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**“Signifying Nothing?: Martin Ritt’s *The Sound and the Fury* (1959) as Deconstructive Adaptation
By Walter Metz
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In this essay, I argue that Martin Ritt’s melodramatic 1959 film adaptation of William Faulkner’s The Sound and the Fury (1929) was critically denigrated for reasons that strike at the heart of Cold War ideology. I argue that Cold War literary critics, in need of a modernist author to represent the height of American literary prowess, settled upon Faulkner. Re-writing Faulkner’s previous literary reputation as a purveyor of sordid filth, the critics emphasized Faulkner’s modernist attenuation of style. Lost in this critical positioning was the complicity of Faulkner’s construction of women with the rigid misogyny of Cold War gender discourses. Ritt’s film re-wrote Faulkner’s narrative, turning it into a melodrama featuring a female heroine striving to become an independent woman within a patriarchal culture. Received within a Cold War critical climate, Ritt’s film was vilified as an abhorrent adaptation. I argue that this evaluation of the film had more to do with its status as a melodrama transgressive of Cold War gender politics than with its skill in adapting Faulkner.

I. Introduction

While watching the end of Joseph Strick’s A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1976), a film adaptation of the James Joyce novel, one waits anxiously for the emotional centerpiece: the scene in which Stephen Daedalus decides to leave Ireland and travel to Paris. Having just rejected any further ties with Catholicism, Stephen wanders to the beach where he spies a girl wading in the surf. Joyce describes the moment of Stephen’s awakening, in a sequence read by modernist critics as a spiritual epiphany:

A girl stood before him in midstream, alone and still, gazing out to sea. She seemed like one whom magic had changed into the likeness of a strange and beautiful seabird. Her long slender bare legs were delicate as a crane’s and pure save where an emerald trail of seaweed had fashioned itself as a sign upon the flesh. Her thighs, fuller and soft-hued as ivory, were bared almost to the hips where the white fringes of her drawers were like featherings of soft white down. Her slateblue skirts were kilted boldly about her waist and dovetailed behind her. Her bosom was as a bird’s soft and slight, slight and soft as the breast of some darkplumaged dove. But her long fair hair was girlish: and girlish, and touched with the wonder of mortal beauty, her face. (171)

Clearly, this is one of the most beautiful passages of prose in all of Joyce’s work. But as the scene continues, other interpretive possibilities beyond aesthetic appreciation begin to surface. Joyce concludes, “Heavenly God! Cried Stephen’s soul, in an outburst of profane joy. . . . His soul was swooning into some new world, fantastic, dim, uncertain, as under sea, traversed by cloudy shapes and beings” (172). A modernist reading of this passage implores us take the scene at face value: we are encouraged to appreciate the profundity of Stephen’s realization that his destiny is to become an artist capable of detailing in words the beauty he has just seen on the beach. However, the scene also could be read as quite kitschy: “Heavenly God! cried Stephen’s soul” could just as easily have come out of a Victorian

melodrama as from a modernist novel. Like many Joycean characters, Stephen is prone to melodramatic excess: in one chapter he is dedicating himself to the priesthood, while in another he is nightly visiting the prostitutes of Nighttown.

Strick's film version makes a direct intervention into the ambiguity of this epiphanic scene. Contrary to the critical reverence for the epiphany, Strick's scene lasts a mere fifteen seconds. Stephen wanders down to the beach, sees the girl, takes the slip of paper from the priest, throws it into the air, and shouts. A cut ensues, and we are thrown well into the content of the novel's final chapter. What the novel offers as the defining moment in Stephen's spiritual life is seen by the film as a merely an earthly decision by Stephen to not become a priest.

One might certainly choose to interpret this scene as the result of an incompetent adaptational strategy. That is, we could assume that the film maker just did not understand the brilliance of the novel's epiphanic climax. From this perspective, the film stands out as a bastardization of a great modernist classic. However, the critical positioning of this scene as a modernist tour de force in the novel is certainly open to critique. For instance, from a perspective sensitive to gender politics, the novel's scene is problematic because of its use of the female figure as the mechanism through which Stephen achieves his epiphany. In this light, the film's treatment of the scene may represent a deconstruction of the logic of the gaze inscribed into the novel's iconography. The comic brevity of Stephen's response in the Strick film makes Stephen's sexuality appear more adolescent and much less mystical than in Joyce's original.

I begin this essay about the Cold War with a 1970s British adaptation of an Irish novel because it stands as a useful prototype of a mode of adaptation that I will label the deconstructive adaptation. By this, I mean an adaptation which, contrary to the canonical interpretation of its source, takes a different interpretive path in its adaptive strategy. I am particularly interested in adaptations which re-work modernist sources into melodramatic narratives. Often, this does not necessarily involve the complete re-invention of the source, as often the source's own melodramatic codes have merely been excised from our understandings by a dogmatic modernist criticism. Thus, I am inverting the situation I looked at in the last chapter in which critics made a melodrama into modernist adaptation.

A clear example of a deconstructive adaptation within early Cold War American culture is Martin Ritt's 1959 film adaptation of William Faulkner's 1929 novel, The Sound and the Fury. Ritt's film is almost universally cited by academic critics as one of the worst adaptations ever made. For example, in her book defending film adaptation, Double Exposure: Fiction into Film, Joy Gould Boyum argues that the flaws of the contemporary film adaptations she is dealing with in the book, "have nothing to do with those of the reductio ad absurdum adaptations of the old days: with the likes, that is. . . of Martin Ritt's The Sound and the Fury" (21). Faulkner critics in particular have savaged the Ritt film, calling it "ludicrous" and "inept"; its relationship to the original novel has been theorized as a "mangling," an "emasculat[i]on," and a "betrayal."

I ought to come right out and state the heresy now: I believe Ritt's The Sound and the Fury is every bit as important to cultural history as Faulkner's original. However, attention to this potential importance was precluded when a modernist orthodoxy asserted itself during the early Cold War period and produced a monolithic vision of Faulkner's novel. In the wake of this critical canonization, Ritt produced a "ludicrous" melodramatic version of the novel which toppled most of the sacred aspects of the text as emphasized by these modernist critics. The modernist orthodoxy persisted within Faulkner studies through the mid-1980s. At this time, a number of feminist revisionist critics began to revisit Faulkner's novel and question the assumptions about gender made by the modernist critics. My assertion is that there is a relationship between the work of these feminist critics and the melodramatic strategies of Ritt's film, produced some thirty years previously: both the feminist criticism and Ritt's film re-produce Faulkner's novel as a text seeking to give voice to its female characters, an interpretive path denied by the Cold War modernist criticism.

My vision of Ritt's The Sound and the Fury as a deconstructive adaptation of Faulkner's novel pushes Neil Sinyard's theoretical approach to adaptation one step further. In Filming Literature: The Art of Screen Adaptation, Sinyard argues that film adaptation at its best involves a practice akin to literary criticism: "The best adaptations of books for film can often best be approached as an activity of literary criticism, not a pictorialisation of the complete novel, but a critical essay which stresses what it sees as the main theme. Like a critical essay, the film adaptation selects some episodes, excludes others, offers preferred alternatives" (117). The deconstructive adaptation is merely one subset of this process of adaptation as criticism, yet a relatively important one for the project of rescuing adaptation studies from the morass of assumptions about the superiority of one medium over the other.

Ritt's film, a melodramatic articulation of the plot of The Sound and the Fury, foregoes the modernist stylistic practices of Faulkner's novel. The novel, a story of the decline of a once-great Southern family as represented by the sexual immorality of daughter Caddy, is told from the point of view of four narrators: Benjy, Caddy's mentally-handicapped brother; Quentin, Caddy's suicidal brother; Jason, Caddy's scheming brother; and a fourth quasi-objective narrator usually associated with Faulkner himself. In true modernist fashion, the narrators employ the stream-of-consciousness technique, frequently shifting without warning between various spatial and temporal locations. The film refuses this stylistically aggressive technique, instead producing a classical film which tells the story of Caddy's daughter, also named Quentin, and her relationship to her step-uncle Jason and her mother.

While the film refuses the modernist narrational technique and focuses the plot's concern onto the relationship between Jason, Caddy, and Quentin, most of the novel's plot elements with respect to these three characters are left intact. By emphasizing the plot similarities between the film and the novel over their vast stylistic differences, I am engaging in an interpretive strategy which Peter Brooks calls "reading for the plot." Most modernist Faulkner and film critics have refused to treat the film seriously because it outright rejects the modernist stylistics of the novel. The modernists' claim for the novel's brilliance is almost solely tied to its narrational techniques. Within the logic of this sort of criticism, a film which refuses every strategy which would qualify it as modernist would a priori disqualify it for being a film worthy of attention in the modernist heritage.

In Reading for the Plot, Brooks argues that such an emphasis on style over plot should not surprise us. Brooks argues that plot is seen as uninteresting and characteristic of low culture, while style is intriguing and the domain of high culture. Brooks argues, "Plot has been disdained as the element of narrative that least sets off and defines high art--indeed, plot is that which especially characterizes popular mass-consumption literature: plot is why we read Jaws, but not Henry James" (4). This is certainly the case with respect to Ritt's and Faulkner's narratives: Ritt's film is almost all plot, relying on the classical Hollywood film style to tell its story seamlessly, while Faulkner's novel is told with modernist aesthetic practices which impede our understanding of the plot. Furthermore, Brooks argues, "with the advent of Modernism came an era of suspicion toward plot" (7). It is certainly this reluctance to treat plot seriously that has helped maintain Faulkner's novel as one of the century's greatest and Ritt's film as one of the cinema's worst.

However, by attending to the plot of the novel and stripping away the modernist stylistics, Ritt's film produces a new, valuable, and critical vision of the ideological significance of the narrative universe created within The Sound and the Fury. Like Strick's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Ritt's film activates new ways of interpreting the source novel, and is worthy of study for precisely that reason. In fact, there is a direct equivalent to Strick's deconstruction of Joyce's beach epiphany to be found in Ritt's The Sound and the Fury. In discussing his novel, Faulkner was fond of saying that it was the story of a girl (Caddy) who muddied her drawers. Here, Faulkner refers to a scene in the novel which recurs from a number of points-of-view in which Caddy as a young girl goes with her brothers to the branch to play. While there, Caddy falls into the muddy water and soils her underpants. Modernist critics have interpreted the scene as central to the overall thematics of the novel because it plays out in microcosm the concerns of the entire novel. The brothers end up obsessing over how Caddy's sexual awakening with a number of boys has ruined their own lives and the well-being of the family. This moment in the branch, according to such a reading, predicts the way in which Caddy's soiled underpants will precipitate the decline of the entire Compson family.

Ritt's film completely strips this "muddy drawers" scene of the psychosexual significance it achieves in Faulkner's novel. Since the film refuses the modernist device of telling the story out of chronological order, the scene occurs in the present. After Caddy returns to the Compson house, she and her brother Howard (for the film, the brother Quentin's name was changed to Howard to avoid confusion with Caddy's daughter Quentin) go to the branch to have a picnic. There, Caddy has a nostalgic reminiscence about her childhood. She reminds Howard of the old days: "I'd get my drawers all muddy." This line of

dialogue sends Howard into a drunken outrage, as he obsesses over all of Caddy's old boyfriends. Howard, like his counterpart the male Quentin in Faulkner's novel, obsesses over Caddy's sexual immorality, yet it is significant that the film puts these raving obsessions into the mouth of a drunk. Unlike Faulkner's novel, which thematically agrees with the brother Quentin that Caddy's sexual immorality is responsible for the decline of the Compson family, the film makes no such gesture. Not only is Howard completely drunk and a buffoonish character in the film, but his parting comment, "You doomed us, Caddy" turns out to be untrue. Since Caddy's daughter Quentin at film's end is a stable, mature woman, Howard's prophesy of doom can be seen as sexist, melodramatic nonsense.

Of the many scenes in the novel that Faulkner and film critics have cited as the film's bastardization of the novel, the "muddy drawers" scene is among the favorites on which to heap abuse. For example, in his article "Change and Decay: The Sound and the Fury (1959)," Gene D. Phillips argues, "This sequence, as well as any in the movie, suggests how much dramatic power is sacrificed in the film by trying to conjure up key scenes from the novel about the Compsons' troubled past by mere verbal references to them in the dialogue" (158). Phillips articulates the modernist proclivity for emphasizing the importance of the novel's modernist narrational style over the film's mere attention to dialogue and plot. In constructing my reading of the film as a deconstructive adaptation of the Faulkner novel, I will follow Peter Brooks' suggestion and read the film for the plot, since it is here that the film is making its intervention into the ideological significance of Faulkner's material and also providing a critique of Cold War gender politics and its cultural historical moment.

II. Melodrama and Modernism as Reactions to the Crisis in Realist Representation

The most striking difference between the Faulkner and Ritt versions of The Sound and the Fury is the attitude that each assumes toward its material. The film effaces Faulkner's stylistic interventions (stream-of-consciousness, manipulation of chronology) and reproduces the melodramatic content of the novel within the boundaries of the Classical Hollywood narrative. However, this very articulation of the differences between the film and its source suggests their inherent similarities: both the classical realist film and the modernist novel offer a presentation of fundamentally melodramatic content.

Christine Gledhill's formulation of the theoretical relationships between melodrama, modernism, and realism offers a valuable method for approaching Ritt's adaptation of Faulkner's novel. Gledhill analyzes the way film studies in the 1970s staked out an opposition between the counter cinema (operating in a Brechtian, modernist, and reflexive mode) and the classical realist text. Gledhill's argument is that the developments in film melodrama studies of the middle 1980s offer a challenge to this long accepted opposition. In reference to Stella Dallas and Peter Brooks' work on melodrama in The Melodramatic Imagination, Gledhill argues, "To read Peter Brooks in the context of the last decade of film studies opens up the fascinating possibility of breaking the dualism that has dominated the field--classic realist text versus counter-cinema--and of positing three major modes of modern cultural perception/expression: realism, melodrama, and modernism" (1986, 45). Rather than see these three textual categories as discrete, as they traditionally have been, Gledhill posits that all three are ways in which narrative art has sought to make sense of the world.

In "The Melodramatic Field: An Investigation," Gledhill continues theorizing the various relationships between these three narrative modes. With respect to melodrama and modernism, Gledhill argues: "Melodrama's pleasure in naming names, is, Brooks suggests, the pleasure of articulated identities: 'Desire cries aloud its language in identification with full states of being' (p. 41). This formulation touches recent debates in post-structural film studies, positioning melodrama in opposition to the modernist claim that the only verifiable reality is the surface of the signifier itself." (33). The film adaptation of The Sound and the Fury offers a valuable site for pursuing Gledhill's hypothesis about the relationships between modernism and melodrama.

Furthermore, the critical debate over Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury since its publication in 1929 provides another site for the study of Gledhill's claim about the intertwined nature of melodrama, realism, and modernism. Over the course of the novel's history, it has been praised and vilified for being a representative case of each narrative mode. When Faulkner's novel was first published, a debate ensued over whether he was producing a meaningless melodrama, a realistic naturalism, or an empty stylistic modernism. As I will discuss shortly, after World War II, Faulkner's Cold War critics solidified his reputation by insisting on his artistic genius as a modernist. To accomplish such a rewriting of his narrative art, the melodramatic and naturalist strains of his novels were expunged in critical discussion.

The early reception of Faulkner's novel illustrates its fundamentally polysemic nature. To each critic, the novel meant something different. The critics either hated the novel or loved it, but often for contradictory reasons. For example, some critics thought Faulkner's work was merely cheap, sordid melodrama, while others praised its gritty realism. While some critics thought Faulkner's modernist style was a brilliant advance in literary achievement, others saw the style as mere showmanship, empty of thematic significance.

Gledhill's hypothesis as to the related nature of melodrama, modernism, and naturalism is supported by the initial reviews of Faulkner's early novels. In reviewing one novel, three different reviewers claimed Faulkner was advancing the narrative traditions of melodrama, modernism, and naturalism, respectively. In "Two Aspects of Telemachus," Dudley Fitts argues in 1930 that The Sound and the Fury was nothing but cheap melodrama: "By the time he has reached the last pages, the reader is somewhat astonished to discover that he is being held by the force of narrative alone; and even more astonished when he realizes that the narrative is straight from the old school of melodrama--nothing more nor less than the pursuit-on-wheels of eloping lovers" (88). Whereas Fitts critiques the novel for its melodramatic situations, Lyle Saxon praises its modernist treatment of these very same situations. In "A Family Breaks Up," Saxon argues for the importance of the novel's modernism by invoking the European masters of the mode: "Many, I am sure will call the author mad. But if Faulkner is mad, then James Joyce is equally so; if Faulkner is obsessed with futility and insanity, so is Fyodor Dostoevsky. It is true that The Sound and the Fury is insane and monstrous and terrible, but so is the life that it mirrors" (82). While Saxon feels comfortable that the modernist technique justifies the sordid material, other critics do not. In "The Cult of Cruelty," Alan Reynolds Thompson argues that Faulkner's work derives mostly from Naturalism: "[Faulkner shows] considerable acquaintance with ghastly details of human depravity and misery as painstakingly accumulated by modern naturalists" (qtd. in Emerson, 73). However, what most disturbed Thompson was that Faulkner seemed to be offering his "extraordinarily shocking" material just for the sake of horrifying his readers.

Thompson's article, an early articulation of what Faulkner historian O.B. Emerson calls "the cult of cruelty criticism," shows the level of disdain in which Faulkner's novels were held by many critics in the 1930s. As Emerson describes, "Beginning with the early 1930s some of his critics classified Faulkner as a writer 'who had ignored the largest demands upon social taste and moral discretion' and accused him of exploiting 'obscenity and horror for their own sake or as a 'cheap idea'" (73). At this point, Faulkner's novels were seen by the critical community as ambiguous. Not only could the critics not decide on the narrative strategies of the novel, they could not even decide whether the stylistic practices that they did agree on were important or not.

For example, Wilfred Townley Scott, Henry Nash Smith, and Clifton P. Fadiman, all agreed that Faulkner was attempting to create an American modernist tradition. However, these three critics agreed on little else beyond this. In "Modernist Manner Over Matter," Scott vehemently attacks the novel's modernist narration: "The chief indictment against the modernists is their utmost complete lack of communication. Under this indictment young Mr. Faulkner must fall. His novel tells us nothing. . . . It is so much sound and fury--signifying nothing" (83). Although both Smith and Fadiman react differently to the novel's modernism, they both agreed that the modernist narration was an unimportant gimmick. However, each critic disagreed over the significance of the novel's content. In "Provincialism and Mr. Faulkner," Smith argues that the novel's universal tragic content far outweighs the novel's stylistic experimentation: "That he has borrowed the stream-of-consciousness technique from Europe seems to me of minor importance: to say the least, he has modified it to his own use and has refused to be tyrannized by conventions, even the conventions of revolt" (87). However, Fadiman dismisses both the experiments in narration and in content: "After one has penetrated the mad, echoing labyrinth of Mr. Faulkner's style one finds a rather banal Poe-esque plot, a set of degenerate whites whose disintegration is irritating rather than appalling. . . . Sound and fury indeed, signifying (the witticism is cheap, but inevitable) almost nothing" (93).

While some critics debated the value of the novel's modernist stylistics, others focused on the content. Those who defended the novel's content tended to invoke traditional definitions of Tragedy, while those who detested it attacked its sentimentality and melodramatic trappings. For example, one of the novel's staunchest defenders was Evelyn Scott. In "On William Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury," Scott argues, "Powerful it is; and it may even be described as 'monstrous' in all its implications of tragedy; but such tragedy has a noble essence" (77). Unlike Scott, Granville Hicks refused to concede the novel's tragic dimensions. O.B. Emerson summarizes Hicks's argument that John Dos Passos is superior to Faulkner:

In objectifying the “southern malaise,” “perhaps too petty for tragic treatment,” Faulkner created an unreal world of terror “in which all the frustrations and bewilderments of his own nature are made fantastic and horrible by the strange power of his imagination.” He offered for those who like him are caught in the “collapse of a long established civilization” emotional release “by transmuting the wearisome struggle into a mysterious melodrama.” (97)

Whereas Hicks connects tragedy to melodrama in order to demonstrate that Faulkner’s melodrama is not even close to the ideal of Tragedy, Peter Brooks has attempted to rescue the melodrama from being Tragedy’s poor cousin. In The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess, Brooks argues that melodrama is the modern world’s only effective response to the loss of Tragedy: [The birth of melodrama occurs at] the moment that symbolically, and really, marks the final liquidation of the traditional Sacred and its representative institutions (Church and Monarch), the shattering of the myth of Christendom, the dissolution of an organic and hierarchically cohesive society, and the invalidation of the literary forms--tragedy, comedy of manners--that depended upon such a society. Melodrama does not simply represent a “fall” from tragedy, but a response to the loss of tragic vision. (15)

Hicks’ vision of Faulkner as a cheap melodramatist without the ability of a true tragedian is supplanted by Brooks’ vision of melodrama as the only possible response to a world in which the tragedy is no longer conceivable. When brought to bear on Faulkner’s The Sound and the Fury, Brooks’ argument produces the novel as a melodramatic investigation of the decline of the Compson family in the post-Sacred world. However, no such attempt to interpret The Sound and the Fury as a melodrama has ever been accomplished, since during the 1950s, a group of critics instituted a canonical interpretation of the novel as a modernist masterpiece. The remnants of this critical strategy persist to this day.

My purpose in examining the 1930s reception of Faulkner’s novel has been to establish that the modernist orthodoxy through which we currently see The Sound and the Fury is by no means natural or inevitable. It is a critical position which did not develop coherently until the 1950s. Before this moment, the novel was seen by critics from a number of critical positions, thus endorsing a variety of views of the novel’s meaning. However, during the 1950s, the novel was canonized, and hence re-produced as a modernist masterpiece.

Drawing from Lawrence H. Schwartz’s work on the literary history of this period, I will argue that the dominance of a modernist criticism was a direct result of the Cold War on American literary culture. That is, this solidification of Faulkner into modernism is symptomatic of how even literary criticism is a consequence of cultural history--here the Cold War ideology. In Creating Faulkner’s Reputation: The Politics of Modern Literary Criticism, Schwartz argues, “I believe in the context of the postwar era, and the emergent cultural cold war, there was a need to find an important American nationalist writer” (3). Because Faulkner fit this need, in the 1950s, he became one of America’s most important literary Cold Warriors. Whereas the 1930s critics had savaged Faulkner for his refusal to engage in Marxist social analyses of the working class, Faulkner’s refusal to do so became his biggest selling point as former Marxist critics attempted to expunge their criticism of its former leftist political roots. As Schwartz argues, “The reinterpretation of Faulkner. . . was explicitly anti-Communist and tied to the repudiation of the socially conscious literary traditions of naturalism/realism. . . It had to be done through an elitist aesthetic--an aesthetic that claimed important literature was remote, complex, iconoclastic, and inaccessible, and required interpretation” (5). Faulkner’s experiments with stream-of-consciousness and other modernist techniques fit this requirement perfectly.

Modernist critics slowly purged debates over the meaning of Faulkner’s novels, and began reproducing his oeuvre as a coherent body of purely modernist work. Any of the lingering concerns about Faulkner’s melodramatic sentimentality or naturalistic tendencies disappeared in dominant critical discourse. The Cold War modernist critics produced a Faulkner who would have been virtually unrecognizable to the 1930s dialogical criticism. This process was accomplished quickly. Schwartz argues that, “In the United States, by 1952, the fight for literary modernism and aesthetic formalism had been won” (34). Schwartz concludes by summarizing Faulkner’s position within the Cold War modernist literary establishment:

The renewed interest in Faulkner coincided with and was related to the heightened Cold War. The Nobel Prize for Literature, which Faulkner won in 1950, was the keystone of this process. But his re-emergence had its origins in the cultural upheaval immediately after the War, which required a great new American novelist to represent the dominance of Western humanist values. Ultimately, Faulkner’s work was championed and canonized because his often supremely individualistic themes and technically difficult prose served an ideological cause. Unintentionally, he produced a commodity of enormous value as a cultural weapon in the early years of the Cold War. (210)

In the following section, I will analyze Ritt's version of The Sound and the Fury, produced simultaneously with the elevation of Faulkner as America's modernist. The film commits a heresy within the logic of the Cold War, arguing for a melodramatic vision of Faulkner which the modernist critics had spent the better part of the decade attempting to suppress.

III. Cold War Gender Politics and Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury

Once the modernist construction of Faulkner was completed by the early 1950s, a number of orthodox positions with respect to The Sound and the Fury became virtually unassailable. Of particular importance for a discussion of Ritt's film was the orthodox position with respect to the gender politics of the novel. The 1930s Faulkner critics had been successful in questioning the representation of women in The Sound and the Fury. One of these critics, Maxwell Geismar, connected Faulkner's gender conservatism to the wider social issues of the era. In Writers in Crisis, Geismar argued that Faulkner's novels assumed that black people and women were both to blame for the decline of the South. Within the Faulknerian moral universe, these minority groups were "the evil cause" of Southern degeneracy. Geismar proceeded to connect this thematic use of minorities to the Nazi scapegoating of Jews in Europe. Applying Geismar's argument to The Sound and the Fury would produce Caddy's sexual immorality as the reason for the Compson family's decline. Such an interpretation is supported by the narrational strategy of the novel: each of the first three sections in the novel documents the personal decline of one of Caddy's brothers. Benjy is sent into fits of screaming at his discovery of Caddy's sexual activity, Quentin deems it his obligation to commit suicide to atone for Caddy's sins, while Jason fumes over the role Caddy's immorality has had in ruining his chances of landing the job at the bank that Herbert Head promised him.

The dawn of the Cold War brought about the complete erasure of the political criticism articulated by Geismar and other 1930s Marxist critics. With this erasure came a temporary end to critical investigations of Faulkner and gender politics. With the rise of the modernist orthodoxy, the political criticism of the 1930s was replaced with a focus on aesthetics that was intended to be a retreat from partisan politics. With centrist, anti-Communist critics like Daniel Bell announcing "the end of ideology," literary criticism followed suit. However, what announced itself as apolitical criticism turned out to be merely an unconscious reproduction of dominant American Cold War ideology. In terms of gender politics, this meant that The Sound and the Fury became an indictment of the role bad mothers played in the weakening of the nation.

For example, Cleanth Brooks, the most influential Faulkner critic of the Cold War era, writes of the gender relations in The Sound and the Fury by re-interpreting the assumptions about the family articulated by Geismar and the other 1930s critics: the Compson family disintegrates because of the improper gender behavior of its female members. However, whereas Geismar used this framework to accuse Faulkner of Fascist scapegoating, Brooks naturalizes these very same gender relationships. Within the ideological circumstances of Cold War America, built upon the vilification of women who departed from constrictive gender behavior, Faulkner's depiction of "decadent" women as carriers of national decay seemed a perfectly natural form of social critique. Brooks' critical construction merely articulates more succinctly the ideological presuppositions of the Faulkner novel itself and of Cold War American culture in general. In his 1963 article, "Man, Time, and Eternity," Brooks argues:

The basic cause of the breakup of the Compson family--let the more general cultural causes be what they may--is the cold and self-centered mother who is sensitive about the social status of her own family. . . . Caroline Compson is not so much an actively wicked and evil person as a cold weight of negativity which paralyzes the normal family relationships. She is certainly at the root of [male] Quentin's lack of confidence in himself and his inverted pride. She is at least the immediate cause of her husband's breakdown into alcoholic cynicism, and doubtless she is ultimately responsible for Caddy's promiscuity. (334)

In dismissing the cultural causes of the Compson family's decline--"let the more general cultural causes be what they may"--Brooks actually exposes the political sleight-of-hand required to construct Faulkner as a Cold War centrist. It also serves as an outright rejection of the 1930s socially-conscious criticism articulated by figures such as Geismar. However, upon closer examination, it quickly becomes clear that Brooks' so-called apolitical criticism is just as imbedded in the climate of the Cold War era as Geismar's was in the Depression era.

Brooks' positioning of the mother as the cause of the family's decline echoes Philip Wylie's cultural criticism of the Cold War period. In Generation of Vipers, first published in 1942, but significantly revised and re-released in a second edition in April 1955 (and reprinted extensively throughout the early Cold War period), Wylie argues that "Momism," a cult of the mother, is responsible for the troubles of the nation. Wylie apocalyptically argues, "We are deep in the predicted nightmare now and mom sits on its decaying throne--who bore us, who will soon, most likely, wrap civilization in mom's final, tender garment: a shroud." (186-7). Wylie thus activates yet another version of the Bomb, as the mother now becomes the symbol for world-wide destruction. Yet unlike The Big Heat, which indicts the masculinist American government for the use of a device which threatens civilization, Wylie blames the decade's apocalyptic potential on another "unnatural" creative force: the mother's womb.

Wylie continues by vilifying the mother as a destructive force closer to home: "The women of America raped the men, not sexually, unfortunately, but morally, since neuters come hard by morals" (190). In this gesture, Wylie connects Mom's smothering influence to American civilization's declining morality. Here, Wylie plants the seeds for a cultural crop that Brooks will reap as a modernist positioning of Faulkner's novel. Brooks' vision of Caroline Compson as the smothering mother responsible for the Compson family decline perfectly re-enacts Wylie's Cold War discourse of Momism.

As I am about to argue, the film version of The Sound and the Fury resists the Momist gestures of Cold War Faulkner critics such as Brooks. Instead, the film focuses on the way in which the mother-daughter relationship between Caddy and Quentin is constantly assaulted by the patriarchal control of Jason. Even though the film is also a cultural product of early Cold War ideological gender assumptions, its refusal of the modernist aesthetic (and endorsement of a Hollywood melodramatic trajectory) forces a different interpretation of the mother-daughter relationships in The Sound and the Fury.

With the sole exception of Ritt's Hollywood melodrama, modernist Cold War interpretations completely dominated Faulkner criticism during the 1950s. Issues of gender politics tended to focus on the role Caddy plays in the story. However, Caddy was equally constructed according to dominant ideological principles of women's roles within patriarchal culture. No one concern about the novel better encapsulates this more than the question of why Caddy never gets to speak for herself within the novel. Instead, four men--Benjy, Quentin, Jason, and the narrator--tell us their versions of Caddy's story. Because of an influential series of lectures he gave at the University of Virginia, Faulkner's own interpretation of Caddy's voicelessness became dogma. When questioned about Caddy's silence by a student during the question and answer session at one of these lectures, Faulkner replied: "[After attempting to tell Caddy's story via Benjy and Quentin], I tried the third brother, because Caddy was still to me too beautiful and too moving to reduce her to telling what was going on, that it would be more passionate to see her through somebody else's eyes, I thought." (21). Later in the question and answer session, Faulkner again invoked his supposed love for Caddy: "To me, she was the beautiful one, she was my heart's darling" (23). From the perspective of a progressive gender politics, Faulkner's excuse for denying Caddy a voice within the novel seems patently sexist: I did not give her a voice because she was too beautiful. The excuse constructs an essentialist and damn near Victorian view of Woman as too pure to be contaminated by using the words of a sordid, male world.

Despite the absurdity of this position, the next generation of Faulkner scholars, still working within the confines of Cold War gender discourses, endlessly attempted to apologize for and to interpret away Faulkner's deeply imbedded sexism. For example, in her 1972 article, "The Ideal of Motherhood," Sally Page defends the novel's narrational strategy, despite offering an analysis sensitive to gender issues. Because "the thematic meaning of The Sound and the Fury is grounded in man's need of the emotional and moral order which is created by motherly devotion," Page is not at all disturbed by the gender politics of the novel's representational scheme. For Page, it makes perfect sense, since "Mrs. Compson, Caddy, and Quentin are the driving forces behind every thought and action of the Compson brothers" (50).

In her 1970 article, "The Rhetoric of Communion: Voice in The Sound and the Fury," Margaret Blanchard is equally apologetic for Faulkner's erasure of the woman's voice. In discussing the novel's fourth section, which by all rights should involve the stream-of-consciousness of Dilsey if not Caddy, Blanchard explains why we are allowed into men's minds and not women's: "Why are we allowed access to Jason's mind only and not Dilsey's or Mrs. Compson's? Because the reader, having already absorbed Jason's perspective through his monologue, is able to project himself into Jason's mind" (128). Blanchard thus avoids altogether the issue of why no woman is given her own section. Instead, it is taken for granted that women should be denied

such an access to their own narration. Consequently, by Blanchard's logic--that the only minds to whom we have privilege should be those to whom we've already been introduced via the modernist stream-of-consciousness technique--the only minds into whom we are allowed access are male ones. The results of this unfortunate gendering of access reproduces patriarchal ideology which positions men as active, thinking subjects, and women as passive, embodied objects.

By the early 1980s, with the much-needed arrival of feminist literary criticism, Faulkner criticism began to revisit its long-held Cold War assumptions about the representation of women. The first such interventions attacked the Momist logic of Brooks' treatment of Caroline Compson. In her 1982 article, "In Defense of Caroline Compson," Joan Williams produces an against-the-grain, revisionist reading of the novel which articulates Caroline's admirable qualities. For the first time, Williams challenges Brooks' construction of Caroline as a textbook articulation of Wylie's Mom. For example, Williams argues that if Caroline is such an abject woman, why does she garner such respect from the otherwise gossipy and often cruel inhabitants of Jefferson? Williams, clearly with Brooks in mind, argues: "Caroline Compson is frequently dismissed as a whiner and complainer by readers of The Sound and the Fury who consider her responsible for the downfall of the Compson family. But the people of Jefferson do not feel this way" (402). Contrary to Brooks' acceptance of Wylie's scapegoating claims that Moms are the reason for the decline of American civilization, Williams argues that Caroline is concerned for the well-being of her family. Yet, because of her gender position within an antebellum, and hence patriarchal, culture, she is powerless to do much of anything: "When her granddaughter disappears, there looms up what always lies under the surface of her mind. 'Quentin left a note.' She refers of course to her son's suicide. Her agonies seem to me justified and not of her own making. She is, rather, a victim" (403).

More radical feminist critics of the past few years have continued this undermining of the Cold War positioning of the gender politics of Faulkner's novel. Going beyond the relatively tame against-the-grain strategies of the early 1980s critics, Minrose Gwin and Dawn Trouard argue for the dialogic nature of Faulkner's text and its appropriability for the goals of feminist theory. This approach necessarily involves the toppling of the modernist orthodoxy, as that original critical strategy entailed constructing the text as coherent, subject to the dominance of the text's modernist aesthetic practices and its apolitical results. Gwin and Trouard achieve the gender criticism of The Sound and the Fury via completely different theoretical paths, but both revisit the issue of why Caddy has no voice in the novel. For the first time in Faulkner criticism since the 1930s, these two critics reject Faulkner's excuse for the silencing of his female protagonist, arguing in different ways that such a sexist rationale is unacceptable.

In "Feminism and Faulkner: Second Thoughts," Gwin argues that Faulkner's text is complex because it expresses the tensions of an authorial voice which is inherently bisexual. Gwin explains, "We can escape the binary oppositions of male and female which reify male power through the radical act of reading difference in the act of its articulation in bisexual texts" (56). Beginning with the assumption of Faulkner's "bisexual artistic consciousness" allows Gwin to encounter Caddy from a completely different point-of-view from that of the modernist critics: "I felt that I could actually 'hear' Caddy Compson's voice of alterity through its very silence, and in the narrative process of her being silenced by male discourse" (58). Such a critical practice enables a breakdown in the binary gender oppositions established by Faulkner's treatment of Caddy as "the beautiful one" during his discussion of her at the University of Virginia lectures. Instead of a silent, passive woman surrounded by her active, articulate brothers, Gwin's reading formation produces a Caddy who has something to say and a means through which she can be heard. This is a vastly important project within literary criticism, argues Gwin, because: "We know what it means when women cannot find their voices, or when no one will listen to them when they do. What we know less about is what happens when women find their voices and are heard by other women" (63).

In her 1993 article, "Faulkner's Text Which is Not One," Trouard continues with Gwin's investigation of women's voices within Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury. While Trouard does not agree with Gwin that Faulkner possesses a fundamentally "bisexual artistic consciousness," she does identify the need to topple the Cold War modernist criticism's acceptance of Caddy's silence within the text. Directly confronting Faulkner's excuse for Caddy's silence and his critics' subsequent critical gymnastics to apologize for a fundamentally sexist gesture, Trouard argues: "To insist that [Caddy] transcends the need for a voice, or that somehow she would have been diminished if granted a voice, is to collaborate with the notorious old stratagem" (37). In order to topple this "stratagem," Trouard playfully yet subversively restructures each of the sections of the novel, not around their modernist narrational devices, but around their

plot concerns. Each section, while narrated by a man, Trouard argues, is concerned at the level of the plot with a bond between women: “To challenge the book’s status as unified text and to focus attention on a plot overshadowed by the culturally privileged saga of sons, I intend to reframe each narrative section and search out discrepancies and ruptures in the depiction of the Compson women who shuttle in and out of the sections waiting to be summoned from the textual perimeters for service in the male symbolic” (25). Exposing the patriarchal logic in Faulkner criticism’s decision to nickname the sections after men, Trouard replaces his emphasis with an attention to women’s experience: Section one (“Benjy”) becomes Caroline’s story; section two (“Quentin”) becomes Caddy’s story; section three (“Jason”) becomes Quentin’s story; while section four (“Faulkner”) becomes Dilsey’s story. Trouard thus takes Peter Brooks’ advocacy of reading for the plot seriously, even with respect to a modernist novel supposedly concerned more with style, and produces a coherent feminist reading.

IV. Cold War Gender Politics, Melodrama, and Ritt’s The Sound and the Fury

I want to use Trouard’s essay as my point of departure for analyzing Ritt’s film adaptation of The Sound and the Fury, for I think that the film, because of its melodramatic grounding, is engaged in a concentration on the mother-daughter bond between Quentin and Caddy similar to the one produced by Trouard’s interpretation. Both Ritt’s film and Trouard’s essay, I will argue, are deconstructive adaptations of the original Faulkner text. Both interpretations are effective, furthermore, in dialogizing Faulkner’s The Sound and the Fury. Given the gender politics of the modernist critics’ monologization of the novel, the otherwise maligned film version emerges as a conduit for examining the crisis in the representation of women within early Cold War culture that would otherwise be clouded from view.

The most significant adaptational change the film makes is to narrow the novel’s focus into a few days in the life of three main characters: Jason, Caddy, and Quentin. Whereas the novel spans the life of thirty years in the life of the Compsons, the film concentrates on the few days leading up to Quentin’s flight from the family with her new-found lover, Charlie Bush, a carnival handyman. In so doing, the film loses much of the complexity between past and present privileged by the modernist critics. The male Quentin’s suicide as the result of his obsession with Caddy’s sexual purity and her subsequent complex sexual relationships with Dalton Ames and Herbert Head are all but removed from the film’s plot. The film’s critics, operating under the assumptions of fidelity to modernist Faulkner criticism, have been harsh on this aspect of the film because of its free play with the novel’s intricate plot and narrational strategies. In an article commonly seen by these critics as a pathetic justification for the horrible film that he produced, Jerry Wald actually successfully defends the concentrating gesture of the film. Wald claims, “The past of the Compson family is thrown into the pressure cooker of the present” (132). According to the logic of the reading I am setting up here, the film is as successful as Wald claims, because it takes the modernist play between past and present and concentrates the plot into an investigation of the gender politics of the Cold War pressure cooker.

What this streamlining enables the film to do is emphasize the relationship between Caddy and her daughter Quentin, one relationship that the novel does not explore fully. For example, the film includes a scene in which Caddy returns to the Compson mansion and meets Quentin. This is a scene which is not present in the novel. In her 1986 article, “Mothers and Daughters in Endless Procession,” Mimi Gladstein explores why the addition of such a scene between mother and daughter is important. Gladstein argues, “Our literature, both ancient and contemporary, is replete with plots that concern the relationships of fathers and sons, fathers and daughters, and mothers and sons. . . . The masculine element is always present. The solely female set, the mother-daughter relationship, however, has received little development in Western literature” (100). However, Gladstein continues by defending Faulkner’s The Sound and the Fury for its articulation of the mother/daughter plot.

The novel certainly does include this plot line as one of its concerns. Throughout the novel, the similarities between Caddy’s teenage maturation and Quentin’s are suggested. However, this equivalence is often done in terms meant to indict both women’s immorality as responsible for the family’s decline. For example, throughout his section, Jason repeatedly refuses to use proper names to identify the particular woman about whom he is speaking. In the famous opening line to his monologue, Jason claims, “Once a bitch always a bitch, what I say” (180). Because the previous two sections have obsessed over Caddy’s sexual immorality, we are encouraged to assume he means Caddy. However, shortly afterwards, we realize he is talking about Quentin, as Jason

struggles to make her attend school. In this case, the novel constructs a bond of similarity between mother and daughter, but the bond turns out to be a construction from within the logic of patriarchy.

The film, on the other hand, includes an entire sequence in which Caddy and Quentin meet in Caddy's bedroom at the Compson mansion. The scene is one of the few that any of the film's critics have analyzed as worthy of interpretation. In his analysis of the film, Gene Phillips argues, "By placing them on opposite sides of one of the bedposts of the four-poster bed that stands prominently in the center of Caddy's room, the director symbolizes visually that it will not be easy for them to relate to each other. The post is a visual metaphor for the barrier that the years have placed between them, an obstruction that mother and daughter will not easily get around" (162). Phillips is partly correct: the scene, typical of 1950s melodramas, does work to express the distance between Caddy and Quentin. Douglas Sirk's *Imitation of Life* (1959), for example, also contains a similar scene. However, unlike that scene, in which the daughter character indicts the mother for performing the role of mother without investing any of the love and emotional concern that comes with it, this scene from *The Sound and the Fury* demonstrates the constraints under which the fallen woman Caddy is operating. Quentin asks Caddy to talk with Jason about his ill-treatment of her while Caddy has been gone. Quentin realizes that her mother is afraid that Jason will kick her out of the house if she complains. The moment is pivotal for the film, as Caddy's fear makes Quentin realize she must stand up for herself. For the rest of the film, Quentin gradually begins standing up to Jason, until the final scene, when she finally declares her independence.

At this point in the film, however, the film displays how the woman-identified woman bonding between the two characters will be the impetus for Quentin's transformation. Unlike the novel, wherein she merely serves as yet another example of woman's immorality, the film refuses to doom Quentin. At the end of the novel, Quentin runs away with the man from the carnival, never to return. Because the novel has worked to establish the relationships between Caddy's and Quentin's behavior, we are led to conclude that Quentin's life with the man will end no better than Caddy's life with Dalton Ames or Herbert Head. However, in the film, Quentin decides not to run away with Charlie, instead returning home where she gains full control over her life.

It is at this final moment in the film that Quentin achieves control over the narrative and articulates her independence. Importantly, in an adaptation of a novel in which all of the female characters are denied a voice, the film employs Quentin's voice-over at its beginning and ending. At the beginning of the film, Quentin introduces us to her story and the town in which she lives: "My name is Quentin Compson. And this is the little town of Jefferson, Mississippi, where I've lived ever since my mother deserted me the day I came into this world. . . . It ought to be wonderful to be alive on a day like this. It ought to be. . ." At this moment, Quentin is able to tell us perfunctorily who she is, but the initial moment of lack--the absence of her mother--precludes her from developing a mature identity which would give her a reason for living.

However, by the film's end, she will be able to assert her identity. As a result of the interaction with her mother, Quentin has learned the cruel demands the patriarchal culture places upon her. Once she overcomes the feeling of lack over not having her mother to protect her, and learns to stand up for herself, Quentin asserts her place in the world. As they walk home together, Quentin tells Jason who she is: "I'm a grown woman, Jason. And I need what any grown woman needs. And that's respect and affection, Jason, in case you don't know." Egotistical Jason immediately attempts to take credit for Quentin's transformation into a mature woman, and at first it seems that the film is asking us to agree with his assessment. Jason brags,

So you're all grown up? . . . You were Caddy's mistake and they wanted no part of you. . . I sent you to the public schools. I rammed it down their throats and I rammed it down yours. I raised you. I fed you. . . I put iron in your backbone. You're the first Compson in fifty years who's gotten up off her knees. And now you can stand up to anybody, even me. Girls. They're not anything at all. Then all of a sudden, they're everything.

But just when it appears that Jason has the last word, we hear Quentin's final voice-over: "Yes, Jason, you raised me, fed me, put the books in my hands, and all the other things you're congratulating yourself about. But, oh my friend, you're not done with me yet. Not by a long shot, Jason." Quentin turns away from Jason and walks into the house. Jason, thinking his interpretation of the events has won out, lights a cigarette and walks next to a tree to smoke as the film ends.

Through the strategy of the voice-over, the film ends with Jason thinking he has the last word. His self-congratulating speech celebrating his patriarchal power stands for him as the lesson behind the events of the last few days. However, he doesn't really control the film's narration, Quentin

does. Unlike Faulkner's novel, in which the women characters are constructed by the male, modernist stream-of-consciousness strategy, the film puts final discursive authority into the voice of Quentin. As she speaks the film's last lines, she undermines Jason's smug authority. She exposes his self-congratulatory attitude for the empty vessel that it is. The film ends radically, with the female voice undermining the male image.

The presence of a female voice-over in a Hollywood film in which the woman is not cruelly punished is in itself an important concern. But, the issue becomes even more important when one considers the way the Faulkner novel specifically denies its women characters the narrational voice. The film then deliberately deconstructs the novel's narrational strategies, reproducing a family melodrama told from the point of view of its female protagonist.

Not surprisingly, the use of the female voice-over is one of the film's techniques which the film's critics, influenced by the modernist dogma of Faulkner criticism, objected to the most. The title of Edward Murray's article, "The Stream-of-Consciousness Novel and Film III--William Faulkner," tips his hand as to his modernist allegiances. Denying that there is any logic to the film's shift in narrational strategies, Murray demeans, "Whereas Caddy is the central referent in the novel, her daughter (played by Joanne Woodward) becomes the main character in the movie, even to narrating portions of it (quite meaninglessly it should be added)" (158). Given Faulkner's construction of Caddy as beautiful and silent, it is quite natural that this Faulkner critic would see a female voice-over in the film as "meaningless."

In his book, Faulkner and Film, Bruce Kavin further attacks the film's melodramatic emphasis on Quentin's role as narrator and as replacement of the multiple, modernist narrators: "It is worth noting that the film is narrated, voice-over, by Quentin II, so that the question arises: if they were willing to allow one first-person narrator, why not have three or four, as in the much earlier Citizen Kane?" (27). By invoking Citizen Kane, Kavin further exposes the masculinist assumptions behind the modernist project. In that film, as in Faulkner's novel, a male narrator goes in search of the meaning of another man's life, only to discover that a series of women have been responsible for his precipitous decline.

In The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema, Kaja Silverman argues that classical Hollywood cinema will only employ the voice-over in order to silence women's voices. Instead, Silverman turns to the modernist cinema in order to find examples of how and why a female voice-over can be used to express female subjectivity. In Echo and Narcissus: Women's Voices in Classical Hollywood Cinema, Amy Lawrence begins with Silverman's theoretical investigation of the voice-over in order to complicate her vision of the classical Hollywood cinema as monolithically conservative with respect to the speaking woman. Lawrence poses a number of questions about the usefulness of studying women speaking in the Hollywood cinema: "How does dialogue, now spoken rather than written, contribute to woman's ability to express her experience now that she is figured by both the image and the sound track? Are women allowed to speak the truth about their experience as women under patriarchy--to say how it actually feels to live the roles they have been placed in?" (5).

As I have attempted to argue, Ritt's The Sound and the Fury offers one answer to the way in which the classical Hollywood cinema offers an enabling space for the female subject to speak her own identity. The adaptational shift from Faulkner's novel to Ritt's film in fact replays Lawrence's opposition between women's dialogue in literature and women's voice in the cinema. Lawrence asks whether this shift could enable women to speak their experiences anew, and Ritt's film tentatively, within my reading of it, offers an answer in the affirmative. Whereas Caddy's written dialogue in Faulkner is couched within a system of modernist stream-of-consciousness strategies for articulating the male construction of woman, Ritt's film ends with a voice-over by the central female protagonist as she subversively questions the construction of her identity which has just been offered by Jason.

The presence of the female voice-over links Ritt's film to the feminist revisionist Faulkner criticism which I surveyed. Both the film and the criticism acknowledge that Faulkner's text is more dialogic than the modernist critics had allowed. The film demonstrates this by constructing the plot within a melodramatic framework, concentrating on the maternal bond between Caddy and Quentin. The feminist critics accomplish a similar task by subversively re-writing the novel in order to bring to the surface its repressed interstices, wherein reside the novel's significant female relationships.

It should come as no surprise, then, that each deconstructive strategy should lead us toward feminist criticism which has theorized these subversive spaces. In the case of the feminist criticism, Gwin invokes the choric fantasy as it has been theorized by Julia Kristeva in order to conceptualize of the feminine space within Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury:

[F]eminine space overlays time in the novel. We may think of this privileged space, created in Benjy's mind and in Caddy's maternal voice within his mind, as the semiotic chora of this section of the narrative and as the section's rhythmic receptacle, "the process by which signification is constituted." . . . The space created between Benjy and Caddy, then, defies the hierarchies of time and structure; its language is the mother tongue. (1990, 42)

In the novel, the feminine space lies outside of the requirements of patriarchal language. Within the logic of Gwin's reading, Benjy ceases to be one of the brothers who constructs Caddy through the male voice, but instead is linked to her by his inability to access the Symbolic in the same ways as can her other more articulate brothers.

The equivalent to this feminine space in Ritt's The Sound and the Fury lies within the film's use of Quentin's voice-over. As evidenced in the final scene, the quasi-diegetic space that Quentin's voice leads us toward is one where Jason is denied access. It is in this realm that Quentin can undermine Jason's patriarchal construction of her. Here, she can assert her own identity. By no accident, Silverman also turns to Kristeva's concept of the choric fantasy in order to theorize the unique place of female voice-over within the cinema. For example, in analyzing Robert Altman's modernist film, Three Women, Silverman argues:

Pinky also attempts to burrow deep inside Milly's voice; like the geriatric patients, she "bathes" in that voice at the beginning of the film, and is before long echoing its aphorisms and turns of phrase, making it the acoustic mirror in which she hears herself. She spends her evenings furtively delving into Milly's diary, which she ultimately claims as her own. These appropriations and penetrations all attest to a powerful desire to fuse with the mother--the desire which, as I have indicated, is also the motive force behind Kristeva's choric fantasy. (128)

In Quentin's case, patriarchal culture has precluded her fusing with her mother, Caddy, but she has learned via Caddy's punishment how to speak for herself. At the end of the film, she uses the choric space of the voice-over to reject the Symbolic law of Jason's voice and its attempts at meaning-making. Instead, she asserts in voice-over her own interpretation of her identity, in turn ridiculing Jason's interpretation, and offering a new one of her own.

My analysis of Quentin's voice-over in The Sound and the Fury offers a fundamental challenge to Silverman's assertion that the female voice-over has only been used to productively articulate female subjectivity in the modernist cinema. In fact, the case of the adaptation of The Sound and the Fury indicates that we ought to be suspicious of a modernism whose roots lie in a masculinist articulation of female identity. While Silverman does primarily focus on feminist avant-garde films (such as Laura Mulvey's Riddles of the Sphinx), a trend in criticism exists to value modernist stylistic interventions as progressive against an enfeebled classical Hollywood cinema as supportive of the status quo. The case of The Sound and the Fury suggests the opposite: it is the melodrama of Ritt's film which enables the articulation of female subjectivity, whereas the modernist stylistics of the novel solely construct its women characters via male subjectivity.

I certainly do not want to overstate my case with respect to the progressive gender politics of Ritt's The Sound and the Fury. The film is by no means feminist in its overall sensibilities. It is still, after all, a cultural artifact of the early Cold War period. For example, the film cannot escape the Momism that was all too evident in the critical constructions of Cleanth Brooks. The film quite simply cannot represent the mother Caddy as able to actively encourage Quentin to speak up for herself. While within Gwin's argument the choric space exists between Caddy and Benjy, both of whom are denied access to the Symbolic, the film shifts the emphasis toward Quentin. While a 1950s film could represent the daughter as actively seeking subjectivity, it seemingly could not circumvent the Momist assumptions of Cold War America to represent Caddy with any agency.

Lawrence's work on another Cold War film featuring a female voice-over helps in sorting out these gender contradictions. In the last chapter of Echo and Narcissus, Lawrence analyses Robert Mulligan's To Kill a Mockingbird (1962). Like Ritt's film, To Kill a Mockingbird features the voice-over of its adult female protagonist, Scout, who describes her childhood maturation. Lawrence studies the presence of the female authorial voice in the film: it was based on a novel by Harper Lee. Likewise, a female authorial presence exists in the production process of The Sound and the Fury. The Ritt film was scripted by the team of Harriet Frank, Jr. and Irving Ravetch. The questions that Lawrence poses of To Kill a Mockingbird seem equally pertinent to The Sound and the Fury: What are the implications of giving the woman-author a cinematic presence through the use of voice-over? And, more important, what is it about not only the story but her telling it--the fact that it is presented as being "authored" by a woman--that ultimately makes the film compatible with patriarchal ideology? And lastly, is there any way a feminist rereading of the film can open it up and allow us--if briefly--to hear the female voice?. (170)

Lawrence concludes with a vision of To Kill a Mockingbird as inherently riddled with political contradictions, yet also admits to a small potential for the film to give voice to female subjectivity--both of the character and of the author--in a culture which otherwise denies these voices. Lawrence concludes, "By recuperating her fragmented self through the process of storytelling, and by insisting on a regionalized and gendered voice that exceeds language, the woman can mark a small place for herself within patriarchy as a speaking subject--although that subjectivity is, admittedly, a highly qualified one" (186). This strikes me as a wise way in which to conclude my discussion of The Sound and the Fury. The presence of the female voice-over at the end of the film offers, within a melodramatic context, a woman speaking her own identity. While this by no means reveals a toppling of the patriarchal conventions within the film or certainly within its early Cold War cultural context, the film represents to me a progressive refutation of the logic through which Faulkner and his Cold War critics denied his female characters any voice at all.

Finally, the film's refutation of Faulkner's and his critics' implementation of the binary opposition between active, male voices and passive, female objects goes a long way toward explaining why the Faulkner critics have so despised Ritt's film adaptation. In his 1986 article, "Faulkner's Critics and Women: The Voice of the Community," John Duvall takes the Cold War modernist critics to task for their conservative gender politics. Duvall in particular exposes the influential critic Cleanth Brooks for his part in accepting at face value Faulkner's rigid use of binary gender roles: "This belief in a male/female dichotomy in which man as an acting subject is opposed to woman as an acted upon object informs not only the corpus of Brooks's commentary but also, to a great extent, the discourse of the Faulkner institution itself" (45).

Given the dominant 1950s construction of the meaning of The Sound and the Fury, it shouldn't surprise us that a film which resists (intentionally or by ineptitude) these bedrock assumptions should come under such rabid attack. Such is the poverty of fidelity criticism. According to its logic, a film which deviates from its novelistic source is by definition a bad adaptation. The importance of the deconstructive adaptation lies in its ability to conceptualize a source as a potentially dialogical text. The film adaptation can then be looked at as an interpretation of one aspect of the novel. Such an interpretation can potentially include an overt critique of the politics of the source novel. In the case of Ritt's The Sound and the Fury, such a deconstructive adaptation can lead us to a new vision of the characters and their story that will lead us out of the rigid and oppressive assumptions that a dogmatic Cold War criticism has forced upon the female characters of Faulkner's novel. Duvall claims that the greatest sin of the Cold War Faulkner critics is their "overvaluation of the paternal voice" (55). If nothing else, through the use of Quentin's voice-over, Ritt's film interrogates this critical problem and allows "Faulkner's women" to finally have their say.

V. Conclusion: Canonicity, Faulkner, and Adaptation

By recognizing the potential for a resistant adaptation in order to question the Cold War critics' construction of Faulkner's novel as monologically masculine-voiced, Ritt's film as a dialogic text potentially calls into question the enforced silence of women of the 1950s. The strategies of the film expose the presence of melodrama within the source material which the modernist critics clouded from view through their modernist interpretations of the novel. Such a situation inevitably raises issues about the process of canonization which I would like to conclude this chapter by addressing.

Since this dissertation is largely about theorizing the application of new historiographies to the study of adaptation, I would like to consider the work of historiographer Dominick LaCapra on the process of canonization and its relationship to history. In History and Criticism, LaCapra analyzes the ways in which recent literary theories have argued for doing away with the canon in an attempt to defeat intellectual elitism. Many such critics have advocated studying popular culture as an antidote to the long history of high culture being the only culture worthy of study. LaCapra responds to this development with the following warning:

I would reject the quasi-ritualistic belief that a text is hopelessly contaminated by its function in a canon and that the alternative strategy should be to focus, more or less exclusively, on more "representative" artifacts, such as items of popular culture that have traditionally been omitted from the canon of elite monuments. I have tried to argue that this kind of professional populism often functions as a methodological way of making a scapegoat of high culture or its bearers. (133)

LaCapra's solution is to instead focus on the relationships between popular culture and high culture, not merely to ignore high culture altogether. In so doing, he proposes diversifying the ways in which we approach high culture, in essence dialogizing it. Drawing from the work of Michael Bakhtin, LaCapra argues, Certain artifacts are exceptional products of cultural activity, and it is ill-advised, even self-defeating, to deny their critical power or uncanny ability to play uncommon variations on commonplace themes. It would, however, be equally misleading to promote them to a detached, transcendent plane or to espouse an elitist aesthetics of genius. A careful and, in certain respects, noncanonical reading of canonical texts, open to their contestatory dimensions and alert to the problem of how to relate them to artifacts and issues excluded from established canons, is in no sense a full answer to the transferential problem in the study of culture; it is, however, a part of any acceptable answer. (93)

The critical gymnastics through which I have taken The Sound and the Fury in this chapter is an attempt to respond to LaCapra's theoretical warnings. I combine the analysis of a popular film text (in fact a popular film text that is seen as so bad by the critical community as to be virtually worthless as an artifact to study) and attempt to theorize its relationship to the high cultural artifact on which it is based (commonly understood by critics to be the greatest American novel of the twentieth-century).

The chapter has attempted to position adaptation studies of the Hollywood cinema as one place to learn, "how to relate a noncanonical or contestatory reading of high-cultural artifacts, such as "great" novels, and the investigation of artifacts, such as "popular" novels, that have traditionally been excluded from elite canons" (133). Inherent in adaptation as a site of inquiry is the interface between high art (literature) and popular art (the cinema). Choosing films which fit the category of the deconstructive adaptation fulfills LaCapra's requirement that we study popular culture seriously, as the construct assumes that the novel is attempting to follow a different path, while it also assumes that the novel could be read noncanonically, as it is being deconstructed by the film.

However, LaCapra's theorization of the problem of the canon does not consider fully why the anti-canonist critics would be so upset with the canon in the first place. If it were just a matter of reading the canonical texts noncanonically, with no ideological pressures upon the criticism, then such efforts would have long since been exhausted. What LaCapra does not conceive is the way in which canonical interpretations gain weight because of their ideological equivalence with dominant patterns of thought within the culture in which interpretation gets produced.

In Classics and Trash: Traditions and Taboos in High Literature and Popular Modern Genres, Harriet Hawkins does a superb job of exposing and analyzing the gender politics which lie behind the canonization of high cultural texts and the ridicule of popular culture texts. Hawkins begins by arguing for the instability between categories of high and low culture as academic criticism has installed them. Agreeing with the path advocated by LaCapra, she claims that high and low culture interact more than canonists would like to admit: "Recognition of the cross-fertilization between high literature and popular genres inevitably enhances our understanding and appreciation of both" (xiv). Furthermore, Hawkins argues that high culture was, almost always, low culture at some other time in its existence. For example, in critiquing Allan Bloom's postulate that American culture is at its ebb because popular culture has totally replaced high culture such as Shakespeare, Hawkins analyzes the way in which Shakespeare arrived in the United States in the nineteenth century: "Shakespeare entered via the low-traveling fly by night actors in the West, not at Eastern universities" (110). Certainly we have witnessed this process in this chapter: the "cult of cruelty" sensationalist Faulkner, as he was understood in the 1930s, was converted by the modernist, Cold War critics of the 1950s into America's premier high novelist.

In making each of these points about the canon, Hawkins argues for the fundamental ways in which high culture is always already dialogic, and that its sources are just as likely to lie in the low than in the high. However, once the canon is established, the high becomes associated with the original, while the low becomes rooted in the formulaic and the generic. As soon as these concretizations occur within criticism, the artistic becomes the voice of the status quo while the generic becomes the site for contestation: "The artistic tradition which thrives on generic out-breeding has in practice if not in theory been a great deal more democratic and far less elitist, even as it has often been demonstrably less sexist than the academically closeted critical tradition" (xvi). We have again seen this to be the case with Ritt's The Sound and the Fury as compared to Faulkner's original novel. Whereas the modernist criticism produces the novel as a rigid implementation of the male authorial voice, the film, operating within the confines of the formulaic genre of the melodrama, produces a new

vision of the female characters as operating outside the boundaries of discursive patriarchal control. Hawkins' view of historical causalities to canonicity thus enables us to analyze the ideological differences and cultural history between the canonical and noncanonical texts in ways that LaCapra's theory in the abstract does not.

By combining LaCapra's and Hawkins' theories, we can mount a defense of adaptation studies as a useful way to analyze the process of canonization and its effects. By looking at the interface between the melodramatic Hollywood film and its modernist novelistic source, we discover the inherent problems with a monologizing canonical criticism. In addition, by considering that films can themselves be resistant deconstructive adaptations, we can reveal the ideological suppositions behind that canonizing process. Such a critical practice, when applied to The Sound and the Fury, generates a vision of the Cold War that produced both modernist Faulkner criticism and a melodramatic Hollywood film adaptation of the same novel. By reading the novel noncanonically via the film's deconstructive strategies, we emerge with a conflictual view of the culture of early Cold War America.