollered at him, but Cunnel kep right on, not lookin' 'back nor nothin'. Then the Yank hollered agin and Cunnel says he could hyear the hoss movin' and he decided hit was time to stir his shanks. He made the corner of the barn jest as the Yank shot the fust time, and by the time the Yank got to the corner, he was in the hawg-lot, a-tearin' through the jimson weeds to'ads the creek whar you was waitin' with the stallion hid in the willers. (4-5)

A similar vision is recapitulated by Aunt Jenny of the original Bayard, after a successful attack on a Yankee stronghold—as he galloped back for a can of anchovies: "He rode yelling 'Yaaaaaahh, Yaaaaahh,' with all the Yankees shooting at him, "right up the knoll and jumped his horse over the breakfast table and rode it into the wrecked commissary tent, and a cook who was hidden under the mess stuck his arm out and shot Bayard in the back with a derringer" (19).

Aunt Jenny's story is not just an expression of outrage at her brother's foolish and ignominious death. No more so than Gail Hightower's obsessive vision in *Light in August* of his grand-
father galloping with a handful of men through a hundred miles of enemy territory, setting fire to a warehouse full of food, and then getting killed stealing a woman’s chickens. For to Jenny, as she sits with John and the Scottish engineer before the sparking fire and thinks in images that would become more fully developed in the mind of Gail Hightower, “Bayard Sartoris’ brief career swept like a shooting star across the dark plain of their mutual remembering and suffering, lighting it with a transient glare like a soundless thunder-clap, leaving a sort of radiance when it died” (19).

All three visions idealize bravado expressed in movement for its own sake—escaping, chasing, raiding—and Faulkner seizes on the form of cartoon characterization as well as on the cartoon chase to shape the ideal and embody its senseless energy. Movement for its own sake is expressed in its most fully cartoonlike form in Pylon, where a two-dimensional group of flyers attract large crowds with their mindless irresponsibility as well as their genuine and imaginative freedom, and where the entire novel is dominated by patterns of movement. But the ideal of movement for its own sake is also expressed in visions most noted for their pastoral qualities. The deer in “The Old People” that Sam Fathers salutes as “Chief . . . Grandfather” stops only for an instant, “then its muscles supplied, gathered. It did not even alter its course, not fleeing, not even running, just moving with that winged and effortless ease . . .” (Go Down, Moses, 184). And if Old Ben appears to Ike “immobile, fixed in the green and windless noon’s hot dappling” (209), what characterizes the bear in Ike’s imagination and in reality is its power and speed. Old Ben “sped . . . with the ruthless and irresistible deliberation of a locomotive. . . . It ran in his knowledge before he ever saw it” (193). When he did see it, “it rushed through rather than across the tangle of trunks and branches as a locomotive would, faster than he had ever believed it could have moved” (211).

Very few of Faulkner’s images are as immobile as the image Ike preserves of Old Ben in their ideal encounter. Although the concept of arrested motion, which Faulkner claims to have been his goal, has been developed by so many sensitive critics to illuminate Faulkner’s fiction, it has also effectively suppressed a palpable dimension of the experience. Take, for instance, the images of the abandoned sawmill in the pastoral opening of Light in August and of Rosa Coldfield, immobile in her straight-backed chair in the beginning of Absalom, Absalom.
Some of the machinery would be left, since new pieces could always be bought on the installment plan—gaunt, staring, motionless wheels rising from mounds of brick rubble and ragged weeds with a quality profoundly astonishing, and gutted boilers lifting their rusting and unsmoking stacks with an air stubborn, baffled and bemused upon a stump-pocked scene of profound and peaceful desolation, unplowed, gutting slowly into red and choked ravines beneath the long quiet rains of autumn and the galloping fury of vernal equinoxes. (2)

... and opposite Quentin, Miss Coldfield in the eternal black which she had worn for forty-three years now, whether for sister, father, or nothusband none knew, sitting so bolt upright in the straight hard chair that was so tall for her that her legs hung straight and rigid as if she had iron shinbones and ankles, clear of the floor with that air of impotent and static rage like children’s feet. . . . (7)

These are images not of arrest but of resisting arrest. They are animated by the same kind of surprising energy that generates Disney’s comic-surreal transformations. Machinery is gaunt, staring, astonished, stubborn, baffled, bemused. Motionless wheels rise from the rubble, gutted boilers lift their stacks, unplowed land guts into choked ravines. Energy is activated by the descriptive verbals: by the staring, rising, astonishing, lifting, rusting, unsmoking, gutting, baffled, bemused, unplowed, un­tilled. The many negatives, or words that attempt to deny motion, only serve to dramatize its potency: motionless wheels are wheels that could move, unsmoking stacks are stacks that should smoke, un­tilled and unplowed land is land that waits to be plowed and tilled. Rosa, holding herself in, is like a spring about to be released. Her picture too is animated by verbals and a significant negative—nothusband. In both descriptions (Rosa’s is three times the length of my excerpt), sentences run on as if the objects resist being arrested by their syntax.

Faulkner’s descriptions may be of motion—when they focus on races, raids, hunts, chases, and escapes and portray movement for its own sake. Or they may be in motion—when the subject is static and a sense of movement is imparted by the medium. The movement in his pictures of the static sawmill and immobile Rosa is evoked by the words that animate their referents and by the long sentences stretching to contain them.

Sometimes motion is imparted by a movement between sen­tences or parts of sentences—which become narrative-pictorial units—that is like the movement between shots of a film sequence. A film sequence is formed by a series of shots, or uninterrupted camera “takes.” The film-maker not only captures his moving
subject with the lens of his camera but moves the camera from shot to shot, sometimes closing in, sometimes pulling away, sometimes at a speed and angle quite different from those of the subject. A similar movement is effected through the transitions from shot to shot—the cuts, fades, and dissolves. Here is a moving picture of Dilsey, Faulkner’s most composed character, from the most stable section of *The Sound and the Fury*. In order to focus its narrative-pictorial units, I will transcribe it into something like a shot-by-shot film scenario. To call attention to the movement within each unit, I will italicize the action verbs and verbals. To illuminate the movement between units, I will comment in the adjacent column.

1. The day *dawned* bleak and chill.
   
   A *moving* wall of grey light out of the northeast
   
   which, instead of *dissolving* into moisture, seemed to *disintegrate* into minute and venomous particles,
   
   *like dust*
   
   that, when Dilsey *opened* the door of the cabin and *emerged, needled* laterally into her flesh,
   
   *precipitating* not so much a moisture as a substance partaking of the quality of thin, not quite congealed oil.

2. The gown *fell* gauntly from her shoulders, across her fallen breasts, then *tightened* upon her paunch, and *fell* again, *ballooning* a little above the nether garments

3. which she *would remove* layer by layer as the spring *accomplished* and the warm days, in colour regal and moribund.

   At the beginning of this long incomplete sentence, the dawn turns into a moving wall.
   “Instead” is one of Faulkner’s *negatives* that allows him to give us an image and take it away, but it nonetheless remains or fades as in a lap-dissolve. “Venom” adds a *new quality* or derives from a *new perspective*.
   Another new quality and perspective is added through the simile.
   Dust changes into particles that needle laterally; what might be called a *moving mixed metaphor* develops still another transformation or shift in perspective.
   Now particles become a moisture again, negated and then transformed into not quite congealed oil.

   This sentence works like a series of shots moving down Dilsey’s body. The movement is achieved within almost every shot by the verb, and between each shot by the connectives that reflect the *traveling eye of the narrator*.
   Another kind of movement is effected through time and tense shift.
4. She had been a big woman once, but now her skeleton rose, draped loosely in unpadded skin that tightened again upon a paunch almost dropsical, as though muscle and tissue had been courage or fortitude which the days or the years had consumed until only the indomitable skeleton was left rising like a ruin or a landmark above the somnolent and impenetrable guts,

and above that the collapsed face that gave the impression of the bones themselves being outside the flesh, lifted into the driving day with an expression at once fatalistic and of a child's astonished disappointment, until she turned and entered the house again.

Muscle and tissue become personified, then unpersonified to be consumed.

The skeleton rises. And becomes a ruin. And then a landmark. And finally the guts become impervious in this wildly moving mixture of metaphors, or shifting of perspectives. By now the shifts and transformations are coming so fast, no single picture of Dilsey holds together.

Until she makes her second actual movement in this page-long moving picture. (281-82).

Besides Faulkner's stylized pictures of motion, then, are his pictures in motion. And his pictures in motion take two forms, which may be compared to the movement within and between film shots. Movement within the narrative-pictorial unit is evoked by Faulkner's long sentences that strive to contain their subjects, by the animation and personification of objects, by the verballs that convey motion as they define and describe, and by the negatives that imply potency. Movement between narrative-pictorial units is effected through the traveling narrative eye (Dilsey 2), moving mixed metaphors that transform the subject and shift perspectives (Dilsey 1 and 4), and the shifting of temporal perspectives (Dilsey 3).

THE HOVERING NARRATOR

This leads us to the role of the narrator who is looking at his subject and trying to grasp it. For although pictures of motion are what the narrator sees, pictures in motion are how the narrator sees; and, as I have tried to show, even when Faulkner is considered most objective—or detached—and omniscient, his narrator is
engaged and limited. Limited in his capacity to grasp, hold, com-
prehend, accommodate the senselessness that drives his charac-
ters to destructive as well as heroic ends, his mind’s eye is in
constant motion. And the motion of the narrative eye becomes the
subject of his most powerful novels.

*The Sound and the Fury* may have begun with a clear, coherent
“mental picture . . . of the muddy seat of a little girl’s drawers.”
But though Caddy is central, she never appears in the narrative
present. She affects the present: she is identified with every object
in Benjy’s world, she is responsible for every move on Quentin’s
last day, she causes all of Jason’s frustrations. But her effects are
the result of her absence, and her absence is the subject of each
character’s thoughts. The actual subject of the novel, however, is
the approaches to Caddy and all the values identified with her. It
is the four different approaches, or perspectives, and it is the
movement from one perspective to another in a pattern that de-
composes chronological, logical, and causal order. Indeed, this
movement is accentuated in the section that has been considered
the most stable—where the narrator is not detached and objective
but hovering and engaged, first in the vicinity of Dilsey’s con-
sciousness as he tries to grasp it, then somewhere between Dilsey
and Jason as he focuses on the climax of Jason’s chase in a way
that parallels Dilsey’s stately walk to church, and finally where
he draws the two disparate lines together in an enigmatic scene—
as Jason leaps across the town square and brutally swings the
 carriage around to stop Benjy’s screaming and restore an order
that though stabilizing is nonetheless arbitrary. Still, the chron-
ological, logical, and causal order that has been decomposed
tends to reassert itself: the novel asks the reader to reconstruct a
pattern that can be reconstructed.

In *As I Lay Dying*, with the exception of Addie’s chapter, the
temporal order is straightforward. But the perspective shifts so of-
ten and so fast—fifty-nine times among fifteen points of view—
that the movement between narrative units continually upsets
our equilibrium. Moreover, the movement is more complex, for
each section is composed of a double perspective. It is not the
narrow-minded, self-centered, and puritanic Cora who sees
Addie’s eyes “like two candles when you watch them gutter down
into the sockets of iron candle-sticks” (8), especially as this image
reappears in the Darl section just before Addie dies—“the two
flames glare up for a steady instant” (47). It is not Vardaman who
thinks about “the dark . . . resolving him out of his integrity,
into an unrelated scattering of components” (55). Tull would
hardly play with the pun on “bore,” which relates the holes bored into Addie’s face with the burdens borne by Anse and Cora (70). Nor would Darl—despite his natural sensitivity and lively imagination—be capable of the abstract and poetic thought and the feeling for language that pervade his sections; for there is nothing in the novel to suggest that he ever heard or read any more than what was available to his provincial family, and all he brought back from his service in France seems to have been a spyglass containing “a woman and a pig with two backs and no face” (244).

Added, then, to the view of the dominant character in each section is the view of the narrator who hovers nearby. Added to the kaleidoscopic intercutting from one perspective to another is the hovering of the narrator between his character’s view and his own. And added to the linear but ironic movement of the Bundrens—as they pass through fire and flood to destroy rather than integrate the family and replace Addie with a new Mrs. Bundren—is the gratuitous intercutting, or movement for its own sake, that continually fractures the story line.

PASSING THE STORY

Faulkner’s impulse toward the hovering narrator may have been grounded in the southern tradition of storytelling and his own gift as a storyteller, as well as his compulsion to grasp the senseless pattern of history. His initial attempts to relate perspectives take the form of stories told by Falls, Simon, and Jenny in Flags in the Dust or Sartoris—which function as flashbacks and oscillate between the past and present. The flashback, or intercutting from story to story, adds the movement of the cutting to the movement of the story. This movement is most suited to the chase, which in one form or another dominates Faulkner’s novels as well as the silent film and the cartoons that so delighted him.

In Light in August Faulkner develops a story of multiple chases—a hectic picture of motion—as well as a disturbing experience of unpredictable movement—or picture in motion—through an intercutting of stories, the gratuitous passing of the story from one storyteller to another throughout all but that section of the novel recounting what no one in Jefferson could know about Christmas. Although the cutting is not so fast as that in As I Lay Dying, the range of perspectives and storytellers is far wider and the total experience is far more unsettling.

It is more unsettling, first, because the picture of motion is far
less clear. Rather than the simple movement from home to city, *Light in August* is composed of varying kinds of chases and escapes. Lena chases Brown with tranquil confidence. Byron chases Lena with stumbling awkwardness. Christmas escapes from the posse with the comic ingenuity of the early Mickey Mouse. McEachern galloping straight to the dance hall he had never heard of, Hines riding straight out to find Milly and the circus man, and Percy Grimm coolly pursuing Christmas through the chessboard of Jefferson's alleys and streets—all chase their quarries with uncanny certainty. Brown is continually on the run to escape identity. And Christmas continually escapes to discover one.  

Added to the multiplicity of pace and direction—to the picture of motion—is the oscillation of the hovering narrator and the passing of the story from one storyteller to another. Indeed, these two kinds of movement become related, for, as I will try to show, the experience of the novel is dominated by both the oscillation and the succession of perspectives.

Part of the story is told by a narrator who focuses on the consciousness of Lena, Byron, Hightower, and principally Joe Christmas. Indeed, he tells Christmas's story from the ritualistic preparation for Joanna's murder, or the act that was to give Christmas an identity as the "nigger murderer," back to his first consciousness of identity in the orphanage, and then straight along those "savage and lonely streets" (207) that led to Joanna's and the murder. Other parts of the story are told by various storytelling characters. Byron, the principal storyteller, tells parts of the Lena and Christmas stories to Hightower. Joanna's story about Calvin and Nathaniel Burdens interrupts the narrator's story about Christmas. Mrs. and Mr. Hines pass along the story of Milly and Christmas's birth. Various townspeople describe the chase, and a collective, choric persona—"the clerks, the idle, the countrymen in overalls; the talk"—tells the story of Christmas's capture (330 ff.). Gavin Stevens is brought into the novel only for his interpretive narration of the climax, which he has not even witnessed, and the furniture dealer tells his wife a funny story about Byron and Lena as they leave Jefferson.

Although the voices of the storytelling characters are often more clearly defined than those in *As I Lay Dying*, intercut into them nonetheless is the awe, amazement, disbelief, rage, irony, and sympathetic humor of the hovering narrator. Further, some stories—like that of the posse chasing Christmas—are passed
along and developed by one storyteller after another; and some stories are passed along and retold by different storytellers: we hear about the fire and the murder three times each, and the story of Christmas’s death is retold after Gavin Stevens tells it by the narrator, who draws back to see it from the viewpoints of Christmas and Grimm and finally the townspeople. To suggest the kind of picture in motion generated by *Light in August*, let me trace the passing of the story in its exposition.

The novel begins with the story of Lena Grove, told from her viewpoint; but the narrative oscillates between her innocent musings, as she passes through the tranquil countryside, and the perceptions of the narrator—who knows how she fits, or does not fit, into the violent story that follows, and who projects his violent ambiguity into the descriptions of the sawmill, the train, and the wagon. Soon there is a shift to the perspective of Armstid and the countrymen, which, remaining within the pastoral setting, gives us an outsider’s and a man’s view of Lena. Here the narrator intrudes only to provide an ironic focus on the countrymen’s folk wisdom. But as Lena comes within sight of Jefferson, sees the smoke from Joanna’s burning house but thinks only of how long she has been on the road, there is a radical break in the story line, an unanticipated intercutting from one subject to another—a sudden leap from country to city and into the consciousness of a new character focusing on another new character, and a sudden shift in pace, mood, and import.

“Byron Bunch knows this” (27), we are told with categorical finality. What he knows—but what the hovering narrator knows better as he adds his perceptions and wit to Byron’s naïve and plodding mentality—is how two strangers came to the mill several years before: Joe Christmas, with his “stiffbrim straw hat . . . cocked at an angle arrogant and baleful above his still face” (27), and Joe Brown, who is supposed to have put Byron “in mind of one of these cars running along the street with a radio in it. You can’t make out what it is saying and the car ain’t going anywhere in particular and when you look at it close you see that there ain’t even anybody in it” (32-33).

Soon the story passes on to a new consciousness, and we discover what the Reverend Gail Hightower knows about Byron; that is, we are told what Byron has told Hightower, which Hightower but not Byron knows is about Byron falling in love. Then, as we watch Hightower sitting at his window, “waiting for that instant when all light has failed out of the sky” (55), we hear what
Byron heard when he first came to town—or the story the townspeople told Byron about Hightower. Finally we are presented with a dramatic scene of Byron and Hightower facing each other, but the scene is set for still another story, or another telling of the same story—of Lena’s arrival in Jefferson, the discovery of Joanna’s body, and the posse starting after Christmas.

In the first seventy pages of the novel, the story has been passed along six times. Twice it is a part of the story that has been told to the storyteller before. Twice we hear of Lena’s arrival at the sawmill. Three times we see the fire of Joanna’s burning house. It is only on the seventy-first page that we begin to feel that the various parts of the story, which have been told out of sequence as well as repeatedly, begin to shape themselves into a coherent pattern. But there is no connection between the two parts of the story Byron tells Hightower as they face each other in the lamplight. His tale of Lena leads up to her asking, “Is he still enough of a preacher to marry folks?”—that is, to marry Lena and Brown. Hightower then asks, “What is this you are telling me?” What Byron answers is that “Christmas is part nigger.” And this leads to the story of finding Joanna’s body and the beginning of the chase (82–83).

We may be able to reason a connection between the two parts of Byron’s story, since Lena arrived in Jefferson as Joanna’s house was burning and her lover had been living in Joanna’s cabin with Christmas. But the connection we are made to feel derives from the breathless pace of the narrative as it leaps from one consciousness to another back and forth in time. Or it derives from the desperate motion of the narrator’s consciousness as he shifts perspectives—now hovering near the mind of one character, now cutting from one storyteller to another—trying to grasp the connections and contain the senseless motion of his world. That he can never grasp the connections or contain the motion is expressed in the pace of his narrative, in the level of intensity to which he raises all the narrative voices, and in the discontinuous shifts in perspective. It is ultimately expressed in the Hightower chapter, which succeeds the climax of Christmas’s death contrary to our expectations, and in the gap between the central story and the pastoral frame.

The dominant image in the Hightower chapter is of the wheel, but the wheel is not introduced as an object of Hightower’s thoughts. Rather, it is a simile, an object of the narrator’s own imagination that serves to describe what he sees in Hightower’s
The evolving consciousness: “Thinking begins to slow now. It slows like a wheel beginning to run in the sand” (462). The wheel continues as the narrator’s simile and metaphor, becoming an instrument of torture, as Hightower feels the pain of his growing awareness. Even when the wheel is released—“going fast and smooth now, because it is freed now of burden, of vehicle, axle, all”—and gives way to the halo, it is still a simile: “In the lambent suspension of August . . . it seems to engender and surround itself with a faint glow like a halo” (465). This simile, though, serves as a bridge from the narrator’s to Hightower’s direct consciousness, for in the next sentence the halo does not seem like but is “full of faces . . . peaceful, as though they have escaped into an apotheosis.” Hightower’s vision of ultimate unity is seen by the reader firsthand; indeed, it is shared by Hightower, the narrator, and the reader, thereby extending the experience of unity to the limits of the novel. But this unity is immediately destroyed—as one face dissolves into two, and the faces of Joe Christmas and Percy Grimm “seem to strive,” not because they themselves are striving or desiring it, “but because of the motion and desire of the wheel itself” (465–66).

It is just this motion that the hovering narrator seeks to contain—a motion that seems to have no cause beyond itself and no purpose other than to keep on going. A motion that is idealized in the daring of the original John Sartoris and the original Gail Hightower, and that drove Christmas to reject the misfitting identities offered to him by a rigid society. But a motion too that led to the death of Sartoris and Hightower, to the senseless violence of the Civil War and World War I, and to the acts of negation—rejection and murder—that were the only means for Joe Christmas to say “I am.”

Finally, the motion of Hightower’s spinning wheel is succeeded by the motion of horsemen, sweeping past Hightower “with tumult and soundless yelling . . . like a tide whose crest is jagged with the wild heads of horses and the brandished arms of men like the crater of the world in explosion” (466–67). This is the motion of Hightower’s consciousness, which continues beyond the moment of self-understanding and experience of unity, and even beyond his disturbing apprehension of what happened in Jefferson that day. It is also the motion of the narrative mind, which, unable to grasp the senseless and autonomous energy, again tries one simile after another and transforms the horsemen into a tide and then a crater.
If the novel's ending is pastoral, and if Lena is the epitome of composure, the jump-cut between the last two chapters accentuates and extends the senseless picture in motion. And if the narrator finally adds his gentle irony to the voice of the furniture dealer and extends a note of sympathy to Byron, he leaves us with a picture of Byron still in pursuit of Lena, even as they sit together in a truck carrying them to no particular destination—"watching the telephone poles and fences passing like it was a circus parade" (480). The ending of the novel might complete the pastoral frame that surrounds the central violence, and it might offer an alternative to that violence—although not one available to modern man and woman. But, as I have tried to show, the principle governing *Light in August* is one of continual movement and senseless succession. Although the story passes from storyteller to storyteller, shifts perspectives, violates chronology, and repeats itself in different ways, it is continually driven forward. Indeed, the dislocations and discontinuities are felt only because of the novel's forward motion. Here too the model of a film sequence will help us understand the essentially narrative element that Faulkner develops. One shot of a moving picture may succeed another in a way that violates continuities of space or time, but it nonetheless succeeds it. Movement is the basis of narrative in film and fiction, and succession is the basis of narrative movement. What is so disturbing about Faulkner's view of the world is that the succession seems ungoverned and ungovernable—that the motion, which inspires heroism, avarice, and violence, derives only from itself and leads to apocalypse. This is the picture of motion in Faulkner's most powerful novels; the power derives from its full realization as a picture in motion.

Faulkner was satisfied with the galleys of *Light in August*, which he read shortly after he arrived in Hollywood. He told Sam Marx that Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer would not find *Sanctuary* suitable—though "it would make a good Mickey Mouse picture." In his own way Faulkner was realizing in *Light in August* the possibilities of motion in pictures and pictures in motion that the silent film makers had developed and that was magnified in the Mickey Mouse cartoons. By extending the resources of the comic-surreal chase in the movement of his characters and of the cutting between perspectives in the movement of his narrative eye, he was able to engage us in a singular but multidimensional experience of what Henry Adams had symbolized in the American dynamo and what Thomas Pynchon would point to as entropy. In *Absalom,*
Absalom! he would develop the impulses that gave rise to *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying* through what I will compare to Eisenstein’s montage, including within his compass the senseless movement of classical and biblical history. In *Go Down, Moses* he would seek out the earliest American source of his vision and introduce us into his most ambiguous picture of race relations with a racing and chasing in “Was” that could come right out of the early Disney. In the Snopes trilogy and *The Reivers*, as his rage would give way to tolerance and his ambiguity to humor, the vitality of his characters might have derived directly from the energetic, sharp-witted, imaginative, and winning Mickey Mouse.