

To Market, to Market: *The Portable Faulkner*

The degree to which the act of calling the nation's familial clan to bear witness to the domestic and public crimes on which it is founded; to which the revelation of the *bed* of a language can arouse hatred and deaf resentment, filtered into celebration only through time, has still, perhaps, never been sufficiently measured. The Americans have never really forgiven Faulkner for existing.

—Philippe Sollers

Written sixteen years after the publication of *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), the "Appendix: Compson 1699–1945" stands in an uncertain relation to the novel it lengthened by some twenty pages. Faulkner himself characterized the appendix as "the key to the whole book." He made it clear, however, that this "key," like "The Key" to Sterne's *Political Romance*, opens the book only to further interpretation rather than laying its presumable contents bare. Paradoxically reversing the assumption that an appendix concerns matters extrinsic to the central questions of a text, Faulkner expressly characterized the appendix as a problematic *opening* or overture of his novel: "Print this appendix first," Faulkner instructed his editor, "and title it APPENDIX."¹ By introducing a contradiction between its title and its position in the text, Faulkner called attention to the problematic status of this belated yet introductory appendage to the novel. Only with the publication of Joseph Blotner's biography of Faulkner (1974) and of selections from Faulkner's correspondence (1977), however, has it become impossible to overlook Faulkner's instigation of the discrepancies associated with the appendix. No longer can it be argued, for instance, that it was Random House that had decided, badly and inexplicably, to print the appendix at the beginning of *The Sound and the Fury*, or that subsequent editions—including the Vintage paperback most frequently read in the United States—repositioned the appendix at the back of the book in order to correct an editorial mistake. The evidence that Faulkner himself gave the appendix its paradoxical status is enough to encourage a reexamination of this text and of the various problems it brings to the fore. Yet so little atten-

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tion has been devoted to such a reevaluation that some critics still argue that the "use of this Appendix as an introduction is hardly correct. . . . It is an appendix, and should be placed at the end of the book."² Indeed, the use of the appendix as an introduction is "hardly correct" since the appendix does not seem to fulfill the explanatory functions proper to an introduction. Yet a consideration of the conditions of its composition and a closer attention to the text of the appendix will suggest that such a departure from the proper and correct is hardly incidental to the appendix. Indeed, the appendix constitutes itself as a *literary* text precisely insofar as it is *essentially* a refutation of the proper and correct.

The appendix is most often discussed in the context of *The Sound and the Fury*, where some of its assertions may serve critics as ballast for the interpretation of less stable configurations in the original text. Yet literary historians recognize that the appendix was originally destined for *The Portable Faulkner*. By examining the appendix in the context of this well-known anthology, which is most often treated as little more than the occasion for the piece, we discover that the appendix is not merely a supplement to *The Sound and the Fury* but a critique, before the fact, of what has since become, in the United States, the canonical representation of this author's writing. According to this representation, Faulkner's writings constitute the unity designated by Yoknapatawpha County, a unity founded upon such categories as kinship and genealogy, whose relation to writing and to its particular forms of organization remains to be thought.

I. A Genealogy of the Criticism

It is by now a commonplace to say that Cowley's *Portable Faulkner* played an important role in the recognition of Faulkner's writings in the United States. Both Frederick Hoffman, in the essay on the growth of Faulkner's reputation that introduces his widely-circulated collections of Faulkner criticism, and O.B. Emerson, in his full-length study of Faulkner's early reputation in America, situate the *Portable* and Cowley's introduction to the volume in the tradition of "favorable" criticism of Faulkner. In other words, the *Portable* is situated within a tradition of corrective criticism, which managed to supplant the predominantly unfavorable reception Faulkner had up to that point received in America.

Until 1939, in the hands of two types of critics, which Hoffman and Emerson call humanists and leftists, Faulkner was generally

faulted because his work violated moral and aesthetic standards or because it ignored progressive social and political imperatives. Faulkner was condemned, on one hand, by a group of critics for whom Alan Reynolds Thompson is made the spokesman, as the initiator of a "cult of cruelty," who lacked "social taste and moral discretion," who "failed to transmute the raw materials of life in such a way as to give readers a purely aesthetic effect," and who interfered with the "response to beauty" by arousing "gross animal instincts." On the other hand, leftist critics like Granville Hicks argued that Faulkner's work showed too little sympathy with the American proletariat, "with the kind of suffering that he can see on every hand, the kind of crime that is committed everyday, and the kind of corruption that gnaws at every human being in this rotten society."³ For Emerson and Hoffman, among other scholars of Faulkner's reputation, 1939 marks the beginning of a critical tradition that overcomes these misreadings, showing greater depth and more sympathy with Faulkner.

Although Emerson marks 1939 as a turning point in Faulkner's literary reputation in the United States, he notes that Robert Penn Warren sees this turning point in Cowley's 1946 introduction to *The Portable Faulkner*.

Responsible for this year [1939] being a turning point in Faulkner's career were Conrad Aiken's and George Marion O'Donnell's valuable studies. With the appearance of these two articles a trend developed in Faulkner criticism to approach the work as a whole, to examine the structural and philosophical aspects which give it permanent literary value, and to consider the social-moral themes inherent in it. . . . However, in Robert Penn Warren's opinion Malcolm Cowley's introduction to *The Portable Faulkner* marks the turning point in Faulkner's reputation. This book brought about a gradual revival of interest in Faulkner's writing which culminated in his receiving the 1949 Nobel Prize for Literature.⁴

In appraisals of Faulkner's critical reception, Aiken, O'Donnell, and Cowley serve to mark the transition from a negative and deprecatory phase to a positive, appreciative evaluation, stressing the unity of the writings, which "culminated," as Warren points out, in Faulkner's receipt of the Nobel Prize.

O'Donnell's criticism of Faulkner—as opposed, for example, to Aiken's, which astutely observed a necessary relation between Faulkner's sentence structures and the characteristic shapes of his novels—represents the earliest attempt to understand and organize Faulkner's

work as the dramatic elaboration of a single principle. All subsequent criticism of Faulkner, Emerson argues, has been affected by O'Donnell's essay: "perhaps it is not too much to assert that all modern Faulkner criticism stems from O'Donnell, particularly that of the 'new criticism.'"⁵ In his study, O'Donnell claims that "one principle holds together [Faulkner's] thirteen books of prose. . . . That principle is the Southern social-economic-ethical tradition which Mr. Faulkner possesses naturally, as part of his sensibility. His novels are, primarily, a series of myths (or aspects of a single myth) built around the conflict between traditionalism and the antitraditional modern world in which it is immersed."⁶ After hypothesizing this single and original principle of Faulkner's writings, which the author is said to possess "naturally," O'Donnell summarily measures each of Faulkner's novels to date against it. If certain of Faulkner's novels, such as *Pylon* and *The Wild Palms*, resist his principle, O'Donnell finds in this discrepancy reason for their failure.

As Robert Penn Warren, Hoffman, and Emerson note, the organizational rationale of Cowley's *Portable* is heavily indebted to O'Donnell. Hoffman, for example, describes the *Portable* as "the fullest and in many respects the most ingenious adaptation of O'Donnell's construction of Faulkner."⁷ At the same time, Cowley's work is seen as an improvement on O'Donnell's, insofar as his perspective is less limited, rigid, and single-minded.⁸

Emerson points out that the organizational model of O'Donnell and Cowley draws on an earlier contribution by Aubrey Starke. Before O'Donnell, it was Starke who saw Faulkner's main theme as the rise of the class of Snopeses and the decay of the class of Sartoris. Before Cowley's 1944 article entitled "Faulkner's Human Comedy," it was Starke who discovered in Faulkner's writings "the building of a carefully integrated whole," constructed after the example of Balzac.⁹ If, then, Cowley's interpretation of Faulkner is not strictly speaking Cowley's own, and if a wholistic interpretation of Faulkner's writings had been suggested a good decade earlier, it is nonetheless the *Portable* that gives this approach a concrete form that can be and has been brought to the attention of a wider public. The effect of the *Portable* was thus to legitimize the celebration of Faulkner in the United States as the celebration of a literary realization and consciousness of wholeness and aesthetic totality. The acceptance of Faulkner was, in other words, less involved with a greater understanding of the ensemble of his writings than with a fundamental reformation of the manner in which his work was received. The efforts of Starke,

O'Donnell, and Cowley all participate in this regeneration of "Faulkner," but Cowley alone acknowledges the stakes for which he is playing—the "business," as he put it, of "relaunching" Faulkner.¹⁰ This reformation was accomplished by turning away from Faulkner's disturbing individual works to the reassuring whole in which their genuine significance is supposedly revealed.

Thus the form of the *Portable*, grounded in the "living pattern" of which all the books in the Yoknapatawpha Saga are part, promises to reveal Faulkner's "real achievement." For, as Cowley explains in his introduction, it is "this pattern, and not the printed volumes in which part of it is recorded, that is Faulkner's real achievement." Its introduction, the selection and arrangement of texts, the editorial notes sandwiched between groups of Faulkner's writings—all these offer an author who is portable, who has produced a *whole* that can be decoded and transmitted to others. As an author devoted to the commemoration of an American region, tradition, and people—in other words, in the affirmative role of bard—Faulkner can enter the American canon, receive the Nobel Prize, and travel abroad as an ambassador of American culture.

II. The Genesis of the *Portable*

It is not as a "turning point" in the genealogy of Faulkner's reputation that I wish to focus on the *Portable*, but as an attempt to establish the legitimacy of Faulkner's writings, in a form that Faulkner's appendix is the first to oppose. As the only anthology of Faulkner's large body of writings, the impact of the *Portable* is less obvious yet more pervasive than is that of a simple essay on Faulkner's work. The *Portable* remains widely distributed: since publication in 1946, it has sold nearly 250,000 copies, or an average of 6,250 copies per year.¹¹ Moreover, because an anthology has the semblance of an objective form, its guiding assumptions, which also govern the interpretation of Faulkner familiar to our canon, typically remain unquestioned and intact. As if by chance, the text Faulkner inscribes within the *Portable*—the appendix—poses a challenge to these assumptions.

The genesis or history of the *Portable* is most fully set forth in Malcolm Cowley's *Faulkner-Cowley File: Letters and Memories, 1944-1962*. As its title suggests, this work is at once an historical document and a personal memoir. In the *File*, Cowley presumably assembles what remains of his correspondence with Faulkner—he does not explain the reason for all the omissions or gaps or claim that the work offers

his complete correspondence—and he splices this correspondence together by interspersing the letters with his own “memories,” to construct a kind of continuous narrative.¹² It is this at best peculiar narrative of the genesis of the *Portable* that other scholars, for the most part, uncritically reiterate.

The Cowley we find in the *File* is a clever strategist and rhetorician, successful in winning consent for the *Portable* not only from Viking, which had initially refused Cowley’s proposal, but also from Faulkner, who was not in the habit of collaborating with critics. In the *File*, for example, Cowley suggests that the three articles on Faulkner he published in various magazines in 1944–45, and would mostly incorporate into his introduction to the *Portable*, also figured as elements of persuasion in a more commercial campaign. They served to persuade Viking that *The Portable Faulkner* he had proposed, as a sequel to *The Portable Hemingway* he was editing at the time, might find a readership.¹³ Cowley’s early correspondence with Faulkner concerned this long article that was to appear in pieces. His first letter to Faulkner is not included in the *File*, but we can guess its general outline from the tenor of Faulkner’s response (and from the very fact that he responded) and from Cowley’s subsequent letters to Faulkner. We can assume that Cowley had from the outset stressed the general neglect of Faulkner’s work on the “literary marketplace” and the fact that his own intentions were, first and foremost, to raise Faulkner’s “stock.”

As I have noted, Cowley intended the *Portable* to represent the “whole interconnecting pattern . . . of [Faulkner’s] novels.” The nature of this pattern is indicated by the descriptive copy printed on the front cover of the first edition, which represented the anthology as:

THE SAGA OF YOKNAPATAWPHA COUNTY,
1820–1945, BEING THE FIRST CHRONOLOGICAL
PICTURE OF FAULKNER’S MYTHICAL COUNTY IN
MISSISSIPPI.¹⁴

This immodest advertisement points to the contradictions that inform the *Portable* and that remain unresolved in subsequent criticism focused on Yoknapatawpha County. What, for instance, is implied when a corpus is represented by analogy with a picture, that is, by analogy with something that lends itself to view? What violence must the corpus suffer when the aim is to present it as a “chronological picture?” In what manner does the reference to some “actual” place enable one to locate Faulkner’s “mythical county?” And what, after

all, relates the reassuring continuity of a "saga" to the multiple, incompatible eruptions of Faulkner's writings? These sorts of questions are repressed in the continuous forward movement of Cowley's "chronological picture."

Following the map of Yoknapatawpha County that Faulkner was asked to draw for the *Portable*, and following Cowley's introduction, the *Portable* is divided into seven sections. The titles of these sections suggest that the anthology is arranged according to a plurality of topics, including groups of people ("The Old People," "The Unvanquished," "The Peasants"(!)); places ("The Last Wilderness" and "Mississippi Flood"); points in time ("The Last Wilderness," "The End of an Order," "Modern Times"); social change ("The End of an Order"); and political and natural events ("The Unvanquished" and "Mississippi Flood"). Notably absent from this apparently unregulated assortment of topics are the less hygienic subjects Faulkner had been accused of exploiting: incest, murder, drunkenness, rape, madness, hallucination, castration, hate and so forth. Cowley carefully avoids all the subjects that perturb, as the French writer Philippe Sollers has observed, "genealogies, filiations, and the hysterical desire for history," in short, everything to which the *Portable* devotes itself.¹⁵ Such topics, evidently, have no place in the becoming portable of Faulkner.

Yet, if the nature of Cowley's exclusions is evident, the ordering principle of his inclusions is not. No topical pattern appears to unify the items included in the anthology. The volume's only apparent principle of organization is chronological; entries organized under each topic are dated, beginning with 1820 and ending (if we exclude for a moment Faulkner's appendix) with 1940. As the scope of this chronology suggests, the entries are arranged not in the order Faulkner wrote them but in order of the fictional time they represent or might be assumed to represent. Yet if the order of the volume was to depend on chronology, why did Cowley bother with topics? Why not simply date the items and allow the chronicle to run its course, as in Faulkner's novel *Mosquitoes*? Why not unify the topics and omit the chronology, as Faulkner later organized his *Collected Stories*? That Cowley never observes the shortcomings or inadequacies of the principles that organize his work betrays the inadequacies of his assumptions about the very aspect of Faulkner's work over which he claims the greatest command, namely, its "whole interconnecting pattern."

As Cowley explains in his introduction, "the special nature of Faulkner's achievement" demanded that an anthology of his writings

"have some other aim than merely to select the best of Faulkner's work. Such an arrangement . . . might fail to reveal what is really best in Faulkner: that is, the scope and force and interdependence of his work as a whole." For Cowley, the best way to reveal the interdependence of Faulkner's work as a whole was to "make selections that would give a general panorama of life in Faulkner's county, decade by decade, from the days when the early settlers rode northward along the Natchez Trace."

Cowley acknowledges the fact that his gesture, which aims at "a general panorama of life in Faulkner's county," in fact limits his own scope: "With regret for a few good stories that had to be put aside, I included nothing unless it had some bearing on the Mississippi background (or on Faulkner's Mississippi characters in other backgrounds). I therefore had twelve [of seventeen] books from which to choose, and managed to use selections from ten of them, omitting only *Sartoris* and *As I Lay Dying*." Omitting Faulkner's two volumes of poetry entirely, along with those stories and novels that do not "take place" in Mississippi or that do not take "Mississippi characters" to other places, Cowley's first gesture of selection reduces Faulkner's seventeen books to twelve, two of which he would not manage to fit into his scheme. Following O'Donnell, Cowley too would evaluate what did not fit into his vision of Faulkner's purpose or "legend" not as another part of his corpus that demanded interpretation and study but simply as a falling away or as a failure. In the first part of his introduction to the *Portable*, for example, Cowley calls most of Faulkner's early poetry "worthless" and refers to *Mosquitoes* as "a very bad early novel." As is indicated by Cowley's Faulkner bibliography, which follows the introduction in the revised *Portable*, and which marks those works that "deal wholly or in part with Yohnapatawpha [sic] County," *The Marble Faun*, *Soldier's Pay*, *Mosquitoes*, *A Green Bough*, *Pylon*, and *A Fable*—to say nothing of certain short stories or of the "other" part of *The Wild Palms*—all these fall outside the scope, and below the mark, of Cowley's Faulkner.

Cowley's show of regret for what his premises forced him to omit does not prevent him from suggesting that the *Portable*, besides offering the "scope and force" of Faulkner's work as a whole, might also retain something of its "interdependence": "I also hope that some readers will go through [the *Portable*] from beginning to end, following the characters and the sequence of events as if they were reading one continued story; and I hope they will find that it retains something of the organic unity of Faulkner's legend." Here we may begin

to see the importance of Cowley's entire editorial apparatus, for the unity of the *Portable* is less the result of some "organic unity" it might claim to "retain" from Faulkner's works than of its own structural armature, its own datings and orderings, groupings and headings and editorial seams.

As I have explained, Cowley organized his selections, from ten of Faulkner's choice works, according to seven topics and in the order of the chronological sequence they might be said to represent. Thus, under each topic heading, each item is introduced by a date. Even at this level we can observe the mark Faulkner left on Cowley's *Portable* with his appendix. For the manner in which the appendix (and this is also true of Faulkner's map of Yoknapatawpha County) insinuates itself into Cowley's systematic dating of the entries cannot be incorporated into the structures that lend order to Cowley's anthology. Faulkner's habitual problematization of such structures also points us toward that which Cowley's notion of "organic unity," with its particular thematic bias, fails to grasp in the articulation of Faulkner's themes and in the nature of their interdependence. With the appendix, Faulkner introduced an anomaly into Cowley's system of linking the entries in a chronology. With its two connected dates, which indicate a continuum or span of time rather than a point within one, the title of the appendix precludes and disrupts Cowley's system. This time span not only fails to submit to the order of Cowley's entries but also lends to it a sinister note of finality or death, which becomes more clear in light of Faulkner's request that, in a reedition of *The Sound and the Fury*, the title of the appendix be laid out in the fashion of an obituary:

Compson
1699 - 1945

Even if Cowley had dated the sections as time spans, as Faulkner had suggested (*File*, p. 64), instead of dating the entries as points in time, the appendix would still have situated itself "outside" the system by exceeding the continuum they suggest.

Cowley did not place the appendix in the position for which it was intended, that is, before the excerpt from *The Sound and the Fury* in the section of the *Portable* whose title, "The End of an Order," receives in this context an ironic Faulknerian gloss. For reasons perhaps no more significant than the title of the piece, Cowley decided to place the appendix at the end of the book. In a gesture that recuperates the appendix as a reinforcement of the *Portable*, he refers to it in

the editor's note that precedes "The End of an Order" as "the Compson genealogy printed as an appendix to this volume." Faulkner's appendix even created a problem in the "Contents," where the word "APPENDIX" is inset and capitalized like an "EDITOR'S NOTE," and the title appears as "1699-1945. The Compsons." The repositioning of the appendix in the revised *Portable* and the revision of both the editor's note and the "Contents" are a few of the deceptively trivial details that reveal the overdetermination of the appendix.¹⁶ For Cowley and Faulkner, the appendix became an illusory battleground, illusory in the sense that Faulkner suggests in *The Sound and the Fury*, where he writes that "no battle is ever won. . . . They are not even fought. The field only reveals to man his own folly and despair, and victory is an illusion of philosophers and fools."

III. "A High Comedy of Misunderstanding"

Among the *File's* memories is a section in which Cowley dwells on the "situation" the appendix gave rise to, which in retrospect impressed him as a "high comedy of misunderstanding." He compares Faulkner, as author of the appendix, to an "emperor invading the realm of a neighboring kinglet" and himself, as the editor, to "Polonius or J. Alfred Prufrock"—pedantic, meticulous, and obtuse, "almost, at times, the Fool" (*File*, p. 46).

The appendix, the "subsidiary extraneous adjunct" (as an appendix is emphatically defined in the *OED*), came to threaten the realm of the *Portable*, its parent or superior, the "neighboring kinglet," as Cowley puts it, narrowly missing the word "hamlet," the title of one of Faulkner's "Yoknapatawpha novels." As if to avoid a reference to Faulkner's writing, which Cowley quite appropriately suspects is outside his domain or "realm," Cowley's reference to the Polonius of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is screened by a citation not of the play but of a verse from Eliot's "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" that refers to the play. Other phrases from "Prufrock," as if by chance, better describe the recognition to which the appendix brought our collaborators dangerously close and on whose repression their alliance seemed to depend, namely, the well-known lament of the poem, "That is not what I meant at all. That is not it, at all." The correspondence between Cowley and Faulkner concerning the appendix foregrounded not only misunderstanding but also two different approaches to language, literature, and the genealogy of meaning.

From the beginning, when Cowley wrote Faulkner with regard to

the long piece he intended to write, Cowley asked Faulkner to authorize, endorse, or legitimate his interpretation of the author's work: "Now, there's one question I wish to God you'd answer for me . . . so that I won't make a fool of myself when I come to write the piece. It's about the symbolism in your work. It's there all right. . . . Well, the question is . . . how much of the symbolism is intentional, deliberate? Or is that the sort of question I shouldn't ask, even for my own information?" (*File*, pp. 10–11). Later he would send Faulkner a long extract from the first part of the article to be published, asking Faulkner if the extract made "sense," if, for instance, it was fair to call Faulkner's work a "myth or legend of the South" (*File*, pp. 12–13). Faulkner replied, in the opening of an often cited passage: "I'm inclined to think that my material, the South, is not very important to me."¹⁷ But Faulkner's disagreement with Cowley's interpretation did not, of course, prevent him from endorsing Cowley's project for more venal reasons.

The *File* does not include the letter in which Cowley first wrote to Faulkner about the prospect of a *Portable Faulkner*, nor do any of Faulkner's earliest letters refer to it. Yet Cowley's letter of 9 August 1945 reveals that the subject (perhaps in his first letter to Faulkner?) had already been broached. "It's gone through," the letter begins, "there will be a Viking Portable Faulkner." Faulkner consents to the project in a pronouncement that reserves a measure of irony and that shares with Cowley's good news an echo of the *fiat lux*: "By all means let us make a Golden Book of my apocryphal county" (*File*, p. 25).¹⁸

The line that may be imagined to lead from here to the appendix traces the difference between Cowley's Portable and Faulkner's Golden Book, to say nothing at all of the difference between either and Faulkner's published writings. From the outset, Cowley and Faulkner had two disparate ideas:

COWLEY: I thought of selecting the short and long stories, and passages from novels that are really separate stories, that form part of your Mississippi series—so that the reader will have a picture of Yocknapatawpha [sic] county . . . from Indian times down to World War II. (*File*, p. 22)

FAULKNER: I have thought of spending my old age doing something of that nature: an alphabetical, rambling genealogy of the people, father to son to son. (*File*, p. 25)

What Faulkner speaks of as something in the nature of what Cowley proposes and as a project he had reserved for "old age" or obsolescence is strikingly different from Cowley's proposal. Cowley intends to reveal the continuity of a "Mississippi series" already somehow present in Faulkner's works, to juxtapose selected texts in such a way that, like pieces of a colossal jigsaw puzzle, they would compose a "picture of Yocknapatawpha county . . . from Indian times down to World War II." But Faulkner points to the composition of a new work, which would organize "the people, father to son to son" in an alphabetical and genealogical, yet rambling order. Whereas Cowley pretends that the *Portable* will make Faulkner's "Mississippi series" speak for itself, Faulkner proposes a book that would tell another story—in a form unlike the form of a story. Faulkner proposes a book that would combine the alphabetical order of a dictionary, encyclopedia, or index; the patrilineal, genealogical order of peerages or biblical narratives; and the rambling order, the revelation of the illegitimacy of that order, which might designate the order of literature. The projection of a book of this sort, with its uncomplementary collection of orders, promises to violate the line that would descend from "father to son to son," and to challenge, in effect, genealogical illusions of continuity.

Although Cowley's plan for the *Portable* envisions no problems with genealogy or continuity, his elaboration of the plan immediately discovers them. For, although Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury* undoubtedly belongs to the "Mississippi series," Cowley could not imagine how to include it. As a whole, the novel was too long to include; as for the parts, *The Sound and the Fury*, unlike most of Faulkner's novels, did not strike Cowley as a loose weave of "separate" and thus easily extractible "stories."

What Cowley had recognized was that this novel "is a unit in itself" (*File*, p. 23), that it does not lend itself to disarticulation. These parts are not individuals that could be transported out of the novel and have universal meaning apart from it; rather, the possibility of their individuality depends on a "genesis" inextricable from the specificity of the novel as a whole. As opposed to the totality Cowley proposes to reveal or regenerate in the *Portable* by means of a succession of "absolutely independent" individual parts, the unity of *The Sound and the Fury*—"a unit in itself," as Cowley had written—derives from the lack of independence, from the interdependence of its parts.¹⁹ For a project whose intention was to reveal the reassuringly thematic interdependence of Faulkner's novels, the formal, structural,

linguistic sort of interdependence characteristic of *The Sound and the Fury* posed something of a threat. If, as the novel suggests, the interdependence of Faulkner's novels cannot simply be represented as the sum of a series of individual parts, then the project of the *Portable* was doomed from the outset.

Such implications, however, were obscured by more practical concerns. Faulkner offered to write "a page or two of synopsis to preface [the fourth section of the novel], a condensation of the first 3 sections," which would simply tell, as Faulkner explained, "why and when (and who she was) and how a 17 year old girl robbed a bureau drawer of hoarded money and climbed down a drain pipe and ran off with a carnival pitchman" (*File*, pp. 31–32). What Cowley received, just under a month later, was much longer than a page or two, and much different from a synopsis that "would simply tell" why and when and who and how.

In the letter that accompanied the piece, Faulkner made three remarks that concern us here. First he spoke of the piece in relation to *The Sound and the Fury*: had he written this when he wrote the book, "the whole thing would have fallen into pattern like a jigsaw puzzle when the magician's wand touched it." Second he spoke of the piece in relation to the *Portable*, as one that would satisfy Cowley's criterion of independence: "I think it is really pretty good, to stand as it is, as a piece without implications." Finally, he warned Cowley that there might be discrepancies between the piece and the fourth section of *The Sound and the Fury*, because the appendix—as Faulkner would entitle it—was written without reference to the novel (Faulkner in fact no longer owned a copy [*File*, pp. 36–37]). Faulkner's remarks suggest that the "implications" of the appendix—its signifying effects—would change from context to context (as we see them changed in the context of the *File*). As editor and virtual author of the *Portable*, however, Cowley concerned himself first and foremost with the discrepancy of the appendix with the section of *The Sound and the Fury* it was intended to introduce, as well as with other entries included in the *Portable*. The matter of these discrepancies is what created the "situation" Cowley described in the *File* as a "high comedy of misunderstanding" (*File*, p. 46).

Cowley's first letter of response to the piece *he* referred to as "the Compson genealogy" is not included in the *File*, but we can judge from the remarks it elicited from Faulkner that Cowley's reading of the appendix was limited to a concern with "discrepancies" (*File*, pp. 41 ff.). Although Faulkner does not theorize about the question of

discrepancy or inconsistency here, we find him in his letter to Cowley defending one such "discrepancy" after another.²⁰ Cowley, for example, objected to Faulkner's derivation of the name "Doom" (for the Indian Ikkemotubbe) from a Chickasaw title "The Man," which became "*du homme*," and then "Doom." The *correct* translation of "The Man" into French, Cowley astutely observed, would have been *l'Homme*. Faulkner replied: "I know it's *de l'homme*. I made it incorrect. That is, it seemed righter to me that Ikke . . . should have an easy transition to the apt name he gave himself in English, than that the French should be consistent. . . . Change it as you see fit." Apparently, Cowley also objected to the discrepancy in the amount of money said to have been stolen from Jason. Faulkner answered: "Jason would call \$2840.50 '\$3000.00' at any time the sum was owed him."

Aside from arguments on the basis of "easy transition" or consistent characterization, Faulkner also argued, parenthetically, that the narrative perspective of the "genealogy" could explain its discrepancies:²¹ "(In fact, the purpose of this genealogy is to give a sort of bloodless bibliophile's point of view. I was a sort of Garter King-at-Arms, heartless, not very moved, cleaning up 'Compson' before going on to the next 'C-o' or 'C-r'.)"²² This "Garter K/A," Faulkner adds, "knew only what the town could have told him." Yet as the correspondence on the subject of the anomalies of the appendix grew, Faulkner's alibis became shorter, and his impatience with Cowley's concern for a trivial literalism became more marked.

Like the letter of Charles Bon in chapter four of *Absalom, Absalom!*, Faulkner's next letter to Cowley bore neither salutation nor signature.²³ "I never made a genealogical or chronological chart," the letter begins, "perhaps because I knew I would take liberties with both—which I have." Given these "liberties" and given Faulkner's manifest contempt for what they violate, we must consider whether the appendix can be at all understood as genealogical and chronological. Further on Faulkner writes, "I realized some time ago you would get into [the problem of chronological and genealogical] inconsistency and pitied you" (*File*, p. 53). Distancing himself from such pitiful concerns, his next reply to Cowley was not even in the form of a letter. With some disdain, Faulkner simply returned a letter Cowley had written, in whose margins Faulkner had scribbled his own remarks.²⁴ Still more or less cooperative, giving the "o.k." or "yes, damn it" to most of Cowley's queries and suggestions, Faulkner insisted that one discrepancy in the appendix stand. Cowley had written, "Quentin in

the novel climbed down a pear tree, not the rain spout. Shouldn't I change this?" In reply, Faulkner scrawled, "Could still be the Garter K/A, whose soul is one inviolable literary cliché. He would insist on 'gutter.'" ²⁵ Like his earlier description of Jason Compson of *The Sound and the Fury*, as the one Compson who "would have chopped up a Georgian Manse and sold it off in shotgun bungalows" (*File*, p. 25), Faulkner's description of the Garter K/A suggests an unflattering double for Cowley.

In sum, the gradual shift in the tone of Faulkner's statements about the *Portable*, whereby an ironic echo of the *fiat lux* is finally replaced with a curt "Yes, damn it," illustrates Faulkner's resistance to Cowley's assumptions regarding the unity of his work. This last bit of marginalia came in response to a query at the end of the letter, a post-postscript that read: "Three times on first two pages of the Appendix you use the word 'dispossed.' I can't find it in my dictionary. Is it a slip of the typewriter for 'dispossessed'?" Cowley's pedantic response to the appendix drew out Faulkner's most explicit demonstrations of resistance to the project—to its disposal of literary complexity and to its simple affirmation of genesis and genealogy. But Faulkner's more literary response to Cowley's assumptions had already taken shape in the appendix.

IV. Reading Between the Lines

By characterizing the appendix as the "key" to *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner calls up the series of references to keys in the novel. Aside from reminding us of who and what, in this novel, are locked up, it reminds us of who is holding the keys. In one of the novel's frequent scenes of hysteria, Jason falls to "pawing" at his mother's dressing gown, while pleading: "Give me the key." He finally wrests from her a "huge bunch of rusted keys on an iron ring like a mediaeval jailer's." The reader is as surprised to see that it is Caroline Compson and not Jason who keeps the keys as Jason is to see that he must seek "the key" from among a number of keys.

I wish only to offer a note on this key-bearer Caroline Compson, whose near exclusion from the appendix is one indication of its limits. Unwilling to be assimilated as a Compson, Caroline divides her family into groups: a patrilineal group of Compsons—comprised of her husband, her sons Quentin and Benjy, and her daughter Caddy—and a matrilineal group of Bascombs—comprised of her brother, herself, and her son Jason. Caroline's attitude represents no more than a

minor challenge to the illusory continuity of patrilineage; she merely wishes to perpetuate her own father's name and to assure its continuity by triage. She takes her brother's name, Maury, away from her son when she realizes that Benjy is "an idiot." She is opposed to any sort of change a name may suffer, whether in the spirit or in the letter. Nicknames, she warns her daughter, are vulgar. Just such a relation to language informs the desire for a "key" to a book or corpus, a key that would secure and limit the perversities of language and meaning (Caroline would be appalled by the "transubstantiation" of the fifteen-pound monster Carolina lock in "The Courthouse" in *Requiem for a Nun*). To desire a hermeneutic "key" is to wish to put a stop to the very operation that makes a "key" possible (yet at the same time impossible). In the context of genealogy, this desire, like that of Caroline Compson, wishes to erect the proper name as a living monument to the same.

If the appendix is not a key, neither does it represent the promised condensation or summary of the first three parts of *The Sound and the Fury*. If anything, its omissions and excesses represent the impossibility of such summarization. Insofar as the appendix refers to the novel, it either offers conclusions that the novel does not substantiate (such as who was responsible for Benjy's castration) or simply continues the elaboration of its fiction, introducing new characters and moving some of the old (such as the elder and younger Jasons, Benjy, Caddy, Dilsey, and Frony) backward or forward in time.

If the appendix is not a summary of the first three parts of the novel, neither is it, as Cowley understood it, a genealogy of the Compsons. The two patriarchs with which it begins, a Chickasaw chief named Ikkemotubbe and the American president Andrew Jackson, are neither temporal nor genealogical precursors of the first Compson recorded in the appendix. The four blacks with which the appendix ends, who "are not Compsons" and whose relation to one another is not spelled out in the entries or unified under the title of a paronym, are neither temporal nor genealogical progeny. "They endure," reads the often cited last line of the appendix, and, I might add, these four blacks "endure" in a kind of genealogical wasteland; in the absence of the Father, they are unable to serve as faintly legible "monuments" to the dead. The order of these various, heterogeneous parts—the patriarchs, the elder Compsons, the most recent generation of Compsons (siblings except for Caddy's daughter Quentin, "the last"), and the four blacks—is neither chronological nor genealogical.

The appendix opens with the representation of a non-genealogical transfer of power and possession. Through Ikkemotubbe, a "dispossessed American king," the Chickasaw Indians relinquish their claims to property in Mississippi.²⁶ A portion of this land, one square mile, is granted to a "Scottish refugee who had lost his own birthright" and who will be identified, in the entries that follow, as Jason Lycurgus Compson, a precursor of his ostensible opposite Flem Snopes. This transfer of property rights appears to dispossess Ikkemotubbe, to rupture genealogical rights of succession and inheritance.

But an earlier text makes it clear that Ikkemotubbe himself had dispossessed both his forerunner and his forerunner's heirs. According to the story that opens the *Portable*, "A Justice," Ikkemotubbe had seized his title and property rights illegitimately. With understated black humor, "A Justice" reports the murders and threats that won Ikkemotubbe the position of "The Man," a title he had assumed before the fact. In the context of Ikkemotubbe's crimes against legitimate succession, which make him a pretender, the transfer of property from Ikkemotubbe to Jason Compson is a perpetuation of illegitimacy rather than a rupture in the rights of succession. At the same time, because this transfer is countersigned by Andrew Jackson in the name of the United States, it also represents a "return" to legitimate possession.

In "The Bear," which is also included in the *Portable*, the tale of Ikkemotubbe's false accession to power is omitted, as in the appendix. Yet in "The Bear," the suppression of Ikkemotubbe's particular usurpation gives way to a more radical definition of the crime. In the difficult fourth section of the story, what is attacked is the very possibility of legitimate possession and hence the very possibility of legitimate bequest and inheritance. As soon as man "translates" what is unpossessable, unbequeathable, and uninheritable in itself into "something to bequeath . . . for his descendants' ease and to perpetuate his name and accomplishments," he has fallen into error and crime. In the context of "The Bear," the transfer from Ikkemotubbe to Jason Compson is fissured at its foundation, not because of any usurpation of the place of the rightful heir but because, countersigned by American law, it perpetrates the transfer of that which is not, in its own right, transferable.

By opening the appendix with this transmission of property that Jason Compson would henceforth bequeath instead of with the "first" Compson, the appendix foregrounds not genealogy but bequest. As "The Bear" suggests, bequest depends on the translation of some-

thing unbequeathable and uninheritable into something that can be bequeathed and inherited or transferred. Something unruly and unfit for bequest must be translated into a legalistic and "portable" possession.

From the beginning, Cowley manifested a concern for Faulkner's bequest. His first letter to Faulkner elicited this response: "I would like very much to have the piece done. I think (at 46) that I have worked too hard at my (elected or doomed, I don't know which) trade, with pride but I believe not vanity, with plenty of ego but with humility too (being a poet, of course I give no fart for glory) to leave no better mark on this our pointless chronicle than I seem to be about to leave" (*File*, p. 7). Cowley persuaded Faulkner that his interest was to help the author leave, as Faulkner put it, a "better mark on this our pointless chronicle." If, as Cowley claimed, Faulkner's books were not selling and were out of print, if Faulkner's name among publishers was, as Cowley wrote, "mud," and if, as Cowley reported, Faulkner was a "god" in France but a nobody in the United States, Cowley would intervene as translator and would turn Faulkner's work into "something to bequeath." Cowley's translation of Faulkner, then, must be read into the "logic" of bequest as outlined in "The Bear" and taken up again at the beginning of the appendix, the piece that was merely to have summarized the first three sections of *The Sound and the Fury*.

The opening entries of the appendix dramatize the absence of legitimate continuity in this text and emphasize the bad faith and violent seizure of power that compose the "history" it recounts. Ikkemotubbe and Andrew Jackson are joined by Napoleon and his "knightly blackguards." The eldest Compson is affiliated with Prince Charles Stuart, the Young Pretender; his son is "attainted and proscribed" by the British regiment with whom he fought in the Revolutionary War; and his son is thrown out of the country for having played part in a conspiratorial confederation that plotted to "secede the whole Mississippi Valley from the United States and join it to Spain." Finally, this dubious continuum arrives at the rivalry and petty betrayals that characterize the last of the Compsons.

The *Portable*, as the translation of Faulkner's work into something that can be bequeathed and inherited, although legitimated by the author's countersignature, is nonetheless an illegitimate bequest. The peaceful, organic, harmonious whole forefronted in Cowley's translation, the unity it piously attributes, as if to hallowed ground, to Yoknapatawpha County—this legacy finds its way into the American

Canon. What is lost in the transfer is not only and primarily the unruly writing Faulkner left behind, but also the underside of bequest—its intemperate desire for domination and mastery at any cost; its dissemblance, hypocrisy, and pious appeals to tradition; and its violent imposition of order upon something wild. That Yoknapatawpha County, as the harmless and reassuring entity lending order and unity to Faulkner's writings, has received critical endorsement is all the more reason to remember the chicanery Faulkner locates at the origins of such unities.

If, as the *Portable* claimed, some of Faulkner's works elaborate the illusion of a unity, the appendix reminds us that these works are not for that matter celebrations of continuity and tradition. They are better understood as memorials to the folly and injustice that an illusory unity masks in its pious remembrance of "the past." The appendix suggests that unity originates in illegitimacy, in error and deceit. When Faulkner urged his editor at Random House that the appendix was "the key to the whole book" and argued that "after reading this, any reader will understand all the other sections," he reconfirmed his own unregenerate practice of error and deceit. By the very outrageousness of his claims, Faulkner acknowledges the impossibility of legitimating or countersigning his own desires.

Faulkner's appendix may be exported, as we have seen, to a variety of contexts, in each of which it seems to tell a different story. For this reason, we might call the appendix a portable text, but in a sense that differs from Viking's or Cowley's use of the word "portable." The appendix is portable not because it can be transferred, wholesale, from one context to another, but because its details stretch in plural and contradictory ways in several directions at once. It is portable because it conveys itself from place to place without coming to rest at any one. This vacillation prevents the appendix from fitting into any chronology or genealogy; Faulkner's desire to entitle this piece "appendix" and to place it at the beginning of *The Sound and the Fury* draws our attention to the genetic and temporal duplicity of the appendix, and of all the texts for which it is neither the first nor the last word.

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Notes

1. See Faulkner's letters to Robert N. Linscott of 4 February 1946 and of 13 March 1946 in *Selected Letters of William Faulkner*, ed. Joseph Blotner (New York: Random House, 1977). See also Joseph Blotner's *Faulkner: An Official Biography*, 2 vols. (New York: Random House, 1974), pp. 1207–1208.

2. Hans Skei, *William Faulkner: The Novelist as Short Story Writer* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1985), p. 322.

3. O. B. Emerson, *Faulkner's Early Literary Reputation in America* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Pres, 1984), pp. 73–74, 102, and 129 ff. This study is a revision of the author's thesis, Vanderbilt University, 1962. See also Hoffman's introductions in *William Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism* (1951) and *William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism* (1960), ed. Frederick Hoffman and Olga Vickery (East Lansing: Michigan State University).

4. O. B. Emerson, p. viii. Cf. p. 129. The well-known articles to which Emerson refers are Aiken's "William Faulkner: The Novel as Form," *Atlantic Monthly*, 164 (1939), 650–54; O'Donnell's "Faulkner's Mythology," *Kenyon Review*, 1 (1939), 285–99; and Warren's "Cowley's Faulkner," *New Republic*, 12 August 1946, pp. 176–80; 26 August 1946, pp. 234–37. All three articles are reprinted in Hoffman, *Three Decades*.

5. Emerson, p. 140.

6. George Marion O'Donnell, "Faulkner's Mythology," in Hoffman, *Three Decades*, pp. 82–83.

7. Hoffman, *Three Decades*, p. 10.

8. Hoffman, *Three Decades*, pp. 10–11, 112. Although Cowley had not mentioned O'Donnell by name in the original version of the introduction to the *Portable*, in which he notes that "*Sanctuary* is not a connected allegory, as one critic explained it," he seems inclined to pay his debts in the revised version of 1967, where the line cited above is amended to read: ". . . as George Marion O'Donnell condemned it for being—he was the first critic to approach it seriously."

9. Aubrey Starke, "An American Comedy: An Introduction to a Bibliography of William Faulkner," *Colophon*, 5 (1934), Part 19. See Emerson, pp. 57–62, 71, 148, 287, 364. See also Malcolm Cowley, "William Faulkner's Human Comedy," *New York Times Book Review*, 29 October 1944.

10. Malcolm Cowley, *The Faulkner-Cowley File: Letters and Memories, 1944–1962* (New York: Viking Press, 1966), p. 88. Page references to this work will henceforth appear in the text, following the abbreviated title *File*.

11. I thank Viking Press for offering me this information.

12. The narrative continuity that Cowley seeks to secure in his correspondence with Faulkner and others can be contrasted with the discontinuous fragments of the appendix, with those of the ledger in the fourth section of Faulkner's story "The Bear" (which Cowley advises readers who want "to read simply a hunting story, and one of the greatest in the language," to skip), and with the prologues in Faulkner's *Requiem for a Nun*.

13. In addition to "William Faulkner's Human Comedy," these articles included "William Faulkner Revisited," *The Saturday Review of Literature*, 28 (14 April 1945), pp. 13–16 and "William Faulkner's Legend of the South," *The Sewanee Review*, 53 (1945), 348–49. For Cowley's explanation of the rela-

tion of these articles to the hoped-for publication of a *Portable Faulkner*, see *File*, pp. 20–21.

14. The revision this copy passed through is something of a saga in its own right (see *File*, pp. 63–66 and 69). Dissatisfied with Random House's original copy, Faulkner suggested his own, and Cowley revised that. What Faulkner had most strongly objected to in the original copy was a phrase that read "in effect, a new work by William Faulkner." Faulkner explained his objections very clearly: "It's not a new work by Faulkner. It's a new work by Cowley all right through." The clarity of Faulkner's position contrasts with the complexity of the question that had been raised. Who is the author of an anthology? Faulkner insists time and again that the anthology is a work by Cowley (Cf. *File*, pp. 37, 54, 84, 90–91).

15. Philippe Sollers, "Faulkner" in *Théorie des Exceptions* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), p. 110.

16. The appendix is moved, in the revised 1967 edition, to the new final section, "The Undying Past," and it appears in the "Contents" as "1699–1945. Appendix: The Compsons," in the fashion of the other Faulkner entries. The note to "The End of an Order" is revised, no longer referring the reader to the Compson genealogy that is printed as an appendix to the *Portable* but to "'Appendix: The Compsons,' printed in the last part of this volume." In the interests of consistency, Cowley leaves off the date, although it is part of Faulkner's title rather than of Cowley's chronology.

17. As opposed to the positive myth or legend of the South that Cowley found in Faulkner's work, Faulkner suggested that his work aims at something more universal and negative: "I'm inclined to think that my material, the South, is not very important to me. I just happen to know it, and don't have time in one life to learn another one and write at the same time. Though the one I know is probably as good as another, life is a phenomenon but not a novelty, the same frantic steeplechase toward nothing everywhere and man stinks the same stink no matter where in time. . . . Art is simpler than people think because there is so little to write about. All the moving things are eternal in man's history and have been written before, and if a man writes hard enough . . . he will repeat them" (*File*, pp. 14–16).

18. Among the glosses on the significance of the Golden Book summarized and documented in Jean Roubertol's *L'Esprit du sud dans l'oeuvre de Faulkner* (Paris: Didier Erudition, 1982), pp. 30–31, that which associates the Golden Book with the Last Judgement is particularly suggestive with respect to the manner in which the appendix decides or judges upon issues that *The Sound and the Fury* leaves undecided.

19. For a discussion of the interdependence of the parts of *The Sound and the Fury* and of the relation of this interdependence to succession or chronological, genetic order, see Cheryl Lester, "From Place to Place in *The Sound and the Fury*: The Syntax of Interrogation," *Modern Fiction Studies*, forthcoming.

20. As the genuine explanation for the discrepancies in the appendix, Cowley would accept one of Faulkner's later remarks: "The inconsistencies in the appendix prove that to me the book is still alive after 15 years, and being still alive is growing, changing" (*File*, p. 90; for Cowley's endorsement of this explanation, see pp. 47 and 89).

21. Faulkner's use of the word "genealogy" to refer to the appendix most likely responds to Cowley's terminology. In the correspondence, the use of common terms as a means not only of identification, a way to indicate that both correspondents are referring to the "same" thing, but also of persuasion, to suggest that something different might be understood as the "same" thing or as satisfying the "same" purpose, compromises the authority that has been attributed to many of the statements it includes. Similarly, Faulkner's use of the word "pattern" when he suggests that the appendix might have made *The Sound and the Fury* fall "into pattern like a jigsaw puzzle," for example, can be read with reference to the telos of the *Portable*, namely, to represent "the whole interconnecting pattern . . . of [Faulkner's] novels."

22. Cowley glosses the reference to the Garter King-at-Arms: "Ignorant as I was of heraldic terms, I consulted the *Britannica* and found that the Garter King-of-Arms presides over the Heralds' College, or College of Arms, which rules on questions having to do with armorial bearings and pedigrees" (*File*, p. 45).

23. The salutations in the correspondence compose a text in their own right. Most interesting is the movement in Faulkner's salutations, which sometimes referred to Cowley as "Cher Maitre" in the early stages but which addressed "Brother Cowley" after the critical negotiations concerning the *Portable* had reached an end. Thus, Faulkner demotes Cowley to a position of lesser authority at the same time as he invests Cowley with a genealogical position and alludes to Cowley's earlier sympathies with Stalin.

24. A facsimile of this letter is included in the *File*, pp. 58-59.

25. Cowley, however, had already sent the corrected manuscript to Viking. He claims to have written them, explaining that Faulkner "has a rather involved reason why he would like to have it changed back to 'rain spout' [sic] here, while letting 'plum tree' [sic] stand in the Dilsey passage of the novel." The result was that Quentin escaped by climbing down both a rainpipe and a pear tree in the first edition; Cowley standardized the references to "rainpipe" in the revised *Portable*.

26. The Chickasaws were among the "Five Civilized Tribes" who agreed to relinquish their lands, free their several thousands of black slaves, and remove to a reservation in Oklahoma, in accordance with the Removal Act of 1830.