AVIATION IN THE FICTION
OF WILLIAM FAULKNER

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by
Kenneth Lewis Weber, B.A.
The Ohio State University
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Approved by

[Signature]
Adviser
Department of English
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CHAPTER I

FAULKNER'S AVIATION BACKGROUND

Early in the Second World War an English fighter pilot, in the midst of the horrors of combat, poetically described the absolute joy of flying:

Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth,
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wing;
Sunward I've climbed and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds—and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of—"1

Unfortunately John Gillespie Magee was fated not to survive the war, and his enthusiasm and talent must reside forever in these brief lines. Late in the First World War, however, an American youth dreamed of becoming an English fighter pilot and joining Ball, McCuddin, and Mannock in the immortal rolls of the Royal Flying Corps. Fortunately William Faulkner was fated not to participate actively in that war. He was spared to become a great writer whose reputation securely stands on a series of recognized masterpieces. Paradoxically, even though the urge to fly was in Faulkner's blood from an early age, and even though he realized that urge, neither the peculiar circumstances surrounding that realization nor the fiction that was finally generated by it has received adequate critical attention.

1
Interest in aviation was a trait shared by all four Faulkner brothers. Each became a pilot, and the two youngest boys, John and Dean, made aviation their profession. William Faulkner, the eldest, made his first solo flight at about the age of eleven. His airplane was a homemade model copied from plans in *The American Boy* and constructed from bean poles, nails, flower paste, and newspapers. After being launched over the lip of a ten foot bluff by two negro handimen: "The ship began to come to pieces in the air.... And Bill fell in a shower of torn paper and scraps of kindling wood and landed on the back of his head in a pile of sand at the bottom of the ditch." In spite of such an inglorious beginning, William Faulkner maintained an interest in flying and, according to John Faulkner's account in *My Brother Bill*, was accepted as a cadet by the English "Royal Flying Corps" after first being turned down by the Americans because of the lack of two years college education.

John Faulkner, relying upon his memory and upon the events described by his brother, presents a slightly confused view of William Faulkner's military service. *My Brother Bill* implies that Faulkner joined the Royal Flying Corps in reaction to the marriage of his childhood sweetheart to another man in June, 1918. Carvel Collins mentions that Faulkner resigned his two month old job with a Connecticut armament company on June 15, 1918 after "signing up with the Royal Flying Corps." Faulkner then "made a brief trip home to visit his family before leaving Mississippi on July 8, 1918, for Toronto, Canada, to begin training as a
John Faulkner supplies the most detailed published information on his brother's training:

They sent Bill to primary training in Toronto on Canucks, ships about like the Jennies we used to train our pilots. He graduated from them and went on to fighter training in Sopwith Camels, the orneriest airplane ever built.

The war ended before Bill could finish his training. But the British government told him and some others that if they wanted to stay and finish their course they'd get their wings and commission. Bill and a few others stayed. They lacked only a few weeks.

While the individual records of Canadian training in World War I are sketchy, some of the confusion surrounding Faulkner's cadet experience may be clarified. First, Faulkner was never a member of the Royal Flying Corps, the original British flying organization that gained such fame in the initial years of the First World War. The Royal Flying Corps (RFC) was reorganized into the Royal Air Force (RAF) on April 1, 1918, three months before Faulkner's enlistment. This distinction between RFC and RAF and the peculiar conditions of special glory the surround the RFC in Faulkner's mind continually recur in his aviation fiction. In addition, flyer's wings are a special and coveted symbol of masculinity in Faulkner's fiction. Yet Faulkner's own legal claim to the wings of an RAF flyer is clouded in confusion. According to John Faulkner, his brother William returned to Oxford, Mississippi from Canada one morning in December, 1918: "Bill got off the train in his British officer's uniform--slacks, a Sam Browne belt, and wings on his tunic. He had on what we called an overseas cap, a monkey cap that was
only issued to our men if they served overseas." Perhaps this cap, in conjunction with Faulkner's later fictional stories concerning wartime aviation, generated the legend that still persists in The Literary History of the United States, and elsewhere, that Faulkner served as a fighter pilot in France.

According to records of the Canadian Air Ministry, a W. C. Faulkner "joined the RAF in Canada July 10, 1918, as a cadet pilot trainee.... He did not complete his flying course and did not qualify for a flying badge. He was awarded an honorary commission as a 2nd/Lieutenant and was demobilized January 4, 1919." Mr. Frank H. Ellis, author of Canada's Flying Heritage and Canada's oldest surviving pilot, although not acquainted with Faulkner, was an instructor at Camp Borden, one of the six RAF aerodromes located near Toronto in 1918. Mr. Ellis writes:

If Faulkner enrolled in June 1918, he would be well through his ground training by the date of the Armistice, and also well towards his completion as a flying cadet. One very certain thing is that on Nov. 11, 1918, ALL flying training came to a COMPLETE ending. No flying courses were continued or operated after that date. (Italics Mr. Ellis's)

However, what did happen was this. ALL cadets in flying training who had FLown SOLO, were, on demobilization, granted full recognition as 2nd. Lieutenants, and were given, mostly by mail, their wings, suitable discharge papers showing their suddenly acquired rank, and whatever additional pay was due to them on discharge. There were a considerable number who were entitled to that ruling, and I would say, William Faulkner would be one of them. But he would then have received Royal Air Force discharge papers, not defunct R. F. C. ones. (Italics Mr. Ellis's)

After the Armistice I was posted to Toronto, and was in charge of one office at Headquarters, until mid-April of
1919, and our job was one which dealt with the discharge of cadets, so you can be sure my statements are correct.\textsuperscript{11}

While the publication of My Brother Bill has dampened to some extent the legend of Faulkner's combat experience, it has not clarified that period of Faulkner's life because its author has uncritically accepted as fact what Faulkner chose to tell. Even though Irving Howe has corrected his contribution to the legend to some extent, he has not documented his revision:

A legend--enshrined, among other places, in the first edition of this book--has grown up that Faulkner served as a pilot in France and suffered severe wounds when his plane crashed in combat; but the truth is that the war ended while he was still in Canada and his only wound came as the result of an Armistice Day prank.\textsuperscript{12}

John Lewis Longley has added fuel to a new legend in his recent study: "Faulkner was never in combat, but crashed twice. He was gravely injured in the second crash and was near death for several weeks."\textsuperscript{13} Of a possible crash, John Faulkner says only: "We saw that he [Faulkner] was limping. As soon as we greeted him and got him in the car he told us that some of the graduating class had gone up to celebrate getting their wings and he had flown his Camel halfway through the top of a hangar."\textsuperscript{14} William Van O'Conner echoes this same information with no indication of its source in his book The Tangled Fire of William Faulkner.\textsuperscript{15}

The true circumstances surrounding Faulkner's accident, if there actually was an accident, are probably lost. Irving Howe implies that Faulkner's crash occurred on Armistice Day, itself.\textsuperscript{16} Mr. Ellis can only state with certainty that there was no crash on a hangar at Camp Borden on November 11, 1918.
Although there were five more flying training bases in the area, it is much more likely that any accident suffered by Faulkner was more in the nature of the training incident described in Faulkner's first published short story, "Landing In Luck." What can be definitely established is that absolutely no Sopwith Camels, a front-line fighter aircraft, were in Canada in 1918. The aircraft reportedly used by Faulkner in his escapade, if the episode actually occurred, was erroneously named.

In attempting to trace the sources of a great writer's inspiration, it is necessary at this point to examine briefly the training Faulkner received in Canada. Before the summer of 1918, Canadian flying training was designed to impress the student with the awful consequences of allowing certain conditions to develop in the air: "Pupils were taught the proper corrective actions to bring the aircraft out of various difficulties but not a great deal about why an aircraft behaved as it did." In mid-1918, the Armour Heights system of pilot training, developed by Major R. R. Smith-Barry, was instituted. This system was stressed during Faulkner's training:

...the gospel that he [Smith-Barry] preached was that the aeroplane was a nice-tempered, reasonable machine that obeys a simple honest code of rules at all times and in any weather. And by shedding a flood of light on the mysteries of its controls, he drove away the fear and the real danger that existed for those who were flying aeroplanes in the blackest ignorance even of first principles.

An indication of the success of the "new philosophy" was a decrease of thirty-five percent in the number of fatalities incurred in the Canadian pilot training program from July to
October, 1918. Canadian training philosophy had changed from a system picturing man as a member of a completely mechanistic universe where he was at the mercy of the whims of fate to a more optimistic system placing man in control of a universe in which he, through his intelligence and proficiency, could accomplish his desires.

The program of training in the summer of 1918 was quite different from the original program of 1917, which gave the cadet only six weeks of ground training before actual flying began.\textsuperscript{20} Anything like fourteen weeks of ground training, which Faulkner probably received, computed from July 10, 1918, allows time for very little actual flying instruction before the November Armistice. Once started, however, flying training could proceed rapidly. Then, as now, an exceptional student could solo in six hours.\textsuperscript{21} Cadet Lowe, a character in Faulkner's \textit{Soldiers' Pay},\textsuperscript{22} muses that he had forty-seven hours of flying time and only two weeks until graduation when the Armistice was declared. There is a possibility that the experience and the situation of Lowe is in reality Faulkner's since other autobiographical details appear to have been included in Lowe's character. Regardless of his actual flying time, Faulkner certainly received a good education in ground subjects related to aviation. John Faulkner, while having reservations about his brother's piloting skill, unequivocally pronounces him "the best navigator I ever saw."\textsuperscript{23} The ground training especially stressed the pilot's role as an observer of what was happening on the earth. Cadets seated
amphitheater-style seven or eight feet above a realistic display simulating the western front were required to plot and report the location of flashing lights which simulated artillery explosions.

Having discussed Faulkner's early acquaintance with flying, it is necessary to assess his achievement as a pilot in order to be able to see what effect his flying had on his later writing. John Faulkner while laboring under the misapprehension that "Bill was bound to have been a good pilot with the RFC, else he would never have got by flying Camels," still admits that "in the 1930's, when I knew him as a pilot, he had lost his touch." John Faulkner goes on to say: "He did pretty good flying OX5 stuff but every time he was out in his Waco by himself and went into some strange field he did something to it. Usually it never amounted to more than wiping off a wing tip or blowing a tire but he did it nearly everytime." The answer to John Faulkner's perplexity is simply that Faulkner had only flown "OX5 stuff" (aircraft like the JN-4 Jenny powered by the OX5 engine), and that his cabin Waco, bought after his success in Hollywood, was too much for him to handle because of his interrupted flying education and his lack of regular flying activity.

Faulkner's attitude toward flying, as shown in both his aviation career and his aviation fiction, was essentially romantic. He was not naturally gifted with the mechanical aptitude which he depicted in Roger Shumann, the racing pilot of Pylon. Faulkner, later voicing his wish to be the only unregimented individual left in the world, said in an interview: "I still enjoy aviation,
but it has become so mechanical that the pleasure I had once is gone. One has to be a mechanical or technical expert to fly any more. The days when anyone with an airplane and a tank of fuel could fly where he wanted to is past."²⁸

Flying to Faulkner was a chance for a man to see his own shadow on the earth and to observe what was transpiring below: "Some days he would take an airplane and fly over the farm to get a better picture of just what we had and how to develop it."²⁹ An airplane also undoubtedly gave Faulkner an unforgettable lesson in the laws of cause and effect and taught him that man had to make choices and accept the consequences. There were undoubtedly times in his flight training when Faulkner found himself baffled by the slipstream-garbled attempts at communication—experiences that would be recalled in other contexts. And through it all was the changing perspective afforded the airman as he watched his shadow fall on the aimless scurrying of the puny individuals below.

If much of Faulkner's inspiration and his outlook came from the cockpit and if he had always wanted to fly, why did he suddenly discontinue both his fictional investigations into the literature of speed and his own flying activities after Pylon was published in 1935? Part of the answer lies between the lines of My Brother Bill. Faulkner had encouraged his youngest brother, Dean, to become a flyer. He financed Dean's training and flew with him often. Dean was killed in Faulkner's cabin Waco on November 10, 1935. After that, it was not until A Fable
appeared in 1954 that Faulkner broke his self-imposed silence on the subject of aviation. "Bill was especially good to Dean, our brother Dean's child," says John Faulkner: "He held himself responsible for her father's death, since he had arranged for Dean to go to Memphis to learn to fly. And it was in his, Bill's, airplane that Dean was killed."\(^{30}\) Dean's crash affected Faulkner's mother so much that the boys refrained for many years from their former practice of buzzing the family home when they wanted to be met by a car at the local airport. Dean's death evidently gave Faulkner a fear of flying that he never overcame. Later he was to take up sailing and horseback riding and compare them both with the sensation of flying. For an author with so much to say and so little time in which to say it, for a man who had seen "and done a hundred things/ You have not dreamed of,"\(^{31}\) a cockpit became a needless risk.
FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER I


3 Ibid., p. 134.


5 Ibid., p. 4.

6 John Faulkner, p. 135.

7 Ibid., p. 138.


14 John Faulkner, pp. 138-139.


16 Irving Howe, p. 114.

18 D. V. Dodds, "Canada's First Air Training Plan: Fourth of Four Parts," The Roundel, p. 18. Extracts of an article published in The Roundel, (Magazine of the Royal Canadian Air Force) included in the letter of D. V. Dodds cited above.

19 Ibid., p. 18.

20 Ellis, Canada's Flying Heritage, p. 122.

21 Dodds, from The Roundel, p. 20.


23 John Faulkner, p. 168.

24 Ibid., p. 168.

25 Ibid., p. 168.

26 Ibid., p. 168.


29 John Faulkner, p. 178.

30 Ibid., p. 217.

31 Magee, Flying Colors, p. 115.
CHAPTER II

FAULKNER'S AVIATION SAGA

Having subscribed to the traditional view of William Faulkner as primarily a pseudo local-colorist who concentrated his focus upon a small mythical country in Mississippi, a reader finds it disquieting to discover that the Faulkner saga must be modified to include a group of nomadic aviators who migrate "from coast to coast and Canada in summer and Mexico in winter, with one suitcase..."¹ and who seemingly "ain't human like us; they couldn't turn those pylons like they do if they had human blood and senses and they wouldn't want to or dare to if they just had human brains." (Pylon 29) These men, in contrast to the usual Faulkner character whose dominant mode of transportation is a buggy or, at best, an automobile, whip "in a vertical bank around a steel post at two or three hundred miles an hour...." (Pylon 30) These unusual characters are the final development of a breed whose lineage may be traced to Faulkner's first published prose work. They are inhabitants of a modern world of speed and split second timing which exists alongside of Faulkner's more familiar world of Yoknapatawpha County.

Faulkner's first fictional work, a story overlooked evidently because of the legend that Faulkner was exclusively
interested in poetry during the early years of his development, is the short story entitled "Landing In Luck," a story of a flying cadet's first solo flight, which appeared in the November 26, 1919, issue of The Mississippian, the literary magazine of the University of Mississippi. "Country Mice," one of Faulkner's series of sixteen signed sketches published during 1925 in the Sunday feature section of the New Orleans Times-Picayune, includes a flying motif, which shows Faulkner's continued interest in aviation. Two of Faulkner's first three published novels, Soldiers' Pay (1926) and Sartoris (1929), are concerned to some extent with aviation or aviators, and speed. Four flying stories, "Thrift" (1930), "Ad Astra" (1931), "All the Dead Pilots" (1931), and "Turnabout" (1932), are set in France during World War I. Two other flying stories, "Honor" (1930) and "Death Drag" (1932), are set in the post-World War I United States, and they are direct predecessors of Faulkner's full length flying novel, Pylon (1935). Faulkner's late novel, A Fable (1954), while not primarily concerned with aviation, has several important episodes devoted to aerial activities and to the reactions of World War I aviators to the conditions in which they found themselves. A review in The American Mercury in November, 1935, dealing with Jimmy Collins's book Test Pilot, reveals some of Faulkner's ideas about aviation and its possible implications for the human race. Further implications of man's relation to the modern machine society are contained in a letter to the editor of The New York Times (1954). The letter
reveals Faulkner's continued interest in aviation and particularly his focus upon man in relation to the machine. Faulkner's love of the air and his power in describing his feelings about flying are shown finally in a short sketch, "Impressions of Japan," contained in Faulkner at Nagano\textsuperscript{16} (1956).

When the unexpected mass of aviation writings is examined, certain themes appear which seem to approximate those of Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County writings, yet strangely seem to have a more easily discernible significance than the Mississippi stories in which the themes are often obscured by the author's experiments in point of view and completely clouded by the critic's experiments in wit. But the aviation writings must be handled carefully and a norm must be established somewhere between the attitude of John Faulkner, who especially likes \textit{Sartoris} and the flying stories but resolutely believes that people read too much into his brother's fiction, and the position of a wishful critic who confidently expects to find a complete pattern, which in some way will throw new light on the interpretations of the Yoknapatawpha saga. The value of the flying stories must be assessed not on the supposition that they are autobiographical remembrances in the lost generation tradition of Hemingway and Dos Passos, but that they are imaginative artistic creations cast against an aviation tradition simply because of the author's experience in that tradition.

Faulkner's own pronouncements concerning the interpretation of his flying stories must be considered in a cold and quizzical
light. Faulkner's *Test Pilot* review, which was written shortly after *Pylon* was published, provides a convenient means with which to arbitrarily classify the novel as a disappointing failure even in the author's eyes. Hyatt Waggoner, depending upon William Van O'Connor as a secondary source rather than upon the *Test Pilot* review itself, damages an otherwise penetrating analysis of *Pylon* by mistakenly attributing Faulkner's disappointment in Collins's *Test Pilot* to a disappointment in his own recently published novel, *Pylon.*\(^{17}\) Nowhere in the review is *Pylon* mentioned by name, but it is still very much in Faulkner's mind as he unconsciously realizes that Collins has not followed his lead into something serious and important but has written a normal book where the reader is: "Never arrested by a single description of night sky or night earth or sunset or moonlight or fog: you have seen it before a hundred times and it has been phrased just that way in ten thousand newspaper columns and magazines.\(^{18}\)"

The interviews recorded in *Faulkner In the University*,\(^{19}\) *Faulkner at Nagano*,\(^{20}\) and *Faulkner at West Point*,\(^{21}\) can not be depended upon to give a full and unbiased account of the significance of the stories since the questions that generated Faulkner's answers were often leading in their implications. For example, when a student asked, "was it anything besides pride"\(^{22}\) that caused Jock to remain with Ginsfarb in "Death Drag," Faulkner simply agreed that "pride was about what it was"\(^{23}\) and then drifted into a generalization about the type of person who survived the First World War. No author can be held responsible for providing
even a close approximation of emotions that swayed him during a period of creativity a quarter century ago. It is better to ignore Faulkner's afterthoughts completely until the stories themselves have been examined so that these afterthoughts will not interfere with a direct understanding of the stories.

Several general themes with universal applications are developed and carried throughout Faulkner's aviation stories. These themes and motifs are best shown by an examination of the series of similar characters that participate in these stories. Being familiar with the metamorphosis by which Horace Benbow became Gavin Stevens, the reader can also detect the same evolutionary process at work from one aviation story to the next. Continually shaping and molding, but never completely abandoning his basic conceptions, Faulkner evolves and tests a series of representative characters strangely similar, in their economy of expression and in their seemingly fated lives, to those of Hemingway. Faulkner chose to address himself to the subject of aviation primarily because it was a popular subject with which he had personal contact and it could support the universal symbolism he felt compelled to use. In addition Faulkner knew that the dream of flying has always been a consuming passion for men, a passion shown repeatedly in ancient mythology. Indeed, the need to fly and the associated idea of speed becomes equated with man's basic drives in Faulkner's handling of the subject. For instance, a young pilot in Soldiers' Pay says: "I am Julian Lowe. I eat, I digest, evacuate: I have flown." (SP 33) In
Pylon, Faulkner describes a powerful automobile as: "A machine expensive, complex, delicate and intrinsically useless, created for some obscure psychic need of the species if not the race...."

(Pylon 88)

One would think, on the basis of Faulkner's idiosyncrasies of dress and manner exhibited at The University of Mississippi after the war, that his first story, "Landing In Luck," would be a rousing adventure yarn dazzlingly designed to focus the hero worshipping attention of the campus upon the dashing young pilot-author. But, surprisingly, the story resorts to no such display of pyrotechnics. It somewhat amateurishly and unevenly tells of a traumatic experience that flavors the first solo flight of a young flying cadet in the Royal Flying Corps. Three things stand out in retrospect: (1) the author's unexpectedly restrained tone; (2) the presence of two main characters who will be developed and modified throughout the series of flying stories; and (3) the emphasis upon the flyers rather than upon the machines they fly.

While "Landing In Luck" is almost totally unknown and certainly insignificant as a work of art, the main character, Cadet Thompson, experiences many of the emotions and touches many of the themes that his descendants will encounter. In order to see the flying characters in their proper perspective, Cadet Thompson must be considered as representing one of the two major types of Faulkner's male aviators. His instructor, Mr. Bessing, may be placed in the other category. Because of Faulkner's
artistic immaturity, the marvelous potential of Bessing's character is not developed, but Faulkner implies that Bessing is a member of what I choose to call the "charmed circle," the category of pilots who not only possess instinctively the ability to master precisely the machine they fly, but also have the human quality of perception that allows them both to understand their circumstances and to attune themselves to those circumstances. Candidates for membership in the charmed circle must possess an almost supernatural perception and talent which allows them to mesh perfectly with the mechanical operation of the aircraft so that the aircraft is an extension of their own extremities. Members of the charmed circle are the first class pilots whose manly qualities are unchallenged. On the other hand, Cadet Thompson belongs to the second class of pilots, the "dead" aviators who are temperamentally unsuited for precision flying or who have lost the optimism and spirit which qualified them as pilots originally. Membership in either of the two classes of aviators depends upon the man's mental attitudes as well as his performance in the air. The member of the charmed circle is certainly a superman and a rarity in our society since the two requirements represent the two poles of human activity, the physical and the mental. The pilot of the first class is a modern development of the Renaissance Man, but the pressures of finances, mechanization, and a compression of time combine to attack the modern man in an assault completely unknown in former times. Although Mr. Bessing is only a flat character in "Landing In Luck," his
potentiality can be glimpsed by identifying him with the stock character of the infallible flying instructor and with later members of the charmed circle. Almost the entire character of Bessing must be constructed from the brief bit of motivational dialogue given to Thompson before the cadet makes his first solo. The speech itself is a variation of what every flying cadet has heard since Daedalus advised Icarus not to fly too close to the sun:

"See that chap there? He's probably had half your time but he makes landings alone. But you, you cut your gun and sit up there like a blind idiot and when you condescend to dive the bus, you try your best to break our necks, yours and mine too; and I'll say right now, that's something none of you rockin' chair aviators is goin' to do. Well, it's your neck or my reputation, now. Take her off, and what ever you do, keep your nose down." (LL 43)

This speech shows Faulkner's awareness of the psychology behind the student-instructor relationship. His insight into the mind of Thompson before, during, and after his solo heralds the psychological probing that will become Faulkner's hallmark throughout his career.

Thompson, trundling into take-off position, is "a strange mixture of fear and pride...fear that he would wreck the machine landing, and pride that he was on his own at last." (LL 43-44)

After an abortive take-off attempt, Thompson closes the throttle with the intention of returning to his starting position. But pride overcomes his reason when he hears Bessing's shouts and the "splutter" of the motorcycle being sent for him: "Cadet Thompson was once more clearly angry. He jerked the throttle open."

(44) Even though Thompson feels the shock of hitting a cable stretched across the end of the field, he thinks that the cable
has broken and his spirit soars with the joy that only the first solo can bring:

"Blasted Englishman," he said, "thinks he's the only man in this wing who can really fly. Bet if he'd a' hit that cable he'd a' been on his back in that road, right now. Wish t' hell he was." (LL-45)

While Thompson's feeling of superiority does not last, it does signify a theme that runs throughout the aviation stories, and the Yoknapatawpha Saga too--the theme of deceiving appearances. Thompson's elation changes to apprehension when he finally realizes that he has lost a wheel on take-off and that a crash landing is inevitable. Initially Thompson reacts calmly, but while descending under the massed observation of the entire base he realizes that he is "utterly beyond any human aid as though he were on another planet." (LL-48) The narrator unnecessarily points out that "Thompson's nerve was going as he neared the earth....his fate was on the laps of the Gods." (LL-48) The accompanying description deftly supplies the mental state of the fledgling airman while simultaneously relegating him from the charmed circle into the company of the also-rans:

The temptation was strong to kick his rudder over and close his eyes. The machine descended, barely retaining headway. He watched the approaching ground utterly unable to make any pretense of leveling off, paralyzed; his brain had ceased to function, he was all staring eyes watching the remorseless earth. He did not know his height, the ground rushed past too swiftly to judge, but he expected to crash any second. (LL-48)

As a direct result of abdicating his position as master of the machine, Thompson crashes:
The tail touched, bounced, scraped again. The left wing was low and the wing tip crumpled like paper. A tearing of fabric, a strut snapped, and he regained dominion over his limbs, but too late to do anything—were there anything to be done. (Italics mine) The machine struck again, solidly, slewed around and stood on its nose.

After the crash, Bessing deftly applies the standard psychological crutch designed to restore the erring pilot's confidence:

"Never expected you'd come through, never expected it! Didn't think to see you alive! Don't ever let anyone else say you can't fly. Comin' out of that was a trick many an old flyer couldn't do." (LL-48)

Bessing's talk enables Thompson to resolve temporarily the problem of his abdication of responsibility during the crash landing, and, moreover, to turn the incident to his advantage:

"--and so, when my petro gave out, I knew it was up to me. I had already thought of a plan--I thought of several, but this one seemed the best—which was to put my tail down first and then drop my left wing, so the old bus wouldn't turn over and lie down on me. Well, it worked just as I had doped it out, only a ditch those fool A. M.'s had dug right across the field, mind you, tripped her up and she stood on her nose. I had thought of that, too, and pulled my belt up." (LL-49)

While Thompson's explanation impresses those Cadets less advanced than himself, an older Cadet posits the more obvious conclusion: "He's so rotten they can't discharge him.... He's the 'F' out of flying. Biggest liar in the RAF". (LL-50) But there is more to Thompson's dilemma than can be summarized by the simple application of the word "liar." While Thompson will probably complete his training, and may possibly see combat action, his development has unfortunately suffered irreparable damage, and he will never be able to direct his machine with the supreme
confidence characteristic of a member of the charmed circle. While it may seem that Thompson was particularly fated to encounter such a shaking experience in this critical phase of his training, Faulkner implies, either consciously or unconsciously, that Thompson brought it upon himself. Thompson's unnatural pride prevented him from discontinuing the faulty take-off. What followed was a logical sequence of cause and effect.

Cadet Thompson's crash landing illustrates an apparent paradox that appears elsewhere in Faulkner's later fiction. While Faulkner's characters appear to have a free choice in determining their own future, that choice extends only to a certain point because the characters are members of a mechanistic universe in which predictable physical forces inflexibly apply after a certain point in a chain of events has been reached. The airplane, a machine whose safe operation depends upon the ability of its pilot to maintain the proper balance between these forces, is a perfect illustration of Faulkner's point of view. Once the pilot critically upsets the balance of natural forces either through ignorance or inattention, certain predictable and unavoidable consequences will occur. Anytime the balance is upset something will be adversely affected—for every cause there is an effect. If the pilot through lack of skill neglects to position the aircraft properly for landing, a bounce will result. If the pilot completely abdicates his responsibility to control the aircraft on landing, a crash will result. Should a pilot at first neglect his duties as he approaches the ground for
landing, there is a certain physical point which can be determined mathematically, along his glide path, beyond which he can not possibly regain sufficient control in order to prevent a crash. Faulkner thoroughly understood the aerodynamic principle behind this analysis. Twice in his letter to The New York Times commenting upon possible causes of an airliner's crash, Faulkner refers to the pilot's feelings before the "moment when the pilot committed irrevocably the aircraft to it [landing]."\textsuperscript{24} Faulkner's thesis concerning the accident is that the pilot in spite of his own experience and possible warnings from his co-pilot refused to trust man's intelligence but relied upon a malfunctioning instrument:

Very likely at some one of the final rapid seconds before he had irrevocably committed the aircraft— that compounding of mass and weight by velocity—to the ground, (Italics mine) his co-pilot... probably said to him: "Look. We're wrong. Get the flaps and gear up and let's get to hell out of here." But he dared not.\textsuperscript{25}

Thompson, for example, is faced with a choice of either continuing or discontinuing what had been an unsatisfactory take-off attempt. His first choice to discontinue the take-off is a proper one, since it is based upon his previous experience and training. Thompson, therefore, is still operating in a balanced condition; he can logically stop a developing chain of circumstances that could, if allowed to progress, place him in jeopardy. But the normal balance of Thompson's environment is upset the moment he countermands his previous decision and re-applies the throttle. From that moment of faulty judgment, Thompson begins
to operate in a dangerous, possibly fatal, atmosphere. Only chance, represented by the physical terms of time and distance, determines whether Thompson's aircraft has sufficient momentum to break the cable stretched across the end of the field, or whether the wire will flip the airplane on its back. A further delay of ten seconds in reapplying the throttle probably would have prevented the airplane from clearing the wire. Even though Thompson was saved by chance from crashing on his foolish take-off attempt, he is still faced with the consequence of landing with a single wheel. Thompson's initial impetuous decision has placed him in a position isolated from his previous training. While Thompson is certainly operating at a disadvantage, he is not doomed as long as he keeps his wits about him. He is only doomed when he succumbs to fear and thereby abandons his life to fickle chance. In Faulkner's world the laws of chance are unpredictable. Regardless of the outcome of any situation, governed solely by the laws of chance, a dignified human being cannot allow his life to be governed by those laws simply because he refuses to assert himself.

If Thompson had accepted the fact of the crash for what it was, a piece of youthful folly caused by pride and inexperience, he could have benefited from the experience the event provided. By denying the fact and substituting a completely erroneous appraisal of the episode, Thompson unconsciously dedicates his life to the protecting influence of chance. That protection is an undependable one and for that reason Thompson's denial of the truth will return to claim him if he continues to pursue a career
such as flying, which requires a human to operate in an area
where the physical laws of nature must be kept in such close
balance.

Thompson will be seen again in the guise of David Levine
(A Fable), Julian Lowe (Soldiers' Pay), and the Sartoris Twins
("Ad Astra," "All the Dead Pilots," and Sartoris). "Landing In
Luck," therefore, introduces two major character types that will
recur in the aviation fiction. It pictures man as a free moral
agent responsible for his own fate in an intensely mechanistic
universe, which can only be depended upon to recognize with success
the man who consistently makes the proper and timely decision.

If two potentially dominant character-types are introduced
in "Landing In Luck," the whole concept of speed in the abstract,
the suggestion of speed as a primary need of modern man, is pre-
sent in "Country Mice." The narrator of the sketch (presumably
Faulkner's persona since legend tells us that Faulkner once worked
for a bootlegger in New Orleans), pictures his "friend" the
bootlegger as a man habitually driving his automobile at its top
speed of seventy miles per hour, a man carrying no watch since
he "travels by a speed indicator." (CM-194) When the bootlegger
is speeding at sixty-five miles per hour, he is dreaming of a
faster replacement for his almost new auto while trying to ac-
celerate the additional amount to the machine's top speed: "It
was not seventy miles an hour he wanted, it was five miles an
hour for which he pined. But such is the immortal soul of man."
(CM-195) At the machine's top speed, the narrator finds that the
wind whips the driver's words away so that conversation is impossible until the speed is decreased. This explicit reference to the destroying effect of speed echoes hollowly in later passages of *Sartoris* and *Pylon*. Related to this subtle reference to the destroying effect of speed is the specific statement at the end of the first paragraph of the story attributing an independent and vindictive intelligence to the machine: "It is my firm belief that on the first opportunity his motor car is going to retaliate by quite viciously obliterating him." (CM-196) This frank statement of the author's persona reverberates in the narrator's description of empty airplanes in *Pylon*: "Wasp-waisted, wasplight, still, trim, vicious, immobile, they seemed to poise without weight...." (Pylon-18) This inherent vindictiveness in machines and the destruction theoretically implicit in speed is combined in Faulkner's uncamouflaged words considering a folklore of speed in his *Test Pilot* review:

It would be a folklore not of the age of speed nor of the men who perform it, but of the speed itself, peopled not by anything human or even mortal but by the clever willful machines themselves carrying nothing that was born and will have to die or which can even suffer pain, moving without comprehensible purpose toward no discernible destination, producing a literature innocent of either love or hate and of course of pity or terror, and which would be the story of the final disappearance of life from the earth.26

The series of short stories and novels featuring the aviation motif that appeared after "Country Mice," in the period dating from the appearance of *Soldiers' Pay* in 1926 to the publication of *Pylon* in 1935, can be divided into two categories:
those stories set in France at the time of the First World War, and those set in post-war America. The vividly descriptive scenes devoted to aerial warfare in *A Fable* (1954), easily attach themselves to the first group and their late appearance imposes no critical problem in my context. The war stories were pieces intended primarily to appeal to the editors and the reading public of the day. Most of them feature the accepted theme of the lost soldier adrift in a valueless and disordered world where drunkenness is the accepted antidote for fear and boredom. The romance of flying, the cynical ace, the philosophy of living for the day—all are present in these tales. But taken as a whole, the stories show some surprisingly Faulkerian touches. The complacency of the smug and prideful aviator is dealt a hard blow in "Turnabout." Overpowering and absurd dedication to an unusual virtue points an object lesson in "Thrift." "Ad Astra" presents peculiar allusions to being outside time, while *Soldiers' Pay* features a notion of expanding or freezing time. "All the Dead Pilots" burlesques the deadly serious war atmosphere by showing the comic and embarrassing situation of a serious competition between two officers for two different camp followers. But behind all the satire, in this case, is man's age-old problem of accounting for fortune's favorites. Faulkner advances the idea of war's usefulness in proving what the race can bear in "Thrift" and "All the Dead Pilots," and illustrates in "Turnabout" the unusual manner in which man can devise games or incongruous motives in order to keep his sanity in a wartime environment.
These later themes, in conjunction with the continuing development of the previously mentioned character-types, make Faulkner's stories of the air war different from those of the "lost generation" writers.

The group of stories and novels set in France during World War I begins with Soldiers' Pay, Faulkner's first novel. Soldiers' Pay concerns Donald Mahon, a fighter pilot who returns to his home a walking deadman with apparently no conception of what has happened since he was wounded in aerial combat. Mahon is accompanied by the war widowed Margaret Powers, and by Joe Gilligan, a discharged enlisted man who is attracted by Margaret and initially takes on the duties of nursing Mahon as a means of being close to her. Julian Lowe, an aviation cadet whose training was interrupted by the Armistice before he could complete flying school (a situation exactly similar to that of young William Faulkner), is seen in contact with Mahon and Margaret before Mahon's Georgia homecoming. Lowe's gradual maturing is traced in letters received periodically by Margaret. The circle surrounding Mahon after his homecoming is examined by the author, and in the process themes pertinent to the aviation saga are developed and expanded. Donald Mahon is important primarily as a catalyst to show the characters of others. As a pilot, he was definitely not one of the charmed circle. The only thing that may be validly inferred from the factual information is that he committed the unpardonable sin of allowing an enemy to catch him at a disadvantage:
Yes, it is about ten, he thought, with a sense of familiarity. Soon he would look at the time and make sure, but now.... With the quick skill of practice and habit he swept the horizon with a brief observing glance, casting a look above, banking slightly to see behind. All clear.... Then, suddenly, it was as if a cold wind had blown upon him. What is it? he thought. It was that the sun had been blotted from him.... (SP-203)

Faulkner, who admitted to using a "proven formula" in order to tell his story in A Fable,27 is using here the proven formula of the dashing young pilot tragically struck down in order to add an additional bit of sales-boosting pathos to his initial novel. Donald Mahon, in contrast to Hemingway's Jake Barnes, does not engage in a search for new values in which to put his trust. Mahon, ironically, has found his own peace. But all of the characters in Mahon's circle attempt to revise their lives in the aftermath of Mahon's temporary resurrection. James Dough, the crippled pilot, serves as a cynical spokesman for the returning veterans who mingle in the background of the novel true to their wallflower identification. Recurring flashbacks to the circumstances of the needless death of Margaret's husband strengthen the atmosphere of futility that Faulkner wished to generate. What is of interest in the development of the aviation motif throughout Faulkner's fiction is the introduction of two recurring symbols which become almost a consuming passion to the pilots and fledglings of the second category. In Soldiers' Pay, pilot wings and military ribbons represent man's unreasonable need for a tangible object with which to signify his masculinity. Wings and ribbons mean nothing to Margaret Powers, all she notices is
"his poor terrible face." (SP 24) But to Cadet Lowe, who,
because of his nagging introspection, joins Cadet Thompson in
the second category, the wings and the ribbons are the man—and
he covets them:

To have been him! he moaned. Just to be him. Let
him take this sound body of mine! Let him take it.
To have got wings on my breast, to have wings; and
to have got his scar, too, I would take death to-
morrow. Upon a chair Mahon's tunic evinced above
the left breast pocket wings breaking from an
initialed circle beneath a crown, tipping downward
in an arrested embroidered sweep; a symbolized
desire. (SP 33: Italics mine)

Cadet Lowe, deprived by fate of his own coveted wings, can be
bodily lifted from Soldiers' Pay and dropped into the character
of Lieutenant Levine in A Fable. Lieutenant Levine, who already
feels the definite slap of fate by having missed serving in the
Royal Flying Corps, the romantic predecessor of the more mundane
Royal Air Force, is posted to a front line fighter squadron just
as the mysterious "truce" take place. The feelings of thwarted
ambition flood over Levine who had dedicated himself to joining
the "old glorious corps, the brotherhood of heroes." (Fable 88)
Thinking of his position as a member of the RAF rather than the
original RFC of the famous aces, Levine muses:

"Glory and valor would still exist of course as long
as men lived to reap them. It would even be the same
valor in fact, but the glory would be another glory....
What had I done for motherland's glory had motherland
but matched me with her need." (Fable 89: Italics
Faulkner's)

Somewhat the same feelings of anticipation were voiced most re-
cently when American jet pilots in Korea repeatedly voiced their
feelings of displeasure when arriving replacements began to
limit the number of sorties allowed to each fighter pilot.
Faulkner is voicing personal feelings known to all those who
arrive for the test only to see it move away seemingly forever.

Glory, in the certainly immature and possibly virginal
minds of Cadet Lowe and Lieutenant Levine, is integrally tied
with the sexual aspects of women. Both young men believe combat
prowess is a necessary prerequisite to sexual conquest. Levine
at one point vividly remembers witnessing with two companions a
reception the fighter ace, McCudden, received at the Savoy in
London:

The three of them watching while women who seemed
to them more beautiful and almost as myriads as angels
flung themselves upward like living bouquets about
that hero's feet; and how, watching, they thought it
whether they said if aloud or not: "Wait." (Fable 119)

Lowe, in the same vein, blurts out to Margaret Powers: "When
I saw you I knew you were the woman for me. Tell me, you don't
like him Mahon better than me because he has wings and a scar,
do you?" (SP 37)

Lowe is saved from Levine's self-destructive impulse only
because of the unusual understanding of Margaret Powers. Margaret
is the first representative of the third main classification of
characters who appear throughout the aviation stories. She,
naturally, is the archetypal woman—the combination mother, wife,
lover that reappears in the aviation fiction under the names of
Mildred in "Honor" and Laverne in Pylon. Although they symbolize
so much that is basic and indescribable, each of these women has
a muddled and complex idea of her destiny, each feels herself somehow "bad," and each physically attracts more than one man. Margaret acknowledges that her husband's death was fated:

"'Rotten Luck. That's exactly what it was, what everything is.' " (SP 31) Yet she feels somehow at fault for repudiating their marriage in her own mind before he was killed. Because of her own warped emotions, she finally refuses to marry the man she loves, although she would be agreeable to an affair.

Mildred attributes her passion for Monaghan simply to a flaw in her character. She tells her lover that her husband can "find a woman he can love, a woman that's not bad like I am." (Honor 557)

Dr. Shumann reminds Laverne: "'You told me the truth, that you would not promise, that you were born bad and could not help it or did not think you were going to try to help it....'" (Pylon 307)

The possibility of a satisfying triangular marriage relationship, a theme that recurs in its most sophisticated sense in Pylon, is first mentioned in Soldiers' Pay. Upon meeting Mahon after his return, Cecily Saunders thinks:

And now I'm engaged again, she thought complacently, enjoying George's face in anticipation when she would tell him. And that long black woman has been making love to him—or he to her. I guess it's that, from what I know of Donald. Oh, well, that's how men are, I guess. Perhaps he'll want to take us both.... She tripped down the steps into the sunlight: The sunlight caressed her with joy, as though she were a daughter of sunlight. How would I like to have a husband and a wife, too, I wonder? Or two husbands?" (SP 59)

This peculiar theme, according to John Faulkner, was a favorite with his brother: "Another thing Bill told me about writing
was that any story must have a conflict in it. You set it up, then solve it. He said the best conflict, the one people like to read about the most, is two men trying to get in bed with the same woman.\textsuperscript{28} The theme appears in "All the Dead Pilots" with no resolution, and in "Honor" and \textit{Pylon} with virtually the same characters but with different solutions.

The third member of the recurring trinity in the aviation stories, the pilot member of the charmed circle, is represented in \textit{Soldiers' Pay} by the crippled James Dough. Dough, "who had been for two years a corporal-pilot in a French chasse escadrille," (SP 131) appears in only one fleeting episode. To him, the difference between an American ace and a French or British aviator is "about six [movie] reels." (SP 131) But Dough, characteristic of Faulkner's first class pilots, is drawn in muted style. He is cynical, but his cynicism is tempered with humor, and the mixture is not undesirable since it may even be considered a more advanced form of maturity.

The theme of the breakdown of communication, attributed to one type of speed in "Country Mice," is shown in \textit{Soldiers' Pay} in another of its possible aspects. The former soldiers of World War I, their normal development arrested by their commitment to the war, are unable to communicate either orally or physically upon their return. They are able to communicate only among themselves and therefore they receive the label of "wallflowers" when they attend public dances. Their separate conversations, portrayed in bits and pieces by Faulkner, are
reminiscent of the windblown conversations of the bootlegger in "Country Mice." The only person interested in bridging the communication gap is the unusual woman Margaret Powers.

The socially rejected group of veterans in Soldiers! Pay represents a theme which Faulkner expresses in varying degrees in all of his aviation writings concerned with World War I. Faulkner implies in "Ad Astra" and "All the Dead Pilots" that it would have been better had none of the aviators who fought in the war survived it: "Because they are all dead, all the old pilots, dead on the eleventh of November, 1918. When you see modern photographs of them....they look a little outlandish....they look lost, baffled." (ADP 511) The Indian subadar, the only sober participant in the victory celebration in "Ad Astra," prophesies: "All this generation which fought in the war are dead tonight. But we do not yet know it." (AdA 421) The wallflower motif in Soldiers! Pay extends this all-inclusive death sentence to the foot soldier as well, although Faulkner later explained that the aviator was especially susceptible to the malady since "there was more concentration of being frightened to flying then than in the infantry or ground troops" and that "the flying people out of that war, most of them would have been better off if they had died on the eleventh of November, that few of them were any good to take up the burden of peace ...." Even though Faulkner's early aviation fiction includes many of the motifs preferred by the "lost generation" writers, Faulkner was never a member of that generation because he had
not experienced first hand the shock of being indiscriminately shelled by an invisible enemy, nor had he associated closely with anyone who had experienced the disillusionment that totally ruthless and fickle war can engender. Faulkner had only experienced the clean and exhilarating sensations that are present when man pits himself in a vital activity such as flying where the laws are definite and man's skill dictates his course. But Faulkner, like Stephen Crane, could imagine the changes war could bring in a man's personality. Faulkner could understand how flying, quite often hazardous under the best of conditions, could be transformed by fear and fatigue into a mistress that could drain a man's life spirit so that, as we shall see in the post-war aviation stories, he would be almost as much of a walking shell as Donald Mahon.

In Japan Faulkner attributed the original idea of the lost generation to Gertrude Stein, who "believed that the young people who had survived that war had been permanently hurt by it, that they were a lost generation."31 But Faulkner emphasized, "I had never agreed to that; I think that a certain amount of disaster and trouble is good for people."32 Faulkner directly posits this idea in the serious introduction to the comic burlesque, "All the Dead Pilots." Speaking of the war, he says: "There stood into sight the portent and the threat of what the race could bear and become, in an instant between dark and dark." (ADP 512) Even the title "Ad Astra," which is a portion of the
RAF motto that means "Through Adversity to the Stars," implies Faulkner's idea of war's ability to purify the race.

Faulkner's third novel, Sartoris, the first of the Yoknapatawpha Saga, puts the aviation motif into sharp focus. Sartoris concerns the attempt of Bayard Sartoris to re-order his life upon returning to his family home after his service as a fighter pilot in France during World War I. Bayard is unable to settle himself primarily because he can not accept the death of his twin, John, who was killed in aerial combat. Bayard's strong attachment to his dead brother, accompanied by a nagging insistence that he should have been able to prevent John's death, will not allow Bayard to find mental peace in any activity or relationship. Dreams and flashbacks in Sartoris provide some insight into the circumstances of John's death, although other short stories have to be consulted in order to get a true picture of the event. After returning home, Bayard develops an insatiable desire to travel at high speed regardless of the consequences. Finally, in utter futility, Bayard kills himself testing an experimental airplane. As in Soldiers' Pay, there is much more in Sartoris that appeals to proponents of the Yoknapatawpha County Saga, but for this study the development of the aviation motif is of primary importance. In wartime France the Sartoris twins pursue what is suggested to be their cosmic fate against a background of apparent glamour as romantic as any created by Jeb Stuart and his troopers. For different reasons, however, both John and Bayard are second class pilots just as their Civil
War ancestor, John Sartoris, was in reality a second class calvary trooper. Young John frankly admits in "All the Dead Pilots" that he is not a proficient pilot: "Oh, I can ride them. I can sit there with the gun out and keep the wings level now and then. But I can't fly camels." (ADP 528) He can see the cosmic humor in his posting to a night-flying squadron when: "I can't fly camels in the day-time even. And they don't know it." (ADP 528) Bayard, on the other hand, is both crafty and proficient enough to engage and destroy the prudent German Ploeckner, his brother's killer and former pupil of Richthofen: "Had to get Sibleigh in an old crate of an AK. W. to suck him in for me.... Well, he got it. Stayed on him for six thousand feet, put the whole belt right into his cockpit. You could a' covered 'em all with your hat." (Sartoris 60) Monaghan, a fellow pilot, also vouches for Bayard's technical ability: "He's all right. I've known him a long time, in places where you had to be good, believe me." (Sartoris 302)

The real difference between the two brothers, a difference dating from childhood, is a question of humanity. John, called a poet by Horace Benbow, was the original love of Horace's sister Narcissa. John was also the boy who risked his life by substituting for a sick balloonist so that the assembled crowd would not be disappointed. Bayard, in contrast, was always the dark twin, the undependable and habitually callous brother. John, therefore, is a second class pilot in Faulkner's air force because he lacks the mechanical aptitude, Bayard because he lacks the
humanity necessary to balance himself even to the extent of maintaining his machinery properly. The uneven performance of both twins illustrates the author's implication that their birth as twins rather than as a unified personality fated them for disaster. Since they are halves of the same whole, a strong metaphysical communication exists between John and Bayard, even after John's death. But this is offset by the extreme barrier to communication existing between the boys and the rest of the world. John Sartoris possesses a "working vocabulary of perhaps two hundred words," (AdP 514) slight endowment for a "poet." Bayard Sartoris "never did talk much; just did his patrols and maybe once a week he'd set and drink his nostrils white in a quiet sort of way." (AdA 414) The theme of the lack of communication in Sartoris has significance beyond the sphere of the Sartoris boys themselves. The one prominent aspect of Bayard's post-war problem is his inability to communicate his own anguish to anyone. It is as if Bayard had accompanied John on his long plunge from the burning airplane. Bayard's inability to establish rapport with anyone, an inability which develops into an almost physical disability, causes disastrous repercussions and misery to radiate from Bayard in constantly increasing circles. Unlike Cadet Thompson, whose responses in "Landing In Luck" affected only himself, the responses of Bayard Sartoris echo universally.

John and Bayard Sartoris are finally and indelibly branded as second class pilots because they ignobly succumb to their fate. "All the Dead Pilots," which portrays so much of the character of
John Sartoris that is unavailable elsewhere, paints him as a part of a mechanistic universe in which he is seemingly fated to lose. In "All the Dead Pilots," John Sartoris is portrayed as a comic character whose motions are in ridiculous contrast to the events about him. Yet his comic tendencies, his love affairs with camp followers, his deathly serious competition with his commanding officer, and his persecution of the commanding officer's dog, give some perspective to the account in Sartoris of his comic opera dive from his burning airplane: "'Then he thumbed his nose at me like he was always doing and flipped his hand at the Hun and kicked his machine out of the way and jumped.'" (Sartoris 219) The comic tone of "All the Dead Pilots" is broken by the ungrammatical, almost unintelligible, letter from Major Kaye informing Miss Jenny of John's death. The letter, which contains the basic facts but puts an incorrect, yet nevertheless tragic interpretation upon those facts, injects a note of tragedy which completely overpowers the ridiculously comic events that have taken place in the story. It is not until we consult Sartoris that we are able to see the truth of John's death—the pathetic conclusion that he simply presented himself for slaughter.

Whether John Sartoris's death was in reality tragic or pathetic, it was anything but comic. Because of the final tone of "All the Dead Pilots," the episodes may certainly be given symbolic meaning, since, after all, the theme of the story is "what the race could bear and become." (ADP 512) The love affairs, therefore, become seriously symbolic of man's accumulated frustrations.
John's death, when seen only from the viewpoint of "All the Dead Pilots," seems to parallel the legend of his Civil War namesake, and to illustrate man's raw courage that enables him to valiantly engage the enemy when outnumbered seven to two. When seen from the perspective granted by Bayard's account in Sartoris, however, John's death becomes a denial of life, a reasoned surrendering of man's rational free will to a superstitious and illogical belief in the malicious force of fate. Bayard's death, although it comes several years later, is motivated by the same surrender to a sense of an unrelenting fate that motivates John's death. Before taking off in an obviously unsafe experimental airplane, Bayard refuses to accept the offered woman's garter, age-old symbol of good luck. He repeats Cadet Thompson's fateful take-off: "The man was running toward him and waving his arm. Bayard opened the throttle full and the machine lurched forward...." (Sartoris 306) He ends his life by literally flying the wings off the aircraft.

The suicide theme, motivated by a basic lack of a desire to live and initiated by the Sartoris twins, recurs often in the aviation fiction. An undeveloped character named White, despondent over gambling losses in "Honor," took an airplane "up five thousand feet and dived the wings off at two thousand with a full gun." (Honor 552) There is the suggestion that Donald Mahon's war wound may have been caused by a subconscious suicide wish. After he returns home an invalid, he is characterized as "knowing time as only something which was taking from him a world he did not
particularly mind losing." (SP 106) Since Mahon's capacity to make rational judgments of any sort while in his condition is not clarified in the book, there is no way of knowing if this feeling covers his present condition only or whether it actually existed in his normal life before his wounding. Showing something of Mahon's listless feelings, Lieutenant Levine despondently blows his brains out in A Fable, while Monaghan in "Honor" and Ginsfarb in "Death Drag" take foolish chances that almost cost their lives and can only be classified as subconscious suicide attempts.

The reason for the high percentage of suicides among Faulkner's flying characters is directly connected with Faulkner's romantic conception of flying as an occupation that puts man in conflict with the basic forces of the universe. Many of Faulkner's aviators, the Sartoris twins, Julian Lowe, and David Levine, for example, think of flying as a test of manhood. John and Bayard Sartoris want to prove to themselves that they are whole, capable, individuals. Lowe and Levine want to prove to others that they measure up to the most rigid and popularly accepted criteria for establishing their manhood. All of these men have conceived of aviation as a romantic rather than a realistic activity. When they fail the test, when the test alludes them, or when they decide that even passing the test no longer matters, they naturally are prone to consider suicide as a means of ending the competition on their own terms.
Faulkner's final short story incorporating the motif of the aerial warfare of World War I in its setting is the often anthologized story "Turnabout." "Turnabout," by showing a group of warriors engaged in operations far more hazardous than those of the flyers, deflates much of the romantic and aristocratic atmosphere surrounding the aviators. Faulkner typically holds the reader in suspense for the first half of the story, before finally revealing the hazardous duty of Midshipman Hope. The familiar theme of deceiving appearances recurs as Captain Bogard, an unpretentious first class pilot, rolls Mr. Hope out of a gutter and decides to take him on a bombing mission in the mistaken idea that a taste of real combat will perhaps cause the young man to change his drunken ways and appreciate the soft job Bogard supposes him to have. Bogard, of course, agrees to accompany Mr. Hope and his skipper, "Ronnie" Smith, on one of their routine cruises. The theme of deceiving appearances is constantly reiterated until the awful horror of the mission of the torpedo boat becomes fully apparent. Young Midshipman Hope and his friend Ronnie Smith are the officer crew members of a torpedo boat whose sole duty is to slip into an enemy harbor and create havoc, depending for protection upon the fantastic speed of the boat. The officers, picked originally because of their youth and innocence, have learned after having two boats shot from under them that death is constantly riding with them. They keep a grasp upon their sanity by playing among themselves a silly and pointless game called "beaver" as they routinely race against death.
What is most interesting from a critical point of view is the first indication in the flying stories of a threat by the machine not just to kill viciously, but to de-humanize humanity. The young men composing the boat's crew, in contrast to the aviators, have no assigned billets when their boats are in port. The men are forced, as it were by the machine they serve, to sleep in the streets. As a result of the inhuman stresses forced upon the men and because of their complete rootlessness, the men deaden their senses with alcohol. Once they have established themselves literally in the streets, the men are still badgered since other machines insist upon using those same streets. The drunken Mr. Hope attempting to explain to a group of angry truck drivers why he is sleeping in the street says:

"Billet, you see.... Must have order, even in war emergency. Billet by lot. This street mine; no poaching, eh? Next street Jamie Wutherspoon's. But trucks can go by that street because Jamie not using it yet. Not in bed yet. Insomnia. Knew so. Told them. Trucks go that way. See now?" (Turn 479)

The torpedo boats not only inflict all manner of impositions upon their crews, they also usually refuse to function properly in battle, thereby forcing the men to play a version of Russian Roulette which exposes them to additional and completely unnecessary hazard. The symbolism is heavy handed--Hope found in the gutter because of the subverted uses of machines in war and Hope killed by a coalition of warlords and machines--but it clearly states Faulkner's position on the issue of machines and their uses. The machine must not be deified at man's expense.
The character who acts as a link between the wartime and the post-war flying stories is Buck Monaghan, a curiously complex character who appears by name in two stories and two novels. He first appears as a bit player, a member of a fighter squadron in _Sartoris_. In "Ad Astra," he is one of the "dead" pilots who celebrates the Armistice in a drunken fog of maudlin self-pity. Monaghan is pictured "in R. F. C. cap and an American tunic with both shoulder straps flapping loose, drinking from Comyn's bottle." (AdA 410) The narrator tells us:

> There was something of the crucified about Monaghan, too: furious, inarticulate not with stupidity but at it, like into him more than any of us had distilled the ceased drums of the old lust and greed waking at last aghast at their own impotence and accrued despair. (AdA 416)

Having torn the wings, ribbons, and insignia from his uniform, Monaghan says:

> "That's what I think of it. Of all your goddamn twaddle about glory and gentlemen. I was young; I thought you had to be. Then I was in it and there wasn't time to stop even when I found it didn't count. But now it's over; finished now. Now I can be what I am. Shanty Irish; son of an immigrant that knew naught but shovel and pick until youth and the time for pleasuring was wore out of him before his time."

> (AdA 416)

The drunken Monaghan, an ace with thirteen Huns to his credit, desperately cries, "I'm not a soldier, I'm not a gentleman. I'm not anything." (AdA 414) Although Monaghan is a proficient pilot who is aware of his situation, and thus meets two of the primary requirements for membership in the charmed circle, he is unable to reorient himself to the stresses of peace. In "Ad
Astra," Monaghan is able only to lose himself through drinking and fighting: "I like fighting, ....I even like being whipped." (AdA 426) Fighting, in "Ad Astra" is equated with being outside time: "There was no time in it. Or rather, we were outside of time; within, not on, that surface, that demarcation between the old where we knew we had not died and the new where the subadar said that we were dead." (AdA 423) Since, as Quentin Compson reasoned, the only human condition permanently outside time is death, then, by implication, Monaghan's hostility entails a subconscious death wish. This interpretation is strengthened by Monaghan's choice of the spiritual death symbolized by the French brothel to which he retires at the end of "Ad Astra."

Monaghan reappears as the narrator and one of the three principal characters in "Honor," published a year before "Ad Astra," but almost certainly antedating it. "Honor" concerns a marital triangle that develops between a stunt pilot, Howard Rogers, his wife, Mildred, and the wing walker in their aerial circus activities, Buck Monaghan. When the affair comes to light, Rogers agrees to divorce Mildred; but Monaghan suspects the pilot's motives since he believes Rogers plans to drop him from the wing during their next air show. Rogers offers to trade places with Monaghan even though he has never attempted wing walking. Monaghan finally accepts what he thinks is his fate and agrees to do the stunt as scheduled. In the loop, however, Monaghan loses his nerve and strikes out at the pilot with one of the supporting wires designed to hold him on the wing. As a result
of his folly, he falls to the wing and is slowly slipping from the plane when Rogers rescues him. Monaghan, realizing Rogers's extreme humanity, cannot force himself to take Mildred from him; he chooses instead to get out of Rogers's life, still supposedly loving Mildred. As he later drifts from job to job, Monaghan learns that Mildred had a son, which is almost certainly his.

The post-war Monaghan is shown as a man with a basic disregard of society's conventions. Upon meeting his pilot's wife, he concludes that she is free game for seduction. Monaghan's sexual promiscuity is only another symptom of his search for a relief or fulfillment. While Monaghan reminiscences that wartime flying was satisfying, we know from his drunken performance in "Ad Astra" that he could no longer find an outlet in war even before the armistice. He moved into test piloting after the war (during which time he witnessed the death of Bayard Sartoris), and then, when that lost its flavor, into wing walking "to relieve the monotony." (Honor 552) The conventional marital triangle assumes an unconventional twist in "Honor" because of the unconventional relationship between Rogers and Monaghan.

The mundane atmosphere of the post-war flying stories is far from the romantic glamour of wartime France. The flyers are now characterized by the amount of work and the numerous risks required to provide for their minimum wants. "It's because we are so poor. We're just an aviator," (Honor 554) says Mildred as she apologizes for her inability to entertain guests lavishly. She is certainly not awed by another aviator's glamour. Monaghan
is to her "just a flyer, too." (Honor 554) What evidently
does impress her is Monaghan's physical attractiveness and the
possible opportunity he provides to interrupt her loneliness.

The revival of the triangular marriage theme, alluded to
in Soldiers' Pay, occurs in a veiled allusion at the beginning
of the story: "We'll have to find Buck a girl, too. He's going
to get tired of just us some day." (Honor 554) Monaghan inter-
prets this remark as an invitation to seduction and the actual
event results from a definite decision on Monaghan's part and
a willing acceptance on Mildred's. Their passion is like
"gasoline from a broken line blazing up around you." (Honor 556)
Once the triangle is a physical thing, the character of Rogers
begins to have increasing importance in the unraveling of the
story. As in the case of Mr. Bessing, a brief sentence or two
suffices to show Rogers' character. During the climactic encounter
when the three people discuss divorce, great emphasis is placed
on the fact that Mildred has told Rogers everything. "'Every-
thing? Have you told him everything?'" (Honor 559) says Monaghan.
"'It doesn't matter,'" responds Rogers, "'Do you want her? Do
you love her? Will you be good to her?'" (Honor 559) It can
only be assumed that the emphasis upon the "everything" covers
more than just a question of marital infidelity. Mildred's state-
ments during the divorce discussion imply that pregnancy has
resulted from her affair. She tells Monaghan, "'We've talked
it over and have both agreed that we couldn't love one another
anymore after this and that this is the only sensible thing to
do." (Honor 557) Later, when Monaghan hesitates, she cries:
"You were lying to me, you didn't mean what you said. Oh God, what have I done?" (Honor 558) Ultimately naming Monaghan the baby's godfather strengthens the argument that he was the actual father.

Rogers behaves throughout the affair as if he were in harmony with a higher love than the sexual variety exhibited by Mildred and Monaghan. Rogers's reaction to the divorce request is strangely more passive than his previous warning to Monaghan had been. Whatever his motives, Rogers conducts himself with a restraint that can only be called Christian. Since Mildred lacked any discretion in her affair even before the divorce discussion, Rogers had many opportunities to discover the affair and to eliminate his rival in the air if such had been his intentions. Monaghan, however, is so basically out of harmony with the universe and consequently so guilt ridden that he becomes terrified of flying with Rogers when he is sure that the pilot knows the truth:
"So this is why you were so mealy-mouthed last night.... You've got me now haven't you?" (Honor 559) Rogers is concerned only with living up to his responsibilities by flying the stunt as programmed. He offers to do the wing walking himself if Monaghan will fly the plane. Monaghan refuses the offer even though he feels he is going to his death: "Take your seat," he says, "what the hell does it matter? I guess I'd do the same thing in your place." (Honor 560) Monaghan's metamorphosis from a vibrant young man who was "scared to death it would be over
before we could get in and swank a pair of pilot's wings" (Honor 551) and who found in aviation "something that suited you right down to the ground" (Honor 551) to a spiritually empty Prufrockian shell is both carrying on the theme of the "dead" airmen from World War I and forecasting a dominant motif to be sounded in Pylon.

The account of the actual wing walking and the mental conflict within the mind of Monaghan are masterfully presented in a terrifying passage that causes the reader to feel his own shoulder blades slowly but inexorably creeping off the trailing edge of the wing. Monaghan, because of his fear, his misunderstanding, and his blind animal instinct to strike out before his death, jerks out one of the thin supporting wires designed to invisibly steady him in his act and hurls it back at Rogers's head: "I wasn't trying to kill myself. I wasn't thinking about myself. I was thinking about him. Trying to show him up like he had shown me up. Give him something he must fail at like he had given me something I failed at. I was trying to break him!" (Honor 561) Because of his actions Monaghan falls backward upon the wing and begins to be pulled off by the slipstream. Only Rogers's rescue at the risk of his own life saves his rival. Monaghan finally understands the significance of what Rogers has done. For the first time in his life, Monaghan realizes that he was totally helpless and dependent upon outside assistance.

It was not like the war when each pilot had the same equipment and the same chance of surviving: "If you go out, that's too
bad; if he goes out, its just too bad. Not like when you're in the center section and he's at the stick, and just by stalling her for a second or ruddering her a little at the top of the loop." (Honor 562) Remembering what the Indian subadar had said on the night recounted in "Ad Astra," Monaghan knows that although he and all the other pilots who survived the war are supposed to be already dead: "I wasn't quite dead while I was lying on the top wing of that Standard and counting my backbones as they crawled over the edge like a string of ants, until Rogers grabbed me." (Honor 563)

Presumably because of the sobering experience, Monaghan leaves Rogers and Mildred and continues his drifting, with Faulkner suggesting that Monaghan has been permanently changed by his experience. Even though he is unable to find peace, possibly because of his sacrifice of Mildred, Monaghan begins to show some regard for society's conventions. Monaghan makes no attempt to seduce either his women customers or the secretary who shows such a sympathetic and inviting interest in him. Since, by implication, the story he narrates has been the high point of his life in the previous six years, one must assume that Monaghan has found no one to replace Mildred in his affections. His concern over observing the convention of giving proper notice before leaving his job is further evidence of a change in Monaghan's attitude. What remains a mystery is Monaghan's reason for giving up piloting originally. There is only the suspicion that as Monaghan slipped further and further from the ranks of society
he became unable to discipline himself enough to assert his will over the machine. Whether it was a willed decision or a psychological block that prevented his piloting, it was strong enough to cause him to turn down the opportunity to fly rather than to wing walk even when he strongly suspected that wing walking would result in death.

A discussion of the situation in "Honor" automatically leads to a study of the themes and characters of Faulkner's other short story on post-war aviation, "Death Drag." "Death Drag" outlines the activities of three strangers who fly into a small Southern town for the purpose of putting on an airshow featuring a stunt (the Death Drag) in which a man is transferred from an airplane to a moving automobile and back by means of a rope ladder trailing from the airplane. The initial events of the story are not unusual, but the characters who emerge are something else again. Jock, the Pilot, is a fallen hero who has lost his flying license because of the crash of a passenger plane that he was flying. Having lost the legal certification necessary to earning his living, Jock resorts to illegally staging impromptu airshows in small towns where the chances of being caught by a government inspector are remote. His illegal activities, coupled with the precision flying he must perform, have deteriorated Jock's mental state to the verge of a complete breakdown. He cannot eat on any regular schedule; a long night's sleep does not rejuvenate him; he can no longer smoke, and his drinking is confined to unusually large quantities of water. The direct source of his nervousness
is the little Jew who performs the parachute jumping and the death drag.

Ginsfarb, the parachutist, is a grotesque drawn in the mold of Sanctuary's Popeye and Pylon's Jiggs. Ginsfarb had been a typical Jewish small businessman until his business failed. The failure turned Ginsfarb into a monomaniac with a sense of outrage so strong that he has turned to an occupation as far from his heritage as possible, for which he demands full and proper payment. A financial profit-loss basis motivates every aspect of Ginsfarb's life from the minor trait of not smoking because "I don't burn up no money," (DD 204) to the observation after Jock saves his life that the operation of the airplane at maximum power for twenty minutes in order to accomplish the rescue would cause his financial ruin. The connection between the flyers and the financial interests, implied in "Honor," begins to take on something of the nature of a pitched battle in "Death Drag." Ginsfarb hates flying, but he does it in order to make money: "For fun? What for fun? Fly? Gruss Gott. I hate it!" (DD 197)

The success of "Death Drag" is assured by the compactness of the story and by the symbolic implications of the characters in spite of awkward shifts in point of view and lapses into fantasy which call for a suspension of disbelief on the part of the reader. Whereas in Faulkner's previous flying stories the aircraft and the pilots responded to predictable laws of aerodynamics and physics, "Death Drag" introduces the supernatural:
"The airplane appeared over town with almost the abruptness of an apparition." (DD 185) Later the airplane is found "motionless and empty" (DD 185) at the local airport: "Painted awkwardly with a single thin coat of dead black, it gave again that illusion of ghostliness, as though it might have flown there and made that loop and landed by itself." (DD 185) When two of the strangers appear they are dressed in "helmets and lifted goggles" (DD 186) and they emerge "suddenly around the corner of the barn." (DD 186) The third man appears later "as though he had materialized there out of thin air." (DD 186) Immediately the townspeople sense a difference between themselves and the flyers, which may not be attributed only to Jewish ancestry of two of the visitors: "They knew at once that two of the strangers were of a different race from themselves, without being able to say what the difference was." (DD 188) The rural townspeople exhibit a sense of awe upon beholding the flyers: "The three newcomers looked at the airplane with the blank, knowing, respectful air of groundlings." (DD 188) They notice that the strangers converse in a "flat, dead voice...as though it were their common language." (DD 189)

The point of view shifts between the third person narrator and Captain Warren, a former pilot in the Royal Flying Corps and a friend of the stunt pilot. Point of view finally evolves into a composite of these two viewpoints. The townspeople are generalized into one category of "groundlings, dwellers in and backbone of a small town interchangeable with and duplicate of ten thousand
little dead clottings of human life about the land." (DD 197-198) Captain Warren is the man who refines and clarifies the story so that it is understandable to the people. He represents the first class pilot, the legendary persona--who trained in Canada, "left England for the front in '17," (DD 193) and successfully made the transition to civilian life afterward--incorrectly attributed to Faulkner himself. Captain Warren was the especially graced flyer who "had himself seen his own lonely and scudding shadow upon the face of the puny and remote earth." (DD 198) In comparison to Warren and the townspeople the flyers are doomed outcasts prostituting themselves to a financially oriented universe. While there is a strong sense of fate surrounding the loss of respectability on the part of both Jock and Ginsfarb, there is also an implied failure, perhaps in the area of imagination, in the characters of both men to rebound from adversity. Jock refused to accept the suspension from flying but remained inflexibly in his old profession. The outraged Ginsfarb illogically and arbitrarily selected an occupation completely alien to his previous experience. The third member of the trio, Jake, the handsome Jewish man who drives the automobile in the death drag stunt, literally represents the "middle man" class of humanity that contributes little, yet is supported by the activity of others.

The themes, characters, and motifs of "Death Drag" forecast the material and method to be used in Faulkner's novel Pylon. In "Death Drag" Captain Warren serves to clarify the
story for the people although there are some people whom this story will not reach. They are represented by the shrieking woman who believes nothing even though apparent miracles are performed in front of her eyes. She maintains at first that the airplane will not fly although she presumably has heard how it circled the town and landed in the field. When the airplane leaves the ground she assumes "there ain't nobody in it!" (DD 193) When Ginsfarb plunges into his stunting position at the end of the rope ladder, she cries, "'It ain't a man! You take me right home this minute!'" Later when Ginsfarb attempts to collect the remainder of his fee before completing his act, the woman screams in terror upon realizing that a man has become so removed from the normal stream of life that he would risk death merely for the sake of money.

Warren's sympathies naturally lie with his friend and fellow pilot. While Ginsfarb, a representative of God's chosen race, has completely dehumanized himself to the point of placing a definite monetary, rather than spiritual, value upon his life, Warren still sees a spark of humanity in Jock. Jock, being the pilot, feels a responsibility for his partner Ginsfarb, although he knows what Ginsfarb is doing to him: "'Then he told me what the name of his nervous trouble was. It was named Ginsfarb.'" (DD 194) When Warren advises Jock that he might be jailed, Jock replies wistfully: "'Do you think so? Do you guess I could?" (DD 195) Jock is trying to survive; his unusual consumption of life-giving water symbolizes his wish to live. His consideration of jail as a possible solution to his problem indicates
he has not given up hope of finding some solution. Even though Jock detests Ginsfarb and promises to "get him right, some day ....where I can beat hell out of him," (DD 205) he still rejects Warren's offer to stay with him because of a responsibility he feels toward Ginsfarb: "Who'd take care of that bastard!" (DD 205) Physically the trouble with Jock is the same inflexibility that prevented his changing jobs when his license was revoked. Since he is Ginsfarb's pilot he cannot completely eliminate his sense of responsibility for Ginsfarb as long as Ginsfarb is accomplishing his stunts from the airplane. Neither can Jock rationalize that he is not only flying illegally but that he is a party to what Ginsfarb has turned into a modified confidence game. Ginsfarb's single desire to make as much profit as possible by cutting his performance to the barest amount of time necessary to accomplish the death drag puts the emphasis on the flaunting of death rather than upon providing a legitimate airshow with the traditional variety of tricks for the circus-like entertainment of the crowd. Ginsfarb finally flaunts the physical laws of the universe when he learns that he has not been paid what he considers the proper fee for his stunt. He releases the rope ladder and falls earthward in order to collect the remainder of his fee. Like Monaghan striking at Rogers during their wing walking stunt, Ginsfarb: "I wasn't thinking about being killed or even hurt.... He was too mad, too in a hurry to receive justice. He couldn't wait to fly back down. Providence knew that he was too busy and that he deserved justice, so Providence put that barn there with
the rotting roof. He wasn't even thinking about hitting the barn; if he'd tried to let go of his belief in a cosmic balance to bother about landing, he would have missed the barn and killed himself." (DD 202) The long tear completely down the back of Ginsfarb's overcoat, which results from the jump and is an extension of the tear he had previously down the back of his helmet, modifies Warren's association of Ginsfarb with Justice and Providence and symbolizes the complete crack in Ginsfarb's character because of his dedication to the wrong values.

Only MacWyrglinchbeath, the Scottish farmer-turned-aviator in "Thrift," allows the machine no dominion over him. But he, in the same manner as Ginsfarb, is driven by an obsession to save money during his war service so that he will be able to reimburse a neighbor for boarding his livestock. MacWyrglinchbeath associates with the flying machine only in order to qualify for extra pay. Although not dominated by the machine, he, like Ginsfarb, succumbs to something worse—avarice. Motivated solely by monetary considerations, the Scotsman loses contact with humanity around him just as surely as any of the machine-dominated aviators.

The continually developing themes and characters seen throughout the aviation stories are also found in the Yoknapatawpha stories. The themes developed in the flying stories are universal ones shown against an aviation back-drop for clarity. The dominant and recurring themes are: (1) man's struggle with his "false and stubborn pride," (2) sin and its associated guilt, (3) the obsession with money and material possessions, and (4) the sense of outrage
and alienation caused by the depressive effects of a society built upon technical and financial values. The principal characters merge into three important types who can be classified as: (1) the first class pilot, the professional who is at one with his environment; (2) the second class pilot, who is or becomes alienated from his environment; (3) the woman who, like Bula Varner of the Yoknapatawpha Saga, represents the erotic side of sexual love, yet who also has the power to resolve the conflict between men simply by assuming her role as wife and lover.

While the themes and the characters are the most important aspects of the flying stories, some attention must be directed toward the development of structure and style, at this point, since these elements play so large a part in Faulkner's aviation masterpiece, Pylon. If there were not the whole of Faulkner's other fiction with which to compare the flying stories, one would be left with the idea that Faulkner was continually mystified and frustrated in his attempts at handling point of view. Regardless of their publication dates the short stories dealing with flying are undoubtedly among Faulkner's earliest works, and a certain amount of experimental groping should be expected.

"Landing In Luck" features a conventional third person omniscient narrator. The story, like most of Faulkner's work, is really a fragment since there is no resolution but rather there is a suspension that invites the reader's further speculation. Stylistically the sensitive depiction of the psychology of Thompson's mind, the unusually appropriate metaphors, the skillful handling
of British dialect, and the traces of folk humor represent many of the elements that run throughout Faulkner's later fiction.

"Country Mice" is an experiment, which if not completely successful may nevertheless be useful in illustrating Faulkner's developing technique of telling a story obliquely. The story itself concerns an episode which resulted in the most totally unexpected frustration ever experienced by the bootlegger. The bootlegger had planned an extensive, illegal scheme to move liquor into New Haven. He had planned to cover all the expected difficulties. His plan was completely neutralized by a dishonest Justice of the Peace whom the bootlegger completely misjudged. Faulkner is beginning to develop a theme that runs throughout all of his fiction and accounts for the difficulty of exact interpretation of any of his stories. That theme holds that any experience, any character, any information, when seen from only one or two viewpoints, is very likely to be a distortion of the actual truth. The multiple descriptions of, and allusions to, the death of young John Sartoris are a perfect example of what in "Country Mice" is only suggested. Since human nature is so complex, so undependable, so frustrating to those who for some mental or physical reason are incapable of resolving it philosophically, something inhuman must be substituted in order for these individuals to work off their frustrations. The bootlegger substitutes his automobile for the complex human beings that he can neither understand nor control. He theoretically controls his automobile during his fast drives around the countryside, drives
which both he and his passenger refer to as "airing off"—ridding themselves of their frustrations. But insidiously the machine begins to usurp control over the bootlegger's mind and his ability to communicate to other humans. The bootlegger is the first of Faulkner's characters to put his faith in what was much later titled the "Cult of the Machine." \( ^{33} \)

The bootlegger's passenger, Faulkner's persona, perceives and directly states that the machine will not be satisfied but will viciously kill its owner at a time of its own choosing. Reliance upon a machine, not merely for productive work, but as a substitute for human relationships or as a means of obtaining illegal or unethical advantage over other people, is implicit in much of the aviation fiction. This machine-oriented philosophy dominates the lives of the sailors in "Turnabout" and influences the characters of Cadet Lowe and Lieutenant Levine who transfer what should be a natural love for woman to a love of machine-attained glory in Soldiers' Pay and A Fable. Bayard Sartoris exemplifies the final destruction that can result from a reliance upon the machine and its inherent uncharted speed to relieve frustrations. The fact that Faulkner devoted the better part of his career to writing about the old verities that he had such close affinity for in his home culture should not be taken to imply that Faulkner had an innate distaste for the machine and associated modern life. Rather Faulkner realized that while the machine promised great advances in technology and industry, it
could only be successfully used if the people controlled the machine properly and directed its uses rationally.

Faulkner's central concern, as clearly shown in all of the aviation fiction, is not with the machine but with the people who operate it and the people who are affected in the process. Faulkner's position is clearly stated in his letter to the editor of The New York Times concerning the crash of an Italian Air Lines transport after making three unsuccessful approaches to land:

It is written in grief. Not just for the sorrow of the bereaved ones of those who died in the crash... but for the crew, the pilot himself who will be blamed for the crash and whose record and memory will be tarnished by it; who along with his unaware passengers, was victim...of that mystical, unquestioning, almost religious awe and veneration in which our culture has trained us to hold gadgets--any gadget, if it is only complex enough and cryptic enough and costs enough.34

While at first glance the aviation fiction appears to be foreign to the accepted viewpoints of William Faulkner's worth, a closer look will assure the reader that Faulkner is still dealing primarily with the effects of the machine age upon the "truths of the heart."35 Aviation provides an illustrative motif with which to symbolize man's aspirations, accomplishments, and fears. It allows Faulkner to deal with the realities of his conception of the universe in a manner that can be transferred symbolically, often with less chance for misinterpretation. The aviation fiction discussed thus far has proven to be relatively simple to interpret. It has introduced a variety of universal character
types and themes within a conception of an essentially mechanistic universe which offers freedom of choice up to a certain definite limit. It is interesting but of generally uneven quality livened with flashes of artistic promise rather than of actual accomplishment. It has whetted our appetite and caused us to expect a sustained effort to order the elements. This effort is the novel Pylon.
FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER II

1William Faulkner, *Pylon* (New York: Harrison Smith and Robert Haas Inc., 1935), p. 30. References to Faulkner's works in this chapter will be identified in the text by means of reference to the following legend and the accompanying page number in the appropriate volume:

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6William Faulkner, "Thrift," *The Saturday Evening Post*, CCIII (Sep. 6, 1930), pp. 16-17.


8William Faulkner, "All the Dead Pilots," *Collected Stories*, pp. 511-531.

10. William Faulkner, "Honor," Collected Stories, pp. 531-
564.

11. William Faulkner, "Death Drag," Collected Stories,
pp. 185-205.


14. William Faulkner, "Folklore of the Air: A Review of
Test Pilot by Jimmy Collins," American Mercury, XXXVI (Nov. 1935),
pp. 370-372.

Times, Dec. 26, 1954, p. 6E.


17. Hyatt H. Waggoner, William Faulkner: From Jefferson


19. William Faulkner, Faulkner In the University: Class
Conferences at the University of Virginia 1957-1958, eds. Frederick
L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Hotner (Charlottesville, Va.: Univ. of


21. William Faulkner, Faulkner at West Point, eds. Joseph

22. Faulkner In the University, p. 48.

23. Ibid., p. 48.


25. Ibid., p. 6E.


27. Faulkner at Nagano, p. 23.

28. John Faulkner, My Brother Bill (New York: Trident

29. Faulkner In the University, p. 23.
30 Ibid., p. 48.
31 Faulkner at Nagano, p. 155.
32 Ibid., p. 155.
34 Ibid., p. 6E.
CHAPTER III

PYLON

None of Faulkner's novels has divided its readers in exactly the same way as has *Pylon.* ¹ *Pylon* is a strange, powerful, uneven, novel which defies a casual investigation but insidiously promises an illumination that is painfully slow in appearing. Frederick J. Hoffman, in his study *William Faulkner,* has, perhaps unknowingly, caught something of the mystery of the book in his statement that Faulkner has created "in *Pylon* an extremely interesting but a somehow inadequate and incomplete novel."² Because of its mysterious and ambiguous atmosphere the novel is sometimes praised or damned by different critics who choose the same point upon which to base their argument. For example Sean O' Faolain names a lack of focus as the book's primary defect,³ while Hyatt Waggoner lauds *Pylon* as "a picture, not painted in oils but made with a camera with the lens in sharp focus, (Italics mine) of our times, of the conditions that characterize contemporary urban-industrial mass society."⁴ *Pylon* has divided its critics into two opposite camps--those who dismiss it as a failure and those who champion it. Most, however, feel that the subject matter, the sterilization of humanity in the face

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of a modern machine age, is epic material. The defenders of the novel, and there are several, generally share Waggoner's opinion that Pylon is "yet to be adequately appreciated... and is a work of real brilliance." Harvey Breit, listing Pylon as the most "undeservedly neglected book" in the past quarter century in American literature explains his statement by saying:

It seems like a kind of bad fiddle, like a monotonous whine. But if you are patient with it, the novel opens up and there are all sorts of variation and richnesses. But one has to listen for it, as one has to in difficult music. Afterward the whine becomes lyric. It is a poem, told in one deep intense, anxious breath...and it has some of the deepest insight and vision into the business of the flying machine and the men who ride them. I was never the same about planes after Pylon.7

Malcolm Cowley perceived this essential poetic quality in his initial 1935 review of Pylon,8 and Waggoner has recently analyzed the book to show that: "Almost the whole value of Pylon lies in its quality as a kind of lyric poem, an evocation, largely through the imagery, of what cannot be said successfully in the abstract language of paraphrase."9 In his later life Faulkner several times stated that he considered himself "as a failed poet, not as a novelist at all but a failed poet who had to take up what he could do."10 In Japan Faulkner clarified his own distinction between poet and novelist: "The poet deals in something universal, while the novelist deals in his own traditions."11

Both Pylon and The Wild Palms have suffered critically because they deal with the contemporary world outside the confines of Yoknapatawpha County and are, therefore, outside what is normally considered Faulkner's dominant interest. But as
Waggoner correctly analyzes: "They are not simply laid in a setting of the present but are attempts to get at the very essence of what distinguishes the present from the past, our society from traditional society."¹² Regardless of the quality of *Pylon* criticism, the novel has usually been judged by itself or in company with *The Wild Palms* as an interloper "written as a relaxation between the two undoubted masterpieces, *Light In August* and *Absalom, Absalom!*"¹³ *Pylon* is actually the culmination of an aviation saga by an author who many times had seen his own shadow upon the earth and had pondered its implications:

The engines are long since throttled back: the overcast sinks slowly upward with no semblance whatever of speed until suddenly you see the aircraft's shadow scudding the cottony hillocks; and now speed has returned again, aircraft and shadow now rushing toward one another as toward one mutual headlong destruction. To break through the overcast and fling that shadow once more down, upon an island.¹⁴

明天 morning the aircraft lightens, a moment more and the wheels will wrench free of the ground, already dragging its shadow back toward the overcast before the wheels are even tucked up, into the overcast and then through it, the land, the island gone now which memory will always know though eye no longer remembers.¹⁵

Doubtless some attention has been deflected from *Pylon* because of Faulkner's own casual dismissal of the book in *Faulkner In the University*: "I wrote that book because I'd got in trouble with *Absalom, Absalom!* and I had to get away from it for a while so I thought a good way to get away from it was to write another book, so I wrote *Pylon.*"¹⁶ John Faulkner, in his charming but sometimes inaccurate book, *My Brother Bill*, implies unconsciously
that _Pylon_ was more a work of inspiration than a calculated means
of deferring work on _Absalom, Absalom!_: 

Bill had his own airplane and he and Vernon Omlie had flown
to New Orleans for the opening of Shushan Airport, dredged
up out of a swamp and named for one of New Orleans' commis-
sioners. Vernon had gone back to Memphis but Bill stayed
on down there with Roark and Mary Bradford...Mary Rose said
that for the final days of the flying meet they did not see
Bill at all. One night, after midnight, she heard him
calling...They did not even know he was still in New Orleans...
[later] She said to me, "Of course I didn't know it at the
time, but when I finished _Pylon_ I did. Bill had this book
when he came in and called us that night."17

What comes as an unexpected surprise is the power detected in the
book by some of the critics and reviewers of 1935, who found it
a stimulating experience. William Troy, while seeing in the book
little growth in Faulkner's philosophical sense, did appreciate
its "almost ideal subject for presenting his theme."18 An
anonymous reviewer in _Newsweek_, after playing up the usual inaccur-
curate aerial biographical data and stressing the fact that the
author was running an aerial circus of his own, finally concluded:
"The macabre atmosphere of this novel is brilliantly done, in
spite of some obscure passages. Unrelieved by romance, humor,
or exaltation, it packs the kick of a mule."19

The unashamed theme of _Pylon_ is a consideration of man's
proper relationship to himself and to his fellow human beings
in a mechanized society. _Pylon_ is the story of a brief and
tragic incident in the lives of an unorthodox "family" of pro-
fessional racing aviators. The family is composed of Roger
Shumann, a pilot and titular chieftain; Laverne Shumann, his
wife; Jack Shumann, Laverne's six year old son; Jack Holmes, a
parachutist and Laverne's lover; and Jiggs, the mechanic of the racing plane that represents the family's primary source of income. This group of nomadic adventurers arrives in New Valois to participate in an airshow dedicating Feinman airport, a modern commercial enterprise constructed upon land reclaimed from a lake. The family comes under the observation of a strangely mysterious "reporter" who infiltrates their ranks and attempts to guide them during their stay in the city. On the second afternoon of the races, engine failure—the final effect of a chain of circumstances that prevented necessary maintenance—causes Shumann to damage the airplane extensively in an emergency landing. Through the efforts of the reporter, a new but untested aircraft is acquired. Even though Shumann has professional reservations regarding the safety of the new aircraft, he accepts the opportunity to compete in the event which, if won, could rescue his family from financial chaos and also provide for Laverne's imminent lying in. After testing and modifying the aircraft as much as possible before the race, Shumann is killed when the "tail group" of his racer disintegrates under the stress imposed by turning a pylon. All observers agree that Shumann "used the last of his control before the fuselage broke to zoom out of the path of the two aeroplanes behind while he looked down at the close-peopled land and the empty lake, and made a choice before the tailgroup came completely free." (p. 234) While there is uncertainty over whether or not Roger jumped free in the final seconds, the one indisputable fact is that the aircraft plunges inverted
into the lake, its wreckage coming to rest tightly against the
fill of rubble used in building the mole at that point. Laverne,
blaming the reporter for Shumann's death, leaves the city in the
company of her son and the parachutist. She later abandons her
son in the care of Shumann's father. As a result of the accident,
the realization that Laverne is giving up her child, and the
fact that he will never see either again, the reporter suffers
a traumatic experience which seemingly leaves him an impotent
and completely disillusioned young man faced with the spiritual
death of prostituted love.

The form of the story is the familiar episodic structure
that has never lost its popularity since man began to lose his
belief in the orderliness of the universe around him. The
episodic form is inherently unable to fulfill the reader's quest
for complete satisfaction since the very structure contains no
provision for resolution. An innovation in technique which has
a further unsettling tendency is Faulkner's modification of the
episodic structure to give the brief episodes themselves an
effect of rapid motion. The book is divided into seven chapters
entitled: (1) "Dedication of an Airport," (2) "An Evening in
New Valois," (3) "Night in the Vieux Carre," (4) "Tomorrow,"
(5) "And Tomorrow," (6) "Lovesong of J. A. Prufrock," (7) "The
Scavengers." The chapter headings give some idea of the plot
movement. The first chapter title sets the stage, the second
and third allow for complication, "Tomorrow" and "And Tomorrow"
suggest the never ending repetition of a dreary cycle, "Prufrock"
interjects connotations of futility, and, finally, "The Scavengers" suggests what remains after a tragic sacrifice.

The chapters vary in length depending, of course, upon the author's intentions, but each chapter is composed of a series of brief episodes. The longest of these episodes are the flashbacks into pertinent history, and these may extend, as in the case of the description of Laverne's first parachute jump, for several pages. But even the flashbacks fall into a series of related and swiftly paced episodes.

Faulkner's technique may be examined most profitably in the climactic fifth chapter ("And Tomorrow") in which events snowball into expected, though none the less searing, tragedy. The chapter is composed of some twenty-four separate scenes or episodes covering sixty-nine pages in the 1935 edition—an average of less than three pages an episode. The chapter describes action in nine different physical locations; it features four separate modes of transportation (train, taxi, private automobile, and airplane); and it includes two important flashbacks. The nine physical locations are further sub-divided into separate scenes taking place in different areas of the same general location. For instance, in one visit to the newspaper building, the reporter uses the elevator, visits the men's room, works in the city room, is called to the editor's office, moves back to the city room—all in the course of four pages. Even in the reporter's small apartment the action is divided between the two separate sleeping areas. The walls of the room then immediately dissolve allowing

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a flashback to events that transpired in an airplane cockpit, at a country air show, in a jail, in a confused mob-accompanied search for justice, and in a suicidal but inescapable night flight.

Moving from a cold consideration of the structure of Chapter Five to a summary of its subjective content, we find that the chapter presents: the reporter’s confession to Shumann of his love for Laverne; an example of the depressing routine that makes up the reporter’s “day”; several references to the effect of time upon man’s actions; a brief allusion to literary criticism; an act of forgery; a blatant confidence game; a flashback showing the depths of man’s depravity; a flashback showing the lengths of his devotion to an objective; a meeting with the representatives of finance, government, and law; and finally Shumann’s terrifying crash and its equally terrifying effect upon Laverne.

The pace of this representative chapter and of the novel in general is so fast that the casual reader is caught off guard and can not analyze what is generating the strong atmosphere of foreboding that envelopes the novel. The veteran Faulkner reader, however, should be aware that the author is experimenting as usual, trying to find a style to fit the material. Once the reader slows the pace, by re-reading and attempting to analyze and dissect, many additional themes emerge that were completely missed in the initial reading. But the additional themes and motifs, like the modern life they portray, still resist a completely logical and emotionless dissection. Although the novel’s atmosphere is initially heavily weighted with a mechanistic tone, the author
appears to mellow the tone perceptibly after Shumann's death so that hope for the human condition is never completely extinguished. The first paragraph of the book, while painting the unrealistic, mirage-like atmosphere and the contrasts of light and dark, need and aspiration, speed and death, still manages to phrase them poetically and end on a note of hope:

For a full minute Jiggs stood before the window in a light spatter of last night's confetti lying against the window-base like spent dirty foam, light poised on the balls of his grease-stained tennis shoes, looking at the boots. Slantshimmered by the intervening plate they sat upon their wooden pedestal in unblemished and inviolate implication of horse and spur, of the posed countrylife photographs in the magazine advertisements, beside the easelwise cardboard placard with which the town had bloomed overnight as it had with the purple-and-gold tissue bunting and the trodden confetti and broken serpentine...the same lettering, the same photographs of the trim vicious fragile aeroplanes and the pilots leaning upon them in gargantuan irrelation as if the aeroplanes were a species of esoteric and fatal animals not trained or tamed but just for the instant inert, above the neat brief legend of name and accomplishment or perhaps just hope. (p. 7)

While admitting that the compound words and lack of commas are unnatural, Malcolm Cowley has directed attention to the poetry: "The style is extraordinarily resonant,...accents fall naturally at the ends of phrases and...pauses for breath recur at regular intervals" so that many of the descriptions "can be broken into verses and printed as songs."20

While the form and the style are appropriate, if unusual, the culprit in the novel's proper esthetic realization--the primary cause of the critical lack of appreciation of the nuances of the novel--is the character of the reporter. The reporter is certainly one of the most enigmatic characters to be found anywhere in
American literature. His most obvious identification is with Eliot's Prufrock. The reporter, an individual who like Prufrock measures out his life with coffee spoons, most resembles Prufrock in his fatalistic idea that it would not change anything if he told the story of which he is capable. Prufrock, wondering if it would matter if he should say "I am Lazarus, come from the dead,/Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all," is immediately brought to mind when Jiggs concocts his banal joke connecting the reporter with Lazarus and the grave. The reporter's realization that he is not a hero capable of supplanting Shumann, his attempts to be of use to the flyers, and his ridiculous, even foolish, appearance closely parallel one of the final stanzas of Eliot's poem:

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;  
Am an attendant lord, one that will do  
To swell a progress, start a scene or two,  
Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,  
Deferential, glad to be of use,  
Politic, cautious, and meticulous;  
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;  
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—  
Almost, at times, the Fool.  

Shumann's death, and the reporter's subsequent attempts to explain to Laverne, echo Prufrock's "That is not what I meant at all." The reporter who resides in an apartment located on a street named "The Drowned," and who once thought he would drown if he entered into the "warmth of lights and human suspirations," (p. 244) strongly identifies himself at the end of the book with the dead Shumann. In the deserted city room the drunken reporter vicariously lingers in Prufrock's "chambers of the sea":

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But it was empty, or comparatively so, because he kept on making that vertical reverse without any rudder or flippers and looking down on the closepeopled land and the empty lake and deciding, and the dredgeboat hanging over him for twenty hours and then having to lie there too and look up at the wreath dissolving, faintly rocking and stared at by gulls, away and trying to explain that he did not know. (p. 301)

But the reporter amplifies one aspect of Prufrock's character to an extent beyond anything expressed in the poem. The reporter represents the ancient conception of the fool brought into close contact with the modern world. The lineage of the fool may be traced back to primitive fertility rites of the ancient Greeks, and Pylon, as its associations with Eliot's Waste Land concept suggest, may be read as a modern fertility rite since Shumann becomes identified with the sacrificed Fisher King.

The fool's most prominent period was perhaps in Elizabethan times when Shakespeare employed the convention of the household fool to fit his own purposes. Faulkner specifically mentioned only three months before his death that Shakespeare had been one of his early interests, and that he still read often from Shakespeare's works. But identifying the reporter as a fool, and admitting that he becomes a major character in the novel, does little to help classify the book as definitely a comedy or a tragedy since the fool has traditionally taken part in both. Although there are passages and episodes of high and grotesque comedy in Pylon, the overall tone remains tragic because the reporter's comic actions do not resolve the story happily, rather his actions bring about the meaningless death of Roger Shumann.
The reporter is identified specifically as a fool by his mother, who tells Hagood: "I just dropped into town to see who he really works for.... Because he is a fool, you see." (p. 93) The reporter is further seen to be of indistinct ancestry since he has had a series of step-fathers. Since the reporter is many- fathered, he may be associated with the famous fool, Punch, who is said to have had two fathers—the Roman clowns, Maccus and Bucco. Faulkner evidently wished to call attention to the identification of the reporter with the fool and he strengthens the identification by referring twice to the reporter's birthday of April First. If the reporter is to be seriously identified with the long line of household fools, he must naturally have a patron who allows him to express his outrageous views and to lead his unusual existence unhampered. Editor Hagood, a representative of "intelligent betrayed asceticism" (p. 86) and the proprietor of the modern newspaper household, employs the reporter not particularly in that capacity, since the reporter's work lacks the "living breath of news," (p. 42) but as a fool to give the editor a different perspective. In spite of the rages the reporter continually incites in his editor, Hagood goes to any length to keep the reporter in his employ. Faulkner's reporter fits the requirements of a fool almost as if the author had followed a checklist provided by Enid Welsford. The very job of the reporter, that of recording the follies of man, reserves for him the title of arch-fool. His scarecrow-like physical appearance further establishes his identity. The identification
with Lazarus, besides suggesting that the reporter has an important and mystical story that he could tell, further links the reporter with certain Hebrew prophets who were thought to be lunatics possessed by a divine spirit.

Encompassing another characteristic of the fool, the reporter obviously believes he is immune to physical punishment: that he is too light to be hurt. Finally, the reporter, through the repetition of his senseless stories and the hypnotic value of his headlines, has, like the fool, an ability to delude us into believing "he can draw the sting of pain; by his power of surrounding us with an atmosphere of make believe; in which nothing is serious, nothing is solid, nothing has abiding consequences." 26

Because of these inherent qualities in the character of the fool, man is willing to associate or identify with him, as he "turns the tables..., defeats the powerful, outwits the wise, and assumes...the role of David against Goliath." 27 Thus, in the conference room where the authorities are attempting to decide whether Shumann's new racer is airworthy, the reporter, "known to some of us here...to be a person of unassailable veracity..." (p. 227) is called upon to upset the combined forces of law and private ownership, and, by implication, to strain the normal conventions of society to the breaking point in preparation for the revitalization that the comic hero promises. But while he is straining the conventions of society, the reporter, as we shall see, is also straining the complex forces within his own make-up: "Something is going to happen to me. I have got
myself stretched out too far and too thin and something is going
to bust." (p. 300) The implication of a possible revitalization
of the reporter's spirit so that he will have the strength necessary
to live up to his own destiny is clear.

Whereas the Elizabethans referred to the character as a
fool, the modern word "idiot" may perhaps more closely approximate
what is implied in this identification of the reporter. Upon
learning that the reporter had helped Shumann acquire an unsafe
airplane, Laverne reflexively responds: "'Note? Note? The
ship, you idiot!'" (p. 221) When the reporter assures her that
the airplane is now safe, Laverne again in shocked disbelief
retorts: "'Good God, what can you know about it?'" (p. 221) The
reporter, his face "dreamy, and peaceful," (p. 222) displays his
characteristic and reasonless trust in what he wants to believe,
by assuring Laverne that he "knew" that Shumann could land the
new racer. The reporter's entire orientation to life is idiotic.
His philosophy that nothing really matters accounts for his
continual wasting of time and money: "'It don't matter,' the
reporter said. 'It's just money. It don't matter if you don't
ever pay it back.'" (p. 177) Hagood, besides subsidizing the
reporter's outlandish style of living, often proves to the reporter
that "he had paid two or three prices" (p. 91) for the decorations
he bought for his apartment. Even though the reporter refers
often to time pieces, time to him is meaningless: "He would
contemplate the inexplicable and fading fury of the past twenty-
four hours circling back to itself and become whole and intact
and objective and already vanishing slowly like the damp print of a lifted glass on a bar." (p. 201) Finally, knowing that it is impossible for an idiot or a fool to offer protection, Faulkner ironically characterizes the reporter as "Patron (even if no guardian) saint of all waifs, all the homeless and desperate and the starved." (p. 183)

If the reporter is identified with the idiotic, he at once suggests other Faulknerian characters who demonstrate this same characteristic--the wounded Donald Mahon in Soldiers' Pay and one of Faulkner's most memorable characters, Benjy, in The Sound and the Fury. While Mahon and Benjy are "reliable" observers if their information is considered in the light of their affliction, the reporter's fabrications concerning the flyers are often completely unreliable and hopelessly confusing unless the reporter's limitations are recognized. Faulkner demonstrates this trait of unreliability over and over by having the reporter build a logically imaginative picture of the flyer's life based entirely upon either a mistaken conclusion or a snap observation. Two examples of such fantasy-structures will suffice to point out the danger of accepting the reporter as a trustworthy narrator. Upon hearing from Jiggs that Laverne and Shumann have gone to the Terrebonne Hotel, the reporter immediately concludes:

"Just because he won a little money this afternoon he has got to pick up and move over to the hotel this time of night when he ought to been in bed an hour ago so he can fly tomorrow." (p. 57) Skipping from this incorrect supposition (the flyers were actually
still trying to collect their prize money so that they could
then find a place for Shumann to sleep), the reporter theorizes:
"'Because you guys don't need to sleep. You ain't human.'" (p. 57)
Following this bit of faulty appraisal the reporter later observes
Laverne dressed in a trenchcoat. He thinks: 
"'Because a trenchcoat will fit anybody and so they can have two of them and then
somebody can always stay at home with the kid.'" (p. 62) He
extends his theorizing to include a portrayal of Shumann: "'Waiting
so he can circulate in his blue serge suit and the other trenchcoat among the whiskey and the tweed when he ought to be at what
they call home in bed except they ain't human and don't have to
sleep.'" (p. 63) When Shumann appears he is wearing "the blue
serge, but there was no trenchcoat." (p. 64) His coatless appear-
ance is a warning to the reader not to accept the reporter's view
uncritically.

By identifying the reporter with the convention of the
fool, whose most fitting place in literature, according to Welsford,
is as the hero of an episodic narrative or as the voice speaking
from without and not from within the dramatic plot, we can see
an apparent validity in the contention of critics who have accused
Faulkner of an obvious and unintentional change in emphasis by
allowing the reporter to usurp the position of hero from Roger
Shumann. What is actually encountered in the apparent conflict
between the reporter and Shumann is a situation analogous to the
familiar phenomenon so evident in Milton of the easily identi-
fiable character opposed to the character representing abstract
goodness. As we shall see, Roger Shumann stands at the end of the line of development of the first class pilot. As such he represents an almost supernatural goodness, which not only alienates Laverne and Jack Holmes but gives the author a major problem in projecting his intentions.

Longley recognizes Faulkner's overall problem "in finding a way, still within realism and truth, to present a goodness that is dynamic and dramatic in an essentially do-nothing world."28 Portions of Longley's consideration of the comic hero as a type may be used to illustrate both the reporter's failure as a comic hero and the book's essential tragic nature. Longley maintains that Faulkner's comic hero must be more than a man of good will; he must wrestle with evil and be willing to fight it repeatedly. Longley further postulates that the seeds of the comic hero's corruption and defeat lie in his attempts to help others, and that he will succeed "only so far as his action is untainted by self interest."29 Faulkner's reporter, the modern fool, lacks the strength to recover from his experience with the flyers because his motive all along was to aid them only so that he could continue to associate with Laverne.

But why, we must ask, is the reporter's failure as a comic hero so important to the book and to the book's universal implications? The answer lies in another facet of the reporter's personality, because the reporter, like Prufrock, the modern schizophrenic, has two separate identities that fight for dominance. The reporter's split personality is dramatized when he leaves
the newspaper building midway in the second chapter. As he walks from the elevator and steps into the street--into the world of time and reality--he is joined by another personality: "Antic, repetitive, his reflection in the glass street doors glared and flicked away." (p. 53) The word "flicked" appears repeatedly in the story as a leitmotif indicating the passage of time. As the reporter continues his walk, his other personality accompanies him:

As he passed from light to light his shadow in midstride resolved, pacing him, on pavement and wall. In a dark plate window, sideling, he walked beside himself; stopping and turning so that for the moment shadow and reflection superposed, he stared full at himself... and saw reflected beside him yet the sweater and the skirt and the harsh pallid hair as, bearing upon his shoulder the archfathered, the boy Jack Shumann he walked beside the oblivious and archadulteress Laverne. (p. 53)

Immediately following this passage, which clearly shows that the reporter is motivated by thoughts of Laverne, Faulkner supplies a key to the identification of the two personalities which fight for dominance in the reporter's mind and are to some extent in everyone: "'Yah,' he thought, 'the damn little yellow-headed bastard.... Yair, going to bed, now, to sleep; the three of them in one bed or maybe....'" (p. 54) The word "Yah," or in some cases "Yes," represents essentially neutral conversation--the cynicism, the resignation, the routine. The word "Yair" represents the opposite of "Yah" even though both function as affirmations. "Yair" signals the imaginative, the enthusiastic, the out-of-this world. It perhaps is the first syllable of a
"still formless forerunner or symptom of a folklore of speed" that would be a "new trend, a literature or blundering at self-expression...." While the "Yair" personality entails the opposite characteristics of the passive "Yah," it can also be carried to extremes as in the case of Jiggs, who in his allegiance to the machine he services and the way of life he follows has not abdicated but rather has outstripped his humanity. Because of the pressures of supporting a family in a society which is becoming increasingly demanding on the individual, Jiggs has abandoned his natural family of a wife and two children to join the unnatural family of Roger Shumann which makes no emotional demands upon him. The "Yah-Yair" idea in _Pylon_ is closely analogous to the idea of the Yin and Yang, the passive and active, female and male, negative and positive force of the universe that is prominent in Eastern philosophy and may also be seen in _The Waste Land_. The "Yah" and the "Yair" are used throughout the book, and the word "Yair" is not an attempt at regional dialect since the flyers, representing diverse regions, would not speak the same dialect as the citizens of New Valois. Since the word is used by the reporter in a flashback antedating the flyer's arrival, it could not be an example of aviation argot imported by the flyers and inflicted upon the townspeople. The flyers, being the most ephemeral, use the term almost exclusively. Jiggs and Shumann rarely use any other term when expressing assent. Hagood and Laverne, being dedicated to more tangible ideas, never utter the word. The announcer, a former pilot now engaged as a liaison between the
pilots and the general public, changes from "yes" to "yair" like a chameleon. Even Feinman, that supreme egotist, exhibits a trace of imagination in his speech and flavors it with the dashing "yair." The "Yair" and the "Yah" are physical indications of the oscillation between the mundane and the sublime that forms the atmosphere of Pylon.

In addition to playing the fool, which in itself is an ambiguous task since it implies idiocy and inspiration, the reporter strives to improve his condition by emulating the flyers, the representatives of decisive action. In the study of the development of Faulkner's aviation fiction the reporter represents not a fourth class of major characters, but rather a mutation of a minor character such as the narrator of "Ad Astra," who also took part in the action of the story. The reporter is more closely analogous to Horace Benbow and Gavin Stevens, characters in the Yoknapatawpha stories who attempt to assert themselves as moral forces, with varying success. The reporter is here cast as the modern writer who prostitutes his talents by producing the pap that becomes the literary diet of modern man. Hagood tells the reporter: "'The people who own this paper...have no Lewises or Hemingways or even Tchekovs on the staff: one very good reason doubtless being that they do not want them, since what they want is not fiction, not even Nobel Prize fiction, but news.' (p. 50)

Faulkner's personal bias undoubtedly asserts itself to some extent in the caricature of the reporter. When asked by a
woman reporter in New York what he, a specialist in decadence, considered the most decadent thing in America, Faulkner is supposed to have replied "What you're doing, Miss!" 32 Yet, much more important than mere personal bias is the nagging conviction that, ironically, when the writer is most needed to give interpretation and perspective to the climactic events of modern life, he is prostituting himself and his talent to the enormous presses of the newspaper. The reason the reporter is an integral part of Faulkner's attempt to explore the modern Waste Land is that an interpreter is necessary to publicize the truth behind Roger Shumann's life and death since Shumann and his family are incapable of interpreting it for themselves. Even Roger's father, a physician who has closely observed humanity rather than machines, is incapable of going below the surface appearances to see the truth of his son's love of humanity.

The reporter attaches himself to the flyers hoping that he, like Jiggs, will be tolerated and allowed to exist on the outskirts of their circle, and that by so doing, he may learn their apparent secret of flexibility. For the reporter, it is a last ditch attempt to regain the humanity that has seeped out of his frame until there is only weightless substance that seemingly flows through, rather than around, physical objects. The reporter, because of his own fatherless, loveless childhood, possesses feelings of repressed hatred that prevent him from even writing the proper journalesese expected by his readers. Twice in the course of the novel, the reporter launches a short burst of
sharp invective directed at passersby. He initially attributes to the nomadic flyers the same feelings of repressed hatred that he feels: "'No ties; no place where you were born and have to go back to it now and then even if its just only to hate the damn place good and comfortable for a day or two.'" (p. 46) Because of his own masochistic bent, the reporter is anxious to think of the flyers as mechanical people without maudlin feelings. It is the reporter's twisted and false suppositions that have caused the novel to be critically pigeonholed because "flat and allegorical characters are thrust into an incongruous realistic environment."33 It is the reporter who says: "'Burn them like this one tonight and they dont even holler in the fire; crash and it aint even blood when you haul him out; its cylinder oil the same as in the crankcase.'" (p. 45)

The reporter, so twisted and introverted by his own childhood, can attribute neither a normal birth nor a neutral environment to the six year old child, Jack Shumann:

"And I thought about him having ancestors and hell and heaven like we have, and birthpaugs to rise up out of and walk the earth with your arm crooked over your head to dodge until you finally get the old blackjack at last and can lay back down again. --All of a sudden I thought about him with a couple or three sets of grandparents and uncles and aunts and cousins somewhere, and I like to died. I had to stop and lean against the hangar wall and laugh." (p. 48)

What the reporter, in his imagination, does attribute to the boy is a fate that is anything but laughable. But the reporter's flaw is that he cannot properly express the emotions pent inside him. Hagood, his editor, pinpoints the reporter's trouble:
"Yet you never seem to bring back anything but information. Oh you have that, all right, because we seem to get everything that the other papers do and we haven't been sued yet and so doubtless it's all that anyone should expect for five cents and doubtless more than they deserve. But its not the living breath of news. Its just information. It's dead before you even get back here with it.... It's like trying to read something in a foreign language. You know it ought to be there; maybe you know by God it is there. But that's all. Can it be by some horrible mischance that without knowing it you listen and see in one language and then do what you call writing in another?" (p. 142-143)

But Hagood also realizes that his foolish reporter does have a spark of divine inspiration that might produce something profound:

"You have an instinct for events. If you were turned into a room with a hundred people you never saw before and two of them were destined to enact a homicide, you would go straight to them as crow to carrion; you would be there from the very first: you would be the one to run and borrow a pistol from the nearest policeman for them to use. Yet you never seem to bring back anything but information." (p. 145)

The reporter is never able to understand clearly the events he reports. The reporter cannot judge proportion; he can see no difference in the jobs of the announcer and the parachutist since both receive the same amount of pay. In order to gain some insight into what he has not been able to gain from reality the reporter continually buys his own newspaper, often the same edition, in a vain search for understanding. But Faulkner implies that reading will not lead the reporter to an awareness since his reading is confined largely to newspaper sensationalism, and his attitude toward analyzing modern fiction is blase': "'when you dont know yourself you just put it down like the book says it and that makes it better still because even the censors dont know what it says they were doing.'" (p. 204)
Even though Hagood is editor of the large newspaper, his continual feelings of frustration and outrage and his hap-hazard operation of his powerful roadster prove that he is not in tune with the modern world. Hagood, as is symbolically shown by his automobile journey, operates in an atmosphere of continual caution. When he rolls into Grandlieu Street late at night when the traffic signals have stopped their sequential operation, he is "unchallenged now by light or bell.... Only the middle eye on each post stared dimly and steadily yellow...." (p. 88) In comparison to Hagood, the reporter, through his association with the flyers, has attempted to assert himself, to move out of the caution area of modern living. Simply by including the reporter as a character in the book, and by keeping him an anonymous abstraction, Faulkner is identifying him to some degree with the artist. But reporting is only a minor aspect of the true artist's responsibilities. The artist must also understand what he is reporting and then he must order the experience so that it may be understood by the reader.

The reason that so much responsibility is placed upon the shoulders of the reporter is that the flyers are incapable of popularizing their own values. Roger Shumann, in spite of his Christ-like Shepherd's qualities, his deep sense of responsibility, and his heroic, self-sacrificing nature, lacks the Christ-like ability to express himself. But there is a mystic communication between the pilot and the reporter in the moments of quiet, which should provide inspiration for a writer:
Even the reporter was not talking now—the two of them who could have had nothing in common save the silence which for the moment the reporter permitted them—the one volatile, irrational, with his ghostlike quality of being beyond all mere restrictions of flesh and time; the other single-purposed, fatally and grimly without any trace of introversion or any ability to objectivate or ratiocinate, as though like the engine, the machine for which he apparently existed he functioned, moved, only in the vapor of gasoline and the film-slick of oil—the two of them taken in conjunction and because of this dissimilarity capable of almost anything. Walking, they seemed to communicate by some means or agency the purpose, the disaster, toward which without yet being conscious of it apparently they moved. (p. 171-172)

In his newspaper writing, the reporter gives the people what they want—unobtrusive, unimportant, useless information according to a set formula. Shumann, in his daring flying, gives them what they need—six minutes of concentrated vicarious thrills—to satisfy man's primeval searching for excitement and adventure, an impossible attainment for the average man who is trapped in the routine waste land of modern culture. But the mass of people understand nothing of the flyer's motives. Even Laverne, Shumann's most logical confident, is unable to comprehend the message of love and humanity illustrated by a man who has reached a perfect acceptance of the facts of life that the machine and his fellow humans have dealt him. Laverne yearns for the passive waste land existence of an ordered routine: "All I want is just a house, a room; a cabin will do, a coalshed where I can know that next Monday and the Monday after that.... Do you suppose he would have something like that he could give to me?" (p. 165) Laverne sees her wished-for existence still in terms of the spiritual vacuum that exists in her present state. Her week would
still start on Monday, rather than the traditional Sunday. Laverne's frustrations show most emphatically when she goads her son into punishing her for contributing to his dubious ancestry. Her frustrations have been caused by her own development in an atmosphere where moral law was ignored. After Shumann's death, the people who come to the edge of the lake to stare blankly at the watery grave know they are in the presence of something of importance, but they do not know what it is. The reporter's implied destiny is to be the spokesman for the values that the flyers represent. He is given the opportunity to create a modern epic based upon the re-enactment of the ancient fertility theme of the death of an outstanding man—a true hero. When the reporter is unable, or unwilling, to generate the energy required to fulfill his destiny, Pylon's ultimate identification as a commentary upon the tragedy of modern life is complete.

In order to understand the significance of the reporter's failure, symbolized by his destruction of his story and his retreat to a house of prostitution at the end of the book, we must perceive in the lives of the flyers what the reporter cannot. The mechanical creatures of the reporter's imagination are really the three principal flesh and blood characters of the short story "Honor." Faulkner, having shown the triangular unhappiness resulting from the separation in "Honor" is now showing, among other things, the alternatives. Although Pylon must stand or fall on its own merits, it is, nevertheless, illuminating to see the novel in the perspective given by a knowledge of the themes
and characters found in the previous aviation stories, since 
*Pylon*, for all intents and purposes, stands at the end of that line of development. Roger Shumann, being the final representative of the charmed circle of professional aviators, has an unquestioned ability to fly. Faulkner implies that Shumann was created with a special talent enabling him to direct and maintain machines. Shumann's attention to the airplane engine is compared to that of a physician to a human being. When the family is engaged in changing valves, its members work together like a surgical team. "They worked quiet and fast,... with the trained team's economy of motion, while the woman passed them the tools as needed; they did not even have to speak, to her, to name the tool."

(p. 131) Shumann, unlike the former pilot turned announcer, unlike the scheming chairman of the sewage board, and unlike the sly corporate lawyer who guards Feinman, possesses a strict code of honor which allies him with what Faulkner called the "truths of the heart, the old universal truths...love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice." Shumann is a machine-age example of the golden rule. His love for Laverne was initially an honest love that accepted her with no concern for her previous escapades. If Roger Shumann is related to "Honor's" Howard Rogers whose only concern was for the welfare of his wife even though she was pregnant, probably by another man, we already know the extent of his ethical nature. Allowing this identification clarifies the triangle and makes it a basis for understanding an unusual love relationship and not a basis
for crude speculation by the scavengers at the end of the story. Allowing the relationship in "Honor" to influence our understanding of the nature of the similar relationship in Pylon parallels current attempts in Faulkner criticism to analyze the specific stories by looking at the interlocking themes and characters in the material as a whole. Unless the memory of the unhappiness resulting from the separation of the lovers in "Honor" is allowed to illuminate the similar triangular affair in Pylon, the human motivations and tensions between Shumann, Laverne, and Holmes tend to look as mechanical as the reporter paints them.

In "Honor," Monaghan, the wing walker, expecting Rogers to be married to a "long, dark, snake-like woman surrounded by ostrich plumes and Woolworth incense," instead finds Mildred a vivacious housewife interested in a settled existence. While Mildred and Monaghan fall passionately in love in "Honor," there is a definite alienation between their alter egos, Laverne and Jack Holmes in Pylon. But the stories run parallel in implying that there is a strained relationship between husband and wife before the triangle develops, because of the inherent instability of the profession of aviation. The theme is more clearly expressed in Pylon: "She now stood in a more complete and somehow terrific immobility...looking at Shumann with naked and urgent concentration. 'Come on,' Shumann said. 'Let's go.' But she did not move." (p. 65) Instead of the sexual circus imagined by the reporter and speculated upon by the scavengers, there is the deeply human problem of an attractive woman unable to find happiness with
either of two men. While Laverne knows that Shumann daily risks
death to provide for her welfare, and while she undoubtedly respects
to some extent his bravery, the bedroom scene the night prior
to Shumann’s death implies that for sometime their relationship
had not been on a sexual plane:

She lay in the middle of the bed with the boy between her
and the wall. Her clothes were laid neatly too on a chair
and then Shumann saw the night gown, the only silk one she
had, lying across the chair too. Stooping to set the jug
beneath the bed he paused and then lifted from the floor
the cotton shorts which she wore, or had worn, from where
they had either been dropped or flung, and put them on the
chair too. (p. 191)

While Laverne continues to lie "with the covers drawn smooth
and nun-like up to her chin," (p. 192) refusing Shumann’s
routine offer to move the boy to the middle of the bed, Shumann
exhibits more interest in completing his cigarette than in
joining the vital woman who has generated such erotic thoughts
in the reporter. Finally, in frustration, Laverne takes the
initiative with a stinging cursing of Shumann for risking his
life after the engine failure by purposefully avoiding the
following racers and the spectators instead of immediately picking
the closest landing spot. As her passion finally arouses Shumann,
he asks: "You want to take your pants off?!" (p. 194) His
question indicates to the reader that Laverne was not in the
habit of removing them at night. It also confirms Laverne's
suspicions that Shumann's thoughts were not on the same physical
level as hers—that he had not noticed that she had removed them.
Ironically Laverne seems to be on scarcely better terms with the parachutist, Jack Holmes, since she continually seeks to frustrate Holmes's efforts to carry the sleeping boy on their wanderings through the town. Their animosity breaks into the open when the flyers roll the drunken reporter: "They stared at one another for an instant longer, then began to curse each other in short hard staccato syllables that sounded like slaps...." (p. 121-122) Shumann, in his usual role as peacemaker, has to separate them. Laverne and Holmes would be quite well suited to each other under different circumstances. Both are rather passive in their desires. Laverne wants the routine life; Holmes is content to be nothing more than a parachutist. He is content to risk his life in a profession that demands no skill and seemingly gives no sense of thrill or accomplishment. But while Shumann is tolerant of the reporter's attentions to Laverne, Holmes is intensely jealous.

The origin of Laverne's disgust with Shumann's seemingly unreasonable code of ethics is revealed by a flashback that portrays Laverne as having been subjected to a traumatic experience every bit as intense as the sexual initiation of Temple Drake. This experience spiritually alienates Laverne from Shumann because it was misinterpreted by her as a sacrifice rather than as a fated occurrence resulting from Shumann's facing of his obligation to the crowd. The event transpired after Laverne suggested that Shumann teach her to parachute:
He did not know that she was frightened until they were in the air, the money collected and the crowd waiting....
She was clinging to the inner bay strut and looking back at him with an expression that he was later to realize was not at all fear of death but on the contrary a wild and now mindless repudiation of bereavement as if it were he who was the one about to die and not her...he saw her leave the strut and with that blind and completely irrational expression of protest and wild denial on her face.... (p. 194-195)

Laverne, having suddenly realized what had been forming in her subconscious mind ever since she became involved with Shumann--that he was not of this world and that she was losing him--crawls back into the small rear cockpit and, in a bit of despondent finality, sexually forces herself upon Shumann. Shumann finds himself overwhelmed: "He soon had two opponents; he was outnumbered, he now bore in his own lap, between himself and her wild frenzied body, the perennially undefeated, the victorious." (p. 195) Yet, while he is recovering from the episode, Shumann's inborn need to fulfill his responsibilities asserts itself: "It was some blind instinct out of the long swoon while he waited for his backbone's fluid marrow to congeal again that he remembered to roll the aeroplane toward the wing to which the parachute case was attached...." (p. 195-196)

Laverne, thrown from the airplane, parachutes semi-nude into the crowd and into a terrifying nightmare. Once on the ground, she is dragged by the wind in her unspilled parachute. She is followed by a sex-crazed group of men and boys, but she is finally "rescued" by three policemen, one of whom goes instantly mad to possess her. The allegorical implications of the nightmare are strengthened when the narrator says: "Already Shumann realized
that in the two other officers he had only bigotry and greed
to contend with. It was the younger one that he had to fear...who
seeing now and without forewarning the ultimate shape of his jaded
desires fall upon him out of the sky, not merely naked but clothed
in the very traditional symbology—the ruined dress...and the
parachute harness—of female bondage." (p. 196-197)

After completing a "nightmare's orbit about the town"
(p. 197) in order to secure Laverne's release from jail, Shumann
is forced by the authorities to make an immediate night take-off
that subsequently results in a night crash landing. Before
leaving, however, Shumann sees "almost a counterpart of that terror
and wild protest against bereavement and division which he had
seen in Laverne's face" (p. 200) in the face of the young police
officer who, insane with desire for Laverne, volunteers to endure
emasculiation if he can only possess Laverne for a moment. If
Shumann perceives that this desperate desire is of the same nature
as Laverne's previous desire for him, he doesn't acknowledge it.
When the police officer sees Shumann leaving without producing
Laverne, the officer begins to scream at Laverne, calling her
all manner of vile names in a "tone wild with despair." (p. 200)
This same tone emerges in Laverne's voice the night before Shumann's
death; it is the human tone of frustrated desire.

Laverne's role, in the final analysis, is that of an
intensely human woman, a woman wanting only the things a woman
should be able to expect from life—a potent lover, a child to
mother, and a permanent home in which to put down roots.
Symbolically Laverne is the female urge to settle down in opposition to the male urge for adventure. Laverne and Jack Holmes share a veritable hell in their relationship with Shumann and the boy. Their unsettled emotional state is illustrated by the seething hatred continually erupting between them. This hatred is diverted only by Shumann's intervention. Holmes, whose alter ego Monaghan in "Honor" was completely lost when separated from Mildred and his child, is even more miserable and jealous in Pylon, even though he is united with them. The unsettling element is, paradoxically, Roger Shumann, the very element which theoretically should order their lives. The problem with Shumann is that he is too good. Living with him is like living with a god. Malcolm Cowley in his 1935 review of Pylon called Shumann the closest thing to a hero created by Faulkner in eight novels. Being a hero, especially a hero whose heroic fault is a lack of the ability to communicate, Shumann can only be a Twentieth Century anachronism while he is alive.

Shumann's death is heroic in Faulkner's eyes because Shumann dies trying to do more than he had to do. He could have flown a relaxed race knowing that Ord, his only competition, was not going to risk his expensive airplane for a two thousand dollar prize. But Shumann, as Laverne well knows, is incapable of taking the easy way out and thereby being false to himself. One of the other reporters in "The Scavengers" chapter comes close to suggesting the mystic motivation that directs some exceptional individuals:

"It's because they have got to do it, like some women have got to
be whores. They can't help themselves." (p. 202) The crowd paid to see a race and Shumann gives them one: "The two in front began to bank at the same time, side by side,...now the two aero-planes, side by side and Shumann outside and above, banked into the pylon as though bolted together..." (p. 234) While the suggestion is made that Shumann is fated, since his entry in the race was arranged by the reporter, who was previously described by Hagood as being a catalyst of fate, Shumann still makes a final conscious choice between attempting to save himself or trying to avoid his fellow pilots behind him and the people below. After making his choice and seeing that the aircraft is no longer a threat to others, Shumann still does not resign himself to fate. He dies valiantly fighting for his own survival after first having met his responsibilities: "Shumann had been seen struggling to open the cockpit hatch as though to jump, as though with the intention of trying to open his parachute despite his lack of height." (p. 237) Shumann's death by water recalls the episode of the Phoenician sailor in Eliot's Waste Land; it is a sacrificial death which should imply symbolically a redemption, since the image of living water is implied in Eliot's allusion. Shumann's stature as the most outstanding individual in the story, the man who can truly be called a modern hero, classifies him as a sacrifice worthy of placating the ancient gods so that the earth may be redeemed by life-giving rain. But Shumann's slamming into the water of an inland lake, finally coming to rest against a junk
fill, instead of peacefully drifting to a watery grave in the clean, open sea ironically contrasts with Eliot's sailor.

The nobility of Shumann's death is vividly contrasted to its impact upon the other characters. Laverne, knowing Shumann's self-sacrificing personality, can only curse him with the futile tone of the night before: "'Oh damn you, Roger! Oh damn you! damn you!'" (p. 234) The photographer, admitting the manner of Shumann's death was enough to make him sick, still passes it off by saying, "'But what the hell? He aint our brother.'" (p. 238) The general public acknowledges the death with "the ten thousand different smug and gratulant behindsighted forms of I might be a bum and a bastard but I am not out there in that lake." (Italics Faulkner's : p. 252) The "scavengers," the group of reporters who hang around the death scene scavenging bits of gossip, amuse themselves by commenting ironically on a life and death they cannot understand because they have lost the capacity to see the deeper significance of any action:

"What do you suppose he was thinking about while he was sitting up there waiting for that water to smack him?" the first said.
"Nothing," the second said shortly. "If he had been a man that thought, he would not have been up there in the first place."
"Meaning he would have had a good job on a newspaper, huh?" the first said. (p. 289)

The reporter, not included in the category of the scavengers since he does not enter their drinking, gambling, or joking, sits quietly meditating. He makes no comment even when one reporter attempts to humanize the conversation: "'You dirtymouthed
bastards. Why don't you let the guy rest? Let them all rest. They were trying to do what they had to do, with what they had to do it with. The same as all of us only maybe a little better than us. At least without squealing and bellyaching." (p. 290)

Just as the reporter originally attributed incorrect motives and emotions to the flyers, the scavengers employ the same superficial reasoning: "People like that don't have money to spend on corpses because they don't use money." (p. 291) Every complex motivation must be seen in a simplified light so that it can easily fit the newspaper columns. The argument continues with no resolution. The flyers are seen only as fated animals living an animal existence emphasizing the pleasures of the moment without even the animal instinct to nurture the young:

"What she did was the sensible thing: when a game blows up in your face you don't sit down... and cry about it, you get out and hustle up another roll and go on and find another game that maybe you can beat.... And then I would bet a quarter maybe that the next time you see them, the kid won't be there. Because why? Because that's what I would do if I were her. And so would you guys." (p. 292-293)

Shumann's death, therefore, is an event which allows for the only resolution possible under the circumstances. His sacrificial death allows him to become an abstraction which may be interpreted in several ways. To Laverne and Holmes, Shumann can, after a time, become a representative of the ideal good which they can appreciate but which they can never hope to emulate. To the reporter, Shumann can be the introduction to a new type of literature, a literature appealing to the modern generations,
and yet one which still stresses the old verities of "courage and pride and honor--compassion." If Shumann's life is correctly interpreted and ordered by a work of art rather than by a work of journalism, Shumann can become the representative of a new type of man, a man who, through understanding of both the unemotional machine and emotional human folly, can reach heroic stature. But Shumann, in order not to be only an anachronism, must be the forerunner of a new race which can join him in life rather than in death. The acceptance of his sudden change of environment indicates that the boy, Jack Shumann, is the second member of the new race. More members can only be recruited through the power of the artist to interpret and publicize the story in new and understandable terms. It will be a work that stresses, compresses, and creates the new legend of speed. Only through interpretation, therefore, can Shumann realize his proper identity as the Fisher King and accomplish the regeneration of the wasteland.

Shumann's death has a profound effect upon the reporter. It represents a failure on the reporter's part to become a man of action, but at least it leaves him with the small satisfaction of having made a choice. After Shumann's death the reporter becomes aware of time. He knows that something has transpired, something has entered his life and flicked away again, but in leaving has caused a change. Even before his crash, the reporter feels a change in his attitude toward time:
Just as last night he seemed to see his blind furious course circling implacably back to a point where he had lost control of it like a kind of spiritual groundloop, now he seemed to feel it straighten out at last, already lifting him steadily and undeviatingly onward so that now he need make no effort to move with it; all he had to do now was to remember to carry along with him everything which he was likely to need because this time he was not coming back. (p. 211)

The nature of the change brought about in the reporter is the focal point of the novel. A poet, not a reporter, is needed in order to interpret properly the events of the past several days. The reporter must become the poet if he is to fulfill his destiny: "It is his [the poet's] privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past..." The poet must help man properly align himself with the machine. The machine, as Shumann proves, is not inherently a threat to humanity if it is directed properly. The machine is a mindless entity that takes on the character of the men who employ it. But the machine, and its operators have been subjugated by a class of men who operate on an inhuman level to regiment society to their own purposes. Feinman, the symbol of all that is hateful in the system of modern capitalism, has corrupted society because of his own insatiable ego. The airport becomes a symbol of the corruption of society because it is designed and dedicated to Feinman's ego. Amazingly, the mathematic monogram of two capital F's laid by compass to all the winds" (p. 18) that forms the airport's runway pattern is a possible arrangement. By slanting one "F" forty-five degrees
from the other, an approach from any of the sixteen cardinal points of the compass could be possible. But the arrangement would be exceedingly wasteful in material and unusually confusing to the airman trying to line up on the proper runway for landing. The airport itself is not designed for people but for machines. There are no dressing rooms in the hangars for the flyers to shower or to change clothes. In addition to the decorator’s motif of the letter "F", the airport is dedicated jointly to the "Aviators of America" and to "Colonel H. I. Feinman, Chairman Sewage Board—Through Whose Undeviating Vision and Unflagging Effort This Airport was Raised Up and Created out of the Waste Land at the Bottom of Lake Rambaud at a Cost of One Million Dollars." (p. 14) The poet has an awesome task of redirecting society, but only he has a chance to reach enough people to cause any impact at all.

The reporter, through his identification with the generic line of fools and coxcombs, should be able to stand on the rooffree and summon the symbolic rain as does the cock in the close of Eliot’s Waste Land. But the reporter—even though he is no longer two personalities, "It surprised me. It surprised the hell out of me until I found out it was two other guys!" (p. 299) is unable to fulfill his destiny because of a basic and deepseated lack of spiritual belief and a dedication to the wrong values. The reporter has fulfilled only two of Eliot’s three commands. He has given (Datta); he has sympathized (Dayadhvam); but he has not controlled (Damyata). Throughout the novel the reporter fights to control himself—-to keep from thinking of Laverne, to keep from laughing

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at the irony of his situation, to keep from drinking—but he never succeeds. The reporter has failed because of a human frailty that has corrupted greater men. He has lusted after Laverne and all of his giving and his sympathy was for her, so that one day "I would be there; I would maybe see her first and she would not look different even though he was out there around the pylon, and so I wouldn't either even if I was forty-two instead of twenty-eight...." (p. 301) Faulkner's Stockholm Address is unmistakably specific about the reporter's flaw. The reporter lacks Faulkner's old verities and, therefore: "He labors under a curse. He writes not of love but of lust, of defeats in which nobody loses anything of value, of victories without hope and, worst of all, without pity or compassion. His griefs grieve on no universal bones, leaving no scars. He writes not of the heart but of the glands."39

The reporter's inability to resolve the significance of Shumann's death in his mind is represented by the two articles he writes and the cryptic note he leaves for his editor. The first article which romantically describes Shumann's death is torn to bits by the reporter just as the ordered romantic age was destroyed by the growth of machines. The second version is a satiric and cynical surrender to the spirit of the modern age. Between the lines of the reporter's note to Hagood is the information that the reporter, in a final Prufrockian surrender, does not dare disturb the universe, since nothing matters.
Although the reporter fails to live up to his destiny he will still continue to endure. Faulkner implies throughout his aviation fiction that the man who will do more than endure is a special mutation of nature. The member of the charmed circle is given a special talent and the presence of mind to employ that talent intuitively. Just as there are two classes of aviators, there seem to be two general classes of men: those who simply endure and those who prevail. Roger Shumann has the "soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance."

Jack Shumann gets little chance to show his mettle, but his acceptance of his fate and his general mechanical ability ("'Every toy he gets he plays with it a couple of days and then he takes it apart to fix it, he says.'" [p. 276]) suggest that, as always, the real hope is in the younger generation.

_Pylon_, as everyone has admitted, is a strange book. It is a disquieting and unsatisfying book. But it is a fine, even a great, book simply because it possesses these qualities. _Pylon_ cannot be laid casually aside. It may be cursed or it may be ridiculed, but it certainly cannot be "enjoyed" in the popular sense of the word. _Pylon_, deals with problems that threaten to completely upset, even destroy, man's physical universe. As man seriously plans to send exploratory probes and robot machines to the moon and beyond he realizes in his arguments over the two cultures of the Humanities and the Sciences that he is really no closer to a solution to the problem than was the reporter in 1935. The power of _Pylon_ is that it is able to generate--perhaps because
of Faulkner's conscious implication, perhaps because of his unconscious genius—an inquisitiveness and an introspection on the part of the reader. We would all like to experience the thrills of taking life's pylons in Shumann's precise and uncompromising manner; but there is the persistent and uncomfortable sensation that we are more closely related in spirit to the reporter. Many of Pylon's deficiencies are caused by the compression of time in a modern society. There is not enough time available to devote to savoring the hidden flavors of this book. Pylon is the type of book that should be in the small library of a castaway in a remote Pacific atoll. Then, when it made no difference, perhaps the book could be appreciated.
FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER III


5. Ibid., p. 122


7. Ibid., 474.


15. Ibid., p. 184.

16. Faulkner In the University, p. 36.


20 Cowley, 254.


22 Ibid., p. 16-17.

23 Ibid., p. 16.


26 Ibid., p. 317.

27 Ibid., p. 315.

28 Longley, p. 20.

29 Ibid., p. 23.


31 Ibid., 370


36 Cowley, 254.
37 *Faulkner at West Point*, p. 76.


CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

William Faulkner benefited directly and literature benefited indirectly from his association with aviation. His talent was channeled by the introduction of a new perspective upon life and by the realization that nothing is actually as it first appears. The acceptance of death as an ordinary and always present possibility in the life of a flyer caused Faulkner to turn to a serious consideration of the value of a courageous life. His early indoctrination in flying caused him to hold with the old verities of courage, honor, and compassion which he believed to be his southern heritage. In seeing his own shadow upon the earth, Faulkner also saw that the puny human beings appeared neither black nor white. From the cockpit nature was beautiful and awe inspiring, but it was neither inherently good nor bad. Man, the pilot of his own life, was the final arbitrator of nature. Man, assuming he had the proper mental equipment and understanding of his capabilities as an individual, had a choice of living a life of caution or extending himself according to the dictates of his heart.
Faulkner developed as a sensitive and tender man who answered the dictates of his heart and lived up to his responsibilities as he saw them. Although Faulkner characteristically and playfully fooled others, he never fooled himself. While accomplishing his inner desire to fly was necessary before Faulkner could retire with satisfaction to a life of contemplation, flying was not something to be pursued irrationally after its lessons had been absorbed. After his brother was killed in a crash, Faulkner lost interest in the activity that had once meant so much to him. He found substitutions, including sailing, riding, and writing. In reviewing Test Pilot, Faulkner theorized that its author, Jimmy Collins, was destined to become a writer and that he only continued to fly in order to support his family. Fortunately Faulkner did not choose to follow the profession that killed both Jimmy Collins and Dean Faulkner.

Because of the perspective gained from his flying experience, Faulkner's early and abortive career is important from a biographical point of view. As those experiences and attitudes become formulated in his stories, they become important from a literary standpoint. The aviation fiction of William Faulkner becomes highly significant as a part of his life's output. It traces the growth of a young author from his very first attempt at prose writing until his last years. It shows a maturing of style and conception parallel to the more complex twistings in the Yoknapatawpha County Saga. Its culmination in Pylon has resulted in a book which in my opinion will someday rank among his
recognized masterpieces. The implications of the Waste Land are still apparent in modern society and Faulkner's thunder still has not produced rain.
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