

A MULTIVERSE OF NARRATIVES: POSSIBLE WORLDS THEORY AND
AUTHORSHIP FROM THE LONE ARTIST TO CORPORATE AUTHORS

By

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I dedicate this research project to my parents. Without them, graduate school would not have been possible.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation utilizes the narratological concept of possible worlds theory to examine the spectrum of authorship by exploring how the theory can help us to understand the crafting of literary worlds as we have seen them evolve from William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County to the fantastical worlds found within the realm of today's popular culture. The major scholarship of PWT establishes a framework to examine a plethora of texts across various media and to see how PWT has been a great tool in narrative creation along the spectrum of authorship from the lone author artist to corporate entities. Many aspects of narrative supply the world-building actions at the heart of PWT allowing authors to create the worlds which give stories their ultimate complexity. Once one central world has become ontologically intricate, it then permits the author of the narrative, and any others who might come later, to journey into tangential worlds.

In the first chapter, Umberto Eco's *The Role of the Reader*, and particularly the essay "Lector in Fabula: Pragmatic Strategy in a Metanarrative Text" along with other essays on prominent popular fiction narratives, serves as a launching point in PWT criticism. In the second chapter, William Faulkner and his nine novels set in his fictional creation of Yoknapatawpha County serve as an example of PWT applied to a narrative realm created and built by one author. My third chapter looks at how narrative worlds expand and need the concept of possible worlds in pop culture texts as I move the analysis to licensed properties like Star Wars and Harry Potter where other authors have continued narratives both officially and unofficially. In the fourth chapter, television showrunners and their

writers become the focus by looking at dramatic television from *The Twilight Zone* and *Hill Street Blues* to the shows of the present. The superhero universes of DC and Marvel Comics are then examined as the ultimate example of possible worlds being used to continue a narrative over many years and writers by looking at the medium's version of the epic in works like *Crisis on Infinite Earths*.

Ultimately, this dissertation explores a multitude of narratives and generates the possibilities for boundless more research due to the infinite potential worlds that might narratively spring from any text. The mechanism of PWT has allowed our pop culture to navigate complex narratives where the characters find their stories being created in multiple media by hundreds of creators as corporations rather than authors drive story production. PWT allows the narratives to thrive rather than confuse as the narratives exist not just in world generated from narrative print but a plethora of media platforms from comics to television and movies to video games and new media. This dissertation demonstrates how PWT allows multiple narratives to coexist without questioning the validity of a story as it jumps from platform to platform.

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CHAPTER ONE

Possible Worlds Theory

The narrative theory of possible worlds provides a useful tool for application to a variety of texts across many different media. The utility of this narrative theory serves as the impetus of this dissertation as possible worlds theory (hereafter referred to as PWT) demonstrates a spectrum from which to observe the link between narrative world-building and authorship. This dissertation examines how PWT can be used from first studying how one author can generate a central world for the various narratives of his fictional oeuvre to later looking at how today's pop culture texts can generate a world ontologically complete from the imagination of a central auteur held in continuity by PWT even after others contribute to the narrative's evolution. The alternative narratives provided by PWT become even more essential in a postmodern era where multiple voices narrate each individual world that readers (or viewers) find themselves immersed within.

The first chapter of this dissertation provides a history of major theorists and their works related to PWT. From how truth in fiction can be defined to how a central model world can generate other peripheral possible worlds, various theoretical concepts introduced to narrative theory via the mechanism of PWT are described in this chapter. The implications of these concepts, to be discussed in later chapters, will be highlighted within the overall development of PWT.

William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County will be the focus of the second chapter. Faulkner's novels deserve attention from PWT due to the unique position of the Yoknapatawpha narrative within American fiction. For this dissertation, Faulkner's work serves the essential purpose of a single author developing a complex narrative world as

the place of origin for most of his noteworthy fiction. While Faulkner is far from the first writer to place much of his fiction within a specific fictional geographic location, the particular moment of his location within the shift from modernism to postmodernism along with the zeal with which he continued to return to Yoknapatawpha and the utility of that place to convey a particular pivotal scene in American history and literature make Faulkner's fiction ideal for a PWT examination. Faulkner's narrative generated a world serving as laboratory to artistically demonstrate the divergent shifts in the human, American, and Southern experience occurring during his lifetime.

Before a true appreciation of the possibility inherent in fiction via PWT can occur, an understanding of how a fictional world may be ontologically formed in narrative across various works needs to occur. The second chapter of this dissertation examines this world generation and analyzes how Yoknapatawpha County reflects both the universal and local aspects of the human experience. Throughout the nine major novels of Yoknapatawpha, PWT's world-building aspects provide a unique paradigm of how Faulkner used his fictional Mississippi county to highlight the issues of actual Mississippi. He depicted Mississippi's struggles with Civil War defeat, attempts to mythologize a Lost Cause, the introduction of the modern world via technologies like the automobile, and the advent of postmodernism.

Licensed properties, specifically *Star Wars* and *Harry Potter*, are the focus of the third chapter as the PWT analysis moves from the literature of Faulkner to more pop culture-oriented texts. *Star Wars* and *Harry Potter* are appropriate subjects for this particular chapter due to their existence as narrative universes that began from the imaginations of individual minds but have since evolved with the contributions of many

others to the urtext of the original visionary. Because of the approximate two decade head start, *Star Wars* receives the bulk of the scrutiny in this chapter because the saga of the original film trilogy quickly moved beyond the media of film and was corporately licensed so that Lucas's narrative could be extended by others into media of comics, cartoons, novels, video games, and various others. This expansion of the narrative becomes even more important due to the recent acquisition of *Star Wars* by Disney and its upcoming films with many of the original cast members signing on to play their iconic roles again. Since the narrative logistics of telling a sequel to the original film trilogy while keeping the canonicity of the much-celebrated Expanded Universe of various other media would be impossible, Disney announced that the imprint of *Star Wars Legends* will keep the Expanded Universe novels in print as an alternative narrative to the one to be told in the new films and their accompanying media. This development illustrates the economic implications of PWT as commercial endeavors worth billions utilize the concepts of PWT to supplant their former multimedia narratives with a new one without destroying any true canonicity. As corporate interests take charge, PWT becomes a nice tool for manipulating official narratives in order to keep every fan's favorite stories sanctioned as "true" within the fictional realms.

Additionally, fan interaction will be examined in this chapter by looking at how Rowling's *Harry Potter* series has become one of the premier landscapes upon which fans have endeavored to continue the narratives of their favorite characters via the means of fan fiction. PWT allows for fan communities to embrace the generation of branches of various continuing narratives shared amongst those communities based upon a parent text. These narratives may frequently be rejected, and occasionally prosecuted, by the

author and corporate caretakers of the official narrative; nevertheless, fans still use the concept of possible worlds to allow their own forays into their favorite narrative universes. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series has been more accommodating to fan fiction than some other licensed properties, but the expanding of her narrative via the website *Pottermore* and the epilogue chapter of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* in which she set some of the future parameters regarding her characters' marriages and children attempts to somewhat restrict fan fiction as it embellishes her narrative universe.

The fourth chapter of the dissertation will move from licensed properties to the realm of television drama. Television presents a fertile laboratory in which observation of narrative construction can occur because several seasons of a show provide multiple hours of story. This situation brings an ability to develop a story and a universe in which it takes place that most epic novels may struggle to match. It also allows one to observe the interaction of a primary creator with a team of writers as the narrative universes of a television show are created not by the single author or corporately, but instead exist as the product of a hybrid system where the singular auteur becomes the creator of the universe's framework while others fill in the many details in singular episode narratives composing overall season and series narratives of the show.

However, one of the greatest connections to PWT found in television narrative can be traced back to the series finale episode of the 1980s hospital drama *St. Elsewhere*. In this episode, the entire series is found to have occurred in the mind of the autistic child of one of the show's "doctors." The entire world and narrative that viewers had been following for six seasons was completely untrue within the narrative of the show due to that closing scene. The PWT implications are quite apparent since the narrative of the

series was rendered “fictional” within itself due to one final scene, but as comics writer Dwayne McDuffie explains the major significance of the scene resides in the implications that the fiction’s fictionality presents across television. Due to the many crossovers that can be linked to *St. Elsewhere* in what McDuffie describes as a variation of the Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon game, the number of televisions shows that have to then be considered “make believe” multiplies exponentially.

As a comic book writer, McDuffie refers to the implications of this theory as generating the television equivalent of the famous DC Comics crossover *Crisis on Infinite Earths*. McDuffie makes this assertion in jest and actually argues that this extreme level of narrative connectivity within the various series should be ignored and writers should instead simply just focus on crafting good stories. However, the interconnected narratives within the two highly serialized mediums of television and comics beg for a PWT analysis. Consequently, the dissertation’s fifth chapter will look at how comic books, specifically superhero comic books published by the two primary publishers DC and Marvel, have used the idea of possible worlds to craft universes written and drawn by dozens of creators since the inception of the comic book superhero.

The best example of how corporations have embraced possible worlds can be found in the DC multiverse. The multiverse arose out of the necessity to explain how Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman (the only superheroes who originated during the rise of superhero comics in the late 1930’s and early 1940’s, survived the eventual bubble bursting of superhero comics, and continued in publication on into the 1950’s) could be in stories with different characters going by the names of Flash, Green Lantern, and others in two different eras. DC decided to take the heroes of the so-called Golden Age

of comics and World War II and have them live on a different Earth in a different universe from their main characters whose current exploits would eventually be called the Silver Age. Alternative universes were not unusual in the genre of science fiction an important influence on comic books in the post-atomic age. The origins of superheroes moved away from fantasy and mythology and towards origin stories more firmly rooted in nuclear fallout and radiation. Since The Flash was the very first DC character to be re-introduced and altered in this new era, it was a Flash story that first revealed that the old Flash lived on an Earth occupying the same place but at a different vibrational frequency. Meetings between the superheroes occupying the main Earth of DC Comics (Earth-1) and the older heroes of World War II (Earth-2) became an annual event as DC Comics used the multiverse as a gimmick to entice young readers with double the superheroes one might regularly see in a team comic book such as *Justice League of America*.

Of course, the major utilization of the multiverse is referenced in McDuffie's article: *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, the fiftieth anniversary event of DC Comics in 1985. This major moment in comics history saw characters from across DC's multiverse battle a malevolent force attempting to destroy the entire multiverse of worlds of the DC Comics narrative. This groundbreaking event brought together characters from the aforementioned Earth-1 and Earth-2, other Earths that included characters from companies DC had acquired such as Fawcett (Earth-S), Quality (Earth-X) and their most recent acquisition Charlton (Earth-4) and an alternate universe composed of evil doppelgangers of DC's heroes (Earth-3). And while the combined might of several Earths' superheroes does prove successful in preventing the destruction of everything, the culmination of *Crisis* results in the elimination of all but one universe streamlining the

multiverse into a singular DC universe. Narratives of heroes whose exploits had occurred outside of Earth-1 were integrated into its history or were merely erased from memory. PWT and its narrative lens were the center of the DC Comics narrative during *Crisis* only to be suddenly excluded immediately after it was finished.

However, the idea of possible worlds and opportunities to apply PWT would not be diminished for too long within comic book narratives. Almost as soon as the multiverse had been condensed into one, DC began to insert alternative timelines and worlds from time to time. Several such examples fell under the *Elseworlds* imprint and major summer events like *Zero Hour* asserted timeline changes and retcons to the narrative. By the twentieth anniversary of *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, DC reestablished the multiverse through the return of some of the forgotten characters in *Infinite Crisis* and a new multiverse created in the follow-up series, *52*. Recently with DC Comics revamping their entire comics line with The New 52 in September 2011 and Marvel Comics developing an Ultimate imprint with its own universe and events like *Age of Ultron* reworking their main universe's timeline, both major comics companies have embraced the idea of possible worlds with relish. The television and cinematic universes both companies are developing around their characters additionally generate even more possibilities to apply PWT.

As stated above, the purpose of this dissertation is to demonstrate how PWT can be used to view authorship as texts become more corporate and their narratives reach across and evolve into multiple media landscapes. PWT facilitates an analysis of how the narrative worlds that take such evolutions can keep ontological cohesion via so many narratives and authors. And while this dissertation has a very daunting task before it, it

additionally promotes the utilization of PWT as a paradigm to be applied to narratives composed in the diverse media environment of today's digital media age. With paratexts abounding and corporations looking to expand any popular narrative as far as they can, the need for PWT as a paradigm to understand texts with a strong audience and commercial value is vital more than ever before. To a certain extent, this dissertation exists as a metaphorical call-to-arms regarding the potential utility of this narrative theory. And in order for this to occur, we must first understand how previous scholars have defined this narratological term.

Taken from a concept associated with Leibnizian philosophy, PWT allows the study of textual world generation as conveyed from the author to the audience and investigates the effect created by the insertion of alternative narratives into the primary narrative. PWT slowly transitioned from philosophical conceit to actualized literary theory as structuralist theorists developed the concept that narratives of texts could be comparatively related to the possible worlds of semiotics. They proposed that a reality could be generated from the creation of the text.

Gottfried Leibniz, a prominent figure in both mathematics and philosophy, began to assert in his writings beginning with *Discourse on Metaphysics* in 1686 that from a metaphysical perspective God existed. According to Leibniz, God after analyzing all the possible worlds that could have existed then deemed the actual world would be the best. Leibniz stated "God...has chosen the most perfect, that is to say the one which is at the same time the simplest in hypotheses and the richest in phenomena" (11). Leibniz argued that "if God is essentially good, then it is difficult – but not impossible – to escape the conclusion that the world that he created must be the best of those alternatives available

to him” (Jolley 1). When literary theorists took this philosophical idea and applied it to literary works, they were basically doing little but replacing God with the author of the literary piece. A presumptive action on their part perhaps, but the idea of the author presiding over the narrative as an omnipotent deity is consistent with much traditional literary theory. More modern critics like Roland Barthes have dismissed the importance of the author to varying degrees, and to them, the comparison would be more flawed. However, if the comparison of the author to an omnipotent deity lording over the text is made, then the idea of a narration of the best of all possible worlds parallels Leibniz’s philosophical ideal which via its “apparatus of possible worlds provides a compelling and influential framework for tackling deep problems about necessity, contingency, and free will” (Jolley 1-2).

PWT owes its roots to other philosophies as well. Analytical philosopher David Lewis utilized Alexius Meinong’s object theory while developing his PWT paradigm related in his 1978 *American Philosophical Quarterly* article “Truth in Fiction.” Meinong’s object theory centers on the idea of non-existent objects and their philosophical placement, an idea that would later be expounded upon by Bertrand Russell. Adding the idea of non-existent objects to Leibniz’s best of all possible worlds allows texts to be studied as worlds in which objects exist. In “Truth in Fiction,” David Lewis uses the character of Sherlock Holmes as an example to examine how “a treatment along these Meinongian lines” (37) could be used to interpret truth within the fictional worlds of texts. While his examination dismisses the fantastical truths from “the exploits of super-heroes from other planets, hobbits, fires and storms, vaporous intelligences, and other non-persons” (37), he considers the truths of Sherlock Holmes on an equal par with

real persons like President Richard M. Nixon. Lewis simply states that sentences describing “truths” about that character, as opposed to one of more fantastical characters in the types of exploits mentioned above, “may or may not be taken as abbreviations for sentences carrying the prefix ‘In the Sherlock Holmes stories...’” (38). To understand the significance of Lewis’s theory, moviegoers or television viewers may be watching one of the multiple Sherlock Holmes adaptations and decide that the adaptation they are viewing does not match the Sherlock Holmes with whom they are familiar. This person might say to themselves “This is not Sherlock Holmes!” and in doing so declare this version inauthentic and “not true” just as if Sherlock Holmes were a historical figure. Certain aspects of “truth” have been established in previous stories about Sherlock Holmes.

The texts created by the author become story worlds, and story worlds have their own unique set of facts similar or different from the world in which the reader exists. Expanding and deviating from its Leibniz foundation in PWT, the story world of the text is not crafted by an infallible entity as is the case of the Creator of Leibniz’s best possible world. Instead, a world comes into being from the narrative simultaneously as the narrative takes place. In “Truth in Fiction,” David Lewis begins with this principle but complicates it further. His article uses PWT to examine what can be considered true in fictional works. This claim seems a bit dubious at first glance, and his dismissal of science fiction and fantasy fiction as opposed to more realistic fiction makes it even more so. Nonetheless, his theories become important to the development of PWT and to this dissertation due to the importance of the establishment of fact (within the fiction) for PWT. Lewis begins his analysis with the above statement on sentence prefixes declaring

fictional truths and “consider[ing] exactly those worlds where the plot of the fiction is enacted, where a course of events takes place that matches the story” (39). With this thesis, Lewis establishes himself as the primary proponent of one of the two differing schools regarding actuality in PWT (Ryan “Possible Worlds Theory” 446).

PWT founds itself around the framework of the “‘modal system’, or M-model” (446). Within this structure, Lewis’s view of the actual world and the possible worlds connected to it differs from that proposed by Nicholas Rescher. PWT revolves around the textual world and the possible worlds which “must be linked to the centre by a so-called ‘accessibility relation’” (446). Thus, the potential of possible worlds in PWT includes “every world that respects the principles of non-contradiction” as a possible world but additionally what is defined as “the excluded middle is a PW” (446). Lewis and Rescher differ in terms of how they define the “excluded middle” or the central narrative world of the text. Lewis has a view of the actual world “as an indexical notion whose reference varies with the speaker” (446) making the actual world of the text subject to the narrator’s perspective. If the text were written with a different point of view or from the perspective of a different character, the actual world of the text would not be the same as the one created by the text. The world of *The Great Gatsby* does not exist except through the eyes and narration given to the reader by Nick Carraway. The plot from the point of view of Gatsby or any of the other characters within the book exists as a possible world, connected but not the same, as the actual world of the text.

Unlike Lewis, Rescher emphasizes plot over narration. Rescher’s view of the actual world of the text supposes the world of the text to be “an autonomous existence” (446) and ontologically complete in contrast to other possible worlds that might exist.

The textual world of the plot exists in Rescher's theory but all others emanating from the plot can merely claim themselves to be the product of mental processes in which an individual might dream of a different world by thinking about the future or pondering what if scenarios. These two differences of opinion in regards to the definition of actuality generate the first division of thought within PWT. Lewis's viewpoint places a premium upon the narration while Rescher's emphasizes plot regardless of perspective. Whichever view one takes, the idea of the central "actual" world allows the many possible worlds around it to come into being. This idea confirms the modal system by allowing a scholar "to formulate the semantics of the modal operators of necessity and possibility" (446).

As mentioned earlier, Lewis distinctly differentiates Sherlock Holmes from Clark Kent and other characters in stories of a more fantastical nature by asserting that "Holmes is just a person—a person of flesh and blood, a being in the very same category as [President Richard] Nixon" (Lewis 37). The article takes a look at the Meinongian approach to fictional works and characters and examines quantifiers and comparisons made within a text or across texts. Lewis discovers that "[t]he way of the Meinongian is hard" (37) and offers a different approach. He proposes that the truths found in literary texts such as "Holmes lived at 221B Baker Street" should be considered "as abbreviations for longer sentences beginning with an operator 'In such-and-such fiction...'" (37). Lewis argues that unless "the prefixed operator [appears] neither explicitly present nor tacitly understood" (38) it should be understood that statements referring to a figure such as Holmes in an unambiguous manner are merely abbreviated from including the "In such-and-such fiction" statement as a prefix.

Lewis gives six different statements regarding Sherlock Holmes which “are false if taken as unprefixes, simply because Holmes did not actually exist” but “true if taken as abbreviations for prefixed sentences” (38). This problem generates “why truths about fictional characters are sometimes cut off from their seeming consequences” (38). For an example of the problem, the article uses the two statements: “Holmes lives at 221B Baker Street” and “the only building at 221B Baker Street was a bank” (38). Lewis explains that readers will assume both truths to be true as the reader will make the assumption that the first statement has abbreviated the prefix “In the Sherlock Holmes stories...” while the second statement will be assumed not to include such a prefix. However, if both statements are assumed true, it would still not automatically follow that “Holmes lived in a bank” (38). Thus, Lewis demonstrates the ability of the reader to differentiate between fictional truth and actual truth.

Next, Lewis returns to the idea “that truth in a given fiction is closed under implication” (39). This closure allows for an insertion of PWT which he to a certain extent disagrees with, but will be of vital importance to the argument of this study. With Lewis’s dismissal of the fantastical truths found in science fiction and superhero comics, he cannot see how the truths can transfer via PWT which would cause him to dismiss the potential to study such narratives with the lens of PWT. However, with his assertion of such truth as being closed, he leaves a window open for fantastical truths. From the implied closure of the text, a reader may identify “an intensional operator that may be analyzed as a restricted universal quantifier of possible worlds” (39). With the truth in fiction of any potential world emanating from the text closed, a certain parameter establishes itself from which the other possible worlds must originate. The reader may

conclude that “[w]hat is true in the Sherlock Holmes stories would then be what is true at all of those possible worlds where there are characters who have attributes, stand in the relations, and do the deeds that are ascribed in the stories to Holmes, Watson, and the rest” (39). The utilization of truth in fiction illustrates how PWT can be applied to universes where superheroes regularly adhere to their own particular laws of physics across a multiverse of various worlds despite Lewis’s dismissal of such textual worlds. The idea of the established truth in fiction existing in an original text and in subsequent possible worlds (at least in partial) will be an integral component of my thesis. However, Lewis takes issue with this idea.

Lewis asserts that “a threat of circularity” exists (39). He argues that “[e]ven in the Holmes stories, not to mention fiction written in less explicit styles, are by no means in the form of straightforward chronicles” (39). Thus, his first point arises from ignoring the function of plot as something more important to fiction than merely chronicling it. Any study which merely focuses on the chronicle of the plot may be flawed as “uncritical” and “uninformative” despite being “correct” (39). This problem of circularity evolves from the fact that if an author such as Arthur Conan Doyle wrote the fiction of the Sherlock Holmes stories as “pure fiction” with “no knowledge of anyone who did the deeds he ascribed to Holmes, nor had he even picked up any garbled information originating in any such person” (39), it would still not mean the events could not have occurred in our own world. In fact, Lewis argues, that however unlikely, the man might even be named Sherlock Holmes. And that possibility leads to the next aspect of this problem. While the above scenario may be extremely unlikely, the idea that “a homonymous name [to one or more characters in the stories] is used by some people”

(39) must be acknowledged as highly likely. This creates the problem for the theory of truth in fiction being universal across all possible worlds since we now have a potential world where the truth does not exist as it does in the stories.

While these previous examples demonstrate some problems for the idea of truth carrying over across possible worlds of fiction, Lewis's solution to these problems illustrates why the problems are not actually as problematic as he believes them to be. He encourages readers to latch on to the idea that "fiction is a story told by a storyteller on a particular occasion" (39). The act of storytelling becomes a central focus for the generation of possible worlds with this proposed solution. Lewis proposes that "[w]hen Pierre Menard re-tells *Don Quixote*, that is not the same fiction as Cervantes' *Don Quixote*—not even if they are in the same language and match word for word" (39). This specific distinction leads back to the difference between Lewis and Rescher mentioned above regarding the "excluded middle." Lewis again places strong emphasis on the act of the telling by that particular storyteller or narrator.

This emphasis leads to his "notion of trans-world identity for stories" (40). Lewis's theory of possible worlds rests on the act of storytelling. The teller of the story and the purpose of the telling supersede all other aspects of the fiction in his mind. This viewpoint results in the great distinction he places between Menard and Cervantes mentioned above. If reliable, a storyteller will tell what he knows, or at least believes, to be true; however, Lewis places a major distinction in regards to this "pretence" when it comes to fiction (40). He asserts that in fiction the storyteller "plays a false part" and "goes through a form of telling known fact when he is not doing so" (40). He distinguishes how this occurs in both first and third person narratives which goes along

with the idea that the storytelling may be “of two different fictions: one a harmless fantasy told to children and the censors, the other a subversive allegory simultaneously told to the *cognoscenti*” (40). He argues that the difference between the storyteller in our world versus that of the fictional one is that if the storyteller is inaccurate in our world then “the act of storytelling at our world was not what it was purported to be” (40). The storyteller of a fictional world has brought that world into being whereas the same fictional telling in our world is simply a lie. Lewis uses the trans-world concept to explain his differentiation here since for fiction he believes there is an act of storytelling in our world about a fiction and the same act of storytelling occurs in the fictional world where that fiction is fact. For this study, Lewis’s differentiation will be unnecessary; however, as his article has been so seminal in PWT the distinction will be briefly analyzed.

As mentioned previously, Lewis’s solution to his perceived problem arising from “the threat of circularity” (39) proves that the problem does not create the substantive worries he asserts. Lewis relies heavily on the example of Pierre Menard, a character in a short story by Jorge Luis Borges. Menard has appropriated the original text by Cervantes in Borges’ short story and has therefore become a storyteller of a fictional world creating an important distinction to Lewis. His trans-world concept relies heavily on this fact in order for his “threat of circularity” to be problematic.

Lewis provides the example of the trans-world concept where “at our world we have a fiction f , told in an act a of storytelling; at some other world we have an act a' of telling the truth about known matters of fact; the stories told in a and a' match word for word, and the words have the same meaning” (40). In other words, the perfect

environment is established from which the examples of Cervantes and Menard could be used. Lewis argues that Menard exists as a storyteller who tells known fiction but retains the identity of a storyteller regardless. Lewis uses this illustration to say that he sees no “threat of circularity” in this particular example while still admitting that the reader and himself might wish “to know more about the criteria of trans-world identity (or the counter-part relation) for acts of storytelling” (40). However, the circularity threat only arises when Lewis places more importance upon the act of storytelling than he does on the plot in creating the fictional world.

He defines fiction as “a story told by a storyteller on a particular occasion” (39), so the act of the storyteller rather than the plot creates the modal world. The plot functions as a tool of the storyteller rather than a world generator by itself. The fictions exist “by no means in the form of straightforward chronicles” (39) and an extraction of “plot from text is no trivial or automatic task” (39) as might be done in a chronicle. Menard though does not exist as a mere chronicler when he makes his word-for-word retelling in Borges’ short story. Lewis’s emphasis on the importance of the storytelling versus the chronicler in regards to avoiding the circularity only matters because of the distinction between the storytelling and the chronicling he has created. I do not share Lewis’s fear of the circularity since I find Rescher’s way of referencing the excluded middle in the modal system to be preferable. In fact, an example from comics in Kurt Busiek and Stuart Immonen’s *Superman: Secret Identity* can specifically challenge Lewis’s points regarding Arthur Conan Doyle and an actual Sherlock Holmes since it focuses on how a boy named Clark Kent becomes a Superman after reading the comics of Clark Kent as Superman. Thus, this text demonstrates an example of a figure in one

possible world who finds truth in his own narrative due to a narrative from a different possible world.

Lewis's article becomes much more useful to this study however when he delves into his various analyses. His first analysis focuses on the idea that something is true in fiction only if it is also true in every other world where the fiction is told as known fact (41). To his credit, Lewis finds some issue with this as he notes "[m]ost of us are content to read a fiction against a background of well-known fact, 'reading into' the fiction content that is not there explicitly but that comes jointly from the explicit content and factual background" (41). He uses the example of Sherlock Holmes's London and how we associate the geography of actual London with our perceptions as readers of the London in which the Holmes stories take place. This concept occurs not only with the locations in our own actual world, but we as readers and viewers of various connected texts apply the same principle to fictional worlds which have become familiar to us. As a reader delves into a text, he assumes that the Yoknapatawpha County or Gotham City he encounters in this text will be the same as the many others he has read about before. And when a textual world of some difference from the more familiar arises, as in the case with parallel worlds within a fictional text, then the reader or viewer anxiously awaits the reveal of the differences.

However, Lewis makes his argument a bit more circular as he delves into his analyses by looking at the possibility of counterfactual suppositions separated from a modal world of an initial text. Alluding to the assumptions that we make as readers, Lewis describes our eagerness to place the familiar from our actual worlds or familiar texts that serve as modal worlds as "mixed reasoning" which "may carry over into the

fiction, not because there is anything explicit in the fiction to make them true, but rather because there is nothing to make them false” (42). He describes a situation regarding the location of Sherlock Holmes’ home in his London and how in some stories it might be the located in exact alignment with the geography of our own London and differ in others (41). However while Lewis allows for the possibility of locations differing in the above scenario, he does not think it is something readers do as they come in contact with fictional truths. He asserts that in fiction, similar to “counterfactual reasoning,” we “depart from actuality as far as we must to reach a possible world where the counterfactual comes true (and that might be quite far if the supposition is a fantastical one). But we do not make gratuitous changes” (42). Considering Lewis’s focus on minor details earlier, it is curious that he ignores possibilities of difference at this point in his analysis as he deems that “[d]ifferences of detail between these treatments are unimportant for our present purposes” (42).

Perhaps his bias against stories of “bizarre worlds that differed gratuitously from our actual world” (42) can be attributed as the cause for his overlooking those small “differences of detail” in this particular instance. Certainly, the aforementioned “gratuitous changes” do not occur with immersion into a fictional text, and readers most certainly make assumptions about the textual world based on the lived world of their own existence. However, Lewis does not give fantastic stories such as science fiction, fantasy, and other related genres their due credit in both substance and popularity. The possibility that a fictional world may differ quite distinctly in many ways from our own yet still remain inspired by it does not merit the consideration from Lewis that it would from others. It is actually much more possible that Sherlock Holmes may inhabit “a

world where three-nostrilled detectives pursue purple gnomes” (42) than someone with Lewis’s perspective might allow.

In his next analytical point, Lewis delves further into PWT as it pertains to this particular study. He looks at the “worlds of Sherlock Holmes” and the differentiation that might be found within such similar multiple worlds. After returning to the phrase “in the world(s) of Sherlock Holmes”, Lewis asserts that “[w]hat is true throughout them is true in the stories; what is false throughout them is false in the stories; what is true at some and false at others is neither true nor false in the stories” (43). Lewis’s thesis focuses on the idea of the worlds where the fictions are told as fact and also on the similarities between the possible fictional worlds in contrast to how each compares to our own. The analytical point being made here is going to be most vital to this study in Chapter Five and the various fictional worlds of various superhero comics across various texts and multiverses (let alone the transference of these characters to other media such as television and film). Of somewhat less importance to this study, but interesting nonetheless, is Lewis’s focus on facts of science and human psychology as they are defined as true in our world versus that of the fictional ones. While this study is primarily interested in narrative, it might be very interesting to look at the transference of truth in fiction in texts where superheroes and Jedi knights regularly circumvent the laws of physics.

Lewis deals with little-known facts and commonly held beliefs (43-44). If facts prove contrary to the commonly held knowledge of the day, he argues that we can probably still assert that they are not true in the fiction of texts like those of Sherlock Holmes. Little known possible facts, such as the possible existence of “purple

gnomes... a few, unknown to anyone except themselves” (44), should not be classified as truth in fiction, and equivalently, neither should beliefs or common knowledge truly affect the truth of fiction once they have been established by the context in which the fiction was originally written in and the audience to whom it was written. Given the context of this dissertation, one wonders how Lewis’s analysis here would differ due to the increasing academic worthiness of the fantastic stories he frequently dismisses. He asserts that “proper background... consists of the beliefs that generally prevailed in the community where the fiction originated” (44), beliefs he later clarifies as being necessarily “overt” (44). If today’s readers generally accept the idea of a police box travelling through time and space or a cosmic police force powered by magical lanterns, then how far could the idea of truth in fiction be potentially stretched?

Lewis concludes his article by separating the world of the author and reader from those of the text and other possible worlds by establishing “two sets of worlds: the worlds where the fiction is told as known fact, and the collective belief worlds of the community of origin” (44). The truths of the textual world do not belong to our world since we are a “community of origin” but the facts that come from the fiction as “known facts” transfer along the other possible worlds where the fiction could be told as a “known fact.” He expands upon this analysis offering “two remaining areas of difficulty and sketch[es] strategies for dealing with them” (45).

Since we have the two potential places of truth in fiction, the “known facts” that come from the texts explicitly as the fiction is told from a place of the fiction being a true story and the “collective beliefs” from the world of production, Lewis attacks the “two remaining areas of difficulty” by looking at other texts as places from which truth could

be derived. He identifies these places as intra-fictional and inter-fictional and then uses the example of *Threepenny Opera* as an example of intra-fictional truth by discussing how the street singer must be treacherous since every other example from the textual world is treacherous, and we assume that “he too would turn out to be treacherous if we saw more of him” (45). A conclusion dubious at best, but one still found within many texts. Once Obi-Wan Kenobi explains things about The Force to Luke Skywalker in *Episode IV*, we tend to believe that The Force works similarly for every other Jedi Knight.

An inter-fictional example is found by looking at a story about a dragon named Sculch. Lewis postulates that even if he wrote a story about Sculch and never discussed how the dragon breathes fire, readers would still be under the assumption that he might because “dragons in that sort of story do breathe fire” (45). This assumption results due to “inter-fictional carry-over from what is true of dragons in other stories” (45). The use of the inter-fictional also works in stories such as those of Sherlock Holmes as Lewis returns to his reference text by explaining “if instead of asking what is true in the entire corpus of Conan Doyle’s Holmes stories we ask what is true in ‘The Hound of the Baskervilles’, we will doubtless find many things that are true in that story only by virtue of carry-over from Conan Doyle’s other Holmes stories” (45). This idea of the inter-fictional will be useful for looking at the possible worlds continuum bridging Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha novels and the shared universes of comic book multiverses. Lewis then concludes by looking at impossible fictions and plots to see how they react with his thesis on the truth in fiction.

While Lewis's article focuses primarily on the idea of establishing truth in fictional universes rather than actual narrative PWT, it still serves as an important building block towards the development of the narrative theory as a conceptual framework. Once fictional texts have been established as actual universes where objects from Meinong's theory can reside, a more in-depth examination can occur regarding the functionality of the resulting possible worlds. By moving from not only Lewis's theories on truth, but Kripke's modal system and Rescher's thoughts on actuality, the studies of PWT can focus more on narrative and how PWT functions in generating the universes from the textual structure. For more on this aspect, we turn to Umberto Eco.

Umberto Eco's contribution to the literature of *PWT* can be found in his collection of essays, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts*, and specifically the chapter "*Lector in Fabula: Pragmatic Strategy in Metanarrative Text*." Eco wrote this chapter for the book itself (as opposed to other essays in the collection which had been published elsewhere) in 1977 and described it in the preface as his attempt "to connect the modalities of textual interpretation with the problem of possible worlds" (vii). Other essays in this collection will also be vital to the particular study of this dissertation, such as the essays on Superman and Fleming's Bond novels because of their pop culture relevance.

To appreciate the approach that Eco brings to PWT, we must realize that he comes first to the theory by looking at his semiotic understanding of what he defines as "open" and "closed" texts. These terms define texts based on how a reader responds to them, and before Eco's theory can be understood, the terms themselves must be clarified. Eco defines an open work as "a paramount instance of a syntactic-semantico-pragmatic

device whose foreseen interpretation is a part of its generative process” and states that the reader (or addressee, to use his term) must have “been envisaged at the moment of its generation *qua* text” (Eco 3). He explains that this theory was controversial when he first proposed it in 1965 because in that environment of “a structuralistically oriented milieu, the idea of taking into account the role of the addressee looked like a disturbing intrusion, disquietingly jeopardizing the notion of a semiotic texture to be analyzed in itself for the sake of itself” (3). To Eco, a study of the text in relationship to the reader must be done, because the author must have envisioned the reader at the moment of the production of the text in order to project the reader’s response.

The structuralist anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss fundamentally disagreed with Eco on this perspective, arguing that an analysis of a work without considering an outside factor such as an addressee should be allowed for (3-4). However, by using Lévi-Strauss’s own example (a Baudelaire sonnet) and research partner (Roman Jakobson), Eco responds that “it is absolutely impossible to speak apropos of the anaphorical role of an expression without invoking, if not a precise and empirical reader, at least the ‘addressee’ as an abstract and constitutive element in the process of actualization of a text” (4). This idea may initially tend to contradict the structuralist principle of viewing the text as whole in and of itself; however, Eco argues that “[t]o postulate the cooperation of the reader does not mean to pollute the structural analysis with extratextual elements. The reader as an active principal of interpretation is a part of the picture of the generative process of the text” (4). He expands in response to the structural protest of Lévi-Strauss and Jakobson asserting the

semantic affinity does not lie in the text as an explicit linear linguistic

manifestation; it is the result of a rather complex operation of textual inference based upon an intertextual competence. If this kind of semantic association that the poet wanted to arouse, to forecast and to activate such a cooperation from the part of the reader was part of the generative strategy employed by the author. Moreover, it seems that this strategy was aiming at an imprecise or undetermined response. (4)

Eco believes that the various interpretations of a potential work all generate from the creative process of that work.

Works that follow along these lines of allowing for the potential readings of that work by an addressee are what Eco refers to as an “open text.” He uses the example of “Les Chats” demonstrating how the text “not only calls for cooperation of its own reader, but also wants this reader to make a series of interpretative choices which even though not infinite are, however, more than one” (4). The explanation for how the interpretative choices occur arrives to the scholar by examining the various codes and subcodes which allow for the different interpretative choices. Eco summarizes:

The existence of various codes and subcodes, the variety of sociocultural circumstances in which a message is emitted (where codes of the addressee can be different from those of the sender), and the rate of initiative displayed by the addressee in making presuppositions and abductions—all result in making a message (insofar as it is received and transformed into the *content* of an *expression*) an empty form to which various possible senses can be attributed. (5)

The composer of the text allows for specific reactions to the text to occur for the desired addressee by utilizing these codes and subcodes. The reactions then become a part of the textual composition for the open texts which Eco defines as possibly varying according to a reader's codes and subcodes.

With that established, he defines as the opposing term: the closed text. Eco explains how “aberrant presuppositions and deviating circumstances” (6) may cause an interpretation of a text outside of the codes and subcodes that might be anticipated by an author from the reader and that “open texts are, rather, reducing such as indeterminacy, whereas closed texts, even though aiming at eliciting a sort of ‘obedient’ cooperation, are in the last analysis randomly open to every pragmatic accident” (7). The differentiation between the two possible textual categories derives from an understanding of a concept referred to by Eco as a Model Reader, or someone “supposedly able to deal interpretatively with the expressions in the same way as the author deals generatively with them” (7). According to his Model Reader theory, the Model Reader does not exist hypothetically, but rather as a production of the text itself. He describes it as even “[a]t the minimal level, every type of text explicitly selects a very general model of possible reader through the choice (i) of a specific linguistic code, (ii) of a certain literary style, and (iii) of specific specialization-indices” (7). The text composes the potential Model Reader by establishing what a reader must know to properly understand the text, but despite the prerequisite knowledge “by implicitly presupposing a specific encyclopedic competence” (7), an open text allows for a potential variety of interpretations of the text itself due to the various codes and subcodes that the Model Reader might utilize in comprehending the text. Eco elaborates “a well-organized text on the one hand

presupposes a model of competence coming, so to speak, from outside the text, but on the other hand works to build up, by merely factual means, such a competence” (8).

A closed text, according to Eco’s definitions, undermines this mingling of a specific prior message tailored to a reader of a certain “competence” by instead “not tak[ing] into account such a possibility” (8). Instead, these types of texts “have in mind an average addressee referred to a given social context” (8). In this context, he firmly places the idea of most formulaic or genre-driven fiction. These types of texts are written for a specific audience that has specific expectations for what should occur in them. Eco explains that such texts “obsessively aim at arousing a precise response on the part of more or less precise empirical readers” to whom these texts may have been designed for; the texts are still “in fact ‘open’ to every possible interpretation” (8). Example types that he uses for this particular focus are Superman comic strips and Ian Fleming’s James Bond series of novels. Both of these examples would fit the idea of formulaic fiction written for a defined audience; however, they also “are potentially speaking to everyone” and in such case, “[n]obody can say what happens when the actual reader is different from the ‘average’ one” (8).

Eco asserts that such texts “apparently aim at pulling the reader along a predetermined path” but can then lead “to the most unforeseeable interpretations, at least at the ideological level” (8). This occurs because these formulaic fictions do not generate the model reader extrapolated from the text as with an “open” text (9). In his differentiation between the two types of fictions, an open text creates what a Model Reader for the text might be and then allows for the codes and subcodes through which one of these suitable readers may interpret the text; whereas, with a closed text “one can

at most guess what kind of reader their authors had in mind, not which requirements a ‘good’ reader should meet” (9). Without the ability to understand the codes and subcodes a reader may use as a prism for understanding the text, an infinity of anomalous understandings of the text remains.

In the chapter on Superman comics, “The Myth of Superman,” an introduction to how Superman represents an archetypal hero prominent in many stories of Western civilization, Eco’s analysis applied to a specific text is presented. The role of such a “hero equipped with powers superior to those of the common man” becomes paramount in modern society where industry has “left [man] abased when confronted with the strength of machines” (107). Superman in contrast defies all of these industrial might pitted against man while simultaneously remaining “not entirely beyond the reach of the reader’s self-identification” (108). The dual identity of Superman and Clark Kent, the dichotomy of the superhero’s secret identity and, in this particular case, a potential manifestation of what others have referred to as messianic duality, functions for both narrative and myth (108). Due to the secret identity, the Superman becomes a figure with whom readers may identify while also representing the narrative of a demigod around whom mythology can be generated.

Eco uses that idea as a starting point from which he can analyze and “specify the narrative structure through which the myth is offered daily and weekly to the public” (108). While the ancient heroes and gods that Superman can claim as forerunners such as Gilgamesh, Hercules, Samson, and others found their exploits narrated through oral traditions passed down from generation to generation until they were finally recorded in writing, Superman’s narrative came about via a corporately generated text of comic

books and strips initially. Eco however sees a deviation in narrative much stronger than that difference though “between the figure of Superman and the traditional heroic figures of classical and nordic mythology or the figures of Messianic religions” (108). These figures he asserts were statically fixed in their narratives unlike the Man of Steel whose adventures were (and still are) continually ongoing. In the case of mythology, Eco asserts “the story followed a line of development already established, and it filled in the character’s features in a gradual, but definitive, manner” (108). The different heroes such as his example of Hercules might be represented by a work of art, but they “would be seen as someone who has a story, and this story would characterize his divine features” (108). Deviations such as “[n]ew additions and romantic embellishments were not lacking, but neither would they have impaired the substance of the myth being narrated” (108). The figure of the hero and their exploits had been created in the minds of the audience even before the storyteller began to craft the narrative for them to hear.

This difference, even if it comes in this case from comic book adventures, displays a major shift from classical storytelling to the modern. Eco explains that “[t]he ‘civilization’ of the modern novel offers a story in which the reader’s main interest is transferred to the unpredictable nature of *what will happen* and, therefore, to the plot invention which now holds our attention. The event has not happened *before* the story; it happens *while* it is being told, and usually even the author does not know what will take place” (109). Modern novels, or since we are discussing comic books and comic strips, we might more aptly define it as modern literature utilizes narrative to tell a story in the present propelling the reader along rather than simply using narrative to present stories

from religion, folklore, and mythology which the audience already knows due to its taking place in a narrative past.

This distinction between the classic and modern illustrates how valued “the ingenious invention of unexpected events” (109) is treated. Eco notes that in classical antiquity audiences did not place such a high regard on the distinction since at that time “the mechanism of the ‘plot’, in accordance with Aristotelian rules, succeeded in making them once more co-participants through pity and terror” (109). The audiences were more interested in observing the tragic fall with which they were already familiar and becoming witness to that particular drama; whereas, the readers of modern literature exulted in the idea of the discovery. Plots consequentially came to focus, or perhaps lead audiences to this focus, on becoming “spectators to a *coup de theatre* whose unpredictable nature is part of the invention and, as such, takes on aesthetic value” (109).

Eco uses this example of a shift in narrative focus to argue its negative impact upon Superman as a hero like his predecessors. He asserts that the “new dimension of the story sacrifices for the most part the mythic potential of the character” (109). Eco defines the differences between two types of characters, the mythic which can be “an archetype, the emblem of supernatural reality” and the modern, novelistic character which he defines as a “historic type” and “aesthetic universality” that allows “a capacity to serve as a reference point for behavior and feelings which belong to us all” (109). In order to be representative of something more than us, according to Eco, the first type of character must be something “part *predictable* and cannot hold surprises for us” (109), or in other words stone monuments to a fixed deity; in contrast, the second type must be as unpredictable as humanity.

Eco places characters like Superman of the comic strips (or what we might more readily refer to as comics) in a particularly unique circumstance. He demonstrates that characters in such a circumstance must adapt to both types. In order to fulfill the cultural role that such a character requires to avoid vanishing into ephemera, the character “must be an archetype, the totality of certain collective aspirations; and therefore he must necessarily become immobilized in an emblematic and fixed nature which renders him easily recognizable (this is what happens to Superman)” (110). The characters must become cultural icons in order to be memorable, and therefore must adhere to certain characteristics without wavering. However, while the modern audience needs the characters to remain fixed to be memorable, they also demand the aforementioned uncertainty of the story to remain engaged in the narrative. Eco argues that with Superman “since he is marketed in the sphere of a ‘romantic’ production for a public that consumes ‘romances’, he must be subjected to a development which is typical, as we have seen, of novelistic characters” (110). A superhero character like Superman definitely falls into this category, but additionally has the burden or advantage of being involved in a continually ongoing narrative.

And perhaps Eco should have considered the impact of the ongoing narrative before relating the potential differentiation from mythological characters of the past. Certainly, the heroic figures of myth require that a certain level of fixed attributes continually appear in both themselves and their exploits; however, the oral traditions from which these figures developed only came to us as the fixed narratives we see after many different tellings and re-tellings. Various incarnations of the Arthurian myth have been told in literature, but take one look at the various heroic cycles within that

mythology and the characters will be found far from fixed. True, the Arthurian characters were a product of “romances” but they still held many traits of the mythological hero as well, so perhaps the distinction Eco gives Superman and other superheroes is not as rare as he states here.

In the next section where Eco dives into the distinction even more, the date of the writing invalidates some of his theories regarding the exploits of Superman if they had not already been nullified. When the original article by Eco was published in 1962, the DC multiverse had been introduced a few months earlier in the September 1961 issue of *The Flash* #123, but that issue written by Gardner Fox and illustrated by Carmen Infantino along with key editorial direction by Julius Schwartz merely dipped the proverbial toe into the amount of narrative complexity that DC would eventually utilize with Earths-1 and -2, along with the rest of the vast multiverse. In a subsection title “The plot and the ‘consumption’ of the character,” Eco begins delineating between tragic and novelistic plots. He notes that the tragic plot has a point to which it is headed, that everything will “culminate in a catastrophe”; whereas, the novelistic plot “must proliferate as much as possible *ad infinitum*” (110). He uses the example of Alexandre Dumas’s *Three Musketeers* and their adventures that extend beyond the initial novel. He asserts that series as “an example of narrative plot which multiplies like a tapeworm; the greater its capacity to sustain itself through an indefinite series of contrasts, oppositions, crises, and solutions, the more vital it seems” (110). If an examination simply looks at the continual newstrip and Golden and Silver Age Superman comics, which primarily consisted of quick, but never-ending, series of exploits for Superman to overcome on a

continual regular basis (be it daily, weekly, or monthly depending on the format), then Superman might be situated within a similar “tapeworm”-type narrative plot structure.

However, Superman comics (and perhaps the *Three Musketeers* themselves) have narratives much more complicated than Eco assumes. Going back to the Arthurian romance example, just because the heroes have ever expanding adventures rather than the predetermined fall, does not make the characters any less iconic. Sherlock Holmes as so often referred to in the Lewis article earlier would be a prime example. In fact, Eco makes a major mistake here with novelistic characters and with Superman in particular. He argues Superman to be “by definition the character whom nothing can impede, finds himself in the worrisome narrative situation of being a hero without an adversary and therefore without the possibility of any development” (110). This statement clearly underappreciates the impact of Superman’s prime nemesis Lex Luthor as well as many others amongst his rogues gallery that while lacking the depth and diversity of Batman’s and Spider-man’s adversaries still proves quite formidable to the Kryptonian.

Superman, despite possessing powers and abilities able to rival almost any potential opponent, still faces multiple threats that challenge him through his many exploits. Very few modern villains in any media or genre have attained the iconic status that Lex Luthor enjoys in American culture. He challenges the man from Krypton not by physical strength, but through his mental acumen. While Superman represents a humanity mixed with the perfection of the divine, making him comparable to many other messiah-like characters (a status that blurs where Superman should actually fall within the distinction that Eco is attempting to make here), Lex Luthor represents humanity at both its peak and basest desires, making him an excellent foil for the Man of Steel.

Luthor's mind has reached the pinnacle of human ambition, but this ambition drives him towards a career of corruption and immoral behavior in his attempt to rid the Earth of the otherworldly and superior nature of Kryptonian Superman. The fact that his own personal pride becomes all-consuming in defiance of divinity allows him a Promethean claim towards opposition to the Zeus of superhero mythology. He continually and mercilessly plots the tragic fall of the Superman icon taking on the personas of various American touchstones for villainy from mad scientist to the scruple-lacking 1980s businessman ala Gordon Gecko to the corrupt politician of the early 21st century. For Eco to deny such a foe so highly regarded in modern culture's perception of villainy is a bit dubious.

But Luthor is not the only opponent of iconic Superman. While Luthor challenges the Man of Steel through use of technology and genius from the embodiment of human ambition, Brainiac does the same but as both alien and computer. Metallo may be little more than the personification of Superman's Achilles' heel (a subject Eco rightly criticizes as little more than a plot device), but he also represents a response by the military-industrial complex of modern America to the superhuman amongst them. The Parasite literally drains power from beings of great strength and power. Mr. Mxyzptlk shows how physical gifts are limited to certain dimensional limitations. Darkseid rests atop a pantheon of evil. General Zod represents a potential father figure who opposes everything Superman's biological father stood for. And finally, Doomsday is literally what his name represents. Superman may rarely lose a battle, but his villains frequently do "impede" his efforts.

However, Eco does present an interesting proposition concerning the narrative of Superman in his various media, but particularly in regards to serial stories like comic books. Eco begins his presentation of this narrative proposition by disparaging the cognitive ability of comic book readers, stating “his public, for precise psychological reasons, cannot keep together the various moments of a narrative process over the space of several days” (110). This dismissive assessment demonstrates that Eco does not anticipate the rise of current comics fans and their obsessions with continuity or deciphering of every small allusion in a Grant Morrison comic; however, he does provide an insightful analysis of the two effects that Superman writers can employ to reasonably keep continuing the narrative. As Superman defeats the perpetual series of obstacles standing in the way of his mission of “truth, justice, and the American way,” these effects are generated as “the reader is struck by the strangeness of the obstacles” and “thanks to the hero’s unquestionable superiority, the crisis is rapidly resolved” (111). Eco asserts that because of these two effects at the end of the crisis of obstacles Superman has not come to the sort of resolution that is required within a novelistic narrative but “has still *accomplished something*” (111) since the matter of surmounting any obstacle must logically “consume” some of the time in his narrative.

The impact of these two effects demonstrates the precarious position that Superman rests upon as an in-between mythic and novelistic character. Eco presents the dilemma: “Superman cannot ‘consume’ himself, since a myth is ‘inconsumable’. The hero of the classical myth became ‘inconsumable’ precisely because he was already ‘consumed’ in some exemplary action” (111). However, he explains that Superman’s status as a modern day myth puts him in a unique position because he “is myth on

condition of being a creature immersed in everyday life, in the present, apparently tied to our own conditions of life and death, even if endowed with superior faculties. An immortal Superman would no longer be a man, but a god, and the public's identification with his double identity would fall by the wayside" (111). This statement does not recognize the significance of Superman's status of being completely human and completely Kryptonian as he has morphed from a Jewish heroic figure in the tradition of Moses to a Christian messiah figure over the years as a corporate entity in American popular culture, but it does lead into an engaging conversation regarding narrative consumption. As Eco asserts the Man of Steel "must remain 'inconsumable' and at the same time be 'consumed' according to the ways of everyday life" (111). He leads into the following discussion of narrative consumption with the assessment that the situation "demands a paradoxical solution with regard to time" (111).

Eco then embarks on an examination of time from its Aristotelian origins to the philosophical musings of Kant, Reichenbach, Sartre, Husserl, and others. He particularly focuses on the causality link between the past and the future, and examines how the temporal state of the future can be freedom in the case of Husserl while Sartre asserts that the past continually creates who we are (112-113). He then sums up this review of philosophy: "the subject situated in a temporal dimension is aware of the gravity and difficulty of his decisions, but at the same time he is aware that he must decide, that it is he who must decide, and that this process is linked to an indefinite series of necessary decision making that involves all other men" (113). Once establishing this idea, Eco moves to a discussion of time in Superman comics that while not pertinent to modern comics did describe the era of Golden Age and Silver Age comics. He describes a

scenario where the Superman stories do not really continue in a narrative timeline but instead “develop in a kind of oneiric climate—of which the reader is not aware at all—where what has happened before and what has happened after appear extremely hazy” (114). Nothing really continues along the timeline but instead the writers “add details to what had already been said” (114) which again brings to mind the oral tradition of storytelling. However, instead of making such a point, Eco delves into a section on “Imaginary Stories,” which this study will look at in more depth in Chapter V, and then states that Superman still remains apart from myth since he would become so “only if the reader loses control of the temporal relationships and renounces the need to reason on their basis, thereby giving himself up to the uncontrollable flux of the stories which are accessible to him and, at the same time, holding on to the illusion of a continuous present” (116). This idea presents some interesting implications for the American mythology that is superheroes which will also be examined more in-depth in this dissertation’s fifth chapter.

Nonetheless, as he seems to be discounting the idea of Superman and the superhero as a myth, he then makes the case for them as particular to today’s modern consumer-driven society which some might argue firmly cements them as the pantheon of modern America. Eco asserts that the stories Superman exists in involve an elimination of time which he then compares to a similar elimination that occurs in the arena of advertising. He explains that according to Heidegger “advertising, as in propaganda, and in the area of human relations, the absence of the dimension of ‘planning’ is essential to establishing a paternalistic pedagogy, which requires the hidden persuasion that the subject is not responsible for his past, nor master of his future, nor

even subject to the laws of planning according to the three ‘ecstasies’ of temporality” (117). A consumerist-driven economy drives the participants towards thinking that the situation presented before them and the way products are presented do not occur due to any nefarious planning by the companies selling the products but instead are simply responses to the innate desires of the consumers themselves. Existing in a temporal reality that neither possesses a past nor creates consequences for its narrative future, Superman perhaps embodies the perfect hero for our postmodern, consumerist age which has become an era where the narrative audience is left “to respond to man’s desires, which themselves have been introduced in man in order to make him recognize that what he is offered is precisely what he would have planned” (117). Now, to describe superheroes as little more than ideal representatives of a completely capitalist narrative is to discount the diversity of their narratives, just as it is to discount the narratives as consumerist-driven in the first place; however, the tie that Eco’s analysis makes here to the larger culture, which can only be augmented considering the plethora of blockbuster superhero films that have been not only successes domestically but even more so in overseas markets as representatives of American culture, makes a very strong argument for superhero narratives as being a very accurate embodiment of a new American mythology.

It becomes quite clear though that Eco does not find this sort of mythology to be quite as valuable to our culture as older pantheons have been to theirs. Instead, he describes the type of stories in which Superman undergoes his exploits to have many similar types of narratives which he describes as a “device of iteration” (117) and explains as being prominent in advertising as well as the popular narratives of formulaic

fiction. The narrative crafted in such stories relies on generating a familiarity with readers in regards to certain concepts found within the stories such as mystery fiction which “have the by now historical ‘tics’ of Sherlock Holmes, the punctilious vanity of Hercule Poirot, the pipe and familiar fixes of Maigret, on up to the daily idiosyncrasies of the most unabashed heroes of postwar detective stories” (118). Eco asserts that the familiarity of these characters to us along with their specific traits is what draws us into the narrative world of the story just as much as the formulaic plot. He asserts that “[p]roof of this is when our favorite author writes a story in which the usual character does not appear and we are not even aware that the fundamental scheme of the book is still like the others: we read the book with a certain detachment and are immediately prone to judge it a ‘minor’ work, a momentary phenomenon, or an interlocutory remark” (118). However, an assertion can be made that such a practice for the reader is in actuality what makes these characters mythic. Does such a need to see Superman or Sherlock Holmes rather than a pale imitation thereof in a very similar work with no discernible weaker points in its plot than found in the standard story including the more well-known characters not actually speak to the timeless characteristics required of a myth?

In fact, Eco almost makes such a case as he makes Nero Wolfe an example illustrating his formula story and then expressing that even what he mentions barely scratches the surface of what those who are familiar with the stories can readily remember about the character. He illustrates “that the list of these *topoi* is such that it could exhaust almost every possibility of the events permitted within the number of pages allowed to each story” (119). The characters have become familiar, and the response

required whether or not this makes the characters mythic or not at all hinges upon whether or not this limitless number of continued characteristics makes for a formulaic fiction or characters who become archetypal. Included in each new story Eco even admits “are infinite variations of the theme; each crime has new psychological and economic motivations, each time the author devises what appears as a new situation. We say ‘appear’; the fact that the reader is never brought to verify the extent to which something new is told” (119). One could argue this as formulaic or assert that such complexity overriding simplicity in fact is what archetypes consist of. Eco certainly argues his answer proclaiming “attraction of the book, the sense of repose, of psychological extension which it is capable of conferring, lies in the fact that, plopped in an easy chair or in the seat of a train compartment, the reader continuously recovers, point by point, what he already knows, what he wants to know again: that is why he purchased the book” (119).

Eco asserts this scenario of formulaic tropes leads to focus on the moment as opposed to a narrative temporal development and examines how this has changed since the development of the novel noting “that mechanisms of this kind proliferate more widely in the popular narrative of today than in the eighteenth-century romantic *feuilleton*” (120). And has this infusion been the result of these figures being mythic heroes for our modern time? And do their narratives deserve to be treated as myth despite differing characteristics from the myths of old? Even Eco admits that it “remains to be asked if modern iterative mechanisms do not answer some profound need in contemporary man and, therefore, do not seem more justifiable and better motivated than we are inclined to admit at first glance” (120). Modern stories have diverted from the

standard of the novelistic character Eco established as a foil to the mythic example, but it must then be answered whether this change has established them as a different sort of myth or a different sort of character entirely.

Eco seems to answer that it is the latter. He notes that unlike eighteenth-century society which favored the “jolts” from literature that did not exist in their actual experience, for our modern industrial society filled with such “jolts”, a “narrative of a redundant nature would appear in this panorama as an indulgent invitation to repose, the only occasion of true relaxation offered to the consumer” (121). He states that “the cultured person” of our modern society in this frantic state of existence may need to find “relaxation and escape (healthy and indispensable) [which] tend toward triumphant infantile laziness and turn to the consumer product for pacification in an orgy of redundancy” (121). Eco clearly places Superman and similar figures into the category of figures made for escapist literature therefore casting his verdict upon their narratives in this particular debate. He also proposes how what he refers to here as an iterative scheme shapes the narrative world of the character, asserting that a study of Superman stories reveals that the particular “ideological contents” of the narratives “sustains itself and functions communicatively thanks to the narrative structure; on the other hand, the stories help define their expressive structure as the circular, static conveyance of a pedagogic message which is substantially immobilistic” (122).

Eco concludes his chapter on Superman by looking at how his civic consciousness regarding the world around him differs from his political consciousness. He begins by noting that in his conclusion his focus on Superman is something that can be applied to almost any other hero of the same genre explaining that Superman “is the most popular of

the heroes we talk about: he not only represents the forerunner of the group (in 1938), but of all the characters he is still the one who is most carefully sketched, endowed with a recognizable personality, dug out of longstanding anecdote, and so he can be seen as the representative of all his similars” (122). The content of this statement prompts the question what a revision of Eco’s chapter would say today considering Batman has now surpassed Superman in terms of popularity, and Eco also refers to characters who now possess long histories such as the Fantastic Four and Spider-Man as recent additions.

Eco also makes a comparison between superhero narratives and children’s literature noting the inherent moral message being communicated in both before he delves further into what this means regarding the ethics of what such powerful beings should do with such gifts. He begins to wonder what a being with the power of Superman could do in regards to affecting the society around him since “[f]rom a man who could produce work and wealth in astronomic dimensions in a few seconds, one could expect the most bewildering political, economic, and technological upheavals in the world” (123). While this dilemma had not been explored in comics at the time of Eco’s writing, it has since been the focus of several alternative takes on superheroes, particularly in Mark Gruenwald’s *Squadron Supreme* where Marvel facsimiles of DC’s Justice League attempt to lord over the world as self-appointed oligarchs, but has remained absent from both DC and Marvel’s proper universes. It would be interesting to note how Eco would treat this narrative reality against the backdrop of PWT.

In the context of the narrative to the point of his writing, Eco ascertains that Superman in not taking such actions to fundamentally change the world as he is easily capable of achieving is due to him being “a perfect example of civic consciousness,

completely split from political consciousness” (123). Because he is ultimately involved in more cosmic matters, Superman does not take as large of an interest in matters more local according to Eco, an act extremely in contradiction to how the Clark Kent persona is often portrayed. It also drastically strays from the initial Golden Age version of Superman as originally created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster who was very much a crusader against corrupt politicians and their ilk. In his treatise on superheroes *Supergods*, popular comic writer Grant Morrison describes Superman as a “socialist” (26) and notes that in his first appearance in *Action Comics* #1 he had by the time of the first issue’s completion “apprehended no fewer than five lawbreakers *and* taken a moment to root out corruption in the US Senate” (10). The Superman that Eco describes in his essay as merely reactive to crimes against “private property” (123) clearly portrays a much more commercialized and capitalistic Superman that took shape later. It also fits his paradigm of the Superman narrative that he sums up as a situation where “plot must be static and must evade any development, because Superman *must* make virtue consist of many little activities on a small scale, never achieving a total awareness” (124). Eco’s assessment of Superman and his narrative scope bring insight into the world of comic book narrative, but do not recognize the full potential of the media due to a misunderstanding of the capability of the media and the narrative to explore more than the mere superfluous adventures to which Eco was familiar with in comics at the time.

Eco additionally explores the narrative and reader’s response to another pop culture icon as well in *The Role of the Reader* as he tackles the James Bond narrative two chapters later in “Narrative Structures in Fleming.” Eco begins his analysis of Bond by looking at the very first novel that Ian Fleming wrote for his spy protagonist, *Casino*

Royale. He introduces the reader to two particular characteristics that Bond shares with the potential “current literary influence” that is Mickey Spillane from the hard-boiled crime novel that was popular at the time. The first involves the ability when betrayed by his love interest he is able to take on “the Spillane characteristic of transforming love into hatred and tenderness into ferocity” (144), and the second involves is to remove “neurosis from the narrative possibilities” (145) as Mr. Bond, Agent 007 is able to ignore his self-doubts about himself and the mission he performs and instead launch himself at them without reservation following the events of the first novel and on into the following novels. Eco asserts that this Bond can be seen in all of the subsequent books as “there remains the scar on his cheek, the slightly cruel smile, the taste for good food, and a number of subsidiary characteristics minutely documented in the course of this first volume” (145). He becomes a force of nature rather than a self-doubting hero struggling with the morality of his actions. He becomes a figurative bullet to be fired into the narrative obstacles that confront him. In a sense, he becomes the embodiment of the hero Eco attempts to assert defines Superman who cannot expand his view beyond the little activities of virtue, which in this case would be more accurately termed: of political necessity.

Eco examines this transformation stating that Fleming utilizes not the four stages of psychological development needed for such a transformation as illustrated in the conversation with Mathis, but instead Eco asserts that Fleming “renounces all psychology as the motive of narrative and decides to transfer characters and situations to the level of an objective structural strategy” (146) in *Casino Royale*. Eco explains that he wishes “to examine in detail this narrative machine in order to identify the reasons for its success”

which he will do by executing a “plan to devise a descriptive table of the narrative structure in the works of Ian Fleming while evaluating for each structural element in the probable incidence upon the reader’s sensitivity” (146).

Eco begins this examination by looking at “a series of oppositions which allow a limited number of permutations and interactions” (147) which he sees as the framework upon which Fleming built his Bond novels. In looking for these oppositions, Eco finds “fourteen couples, four of which are opposing characters, the others being opposing values, variously personified by the four basic characters” (147). The four character oppositions he finds are: Bond-M, Bond-Villain, Villain-Woman, and Woman-Bond. Eco takes this first section of the chapter and explores the various opposing values as they are represented in the four character oppositions mentioned above.

Eco then demonstrates in the next section that the conflict between these various foils takes on a game-like hierarchy of what defeats what as in each novel

toward the end of the book the algebra has to follow a prearranged pattern: as in the Chinese game that 007 and Tanaka play at the beginning of *You Only Live Twice*, hand beats fist, fist beats two fingers, two fingers beat hand. M beats Bond, Bond beats the Villain, the Villain beats Woman, even if at first Bond beats Woman; the Free World beats Soviet Union, England beats the Impure Countries, Death beats Love, Moderation beats Excess, and so on. (155)

Eco describes how these rules can be used for a form of play by examining the difference between what he refers to as the Journey and the Meal (155). He argues that the Bond novels follow the setup of a Meal rather than a Journey because the Bond “novel, given

the rules of combination of oppositional couples, is fixed as a sequence of ‘moves’ inspired by the code and constituted according to a perfectly prearranged scheme” (156). These moves are eight in total, and while not always occurring in the same order and with some variation on the frequency of the move in a novel, the eight moves are constantly present. Eco argues that these variations or “collateral inventions are rich enough to form the muscles of the separate skeletons of narrative; they constitute one of the great attractions of Fleming’s work, but they do not testify, at least not obviously, to his powers of invention” (159).

After looking at how these moves are in every novel, with some “collateral inventions” in how they are presented to the reader, Eco then displays exactly how formulaic the Bond novels are giving a quick summary of the basics found in each one. This leads him to addressing the question regarding where narrative invention might occur in works such as this, and he asserts “in every detective story and in every hard-boiled novel, there is no basic variation, but rather the repetition of a habitual scheme in which the reader can recognize something he has already seen and of which he has grown fond” (160). Eco explains how the Fleming Bond novels demonstrate not a narrative to discover knowledge as a Journey narrative would require but instead readers focus on the Game and the scheme around which it is laid out to the reader. He makes a comparison of the Bond novel to a basketball game involving the Harlem Globetrotters. The spectators of such a game “know with absolute confidence that the Globetrotters will win: the pleasure lies in watching the trained virtuosity with which they defer the final moment, with what ingenious deviations they reconfirm the foregone conclusion, with what trickeries they make rings round their opponents” (160-161).

In the next section, Eco then moves to how this pop culture narrative which has been accused of harboring many reprehensible ideologies does not actually focus on them. Instead, he argues with contrary examples to this thesis that the Bond novels are not of “ideological opinion but purely for rhetorical purposes” (161). He defines these rhetorical purposes as “an art of persuasion which relies on *endoxa*, that is, on the common opinions shared by the majority of readers” (161). Eco describes Fleming’s purpose here as similar to the construction of fairy tales, and therefore, the ideological only occurs due to the desire to divide the world between the good and the bad. These works do not stand up to focused criticism because they are primarily just mirroring popular opinion of their audience. This mirroring actually makes for interesting implications for a PWT narrative analysis since in many of the popular culture texts that will be analyzed in this study, similar to the Bond novels, can also frequently be cited for this polarization trumping nuance reality. Possible worlds may be occasionally inserted into these narratives to give the narrative opportunity to delve into matters of greater social import while also not upsetting the status quo of the narrative.

Fleming’s character of Bond along with M, his Villains, and his Women exist according to Eco in “the static, inherent, dogmatic conservatism of fairy tales and myths, which transmit an elementary wisdom, constructed and communicated by a simple play of light and shade, by indisputable archetypes which do not permit critical distinction” (162). The names are almost as fairytale-esque as the superheroes mentioned earlier, and Eco displays the limited and defining aspects of the various characters including Bond whose name “Fleming affirms, almost by chance, to give the character an absolutely

common appearance, then it would be by chance, but also by guidance, that this model of style and success evokes the luxuries of Bond Street or treasury bonds” (163).

And of course, the utilization of words in Fleming is very suspect if assuming an idea of chance since as Eco points out in the fourth section the deft way the author employs them in his narrative. Eco notes that the author’s work “abounds in such passages of high technical skill which makes us see what he is describing, with a relish of the inessential, and which the narrative mechanism of the plot not only does not require but actually rejects” (166). Eco demonstrates that Fleming uses the twist of the voluminous focus on the inconsequential with the brief jump into the essential narrative displays his game of dichotomy once again. The author of Bond he explains “takes time to convey the familiar with photographic accuracy because it is with the familiar that he can solicit our capacity for identification” (167). It is a practice that can greatly be tied to why the comics writers mentioned above do not have such overwhelming forces as Superman and other pseudo-divine characters fundamentally transform their worlds. Such an action would pervert the world-building from construction as it would rob the reader of a proper initiation point in understanding the narrative’s physical space. It is here that Eco informs the final aspect of how Fleming’s work can be influential on the narrative world-building of pop culture and literary works as the world least removed from our own invites us into the narrative most deftly. In the fifth section, he concludes his study of Fleming and Bond by noting the literary merits of Fleming and asserts a noteworthiness that unfortunately he and others have allowed pop culture works to achieve but never surpass as he suggests “the extent to which it permits a disenchanting

reading, the work of Fleming represents a successful means of leisure, the result of skillful craftsmanship” (172).

Of course, as mentioned earlier, Eco’s primary contribution to PWT and the study of this dissertation can be found in the eighth chapter of *The Role of the Reader* entitled “*Lector in Fabula: Pragmatic Strategy in a Metanarrative Text.*” Eco begins this key chapter by presenting a short story by Alphonse Allais called *Un drame bien parisien*. He presents this very brief short story to the reader and then begins to outline how it draws out its Model Reader, thus returning to the thesis of the overall work this essay appears in. He explains to the reader how the short story works as a “textual trap” for the reader and adamantly asserts “its misfortune has been carefully planned, *Drame* does not represent a textual failure: it represents a metatextual achievement. *Drame* must be read twice: it asks for both a naïve and a critical reading, the latter being the interpretation of the former” (205). The short story tells of a married couple who go to a costume party to catch their partner in an act of infidelity; however, this simple story deceives the reader upon reading as “it tells at least three stories: (i) the story of what happens to its *dramatis personae*; (ii) the story of what happens to its naïve reader; (iii) the story of what happens to itself as a text (this third story being potentially the same as the story of what happens to the critical reader)” (205). Allais has predicted how his reader will read the book and has therefore launched an interesting case study for Eco’s thesis as he argues “the present essay is nothing else but the story of the adventures of *Drame*’s Model Reader” (205).

So, Eco then explains how this case study came to be via Allais’ composition of the story. He explains that in order for the last two chapters of the short story to make sense then there must have been some “postulating [of] a reader eager to make the

following hypotheses” (205). Eco explains these hypotheses as being that the couple Raoul and Marguerite must wear the suspected costumes in an attempt to catch their lover in the act and that the two masked individuals as the Templar and Pirogue must be Raoul and Marguerite in their respective disguises. Eco assumes that Allais must have foreseen the Model Reader as having the reading of each individual receiving the letter stating that their spouse will wear the respective costume and that the created lover will be wearing the other. However, here Eco asserts that

The text itself is of an adamant honesty; it never says anything to make one believe that Raoul or Marguerite plan to go to the ball; it presents the Piroque and the Templar at the ball without adding anything to make one believe that they are Raoul and Marguerite; it never says that Raoul and Marguerite have lovers. Therefore it is the reader (as an empirical accident independent of the text) who takes the responsibility for every mistake arising during his reading, and it is only the reader who makes mischievous innuendos about the projects of Raoul and Marguerite. (206)

The reader has not been given enough information to make the actions and reactions to make any logical sense whatsoever, but the execution of the plot to make a Model Reader make such assumptions in their own minds is where the brilliancy of the text lies. In order to achieve this scheme, Eco demonstrates that “the text postulates the presumptuous reader as one of its constitutive elements” (206). The mistakes belong to the reader but it is the text that has led the reader to such mistakes because “*Drame* takes into account his possible mistakes because *it has carefully planned and provoked them*” (206). Eco illustrates to his readers that Allais has made a very key contribution to the utilization of

PWT in narrative. He argues that “Allais is telling us that not only *Drame* but every text is made of two components: the information provided by the author and that added by the Model Reader, the latter being determined by the former—with various rates of freedom and necessity” (206). With such a demonstrated connection between the narrative and the reader, Eco has given the probability of his argument by demonstrating the freedom of possibility along with the authorial agency in creating the text that can control such agency in the reader thus allowing for the open text.

Eco displays how the reader is lured into the world of the text via various subcodes that as “speech-act strategies become evident only a second reading” (208). Allais instead uses these strategies so that “the naïve reader is lured by the familiar process of narrativity; he suspends his disbeliefs and wonders about the possible course of events” (208). The reader is literally ushered in and welcomed in order that he “brackets any extensional comparison and enters the world of *Drame* as if it were his own world” (208). Eco gives several ways in which the author utilizes various ideologies and assumptions that the Model Reader will make considering the text’s discursive strategies to which the Model Reader has become accustomed due to the era’s literature.

Eco also asserts how the text utilizes a *fabula in fabula* to lure the reader into the *fabula* itself. He suggests that the second chapter “not only anticipates the maze of objective contradictions through which the entire *fabula* will lead the reader, but also does what the reader himself is expected to do, that is, to transform his expectations (beliefs and desires) into actual states of the *fabula*” (213). And in this particular instance, Allais has utilized this concept so that “the theme of misunderstanding and

logical incoherence is overwhelmed by the theme of adultery” (213). It’s a strategy to blind the reader to the trickery being played by the discourse of the narrative itself.

Aside from misleading the reader by utilization of *fabulas* imbedded in *fabulas*, Eco also demonstrates how *Drame* utilizes another critical aspect of PWT as within the “discursive structure the reader is invited to fill up various empty phrastic spaces (texts are lazy machineries that ask someone to do part of their job)” while within “narrative structures, the reader is supposed to make forecasts concerning the future course of the *fabula*” (214). The result of these invites by the structure of the work both discursively and narratively becomes a mechanism to urge the reader to take what Eco refers to as inferential walks within the text. Eco demonstrates how these walks are employed by the text of *Drame* while additionally asserting that the concept of inferential walks being used by texts is no recent enterprise for narratives as one can find “[t]he whole universe of intertextuality, from Boccaccio to Shakespeare and further on, is ready to offer us a lot of hints as to satisfactory inferential walks” (215). These walks become possible due to the fact they “are supported by the repertory of similar events recorded by the intertextual encyclopedia” (216).

These inferential walks lead Eco to his examination of PWT as he looks at how possible worlds form within texts. He describes how the actual world of the text frequently comes into conflict with the world we find in the text desired by the character and just as often the actual textual world will also defy our expectations as readers. Eco states that

Both worlds are in the last analysis proved to be nonactual by the very fact that the further and the final states of the *fabula* outline a different course

of events. Both remain as the sketches of another story, the story that the actual one could have been had things gone differently (that is, had the fictional world, assumed as the ‘real’ one, been differently organized).”

(217)

Eco then delves into some semantic issues that go beyond the scope of this project, but as he positions himself within the scope of PWT he asserts one of his central tenets of research relating to PWT that scholarship should bring PWT back to literature since it derived from there (219). As he begins his trek of looking at PWT in literature though, Eco first establishes some definitions to begin his analysis:

- (i) a possible world is a *possible state of affairs* expressed by a set of relevant propositions where for every proposition either p or $\sim p$;
- (ii) as such it outlines a set of possible *individuals* along with their *properties*;
- (iii) since some of these properties or predicates are actions, a possible world is also a *possible course of events*;
- (iv) since this course of events is not actual, it must depend on the *propositional attitudes* of somebody; in other words, possible worlds are worlds imagined, believed, wished, and so on. (219)

Eco also describes how these possible worlds of narrative are separated from the construction of narrative as he describes how a historical narrative can be constructed that does not create a world other than our own versus the world of the fairy tale where world building coincides with the narration. He describes how the narrative of Little Red Riding Hood being told employs world building since the narrator must “furnish a world

with a limited number of individuals (mother, girl, grandmother, wolf, hunter, a wood, two houses, a gun) endowed with a limited number of properties holding only for that world; for instance, in this story wolves can speak and human beings have the property of not dying when devoured by wolves” (220).

Eco moves beyond from this idea as he explores that possible worlds are derived from cultural context “since no possible world sets up *ex nihilo* all its elements” (220). In a sense, Eco argues here that the gaps between what is provided for the composition of the narrative world and what the reader does not know is filled in by the societal constructs of the culture it was created or read in to the point that this “fictional text abundantly overlaps the world of the reader’s encyclopedia” (221). He relates how in consequence “all possible worlds, and fictional worlds in particular, pick up many of their individuals as already recognizable as such in the world of reference” (222). This idea has some real implications for PWT as characters and narrative worlds cross over into other texts via the vehicle of adaptations. A textual world of a play created in 17th century England may be adapted within the cultural context of the 21st century and generate a textual world of a film that includes characters whose interpretation comes not just from the construct by the original playwright but the various creators behind the film and its audience, but additionally the cultural constructions of scholars who have interpreted the original text and influenced the adapters and their audience. The world is adapted based on the references of adaptors and the audience. Codes of how to fill the gaps of the narrative world are influential at multiple points in the transmission from sender to addressee using Eco’s early terminology.

Eco increases the complexity here by referencing Hintikka and focusing on how these influences generate the world so that “our commitment to a possible world is an ‘ideological’ rather than an ontological matter” (223). He references how as explained by Hintikka that to someone in the Middle Age certain beliefs were considered true and therefore would have been considered true in any potential fictional worlds composed as the result of a narrative. The belief system of a writer or reader or “his encyclopedia had so molded his perceptual experience that, in the right hour of the day and with appropriate atmospheric and psychological conditions, he could have easily mistaken a deer for a unicorn” (223). Eco states that because of this reality our “world of reference is an encyclopedic construct” (223). The implications of that statement mean that the world we see has an ideological basis rather than existing independent of our belief systems. We then carry this ideology over when we construct possible fictional worlds from a standard of our actual one which we perceive according to ideology. Any potential possible world must be somewhat accessible from our own; thus “[t]o say that one world is accessible to another if the individuals living in the former can conceive of the latter presupposes that one is anthropomorphically putting oneself within a given world taken as the ‘actual’ one and trying to speculate whether what happens in another world fits the requirements of one’s own” (223). According to Eco, humans naturally relate any potential world to their own, but we do not immediately identify that we have culturally constructed our own world. This reality can make it sometimes difficult for us to find access into fictional worlds where we cannot find an identity since this new world seems so different from our own.

Eco delves into some signifying and philosophical minutiae regarding the encyclopedic entry points granted a potential reader looking for accessibility, but the main point of concern for this study resides in what is necessary for accessibility and what the writer and reader do with the access once it has been achieved. In terms of science fiction (which is a genre much of the works to be discussed in Chapters 3-5 of this dissertation reside in), Eco establishes that

It is possible to imagine a science-fiction novel in which there are closed causal chains, that is, in which A can cause B, B can cause C, and C can cause A. In this novel an individual can travel backward through time and become his own father, or find another self only a little younger, so that the reader no longer understands *who* is the original character. (233-234)

With this established possibility in a fictional world, Eco asserts how one might be told that a “necessary truth” is not true in that particular world; however, Eco asserts what this discrepancy between the two worlds truly is derives from what can be defined as “an *exception operator* like the Magic Donor in fairy tales or God in the theological explanation of miracles” (234). Eco makes the argument that instead of providing accessibility to the reader the possible worlds of these particular types of texts become accessible by subverting the idea of accessibility:

As a matter of fact, the proper effect of such narrative constructions (be they science-fiction novels or avant-garde texts in which the very notion of self-identity is challenged) is just that of producing a sense of logical uneasiness and of narrative discomfort. So they arouse a sense of suspicion in respect to our common beliefs and affect our disposition to

trust the most credited laws of the world of our encyclopedia. They *undermine* the world of our encyclopedia rather than build up another self-sustaining world. (234)

Of course, Eco's assessment in this particular instance predates the true rise of such texts into the reader's encyclopedia as the rules of such possible worlds have become part of the codes and subcodes that readers bring to the table or can now access pretty easily with the world wide web filled with such encyclopedic content. The *fabula* of Eco's examination has many more accessibilities to consider than just the mere mental activities of its characters as movement has now been made to include parallel universes and time paradoxes as just as likely to occur within a text. Eco's use of *Drame* came because he perceived it as a text that "seems to stay half-way: it lures its Model Reader into an excess of cooperation and then punishes him for having overdone it" (256). It is a text that seems to remain within the balance between "open" and "closed" texts; however, its uniqueness then would not be quite as such today. He concludes simply that it is "only a metatext speaking about the cooperative principle in narrativity and at the same time challenging our yearning for cooperation by gracefully punishing our pushiness" (256).

In the years since Eco's seminal text arrived on the scene of PWT, other theorists have arisen applying the lens of the theory. Some of the most notable examples have been Marie-Laure Ryan, Ruth Ronen, and Lubomír Doležal. Marie-Laure Ryan expands the role of narratology beyond the communication between writer and reader by including the concept of narratology in *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory*. She proposes with the advent of artificial intelligence arising from technological process to decipher messages such as narratives then "analytical tools

proposed by AI to narratology and text theory consist of conceptual units and of data structures” (7). Artificial intelligence brings a different map of communication beyond the sender/addressee map laid out by Eco since the machine will not have the experience of modal lexicons inherent within the human experience.

Ryan begins focusing on the idea of fiction as opposed to reality examining the relativity of the differentiation describing how “[d]iscourse can be classified according to whether it focuses on the center of a speaker’s system of reality (factual, a) or on a world at the periphery (world-creating, all other cases)” (29). The distinction of the difference between reality and fiction can be manipulated once the determination is made of the role of the world-generating narrative which according to Ryan can result in a displacement of where fiction lies. She describes how a “relocated speaker of a fiction may utter factual statements (c), fictional nonfactuals (d), or fiction within fiction (e), as either the main narrator or one of the characters...jumps the ontological boundary into yet another system of reality” (29). This concept returns PWT back to Lewis’s study of how truth can be achieved in fiction while also moving towards the accessibility of possible worlds as found in Eco. Using much of the same theory, Ryan focuses on how accessibility can be achieved between actual worlds and textual actual worlds and sees a correlation between the two connected to the text’s level of fictionality (46) leading to her theories on how these fictions are constructed from the text. One example of these theories is how our own beliefs and opinions can shape the state of fictionality of our own messages by how “our disagreements concerning the inventory of the real world, and the properties of its members” impact the textual actual worlds. For example, imagine the differences

in fictional textual worlds generated by two spy novels where one author is a conspiracy theorist whereas the other is not.

In the second part of *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory*, Ryan moves her focus more towards plot in narration and examines quite extensively its impact mapping it out in detail. She focuses on structure and dynamics but also examines how these aspects are a bit limiting due to the inability of artificial intelligence to truly produce plots of equality. She asserts

not all plots are created equal. Some configurations of facts present an intrinsic “tellability” which precedes their textualization. This is why some stories exist in numerous versions, survive translation, and transcend cultural boundaries. Narratologists have long been aware of this fact, but the problem of what accounts for the pretextual tellability of a narrative message is one of the most neglected areas of narratology. (148)

As a student of the interactions of artificial intelligence with narrative, Ryan does not merely try to incorporate narrative and technology seamlessly together, but instead she attempts to define what boundaries prevent such amalgamation detailing that “narrative boundaries present a concentric structure: each territory is contained within another, and as travelers cross the narrative space, they must reenter in reverse order each of the territories encountered on the way” (175). Her analysis demonstrates how technology can be combined with plot to create narrative but also points out the potential issues in attempting to do so.

Ryan explains “[t]he problem of formal representation of plots lies at the crossroads of several different disciplines: literary theory, discourse analysis, cognitive

psychology, and its favored instrument of research, artificial intelligence” (201). Her thesis demonstrates how technology can represent, and to a certain extent manipulate, plot, and proposes “a line of reasoning which I [Ryan] believe to constitute an improvement over other existing programs in the domain of aesthetic awareness, but of course this awareness should not be achieved at the cost of creativity” (256). She does not propose the computer so much as storyteller but instead as an assistant to storytelling as “[n]arratology defines the aesthetic resources that guide the computer, but through trial and error, the computer may teach narratology how to manage and orchestrate these resources” (257). She further argues that her “real importance of the seemingly hopeless enterprise of teaching computers the art of spinning tales does not reside in the output, but in the opportunity to test hypotheses” (257). Ultimately, Ryan’s primary conclusion regarding narratology comes as a rejection of equating fictionality with simple non-truths or “made-up” actions; instead, she sees plot forming a narrative that ultimately creates a world, one where the reader can be sent by the narrative. She summarizes that “[f]or the relocation to take place, the text must assert or imply the existence of an actual world” (259). These worlds that plots immerse readers in bring readers in touch not just with series of events that take place and could be easily replicated by artificial intelligence, but instead are narratively-generated places that readers find and plot guides them on a journey as will be seen in the following chapters of this dissertation focusing on such places like Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi and a Galaxy Far, Far Away.

Another major work in PWT comes via the work of Ruth Ronen, who despite the title of her 1994 book *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory*, examines how PWT addresses other areas of study as well. Ronen cites PWT in her study as “first as a general label for

a set of modal and referential concepts developed in logic and borrowed by other disciplines to describe diverse issues: from universes of discourse in linguistics, through fictional worlds and narrative multi-perspectives in literary theory, to physical reality in natural sciences” (5). In her study, PWT as applied to literary study remains an interdisciplinary problem and she focuses a lot of energy on examining the difference between a fictional world and a possible world. This examination takes up the first part of her study, and the second “focuses on the meeting place of fictionality and narrativity although dramatic texts as well as lyrical poetry and narrative prose all construct worlds or fragments of worlds” (13). In other words, she looks at narrative beyond the typical genre forms associated with it.

Ronen’s focus on possible worlds resides greatly in the emphasis on their importance philosophically as opposed to fiction merely existing as a series of events and fictional worlds being the spaces in which those events take place. Instead, she states that PWT allows a utilization of fiction as another possible way the world could be. She claims that the possible worlds of PWT “create a heterogenous paradigm that allows various conceptions for possible modes of existence” (21). She asserts that “it is fundamental to the idea of possible worlds that *possibility* is bound to the logic and probabilities of one world” (49). This theoretical tenet can explain her examination of PWT as an interdisciplinary study since the center world alluded to previously in this chapter is not the fictional one of the text necessarily, but instead the primary actual world. Surprisingly, this focus on the one world logic actually encourages rather than refuting the impossibility of worlds from postmodern literature which literary theorists have struggled with. She explains as “possible worlds represent states of affairs as ontic

spheres, impossibilities can be neutralized relative to different spheres (one proposition does not contradict another – each is valid in another sub-world); and indeterminacies (p and $\sim p$) can be made valid when each interpretation of an indeterminate position obtains in a different ontic sphere” (55). Ronen also places her views of accessibility between those asserted by Lewis and Ryan arguing that while their differentiation originates with “the fact that the problematic ontological status of reality is not an issue either in the logical models for accessibility or in the literary ones, but in each case for different reasons” (71) while for her “ontological status of reality is not an issue for logicians because an actual world is another compossible system with no privileged status over other possibilities” (71) While Lewis debates the ideas of what constitutes truth in fiction and Ryan sees accessibility extremely tied to the reference world (similar to Eco), Ronen’s view comes more in-line with the idea of seemingly improbable in PWT.

Additionally, building on the work of Ryan, Ronen examines the concept of fictionality within PWT and relates the conventions utilized to construct worlds and others that can be used to reconstruct them. She even postulates how the differing uses of the term “world” have impacted literary studies and notes that “the different interpretations involved in each use of *world* seem to escape the attention of literary theorists, and in different contexts different uses of the concept can be shown to emerge from different conceptual frameworks and to carry different meanings” (97). Her work in this particular respect should continue to be quite influential as PWT moves from “worlds” to “universes” as this study attempts in a couple of respects in later chapters.

After adding this particularly utilitarian nugget to future PWT studies, Ronen’s second stage of her study of PWT begins which returns to the concepts of fictionality and

narrativity which were such a large portion of Ryan's study. This particular part of her study returns to the modal system and how the constructed middle comes to be as relating to completeness or generating from focal perspective as Lewis asserts above. One importance of this debate which Ronen highlights is that "[t]he interaction between fictional entities and focalizers does not only determine the degree of factuality of world-components; this interaction motivates the very selection of elements forming domains of the fictional world" (180). Ronen adds her voice to this debate while also adding the impact of time in fictionality and actuality as an additional perspective of PWT before concluding her study that has provided fertile ground for future PWT theorists to explore and cultivate.

Of course, no review of PWT scholarship can be complete without looking at the work of Lubomír Doležel. His most recent and most comprehensive look at the subject can be found in his 2010 book, *Possible Worlds of Fiction and History*. In *Possible Worlds of Fiction and History*, Doležel focuses primarily on PWT as an aspect of postmodernism. He asserts that in regards to "the postmodern thesis that there is no fundamental difference between the fictional and the historical narrative" he believes that idea "applies to the discourse (textual) level of narrative" and "can be subverted if we shift from the level of discourse to the level of worlds" (viii).

His analysis begins by looking at postmodernism's focus on history and world-building. He examines how "the focus on ontological issues is characteristic not only of postmodern fiction but of postmodern writing and culture in general" (4). History itself according to a postmodern paradigm "suffers from the incurable malaise of signs, from their inability to pass from meaning to the world" (28), and Doležel's theory supports an

idea that in order to defeat the limits of semiotics in this particular case “a new understanding of the notion of world is required” (28). This idea leads to his conclusion of the necessity for PWT.

Doležel presents his argument by presenting various examples of postmodernism’s relationship with history looking at different works and how each deals with history and fact. He concludes after looking at counterfactuals and fictional worlds fit for history that “in the postmodern discussions of the relationship between fiction and history it reconfirms that the distinction between the *poietic* and the *noetic* reconstructions of the past is not abolished” (126). History becomes complex, and postmodernism along with PWT allows for the various aspects to be studied conclusively.

The field of PWT within narratology continues to be a fertile field for exploration. In the following chapters, the works of William Faulkner set in his created universe of Yoknapatawpha County along with a variety of pop culture universes generated from multiple medias will analyzed through the lens of PWT. This lens will allow an understanding of the evolution of authorship as it moves across the spectrum from lone author to the corporate. It will explore the fictional world as an ontological unit before diving into the multiverses of divergencies.

CHAPTER TWO

Faulkner's World: Yoknapatawpha

One place to begin a study of PWT is with the concept of a created world by a single author. Every time an author creates a work, he or she generates a world within which the text's characters, settings, and actions exist, but sometimes an individual author may decide to expand this concept beyond the contents of one individual work. When he began writing the Yoknapatawpha novels in 1929, William Faulkner created not only the textual centerpiece of his most widely acclaimed and read novels, but also a world of fiction equivalent to any of the fictional texts taking place within its borders. There, he generated family trees, built landmarks, and chronicled a history from which his characters would arise and interact.

Faulkner began the Yoknapatawpha novels with the publication of *Sartoris* (later titled *Flags in the Dust*) in 1929 and continued writing primarily within that setting until *Go Down, Moses* in 1942. The idea of an author working extensively within a specific geographical creation was not a novel idea by itself. One of Faulkner's mentors, Sherwood Anderson, certainly could stake his own claim with *Winesburg, Ohio*. John Pilkington, a scholar of Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha, notes in his study of the nine works *The Heart of Yoknapatawpha* that at the outset of Faulkner's creation of this fictional home base that "American literature contained a number of sharply defined configurations to which he responded" (xi). From Anderson's Winesburg to Ellen Glasgow's Virginia (xi), Yoknapatawpha had a few famous ancestors.

The story of Yoknapatawpha begins with the novel *Sartoris*, continues into a period of what most consider Faulkner's greatest works with *The Sound and the Fury*; As

I Lay Dying; *Sanctuary* (perhaps the aberration among the group as Faulkner wrote it as a moneymaking potboiler, but it still remains one of his most widely read works); *Light in August*; *Absalom, Absalom!*; and concludes with his Civil War novel *The Unvanquished*, the first of the Snopes trilogy *The Hamlet*, and the ambiguous-in-form *Go Down, Moses*. With *Sartoris* as the initial novel set in the Mississippi county, the literary beginnings of Yoknapatawpha County could be described as inauspicious. Faulkner himself felt quite confident about the book when he finished the manuscript in 1927 (Pilkington 3). The book proved to be much less exemplary in the eyes of others, but Faulkner's confidence in the subject matter still proved correct with the success of his later novels.

Faulkner knew the post-bellum South and realized the wealth of drama concerning the human condition that the soil fostered there. As he wrote *Sartoris*, he inserted local history, family genealogy, and rural legends of his own Mississippi hometown, giving the fictional county an authentic soul. Also, as a Southerner born in the shadow of the Civil War, Faulkner created a fictional world that could claim the scars of reality. The setting of *Sartoris* concerns itself with the Civil War past of his community and his own contemporary times. It serves the author's purpose as "the benchmark of the past from which the novelist measured motion (progression) to his own time" (Pilkington 8), while the contemporary setting of a generation facing its own war would mirror Faulkner's own times. Faulkner wished to take the drama of the Old South going to war and establish it as a standard from which the contemporary could be compared. The War against the Northern States had become the mythologized standard each following generation had to weigh its own accomplishments.

The setting of *Sartoris* does not bear the name of Yoknapatawpha County, but the fictional entity was created within *Sartoris*'s pages. According to Pilkington, the Yoknapatawpha that Faulkner introduced to the world in this novel served "the intention of re-creating in a book the world and feeling of his youth, a world and feeling that he believed would pass from him as he grew old" (6). Faulkner viewed the two Souths (the defeated of the Civil War and the surviving one that had survived only to facing World War I) as centers from which the human experience could be viewed with heightened awareness. He "alluded only to the locale and the characters that had their origin in his Mississippi youth" in order to create a more "personal" approach to *Sartoris* (6) as he generated a present and past that mirrored himself, his family, and his town. His great-grandfather, Colonel William Clark Falkner, for example, would provide the catalyst character for Yoknapatawpha, Colonel John Sartoris.

Joseph Blotner describes Sartoris as "molded substantially" (*Faulkner: A Biography* 5) from Faulkner's ancestor. And the fictional Colonel's family continues to feel the presence of their Confederate ancestor in a Mississippi county contemporary to Faulkner's own. Initially referred to as Yocona County by Faulkner, the fictional analogue of Faulkner's Lafayette County claimed Jefferson as its county seat (532). Faulkner quickly found a home in his new fictional creation, describing in a letter to his publisher, as he finished writing *Sartoris*, that it would be "the damdest [sic] best book you'll look at this year" (Blotner, *Selected Letters of William Faulkner* 38). Considering the novel's eventual reception His prediction was obviously wrong; however, the town and county that would produce many of the greatest characters and novels of the twentieth century had been created.

In *Sartoris*, the Civil War experiences of Colonel Sartoris wield a strong presence over the plot's conflicts. From the opening pages, the shadow of the family patriarch looms over the current characters as a reminder that this Southern world remains his. The opening sentence, which recalls that "old man Falls had brought John Sartoris into the room with him" (1), leads to Faulkner demonstrating how the fictional analogue to Colonel Falkner garners a greater emphasis than the novel's still-living characters. John Sartoris proves profoundly domineering because "[f]reed as he was of time and flesh, he was a far more palpable presence than either of the two old men" and "was far more palpable ... cemented by a common deafness to a dead period and so drawn thin by the slow attenuation of days" (1). Simon, old Bayard's aging driver, still communes with his former master, talking to him "as he labored about the stable or the flower beds or the lawn" (111). The old patriarch remains "that arrogant shade which dominated the house and the life that went on there and the whole scene itself, across which the railroad he had built ran punily with distance" (111). The days of the fratricidal war hold sway over Faulkner's characters just as they did their author, and the dead Colonel's memory fashions everything that would come after for generations in this conceived world. He exists more than the living.

The continued presence of the Civil War generation over its descendants in Faulkner's South came forth from an oral storytelling tradition. Following the defeat of Lee at the hands of Lincoln's federal government and its superior numbers, the pride of Southern masculinity, not just its military prowess but its perceived superiority of what it meant to be American, suffered an injury from which it could not recover. To combat this injury, Southern women began to weave the myth of the famed "Lost Cause" for

which their fathers, sons, and brothers had sacrificed so much. For Southerners following the Civil War into Reconstruction, the idea of The Lost Cause “came to represent a mood, or an attitude toward the past” and “took hold in specific arguments, organizations, and rituals, and for many Southerners it became a natural extension of evangelical piety, a civic religion that helped them link their sense of loss to a Christian conception of history” (Blight 258).

As a result of the religious fervor accompanying belief in The Lost Cause, canonization of the fathers, sons, and brothers allowed men like Colonels Falkner and Sartoris to have a divine presence continuing over their descendants. As Faulkner created his world of Yoknapatawpha County in the pages of *Sartoris*, he realized he would need to people his world with these patriarchs and saints of The Lost Cause in order for his fictionalized Mississippi to have authenticity. Colonel John Sartoris provides this element looming as a framing presence at the opening of the novel over old Bayard and continuing with him as he journeys home later to “the house John Sartoris had built stood among locusts and oaks” (6).

A storytelling culture also exists preserving this generation’s status for future generations which Faulkner utilizes the feminine voice of Aunt Jenny to promote. The younger sister of John Sartoris arrives in Yoknapatawpha “with leaded panes of varicolored glass ... brought from Carolina in a straw-filled hamper in ’69” (8), but these physical objects do not contain the whole of the family heirlooms she brings to Mississippi. Aunt Jenny comes to the Yoknapatawpha branch of the Sartorises as “a slender woman with a delicate replica of the Sartoris nose and that expression of indomitable and utter weariness which all Southern women had learned to wear” (8-9),

giving her the distinction of providing the continual yoke of the present to the primordial past of The Lost Cause. She tells Old Bayard and the rest of the Sartoris clan the story of his namesake and their family heritage to the Cause over and over about his foolish death prior to the second battle of Manassas. It is a story emblematic of the Lost Cause as “the tale itself grew richer and richer” with each retelling morphing from “a hare-brained prank of two heedless and reckless boys wild with their own youth” to a transformed tale of “a gallant and finely tragic focal point to which the history of the race ... altering the course of human events and purging the souls of men” (9). These stories told by Aunt Jenny and the other ladies of the South, many widowed or left childless or brotherless by the War, reach mythic proportions deifying the heroes beyond their actuality. Faulkner’s text admits that Old Bayard’s namesake “had been rather a handful even for Sartorises” (9) and described as a bit troublesome since the War allowed that “now Bayard would have something to do” (10). The generation of Faulkner could not live up to the religious entities which had replaced their historical forebears, so he would have to generate similar figures in his fictional Mississippi world. Even the known blemishes such as General Jeb Stuart’s assessment of the Carolina Bayard as “too reckless” (18) are glossed over as Aunt Jenny simply asserts that this god Stuart even higher on the pantheon of the Southern Cause, who she “danced a valse with ... in Baltimore in 58”, “had a strange sense of humor” (19).

The Southern ladies were not the only evangelists of this deification. Colonel John Sartoris himself proclaims the Confederate army to be “the goddamnedest army the world ever saw” (18). Others in the community also share this belief, and Old Man Falls will regale Bayard Sartoris with tales about his colonel father whether Bayard wants to

hear them or not. It can easily be understood how young men like Faulkner, born in a different generation from their legendary forebears, would find themselves with a sense of inferiority.

The Yoknapatawpha that Faulkner begins to shape in *Sartoris* contains these anxieties of his generation in order to reflect the Mississippi from his own experience. When young Bayard returns from World War I, he comes back changed in a way different from his ancestors with their fantastical experience at war. Bayard feels embarrassed that his brother John who “at least tipped his hat to a lady on the street” (74) died in combat while he survived. The reality of twentieth century war does not garner laurels similar to those of the Confederate veterans. Instead, this Sartoris declares that it “[t]akes damn near as big a fool to get hurt in a war as it does in peacetime” (44), and, as Simon describes to Old Bayard, jumps off the train before it reaches the depot “his own folks built” without his uniform on. Simon wonders, “reckon dem foreign folks is done somethin’ ter him” (5), but the cause can be found much closer to home in the roots of Yoknapatawpha County.

The conflict eating at young Bayard Sartoris rests at the core of the conflict between mythologized past and the Modernist era. As he constructed his world, Faulkner generated a clash between the two realities. He created his own mythology, which George Marion O’Donnell defined “in the spiritual geography of Mr. Faulkner’s work” as a creation of “two worlds: the Sartoris world and the Snopes world” (24). Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha was an act of “exploring the two worlds in detail, dramatizing the inevitable conflict between them” (24). The Sartoris family represents the old South and its golden age to Southern inhabitants like Faulkner, while the Snopeses were a depiction

of modern man who had strayed from the perceived Eden that had come before.

O'Donnell sees the struggle between the two as a contest “between humanism and naturalism” (24), but it can also be perceived as a world remembering a romanticized past while struggling with the modernism of the Twentieth Century.

Faulkner would continue this contrast in future works with families like the Compsons in *The Sound and the Fury* and the Bundren clan of *As I Lay Dying*, but Yoknapatawpha would begin here in *Sartoris*. The Sartoris family, with their colonel patriarch who returned from the War Between the States and built the town's railroad station, represented the regality of the antebellum South. The Sartorises “act traditionally ... always with an ethically responsible will” (24); whereas, a clan like “the Snopeses do[es] not recognize this point of view; acting only for self-interest, they acknowledge no ethical duty” and “are [ultimately] amoral” (24). With Yoknapatawpha's past mirrors Faulkner's own South, the differences between the influence commanded by members of such families would have been an immeasurable gulf. This situation mirrored the chasm between Christian torment and paradise as the landscape has fundamentally shifted in the soil of the fictional world the same as in the historical one.

Faulkner began his literary career as the Romantic era was still remembered, but the world around him, as well as literature, had shifted to Realism, Naturalism, and forward into the Modernist era. The memory of the Civil War and its soldiers still resided in the Romantic age, but the contemporary events of the Great War in Europe were fully a Modernist experience. As young Bayard returns from the European conflict that claimed the life of his twin brother, he struggles with the paradigm shift of his country. The accolades and laurels heaved upon his ancestors are not available to young

Bayard and were not an option for Faulkner. Bayard cannot start up his own regiment like his ancestor colonel nor even be the subject of a foolish, but glamorous, raid into enemy camp with the majestic Jeb Stuart as the Carolina cavalier who shares his name did.

Instead, the homecoming that awaits Bayard demonstrates the alienation of the modern world antagonizing over the remaining vestiges of the old. Both Bayards remove themselves from each other and their peers. No symbol represents this rift better than the new car young Bayard obtains as he arrives back home. Automobiles as they became popular represented a new era early in the Twentieth Century, and Faulkner will address the reactions they generated in later novels like *The Reivers*. But the tension caused by this new system of transportation settles into the forefront of the first novel of Yoknapatawpha.

One major definer of place has always been transportation. Go to any modern American city, and the existence of the Interstate highway has shaped that city by defining exactly where people will live and commerce will be conducted. Transportation gives birth to place. It always has. Cities arose on rivers, spice trade routes, and along elaborate Roman highways. Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha needed its transportation access as well. So Faulkner gave it Colonel Sartoris's railroad station: a monument to the patriarch still haunting his family and community as a presence of mythical force. The railroad station presented the past but illuminated the future, thus demonstrating the flaws of the Colonel's descendants in comparison. Almost as soon as the reader is introduced to Bayard and his world haunted by the Colonel still residing in the room, we find his mode of transportation as his servant Simon conveys him from the bank to home by

wagon driven by “the matched geldings glittering in the spring afternoon” (3). The journey from the financial institution he runs as the head of the Sartoris household to the family land attempts to retain all of the splendor of a world gone by with a man servant guiding the way along the rural path. An insulated world unsuccessfully attempts to keep the changes outside it from impacting it.

Young Bayard’s arrival completely unsettles this ancestral portrait. Faulkner, an aspiring airman himself, depicts the young Sartoris as a veteran of the Great War as a pilot who continually bemoans the fact of his brother’s death, repeating frequently that he could not stop him from going up on that “pop-gun.” His new automobile continues this modern alienation. He figuratively continues to fly around Yoknapatawpha bringing his emasculating war experience with him, and the friction it brings to his relationship with his grandfather parallels both Bayards’ inability to live up to the Yoknapatawpha male identity as established by their colonel forebear. He scares his grandfather’s driver Simon by tempting him into the vehicle and then zooming along much faster than the equine-adjusted driver can handle. They move “forward on a roar of sound like blurred thunder” (116) as Simon becomes frightened of the intrusion of the modern into his pastoral world feigning for protection from it as he “knelt in the floor with his eyes shut tightly” (117). This intrusion of the modern into the world of Yoknapatawpha illustrates the disillusion of what would later become the Lost Generation of the Modernist literary movement, and young Bayard serves a protagonist struggling with this new world much like Faulkner and others artists were doing themselves. He attempts to gain his masculinity in a way open to his ancestors by breaking the young stallion demonstrating the futility of attempting to return to the golden age of his family heritage. At least, that

is Faulkner's attempt in the novel. Critics such as John Pilkington have pointed out that the reason *Sartoris* is not a common answer when scholars list the landmark novels of Faulkner's career lies in the fact that young Bayard could not represent Faulkner's lofty ambitions as Pilkington asserts, "Bayard all too often appears to be merely an immature, romantic, and neurotic young man, a special case, too limited to be representative either of the Sartoris family traits or the plight of modern man" (32). Nevertheless, the attempt has been made by Faulkner to communicate the fact that the Sartoris family must accept its decline and live in a world fit for Snopeses.

Faulkner solidifies this concept of modernism's alienated man juxtaposed with the inherited romanticism of the Lost Cause in his fictional world in his next novel, *The Sound and the Fury*. It becomes quite obvious via "certain similarities between the two novels [which] suggest that he had by no means dismissed the subjects and themes he had treated in *Sartoris*" (35) although almost every critic will agree with Pilkington that "[i]n virtually every respect ... *The Sound and the Fury* is a better novel than its predecessor" (36). In this novel, Faulkner focuses on perhaps the most famous family that would come to populate Yoknapatawpha County. The Compsons, like the Sartorises before them, represent Old South aristocracy with deep bloodlines suddenly halted in a state of impotency. The narrative focuses on the four Compson children, who are also a part of the Lost Generation of Faulkner and his earlier protagonist young Bayard Sartoris. In writing his previous novel, the author of this new literary world "learned how the past could be made to illuminate the problems of the present and how the polarities of history could be made to measure motion and the quality of life" (33), and Faulkner would make excellent use of this lesson as he composed *The Sound and the Fury* bringing

Yoknapatawpha into further existence. The rural Mississippi county has more ontological gaps filled in. While possible worlds allows for the idea of minimal departure, Faulkner makes it less necessary for readers to fill in the gaps on their own as each of his novels makes Yoknapatawpha more complete.

The Sound and the Fury focuses around the four Compson children and divides the action into three sections narrated from the perspective of each of the male offspring (Benjy, Quentin, and Jason) with a fourth centered on their house servant Dilsey. As Cleanth Brooks explains, the “special technique was obviously of great personal importance to Faulkner, as evidenced by his several references to it in the last few years,” and this particular case proved well-suited, allowing the narrative to be “told through one obsessed consciousness after another, as we pass from Benjy’s near-mindlessness to the obsessed mind of Quentin and then to the very differently obsessed mind of Jason” (325). Faulkner also seems to have noticed the drawback of spotlighting the separation between the Civil War forebears and his contemporaries, choosing to instead “deal primarily with two generations: one that came to maturity in the 1890s, the generation skipped in *Sartoris*, and the other the generation of the 1920s that he had used in the earlier work” (Pilkington 35). The contrast would be less grandiose and more immediate in the lives of the characters, adding depth to the Compsons which was lacking in the Sartoris family.

Faulkner’s utilization of stream of consciousness narrative would also be central to the composition of his world, and the three sections by the different brothers “provide three quite different modes of interpretation” (Brooks 326) and “different conceptions of the love they imply” (327). As the man-child, Benjy represents a primal but also negated, and literally emasculated, love for his sister and the life she represents. His story shifts

dramatically from present to past without any filtering or guidance for the reader due to him being “[t]otally unable to reason, to link cause and effect” (Pilkington 39). The smallest shift in sensory information causes him to drift in and out of time. At one point, he narrates “I couldn’t smell trees anymore and I began to cry” which causes Caddy to hug him. As she does so, and then a moment later again, when her hat falls off Benjy continues to relate in the narrative that “I went away” (*The Sound and the Fury* 26). He views Yoknapatawpha much differently than any of Faulkner’s other characters as the past does not unfold for him but instead the moments shaping generations stand side by side with one another. He cannot delineate movement from one age to the next, but instead the “mind records as a camera captures a moment in time, and the moments he captures may be summoned again, not in logical sequence of thought but by association of ideas” (39). He represents modern man in a way that none of the Sartoris males could have.

Meanwhile, Quentin leaves the South and the world of Yoknapatawpha behind physically but not mentally. Olga Vickery notes that Quentin, like Benjy, “has constructed for himself a private world to which Caddy is essential, a world which is threatened and finally destroyed by her involvement in circumstance” (36). While Benjy jumps from one moment to another based on his surroundings, sparking memories he cannot contextualize in time, the very notion of time slays Quentin as he “is destroyed by his excessive awareness of it” (36). He suffers from being both “highly intelligent” and “emotionally disturbed,” and both traits devour him as “he usually makes too many connections, so many that his thoughts often become chaotic and metaphorical” (Pilkington 59). The intellectual young man leaves Yoknapatawpha County for Harvard

but cannot shift his worldview to his new surroundings and instead finds himself still haunted by the world he left behind.

His “obsession with the past is in fact a repudiation of the future” (Brooks 329) as he leads himself further toward the act of suicide in his section of the novel. Quentin has been impacted by the pressure of the ever looming Southern heritage found in the Lost Cause and feminine memorialization of the Southern ideal of yore. An understanding can be achieved here by examining how “[t]he curse upon Quentin and the rest of the Compsons is the presence of their hypochondriac, whining mother” (333). Her aristocratic view of the Yoknapatawpha world overwhelms each of her children in one way or another, disallowing them from making the world their own but rather being forced to adhere to hers. She looms over the Compsons more than even Colonel Sartoris and his railroad did his kin. The feminized ideal of both male and female is ultimately rejected by the Compson children, and Caddy’s refusal of feminine propriety helps propel Quentin into a state of disillusionment. Caddy’s promiscuity provokes a reaction in Quentin which Brooks defines as “Puritan.” Brooks proposes that Quentin’s reaction to Caddy is very much a classic case of a Puritan confronted with moral transgressions since “a common reaction and one quite natural to Puritanism is to try to define some point beyond which surely no one would venture to transgress—to find at least one act so horrible that everyone would be repelled by it” (332). In Quentin’s case, that act would be incest.

From Benjy’s section, which focuses on the neutered, emasculated Christ figure of modern man at the age of thirty-three on Good Friday April 7, 1928, the narrative of Quentin’s section primarily centers on the date of his suicide at Harvard on June 2, 1910.

Quentin's depiction of the world around him describes a place outside Yoknapatawpha, but also perhaps outside of reality considering his state of mind now as he thinks back to what has brought him to this moment. He begins his descent as he looks down on the world of Harvard and figures like Spode and remembers how he tried to remake the one he left behind by attempting to claim himself instead of Dalton Ames as the one who fornicated with his sister. His attempt to convince his father of this falsehood expressed in recollection—"I have committed incest I said Father it was I it was not Dalton Ames And when he put Dalton Ames. Dalton Ames. Dalton Ames." (51)—displays his persistent and obsessed desire to claim that which is outside of his control. Mr. Compson does not believe Quentin's attempt at a distorted paradigm shift. The attempt at union with his sister to subvert her own subversion of Victorian ideals drives Quentin so "it is not the body of his sister but the river of death to which Quentin gives himself" (Brooks 332).

The fictionalized union of Quentin with his sister also represents the ultimate devolvement of Southern heritage in the Compson clan. When Quentin thinks about his being at Harvard thinks to himself, that it is "*your mother's dream for sold Benjy's pasture for*" (65). The true implications of this statement for the demise of the Compsons can be found when examining the Appendix to the novel that Faulkner composed for the 1946 publication of Malcolm Cowley's *Portable Faulkner*. Benjy's pasture symbolizes the last vestige of the Compson land and their status as an important family within the Yoknapatawpha world. In the history of the Compsons given by Faulkner in the Appendix, the reader learns that Mr. Compson "sold the last of the property, except that fragment containing the house and the kitchengarden and the collapsing stables and one

servant's cabin in which Dilsey's family lived" (207), thereby demonstrating the fall of this once great family now reduced to "fragment[s]" with "collapsing stables." The great legacy of the family has fallen into disrepair and dwindles to nonexistence as even this last small birthright to a castrated son is bargained off by Mr. Compson "to a golfclub for the ready money with which his daughter Candace could have her fine wedding in April and his son Quentin could finish one year at Harvard and commit suicide in the following June of 1910" (207). The family heritage diminishes from the ruin of emasculation to the ephemera of youthful passions and suicidal angst.

Ephemera proving a logical parallel for the journey of Quentin, the Compson son who represents the family hope following Benjy, works not for a continuation of a legacy over time but ultimately a complete cessation of time. John Pilkington in his analysis of Benjy "frequently viewed as the pivotal character in the novel" additionally cites the Appendix as a revelatory piece regarding any interpretation of him and the Compson clan, firmly declaring that "every word in Faulkner's sketch merits the reader's careful attention" (46). In the Appendix, Pilkington explains one can find "Faulkner's own verdict upon Quentin ... which appears to cover all the important points raised in his monologue" (60). From this character sketch, several important points about the young Compson male can be discovered. To Quentin, his desire rests not towards the physical body of his sister, but instead represents the Old South, the death of which haunts both he and Bayard Sartoris before him as they exist in this tipping point reality Faulkner has created for them in Yoknapatawpha.

In the sketch, Faulkner states with certainty that Quentin "loved not his sister's body but some concept of Compson honor precariously and (he knew well) only

temporarily supported by the minute fragile membrane of her maidenhead as a miniature replica of all the whole vast globy earth may be poised on the nose of a trained seal” (*The Sound and the Fury* 207). Faulkner uses this opportunity to define Quentin’s state of disillusionment leading to his suicide not as a result of a taboo desire for his sister but instead a love for what her virginity represented to his family’s stature in the declining Old South. He continues stating that instead of the taboo he desired “some Presbyterian concept of eternal punishment” which allow him to stand in God’s stead and therefore “cast himself and his sister both into hell, where he could guard her forever and keep her forevermore intact amid the eternal flames” (207-208). Like Bayard, Quentin struggles against the harsh reality of the modern era so different from his ancestors. For him, the only way to duplicate the heroic deeds of yore and capture his own narrative within this Yoknapatawpha world is to hold to the ideal of Caddy even if it means flinging the two of them into hell itself. This frantic last attempt at recreating an ideal in this new world will prove him to be impotent in even carrying that out as he cannot convince his father of this unforgivable sin, but instead only flings himself down into the depths where he can stop time and meet the true object of his dearest affection, death. Faulkner describes Quentin as having “loved and lived in a deliberate and almost perverted anticipation of death as a lover loves and deliberately refrains from the waiting willing friendly tender incredible body of his beloved, until he can no longer bear not the refraining but the restraint and so flings, hurls himself, relinquishing, drowning” (208).

Quentin’s love for death brings his battle with time to a full culmination. The young man Cleanth Brooks refers to as the “incestuously Platonic lover” (327) marches forward with an “obsession with the past [that] is in fact a repudiation of the future”

(329). He wants to isolate time and prevent its continual destruction of the mythic world of his mother to which he can never belong. He must defeat that world which has defeated his own maturity. However, this battle with time is both daunting and futile.

Comparing the differences between both the past and present, Jean Paul-Sartre discussed the issue of time in the novel quite extensively. Sartre proposes the past as “a sort of super-reality; its contours are hard and clear, unchangeable,” while in contrast the present where Quentin faces his struggle is “nameless and fleeting, is helpless before it [(the past)]” (82). The two ideas of time conflict, but the past continually wins out due to its nature. The past perpetually affects the present preventing the modernist view of humanity demonstrated in Quentin. Sartre reminds: “The present is not; it becomes. Everything *was*” (82). The one cannot exist without the other already affecting it. It exists as an inescapable fact for characters like Bayard Sartoris and Quentin Compson peopling Faulkner’s world. Sartre believes that Faulkner’s ability to communicate this human condition has progressed from the first Yoknapatawpha novel to this second one as he notes in the first novel: “the past was called ‘the stories’ because it was a matter of family memories that had been constructed, because Faulkner had not yet found his technique” (82). In *The Sound and the Fury*, though, the novelist has begun to explore his ideas in the Yoknapatawpha landscape with much better insight and illustration. Sartre explores Faulkner in the contexts of other great writers who have used their heroes in a conflict with the concept of time, exploring Faulkner’s usage and that of contemporary writers like John Dos Passos, James Joyce, and, most notably. Marcel Proust (83-84). Sartre asserts that for Faulkner’s heroes, and particularly Quentin:

never look ahead. They face backwards as the car carries them along.

The coming suicide which casts its shadow over Quentin's last day is not a human possibility; not for a second does Quentin envisage the possibility of *not* killing himself. This suicide is an immobile wall, a thing which he approaches backwards, and which he neither wants to nor can conceive.

(85)

The modern human of Faulkner becomes not a heroic agent venturing into a quest world, but instead the world around him dictates for him what will come.

According to Faulkner himself, the world around Quentin Compson in *The Sound and the Fury* comes from one single image: Caddy and her muddy drawers. Faulkner related that "it began with the picture of the little girl's muddy drawers, climbing that tree to look in the parlor window with her brothers that didn't have the courage to climb the tree waiting to see what she saw" (Gwynn and Blotner 1). While Faulkner leaves Caddy without a voice of her own and allows her brothers to tell her story in their respective chapters, she serves as a sort of Gaia figure in the generation of the world in which they inhabit.

Pilkington places a biblical Genesis emphasis on world building in this scene by comparing Caddy to Eve and the tree she climbs as "a tree of knowledge, and the knowledge to be gained is the knowledge of death inside, but the boys below gain something of the knowledge of sex and life from the sight of the girl's muddy drawers" (37). Pilkington even notes the differing accounts in regard to the type of tree both in the novel and in Faulkner's recollection and how both demonstrate Caddy's role as a Gaia/Eve figure to her brothers constructing the narrative. He relates that "the reader's

understanding of the tree is enriched by the knowledge that it is a pear tree, whose fruit, shaped like a woman's womb, symbolizes fertility (captured in the Christmas carol of the partridge and the pear tree)" but that Faulkner later recalls it himself incorrectly despite its status as the "seminal image of the novel" as "an apple tree, almost as fitting a symbol since it is the ancient symbol of Adam and Eve's fall from paradise through their knowledge of the tree of good and evil" (37). The reader sees the world of Yoknapatawpha County through the eyes of the Compson brothers, but the fact that this world's creative genesis derives from the female cannot be questioned despite the narrative bias.

This feminine generation can become lost in the third section of the novel as the person of Jason comes to dominate. Regarding the section, Cleanth Brooks suggested "has in it some of the most brilliant writing that Faulkner ever did" (338). Brooks noted that Faulkner describes "a brutal and cold-hearted man" (338) who "exposes himself" by illustration "in a coldly furious monologue" (339). Faulkner expertly uses this method in the Jason section to negate the youngest Compson's portrayal of the world. As Brooks claims "Faulkner does more in these eighty pages to indict the shabby small-town businessman's view of life than Sinclair Lewis was able to achieve in several novels on the subject" (339). And this brutal perception of the universe ultimately destroys what is left of the world Quentin fought so desperately with, as Jason struggles with Caddy's daughter, also named Quentin, resulting in the Compson family and its world's ultimate ruin.

Brooks explains that Quentin the niece is merely a product of Jason's own harsh view of the world. She has been "[r]eared in a loveless home, lacking even what her

mother had in a way of family companionship ... [and] shows the effect of the pressures that have been exerted upon her all her life” (340). The young girl has become “cheap and thoughtless, and she has absorbed from her uncle something of his cruelty” (340). Olga Vickery asserts that Jason’s attempt to brutally exert such control over his realm actually leads to the downfall of all his plans and the world he attempts to create since his “concern with forms of action rather than with the actions themselves is reflected in his legalistic view of society and especially of ethics. It is on this view that the double irony of Miss Quentin’s theft hinges” (44). Victory continues stating that in “one unpremeditated act Miss Quentin destroys the work of years; more important, she is as safe from prosecution despite her heedlessness as Jason was because of all his care” (44). The male attempt to control the world ultimately results in a feminine destruction of it.

But why does the Compson family and their world need to be destroyed in Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha? Brooks explains that the Southern setting of the novel is similar to the William Butler Yeats’ play *Purgatory* (341). He relates that this particular geographic setting allows “the fact that the breakdown of a family can be exhibited more poignantly and significantly in a society which is old-fashioned and in which the family is still at the center” as it is with the Southern heritage of the Compsons (341). However, Brooks looks beyond the Compsons as this center of old-fashioned Southern values “to the contemporary American scene” (341), as well as it becomes additionally symbolic “of the disintegration of modern man” (341-342). The patrician class that the Compsons represent finds its tenuous hold upon their society rapidly diminishing and with Jason representing the last patriarch of this old society, a man Faulkner himself described as being “completely evil” and “the most vicious character in my opinion I ever thought of”

(Jelliffe 104). Faulkner is demonstrating that the time to move beyond the old order and enter a new world is well at hand.

However, by using Jason as the representative of the old order, Faulkner makes it clear that the vanishing world is not distinctly Southern, nor are the ills which are imposing demise upon it. Pilkington relates that “Jason’s monologue has been called the ‘least Southern’ of all the narratives of the novel. He seems more of a portrait of the small-town businessman typical of any region in the country than a specifically Southern figure” as he becomes “a sweeping indictment of the genus he represents” (73). Faulkner portrays this figure, not progress, as the destroyer of the Compson family heritage.

Noting Jason’s contempt for his siblings, Pilkington argues:

Jason always thinks of his sister as a “bitch” and despises her for cheating him of his chance in Herbert Head’s bank. His revenge upon Caddy takes the form of embezzling her money and ruining her daughter. Jason is equally contemptuous of his brother Quentin who had his chance, went to Harvard, and there learned only “how to go for a swim at night without knowing how to swim” (p. 213; p. 243). About Benjy, Jason is even more caustic because Benjy poses a threat to appearances. (72)

Jason ultimately destroys the family heritage of the Compsons. The ruin comes not as a result of Caddy’s deviating from sexual mores. Nor does the ruin come as a result of Quentin’s inability to accept the change and challenges that come with time’s battle against some mythical golden age similar to Modernism’s struggle with the twentieth century. And it does not even come because Benjy represents a castrated Southern masculinity and loss of pride. The death of the Compsons comes as the result of the

scheming capitalist who thinks he is the last bastion of Compson importance. His final failure occurs when he “discovers that Quentin has robbed him” (77), and her getaway down the pear tree parallels her mother’s ascent up the same tree. It serves for the Compson siblings as “the tree of knowledge, the knowledge of life and death, of bitterness and agony, without any compensating ecstasy and joy” (77).

In contrast to this descent, the one remnant of family heritage and strength that can be found at the conclusion of the novel is in the person of the maid servant Dilsey. The enduring presence of Dilsey accompanies the Compson children throughout the text, and the final section has been bestowed upon her in spite of her lack of a narrative voice. Instead of ending the novel with Jason’s section, Faulkner instead concludes with three final scenes which Pilkington describes as not merely tacked on but “appropriate, even necessary,” as each play “an important part in the conclusion of the Compson story” (78). The first scene is the one of the three that focuses on Dilsey as she takes the emasculated Benjy to church with her on Easter Sunday, presenting a decaying image of clan Compson for a wider Yoknapatawpha audience as “nowhere does Faulkner make a sharper contrast than between the joy of the Easter story and the fall of the house of Compson” (78). Yet, the knowledge of this contrast does not deter the indomitable Dilsey from taking the young man to church with her despite protests from her family “who are embarrassed by the presence of a ‘loony’” (78). In contrast to Jason’s frantic attempt to catch Quentin and the money which is the second of the three scenes of the final section, Brooks explains that “Dilsey finds her exaltation” in the service and Reverend Shegog’s sermon (345), which “describes Mary’s sorrow and the crucifixion of Jesus, but ends with the promise of resurrection and of ultimate glory in which all the

arisen dead 'whut got de blood en de ricklickshun of de Lamb' (313) shall participate" (345).

A new dawn is promised while the sunset falls on all of Jason's schemes and plans. The Bascomb trying to be a Compson fails because he attempts to take on an identity not his own while Dilsey and an almost understanding man-child Benjy are able to take in what Brooks describes as "a vision of eternity which gives meaning to time and will wipe away all tears in a final vindication of goodness and in a full consolation of those who mourn" (345). Perhaps, Faulkner suggests, the perseverance of Dilsey will eventually be of more import than any Southern family heritage, which can be neutered and perverted. Yoknapatawpha becomes a narrative world that recognizes something beyond its own structure, as Benjy attempts to acknowledge at the novel's conclusion as he wails at Luster driving the mare in the wrong direction. He stops once Jason takes the reins and puts it back in the proper order; however, it remains unclear what he truly protests. Or as a failed Christ figure does his protest proclaim the absurdity of it all?

Regardless, the composition of Yoknapatawpha County continued in *The Sound and the Fury* as it took a major theme of *Sartoris* (the decline of a moneyed Southern family heritage) and explored it with more depth demonstrating the world building across the two novels which would only increase in novels to come. In *As I Lay Dying*, the depth gives way to diversity. Whereas the first two Yoknapatawpha novels focused on the well-to-do families of the rural Mississippi county, *As I Lay Dying* tells the story of one barely subsisting. *As I Lay Dying* additionally remains a unique novel for Faulkner which Brooks cites "as good as Faulkner has ever done" and "a triumph in the management of tone" since it "daringly mingled the grotesque and the heroic, the comic

and the pathetic, pity and terror, creating a complexity of tone that has proved difficult for some readers to cope with” (141). The novel was written very quickly and without much revision, at least in comparison to other Faulkner novels (Pilkington 87-88), but is most remarkable for a structure which “consists of fifty-nine narrations or monologues, averaging about two pages in length, delivered by seven members of the Bundren family and eight ‘outsiders’” (Pilkington 88).

Pilkington examines the literary predecessors of Faulkner’s particular form for the novel citing the “kinship with the Elizabethan stage soliloquy is readily apparent, since in both play and story the character’s private speech reveals whatever portions of his experiences, thoughts, and motives the writer wishes to convey to the audience” (88). The events of the novel and Yoknapatawpha itself are shaped by these private monologues in which the characters communicate with the reader much like an actor in a Shakespearean play delivering an aside. An additional literary precedent is also apparent. Before Faulkner, “Browning and Tennyson took the soliloquy out of the theatre and refined it into single poems designed to reveal the complexities of the speaker’s character and at the same time to narrate an incident or story” (88). The Bundren family does this in individual chapters as well, but the most obvious link on their literary family tree can be found in the work of Edgar Lee Masters who, like Faulkner, used the dramatic device of the soliloquy and its development by the poets of the nineteenth century when he “published in *Spoon River Anthology* more than two hundred short poems purporting to be epitaphs or speeches from characters possessing the immunities that only death can give” (88-89).

Masters employed this technique in not only *Spoon River Anthology* but other works as well, and Pilkington cites him as “a distinct influence upon Sherwood Anderson and probably William Faulkner” (89). Although despite an admiration by Anderson, Pilkington admits Faulkner “never conceded any influence from Masters” as well as the idea of influence “passed directly from Masters to Faulkner or, as is more likely, from Masters and Anderson to Faulkner cannot be firmly established” (89-90). Nevertheless, the precedent of the monologue in crafting a world around it carried over in the three writers’ narrative worlds. In *As I Lay Dying*, Faulkner uses this monologue influence to, like Masters, both simultaneously create a world while telling the character’s perspectives as they journey through it. And if nothing else, the narrative of *As I Lay Dying* presents the reader with a journey narrative exploring Yoknapatawpha County in a way that the Sartoris and Compson families could not. With the Bundren family, Faulkner’s readers can explore places that the Sartoris and Compson families would never venture. The less aristocratic parts of Yoknapatawpha are on display.

The Bundren family is on a mission to bury their mother in Jefferson, and the ordeals they undergo before and after her death become the subject of the various monologues that create the story for the reader. Despite the ridiculous and outlandish actions that take place along the way, the journey is still heroic Brooks observes, “Faulkner is not portraying a quaintly horrifying Southern folkway. Few, if any, families in rural Mississippi would have attempted to do what the Bundrens did. Consider how all the non-Bundren characters within the novel regard the expedition” (142). The community around them does not understand the journey and do not view it as anything but absurd, yet the Bundrens remain undaunted in its completion despite their own

dysfunction. This situation leaves the reader pondering “why the Bundrens carry out their strange and difficult task, for it not only cuts across the community’s sense of what is fitting, but runs counter to the shiftless husband’s lethargy and irresponsibility, is opposed by at least one of the brothers, and involves the whole family in hardship, loss, danger, and injury” (142). The atypical family becomes heroic in its own sense as they journey through the community countering communal expectations with a familial bond.

This journey is undertaken by the Bundrens simply because it was their mother’s request, and it is a duty, an honor-bound duty, to make sure it is carried out the way the family matriarch wished. Brooks cites the importance of this fact, emphasizing its “general importance of honor in the novel deserves stress, especially since many readers associate a concern for honor only with Faulkner’s aristocrats and are not sufficiently aware of the sensitivity on that score exhibited by Faulkner’s poor whites” (143). Despite their many failings, both moral and self-improving, the Bundren family retains this emphasis on Southern honor. Southern honor allows the Bundrens to have a connection to the communal ideals; however, their absurd performance in trying to meet these ideals, places them firmly outside of the community.

Each of the three older brothers—Darl, Cash, and Jewel—has a different response to undertaking the journey, and the daughter, Dewey Dell, approves of its enterprise because she is pregnant and needs an abortion while the young child Vardaman cannot fully comprehend its significance. Anse the father takes on a unique position as Brooks describes him with “the profound inertia that Faulkner usually associates with women, who is apparently unaggressive, pliant, and resilient, but with tireless persistence tends toward her elected goal and is never fully deflected from it” (148), but the central

character through whom we may fully comprehend the Bundren family's functional status within a greater community lies with the deceased Addie.

In Addie, Faulkner presents a complicated persona upon whom he can impress the struggles of the poor white within the universe that Yoknapatawpha has become in a post-Civil War South. In some circumstances, she is much like young Bayard Sartoris and Jason Compson. Addie has become quite modern and therefore a non-romantic and practical individual, which Brooks associates as a feminine characteristic in Faulkner's works of "being completely committed to the concrete fact" (148). However, much like the male characters of Bayard and Jason, she has missed an important aspect of her life as the thing she finds in reflection that she "lacks, and what she yearns for, is some kind of communion" (149). Being devoid of this relationship with others and suffering a "malady Brooks describes as a "loss of the experience of community" (149), the deceased matriarch, occasionally narrating and shaping the world being created for the reader from beyond the grave, seeks out some way of connecting and reversing this condition.

Much of the text focuses on the entire Bundren family who seek to re-connect, or go along while disputing the endeavor, Addie to the community of her birth as they journey to Jefferson. However, to neglect Addie Bundren's own role in this journey is to neglect the entire novel. Pilkington explains Addie's brief and arguably influential space of direct influence upon the construction of the narrative and its world stating that "[e]xcept for her single, brief monologue, placed somewhat beyond the middle of the book, after her coffin has fallen in the river, she does not directly appear; and only if the reader believes that Anse and his children undertake their journey out of respect, duty, or affection for her, a concept to which very serious objections exist, does she influence the

journey plot” (105). But despite this perhaps inconsequential impact upon the narrative construction of the Yoknapatawpha of the *As I Lay Dying* narrative, a direct correlation between her presence in the novel and the struggle with being part of the narrative community exists not only as exemplified in the novel’s title but also in her unyielding physical presence continuing in the novel despite her mortal demise. Throughout the text, Pilkington explains that a “reader receives fragmentary and highly prejudiced glimpses of her through her family, the Tulls, Whitfield, and Peabody” (105). Despite being the subject voice of the novel’s title, she does not assume the customary position of a crafter of the narrative world; however, the narrative belongs to her “in a fashion at once very real but macabre and grotesque, she is an intensely present person throughout the novel, first as a dying woman and later as a putrefying corpse” (105).

And what does this “dying woman” and “putrefying corpse” reveal about herself through her presence? What connections or dislocations are credited to her as the narrative shapes its world via the various monologues? Pilkington answers these questions, stating first that “Faulkner offers the reader very little biographical information about Addie. Though she came from Jefferson, he learns nothing about her mother or siblings, if any, and about her father only the remark that he ‘used to say that the reason for living was to get ready to stay dead a long time’” (105). The Bundren matriarch comes from Jefferson while her family has been raised outside of it, but beyond those facts, the reader must imagine any innate connection she held within her formative years to Yoknapatawpha. She “taught in the country school, [so] she must have had an education, which, on the basis of the language in her monologue, lifts her considerably above the level of Anse and others” (105). At some point, the reader hypothesizes that

something must have occurred, removing her from her former rank to her now plebian status within the southern community that is Yoknapatawpha.

When the reader begins to endeavor in this speculative type of narrative and world shaping activity, several different possible worlds of Yoknapatawpha begin to exist. The responsive thoughts in the mind of the reader regarding Addie's former identity is a reaction prompted by Faulkner's narrative as it constructs a defined Yoknapatawpha. A return could be made here to Eco's ideas regarding open versus closed texts in order to observe a phenomenon in which the author has generated some codes for readers to interpret the narrative world via a certain paradigm; yet, Faulkner also left much interpretation up to chance regarding the educated reader's various logical musings in shaping the possible world of Addie Bundren's origins as a citizen of Yoknapatawpha. Readers can interpret Addie Bundren as they will. Pilkington asserts her representing how "a long-standing conflict between town and country appears in Addie and elsewhere in the novel and may partly account for her antagonism towards the rural people among whom she lives" (105).

In Faulkner's next novel, the division between the rural poor and town aristocracy becomes even more pronounced as Faulkner delves into potboiler fiction in *Sanctuary*. *Sanctuary* has never been regarded within the group of major Yoknapatawpha novels as *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying* have been along with *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Light In August* because Faulkner has stated several times that it was written primarily as a means to make money and appeal to common appetites of the time, but Pilkington argues that such admissions by Faulkner that it "was a 'cheap idea' as a result of its economically driven origin and his later comment that it was 'basely conceived'

tainted the work for years as a piece of sensationalism and commercialism” (111).

However, Pilkington asserts that such assessments are wrong, and most examinations of the work in the context of the greater Yoknapatawpha narrative would readily agree due to the extraordinary depth of its various subterfuges which continually disrupt the rural Mississippi hamlet.

Pilkington recounts a quite complex retelling of the novel’s composition illustrating how the narrative was far from quickly constructed for a commercial audience, but instead how it underwent numerous rewrites. By adding more about each of the complex central characters of the seedy tale, including Horace Benbow, Temple Drake, Lee Goodwin, and the demonic Popeye, Faulkner explored a side of the Southern community that he had left untold even in the dark comedy of *As I Lay Dying*. Perhaps the critique of Southern society found within Faulkner’s most commercial book can explain why “[s]ome of the most derogatory comments about the novel and its author came from Southern reviewers” (113). Such assessments should not be surprising given the novel’s bleak portrayal of humanity.

Brooks asserts that fundamentally the novel represents “the discovery of the nature of reality with the concomitant discovery of evil, and it recurs throughout Faulkner’s work” (116). Yoknapatawpha’s existence as a Fallen World in a very Biblical sense of Original Sin permeates the narrative genesis of *Sanctuary*. The novel describes how “the initiation of Horace Benbow has a much more somber ending. Instead of victory and moral vindication, Horace receives a stunning defeat” (116). He demonstrates “the man of academic mind, who finds out that the world is not a place of justice and moral tidiness” but instead “discovers, with increasing horror, that evil is

rooted in the very nature of things” (116). Evil permeates the world that Horace finds his eyes adjusting to perceive not just with monstrous forces of nature like Popeye, a perversion and evolution of the modern man torn from any system of value just like Jason Compson, but also in the corrupted Christian judgments of his sister Narcissa (introduced earlier in *Sartoris*) and the church ladies.

Pilkington investigates the historical inspiration for the very brutal book with its grisly depictions of murder and rape. He cites several potential sources of gangsterism and local violence that Faulkner could have looked to for inspiration: “Faulkner fused exceptionally well a number of seemingly diverse elements: the account of the bizarre abduction and rape of the girl from Memphis; the abortive journey of an Ole Miss coed to a baseball game in Starkville; the Memphis underworld of the tenderloin brothels and roadhouses; and the trial and lynching of an Oxford Negro” (120). Pilkington argues that by utilizing this plethora of criminal activity to forge his own narrative demonstrates “Faulkner’s skill in shaping these diverse but related elements into an artistic whole and into a commentary upon good and evil in modern life reveals the depth of his genius as a storyteller and a critic of society” (120).

Pilkington actually examines how this fourth Yoknapatawpha novel fits within the context of the previous three despite the initial juxtaposition. He asserts that despite being “divergent in subject matter and focus, *Sartoris*, *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying*, and *Sanctuary* were written from very similar philosophical positions and reflect Faulkner’s reaction to the spiritual struggles that plagued many writers in the 1920s” (120). He rightly points out how the first two novels focus on aristocratic families which take a dramatic fall from their former status in the hierarchy of Mississippi culture;

whereas, in the third novel, the Bundren family brings a uniquely lower class and rural perspective yet “are no better equipped for purposeful living than the aristocrats and much less intellectually aware of their plight” (120). Faulkner looks at figures even further on the margins of society in *Sanctuary*, but while doing so he does not leave the aristocratic view behind. Pilkington argues that they are even more important as “they more than the inhabitants of the underworld form the philosophical center of *Sanctuary*” (120). Bootleggers, prostitutes, brothel owners, and especially the grotesque rapist and murderer Popeye may shock and dominate the novel to most readers at the outset, but *Sanctuary* is probably more about Temple Drake, Narcissa Benbow, and others.

The crimes of Popeye and his evil existence entice the readers into the narrative as they look on with sublime fervor at his dastardly and brazen crimes, but it is the manipulation of the good “Christian” community he orchestrates that truly propels the narrative forward. Brooks explains that “Faulkner’s chosen methods are very effective for presenting scenes of action with almost intolerable immediacy, for rendering psychological states, and for building up a sense of foreboding and horror” (119). In his depiction of Popeye’s crime, Faulkner creates a world where Original Sin has not only been committed but still prevails. This fallen world motif may be a Christian allusion, a commentary upon the South’s defeated Cause for its own Original Sin, or a summation of modern man’s universe. Regardless, it represents the overwhelming presence of evil in Yoknapatawpha in “Faulkner’s bitterest novel ... in which the male’s initiation into the nature of evil is experienced in its most shattering and disillusioning form” (127). An evil that comes to the protagonist Horace in the form of his sister Narcissa.

Narcissa Benbow has already been unveiled in the narrative world of Yoknapatawpha in Faulkner's first novel set there. In *Sartoris*, she is "a rather sweet girl, shy, quiet, and dependent upon her brother" (Brooks 128). By the time of *Sanctuary* in the narrative timeline, things have changed as she "reveals a depravity that the reader, and certainly Horace himself, finds shocking" (128). Faulkner utilizes her façade established in *Sartoris* in order to depict a different kind of evil from Popeye, but nonetheless just as damaging and effective. As she thwarts Horace's efforts to exonerate Goodwin from a crime he did not commit, she represents the lack of good within the community which sacrifices right for the façade of morality's appearance. Narcissa and the other "church ladies" combat the administration of justice by utilizing every tool at their disposal to see a bootlegger like Goodwin convicted, regardless of his guilt in the matter at hand.

Narcissa represents a particular type of evil to be thrust upon Horace, and according to Brooks second only "to Popeye, [she] is the most frightening person in this novel, as she pitilessly moves on to her own ends with no regard for justice and no concern for the claims of truth" (128). In fact, the female sex itself may represent evil to the naïve protagonist as he finds a distinctly feminine aspect to the evil he perceives, harkening back to the Original Sins of Eve and Pandora. Brooks asserts that while Narcissa and the "church ladies" are undoubtedly perpetrating evil by undermining Horace's attempt to exonerate Goodwin regardless of guilt or innocence. However, not all of the evil that Horace perceives should be taken quite so literally as perhaps the "most important facet of Horace's discovery of the true nature of woman involves his stepdaughter, Little Belle" (128).

As Brooks suggests, Horace's infatuation with his stepdaughter and a dream sequence where he merges himself and her with the raped body of Temple demonstrates both how the lawyer "in an agony of empathy has felt himself into the raped girl's ordeal" and "the evil within himself—incestuous feelings which he suddenly realizes he has for his stepdaughter" (129). Simultaneous in this dream sequence, Horace sees his own evil being thrust upon femininity in a sexist attempt to define Original Sin, but there is innocence as well. The scene depicts "the evil to which a sweet young girl is exposed and, more darkly, the disposition to evil which lurks within such a girl" (129). Faulkner is creating a world where religion, community standards, and relationships between the sexes and classes all come under great scrutiny. These issues will be formulated into definition even further in the fifth Yoknapatawpha novel.

Following the pot-boiler of *Sanctuary*, Faulkner produced his two most nuanced and artistic novels in *Light in August* and *Absalom, Absalom!* Both rank among any list of greatest American novels, let alone Southern literature. In these two works, the full majesty of the narrative construction that bears the name Yoknapatawpha comes to the forefront. As the themes he has been delving into come to maturity in these prose works, Faulkner finds his high water mark as an artist.

In *Light in August*, Faulkner's creation becomes ever more complex and intricate as the fictional town of Jefferson comes truly alive with characters with lives so muddled with issues that it seems like Faulkner has achieved the depiction of the human condition he was working up to in previous novels. Sexuality, race, class, religion, and a host of other issues come into examination but leave the reader pondering these large questions as they should. A narrative reality as complex as reality itself has overtaken Faulkner's

world. Pilkington sees a connection between the novel and *Sanctuary* referring to it as a novel that asserts itself with a “plunge [of] the reader down into the gloomy depths of human degradation” as it allows the reader to “uncover the hearts of those who neither ‘fit in’ nor ‘relate’ affirmatively to society yet as human beings desperately need its compassion and understanding” (135).

With memorable characters like Joe Christmas, Gail Hightower, and Lena Grove, *Light in August* displayed Faulkner at his ambitious best in peopling Yoknapatawpha with complex characters whose stories allowed him to really delve into the soil of his world. Pilkington asserts that what connects the novel to the previous one is “Faulkner’s treatment of the religious elements of the Jefferson community” (136). The depiction of the fundamentalist Christianity of the South is much harsher though in *Light in August*. It becomes a paramount antagonist in the lives of characters like Joe Christmas possibly assisting, if not leading him to, the acts of depravity which he commits as well as being a burden upon Reverend Hightower and others. Pilkington argues that “[b]y associating it [Southern Christianity] with racism and sex, Faulkner greatly expanded the criticism he had begun in *Sanctuary*. Not since Sinclair Lewis’ *Elmer Gantry*, published in 1927, had an American novelist mounted so explosive an attack upon religious fundamentalism as Faulkner made in *Light in August*” (136). Considering the work’s title, the nature of spirituality often associated with light has to be taken into account.

Pilkington examines the various theories regarding the novel’s title and Faulkner’s responses to such theories without much satisfactory conclusion; however, there can be no doubt that the naming of the work is important. Perhaps, it may symbolize the fallen and decaying state of this small Southern town of Jefferson and

surrounding Yoknapatawpha as it struggles in its fallen state throughout so many of the previous works in a post-bellum and modern world inching towards the end of its summer. In this novel, the Christian spiritual light that is frequently associated with a Savior from Galilee has become impotent to redeem the world of Faulkner's narrative. Of course, as Pilkington points out, Faulkner did make one slight change to the manuscript that may debunk such associations as he states

In the autograph manuscript, Joe Christmas arrived in Jefferson at the age of thirty; thus, his death would have occurred when he was age thirty-three. Very likely because Faulkner did not wish to make an analogy between Christmas and Christ (their initials are the same) too exact, he changed the date so that Christmas would die at age thirty-six. The alteration weakens the case of those who understand Joe Christmas as a Christ-symbol. (138)

Of course, the point could also be made that Faulkner did not want to drive the religious issue too far either. He had made things bleak enough in Yoknapatawpha County. The distinction was made clearly enough already.

Beyond the title, *Light in August* is more a story of Jefferson and its environs filled with fascinating characters. Pilkington centralizes that theme by noting the lack of interaction between the two major characters of the novel, Joe Christmas and Lena Grove. He points out the plots of the two characters are completely separate to the point that they never interact (139). This fact becomes of major interest to those who assert that Faulkner failed to unify the novel. Perhaps Faulkner wanted to do something different.

Like the works of Edgar Lee Masters and Sherwood Anderson, Faulkner may be using *Light in August* to tell a story of characters who are not artificially thrust together. They interact with people who might connect them by degrees as would be typical in any small town, but their stories may continue quite separately, much as they would in reality. And as Pilkington demonstrates, the two are linked thematically: “the most important contribution of the Lena Grove story to the artistic wholeness in *Light in August* is that of contrast, often called counterpoint, to that of Joe Christmas. In most respects, she and her experiences are almost exact opposites to the personality of Christmas and the events in his life” (140). In fact, the juxtaposition between the two presents a sort of unity. Lena’s baby, which is born in Byron Bunch’s cabin just as Joe flees from the town with the Burden House in flames, will not be born with the burdens that have plagued Christmas, who, despite being born “a bastard, her son is not a pariah, an Ishmael, or an outcast” (143).

Brooks also focuses on the issue of unity within the novel. He proposes the fact that most of the primary characters in the novel “are drawn from the ranks of the plain people and most of them exhibit a Puritan ethic” (47). Brooks sees this factor as a development of the many themes Faulkner has been building up in previous novels. In fact, Brooks sees *Light in August* as a fully “mature novel” within the Yoknapatawpha cycle and therefore a place one can witness Faulkner’s most important “themes receive full development” and become “embedded in the fictional structure” (47), which therefore leads the critic to place *Light in August* as the first subject of his examination of the Yoknapatawpha novels. However, even with all of these themes being presented by Faulkner at his pinnacle, as Brooks asserts, “[n]o novel of Faulkner’s exhibits more

brilliant writing or abounds in a greater number of memorable individual scenes” (47).

The admission is still made by Brooks, who even asserts that it is a common one held by even the most admiring of critics (48-49), that the novel lacks unity. For Brooks, the closest thing to unity binding the stories of the novel together can be found in the idea of community and place of pariah Joe Christmas within it.

The concept of community, Brooks asserts, “demands special consideration at this point, for the community is the powerful though invisible force that quietly exerts itself in so much of Faulkner’s work” (52). The invisible aspect of the community, according to Brooks is a major consequence of the frequent misunderstanding of Faulkner’s work by readers. Faulkner’s creation of Yoknapatawpha has a great deal of influence on the generation of this unnamed, slightly hidden, yet extremely powerful, force acting upon his novels and characters. The novels take place in a South that, as mentioned before, is still finding its identity. As the South searches for its identity, the country and world it is attempting to reconcile with are themselves in the midst of another conflict (World War I and the rise of the modern age) inflicting an identity crisis upon the rest of the world mirroring the South and Yoknapatawpha’s own struggles. Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha exists as a community of the defeated, and each individual member of the community, and the community itself, must find a way to deal with this paradigm.

Brooks asserts that “a little reflection will show that nearly all the characters in *Light in August* bear a special relation to the community,” and he defines their relationship to it as “outcasts—they are pariahs, defiant exiles, withdrawn quietists, or simply strangers” (53). This categorization includes not only Joe Christmas but many of the other characters. Several different characters find themselves shunned by the

community for a variety of reasons, but as Brooks explains, no character represents the community itself. He explains that “the community itself, the great counterforce to which these characters are attracted or against which they are reacting, has no special representatives in the novel and need have none” (53). In *Sanctuary*, Faulkner used Narcissa Benbow and the church women as the representatives of the community passing judgment upon the various outsiders of that novel, but in *Light in August* the community has become more of a pervasive environment that does not need any particular individual representation.

Additionally, the community does not have a representative because Faulkner does not want to portray it as solely negative either. The community of *Light in August* does not focus on the use of religious fundamentalism and its hypocrisy in a South overly concerned with piety while ignoring its rampant hypocrisy founded upon the original sin of chattel slavery. Instead, *Light in August* allows for a more complex world to be built up to embody the community, and it is a community that holds the positive attributes of unity which has been lost in the modern world. Brooks explains that “to gauge the importance of the community in this novel is by imagining the action to have taken place in Chicago or Manhattan Island, where the community—at least in Faulkner’s sense—does not exist” (54). He cites how the various examples of human degradation that occurs “could be easily accounted for: The frustration and rage of Joe Christmas, the murder of the lonely old maid, Miss Burden, and the moral impotence and isolation of Hightower are situations and events that occur frequently enough in the setting of the great modern world cities” (54). *Light in August* unites by showing alienation where it

can still exist in the modern world. The lack of unity that most decipher in the novel is a result of the lack of unity in the modern reader's human experience.

Faulkner sees his native South as fatally flawed but also promising for humanity in its attempt to keep community alive despite the region's own hostile attempts at providing this necessary human connection. For him, the South as he constructs it in Yoknapatawpha contains various paradigms that are slowly becoming extinct, and as they vanish from the modern world, Faulkner examines those whose passing should be rejoiced and those whose departure from human interaction should be lamented. If this aspect of Faulkner's narrative world is not understood, one will not comprehend the tissue that does connect *Light in August*. These connections will be examined further and more explicitly as Quentin Compson helps build the world with Faulkner in *Absalom, Absalom!*

Absalom, Absalom!, along with *Light in August*, arguably Faulkner's most mature and complex works, focuses on the character of Quentin Compson. Within this novel, Quentin constructs a narrative that he relates to his Harvard roommate, Shreve. This narrative brings more life to the narrative world Faulkner has created around Quentin by delving into Yoknapatawpha's history. Faulkner presents a narrative that is about constructing a narrative from other narratives. This approach allows a reader's perception of the narrative world to become fully developed over the course of the work. Young Quentin Compson, prior to the events of *The Sound and the Fury* including his eventual suicide, learns about the story of man-becoming-force-of-nature Thomas Sutpen from stories told to him by spinster neighbor Rosa Coldfield and his own father. The narratives of Miss Rosa and Mr. Compson, both biased, are used as the raw material for

the world created in Quentin and Shreve's Harvard dorm room as they create a history for the narrative world that belongs to their telling rather than history; yet, their biased account of history remains undeniably real as the substance of Yoknapatawpha in Quentin's young mind.

Quentin comes to tell the story of Sutpen, the epitome of the outsider who has crafted his own narrative as Southern patriarch, while struggling with his own decaying family heritage narrative. Sutpen impacted the land and the lives of those he shared it with, leaving a mark that has lasted up to Quentin's lifetime as a representation of the hypocrisy of Southern gentility and an opponent of modern man's impotence, a bold figure in defiance of the two paradigms eating away at young Quentin. Faulkner began giving the oral history told to and adapted by Quentin shape and existence in the already established world of Yoknapatawpha. He later described it as "the more or less violent breakup of a household or family from 1860 to 1910" (*Selected Letters* 78-79) and the lens he communicated it with via Quentin as "bitterness which he has projected on the South in the form of hatred of it and its people to get more out of the story itself than a historical novel would be" (78-79). While *Light in August* showed the importance of community and how its absence could negatively impact someone's life, *Absalom, Absalom!* gave Faulkner the opportunity to show how the community of the South with its presence and its history had been equally devastating to someone like Quentin.

By giving background information via the appendices at the end of *Absalom, Absalom!*, Faulkner gives Yoknapatawpha even more complexity than he had before. Pilkington relates that these appendices were added so as "to help the 'average' reader follow the plotline," but the in-depth information, including "a chronology of events, a

genealogy of seventeen of the characters, and a map of Yoknapatawpha County” (Pilkington 158), helped flesh out Yoknapatawpha County and give Faulkner’s fictional world actuality. Despite the various errors by Faulkner which Pilkington mentions, the appendices add to Yoknapatawpha’s complexity as an ontologically complete entity.

The map was probably the greatest asset in this development as Pilkington explains the “Mississippi readers at once recognized its remarkable resemblance to Lafayette County” (159). However, despite the obvious real world explanation, the narratives of Faulkner’s works had created a world inspired by his home and housing many of the same human conditions but still dwelling as its own separate identity due to the impact of Faulkner’s narrative and characters. On the map, one can find “old Bayard’s bank, the Sartoris Plantation, the Compson land, Mottstown, the bridge where Anse Bundren and his children tried to cross the river with Addie’s body, Joanna Burden’s house, the courthouse where Temple Drake testified, the jail, and the Holston House” (159). It demonstrates a physical space for each place that has appeared in Faulkner’s novels, while his narratives brings the map to life. The narrative world composed by Faulkner as Yoknapatawpha County becomes a physical entity where the lives people have lived in the fictional world can be physically mapped out. A reader can even begin to imagine traversing the streets, turning one’s head from side to side, and seeing the domain of families named Sartoris, Bundren, Compson, and others.

The physical space of Yoknapatawpha is particularly important to *Absalom, Absalom!* as Pilkington explains the importance of Sutpen’s home to the novel. The novel was originally planned to be titled *Dark House* (157), and Pilkington asserts that “many old antebellum plantation houses and mansions in the Oxford area, some well kept

and others deserted and rotting, could have supplied the prototype of Sutpen's ill-fated mansion" (160-161). One of the great symbols of the antebellum South that a young, modern Southern person, like Quentin Compson or the author himself, struggles with in a search for identity and human community becomes the focal point of Faulkner's ultimate narrative of Yoknapatawpha.

Brooks focuses on *Absalom, Absalom!* as not just a historical novel spiced up with the elements that Malcolm Cowley described as reminiscent of Poe as he describes the novel as having a "spirit [which] seems closest to the story—especially at the end, where Sutpen's Hundred collapses like the House of Usher" and how "the mansion that rotted and finally burned, is obviously a symbol of Southern culture" (Cowley 22). Brooks instead argues for the novel being much "more than a bottle of Gothic sauce to be used to spice up our own preconceptions about the history of American society" (295). Brooks asserts that a more meaningful look at history and tragedy within the American experiment can be found within the pages of *Absalom, Absalom!* Brooks takes Thomas Sutpen as a tragic figure along the lines of Oedipus and Macbeth because of what he references in the text as an "innocence," not a guiltless innocence, but rather, an innocence because of one's origins outside of the society where the rules have been established. Much like several of the characters in *Light in August*, Sutpen's fall occurs due to an estrangement from the society within which he finds himself. Brooks claims this situation as one "with which most of us today ought to be acquainted" and an example "par excellence the innocence of modern man, though it has not, to be sure, been confined to modern times" (297) as he makes the comparison between Sutpen and the above-mentioned examples of classical tragedy.

Sutpen exists in a situation both specific and universal. He continues the legacy shared by Oedipus and Macbeth, but also finds his tragedy of innocence partially due to the confluence of the dying antebellum South of Yoknapatawpha with the emasculation of Twentieth Century mankind. Brooks explains that “[o]nce Sutpen has acquired enough wealth and displayed enough force, the people of the community are willing to accept him. But they do not live by his code, nor do they share his innocent disregard of accepted values. Indeed, from the beginning they regard him with deep suspicion and some consternation” (297). Sutpen’s existence rests precariously in Yoknapatawpha as Faulkner utilizes him as a demonstration of a world-building figure at Sutpen’s Hundred while simultaneously attempting to find a place for himself in Yoknapatawpha.

Of course, Pilkington reminds us that, since Thomas Sutpen does not exist within the real-time of the novel, his actual existence is a product not just of Faulkner’s narrative but the narrations of Faulkner’s characters as “[i]nformation reaches the reader through the narrators who often provide different versions of the same event, sometimes with additional details” (171). Sutpen comes to us as a creation of these various narratives, but Pilkington believes Faulkner provides the reader with a key to interpret the various narrative histories: the most reliable narrator of Sutpen’s tragedy is General Compson, Quentin’s grandfather, from whom a majority of true “knowledge about Sutpen’s life, especially his early life, derives” (171). This narrative explains how the conquering patriarch of the land outside of Yoknapatawpha’s Jefferson came to haunt the narratives of Quentin and Miss Rosa Coldfield. Before he built his kingdom of Sutpen’s Hundred, Sutpen did not exist in a land where Southern aristocrats thrived with ownership of large plantations or families garnered esteem due to such possession of

land. Instead, growing up in western Virginia away from the more prosperous plantations of the Tidewater, Thomas Sutpen grew up in what Pilkington describes as an innocent and hypocritical origin narrative; Pilkington argues that despite the fact that “this primitive society into which Sutpen is born has been called a kind of Eden, the rifles pointed at Indians and the premise that one holds land only by physical force hardly suggests a high level of morality or a Utopian setting” (171). Sutpen’s existence derived not from the South of patrician landowners but a more plebian world, thus creating a harsh realization once he traveled beyond its borders and became the Thomas Sutpen of the narrative related by Quentin and others.

Pilkington describes Faulkner’s depiction of Sutpen’s origin and roots as an attempt in which “Faulkner wishes to establish ... that Sutpen as a child has no knowledge of a society in which there is an order of master and servant, racial prejudice, and a notably unequal distribution of material goods” (171-172). Faulkner creates the character who becomes one of his more notorious villains apart from the diseases that plague the worlds of Yoknapatawpha and the Mississippi Faulkner lived in, and even moreso, the Lost Cause antebellum world of Southern mythology. Sutpen’s villainy then comes not from any sort of inherent evil but instead arises as the result of his exposure to the community where the divisions of wealth, power, and familial distinction resides. He moves from the mountainous “utopia” to the Tidewater region and witnesses his own placement within that world. He immediately finds himself rebuked from the front door, by not even the wealthy owner to whom he has a message to deliver but instead a servant, and this moment creates in Sutpen “a design to acquire, take, seize, by whatever means possible, the possessions that will prevent him from ever being humiliated again and give

him the same or greater place in society than that held by the wealthy plantation owner” (172). As a result of these designs, Sutpen provides Faulkner and the narrators his story. Sutpen’s story leads to his acquiring all that he finds himself without in terms of the valued commodities of the Tidewater society that rejected him at the plantation door. This world has rejected him as a figure outside of it, and his reaction will be to conquer it by achieving possession of what it values. He dons the paradigm that overlooks him.

And doing so requires that he acquire that world for his own. Pilkington demonstrates how the house is at the center of the narrative of Thomas Sutpen. As to the adult Thomas’s answer to young Thomas’s lack of a plantation home, Sutpen’s Hundred and the status it provides becomes the centerpiece of the novel, symbolizing the decaying Old South in Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha map more than any other residence. As Pilkington explains,

To appreciate the centrality of the Sutpen mansion in the novel, one just needs to recall the emphasis Faulkner places upon it as the setting for the major actions of the Sutpen story, for example, its planning and construction by the French architect and the half-wild slaves, the visits of Henry and Bon, Ellen’s death, the burial of Charles Bon, Sutpen’s return from the war, Rosa’s affront and outrage, the murder of Sutpen, the deaths of Judith and Charles Etienne Saint-Valery Bon, and the final scenes with Quentin and Rosa that conclude in the conflagration that destroys it in December, 1909. From beginning to end, the mansion is the center of the story. It seems never to have known joy, again and again the reader views it through the narrator’s eyes as a grim, rotting, desolate, haunted house.

Sutpen's mansion is to *Absalom, Absalom!* what the scaffold is to Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and the *Pequod* is to Melville's *Moby-Dick*. (162)

The house represents everything that Sutpen has set out to achieve to create a world in which he can usurp the power from those who denied him equality as a young boy. And though Brooks looks to Sutpen's lineage rather than the house as this embodiment, the design remains paramount as he explains that "Sutpen thinks of himself as strictly just and he submits all of his faculties almost selflessly to the achievement of his design" (301). The design, which Pilkington aligns as symbolized in the house, leads the narrative and the self-made Sutpen generated his own world that is now falling into decay in the modern narrative similar to the fates that earlier befell the Sartoris and Compson clans of Yoknapatawpha.

This narrative nucleus of the house at Sutpen's Hundred generates a seminal text of modernism and perhaps the initial postmodern text, but it also keeps itself firmly entrenched within the soil of Yoknapatawpha's narrative history despite the narrative diversity and abstractness due to Quentin and Shreve's play with the narrative. *Absalom, Absalom!* resides as a masterpiece of the twentieth century American literature canon and Faulkner's catalog. This status results from the interplay between firmly entrenching the narrative within the history of the post-war South and Mississippi, depicting modern man's separation from community and history, and the experimentally exploring postmodernism as Quentin and Shreve generate their own truth. Pilkington examines how Faulkner arrived at the narrative choice of utilizing the two college roommates to

help create the complex narrative as he describes discovered manuscripts of sketches that Faulkner composed prior to *Absalom, Absalom!* He explains:

In addition to the material at hand for the Sutpen mansion, Faulkner had a number of “rag-tag and bob-ends of old tales and talking” (p. 303) which he sued to develop and complete the novel. Until 1979 several of these old tales existed only in manuscript and have not been generally known; but to those interested in the material with which the novelist built his fiction or in the craft of writing novels, these preliminary sketches have prime value. (162)

Pilkington focuses on how four particular tales amongst this group would be greatly influential in creating the narrative of *Absalom, Absalom!* He notes how these stories were written on a European trip in 1925 and that among “the remarkable features of these stories is that each employs a ‘frame’ consisting of a young man named Don and his unnamed friend merely identified as ‘I.’ Don and ‘I’ in each story learn the basic facts of a biographical event, much as Quentin and Shreve learn the facts of Sutpen’s biography, and then collaborate in an endeavor to fill out the basic facts with plausible motives” (162-163). It is a simple device utilizing the curiosity of two young men trying to fill in the holes they find in a local history narrative that has come to their attention, but it speaks to a much greater narration decision by Faulkner as he creates the text in which his Yoknapatawpha would achieve its literary peak.

The story that Pilkington identifies as chief among the group mentioned is “Evangeline,” and he describes the similarities between the story and Faulkner’s novel: despite its deficiencies the short story, “has considerable significance, because many of

its features passed into *Absalom, Absalom!*, while others underwent considerable change; and as Faulkner thought about the story, he added a great deal to enrich its character and humanity” (164). It is a demonstration of the author building complexity into ultimately what many consider his greatest work and most complete rendering of Yoknapatawpha County. This greatness can be found in the complex rendering that demonstrates that “many of the unanswered questions in ‘Evangeline’ survive into the novel, the most important being the general theme of the stubbornness of history to relinquish its truths” (165). In this development of the telling of the narrative of Thomas Sutpen, his family, and the “background of the Judith-Bon-Henry triangle” (163), Faulkner suggests that the development of history results due to a narrative creation generated by victors, or at least those still standing to create the historical narrative. Pilkington asserts this idea as the “Evangeline” short story “bears directly upon the second half of the novel when Quentin Compson and Shreve McCannon, in a Harvard dormitory, take over the telling of the story and improvise or imagine or conjecture many of the moot questions raised by the accounts offered earlier by Miss Rosa, Mr. Compson, and General Compson” (163). The narrative of the self-made patriarch raising himself up from the “utopian” poverty of western Virginia’s hills to conquer plantation-centered Mississippi by way of Barbados does not belong to the forceful protagonist nor even his contemporaries and victims/enemies like Miss Rosa; instead, its fate rests solely with two college boys up North in Massachusetts: one a disgruntled child of the troubled South and another a Canadian.

The composition arising from “Evangeline” and these other short stories adds to the theory of this process of history too. Just as Quentin and Shreve did not generate the

Sutpen narrative from thin air but relied heavily on what they had been told before retelling and repurposing it, the novel *Absalom, Absalom!* needed Faulkner to play with the narrative within these four short stories as well. Pilkington gives examples of how not just “Evangeline” but the other three stories add to the narrative generation as “they reinforce the evidence that Faulkner was interested in narrators who make their own conjectures about incomplete or fragmentary historical fact and in variations upon the theme of the murdered bridegroom” (166). He also adds that due to the discovery of these stories the novel can be seen in a different light as scholars can now observe how it “was not written in a flash of inspiration; rather, like most great novels, it resulted from patient, laborious thinking, experimenting, and revising of the kind that transformed these ordinary stories, for the most part rejected even by the editors of the slick magazines, into a masterpiece” (167). The writer’s process basically serves as Yoknapatawpha’s historiography. Just as geographical places develop a history over time, as oral history gives way to various professional historians with multiple ideologies competing in the composition, the possible fictional world of Yoknapatawpha developed its history through the filters of various fictional narrators but also various rewrites and editorial suggestions.

The historical narrative of Yoknapatawpha County would continue in three more novels *The Unvanquished*, *The Hamlet*, and *Go Down, Moses*. Following the pinnacle of creative generation that was *Absalom, Absalom!*, these three novels bring an intriguing conclusion to the Yoknapatawpha chronicle. Each of the three’s status as novels can be brought into question due to the non-traditional textual history that unites them as groups of short stories originally published in magazines and later brought together in revised

book form. None are traditional novels display most of the form's characteristics. *The Unvanquished* continues a central theme of Yoknapatawpha's fictional history as the South struggles with its past and the past's impact upon the present and future; as Pilkington points out, "Faulkner presents a view of Southern society during the Civil War and Reconstruction, that the development of Bayard Sartoris is the central theme in all the stories, that the effects of slavery and the beginnings of 'Snopesism' are pervasive themes, and that the final story brings all or most of these motifs into final perspective" (198). This novel, or collection of short stories depending on your perspective, returns the focus of Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha lens to the Sartoris family from the first novel that generated the fictional Mississippi county into existence. The textual world of Yoknapatawpha is generated from the perspective of Bayard Sartoris in this particular collection of stories, and his paradigm presents a former code that is slowly dying away from society.

Cleanth Brooks looks at how the Southern code of the aristocracy and the honorable gentleman of the mythic Confederate Lost Cause come under scrutiny once again. The very title of the work collecting these stories hints at the continued defiance of this mythic standard of masculinity as Brooks describes Faulkner's utilization of the figure of the "dashing Confederate cavalryman" in Colonel John Sartoris based on his own ancestor (76-77). At first glance, the very title *The Unvanquished* seems to be attempting to stir up a return of the spirit of this mythical generation; however, closer scrutiny reveals a more complex world being presented to the reader. Brooks describes Faulkner's Colonel Sartoris "as seen through the eyes of his adolescent son early in the novel, is not a paper paladin: he is a portion of sweating humanity. And in the hard and

difficult years after the fighting had ceased, the boy did not always see him as the perfect gentle knight” (77). *The Unvanquished* does not exist to perpetuate the myth of the Lost Cause or yearn for its reestablishment. Instead, as Pilkington asserts, when it “is considered as a novel, the central character becomes the narrator, Bayard Sartoris, and its primary theme the maturing of this impressionable young boy during the years of his adolescence in the Civil War and Reconstruction” (199). And in the maturation of this young man of Faulkner’s Lost Generation, the act of becoming an adult involves making sense of what came before you and creating your own world in its wake. Occasionally, that process is an act of futility, but still it must be done. When Bayard finally stops the culture of violence within the Southern tradition, he finds himself attempting to create a world influenced by his forebears “if by the Colonel’s dream Bayard meant the recovery of the community from the war, the restoration of law and order, and an end to the vendetta type of violence” (215). Bayard’s “final comment about his father becomes an affirmation of the good qualities in the Southern tradition and includes both races” (215).

While in *The Unvanquished* Faulkner perhaps tries to save some hope for the Southern tradition while attempting to keep it from being mythologized into racist bitterness peopled with survivors longing for a world both impossible and fictional, his next Yoknapatawpha novel *The Hamlet* focuses on another threat arising from the death of Southern tradition in his generation. This threat comes from the infestation of Yoknapatawpha by Snopesism. As the first of three novels, along with *The Town* and *The Mansion*, dealing with the sinister bloodlines of the Snopes but the only one considered amongst the major Yoknapatawpha period of Faulkner’s career, *The Hamlet* begins a chronicle of “the change from the dominance of the Sartorises to that of the

Snopeses” (217). The Snopes clan represents a change from the Southern code to a power center that does not respect the “honor” that came before it. This loss of respect and reverence for the Southern tradition proves quite frightening to those whose paradigm the Snopes clan has invaded mercilessly. Faulkner himself expressed his concern regarding these characters: “I feel sorry for the Compsons. That was blood which was good and brave once, but has thinned and faded all the way out. Of the Snopes, I’m terrified” (*Faulkner in the University* 197). The Snopeses represent a new South that has abandoned tradition and rose to prominence by taking advantage of the modern age.

Brooks describes *The Hamlet* as “ostensibly the story of the rise of Flem Snopes—from a shiftless sharecropper’s indigent son to the financial power of the community” and as “a sort of sardonic Horatio Alger story, a tale of commercial success in which the poor but diligent young man marries the boss’s daughter and becomes a financial power” (174). Flem Snopes’s narrative does not value the community or groan in agony due to its exclusion from the community like so many of the narratives of other Faulkner protagonists; instead, it flourishes by manipulating the community. Unlike the other residents of Yoknapatawpha, Flem and the other Snopes clan members thrive in the modern world and its isolation.

Due to the accessibility of its prose style in comparison to other works, *The Unvanquished* served as what Faulkner felt was a solid introduction to the other narratives of Yoknapatawpha County (Pilkington 189-190). Meanwhile, *The Hamlet* returns closer to the greatness of earlier Yoknapatawpha prose, combining an overall realistic tone with “some very romantic writing, for example, the pastoral lyric or prose-

poem that forms the primary content of the Ike Snopes incident, or Ratliff's dream of Flem in hell, or even the main incident of the spotted horses incident" (219). As Pilkington describes, Faulkner had ruminated quite lengthily as he built the Snopes family into his Yoknapatawpha world as "one cannot ignore the fact that before writing his novel Faulkner spent years of his maturity thinking about the character of the people and the conditions of life in his own area" (222). *The Unvanquished* paid heed to the possibility of some honor lying within the façade of Southern tradition; *The Hamlet* and its sequels demonstrated the South that Faulkner knew firsthand. The portrayal was not completely as Faulkner gives Flem, despite the overwhelmingly grotesque nature of being, some positive characteristics:

Beginning with nothing, Flem works hard, takes no vacations, keeps his own counsel, and saves his money. He replaces the old Varner system of casual, haphazard bookkeeping with a calculating efficiency—an early version of cost accounting or perhaps computerized billings—that never makes a mistake. He buys cheap and sells dear. He gives no credit. He counts the pennies and takes advantage wherever he can. (226)

Snopesism thrives in the modern world creeping upon Yoknapatawpha by basically becoming the representation of the ideal modern businessman. The world of Faulkner's narratives has changed into a modern one, and figures like Flem Snopes will thrive in it while the more romantic ones of earlier narratives will perish. Faulkner realized his Yoknapatawpha County "could be made a microcosm of modern life and thus a platform from which he could address the world" (241).

And in the last narrative of Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha period, the author delves into the quagmire of racial relations in the South of the modern era with a work of loosely-united short stories acting as a novel. *Go Down, Moses* attempts to look at how Yoknapatawpha County's inhabitants will move forward after the Civil War and Reconstruction towards a modern era. The stories do expand on the textual world's complexity, but in achieving the goal of further exploring racial relations in the modern era of Yoknapatawpha, the stories lack significant literary impact. In fact, the most noteworthy contribution of *Go Down, Moses* comes not from the topic of race but instead man's relationship to nature as work has been a literal gold mine in composing the environs of this fictional world and how humans interacted with it. The stories of *Go Down, Moses* are the story of the McCaslin family, and it is from the branches of that family tree, two from white descendants and one borne of Lucius McCaslin's incest with his slaves, that the interaction of race was attempted as the theme of the "novel" by Faulkner. Pilkington points out Faulkner's tendency to allow his works to possess "individual parts often seem[ing] more strongly defined than the composite entities" and identifies this fact, along with "his practice of incorporating or adapting already written and already published short stories into the plot structure of his novels" (243), as reasons that have prevented *Go Down, Moses* from becoming the examination of racial relations Faulkner had planned.

Instead, the structure enables individual stories such as "The Bear" to take prominence within the narrative chronicle. The experience of Isaac McCaslin in the hunt for Old Ben dominates the narrative and gives Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha world a prominence in American Literature regarding the nature of the country as a new Eden.

Regarding “The Bear,” Brooks asserts that “Man’s attitude toward nature is a function of the health of his own nature. His necessary conflict with it provides the discipline out of which qualities such as humility and courage come. Man has to contend with nature and prey upon it; only thus can he sustain life” (270). Pilkington places Faulkner’s wilderness narrative within the context of the American tradition of such stories depicting man’s struggle with the responsibility of this second Eden in works of romance by James Fenimore Cooper, Herman Melville, and Nathaniel Hawthorne; he suggests that “Faulkner has superbly combined the real and the marvelous, the essential components of the romance, by taking a reality and developing it into a symbol that invites comparison with Melville’s great whale” (263). *Go Down, Moses* may not have achieved the examination of racial relations that Faulkner originally intended, but it did serve as a deserving capstone to Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha period.

With the end of the Yoknapatawpha period of Faulkner’s career, the Mississippi writer had undoubtedly placed himself within the canon of not only American Literature but of the world. He had truly conceived his own fictional world that allowed for a full examination into the human condition. This possible world was not a concept that Faulkner had invented but one perhaps displayed as ideally as any author has. Of course, the shared world for a creator’s stories would not end in this Mississippi fiction but has instead blossomed as the idea has moved from a tiny county to whole universes. It has also moved from the one author (assisted by his editors and publishers) to the purview of multiple creators as narratives have become corporatized in popular culture. The following chapters will examine how the concept of the possible narrative world has functioned with this evolution.

CHAPTER THREE

Sole Ownership of Worlds Versus Fanfics and Expanded Universes

After leaving Faulkner's private narrative property, this study now shifts to the realms of popular fiction and film by looking at narrative worlds that have been expanded beyond the boundaries of their initial creation. Two narrative worlds—or universes, perhaps the better term for some of the textual realities to which this study applies PWT—in which these boundaries are crossed beyond the original creator's vision can be found in the worlds of George Lucas and J.K. Rowling. The narratives of both Lucas and Rowling have become iconic within popular culture, and as a result, their textual significance has gone further than the original texts from which the universes derived. The stories and the settings became the subjects of cultural homages, parodies, and allusions, but fans also started creating their own stories within these 'verses. The universes of *Star Wars* and Harry Potter would not be the first in which fans attempted to claim their own corner of the universe, but the passionate level of involvement of both fan communities make them ideal subjects for a study such as this one.

The original trilogy of Lucas's *Star Wars* did not remain static within its own narrative but expanded into other narratives as well. From the often-mocked *Holiday Special* to comics and cartoons set in the *Star Wars* universe, Lucas allowed his initial story universe to move from the original text into realms generated by others, making it one of the most successful licensed properties ever. Fans decided to interact within this textual universe as well, creating fan fiction on various internet sites such as *TheForce.net* and creating so many fan films that LucasFilm itself began to sponsor an annual awards contest.

From the beginning of *Star Wars*' tremendous popularity, the studio executives realized the marketing potential of the franchise and immediately began licensing all sorts of products. These products, which ranged across the spectrum found in big-box department stores such as Wal-Mart, Target, and Costco, have come to be referred to by both narratologists and popular culture scholars as paratexts. While the term paratext as defined by Gérard Genette initially referred specifically to the text in a work outside of the narrative (chapter titles, prefaces, afterwards, etc.), the term has come to refer to texts beyond the initial text. Jonathan Gray's further exploration of this term will be very beneficial to the application of it to PWT regarding the various texts of the next two chapters; however, his basic argument "that paratexts are not simply add-ons, spinoffs, and also-rans: they create texts, they manage them, and they fill them with many of the meanings that we associate with them" (6) forms a launching point for describing how these licensed properties began the expansion of the *Star Wars* universe.

As a universe which marketers realized could be readily marketed to a young audience, the *Star Wars* films would soon be followed by comics and cartoon series. Marvel Comics published a *Star Wars* series that ran for over 107 issues and 3 annuals from 1977 to 1986 (Kogge 42) which included adaptations of the three films and further expanded the adventures of the core cast between and following the films. The licensing of *Star Wars* for a comic book series "would lead to an unprecedented marriage of a comic book and a film franchise" (42). This practice has become so common place today when examining the gluttony of licensed properties owned by second-tier comics publishers such as IDW and Dynamite.

The licensing of the *Star Wars* universe for comics began when a meeting occurred between Lucas and comics creator Roy Thomas via a mutual friendship with Edward Summer (44). As Lucas began to search for prospective comics creators for *Star Wars*, Roy Thomas seemed a natural choice for the project. When the two meet in 1975, Thomas was already an established comics writer for Marvel titles such as *Doctor Strange* and *X-Men* and had since moved on to be Stan Lee's successor as editor-in-chief at Marvel before moving to becoming a freelancer who "had convinced Marvel to license [comics] based on Robert E. Howard's Conan novels" (44). In Thomas, Lucas discovered a like-minded creator with similar artistic interests, whose connection to Marvel would prove fruitful. Marvel, like the other publishers, had initially rejected a proposal of *Star Wars* into comics, but Thomas could potentially provide a bridge to the publisher. As Thomas listened to Lucas representatives, he became very interested but understood why Marvel had balked considering that "other movie properties like *Planet of the Apes* had caused Thomas considerable headaches at Marvel" (45).

Thomas proved the perfect pitchman to bring the idea to Stan Lee due to his experience working with the Conan license, and the series was a go despite some initial concerns regarding how the comic would be released. Thomas joined artist Howard E. Chaykin on the title, and the expanding of the narrative universe of the film quickly begins. Once the first six issues of the adaptation were finished, Thomas began the expansion of the *Star Wars* narrative universe beyond the text. However, Lucasfilm did not want this narrative to conflict with its own plans for the film franchise, so they "restricted what could be done, particularly with Luke and Leia" (49), which is no surprise considering the revelations about those two characters' relationships to each

other and Darth Vader in both *The Empire Strikes Back* and *The Return of the Jedi*. Instead, the Marvel team focused on Han Solo and Chewbacca as “Thomas took the smuggler and Chewbacca on an adventure reminiscent of *The Magnificent Seven*” (49). Still, creative differences would eventually arise due to the complications of Thomas and Chaykin attempting to craft continual stories in a narrative universe Lucasfilm still had definite plans for in future films. This situation would ultimately lead to Thomas leaving the title as he “understood that this wasn’t his universe” (49). Nonetheless, the series would continue under the creative team of Archie Goodwin, Carmine Infantino, and Terry Austin; and ultimately continue the narrative for over 100 issues. This series certainly had defined boundaries, but one of the most extensive expanded universes in licensed properties had begun its narrative. One comic book series would only be the genesis.

Of course, this expanded universe would not be without its false starts, too. A tie-in novel titled *Splinter of the Mind’s Eye* resides prominently as a trivia question answer in the minds of most *Star Wars* fans even if they have not read the actual text. Written by Alan Dean Foster and published in 1978 after the first film, the novel was produced “with the possibility of it being produced as a film” (Hidalgo 227). “Foster had already ghostwritten the *Star Wars* novelization” (Rinzler, “The Conversation: Part I” 20) for Lucas, who came to him with a need to significantly downscale the next potential film due to ongoing concerns with the first film’s shooting experience. The thoughts seemed to be that at the time Lucas was thinking that this second film would be “a lower-budget affair” which would include “moving most of the story’s action to a planet surface” and with “fewer visual effects” (20). A 2013 interview between Lucas, Foster, and Charles

Lippincott reveals Lucas's concept for the future of *Star Wars* to be divergent from the ideas it would eventually portray in later films. Lucas seems to be a bit disillusioned with the idea of another space fantasy but instead seems enamored with the idea of "putting the whole thing on the scale of a Western" (20). Almost blasphemous to *Star Wars* fans now, "Lucas thought that Darth Vader was a relatively weak villain, that Leia could run off with a Wookiee and be killed off, possibly, and Luke could become more like James Bond" (20). Lucas was not pleased with the direction at the time of the first film's progress, and as *Star Wars Insider* notes, the conversation occurred prior to the voice work of James Earl Jones and sound effects by Ben Burtt such as Vader's famous robotic breathing (20). Lucas also wanted to evolve Luke into a warrior-type figure. Foster tempers this idea a bit as he states what is "so attractive about Luke is that anybody who ever felt like a klutz in high school watching the football players run around can identify with him. You can't make him over into Clint Eastwood. You can't identify with Clint Eastwood" (22).

Obviously, this attempt at moving forward with the narrative world drifts wildly from what eventually came to be. As a result, *Splinter of the Mind's Eye* creates an interesting false detour from the narrative world providing a deviant narrative. Possible worlds theorist Ruth Ronen asserts that the concept of "[p]ossible worlds create a heterogeneous paradigm that allows various conceptions for possible models of existence" (21). While the saga of *Star Wars* did not follow along the path of *Splinter of the Mind's Eye*, the novel becomes a possibility the narrative universe could have taken. We see the first additional possible world that could have also taken place a long time ago and in a galaxy far, far away.

As the novel came to finally be conceived, it follows the story of Luke and Leia. With Harrison Ford not being contracted for future *Star Wars* films at the time of writing, the character of Han Solo and his partner Chewbacca were omitted (Hidalgo 228). Luke and Leia crash on a planet called Mimban along with C-3PO and R2-D2. They are eventually captured, escape from, and attempt to evade Imperial authorities as they search for a mysterious crystal that is said to strengthen the Force. This adventure eventually attracts the attention of Darth Vader, who confronts them in an encounter that ends with Vader losing an arm via Luke's lightsaber. Gary Kurtz has acknowledged that *Splinter* was definitely a potential sequel as it "took into account production budgets by being set in filmable locations (jungles, underground caverns) and avoiding costly visual effects sequences like space battles" (227). However, the film was not meant to be, and the *Star Wars* saga would instead continue forth in *The Empire Strikes Back*.

As a result of this shift in decision making regarding the direction of the film sequel, *Splinter of the Mind's Eye's* impact on the expanded universe would be negligible. The continuation of the film series overruled anything that occurred in this spin-off novel (an idea that will be explored further in this study regarding the Holocron continuity database that has since been developed regarding canonicity in *Star Wars*), and, consequently, many things that occur in the novel conflict with what would be the later continuity of the saga. This false start of the narrative into a direction the overall narrative of the saga would not follow represents the contradictory states of affairs and counterfactuals that occasionally arise in PWT, which leads back to Lubomir Doležel's theories, bringing *poietic* and the *noetic* reconstructions, alluded to in the first chapter of this study, to the history of *Star Wars*. While Doležel's theories primarily focus on the

idea of how history and fiction merge in a postmodern sense, the entertainment narrative of *Star Wars* can still be worthy of examination with this same theory. The melding of history and fiction can also be seen in how corporate entities generate the fictional narratives they produce. Another diversion along a similar path can be found in the infamous 1978 *Star Wars Holiday Special*. The *Holiday Special* aired November 19, 1978 on CBS, and the combination of the negative reception it received and George Lucas's overall distaste for it has resulted in it never re-airing or being distributed, except for pirated copies. However, its connection does not merit the counterfactual distinction like *Splinter of the Mind's Eye* since the chief reason most fans know of its existence today, other than as a punch line is the introduction of Boba Fett.

The Empire Strikes Back would see the *Star Wars* narrative expand a bit both prior to and immediately following its release date. Novelizations of the adventures of Han Solo and Lando Calrissian would be published by Del Rey Books between 1979 and 1983. *The Han Solo Adventures* were all written by Brian Daley and proved to be “extremely influential in developing elements that would continue well beyond the scope of these three books” (Hidalgo 167). In each of these series continuing the Expanded Universe of *Star Wars*, the narrative is extended via paratexts similar to how characters like Perry White and Jimmy Olsen and concepts like Kryptonite were introduced to the Superman narrative via the radio program rather than the comic books.

Lucasfilm additionally saw opportunities to cash in with children through the lovable teddy bear-like Ewoks characters from the third film, *Return of the Jedi*, and two spin-off films created for television to air on ABC. *Caravan of Courage: An Ewok Adventure* and *Ewoks: The Battle for Endor* were both written, or co-written, by George

Lucas and included Warwick Davis's Ewok character Wicket. They are set prior to the Ewoks' involvement in the Rebellion against the Galactic Empire in *Return of the Jedi*. However, the marketing of this cuddly corner of the Star Wars universe would not stop there. An animated series would run for two seasons, joined in the second season with a sister series *Star Wars: Droids* focused on the adventures of two other characters popular with the young audience, the pair of misfits droids, R2-D2 and C-3PO. Each of these two series could claim the typical paratexts associated with most Saturday morning cartoons shows in the 1980s. Comic books and all sorts of kid-related merchandise cropped up in order for Lucasfilm to maximize as much profit as possible from these spin-offs.

The cartoons and *Ewok* films would serve to help maximize the paratextual profits from *Star Wars* following the conclusion of the film saga, but attempts to continue to reach the young audience that might have outgrown cartoons and teddy bear Ewoks would also occur. As some young fans moved beyond the paratexts intended for a younger audience, *Star Wars* responded by also entering the arena of tabletop roleplaying games. *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game* was published by West End Games in 1987 ("Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game"), and while these roleplaying game opportunities allowed fans to use the game to generate narratives of their own (creating an infinite amounts of possible worlds for the narrative), the sourcebooks for the roleplaying game would serve paratextually as an additional outlet through which the universe could be expanded.

Histories and facts pertaining to different characters, alien races, planets, and weapons within the narrative universe of *Star Wars* were provided. As a result, this information could be utilized by later storytellers. Michael A. Stackpole, one of the

primary authors of one of the Expanded Universe's bestselling series about X-wing pilots, states that he "used the West End Games books as canon throughout [his] run" and that he "recall[ed] getting the most use out of the starship and weapon sourcebooks" (Young 27). Much world building occurred through the sourcebooks created for the West End roleplaying games. Even if authors did not utilize them directly, they probably referenced other writers' contributions to the Expanded Universe which had already been based upon something from the sourcebooks (27). Another *Star Wars* author, Aaron Allston, explained that these sourcebooks were so invaluable because "they organize and codify details about their subject" (27). The need for storytelling by the fans who were players of these games became a tool for those who were officially continuing the narrative commercially as well, thus creating a very interesting narrative dynamic.

However, the Expanded Universe of *Star Wars* would not truly take off until the early 1990s when one of the most successful expansions of a narrative beyond its initial media format occurred with Timothy Zahn's trilogy of *Star Wars* novels. *Heir to the Empire* reached audiences in 1991 and became a huge success. At this point several years after the release of *The Return of the Jedi*, Zahn states that "[n]o one knew at the time if *Star Wars* fans were even out there any more" (Wilkins 24). The novel was slated to be the first of three and occurred five years later in the narrative timeline from the characters' adventures at the conclusion of *The Return of the Jedi*. Of course, many things had changed.

The galactic war between the Rebel Alliance had defeated the Galactic Empire of Darth Vader and his mentor, Emperor Palpatine (the name Palpatine was not used in the initial film trilogy but was established in various paratexts). Now, the former Rebel

Alliance has developed into the New Republic and established itself on Coruscant, the former throneworld of the Emperor. Major changes have occurred with the main cast of characters as well with the most notable being the marriage between Han Solo and Princess Leia Organa. Leia is pregnant with twins, Jacen and Jaina, who would be born during Zahn's trilogy and continue forward in the adventures of their parents and uncle. The twins would eventually grow older and become protagonists in their own right in the Expanded Universe. In fact, they would not be the only characters introduced to readers by Zahn as the three books became "[p]erhaps the most influential work of the Expanded Universe" as it "introduced characters such as Grand Admiral Thrawn, Talon Karrde, Mara Jade, Garm Bel Iblis, Borsk Fey'lya, [the aforementioned] Jacen and Jaina Solo, and Gilad Pellaeon into the *Star Wars* pantheon" and each of "[t]hese heroes and villains would have long careers in the books that followed" (Hidalgo 308).

Thrawn would provide the nemesis that Luke and the others needed now that the specter of Darth Vader only loomed emotionally, and not physically, over the characters. The blue-skinned Thrawn's backstory included him being the only non-human Grand Admiral in the Emperor's xenophobic Galactic Empire, and Zahn utilized the freedom that Lucasfilm gave him to allow Thrawn to become a major military threat. As Zahn continued the narrative in this novel trilogy, he turned to the West End Games sourcebooks to flesh out more of the *Star Wars* universe. For the final conflict in the third book of the trilogy *The Last Command*, Zahn received some invaluable assistance from West End. Zahn sought out the game company to get one of their artists to design a throne room in which a pivotal fight scene would occur. He then utilized the artist's rendition as the set for his fight scene (Young 27-28). As a result, a novel narrative

ended up with some of the same parameters of world building that encompass a film narrative as the author wasn't just bound by his imagination, but also the physical restrictions of a set even if it was just in a drawing. Zahn states how he “had to put the fight within that. I couldn't do the typical writer thing of, ‘Oh, I need a catwalk here, so I'll just put one in.’ This way, it was more of a challenge, and challenges are fun” (28). It was also world-building across media and genres instead of merely deviating from something that had been established in another medium claiming that it was a different possible world of the narrative; in this case, Zahn used what had come before him to further deepen the world's realism.

The Zahn novels and West End Games books also impacted the movie series as well. As Zahn researched his first novel, he read about the home planet of the Empire from the original films which was referred to as Imperial Center in the West End books. Zahn wanted to give the planet a real name instead asserting that

nobody names their planet “Imperial Center.” All capitals on earth have a history—Paris, London, Moscow ... So I figured the planet would have a name since the Imperials are gone. “I will give it a name and call it Coruscant,” which with the human pronunciation means “glittering.” I thought a planet-wide city would glitter in space, and you see that in the long shots in the movies. (29-30)

Zahn took a concept established in the game sourcebooks and expanded upon it, which eventually crossed over in the 1997 Special Edition version of *Return of the Jedi* and became even more prominent in the prequel trilogy.

Zahn's trilogy would shape *Star Wars* for years to come. In addition to Thrawn and Han and Leia's twin children, one of the biggest character additions to the *Star Wars* universe arrived with the creation of Mara Jade. Zahn gave her a backstory in which she was Emperor Palpatine's Hand. In the notes of the 20th anniversary edition of *Heir to the Empire*, Zahn explains that his concept of her "began with a simple idea and plan: to tie the opening section of *Return of the Jedi* more closely to the main story presented by the *Star Wars* movies" (344, Chapter 26 note 2). He argues that the mission to Jabba's Palace to rescue Han seemed like a very personal mission removed from the larger story of the galactic war with the Empire. As he created Mara Jade, who we first meet working for smuggling kingpin Talon Karrde, Zahn made her an excellent foil who could bring some tension for Luke as a still evolving Jedi. With the ending of *Empire Strikes Back* in which Darth Vader tells Luke he is his father and urges him to join him in usurping the Imperial Throne from the Emperor, Zahn decided that "the Emperor might very well have decided that Luke was more liability than potential asset and sent someone to take him out when he turned up at Jabba's palace" (344, Chapter 26 note 2). This idea led Zahn to create the role of the Emperor's Hand and from there Mara Jade. Luke wonders about this female smuggler from the very beginning as she does not attempt to hide the open hostility she feels for him from their first encounter. Near the end of the first book of the trilogy, Luke confronts Mara, to which she responds "*You* happened to me ... You came out of a grubby sixth-rate farm on a tenth-rate planet, and destroyed my life" (343). When he cannot recall where he would have met her previously, she tells him that she was "a dancer at Jabba the Hutt's palace the day you came for Solo" (344).

Luke assumes from that statement that she must hold him in such contempt because of his role in the death of Jabba, but then realizes that her skills demonstrate more than just an entertainer for the Hutt crimelord. He questions whether she may have been an agent of his father's. She quickly rejects the error he has made with disdain replying "Don't make me laugh. Vader was a fool, and skating on the edge of treason along with it. My master sent me to Jabba's to kill you, not recruit you" (344). Luke understands then that she means Palpatine. She gives him her backstory:

I was his hand, Skywalker ... That's how I was known to his inner court: as the Emperor's Hand. I served him all over the galaxy, doing jobs the Imperial Fleet and stormtroopers couldn't handle. That was my one great talent, you see—I could hear his call from anywhere in the Empire, and report back to him the same way. I exposed traitors for him, brought down his enemies, helped him keep the kind of control over the mindless bureaucracies that he needed. I had prestige, and power, and respect.

(345)

Luke realizes that she was almost able to have the opportunity to kill him there in that rescue mission and the ultimate impact of how divergent paths were successful for one and catastrophic for the other. He understands that the death of the Emperor proved ruinous for her and eventually led her to Talon Karrde's employ.

The story of Luke and Mara Jade does not end at that point though, nor does it stop with the completion of Zahn's trilogy. Mara Jade becomes a full-fledged new member of the family unit of rebels introduced to audiences in the original trilogy. Not only does her story with Luke, Leia, Han and others continue forth in the Expanded

Universe adventures following Zahn's trilogy; she even becomes a literal family member when she marries Luke. The marriage between Skywalker and his former assassin-to-be presents an interesting example regarding how the Expanded Universe began to evolve in both novels and comics.

Since Zahn's trilogy of novels proved a major success, Lucasfilm and Bantam Books mapped out a strategy for the future of the Expanded Universe as it would be told in their novels. According to *Star Wars: The Essential Reader's Companion*, they had a publishing plan for for twelve additional novels (Hidalgo 345). All but one of these proposed twelve were eventually published, including *The Courtship of Princess Leia* by Dave Wolverton which went back in the timeline from *Heir to the Empire* and told the story of how Leia and Han became a married couple, with the one exception being a novel by Margaret Weis (346). Others though would be added as the "roster flexed as the popularity of the *Star Wars* publishing program grew, but it was always intended that Zahn would have the last book of Bantam's contract with *Star Wars*, allowing him to close the era of storytelling he started" (346). The storytelling narrative would expand, with the popular novel series focused on the X-wing pilots by Michael A. Stackpole and Aaron Allston as the most obvious example, but the Bantam series remained in the hands of Zahn who knew he had a distinct way he wished to conclude this narrative run. He knew that in the end "Mara Jade and Luke Skywalker would end up together, and the Empire and New Republic would sign a peace accord" (346). His plan would remain intact for the most part although the planned "single-novel finale expanded into two books, published a year apart" and "[e]arly in development, there was a plan to bridge the two novels with a comics series, *Specter of Thrawn*, written by Zahn and Stackpole,

focusing on Wedge Antilles's efforts to contain an outbreak of violence during the Caamas Document Crisis" (346).

The two novels would come to be known as "The Hand of Thrawn" duology and continue the story Zahn had begun in his first *Star Wars* novel, *Heir to the Empire*. The Imperial forces have fallen into disrepair since the defeat of Thrawn in Zahn's trilogy, and his former commanding officer now Supreme Commander Gilad Pellaeon (also introduced in *Heir to the Empire*) advocates a peaceful settlement and capitulation. This new story from Zahn also brings many of his other characters back into the Expanded Universe main story as Leia finds out about a Bothan role in a genocide committed by the Emperor and also finds a data card titled "The Hand of Thrawn." Her discovery brings Borsk Fey'lya back to the attention of Leia and Han, while other Imperial forces attempt to sabotage Pellaeon's peace plan by spreading rumors concerning the return of Thrawn. Meanwhile, Luke comes into contact once again with Mara Jade, who rescues him from pirates. Luke, who is receiving visions of Mara in great danger, follows her as she investigates a signal related to Thrawn. As the various characters with whom *Star Wars* fans have become familiar via the films or Zahn's previous novels investigate the rumors about Thrawn, the climax of action eventually arrives with the heroes winning in formulaic fashion, but also with Luke and Mara becoming trapped in a flooding room during which Luke proposes to Mara. The two escape and triumph at the conclusion of the two novels which also sees a brokered peace between the New Republic and Imperial forces; yet, the marriage between Luke and Mara will not occur at the end (342-345). Instead, the proposed comic by Zahn and Stackpole will instead become a comic mini-series a few years later written by Stackpole entitled *Star Wars Union*.

Whether this comic series perhaps serves as a replacement of sorts for the above-mentioned series proposed to be written by Zahn and Stackpole is merely trivial, but even if it was not a replacement it still serves as an example of the Expanded Universe working in cohesion across different forms of media. The story from the novels is completed in a comics mini-series written by a prominent author of a novel series also set within the Expanded Universe. The stage for this cooperation between the novels and comics had been in development for some time at this stage of the Expanded Universe. After the Marvel run of *Star Wars* comics, the property was once again revived by Dark Horse Comics, a comics company in the second tier of comic book publishers who, unlike their first tier counterparts of DC and Marvel, did not possess an established superhero universe but instead existed primarily from licensed properties like *Star Wars*. The very first story by Dark Horse Comics was actually published prior to Zahn's Thrawn trilogy of novels in 1991-1992, and despite the fact that it was quite memorable, it became a hindrance to the Expanded Universe rather than a launching point like Zahn's novels.

The six issue miniseries written by Tom Veitch and drawn by Cam Kennedy was titled *Dark Empire*. It has been described "as influential and important to the world of *Star Wars* sequential art storytelling as *Heir to the Empire* was to prose fiction" and "depicted events that would be folded into the Expanded Universe fabric of the novels" (Hidalgo 313). However, as soon as Zahn's novels were published with an attempt to create an Expanded Universe going beyond the narrative established in the films, continuity problems began to emerge in regards to connecting the comics timeline with the one being established in the Bantam novels.

The *Dark Empire* series “was originally envisioned as taking place immediately after the events of *The Return of the Jedi*” however this was problematic since “its story developed before the mandate of an all-encompassing continuity” (313). Because “Zahn, in the midst of developing the Thrawn Trilogy, found the events of *Dark Empire* incompatible with his story, ... the comics tale was moved after the novels, to 10 ABY [After Battle of Yavin- a designation of time in *Star Wars* continuity that uses the Battle of Yavin (the climactic battle of the first film) as a temporal reference]” (313). Similar occurrences happen when the prequel movies arrive and undue some of the occurrences in the novels (which will be discussed below), but in this circumstance *Star Wars* continuity simply placed the *Dark Empire* series further along in the timeline than it was originally supposed to be. Unlike *Splinter of the Mind’s Eye*, *Dark Empire* and the two following sequel miniseries would not simply be shoved aside as continuity misfires.

Instead, the storyline would be quite memorable with Luke delving into the Dark Side of the Force and the Emperor resurrected in a clone body, but some fans did dislike the over-the-top nature of the series. Additionally, the disjointed nature of the plot in comparison with the world Zahn established in his novels “led to some complications. In *Dark Empire*, Coruscant is devastated by warfare, and the New Republic is based out of Da Soocha V. Text pages that accompanied the individual issues of *Dark Empire* elaborated that Imperial factions, emboldened by Thrawn’s progress, launched an attack on the capital that pushed the New Republic off planet” (313). The *Star Wars* universe was geographically destabilized by these two somewhat differing narratives; however, once again, the West End Games sourcebooks came through. Once a source for adding depth and backstory to the *Star Wars* narrative universe, this time West End alleviated

conflict as “*The Dark Empire Sourcebook* (1993) from West End Games would make great strides in smoothing over the transition from the Thrawn Trilogy to the events of the comics” (313).

From this experience, the cross-over between the narratives established in the novels and the comic books would be much more cohesive with the project that would become *Shadows of the Empire*. Published in 1996, *Shadows of the Empire*, a story taking place between the events of *The Empire Strikes Back* and *The Return of the Jedi*, served as “a coordinated effort to tell a single, unified *Star Wars* story across multiple media” (245). Taking place as it does in the *Star Wars* timeline, this project returned the *Star Wars* cast back to the era in which fans had first been introduced to them. However, this time we would see the familiar group without Han Solo due to his state of carbonite hibernation as Boba Fett transported him back to Jabba’s Palace.

As it turns out, the primary reason for *Shadows of the Empire* to be told was a very commercial one. *Shadows of the Empire* was conceived by the creative teams as

it became apparent that a projected 1997 release date for Episode I wasn’t feasible, and a planned re-release of *A New Hope* was consequently moved from 1996 to 1997, an opportunity arose to create some sort of *Star Wars* event for 1996 that would not only engage fans but continue the momentum of creative development already under way at Lucas Licensing and its partners. (245)

So, they turned back to the era of the original movies (rather than focusing on a post-movie universe as had been the focus of most of the most recent novels and comics) and

crafted a story taking place in between what fans were already familiar with from the film trilogy.

Of course, by placing a storyline within the era of the original film trilogy, parameters beyond just the absence of Han Solo would have to be factored into creating a new story as well. As a result, two new and quite memorable Expanded Universe characters would be created. With no Solo and the ability to have the heroes interact with the movie villains Darth Vader and Emperor Palpatine limited, the idea for a roguish hero to fill the Solo role and a new villainous entity gave birth to Dash Rendar and Prince Xizor, respectively. Rendar proved very much a Han Solo clone in his first interactions with the group of Rebel Alliance heroes. He's a smuggler who helps Luke and Leia then is conveniently dropped from the narrative as Luke and Leia see his ship wreck and assume his death. He is assumed dead, thus explaining his absence from *Return of the Jedi*, but the lack of definitive proof allows him to be kept in limbo for other future writers to use him in Expanded Universe endeavors, particularly those of the video game variety considering he is the primary playable character in the videogame version of *Shadows of the Empire*.

On the other hand, Prince Xizor would prove to be a much more unique figure in the *Star Wars* narrative. The movie trilogy has given *Star Wars* fans the iconic villains of Darth Vader, Emperor Palpatine, and the grotesque Jabba the Hutt. As the Expanded Universe began to create a vaster universe, the only villain to have made a major impact on *Star Wars* fans at this point was Admiral Thrawn. This brilliant military tactician's reason for being absent from the film trilogy is given as being the result of xenophobic policies in place within the Empire as well as the character's distrust of the Force users

who command him. Thrawn represents a character within the villainous command structure whose value is appreciated but also the object of continual mistrust. For their new villain, the writers of *Shadows of the Empire* create a villain who like Jabba the Hutt operates outside of that same structure.

Beyond possessing a criminal empire though, Prince Xizor could not differ any more from the infamous Hutt. While Jabba contented himself by controlling a criminal empire that remains well outside the Empire's concern, staying in the Outer Rim worlds of the *Star Wars* galaxy, Prince Xizor, described as "the most powerful crime lord in the galaxy, seeks further advancement and sees Vader as the principal obstacle to his standing directly at the Emperor's side" (243-245). Due to this particular ambition, Xizor initiates the narrative of this particular endeavor by using the information that has come to him regarding Luke being Vader's son to generate a scheme that will garner the Emperor's attention at Vader's expense. The Black Sun crime lord has "long hated Vader for his past sundering of the Falleen [Xizor's species] homeworld, [so] Xizor plots to assassinate Luke and blame the death on Vader's incompetence, thereby causing the Dark Lord to lose favor with the Emperor" (243). The sheer brazenness of Xizor's scheme separates him from his Hutt counterpart almost as much as their contrasting physical appeals. While Jabba must keep his dancing girls and Princess Leia in chains, the reaction of the Alderaanian princess to Xizor finds her "nearly overwhelmed by the Falleen's natural pheromones, which make him irresistible to humanoid females" (245). In this multimedia narrative, the *Star Wars* universe trades the grotesque mobster stereotype for a Valentino villain.

Shadows of the Empire became a huge success for the *Star Wars* universe, returning fans to the original narrative era and demonstrating how the various media available to Lucasfilm could be utilized to generate future narrative endeavors. To appreciate its potential impact it must be understood that

It was accurately described as “a movie without a movie,” because all the tie-in products one would expect from a *Star Wars* theatrical release were present...except a movie. At the core of the *Shadows* story was the novel from Bantam Spectra, which focused on the newly created Prince Xizor and his plot to assassinate Luke and discredit Darth Vader. A six-issue series from Dark Horse Comics written by John Wagner with art by Kilian Plunkett and P. Craig Russell, explored Boba Fett’s story as he faced rival hunters while trying to return to Tatooine with Han Solo. A videogame from LucasArts focused on Dash Rendar, a new smuggler character who served as the game player’s proxy, and his various missions to help the Rebel Alliance. (245)

Novels, comics, and video game narratives all combined to explore this particular episode of the *Star Wars* narrative history. It’s a formula that would eventually serve *Star Wars* quite well, similar to how the roleplaying game books had been used previously to expand the historical and background depth of various planets, peoples, weapons, and other miscellaneous items to be found through the course of a narrative journey within the *Star Wars* saga.

Another foray into the multimedia model of narratives would involve one of the Expanded Universe’s most beloved corners, as just a few months prior to the release of

Shadows of the Empire, the first novel of the *X-Wing* series was published. A novel series that was “[e]nvisioned as ‘*Top Gun* meets *Star Wars*,’ the *X-Wing* novels proved very popular, numbering ten books by authors Michael A. Stackpole and Aaron Allston” (283). These books centered around Luke Skywalker’s frequent wingman from the film trilogy, Wedge Antilles, and the group of pilots he put together to serve as an elite band for the newly formed New Republic. This talented team, including the debut of fan favorite characters such as Corran Horn, became a decisive unit of military prowess in “the conquering of Coruscant by the New Republic, an event established as history but never elaborated upon in *Heir to the Empire*” (283-284). Their exploits really became popular among fans who couldn’t seem to get enough of Wedge Antilles and his fellow pilots. In addition to their ten novel series, the *Rogue Squadron* also became a comics series and video game series. While the novel series focused on the New Republic retaking Coruscant from the remaining Imperial forces a few years following *Return of the Jedi* in the *Star Wars* narrative timeline, the comics series also written by Stackpole “ran for thirty-five issues and took place in the years 4-5 ABY, before the events of the novels” (284). The video game series was not quite as tied into the other two media and was set in between the films in order to be more accessible to gamers who were only casual *Star Wars* fans. In fact, the first *X-Wing* game (published prior to the novels and comics in 1993) was the first *Star Wars* game published under the renamed LucasArts and “perfectly simulated the feel of the WWII-styled dogfights of *A New Hope*” (Rowe 17). This first game focusing on X-wing pilots demonstrated a greater commitment by LucasFilm to explore the narrative via the media of video games as “deep gameplay and rich storyline immersed computer gamers in the *Star Wars* universe without relying

solely on the events of the films” (17). The Expanded Universe grew and adapted according to the audience the license needed to commercially appeal to at a particular moment.

Of course, this practice would become even more important in 1999 when the prequel films began. Mention the prequels now, and most *Star Wars* fans, whether casual or hopelessly devoted to the series, will immediately greet you with a look of slight revulsion and begin to bitterly explain to you everything that went wrong with them from Jar-Jar Binks to the miserable plotting. Nonetheless, *Star Wars* and its Expanded Universe’s narrative owe the prequels a great deal in shaping the narrative.

From the moment the introductory titles of the first *Star Wars* movie appeared on screen letting fans know that *A New Hope* was Episode IV of the saga, fans of the *Star Wars* universe realized that part of the story had not been revealed to them. George Lucas hinted that there was a previous story, and that the full background of Darth Vader would be the plot of those previous episodes. As a result, leading up to the release of the first film of what would become the prequel trilogy *The Phantom Menace* in 1998, *Star Wars* fans were alive with a buzz unlike anything that had occurred since *The Return of the Jedi* had been on movie theater screens in 1983. The iconic image of new villain Darth Maul’s satanic appearance and seeing Obi-Wan Kenobi as a young man thrilled fans who had all but given up on ever seeing any new *Star Wars* films.

However, the end result would be very disappointing, and the prequels became the subject of a deluge of ridicule for George Lucas. Fans were far from pleased. Perhaps, even less than they were at the theatrical Special Edition releases where Greedo shot at Han first much to fans’ chagrin. Regardless though, the *Star Wars* prequel trilogy

brought a great amount of narrative world building to the universe. Artist Joe Corroney in a recent *Star Wars Insider* article praising the “50 Greatest Reasons to Love the *Star Wars* Prequels!” cites that

Fans take a lot of these amazing characters and ideas presented in all *Star Wars* multimedia across the board for granted now. But before the prequels, when all we had were Expanded Universe stories more closely tied to the era of the original trilogy, we really had no idea what being a Jedi Knight or a Jedi Master in their prime was really like until George Lucas presented the characters of Qui-Gon Jinn and young Obi-Wan Kenobi. Up to that point, we just had to imagine what it was like to see a galaxy full of these mysterious, lightsaber wielding, Force-using characters. We also had to piece together the backstory to these central, iconic characters like Anakin Skywalker, Obi-Wan, and even Yoda on our own. I’ll always be grateful for the prequels for adding more depth and complexity to these characters we love and even surprising and defying our expectations when, after 20 years of speculation, we thought we already knew them and their stories from our own active imaginations.”

(22)

Before the prequels were released, the eras of *Star Wars* prior to the original film trilogy were expressly defined as restricted area for the Expanded Universe, but with their completion, the Expanded Universe would quickly delve into these time periods.

Despite fans’ disappointments with the story, the narrative universe of *Star Wars* seemed much more complete following the prequel trilogy. Who Darth Vader was, his

relationship with Obi-Wan Kenobi, the Emperor's rise to power, and the Clone Wars that Obi-Wan had referenced in conversation with Luke in the first film. All of these were presented to *Star Wars* fans via the prequel narrative. But other now well-established facts of the *Star Wars* narrative came into being in the prequels as well: midichlorians, the planet Naboo, and Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn.

With an Expanded Universe established in other media, the new films would also take advantage of bringing the narrative to greater life via paratexts. One notable example of paratextual influence upon the prequel films began with the novelization of the first prequel film *The Phantom Menace* by fantasy novelist Terry Brooks. In this novelization, as a result of using Lucas as a source during the writing, Brooks was able to add to George Lucas's screenplay expanding the story, and as a result *The Phantom Menace* novel "was the first *Star Wars* movie novelization to add newly created scenes unique to the book" (Hidalgo 50). Additionally, this novelization would reveal information about Qui-Gon Jinn having a Jedi Mentor who had "described Qui-Gon as the best he had taught in more than four hundred years of the Jedi Order" (50) which would later be questioned by the narrative of the second film of the prequels. While most readers assumed this reference was to the very long-lived Yoda alluded to as the teacher of all Jedi in the original trilogy, in the second film of the prequels *The Attack of the Clones*, Qui-Gon Jinn's mentor is revealed to be the rogue Jedi turned Sith Apprentice Count Dooku, who would not have been able to have trained Jedi for over four hundred years. Similar discrepancies would begin to pop up with even greater frequency as the prequel narratives shape the history of the *Star Wars* universe.

The release of *Episode I: The Phantom Menace* allowed the extension of the Expanded Universe novels into the timeline immediately before and following the film, and three novels would soon be released that fit this particular era with Anakin's first Padawan mission in *Rogue Planet*, and prior adventures of the now-deceased characters Darth Maul and Qui-Gon Jinn in *Darth Maul: Shadow Hunter* and *Cloak of Deception* (which established much of the political intrigue of *Phantom Menace*), respectively. With the 2002 release of the second prequel *The Attack of the Clones*, the narrative would get much more complicated. A prequel novel was released just prior to the movie, called *The Approaching Storm* followed by the release of the novelization by another noted fantasy author R.A. Salvatore. Salvatore had been a major contributor to the *Star Wars* narrative due to his Timothy Zahn-like influence on *The New Jedi Order* series of novels (when the novel license returned to Del Rey) which had taken the original trilogy's characters beyond the events of the Bantam Series novels. The novelization by Salvatore would be published in April with the movie released the next month, and with those releases, *Star Wars* fans would finally get to see the beginning of The Clone Wars mentioned briefly by Obi-Wan to Luke in *A New Hope*. After the movie, the Expanded Universe could finally explore this era speculated about for a long time by fans, and Lucasfilm would gladly oblige them over the next decade-plus with novels, comics, and two different cartoon series.

However, the movie had to set up The Clone Wars first for this to happen, and *The Attack of the Clones* probably reshaped continuity between the films and other media narratives more than anything before it. The first major change was the revelation in *The Attack of the Clones* that "the Jedi Order is monastic, with love and marriage forbidden to

its members” (Hidalgo 78). Several examples of marriage amongst Jedi in comics including that of Luke Skywalker and Mara Jade had to be explained. Additionally, these examples also included the marriage of a Jedi introduced in the prequels Ki-Adi-Mundi whose practice of polygamy had just been established in tie-in comics just a few years earlier (78). Of course, the biggest change occurred in the origin of fan favorite character Boba Fett. To chart these differences:

[In *The Attack of the Clones*, t]he future bounty hunter began life as the perfect clone of Jango Fett, the genetic template of the Republican clone army. Prior to this revelation, Fett already had several EU backstories charted out in comics. *Star Wars* #68: “The Search Begins” (Marvel Comics, 1983) describes Fett as one of three survivors out of 212 Mandalorian Supercommandos from the Clone Wars. *Dark Empire II* #2 (Dark Horse Comics, 1995) reveals that Fett was a former Imperial stormtrooper who murdered his superior officer. *The Essential Guide to Characters* (Del Rey Books, 1995) gives the most detailed account of Fett’s background: he was a former Journeyman Protector from Concord Dawn named Jaster Mereel exiled for murdering a fellow lawman. Fett’s true roots have revealed these narratives to be historically inaccurate, as the legends of notorious characters often are. (78)

After *The Attack of the Clones* made such changes to previous stories and then added multiple narratives to the era including the two different cartoon series, a firmer grasp was needed at Lucasfilm to take control of the narrative continuity of this galaxy far, far away. Enter Leland Chee and the Holocron.

Just two years prior to the release of *The Attack of the Clones* (2002), Lucasfilm decided to fix some of its continuity issues by creating an in-house “database used internally by Lucas Licensing to keep track of all of the fictional elements created for the Star Wars universe,” containing “elements from nearly every officially sanctioned Star Wars source” (“Holocron Continuity Database”). Leland Chee was the Lucasfilm employee put in charge of this database which basically became Lucasfilm’s way to explain potential conflicts in continuity amongst the various narratives it approved within its licensed universe. In a very corporate manner, Lucasfilm decided that rather than fixing the problems that had arisen under somewhat sloppily approved editorial direction (for example, Ki-Adi-Mundi’s polygamy, established in a Lucasfilm-approved comic just prior to revealing that the Jedi Knights of his era practiced celibacy in *The Attack of the Clones*), they would instead create an escape route via PWT in order to circumvent any such continuity contradictions in the future.

The solution was actually editorial in and of itself with Chee generating what is supposedly an impressive database including 61,128 entries according to his Twitter (“Holocron Continuity Database”). And with such a large amount of Expanded Universe material available, Lucasfilm can hardly be faulted for taking such a step to streamline continuity. However, the Holocron additionally established a ranking system of the various narratives created by Lucasfilm that greatly negated the impact of many of the paratexts which had been established as official. As Chee has developed the Holocron, the canon of *Star Wars* has been divided into six different levels (known by their one letter designations G, T, C, S, N, & D). The first four of these designated levels “together form the overall *Star Wars* continuity” (“Canon”) while the other two stand for Non-

Canon and Detours Canon. The G-Canon (G referring to George Lucas) is the primary canon and is the most authoritative. It refers to the films as well as any statements, notes, or other sources from the creator of the *Star Wars* saga. Beneath the sources at this level, the T-Canon or Television Canon can be found. This level of canonicity refers to the *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* television series and the theatrically released cartoon film that started it, (Note: This probably does not hold true for the initial cartoon series *Star Wars: Clone Wars* produced by Genndy Tartakovsky that aired on Cartoon Network in mini-episodes from 2003-2005). Most of what fans have come to know as the Expanded Universe can be placed within C-Canon or Continuity Canon, “consisting of all recent works (and many older works) released under the name of *Star Wars*: books, comics, games, cartoons, non-theatrical films, and more” (“Canon”). The fourth level of canonicity is S-Canon or Secondary Canon referring to works which have not been labeled as Non-Canon but are seldom impactful upon current works. This category “includes mostly older works, such as much of the Marvel *Star Wars* comics, that predate a consistent effort to maintain continuity” and “the materials are available to be used or ignored as needed by current authors” (“Canon”). The Holocron basically makes the large number of texts that now compose the *Star Wars* saga much more manageable, particularly for a narrative that now includes so many creators.

Although critics, including this author, will point out that the Holocron also established a means of commercial success without strict adherence to previous narratives. Lucasfilm has been able to utilize the idea of paratexts such as the various novel and comics series continuing and expanding the *Star Wars* saga as a commercial incentive to entice prospective readers to continue their lifelong love of enjoying and

understanding the *Star Wars* universe. However, the Holocron gives the company, and George Lucas in particular, license to ignore narratives that fans have invested in for many years without narrative consequence. And now with the acquisition of the series by Disney and the promise of future films, the Holocron gives Lucasfilm guilt-free alibis for completely jettisoning the Expanded Universe in which fans have been invested for two decades. The Thrawn Trilogy and other novels published by Bantam and Del Rey will be shoved aside neatly and quickly when they cannot be connected to the new films. They will become just another possible version of the *Star Wars* saga.

Of course prior to the Disney acquisition of *Star Wars* and the accompanying proclamation that more films would follow, the last film that *Star Wars* fans had expected to see was released in the summer of 2005. *Episode III: Revenge of the Sith* wrapped up the prequel trilogy and showed fans the final acts of how Anakin Skywalker had become Darth Vader, a story that had been often pondered by fans from the moment Obi-Wan gave Luke a brief summation of the events way back in the original film. This particular film did not deviate much from anything that had been established in the Expanded Universe (one possible exception being that Luke's Uncle Owen and Aunt Beru were Anakin's stepbrother and wife as established in *The Attack of the Clones* rather than Obi-Wan's brother and wife as was said by Obi-Wan's ghost to Luke in the novelization of *The Return of the Jedi*).

Ultimately, beyond finishing the story of Anakin Skywalker's fall from heroic status to becoming the feared villain known as Darth Vader, the contribution made by the completion of the prequel films primarily resided in the fact that they opened up the entirety of the *Star Wars* timeline for Expanded Universe texts to be told in. No longer

would restrictions be so strict to avoid conflicting with the aforementioned G-level canon of the Holocron. The cartoon series *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* would continue to explore the military conflict across the universe between *Episode II* and *Episode III*. Timothy Zahn would get to explore the earlier histories of his characters like Admiral Thrawn and Mara Jade in the novels *Outbound Flight* and *Allegiance*, published in 2006 and 2007, respectively. Many other novels and comic narratives would also dive into the period between the two movie trilogies which came to be known as *The Dark Times*.

Lucasfilm even produced another multimedia story geared towards video games, novels, and comics, *The Force Unleashed* “was an ambitious video-game series launched ... in 2008, [the] first foray into next-generation console gaming, featuring unique technology for unparalleled visuals, game physics, and character intelligence” (Hidalgo 161). This video game series was perhaps the most high profile project *Star Wars* could have been introduced to due to the large interest in video games amongst its fan base. As a paratext, its structure could make for a very compelling study on video game narratives, and Lucasfilm went to great lengths to make it a key narrative point within the saga. The story of the video game series, “set between Episodes III and IV, had sweeping implications for the larger Expanded Universe, by giving Vader an apprentice, imbuing him with unfathomable Force abilities, and positing that the very origin of the Rebel Alliance was a plot by the Emperor” (161). The video game series even paralleled *The Shadows of the Empire* with its cross-media appeal as the storyline from the video game unfolded in novels and other media as well; however, it still did not rate a higher level on the Holocron than its media would allow. Despite its popularity, *The Force Unleashed* “still exists outside the movies and television series produced by Lucas and would be

subordinate to mythology revealed in those media” (161). As a video game, the Holocron categorizes *The Force Unleashed* in the C-Canon level therefore making it subordinate to the G and T canon levels of film and television as a consequence “Lucas’s alternative explanations for the roots of the Rebel Alliance appear in season five of *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*, which take precedence over Starkiller’s involvement” (161). This distinction presents an excellent example of the Holocron acting more as a mulligan generator for sloppy editorial direction rather than a mechanism for a more complex narrative universe.

The Force Unleashed did not exist in a vacuum of Expanded Universe video games in recent years. Narratives from the *Star Wars* universe long before the movie saga found their popularity via video games. A few years before *Force Unleashed* and while the movie prequel was still finishing production, a very popular video game gave *Star Wars* fans a glimpse of an era of the universe that had not been touched by Lucas’s films. Finding an era like this was far from easy, but “Bioware solved this problem by setting its role-playing game thousands of years in the past” so that its game would be “ancient history by the time Yoda is born” (Rowe 18). *Knights of the Old Republic* and its sequel *KotOR II—The Sith Lords* were big success stories taking the narrative of *Star Wars* into areas that had been mined narratively less than others in both media and eras of the saga. This success would help lead to *The Force Unleashed*, as well as a return to the Old Republic era again a few years later with the first exploration into the video game world of MMO’s with the release of *The Old Republic* in 2011. By leading the saga into the world of MMO’s the possible world potential of the *Star Wars* saga became nearly limitless as the ability of so many potential players to lead infinite characters into

boundless narratives became a reality. In this ambitious narrative project, “[e]ach character class has a carefully crafted story arc, the first chapter of which was longer than the entirety of *KotOR*. All told, *TOR* took over sixty man-years worth of writing to create and continued to grow as the game developed” (20). The narrative potential in video games could claim its own PWT-focused study.

Of course, following the conclusion of the prequel films, the video game arena was not the only media platform in which the *Star Wars* saga continued to expand. As mentioned above, a television cartoon series *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* would be introduced via a theatrical release movie followed by a series on The Cartoon Network. It would continue developing the narrative between the second and third prequel films. The novels and comics series also continued expanding the narrative even further. As stated above, the Bantam run of novels concluded with the duology *The Hand of Thrawn*, as Zahn came back and concluded the narrative era he had begun with *Heir to the Empire* by writing the novels *Specter of the Past* and *Vision of the Future* in 1997 and 1998, respectively. As this run ended, “the license to produce adult fiction shifted from Bantam to Del Rey—the original publishers of *Star Wars* books—offering an opportunity for a fresh perspective” (Hidalgo 369). Del Rey had lofty ideas for its return to the prose world of the *Star Wars* universe as they planned twenty-nine books in five years before eventually settling for nineteen (369). These novels continued from the point in the narrative timeline where the Bantam series left off, and their “story arc was to hew closely to the mythic structure of the Hero’s Journey as outlined by Joseph Campbell, a huge influence on the creation of the *Star Wars* films” (369). These novels dealt with an invasion by the Yuuzhan Vong, a species, undetectable by the Force and originating from

outside of the *Star Wars* galaxy, and the first novel by R.A. Salvatore changed *Star Wars* as profoundly as any event post-*Return of the Jedi*. For the first time, one of the characters from the central cast of the film died when Chewbacca was killed. This novel series saw the Campbellian heroic quest journey shift from Luke and Leia's generation to the next one as Han and Leia's twins Jacen and Jaina became more central figures to the narrative. Trials are endured, the Dark Side is succumbed to, and more lives are lost; nonetheless, the saga continued in both the novels as well as comics with the storyline eventually getting covered in the *Star Wars: Invasion* series.

As the narrative continued in the comics and novels, real-life marketing additionally influenced the continued direction of the *Star Wars* stories. The third movie of the prequel trilogy, *The Revenge of the Sith*, served a role so that "the conclusion of the cinematic *Star Wars* saga brought the shadowy Sith into the spotlight and to the top of the public's mind" (417). The prequel movies brought these characters to the forefront and with their conclusion, a vacuum was now created for other such characters to occupy. Before the prequels, "[d]ark villains in previous works were usually called dark siders, Dark Jedi, dark adepts, or some other descriptor that set them apart from true Sith Lords" (417) as LucasFilm had wanted to keep Darth Vader and Darth Sidious on a particular peak of villainy apart from other potential usurpers. However, now that the film series was finished and instead of wanting to reserve that particular level of villain to promote their film franchise, that villain class could be utilized to promote other media narratives such as the novels and comics. With this new initiative, "Del Rey Books gave the ancient Sith new life with the bestselling novel *Darth Bane: Path of Destruction*, and Dark Horse Comics introduced a future in which an entire order of Sith would control the galaxy in

the *Star Wars: Legacy* comic series” (417). The *Star Wars: Legacy* series pushed the narrative of the saga up a century and a half in its timeline which allowed a Sith army to become a reality (something that had existed for some time in the ancient timelines of videogames like *KotOR*) and for other aspects of the universe to change dramatically to leave readers pondering what events had caused such tectonic shifts in the galaxy they had been previously so familiar with. Descendants from the Skywalker and Solo families still find themselves connected to The Force and the continuing struggle for power and freedom in the *Star Wars* galaxy, and the narrative creates wonder in the reader pondering how the Expanded Universe narrative arrived at the point at which the *Legacy* comics series arrived. The novels even began a *Legacy of the Force* series that continues the narrative beyond the *New Jedi Order* storyline moving forward from the consequences of the Yuuzhan Vong invasion. The *Star Wars* struggle with the Dark Side of the Force continues to endure long after the Emperor and Darth Vader fell at Endor.

However, the biggest PWT issue has only recently occurred in the *Star Wars* universe due to the purchase of Lucasfilm by Disney along with the announcement that there would be new films, including an Episode VII directed by J.J. Abrams. Speculations immediately arose after this news regarding what this meant for the entirety of the franchise going forward. Most figured that Disney would definitely want the recognizable faces of Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, and Harrison Ford to return and hand the future of the series over to the next generation, but such thoughts also generated questions regarding what this meant to all of the texts that had continued the stories of Luke Skywalker, Princess Leia, and Han Solo beyond the original film trilogy. The actors from the original film trilogy are too old to tell the tales of Timothy Zahn and

others. Additionally, diving into the narrative of the Expanded Universe as far along as *The Legacy of the Force* novel series would only confuse casual fans who have not consumed the novels. However, it's hard to imagine Disney not wanting to capitalize on established Expanded Universe characters such as Grand Admiral Thrawn and the Solo twins, Jacen and Jaina, to help excite fans of the Expanded Universe about the upcoming films. PWT actually provides the solution.

The most likely way for Disney and the *Star Wars* franchise to move forward with the film narrative while using the Expanded Universe but not holding themselves adherent to its chronology will be for the narratives to be treated as separate possible worlds. The stories and the characters in them that fans have come to love still retain a certain level of pop culture legitimacy, and their narratives may even continue in comics and novels, but Lucasfilm will move on with another narrative in the film universe as it explores a different universe. Timothy Zahn's Thrawn trilogy will no longer be the starting point for the continuation of the film narrative but simply a different possible world, or galaxy in this particular case, that the narrative could have the reader. However, should the creators of the next *Star Wars* film decide that they would like to use a character like Grand Admiral Thrawn or plotline such as the Yuuzhan Vong invasion, then those characters and plotlines remain available only with different details, causes, results, etc. PWT will allow the new scribes and filmmakers of the *Star Wars* saga the ability to have their cake and eat it too. This circumstance proves ironic considering that J.J. Abrams has arrived at the helm of the narrative now considering his similar endeavor with the *Star Trek* narrative. Abrams' utilization of PWT in that particular franchise will be briefly analyzed in the next chapter.

PWT has implications for a multitude of franchises, particularly those that have developed their narratives across a plethora of media and paratexts. With the popularity of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, it came to no one's surprise when the adolescents to whom the novels were marketed began to create their own stories within its world. This burgeoning world of fan-created texts generating narrative worlds unsanctioned by the author resulted in a move by Rowling and her publisher to attempt to reign in such divergences. Rowling's novels latched on to their audience of adolescents and grew in complexity to meet the readers' demands as they matured. As a result, the world inhabited by Potter and his friends became a cultural touchstone for an age group who had always had the advantages of the world wide web at their fingertips.

Of course, the *Harry Potter* novels are not alone regarding fan fiction, but instead simply represent one of its biggest inspirations as exemplified in a 2011 *Time* magazine article titled "The Boy Who Lived Forever." Lev Grossman examines the culture of fan fiction and how it has continued, expanded, and altered the narratives of many television shows and licensed properties like *Harry Potter*. Grossman demonstrates how immersive any narrative can be by describing how even a show like *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* can be to a particular fan where "the world in which *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* took place felt so real that it seemed to have a life beyond the show, as if you could turn the camera around and see not a TV studio but an entire planet populated by men, women and children from U.N.C.L.E." (46). Fan fiction allows the world of the narrative to become fully ontologically complete as the gaps left by the narrative are filled by the fan-generated narratives. This example demonstrates PWT theory regarding a medium

between the principle of minimum departure and the dissensions proposed by Lubomir Doležel.

Grossman demonstrates this reality as he remarks that “[f]ictional worlds, while they appear solid, are riddled with blank spots and unexposed surfaces” (48). He relates an episode where one line from Dumbledore in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* spawns a ton of fan fiction regarding a potential homosexual relationship between the characters Sirius Black and Remus Lupin (48). Dumbledore tells Black to “lie low at Lupin’s,” which became a phrase that fan fiction writers then used to create stories of their own to fill in the spaces regarding what might have occurred as Black went to the home of his childhood friend. Grossman explains “that one little gap has given rise to so much fan fiction that ‘lie low at Lupin’s’ has become a recognized trope of *Harry Potter* fan fiction, a sub-subgenre in its own right” (48).

Such “coupling” of characters in romantic and sexual pairings has a long tradition in fan fiction Grossman evokes by looking at the first true instance of what has come to be known as “slash” fan fiction. Grossman goes back to the fan interactions that developed due to the popularity of the original *Star Trek* television series and relates that the first *Star Trek* fanzine appeared in 1967 and “bore the instantly definitive title *Spockanalia*” (46). *Spockanalia* became a venue for fans to construct their own stories about their beloved characters, and another fanzine became the forum where slash fan fiction first appeared. Grossman relates that these fanzines allowed fans to explore ideas about the characters that would never be done within the actual narrative, and so “in 1974 an adults-only *Star Trek* zine called *Grup* published a story called ‘A Fragment Out of Time,’ which featured Kirk and Spock in a gay love scene” (46). The short story did not

actually refer to the characters as Kirk or Spock. However, the context of the story within the confines of a *Star Trek* fan zine and the pictures included illustrating the story made the imaginative leap quite elementary. Grossman tells the reader that this

premise of ‘A Fragment Out of Time’ became so popular that it acquired a shorthand label: Kirk/Spock, or just K/S, or eventually just slash. *Slash* has since become a generic term for any fan fiction that pairs two same-sex characters, be they Holmes/Watson or Cagney/Lacey or Snape/Harry. It can be a verb, something you can do: if you have written a story in which Edward and Jacob from *Twilight* get together, you have slashed them. (46)

Fan fiction writers have routinely paired characters romantically that the official storyline narrative would never allow ever sense. And whether they want to “slash” same-sex relationships upon characters or pair opposite sex couples together who the writer(s) would never allow, romantic pairings has been one major focus of fan fiction. Fan fiction writers may attempt to make such pairings plausible, though not necessarily a part of the initial narrative, and therefore view themselves as filling gaps, or they may take the narrative into completely illogical directions according to what has been laid out by the original author.

Of course, as fan fiction writers’ deviations come into conflict with the creators of the original text and characters. Grossman’s article details this division between fan fiction writers and some creators. He cites creators adamantly against any fan fiction generated from their narratives including Orson Scott Card, George R.R. Martin, and Ursula K. Le Guin—and those who embrace it—J.K. Rowling and Stephanie Meyer.

Grossman's article asserts itself against this conflict by looking at how it "fills the gaps" as mentioned above thus placing fan fiction within a camp of PWT directly in opposition to the ideas of Doležel who preferred to leave possible worlds incomplete ontologically. However, as in the case with "slash," fan fiction frequently goes beyond "filling the gaps" and engages narrative departures. This type which "isn't constrained by canon is known as AU, which stands for Alternative Universe, and in AU all bets are off. The canon is fired. Imagine how Harry Potter's story would have been played out if on his first day at Hogwarts he'd been sorted into Slytherin instead of Gryffindor" (48). The number of AU's potential extrapolations from the narrative of licensed properties such as *Star Wars* or *Harry Potter* is infinite, and that fact is troubling to many creators. Grossman frames this debate within the confines of the legal copyright issue (where many of the anti-fan fiction authors attempt to place it) but he finds their case is not very strong, though it is effective due to the corporate legal strength that backs the authors in relation to fan fiction writers creating just for fun without the money to defend themselves (50).

The ultimate counter-argument to be made against authors stringently opposed to fan fiction is the critical and commercial success achieved by multiple creative endeavors that have avoided the fan fiction label yet possess some of its traits Grossman lists a few examples: *Wide Sargasso Sea*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, and *March* (50). Of course, the biggest difference between these texts and random fan fiction thrusting science fiction characters together in romantic liaisons resides in quality and perception. The first have been created by established authors and creative minds while the others are perceived to be constructs of obsessed fan boys/girls writing from their parents'

basements. And while much fan fiction cannot claim to be of extremely high quality, there are certainly some gems if one mines the vast output that has been generated in response to a variety of original narratives, so the distinction certainly has a highbrow scrutiny.

The acceptance of fan fiction is not always as clear as it appears either. Grossman champions J.K. Rowling as one of the authors who does not have a problem with fans using her characters for their own amusement. However, her actions have not always conveyed a willingness to have fans do what they wish with her characters. The epilogue at the conclusion of the seventh book, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, demonstrated to many the desire of the author to leave the series few questions regarding the futures of the characters as possible by revealing, future marriages and children. Additional interviews since the end of the series have also showed an author trying to prevent the “gap-filling” of fan fiction despite claiming to embrace it. By letting her readers know that Dumbledore is gay and that she regrets pairing off Ron and Hermione as a couple, Rowling is both filling in some of the gaps herself and steering fan fiction in particular directions. More gap-filling occurred with the advent of the website Pottermore which allows fans a more interactive experience with the texts and provides a great opportunity for paratexts with fan interaction; however, the additional materials provided by such a site prevents fans from creating answers for themselves that might or might not be canonical. Rowling seems to want readers to play in the sandbox that is her narrative world, but with certain parameters established.

This status between authors and fan fiction is reaction and balance between the narrative constructions of licensed properties. These properties move from the world of

the original text to an expanded one with paratexts where other authors create text fully licensed. Now the issue is whether such textual worlds will allow, or if they prefer to combat, texts generated outside of corporate permission. From *Star Wars* to *Harry Potter*, licensed properties thrive because of the allure that the original text has for readers who then embrace it by buying texts (in the same original media or other media) based on the original. Will their own independent narratives via fan fiction be embraced as a possible world?

CHAPTER FOUR

Television and Possible Worlds: Showrunners and Writers

Narrative world generation and PWT may have no better genre environment than modern television. With its long narrative structure taking place over multiple seasons, generally as long as networks see the show remaining profitable with advertisers, television allows for an individual auteur, generally known as the showrunner, to weave a very complex narrative within a textual world that has time to be built and developed as long as network executives do not pull the plug. Since, in this organizational structure, one creative voice can have primary authority while nevertheless delegating work to other writers, television narratives provide a unique perspective on how a narrative world may be generated in modern popular culture.

Creators such as Joss Whedon, Aaron Sorkin, J.J. Abrams, Ronald D. Moore, and Alan Ball, among others, have created expansive universes in their shows by forming a world and then allowing others to tackle specific sections of it; these creators frequently (although not always) remain in the admiral's chair, making sure the ship is sailing to the proper destination under various different captains along with some occasional guidance from themselves. Since the narrative guidance of the writer(s) wrests a lot of control from the prime creative influence, while still maintaining him or her as the guiding force of the text, the opportunities for application of PWT abound. For example, the link between the chief creator and various subordinate creative minds contributing to the ontological creation of the narrative allows for an insightful study into how narrative worlds are created in modern media.

Any endeavor into the arena of possible worlds within the medium of television must begin with an essay by late comic book writer Dwayne McDuffie. In 2002, McDuffie, most widely known as the creator of minority characters such as Static under DC Comics' Milestone imprint, wrote an article for a website called *SlushFactory.com* titled "Six Degrees of St. Elsewhere." In the essay, McDuffie takes his stand that the crossovers, which occur in both comics and film sometimes unite the narratives into a shared universe, should be subsidiary to telling a good story with the shared characters. He asserts that "*Seinfeld* and *Mad About You* share characters but both shows conveniently ignore that fact whenever they feel like it." McDuffie wants the focus to be on the storytelling in these circumstances rather than narrative-uniting because doing so "allows them to have all the fun of crossovers, without the silly baggage of both shows having to keep it all straight (and, wonder of wonders, you can watch and enjoy either show without ever watching the other one)." McDuffie speaks for the numerous comic book fans who have complained over the years of marketing ploys by DC and Marvel to continually use crossovers so that fans not only have to keep up with the ten titles they usually read on a monthly basis, but an additional twenty others because of some company-wide crossover story.

McDuffie thus describes the Grand Unification Theory from which the title of the article originates. He states: "The last five minutes of *St. Elsewhere* is the only television show, ever. Everything else is a daydream." How is this claim supported? McDuffie reminds the reader of the *St. Elsewhere* finale. The finale closes with a revelation gimmick occasionally used in the final episodes of television show runs or frequently at the conclusion of a season as was the case in the infamous Bobby Ewing

shower scene at the end of season nine of *Dallas* revealing that his death at the end of the previous season (and all the events subsequently following) was nothing but the product of his wife's dream. As *St. Elsewhere* came to a close, a similar twist on the narrative occurs.

The show moves to its final scene, and viewers soon learn that what they have been watching for six seasons is not what they thought it was. The scene shifts from Dr. Donald Westphall's office with his autistic son Tommy to a scene at Westphall's home with Tommy and Dr. Daniel Auschlander (who had died earlier in the episode) waiting for Westphall's return. It soon becomes clear that neither Westphall nor Auschlander exist as the viewer had seen them in the previous six seasons. Instead, they are apparently the father and grandfather of Tommy. Westphall wonders what his son is thinking, and as the three prepare for dinner, Westphall takes the snow globe that Tommy had been holding and sets it down. As the camera focuses on the snowglobe to bring the series to an end, the contents of the globe can be seen by the viewer and inside the globe is none other than St. Elgius Hospital, otherwise known by its nickname "St. Elsewhere." The entire series has apparently been the product of Tommy's daydream.

So what does this have to do with PWT and Dwayne McDuffie's Grand Unification Theory? As McDuffie explains in his essay, if the idea of the entire series of *St. Elsewhere* being the product of an autistic boy's imagination had "played by the rules of comics, either they wouldn't have been allowed to do it, or they would have precipitated a crisis in TV Land far bloodier than DC Comics' *Crisis on Infinite Earths*." *St. Elsewhere* has crossed over with so many other television series that it has become, as McDuffie dubs it "the Kevin Bacon of TV shows." As McDuffie begins in the essay and

others have since expanded upon, an intricate web of narratives can be found that have intertwined either directly or indirectly with Tommy's imagined hospital.

Thus, the thesis of McDuffie's essay appears. If *St. Elsewhere* does not exist except in the mind of Tommy Westphall, then neither do the dozens and dozens of shows which have overlapped with *St. Elsewhere*. As McDuffie begins to explain:

Characters from *St. Elsewhere* have appeared on *Homicide*, which means that show is part of the autistic child's daydream and likewise doesn't exist. It gets worse. The omnipresent Detective John Munch from *Homicide* has appeared on *X-Files*, *Law & Order*, and *Law & Order: SVU*. *Law & Order* characters have appeared on *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*. *X-Files* characters have appeared on *The Lone Gunmen* and *Millennium*. Characters from *Chicago Hope* have appeared on *Homicide*. Characters from *Picket Fences* have appeared on *Chicago Hope*. All those shows are gone (if you count cartoons, which makes this game too easy, the *X-Files* characters have appeared on *The Simpsons*. *The Critic* has also appeared on *The Simpsons*. Dead).

With all narratives connected, the revelation of *St. Elsewhere* as a dream makes all other narratives with which it interacted dreams as well. It becomes even more complicated when McDuffie cites that *The Bob Newhart Show* connects with *St. Elsewhere* via a mutual patient and the show *Newhart* is revealed in its series finale to be a dream (similar to *St. Elsewhere*) of Bob Newhart's character in *The Bob Newhart Show*. Thus, making all of the shows that connect to *Newhart*, such as *Coach*, like it: dreams within a dream.

McDuffie therefore uses this “dream” status for the narrative universes of so many television shows to argue that crossovers should not be utilized by continuity-obsessed analysis (which some might argue lies at the very heart of PWT), but instead the writers of the various shows should just focus on telling good stories with the characters. He firmly concludes “while guest-shots and crossovers can be fun, obsessive, cross-series continuity is silly.” Most would not disagree with this statement to a certain extent; however, it might go too far in preventing the interesting narrative framework that PWT assembles.

While no one wants writers of stories to slavishly adhere to continuity instead of focusing on telling a good story, is it really so bad that possibly every television show ever aired comes from the mind of Tommy Westphall? Might this unintentional quirk in the finale of one of the first examples of quality television actually prove beneficial to storytelling? In order to answer such questions, the ideas that PWT brings to television narratives and the development of quality and cult television towards its current golden age must be examined. Such a journey will probably never conclude with universal sentiment as comics fans are still divided in regards to the *Crisis on Infinite Earths* example McDuffie cites as a parallel to the revelation of Tommy’s dream, but some television viewers may parallel Grant Morrison’s love for the DC multiverse with a full embrace of Tommy Westphall’s imagination as a place of wonder and text of infinite possibilities.

As mentioned earlier, showrunners dominate the landscape of television’s golden age. Even casual fans have heard of at least some of the names amongst Joss Whedon, Vince Gilligan, Alan Sorkin, Shondra Rhimes, Alan Ball, Ryan Murphy, and many

others. Long before any of these became the household names they are though, perhaps the first precursor to the modern day showrunner arrived to create the ancestor of what would become cult television: Rod Serling and his *Twilight Zone*. From the beginning, Serling was extremely productive and really hit it big when “‘Patterns,’ his drama about big business, was broadcast live on NBC’s *Kraft Television Theater*” (Lampley 292) in 1955 and earned him an Emmy, which he would later duplicate with “‘Requiem for a Heavyweight,’ a 1956 episode of CBS’s *Playhouse 90*” (292). Eventually, the battle between the writer and the corporate became too much for Serling as the “sensitive, literate dramatic anthologies” (292) like *Kraft Television Hour* and *Playhouse 90* became the subject of much “censorship and interference of the networks and sponsors” (Angelini and Booy 20). He sought out science fiction as an alternative since he felt it could be utilized allegorically to discuss societal issues without alarming the censors and network executives who might have corralled similar messages within a realistic setting.

Thus, began the crafting of a narrative world (albeit an anthologized one) known as *The Twilight Zone*. Serling found “he could write more seriously about the human condition if his realistic themes were clothed in fantastic story lines” (Lampley 292). So, each week *The Twilight Zone* delved into the pressing societal issues that Serling and other writers found facing humanity, but with a twist of science fiction to remove them one step from the world the audience and sponsors inhabited. The show began with an introduction to this narrative world Serling had created in order to tell the stories he wished to tell:

There is a fifth dimension beyond that which is known to man. It is a dimension as vast as space and as timeless as infinity. It is the middle

ground between light and shadow, between science and superstition, and it lies between the pit of man's fears and the summit of his knowledge. This is the dimension of imagination. It is an area which we call the Twilight Zone." This introduction would change and shorten with subsequent seasons, but the theme remained that Serling was welcoming his audience to the fantastic narrative world he had birthed for his very human stories. Unlike future narrative worlds of television, Serling's stories would not do any world building, but rather the Twilight Zone universe would simply be a narrative backdrop for the anthologized stories.

According to Jonathan Malcolm Lampley, the first season of *The Twilight Zone* introduced two of the major ingredients of what fans would come to associate with the show. The first of these ingredients dealt with the one aspect of world building that Serling did utilize. One of the major ideas he wanted to emphasize in his writing and that the science fiction realm allowed him to do quite successfully centered around an "idea of a lone man trapped in a solitary environment...representing his fascination with the notion of alienation in the modern world" (Lampley 293). Serling may have utilized "a broad generic spectrum" jumping "from space opera to supernatural horror, from comedy to drama" (Angelini and Booy 20) with no transition due to the anthologized framework each week, but he still kept the ingredient of alienation at the heart of his constructed narrative world. The second ingredient was the iconic twist near the end of each episode that became the hallmark of how viewers perceived *The Twilight Zone*.

When the show ended, Serling had established a precedent in television history that would later be applied by other auteurs of the medium decades later. The idea of the

showrunner had been established for future aspirants of television authorship to follow. Taking on the role of the central author, he “would write 92 of the series’ 156 installments” (Lampley 293). With this large number of writing credits, Serling’s was the central voice, but he would additionally use other writers such as Richard Matheson, Charles Beaumont, and George Clayton Johnson to work with him and help shape the series by writing several episodes (295). And thus was born the idea of the star writer with a remarkable stable of fellow writers helping him to build the narrative world.

After Serling became synonymous with *The Twilight Zone* as it aired from 1959 to 1964, another science fiction series came along that was equally known for its creator. During its three season existence from 1966 to 1969, Gene Roddenberry’s *Star Trek* built a future universe that would spawn several spin-offs and movie sequels, but it also became extremely important for the purposes of PWT for one special episode “Mirror, Mirror” in its second season. This episode firmly established the idea of the parallel universe as a common narrative deviation in pop culture. So-called mirror image universes were nothing new in the science fiction realm as this was far from the first time that heroic adventurers had met their evil counterparts. Just a few years before, DC Comics had introduced readers to Earth-3 and its evil Justice League known as the Crime Syndicate of America. However, *Star Trek*’s “Mirror, Mirror” episode became a cultural icon frequently referenced whenever parallel worlds are alluded to in pop culture.

The episode begins with Captain Kirk accompanied by McCoy, Uhura, and Scotty on an away mission negotiating with a planet’s inhabitants for the Federation to mine dilithium there. After their meeting, the away team in typical *Star Trek* fashion beams back up to the *Enterprise*; however, something diverts their journey in the subatomic

transit. Mister Spock and the transporter operator watch as the bodies of the group flash before them, but when they fully form upon the ship everything is much different. Their uniforms have been altered, Mister Spock is now bearded, and he and the transporter operator greet the away team with a quasi-Nazi salute. However, the physical differences are the least of their concerns as they immediately notice a difference in Starfleet procedure as Spock physically punishes the transporter operator and discusses a plot to attack the planet should they not comply with Starfleet's request. As the four members of the away party attempt to navigate in this different world and find a way back to their own universe, they find even more differences in this "evil twin" parallel universe. Marked with a rather large facial scar, Sulu blatantly harasses Uhura in a sexual manner while Chekov attempts to assassinate Captain Kirk with some henchmen because mutinous acts happen to be the easiest way to garner promotion on this version of the *Enterprise*. Everything in this parallel universe has become much more barbaric.

Eventually, the four members from the *Enterprise* crew with whom we are familiar are able to navigate back to their own ship with a little help from the "Mirror" universe's Mister Spock who seems changed from the interaction. The trip to a parallel universe would also change *Star Trek*. This universe would show up again in the *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* episode "Crossover" and the *Star Trek: Enterprise* two-parter "In a Mirror, Darkly." Of course, alternate universes would lead to alternate timelines as well in *Star Trek*. Since the original *Star Trek* used references occasionally of 20th century events, occasional revisions or sliding timelines had to be created as in the case with the history of the Eugenics Wars, most famous in *Star Trek* as the backstory of Khan. Additionally, with *Star Trek* not getting renewed after its third season, the fourth

and fifth years of the crew's five-year mission have since been explored in other media such as the animated series and various comic book runs.

However, the most famous timeline shift in the *Star Trek* universe occurred when J.J. Abrams took over the film franchise in 2009. The *Star Trek* brand had been floundering a bit following the dwindling success of the previous couple of films starring the *Next Generation* crew and the cancellation of the prequel television series *Enterprise*. J.J. Abrams who had been associated with science fiction shows like *LOST* and *Fringe* was tabbed as the guy to re-boot the franchise, and a whole new cast of actors was selected to take on the roles made famous by William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, and others. In order to make this new series of films work while also paying homage to the old characters, a parallel timeline was created. Leonard Nimoy returned in his original role as Spock to help create this new timeline as Starfleet and the *Enterprise*'s antagonist in this new film turns out to be an enraged Romulan named Nero who is furious about Spock's inability to save his homeworld in the future. The new film series begins with him returning to the past, attacking a ship, and killing the future Captain Kirk's father in the process. This action creates a divergent timeline in which Kirk was not raised by his father. Nimoy's Spock will remain in this alternate timeline which will be further altered for his counterpart Spock who will see their homeworld of Vulcan destroyed later on in the film. Abrams's new crew for the *Enterprise* remains essentially the same as the previous one, but the alterations to the timeline create a parallel universe for the new film series to explore. A new possible narrative has been born allowing the stories of Kirk, Spock, and company be told to a different generation through the use of a concept established initially within the *Star Trek* narrative in the "Mirror, Mirror" episode.

Strange worlds and parallel universes in both *Star Trek* and *The Twilight Zone* increased the complexity of television by providing a grander canvas upon which to tell a story and present issues of societal import, but television would truly become quality in the early 1980s thanks to Mark Frost. Frost served as a member of the writing staff on *Hill Street Blues* and then moved from there to work on David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* (Bianculli, *Teleliteracy: Taking Television Seriously* 117). Both of these series made an indelible impact upon the face of television narrative, and Frost's particular desire to augment his television writing with literary acumen. He viewed his writing for the screen as akin to providing America with a mythology he deemed it otherwise did not have by remarking that "in the absence of any collective mythology, which America sort of seems to be lacking, we have instead the movies. We have images like James Dean on a motorcycle. What I think we are trying to do in those kind of images is pass on a form of mythology of ourselves" (qtd. in Bianculli 118). Frost's above statement presents an interesting contrast to the differentiation placed between the mythic character and the modern or novelistic characters as defined by Umberto Eco in the first chapter of this study. The resulting transformation of television narrative due to the influence of Mark Frost and his collaborators Stephen Bochco, David Lynch, and David Milch seems to have disproved the distinction between the two categories Eco asserted. Characters generated in modern medias of episodic nature in formulaic genres such as police procedurals could exceed the initial bounds granted to them. Instead of being "another show that's shot out in the San Fernando Valley with two guys in a cop car" (qtd. in Bianculli 118), *Hill Street Blues* dawned the era of quality television by generating

complex narratives that would become even more complicated with the arrival of *Twin Peaks*.

In his 2005 book on the benefits of popular culture *Everything Bad is Good for You*, Steven Johnson first examines how video games have increased our minds' cognitive power and then moves to "passive forms like television or film" (62). Johnson asserts however that television has been evolving to the point that television creators "have also increased the cognitive work they demand from their audience, exercising the mind in ways that would have been unheard of thirty years ago" (62). Johnson acknowledges how this is a drastic cultural change that "will sound like apostasy" (62), but he quickly moves to demonstrate how the "idiot box" moniker that has been placed upon television may be inaccurate.

Johnson suggests that television has increased in its demands on the viewer due to three major factors, and the first one brings *Hill Street Blues* to the forefront as an example. The idea of multiple threading is the first factor for television's increasing intricacy Johnson relates that

According to television lore, the age of multiple threads began with the arrival of *Hill Street Blues* in 1981, the Steven-Bochco-created police drama invariably praised for its 'gritty realism.' Watch an episode of *Hill Street Blues* side by side with any major drama from the preceding decades—*Starsky and Hutch*, for instance, or *Dragnet*—and the structural transformation will jump out at you. The earlier shows follow one or two lead characters, adhere to a single dominant plot, and reach a decisive conclusion at the end of the episode. (66)

Johnson contrasts this with *Hill Street Blues* by illustrating narrative graphs of the various plot threads that run through an episode of *Starsky and Hutch* versus an episode of *Hill Street Blues*. The *Starsky and Hutch* episode narrative consists primarily of a single-episode case structure with comic subplots usually bookending the case and a variation on the *Dragnet* prototype by flipping viewpoints from cops to criminals (66).

Meanwhile, *Hill Street Blues* demonstrates in its graph a true departure from the *Dragnet* formula as in most episodes of *Hill Street Blues* a

Narrative weaves together a collection of distinct strands—sometimes as many as ten, though at least half of the threads involve only a few quick scenes scattered through the episode. The number of primary characters—and not just bit parts—swells dramatically. And the episode has fuzzy borders: picking up one or two threads from previous episodes at the outset, and leaving one or two threads open at the end. (67)

Basically, the television narrative began to operate much more like the real world where problems do not pop up one at a time and tidy themselves up in a standard time allotment. Instead, world-building began to occur as plots were able to lengthen or shorten depending on how essential they were in the characters' narrative lives. Television became more complex and developed a better atmosphere as their worlds started to feel like people lived in them.

Of course, Johnson then argues that what *Hill Street Blues* did was not that revolutionary. It was new to primetime and cop shows, but not to television. He asserts “[t]he structure of a *Hill Street* episode—and indeed all of the critically acclaimed dramas that followed, from *thirtysomething* to *Six Feet Under*—is the structure of a soap opera”

(68). *Hill Street Blues* revolutionized television but “it did so by using a few crucial tricks that *Guiding Light* and *General Hospital* had mastered long before” (68). Long narratives and serialized storytelling had been a standard of day-time television for several years, and the soap opera format had just been translated to prime-time with the hit success that was *Dallas*. *Dallas* demonstrated “that the extended, interwoven threads of the soap opera genre could survive the weeklong interruptions of a prime-time show” (68), so all that *Hill Street Blues* then had to do was provide the prime-time level content more sophisticated topics than viewers found in soap operas could be handled. As mentioned previously, these topics had been brought into prime-time by Rod Serling’s *Twilight Zone* (but in an anthologized format) and according to Johnson, had been a major aspect of the hit sitcoms *All in the Family* and *Rhoda* (68) prior to them being combined with serialized storytelling. Now, *Hill Street Blues* combined complex narrative with substantive material.

Johnson explains that due to the arrival of *Hill Street Blues* “the multithreaded drama has become the most widespread fictional genre on primetime: *St. Elsewhere*, *thirtysomething*, *L.A. Law*, *Twin Peaks*, *NYPD Blue*, *ER*, *The West Wing*, *Alias*, *The Sopranos*, *Lost*, *Desperate Housewives*” (68). What many have referred to as a “golden age of television” found its roots in *Hill Street Blues*’ combining the soap opera narrative structure with dramatic stories containing issues of social importance. In the 1980s, the idea of the television auteur began to develop and really took off at the beginning of the next decade with a show about a small town in Washington filled with unusual inhabitants that would become the cult television show of cult television shows. And as mentioned above, like *Hill Street Blues*, *Twin Peaks* was co-created by Mark Frost.

In addition to Frost though, film director David Lynch also played a key role in shaping the odd little television series that would alter television forever. As David Bianculli states, *Twin Peaks* became “the cult TV show to end all cult TV shows. It resonates more, without reaching too many than any other” (“*Twin Peaks*” 299). Why is it revered so? It proved to be so influential because “[t]hose who have watched and made television since *Twin Peaks* have used it as a touchstone, keeping it alive in memory through a sort of oral-visual history” (299). It became a narrative that impacted many other narratives that would follow it.

Set amidst the discovery of missing teenage beauty Laura Palmer’s murdered body, the plot of *Twin Peaks* may seem quite formulaic as FBI Special Agent Dale Cooper played by Kyle MacLachlan arrives on the scene to uncover the murderer’s identity. The initial hype heaped upon the show even before it aired illustrated that the Lynch/Frost combo was creating something that was being banked upon as a ratings hit as opposed to the quirky cult hit it would become. *Twin Peaks* would prove to be more than a “whodunit?” mystery. In fact, it was dubbed “The Series That Will Change TV” in one of its first media articles in the Howard A. Rodman article the September 1989 issue of *Connoisseur* (Bianculli, *Teletiteracy* 268). Fans quickly learned that the quiet Washington town was unlike any they had seen before, and the show’s weird nature coupled with the murder mystery was a huge success. After that first article, more positive press followed and “the two-hour opener drew enough viewers to rank as the highest-rated telemovie of the 1989-90 season” (268-269). Viewers became invested in the mystery as the first few episodes were a water cooler hit. David Bianculli writes about “*Twin Peaks* mania” asserting that “The ‘Who Killed Laura Palmer?’ mystery

storyline dominated conversations, and the increasingly paranormal subplots kept viewers involved and guessing in different ways” (*Teeliteracy* 269). Its ratings eventually came down from their initial high numbers though, and the show garnered a following more appropriate for the type of cult show that it had become rather than that of a network juggernaut. However, this shift only meant that the narrative could become even more intricate and the world in it more complex with each episode. The large audience was gone but “the viewers who remained, though, were a loyal core audience, delighting in Lynch’s otherworldly dream sequences and playing along at trying to unravel, or at least follow, the various plot threads” and “*Newsweek* and *People* ran elaborate flow charts tracing the characters’ intricate relationships” (269). It quickly became the ultimate cult television show, and the existence of such an ardent and involved fan base feed the narrative to burgeon beyond the show itself.

No television show had such an enriched set of paratexts prior to *Twin Peaks*. From “cherry pies and *Twin Peaks* memorabilia at the Mar-T Cafe in North Bend, Washington (the model for the series’ Double R Diner)” and “compact disc releases by *Peaks* composer Angelo Badalamenti and featured singer Julee Cruise” (269), a plethora of merchandise took the show beyond the screen. However, this list of related material did not stop there as

The stack of stuff generated by, and with the cooperation of, *Twin Peaks* ultimately included an audiotape of Cooper’s messages to Diane, a *Twin Peaks* collectible card set by Star Pics, and such books as *The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer* (written by Jennifer Lynch, the director’s daughter), *The Autobiography of F.B.I. Special Agent Dale Cooper* (written by Scott

Frost, the cocreator's brother), and even a *Twin Peaks Access Guide* (written by David Lynch, Mark Frost, and regular *Access* author Richard Saul Wurman). (269)

Paratexts abounded in a galore of ways for committed fans to immerse themselves within the narrative being created by Lynch, Frost, and others. Henry Jenkins notes in several of his works how *Twin Peaks* took the idea of fan interaction further than any show before it. He writes in *Textual Poachers* about how with the early internet as an access point fans of the show in “computer nets...may participate in electronic mail discussions of favorite genres and programs” and one such interest group could be called “Alt.tv.twinpeaks...[which] emerged within just a few weeks of the series’ first episode and quickly became one of the most active and prolific on the Usenet system, averaging one hundred or more entries per day during the peak months of the series’ initial American broadcast” (77). Such an abundant use of the internet for the purpose of analyzing a television at this early of a stage in internet usage presents a remarkable portrait of the show’s fan base.

Jenkins explains how the technologies of both the internet and VCR’s were both utilized to bring deeper analysis into the narrative world as “net discussion was full of passionate narratives of the viewer’s slow movement through particular sequences, describing surprising or incongruous shifts in the images, speculating that Lynch, himself, may have embedded within some single frame a telling clue just to be located by VCR users intent on solving the mystery” (78). Such behavior may seem obsessive but it also demonstrates at least in the minds of fans that the narrative structure of television shows had continued to increase, almost exponentially, from the initial standard-raising

made by *Hill Street Blues*. Jenkins notes how these fans may have occasionally went over into the obsessive habit where one “looks for glitches within the text (such as Laura’s heart-necklace that sometimes appears on a metal chain and sometimes on a leather thong) but more often, they were looking for clues that might shed light on the central narrative enigmas” (78-79). Narrative was being absorbed by viewers and the paratext gave them a venue in which they could become engaged with it rather than just merely observing it. Jenkins notes that the internet forum created to study the show “only intensified this process, letting fans compare notes, allowing theories to become progressively more elaborated and complex through collaborations with other contributors” (79). The narrative world became alive by symbiotically attaching itself to its fanbase.

Jonathan Gray takes similar observations by Henry Jenkins on these internet discussion groups of *Twin Peaks*, and he combines Jenkins’ observations with Stanley Fish’s analysis of this type of analysis to describe a phenomenon of collective intelligence to study the narratives via the device of paratexts. He asserts that “Stanley Fish had noted with frustration (see chapter 1), too often analysts make sense of a text in its entirety after the fact, but online fan discussion allows a running catalogue and minute-by-minute register of how meanings are circulated, how the text is being interpreted, which intertexts are invoked, and, for our purposes here, how various paratexts are being discussed and activated” (137). Via the collective intelligence of internet forums and various websites, fans can now speculate about possible worlds for the narrative by using not only their own reactions to a text, but with information gleaned from the text by thousands, and maybe even potentially millions, of other ideal readers.

This intense devotion to analyzing every small, minute detail about *Twin Peaks* and its paratexts made *Twin Peaks* the pinnacle of cult television shows, and other networks would try to imitate the success of a show about a small town filled with quirky individuals as facsimile shows such as *Northern Exposure*, *Picket Fences*, and *Eerie, Indiana* soon arrived on television sets in hope of being the next *Twin Peaks* phenomenon. These imitators would not garner anywhere near the narrative buzz of *Twin Peaks*, but they would begin a television emphasis on local color that would make Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha proud and remain with television viewing audiences over two decades later with shows like *Breaking Bad*, *Justified*, and *Friday Night Lights* continuing the legacy. Nonetheless, many of the aspects that drove fans to such extremes would eventually result in the show being quite short-lived.

In his entry in *The Essential Cult TV Reader*, David Bianculli refers to *Twin Peaks* as "the pace car, the record holder, and, at times, an almost mythological case study about narrative lapses and loss of momentum" (299). Cult tv shows like *Twin Peaks* do not garner large audiences for lengthy periods of time, but the precedent with how far the numbers fell for *Twin Peaks* remains relatively unchallenged. *LOST* may have slipped some over the years from its large initial audiences, but nothing remotely approaching the escalating snowball that occurred with Lynch and Frost's creation. Its bizarre aspects and even more bizarre critical and popular reception make it the standard against which everything else is compared and left wanting as it has become "for those who strive to make original dramatic television and tell their stories in unconventional manners...[a measuring stick which] never seems to be far from the minds of critics, viewers, or the creators themselves" (300).

Twin Peaks was weird, and that fact would ever define it. It lured viewers in, but ultimately frustrated many of them to the point that the weirdness could be cited as the primary reason they went away. Bianculli asserts that

the viewer and media response to the plots and characters in the early episodes, led to and fed a *Twin Peaks* mania. The “Who Killed Laura Palmer?” storyline (examining the mysterious death of the high school beauty, played by Sheryl Lee, who is found washed ashore wrapped in plastic) dominated conversations, and the increasingly paranormal subplots kept viewers involved and guessing in different ways. (301)

These factors lured in viewers who were transfixed by both the novelty and mystery which gave *Twin Peaks* its aura of prestige as revolutionary television, but ultimately these initial numbers would begin to dwindle, but still “viewers who remained, though, were a loyal core, delighting in Lynch’s otherworldly dream sequences and playing along at trying to unravel, or at least follow, the various plot threads” (301). These fans would be the ones who interacted with the narrative, and they would be the fans who would give the narrative its cult status for years to come.

Of course, cult television frequently gets in trouble despite its rapid following due to the lack of quantity of such fans. Most fans were not as patient and devoted as those following the narrative as it unfolded via not just the traditional show but paratexts as well. So, many became quite frustrated as it “ended its first season with the Palmer murder mystery still unresolved and a cliffhanger ending, as Kyle MacLachlan’s Dale Cooper is shot by an unseen assailant” (301). It snowballed even further from there as the network toyed around with time slots while “the writers frustrated many viewers by

stringing out the Laura Palmer story: the killer was revealed eight hours into the show's second season, and the subsequent wrapping up of loose ends turned it into a twenty-hour mystery" (302). Fans were not that patient and when "*Twin Peaks* was finally pulled from the ABC schedule in the middle of the competitive February sweeps period, its audience had shrunk to only 10 percent of the homes watching TV at that hour" (302). A show that had once been a cultural phenomenon slowly died over a few staggered episodes later over the summer.

However, despite its less than momentous demise, *Twin Peaks* would usher in a completely new age of television. Much like Mark Frost's earlier *Hill Street Blues*, *Twin Peaks* became a revolutionary landmark. While *Hill Street Blues* brought the multithread narrative into primetime and important societal issues, *Twin Peaks* generated an even greater literary impact upon the medium of television. Narrative worlds that extended beyond the screen in one's living room were now possible via the internet and various paratexts that networks could use to generate revenue from obsessed fans and the era of the television auteur arrived.

One of the first most prominent examples of this new recognition of television authorship and showrunning is Chris Carter, who gave potential cult television fans yearning for more supernatural narratives a show they could be excited about as *The X-Files* cases of FBI Agents Fox Mulder and Dana Scully became the most stable science fiction hit that the young FOX network had ever seen. According to Mikel J. Koven, *X-Files* became "the American television series that defined the zeitgeist of the 1990s" (337). A major contributor to FOX's rise as a major network, the show "lasted a full nine seasons—an unprecedented success for a supernatural-science fiction series" (338).

What was the reason for its success? Science fiction certainly was not a new genre for television as series like *The Twilight Zone* and *Star Trek* demonstrate. However, the success that *The X-Files* would garner was far from the norm and as Koven asserted above “unprecedented.” *Twin Peaks* probably had a lot to do with it. The success of the odd show set in the Pacific Northwest did result in a ton of copycat series combining “weird” storylines with local color and subject matter worthy of the “quality television” movement that *Hill Street Blues* had established. In fact, *The X-Files* used the examples of television that aired before it to generate its own successful narrative.

As mentioned earlier, before *Hill Street Blues*, police shows were frequently standard one-episode procedural fare, and even long after *Hill Street Blues* established a different narrative possibility the one episode procedural remained a television standard with shows like *Law & Order* and *CSI* launching ratings successes that led to multiple franchise spin-offs based on the procedural. *The X-Files* used the procedural as well; Koven admits it was “a typical investigative drama, a long-standing staple of American television” (337), but it was also much more. Like *Twin Peaks*’s FBI agent Cooper, agents Mulder and Scully would frequently find themselves travelling to mundane small towns all across America where some sort of unexplained phenomena had resulted in a crime which Mulder almost always attributed an extraterrestrial or similar explanation while Agent Scully remained skeptical. However, unlike the drawn-out Laura Palmer mystery, *The X-Files* cases would frequently be solved in one episode narratives.

On occasion though, the cases would not be wrapped nice and tight at the conclusion of the episode. In those cases, the explanations for the case would be tied to the show’s larger mythology. Agent Fox Mulder had garnered his reputation at the FBI

when we and Agent Scully first meet him in the pilot episode as a result of his continual search for the truth behind alien abductions after losing his sister in one. The conspiracy of extraterrestrials doggedly pursued by Mulder throughout the series demonstrates the narrative complexity that *Hill Street Blues* brought to television. Additionally, Koven also attributes its commercial success to this complexity as “it tapped into pre-millennium paranoia and the collapse of traditional beliefs” (338). Koven displays how the two catchphrases of the series “I Want to Believe” and “The Truth Is Out There” both latched onto the cultural imagination of the time. He argues that *The X-Files* was

challenging the very epistemological fabric of our world: If the truth is out there, then where is it? Who has it? I want to believe in God, science, the universe, the U.S. government, and so forth, but how can I when all I see are cover-ups of the truth that is supposedly out there? These two mottoes were picked up by the popular culture nexus, and even those who didn’t watch *The X-Files* certainly knew of the series’ existence and recognized the names Scully and Mulder and the series’ catchphrases. Even Mark Snow’s eerie theme music became a synecdoche of all that the series embodied. (338)

The X-Files gave viewers a mix of mythology episodes with the Monster of the Week episodes. This approach enabled fans to have a complex narrative but also relax from it on occasion as well. It is a formula that would work quite well for genre shows, but also it assisted in creating lush narrative worlds for these television narratives.

Reviewing how narratives arrived at this complexity in textual worlds, this dissertation discussed earlier how Faulkner demonstrated an excellent example of

generating a complex world from one's own narrative creation from novel to novel. In the last chapter of this study, the licensed properties of *Star Wars* and *Harry Potter* exhibited the difficulties that might be found in keeping those narrative worlds in continuity as the ur-text of the overall creator might frequently come into contact with the various offshoots found in paratexts. Television narratives reveal a potential solution to keep the cohesive nature of one author while still working with the plethora of writers involved in most modern pop culture narratives. As shows like *Twin Peaks* and *The X-Files* helped create the idea of the television showrunner as auteur, the artistic impact of one individual working with multiple others began to evolve as well. The intermingling of a larger mythological scope within a series with episodes that dealt with Monster of the Week-focused illustrated a way to ease the tension between cohesion and multiple creative voices, at least for genre shows like *The X-Files* and later shows like *Supernatural* and *Smallville* where Monsters of the Week were plausible.

Narrative universes, or 'verses, began to pop up all over television and perhaps none is more well-known than the Whedonverse. With groundbreaking shows like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel*, and *Firefly*, perhaps no other auteur has become as synonymous with the term showrunner as Joss Whedon. While Whedon had worked on various television shows and films previously, his career took off with the cult success of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* for the young television network the WB. *Buffy* was originally "[b]orn as a campy and largely unsuccessful feature film in 1992, written by Whedon but directed by Fran Rubel Kuzui" (Wilcox and Lavery xxi), but the film version would be ignored by the television version with it only serving as a prequel of sorts with the heroine Buffy moving away from Los Angeles to the small California town of Sunnydale

following the events of the film. However, the show also spawned from a single image; Whedon explains “that the original kernel of an idea for *Buffy* came with the reversal of an image from traditional horror: a fragile-looking young woman walks into a dark place, is attacked—and then turns and runs and destroys her attacker” (xvii). *Buffy* becomes an embodiment of empowerment, flipping the archetype of the female victim (typically blonde and sexualized) into a Chosen One to battle against the demonic forces that come her way. And as a new resident of Sunnydale which turns out to be the epicenter of much demonic activity due to being the location of a Hellmouth, *Buffy* is offered multiple opportunities to battle these evil forces in her new location.

As a small town like Faulkner’s Jefferson in Yoknapatawpha County, Sunnydale serves as a narrative world, or universe, for taking quality television narrative into its next level as demonstrated by Rhonda V. Wilcox and David Lavery in the introduction to their edited collection *Fighting the Forces: What’s at Stake in Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. They take the nine characteristics of “quality television” as pronounced by Robert J. Thompson and examine how *Buffy* has stacked up against such criteria; their analysis positions the show as not only cult television but also quality television. Wilcox and Lavery demonstrate Whedon’s pedigree as auteur as they address one of the nine criterion demonstrating the show’s need to be of “a quality pedigree” as they assert Whedon’s credentials of “a certain cachet” as a result of being “[a] graduate of Wesleyan University with a degree in film studies” (xxi).

Wilcox and Lavery additionally look at how the large ensemble of characters makes *Buffy* quality television and demonstrates how the show generates a narrative world interesting enough to engage viewers. The large number of characters in any

narrative helps in world-building, and the really great narrative universes not only possess a large number of characters, but a large number of characters with complexity. With a few dozen such characters who fit such a description (along with the central Scooby Gang), *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* excels in creating its world in this aspect. Another characteristic shows where Whedon and the rest of the *Buffy* creative team really went to work in creating a narrative universe that was more cohesive than *The X-Files*. Wilcox and Lavery note that in a “*Fresh Air* interview, Whedon has expressed his disappointment with the lack of memory exhibited by the characters on *The X-Files*, especially Scully’s inability to accept the reality of the supernatural despite weekly proof” (xxiii). In creating the narrative mythology of *Buffy*, Whedon and his staff worked against letting their narrative remain static but instead worked to make sure that memory remained a critical aspect of the show to help characters evolve. Wilcox and Lavery give various examples of how the *Buffy* characters changed due to the impact of narrative events. These events changed them and “changes can happen because the series has a real, palpable past” (xxiii). The Whedonverse became a world where characters lived, grew, and changed. They learned from the narrative just as people in the real world. As a result, the mythology of *Buffy* and even the Monster of the Week episodes had much more long term impact than what was developed in *The X-Files*. These particular aspects of what make *Buffy* a prime example of quality television helped develop a narrative world that rivals one of literary construction, and the deviations from that narrative world in specific episodes place some *Buffy* alternative universe episodes in a similar classification with *Star Trek*’s “Mirror, Mirror” episode.

A couple of deviations from the normal timeline reality present themselves in the very first *Buffy* season as “Nightmares” demonstrates the characters’ nightmares becoming reality before Buffy can help the young boy who is unintentionally causing the manifestations and the season finale of “Prophecy Girl” centers around Buffy quitting her role as the Slayer due to overhearing Giles and Angel discussing her death as predicted in a prophecy. “Prophecy Girl” demonstrates an example of how a narrative can be generated via the act of an indefinite but possible narrative, in this case a prophecy. This tangential narrative will continue forward into the next season, thus demonstrating Whedon’s emphasis on consequence and memory, as an additional Slayer named Kendra arrives in Sunnydale in the two-part “What’s My Line.” Kendra became a Slayer due to Buffy’s “death” in “Prophecy Girl” and this deviation from the One Slayer mythology will continue forward with major consequence later when Faith takes the place of Kendra upon her passing. Of course, the very first episode to truly deal with a possible world dominating a complete episode’s narrative occurs in the ninth episode of the third season, “The Wish.”

“The Wish” gives the Buffyverse its first appearance of vengeance demon and Xander’s future wife, Anya. After her breakup with Xander, Cordelia is befriended by Anya, and when the former queen bee of the school wishes that Buffy Summers had never moved to Sunnydale her wish is granted as Sunnydale becomes an apocalyptic nightmare where The Master, the Big Bad from season one, was successful and vampires have been allowed to rule. “Doppelgängerland” the third season’s sixteenth episode also creates an alternative narrative world due to the influence of Anya. In “Doppelgängerland,” Anya seeks Willow’s help with a spell and the result creates a

Vampire Version of Willow arriving in the primary narrative world. David Kociemba writes in his article “‘Where’s the Fun?’: The Comic Apocalypse in ‘The Wish’” that these “storytelling gambits force the audience to acknowledge the fluidity of this fictional universe” (1). Kociemba describes several different ways in which the departure from the familiar narrative with its commercial appeal may be utilized. This practice may seem counter-intuitive initially. Kociemba states that

Such constancy eventually allows for a sense of nostalgia to set in, which fosters a “beloved” quality so profitable in syndication. This narrative strategy allows the series in syndication to function like a codex. The audience can turn to any “page”—tune in at any point in the narrative—and begin reading comfortably. It allows the programmers at the A&E cable channel to broadcast back-to-back episodes of *Law and Order* from vastly different seasons featuring different main characters. (1)

Departures from such narrative “constancy” should then be looked at as negative rather than positive endeavors in a media as commercial as television; yet, specific exceptions can be particularly beneficial.

Kociemba makes his argument by beginning with the assertion of there being “no question that the alternate reality subgenre of fantasy grants the freedom to vicariously enjoy departures from the norm without much consequence” (2). Due to fans of the science fiction and fantasy genres being quite familiar with the idea of seeing alternative versions of characters familiar to them, the idea of seeing a world where everyone has gone topsy-turvy might not be too jarring to sensibilities even when syndication takes it away from its initial placement in the narrative. However, Kociemba argues for a residue

of sorts to exist because of the melding of these alternative possible worlds together; he explains this residue quite well with his description of Alyson Hannigan's performance as the Vamp Willow who contrasts with the typical Willow character. He explains how the Vamp Willow character sheds light onto the typical Willow character. This revelation occurs because following her appearance in "Doppelgängerland" "we must reread her character in light of this core of unexpected power and grace and be on the watch for moments where her mask slips" due to the fact that "Willow, Vamp Willow, and Hannigan coexist in a manner that makes the distinction between the absurd and the plausible that much more difficult to pin down in this episode" (4). As Kociemba analyzes the impact that "The Wish" has upon the overall narrative of *Buffy* as a whole, he particularly looks into how the humor and wordplay constructs the narrative world.

Kociemba looks at how this counternarrative becomes more than just a singular exercise of possible worlds deviation as he relates how "'The Wish' (3009) threatened to be the last laugh, a meaningless exhibition of narrative inventiveness, and an affirmation of its own norm that could only lead to the stagnation of nostalgia, all at the same time" (6). Kociemba relates how the narrative universe created in this one episode rejected suppression as one simple narrative aside episode. Instead, he asserts how the episode's "narrative virtuosity generated new stories, rather than being a self-contained display of writing technique, ultimately disposable and thus masturbatory" (6). In this statement, Kociemba asserts that the Buffyverse has the memory Whedon advocates in contrast to *The X-Files*. He explains how not only the obvious "Doppelgängerland" references back to this episode that has become a parallel universe with an impactful counternarrative, but also argues that by becoming a counternarrative rather than a diversion the effects do not

“remain safely ensconced there” (6). Instead, as prime examples of the counternarrative’s influence “similarities between the alternate versions of Willow and Xander undermine the founding mythology of the series” (6).

In fact, the most impactful analysis Kociemba offers of “The Wish” upon the larger narrative of the Buffyverse is how deviations made possible by a possible world narrative demonstrates the essential role that the fans play upon the narrative. He compares how the alternative world with the alternative Willow actually creates a sort of fan fiction reality within the narrative of the series. Kociemba writes that by “adopting an iconic storyline of the fan fiction genre, the series acknowledges that some of its viewers are authors too” (7). Fan interaction of the *Twin Peaks* variety where a community develops to analyze the show has gone a step further in progression as now they have begun to develop their own narratives that the narrative itself comes into contact with as Kociemba explains the viewers “not only wanted an episode like this one; they wrote it, near enough” (7). In fact, fan fiction becomes even more prominent in the next season’s episode titled “Superstar” where Jonathan, a background character, gets to take center stage, temporarily in a counternarrative wish fulfillment but eventually permanently as he then becomes a more integral part of the cast.

The Buffyverse would move its narrative even beyond the show though. As mentioned above in regards to the narrative connectivity of *St. Elsewhere*, narrative worlds in television often morph from one another, and as a cult hit, *Buffy* produced its own spinoff *Angel* as Buffy’s first love leaves her and the rest of the main ensemble and goes to Los Angeles along with Cordelia. Other characters from *Buffy* would later follow including guest appearances by Buffy herself and most notably *Angel*’s rival Spike. The

narrative of the Buffyverse would also leap into paratexts as well with Dark Horse Comics producing several different comics series based on the narrative world of Buffy and Sunnydale. The most notable and influential endeavor of the comics arrived with the continuation of the actual show's narrative in the *Season Eight* and *Season Nine* series of *Buffy* comics written occasionally by Whedon himself and sometimes by such prominent comics writers as Brian K. Vaughn of *Y: The Last Man* fame who had also ventured into another prominent narrative world of television: ABC's mega-hit *Lost*.

When the narrative possible worlds of *Lost* debuted on ABC in 2004, it did so with extremely high expectations as a much-needed hit for the floundering network and a show with lots of potential for being a cult hit. Considering the shared network on which both aired, inevitable comparisons could be made to the initial water-cooler conversation catalyst *Twin Peaks*. And while *Lost* shared the initial ratings success followed by a decline in viewership, the result was nowhere near as damaging or dramatic as time-twisting tale of the survivors of Oceanic Flight 815 lasted for six successful seasons. The show also built a world that stimulated fan interest and speculation to a level far beyond what was available to the *Twins Peaks* enthusiasts over a decade earlier.

Lost exists as a unique show in terms of quality television created to sustain a narrative world as complex as the one to which viewers would become accustomed. Marc Dolan writes that it was actually originated as a pitch by an ABC executive who took the idea to both Jeffrey Lieber and J.J. Abrams. He also asserts that due to the idea being offered up to both Lieber, and particularly, Abrams, the pitch was intended by the executive "to be a peculiar hybrid: a mainstream cult show" (149). As a result of this unique conception, Dolan argues that *Lost* evolved into a narrative world "reflecting the

post-*Twin Peaks*, post-*X-Files* emphasis in serialized American television on developing a so-called mythos, a larger hermeneutic puzzle whose episode-by-episode disentanglement engages potentially committed viewers enough to keep them tuning in regularly” (150). It did so by utilizing a creative method of narrating a story.

With an large ensemble cast composed from the forty-eight survivors from Oceanic 815, *Lost* became a show where the regular narrative trope consisted of two interacting narrative threads: the current lives of the survivors on The Island and one particular character remembering his or her past as the other narrative unfolded. Dolan looks at the role of the flashbacks stating how they “work ironically, letting us see how the characters provide incomplete versions of their pasts to the others on the island” (152). They fill in the ontological blanks that create for much conflict within PWT. The narrative world becomes more reliable due to their existence since “[n]either the audience nor the actors know for sure what is true about the characters’ lives before they crashed on the island until they see it in a flashback” (152).

Lost did not simply stop at flashbacks as the only narrative tool utilized to construct the complex narrative world. In the finale of the third season, most *Lost* viewers could tell as the episode went along that something was just not quite right regarding Jack’s “flashback” narrative as it interwove with the story being told on the island with Jack and Locke in debate about what to do regarding the new arrivals on the island who were either potential rescuers or individuals with malevolent intent. By the conclusion of the episode titled “Through the Looking Glass,” Jack tells Kate in Los Angeles that they “have to go back.” This final statement confirmed that in this episode viewers had witnessed a “flashforward” instead of a “flashback” interacting with the

main narrative. With the title of this pivotal finale a reference to Lewis Carroll's work, the establishment of flashforwards creates an entire new paradigm for viewing the show's narrative. Lisa Williams states how this "convoluted sequence of events leading to the Oceanic Six's rescue propels them into a new world—a version of home very different 'Through the Looking Glass' than they remember from their pre-crash lives" (37). The application of PWT becomes difficult, but more necessary than ever, here as the future established timeline for the main narrative of the island in Season 4 has already occurred in this possible world future that will be running along narratively simultaneously. Of course, once the Oceanic Six are rescued from the island fully revealing the past of the flashforwards thus filling that narrative gap, the narrative begins to get even more complicated.

Viewers find out how the Oceanic Six were able to get off the Island in the Season 4 three-part finale "There's No Place Like Home" which additionally featured in a flashforward Jack learning from Ben that they need to go back to the Island. Of course, the one problem with such an ambition is not only due to the supernatural whereabouts of the Island under normal circumstances. The additional fact remains that Ben was able to move the Island after the departure of the Oceanic Six to keep Charles Whitmore from finding it again. Season 5 begins with the remaining inhabitants of the Island rapidly shifting across time and space with the Island due to Ben's moving of the wheel to shift the Island. Finally, John Locke stops the continual space-temporal movement by getting the frozen wheel back on its axis; this event leads to him leaving the island and leaving the rest of the castaways remaining on the Island stuck in 1974 where they become members of the Dharma Initiative.

When the Oceanic Six return to the island, they (with the exception of Sun and their recent accomplice Ben) return in 1977. The impact of the survivors on the timeline that had preceded them continues illustrating a situation of narrative affecting the narrative that came before it, both literally within the timeline and outside of the fiction, giving PWT an extremely unique case study. The situation becomes even more complicated due to Juliet accomplishing the plan laid out by Daniel Faraday to detonate the Jughead bomb and therefore change the course of time that led to Oceanic 815 crashing on the Island in the first place. This action would lead to an alternative narrative unlike anything television drama had seen to this point.

Season 6 opened with the detonation of the Jughead bomb leaving the castaways from 1977 back in the present day with the other survivors after the infamous Man in Black has pushed Ben to kill his brother and the Island's caretaker, Jacob. However, the narrative took an extreme turn due to another effect of Jughead's detonation. What became known as the Flash sideways timeline developed as Oceanic 815 landed safely instead of crashing on the Island. However, several other alterations had clearly been made as well. Several different theories exist regarding the nature of the Flash sideways world. At first glance, the assumption would be made it exists simply as the alternative timeline generated due to the detonation of the Jughead bomb. Several things might cause this theory to be held since the Oceanic 815 flight does not crash. Even though the flight differs from the original one in many ways, such as the inclusion of Desmond as one of the passengers, such differences can easily be attributed to coincidences from a sort of butterfly effect. The detonation in 1977 would have not only prevented the crash from occurring but other events from occurring as well such as how Desmond came to

the Island. Many different aspects of the Flash sideways universe support this idea if a butterfly effect view of the narrative is taken, but the Lostpedia wiki differs in its assessment of exactly how this alternative narrative universe has been constructed due to the revelations made to Jack by his father Christian in the series finale. In the finale, Jack and the majority of the other castaways find themselves all drawn to the church where the Oceanic Six had originally met with Faraday's mother Eloise who had told them why they had to return to the Island. As they journey to the church, the various characters in the flash sideways world have their lives in the other universe revealed to them as they make contact with each other. They remember their relationships and the time they spent on the Island with the others. They even remember things that occurred beyond the narrative shown in the series as Hurley and Ben refer to the years to come in the other narrative in which Ben helps Hurley serve as the Island's new caretaker.

Jack, similar to the audience, is confused by all of this, particularly when he sees his father who died before the crash on the Island. He begins to understand that everyone is dead there, and his father responds "Everyone dies sometime, kiddo...some of them before you, some long after you." He continues explaining to his son the nature of the place all of them have arrived at simultaneously. Christian tells Jack "this is a place that you...that you all made together so you could find one another. The most important part of your life was the time that you spent with these people. That's why all of you are here. Nobody does it alone, Jack. You needed all of them, and they needed you." The Lostpedia uses this explanation by Christian to generate their theory in regards to exactly what the flash sideways world actually is. This evidence by Christian proposes the idea that the flash sideways world is not actually a parallel universe created by the detonation

of Jughead back in 1977, but instead a narrative specifically created by the *Lost* survivors within this universe. The fact that the survivors are still connected to the other timeline narrative of the show supports this fact since a true parallel universe narrative would have left the characters completely unaffected by the other narrative. And as noted above, Hurley and Ben have knowledge of events beyond the narrative that even the audience is aware. Instead, of the flash sideways universe being a mere alternative universe narrative, *Lostpedia* asserts that this different world was constructed by the castaways. It serves as a sort of purgatory specifically designed by them and for them. Of course, that is just one theory. This purgatory may be specially designed due to their experience on the Island, or it could be some sort of universal purgatory that exists outside of time for everyone and the viewers are only witnessing Jack and his friends finding their afterlives. The answer is never clearly presented within the series; however, we do know that the castaways were alive on the Island and the flash sideways world is more complicated than it initially presents itself.

Shortly before *Lost* became an example of quality and cult television coming together on network television becoming a huge hit, another similar series converging the cult elements of science fiction with serious quality storytelling arrived on cable television in 2003. This show adapted the previously campy science fiction of the original *Battlestar Galactica* into a serious allegory of many of the pressing societal issues of the Bush administration. Over the course of its four seasons, the remake would examine topics such as monotheism, terrorism, and euthanasia, but the most remarkable occurrence was how the show challenged these issues without a particular political agenda. Did the show see religion as an asset for humanity or a plague? Are the tactics

of military insurgency ever justified? What qualifies as life? Each of these questions were addressed over the course of the show's history, but absolute answers never rose to take precedence. Instead, the show decided to allow for what British historian E.P. Thompson referred to as a "multiplicity of pasts."

From the beginning, *Battlestar Galactica* presented a complex narrative to the viewer. The devastating surprise attack by the Cylons on the Twelve Colonies of Kobol seemed like typical science fiction with a hint of allegory relating to current events. The Iraq War was looming in the near future, and it did not take much imagination to see a possible connection between the attack on the Colonies and 9/11 let alone to compare Commander William Adama's persistent vigilance as a neo-con's idealization of a prepared military commander, still vigilant after the rest of society has let its guard down. As described by *Newsweek* contributor Joshua Alston, the commander of the *Battlestar Galactica* "is a hard-liner, willing to sacrifice personal freedoms in order to provide safety from an abstract threat. And he was right: the moment the human race let its guard down, the Cylons attacked" ("The Way We Were: Art and Culture in the Bush Era" 53). Sure, newly-minted President Roslyn and Adama's son Lieutenant Lee "Apollo" Adama would serve as liberal alternatives who would frequently be contrasted with the *Galactica* commander (they might even be right on occasion); however, Edward James Olmos's veteran military man would be the primary protagonist of the series.

Nevertheless, the show would prove much more complex. While as stated by *Atlantic Monthly* correspondent James Parker, just prior to the midpoint of the fourth and final season, "a proper space opera...advertises with chilly pride its remoteness from life as we know it, the retooled *Battlestar Galactica* has plunged into the burning issues of

the day” (39). The issues discussed in this complicated narrative would not be limited to war, terrorism, and politics either (let alone the typical topics of political commentary in science fiction such as technology and its role in society). *Battlestar Galactica* would even analyze religion and spirituality with the synthetic Cylons worshipping an all-powerful monotheistic God, similar to that of Judeo-Christianity while the humans remain tied to a mythology similar to the pantheons of ancient Greek and Rome.

Seemingly all issues of importance to society at the turn of the 21st century receive analysis in this narrative. Parker wittingly refers to this socially-aware narrative when he critiques that the only modern subjects not represented in the series at the point he is analyzing from are “steroid abuse, the slow-food movement, and the declining standard of international travel” (39). Yet, the show’s greatest achievement lies in the fact that it never gets didactic in its political, social, or religious commentary. While Commander Adama is the show’s primary protagonist, his decisions do not always prove themselves correct. Other characters frequently serve as alternative points of view that encourages the show’s audience to debate the merits of various perspectives. The fact that the narrative concludes with the Cylons no longer enemies but allies as well as fellow ancestors to the human population of Earth leads to the understanding that multiple points of view should be taken into consideration before attempting to make any conclusions in regards to interpretation. Thus, the show generates an excellent example for PWT analysis considering the point of view perspective of David Lewis where only the narrator’s perspective is the actual world of the text.

By virtue of the multiple paradigms found in the series, *Battlestar Galactica* serves a purpose only few science fiction texts have ever achieved. It is not uncommon

for science fiction to tackle contemporary issues with a critical lens that more realistic fictions have been unable to achieve. Like the concept of historical anecdote which Joel Fineman proposes results in an “exposure” of history by virtue of tying “the historical narrative” to a concrete moment generating an “affect of the real,” science fiction has frequently attempted to analyze historical events and narratives by virtue of the unique perspective afforded by the rhetoric of its genre. Science fiction frequently comments on the contemporary world of the author taking a pressing issue of contemporary society and hiding it within the context of fantastic worlds, speculative futures, and strange creatures.

Battlestar Galactica takes this idea a step further as it attempts to bring the issues of contemporary life to the allegorical prism of science fiction from diverse perspectives. A plethora of different sets of goals and objectives propel the narrative of the show forward: Adama’s desire to defeat the Cylons, President Roslyn’s concern for the survival of the human race, Baltar’s cult of celebrity, Starbuck’s spiritual journey, the Final Five’s past, and the different philosophies of Cylons that become apparent as a result of their schism. The alternative history of science fiction generates its own counterhistory thus making *Battlestar Galactica* a prime example of E.P. Thompson’s “multiplicities of the past.”

Thompson, a historian who began his work with William Morris and the revolutionary history of the British working class, arose from the school of determinist Marxism but eventually shifted from it. His book *The Making of the English Working Class* established him as a significant figure in the New Left Movement only to break with it in later years. In *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain: History, the New Left and the Origins of Cultural Studies*, Dennis Dworkin explains that Thompson “was the only

historian to develop a specifically New Left theoretical perspective: a cultural Marxism fusing the new approaches to culture and the Communist tradition of the Historians' Group" (100). Keith McClelland states that Thompson "has been heard as a critic of contemporary trends in Marxism, as polemicist against the encroachments of the State upon civil liberties and as an influential writer and campaigner in one of the most important political developments of the 1980s -- the internationalization of the peace movement" (1). He stood up against contradictions he saw within the ideology of the leftist movement and eventually became a central figure in the campaign for nuclear disarmament. Regardless though of his academic or political aims, Thompson remained an advocate in promoting the establishment of a voice for the disestablished what Gallagher and Greenblatt refer to as "a full hearing" for "the putatively unprocessed 'voices' of the lower classes" (54-55). Thompson promoted historical anecdote as a vehicle for giving the anonymous actors of history a voice while granting history concrete evidence which when combined with other anecdotes will eventually provide completeness where "[e]ach explanatory narrative can be summed up in a further anecdote, which makes a new tear and provokes yet another contextualization" (Gallagher and Greenblatt 50).

Though fiction, *Battlestar Galactica* with its multiple paradigms serves as an alternative to counterhistory and the historical anecdote referenced above. It utilizes Thompson's "multiplicities of the past" by demonstrating various alternative histories within its fiction creating a unique spin on PW theory looking at the past possible divergences creating the same now. The humans and Cylons represent the initial schism in the telling of history within the narrative's world, but many other splits in "historical"

view will occur through the course of the series. The first words spoken in the miniseries that serves as the pilot for the series are spoken when a Number 6 Cylon model walks into the room where the human diplomat waits and whispers into his ear: “Are you alive? Prove it” (“Miniseries Pt. 1”). This simple statement quickly alludes both the character and the audience to the fact that things are different than they are originally believed to be. Counterhistories begin to take shape. The human diplomat, whom one could conclude must be required to be well-versed in Cylons considering he is there to potentially represent his entire species in communication with a former enemy, appears shocked to see a beautiful human-looking Cylon in his presence. On the other hand, this scene establishes for the audience that the Cylons in this remake are not going to be the toaster-looking robots found in the original 1970s series (which is also how they apparently appeared in this series’ history), but can also appear as sexualized blondes in tight red dresses. Although, perhaps even more enlightening to the audience that this new *Battlestar Galactica* will differ from typical science fiction fare is the question itself. What is alive? Is it biological? Carbon-based? How do we tell? How is it created? All of these questions will be explored over the next four seasons.

The primary narrative from the show’s inception lies in the controversy surrounding technology and man’s attempts to metaphorically play God in attempts of artificially generating life. The Humans created Cylons who ultimately attempt to destroy them. Immediately following the Cylons’ attacks on the Twelve Colonies of Kobol, Commander Adama announces to the crew and passengers of the *Galactica* that

We decided to play God. Create life. When that life turned against us, we comforted ourselves in the knowledge that it really wasn’t our fault. Not

really. You cannot play God then wash your hands of the things that you've created. Sooner or later, the day comes when you can't hide from the things you've done anymore. ("Miniseries Pt. 1")

Man has transgressed beyond his intended purpose by attempting to create life in service of himself. He has overstepped his bounds in favor of making life more convenient for him. The fact that Dr. Gaius Baltar shares an intimate relationship with a Cylon at the beginning of the series and remains as closely tied to them as any human through the course of the series should not be surprising. Baltar represents the basest of human instincts and the epitome of self interest. He allows Caprica Six into the defense mainframes simply because she will both share his bed and speed up his work with her calculations. When he discovers what she actually is, he shrinks back in horror not at what will happen to his civilization but in his own fate should he be found out. This self-preservation illustrates how Baltar functions as a base character. His appearance, status as a cultlike figure, visions of Six, and philosophical debates with said vision each serve to remind the viewer of his status as a messianic figure in the cosmology of the show; yet, he will always remain a fallen messianic character, man but not divine, as he refuses to acknowledge any higher power beyond reason. He responds to Six's discussions of God's will with the statement: "[t]he universe is a vast and complex system. Coincidental...serendipitous events are bound to occur. Indeed, they are to be expected. It's part of the pattern. Part of the plan" ("33"). Even with the occurrence of events that could only be described as miraculous or supernatural, Baltar still remains skeptical at best. Reason not faith will be the source of his belief; yet, a technological creation such as Six will be a promoter of religious faith.

Counternarratives abound with the beginning of *Battlestar Galactica*. In addition to the unknown circumstances surrounding Baltar and the invasion, several of these counternarratives can be found arising within the very first few shows. Boomer's unknown status as a Cylon (along with other Cylon agents who may or may not be aware of their existence as such). Starbuck's role in the death of her former fiancé, and Adama's youngest son, due to the falsifying of a test grade. President Laura Roselyn hiding her cancer. Adama's promise that he knows how to get to Earth. Each of these counternarratives serve as examples of a different truth exerting influence over the prevailing beliefs and ideologies. The creations of man, otherwise known as the Cylons, will come back along with their monotheistic view of God to destroy their former masters only to find they have been manipulated by one of their own. Humans will find their creations are more than what they designed them to be due to self-evolution. Legends will become history and religions will be challenged and usurped. Earth will not be the actual destination they seek. All of these interwoven narratives will serve as counterhistories to the central history as Thompson proposes through the lens of his "multiplicities of the past."

In the four seasons of the new *Battlestar Galactica* and the related miniseries and spinoff prequel *Caprica*, "multiplicities of the past" will exist as a mechanism to explore the pressing issues of the 21st century. From the Cylons as a metaphor for our rising reliance on technology to the intricacies of modern warfare and insurgency tactics practiced by the humans on New Caprica, various issues related to our current society are explored through the "multiplicities of the past" afforded by science fiction. Science fiction allows the storyteller to utilize a counterhistory via a new narrative, and the

writers of *Battlestar Galactica* take this idea even further by creating multiple counterhistories within their own counternarrative. By virtue of this fantastic realm, *Battlestar Galactica* served as a prism through which we could understand our own traumatic times at the beginning of this century. It served as a narrative world that mirrored our own times with multiple points of view regarding our pasts and present. The fact that the show ended with a mythology that preceded our own world made this possible narrative world a construction, mirror, and myth simultaneously.

Possible worlds have since abounded in television narratives. *Supernatural* has played heavily with the idea of fan fiction and paratexts bringing the audience engagement that was created by *Twin Peaks* to its pinnacle. Meanwhile, another show with the handprint of J.J. Abrams (briefly just as was the case with *Lost*), *Fringe* centered its narrative on a second possible world. And with the restart of the *Doctor Who* franchise in 2005, time paradoxes generating many possible worlds of narrative continue to abound. The utilization of PWT in the realm of television narrative will continue for many years to come.

CHAPTER FIVE

Comics and Multiverses: Possible Worlds and Corporate Authorship

Of course, no genre or medium has drawn on the idea of PWT as well as superhero comics as created by the two major publishers, DC and Marvel. Ever since superhero comics debuted in the 1930s, they have possessed a unique narrative structure. As a long narrative form generated by the creative work of several different writers and artists in a commercial publication, the stories of popular superheroes have generated cosmologies over the course of less than a century rivaling those of their antecedents in myth, legend, and oral histories. Like the heroes of the Arthurian Romance cycles and mythological epics, many different versions of Superman and Batman have had their stories told. Depending upon the setting or story the creators want to tell, superheroes find themselves becoming quite different characters from previous incarnations.

DC Comics had developed two universes to account for the existence of both its Golden Age heroes whose creations had occurred in the midst of the 1940s and its current heroes whose stories had seemingly begun with the debut of The Flash in *Showcase #4* in 1956. Following the conclusion of World War II, the Golden Age of comics had come to an end with sales numbers bottoming to the point that only the exploits of Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman remained in publication whereas dozens of titles had dominated the newsstands only a few years earlier.

When the Silver Age began, DC Comics decided to create new characters with a greater science fiction emphasis so characters like Flash and Green Lantern re-debuted as completely different characters who interacted with Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman the same as their predecessors had. So, in order to explain how Clark Kent

fought crime alongside Jay Garrick in the 1940s and Barry Allen in contemporary times, the concept of the multiverse came into being. The current crop of costumed adventurers lived on Earth-1 while Earth-2 was where the original DC superheroes who had debuted in the 1930s and 40s resided. On Earth-2, Superman married Lois, got gray around the temples, and became the editor of *The Daily Star* (rather than *The Daily Planet*) while Batman married Catwoman, fathered a daughter who became the Huntress, and eventually died. Their counterparts on Earth-1 remained the same as they always had, perpetually fighting crime in the prime years of their lives. The heroes of the two worlds would occasionally meet up due to some interdimensional crisis within the pages of double-sized milestone issues featuring JLA/JSA crossovers, and some writers decided to create even more universes in other dimensions such as Earth-3 where the heroes of the Justice League instead became villains and the lone superhero was Lex Luthor. When DC Comics acquired other companies' characters they added another universe to the ever-expanding multiverse as in the case with characters from Charlton, Fawcett, and Quality who peopled other universes and lived on Earth-4, Earth-S, and Earth-X, respectively. There was even an Earth-C where humanoid animals like the rabbit superhero Captain Carrot, existed in the place of people and superheroes.

The alternative Earths found within the DC multiverse still held true to the overall antecedent stories of the DC Comics narrative-matrix but allowed creators the opportunity to explore deviating narrative strands. One could explore a world where the Nazis won World War II (Earth-X) or America lost the Revolutionary (Earth-6), thus, creating opportunities for typical counterfactual history narratives along with counterfactual histories within the fictional universe itself (ex. Superman's ship lands in

medieval England). Also, having the multiverse exist made these more than hypothetical “what if?” stories because characters from both universes might come across one another in a big event comic like *Crisis on Infinite Earths* allowing the two narratives to merge together briefly.

DC Comics decided to remove the possibilities of the multiverse following the conclusion of *Crisis on Infinite Earths*. DC was afraid that the complex history and complicated situation of the multiverse was negating the interest of new readers so they decided to use the event as an opportunity to streamline their overall narrative. *Crisis on Infinite Earths* became the genesis for the now all-too-familiar concept of the event comic. Economic facts learned by comics publishers very early in the inception of the industry created the initial reason for the DC multiverse. Despite being a fairly cheap form of entertainment (unlike today), comic books still arose in an America that was just overcoming the Great Depression and despite having a large readership that would dwarf today’s specialty market, the industry still relied on preadolescent boys for the most part to drive its sales numbers. This readership could be very picky in determining just which of the four-colored books they were going to spend their precious allowance of a dime on, and publishers realized that the more heroes they could throw into a book the more appealing it would be.

Thus, the shared universe was created. After the Silver Age Flash (Barry Allen) first met the Golden Age Flash (Jay Garrick) in an interdimensional story, DC realized they could exploit this idea even further which generated several yearly meetings between the Justice League of Earth-1 and the Justice Society of Earth-2 in big event comics. Why settle for just having the members of the Justice League meet up when you

could also throw in alternative versions of them as well? Geoffrey Klock describes the multiverse as “an architecture of parallel worlds that house various interpretations and alternate histories of established characters: a Superman married to Lois Lane, a Batman whose parents were never killed, a world where the superheroes of World War II fight Adolf Hitler eternally, an evil mirror image of the Justice League of America” (20). This framework could allow artists to tell a variety of stories. Sometimes comic creators generated these parallel worlds to help with the stories that they wished to tell, so that they did not have to be tied down by long-established continuity while on other occasions simply because they wanted Superman or Batman to meet other versions of themselves.

Crisis on Infinite Earths took the concept of giving you the most superheroes for your hard-earned nickels and dimes (or dollars as the prices eventually continued to rise) even further including every superhero published by DC except for Hal Jordan who had recently quit the Green Lantern Corps in his title. Before they began their massive streamlining of the narrative’s fifty years of publication, DC decided to let the multiverse go out with a rather impressive bang. *Crisis on Infinite Earths* began as the personal project of writer Marv Wolfman, who along with artist George Pérez plotted the series as a company-wide event that would change the landscape of DC Comics following the celebration of its fiftieth anniversary. It was marketed ominously with the tagline: “Worlds will live. Worlds will die. And the universe will never be the same.” The two fan favorite creators of *The New Teen Titans* to a proposal they had earlier pitched to the powers-that-be. In the introduction of the trade paperback collected edition of *Crisis*, Wolfman relates that growing up reading the big events where the members of the Justice League and Justice Society met up to fight some big threat always left his greedy

imagination wanting more. These were “bigger” stories where not just those heroes but all the heroes of the DC multiverse could get together and fight an even larger threat. He states that “I even came up with a villain for the saga and gave him the ever-so-awesome name of ‘The Librarian’.” He had tried to get DC’s interest to create such a comic miniseries earlier but had proven unsuccessful, but now with his increasing commercial success he was able to get approval for it. It was announced in 1981, but Wolfman states that the amount of research required and DC’s desire to use the event series to celebrate their upcoming fifty-year anniversary pushed the publication back to 1985.

The series allowed Wolfman and Pérez to play in the sandbox of DC superheroes. Not only were all the heroes of Earths-1 and 2 involved, but they also brought in the characters from Earth-4, Earth-S, and Earth-X as well. The narrative of *Crisis on Infinite Earths* demonstrates that the presence of all these various earths and “this situation of alternate histories is not natural but the result of a disaster that occurred eons ago” (Klock 20). A renegade scientist on the planet Oa (the center of DC’s universe and home of the Guardians of the Universe who would become the administrators of the Green Lantern Corps) named Krona decides that he wants to witness the very birth of the universe. His fellow Oans who Harbinger describes “were like gods and they lived in peace for more years than even they could remember” and “possessed powers undreamt of now. Powers which they cultivated and increased beyond all belief” (Wolfman, *Crisis on Infinite Earths* #7 7) warned Krona. They said he should not attempt this endeavor citing “legends” of warning to him (8). Krona continues forward with his project heedless of such warnings and as he watches the beginning of the universe he sees a gigantic shadowy hand begin to form with “a cluster of stars inside” only to then watch as “a

terrible cosmic bolt splintered his machine” (8). The legends prove to be incorrect, and Krona’s ambition does not bring about the destruction of creation, but instead generates an anti-matter universe while also creating “a chain reaction that sends shock waves back in time, creating a situation in which the universe not only becomes a shattered and unstable multiverse, but always has been” (Klock 20). Time becomes fluid, or wibbly-wobbly and timey-wimey to paraphrase a certain Doctor from Gallifrey, as an event Wolfman creates fifty years into the narrative of DC Comics becomes the origin for the narrative as it exists at the time. The ultimate comic reboot arrives, however even more dramatic impacts to the multiverse timeline would occur within the context of the miniseries much to the chagrin of many long-time readers which will be discussed below.

Klock states concerning Krona’s experiments and its consequence that

The metaphor of this biblically styled story is unavoidable: by looking into origins, existence is splintered into a variety of mutually exclusive interpretations that have no center. The current state of the DC universe—all of the continuity problems and confusions and paradoxes, Umberto Eco’s oneiric climate—is the retroactive result of looking too closely for a guiding and originating principle. (20)

Of course, within the context of the specific miniseries, this creation allows Wolfman to tell the story of his “Librarian” on the actual comic page.

Wolfman had created a character called the Monitor. He had initially used this character as a villain in *The New Teen Titans* but later revealed the Monitor not to actually be a villain but instead a cosmic figure working to prepare the heroes of the multiverse against his evil twin, the Anti-Monitor. The Monitor was much like “The

Librarian” figure Wolfman had conceived as a young reader. Like “The Librarian,” the Monitor was also a character “living in a satellite orbiting the Earth, observed all the heroes, and sold the information he obtained about the heroes to other villains” (Introduction to *Crisis on Infinite Earths*) before the revelation that he was only doing so to prepare them for the battle to come. Like the Monitor, the Anti-Monitor was an extremely powerful entity but lived in the antimatter universe where he plotted the destruction of his brother the Monitor and the positive matter universe. The series opens up with Earth-3, home of the evil Justice League, being destroyed while the noble Lex Luthor saves his young child from the cataclysmic fate much like Superman was saved as a baby from the destruction of Krypton. The Monitor saves the young Alex Luthor and uses him and others to create a group of heroes capable of keeping the Anti-Monitor from destroying the multiverse.

Since the confines of the comic series needed to make the infinity of characters available for such an event somewhat manageable, the first arc of the series results in a culling of the multiverse to a mere five Earths. When the Monitor first brings various heroes from these various Earths together, he explains to them that “Already more than one thousand universes have perished” (Wolfman, *Crisis on Infinite Earths* #2 9). He explains that his twin brother, Anti-Monitor has been breaking down dimensions and destroying each one. With the end of each universe, the Monitor explains that his power weakens and that of his evil counterpart merely grows. To attempt to combat this threat, the Monitor has taken a group of heroes out of time and their various universes to protect some devices that he has placed to halt the wave of anti-matter destruction, and hopefully, save their worlds. However, the Harbinger, a young girl with dimensional

powers whom the Monitor saved as young child, stunningly kills the Monitor as she is under the control of the Anti-Monitor.

Nonetheless, despite his death, everything has gone according to the Monitor's plan as he explains to Harbinger and Pariah, a scientist like Krona who was obsessed with learning the origins of the universe and has since been condemned to bearing witness to the death of the universes by the Anti-Monitor. His recorded message relates to them that

There were worlds still to be saved, yet my machines were not ready ... my power source not yet complete ... Still, I had to move quickly—thus I arranged for my death...to be at the very moment I activated my machines. My body died ... yet my essence lived. Killing me, Lyla [Harbinger's depowered identity], released all my energy. Energy which would do more than just power the vibrational forks. It was a mad scheme, and it may yet work. Hear me out—for I need you still. Out of my very being was created a netherverse ... one which has temporarily absorbed your two universes. Earths 1 and 2 and all their respective planets exist within me. For the moment they survive—but in my haste to save the worlds—all time has become one! (*Crisis on Infinite Earths* #5 3-4)

The Monitor's last message sends Harbinger, Pariah, and Alex Luthor, son of Earth 3's heroic Lex Luthor, to gather the various superheroes from the remaining Earths (which consist) to formulate a strategy to save the very fabric of reality. This group of superheroes consisted not only of heroes from Earths-1 and 2 but the Earths S, X, and 4 that housed the heroes of comics companies that DC had purchased Fawcett, Quality, and

the then newly-purchased Charlton, respectively. At first the heroes are quite skeptical given their encounters with the Monitor previously, but after Harbinger temporarily saves Earths 4, S, and X by placing them with Earths 1 and 2, the heroes of the various Earths decide to listen to them as leaders from each of the five Earths along with the lone survivor of Earth 6 Lady Quark listen to the Monitor's allies and decipher a way to thwart the destruction generated by the Anti-Monitor. They explain the history of this conflict to the heroes describing Krona's sin and how it led to the creation of both the multiverse and anti-matter universe with its twin to Oa, Qward.

Pariah then fills in the details that led from that moment to the present due to his actions of attempting to discover the origin of the universe following his discovery that the multiverse existed. His experiment not only destroyed his own universe but also enabled the Anti-Monitor to awaken from his comatose state and help him to understand that the destruction of each positive matter universe would increase his power in the anti-matter one (*Crisis #7*, 12-16). The heroes understand that if their universes, which are in an extreme time flux with different eras overlapping each other in the same space, occupy the exact time and space, then all five universes will be destroyed, allowing the Anti-Monitor to become all powerful. So, they decide to take action and bring their mightiest warriors to his home in the anti-matter universe which they are able to do thanks to Alexander Luthor. The young Luthor explains to the heroes that he "became imbued with both positive and anti-matter...which is why the Monitor brought me to his ship...He knew I could become a tunnel through which his warriors could enter the antimatter universe" (*Crisis #7*, 18).

The heroes embark on a mission to fight the Anti-Monitor in his very own universe. As with many comics mega-events, the plot breaks down a bit at this point as the multitude of heroes sets out without a clear agenda other than to take the fight to the enemy and pound him into submission. The most powerful members of the remaining universes along with other survivors are the invaders of this mission. Unfortunately, the attack does not seem to be very well-planned as the heroes find some of their powers beginning to behave unusually due to the different physical laws of the anti-matter universe, and there does not seem to be a clear agenda for the mission other than destroying the Anti-Monitor's machines to prevent the five remaining universes from overlapping and therefore causing their mutual destructions.

As many of the heroes are stopped by the fortress of the Anti-Monitor itself as it comes alive combating their attack, the Earth-1 Superman proves to be the one able to fight his way towards the Anti-Monitor's machines. He follows the newly-created superhero Dr. Light II (another of the Monitor's creations before his death) and she shows him what she refers to as a solar collector. As a physicist, Dr. Light II explains to Superman that it is being used "to reduce the vibrational differences between the Earths" (*Crisis* #7, 32). Superman attempts to destroy the machine, but he is abruptly attacked by the Anti-Monitor who was lying in wait. The near-omnipotent being is able to overwhelm even the most powerful of the superhuman beings attacking him; however, his onslaught on the Man of Steel creates one of the series' major turning points.

Hearing her cousin face the brutal assault by the Anti-Monitor, Earth-1 Superman's cousin Supergirl rushes to his rescue. She prevents the Anti-Monitor from killing Superman and gets him to safety before rushing back to continue her onslaught

against the Anti-Monitor. She destroys his machine but does not survive the fight with the Anti-Monitor. Supergirl's death would demonstrate the first moment of the grave significance that DC was going to allow *Crisis* to have on their multiverse and its characters.

Supergirl was a creation of DC's Silver Age. The Silver Age was notable in DC Comics history since, as briefly mentioned above, it bore witness to the birth of the multiverse as new incarnations of Golden Age characters like The Flash and Green Lantern arrived in comics (now with origins and powers more closely tied to science fiction befitting the atomic age) to re-join their counterparts Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman. However, it also became the era of stretching ideas to absurdity by taking them in all sorts of crazy directions. In Superman comics, this became a time of the lone survivor of the destroyed planet Krypton being surrounded by other such super beings and a rainbow of Kryptonite that affected the Man of Steel in a multitude of ways giving opportunities for all sorts of silly stories. First, Superman's adventures as a young man dubbed Superboy were explored as the young Boy of Steel fought crime with a canine companion from his home planet called Krypto the Superdog (Madrid 80). Next, before things got really ridiculous with a Legion of Super-Pets including, a Kryptonian cat, monkey, and horse, Superman would find himself a fellow humanoid survivor from Krypton. In his massive tome *75 Years of DC Comics: The Art of Modern Mythmaking*, Paul Levitz describes this period: "Left to his own devices, editor Mort Weisinger built a complex mythology of different kryptonite colors with different effects, more survivors of the doomed planet, and an entire world of imperfect, backward duplicates of Superman and his friends like the Frankensteinish Bizarro" (251).

Supergirl first appeared as an imaginary story creation as was often the case with one-and-done Silver Age stories. Mike Madrid describes the debut of the character as

DC decided to give readers a taste of female power in 1958. Superman's pal, freckle-faced cub reporter Jimmy Olson, finds a magical Indian totem that holds the power to grant wishes. Jimmy wishes that his best friend and idol Superman had a super-helper, and a gorgeous blonde appears in a puff of smoke, wearing a duplicate of Superman's costume, but with a short flaring skirt. Super-Girl is pretty, powerful, and virtuous, but, because she is a magical manifestation, has no real personality to speak of. Supergirl's primary goal is to be of aid to the Man of Steel, but lacking life experience or, presumably, common sense, she impulsively flies into danger, causing more damage than good. In the end, Super-Girl sacrifices her life to save Superman from deadly Green Kryptonite. As her life forces ebb, she begs Jimmy to wish her back to the magical ether from whence she came. Super-Girl fades away, as did the prospect of a super mate for Superman. (80-81)

Stories such as this one were typical for the Silver Age. A dramatic shift to the status quo of the typical Superman comic finds itself being utilized to entice viewers much like Marvel would do later in their *What If...?* series. However, in these Silver Age stories, something typically occurs to revert back to the status quo by the conclusion of the comic story thus returning back to the never-ending narrative present that Eco refers to in his Superman essay.

Additionally, the use of the continual narrative present in this particular circumstance allowed DC Comics to utilize PWT as an economic tool by testing the response of its readers to a younger and female counterpart to Superman. When the permanent character of Supergirl would be introduced to readers, there would be some alteration from this initial appearance in order to make the character distinctive from the prototype and be more suited for permanent existence within the DC Comics universe. One example of a major difference in the prototype was that “the first Super-Girl was an adult woman, much to the chagrin of perpetually jealous Lois Lane” and a “Superwoman would have seemed the logical mate for the Man of Steel, and would have destroyed the ongoing tension of the Superman/Lois Lane/Clark Kent love triangle” (81). So, when Supergirl would be re-introduced to readers, and this time as a permanent resident of the DC Comics universe, she would be altered accordingly.

Mike Madrid explains how the permanent Supergirl was then introduced to the DC readership “hyphen-less” and as “a pretty blonde teen flying” out to them wearing a perfect replica of Superman’s iconic suit but substituting his pants with “an ice skating skirt” (81-82). She is also of Kryptonian origin and her journey prior to reaching Earth is explained detailing how

when Krypton exploded, a large chunk of the planet remained intact. On this planetoid was Argo City, where Kara was later born. The residents of Argo City erected a huge dome to protect their home from the ravages of outer space. When a shower of deadly Kryptonite meteors threatened to destroy the domed city, Kara’s father built a small rocket to carry his now teenaged daughter to Earth. Having observed Superman on the family’s

telescope and deducing that he was a fellow Kryptonian, Kara's mother made a feminine version of his costume for her daughter. After comparing family histories, the super duo realizes that they are actually cousins! They happily fall into one another's arms. "We may be orphans, but we have each other now." says Superman, as his little tearful cousin clutches his mighty chest, "I'll take care of you like a big brother, Cousin Kara!" (82)

Her origin would be tweaked slightly over the years, but this origin became her essential form for the primarily young male readership. She was a "cuter blonde version of Superman, able to do almost all of his same incredible feats, but in a skirt" (84). Supergirl did appear "to be a concerted effort to appeal to young girls; her stories were whimsical adventures that also featured Streaky the Supercat and Comet the Superhorse" (Wright 185), but even then she was still part of DC's attempt "to reinforce traditional gender and genre expectations by relegating female characters to a subordinate status" (184). Unlike what their counterparts were doing at Marvel at the time, DC Comics used the era of the Silver Age to tell silly stories where "superheroes squarely on the side of established authority, with which it naturally equated the best interests of American citizens" could be found (184). The DC characters became more scientific-based to reflect the changing society, but instead of confronting the harsh realities of 1960s America, the DC narrative decided instead to focus on more escapist-type stories which primarily consisted of expanding each major character's specific pantheons and created a focus on the family of characters around Superman and Batman as well as the expansion of Green Lantern mythology to make the hero's role to be an intergalactic space cop job.

However, in the new DC universe that DC Comics wished to create following *Crisis*, the powers-that-be in the DC office preferred to strip away some of these vast mythologies around their characters. A Superman who was the lone survivor of his doomed planet was much preferable to a company that wished to begin telling stories that would bring their character narratives back to a simpler framework. So, the decision to kill off Supergirl was made.

And the ramifications were quite large. Supergirl was dead. Readers knew that *Crisis* would result in some major changes to the comfortable formulaic narratives to which they had become accustomed. George Pérez drew what would become one of the most iconic covers in comics history with a Superman awash in grief and anguish crying while holding a prostrate Supergirl. The background of this foregrounded image included a plethora of heroes watching on with heads bowed in their own grief. And unlike many other comics characters whose deaths had been depicted earlier and would continue to be depicted in comic events, Supergirl would not immediately return to life at the conclusion of the adventure. Future Supergirls would come into contact with the Last Son of Krypton including Matrix-Supergirl, a Supergirl who became as much a spiritual figure as Kryptonian in a comic run written by Peter David, and a brunette Supergirl who fans never warmed to and only appeared in a handful of comics in 2003 before a Supergirl much more comparable to the pre-*Crisis* one in 2004 (Madrid 94).

The major ramifications continued though in the very next issue of the miniseries with the death of an even more important character of the Silver Age and in the history of comics. In September 1956, the Silver Age of Comics began with the publication of DC's *Showcase #4*. Written by Robert Kanigher, penciled by Carmine Infantino, and

inked by Joe Kubert, the Flash debuted in the fourth issue of the anthology title *Showcase* marking a new era in super hero comics shepherded by legendary DC Comics editor Julius Schwartz. The Flash had previously appeared as the star character of *Flash Comics*, described by Paul Levitz in his history of DC Comics as “the strongest title from the old All-American Comics stable not featuring Wonder Woman” (250) seven years earlier. The Flash of the forties had been much different though than the character appearing in the pages of *Showcase*. As Grant Morrison relates, “Jay Garrick wore a tin-winged helmet, a red shirt with a lightning bolt motif, blue slacks, and boots with wings. In this way he personified comic books’ debts to one of their secret patron gods” (30). Levitz writes that Schwartz made “radical...changes” to the character “as he chose to keep the name, emblem, and essential powers of the original and tossed the rest of the elements away” (250).

Levitz’s assessment of the change from the Jay Garrick Flash of All-American Comics to the Barry Allen Flash of Silver Age DC Comics portrays the common thought as the mythology of the Golden Age makes way for the science fiction of the Silver Age; however, Levitz neglects the level of connection between Barry Allen and his predecessor. In *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America*, Bradford W. Wright asserts that “the Flash was one of [Schwartz’s] favorite characters from the company’s past” (183), but like Levitz, Wright also states that “Schwartz revamped the character for modern times and reinvented him as police scientist Barry Allen” (183). However, as Grant Morrison points out in *Supergods*, Jay Garrick “was the first of the accidental supermen, prefiguring the heroes of the future Marvel universe: all victims of science, motivated by sheer altruism to use their great powers in the service of

their communities” (30). Like Allen, Jay Garrick was also a scientist, not a forensics policeman like Allen but “a research chemist who inadvertently inhaled ‘heavy water’ fumes that gave him his power” (30).

However, Morrison does point out that when this Silver Age revamp began with Flash that the editor insisted “on the condition that he was allowed to rebuild the series from the ground up, keeping only the name and...powers” (82). So, the changes were made with the most obvious being to the costume which Morrison describes as “[a]ndrogynous, mercurial, sleek, and intelligent, the Flash was appropriately blessed with the coolest costume in comics” (82). Gone was the “heavy water” fumes of Jay Garrick’s origin. Barry Allen became the Flash after one night in the police laboratory where he was “simultaneously struck by lightning and bathed in a mysterious combination of chemicals” (Wright 183). Morrison describes the Flash’s popularity arising since

His villains were rogue personifications of scientific forces: thermodynamic (Heat Wave, Captain Cold), optical (Mirror Master), meteorological (Weather Wizard), sonic (the Pied Piper), gyroscopic (the Top), chemical (Mr. Element). Stories often turned around some simple scientific fact. Yet there was rarely the feeling of being lectured to. These scientific facts were exactly what boys of the Silver Age wanted to know, and what better way to learn than with this new avatar of one of our oldest gods? Chemical reactions were acted out as drama, while physics lessons could become dreams of velocity and romance. (Morrison 83)

Before Marvel Comics arrived with similar themes for the atomic age in *The Fantastic Four*, *Spider-Man*, and *the Incredible Hulk*, DC Comics under Schwartz had shown them the way. *The Flash* was followed by other science fiction heroes like *The Challengers of the Unknown* and *Adam Strange* in the pages of *Showcase*. Soon, heroes like *Green Lantern* and *Hawkman* returned to comics. Gil Kane made *Green Lantern* not only a test pilot but also a beat cop in an interstellar police unit known as the *Green Lantern Corps*, and *Hawkman* became a policeman from the planet *Thanagar*. Soon, Gardner Fox would be creating a Silver Age equivalent of the old *Justice Society of America* as these new heroes would be joined by the remaining Golden Age heroes *Superman*, *Batman*, and *Wonder Woman* to comprise the new *Justice League of America*. A new age of superheroes had begun.

Next, Schwartz would make an editorial decision that not only preceded the *Marvel Universe* but also would distinctly differentiate DC's universe more from the *Marvel* stories for many years. The other departments within DC Comics focused on characters such as *Superman* and *Batman* across various titles but "Julie's office specialized in assembling the streamlined beginnings of a shared universe where all the DC superheroes were friends and partners" (Morrison 111). And as mentioned above, the idea of the "shared universe" had a major problem since *Superman* and *Batman* who were now interacting with the *Barry Allen Flash* and the *Hal Jordan Green Lantern* had once fought alongside the *Jay Garrick Flash* and the *Alan Scott Green Lantern* back in the Golden Age. To fix this problem, Schwartz created a "multiverse" and in this "multiverse" "an infinite number of alternate Earths occupied the same space as our own, each vibrating out of phase with the others so that they could never meet. The idea of

infinite worlds, each with its own history and its own superheroes, was intoxicating and gave DC an even more expansive canvas” (111). So, Barry Allen became the hero to introduce this multiverse with to readers in the Silver Age. In Barry Allen’s universe, Jay Garrick’s Flash was a superhero in comic books who had inspired him to take up the Flash mantle. However, Allen would soon find out in a story called “Flash of Two Worlds” that Garrick was more than just a fictional character in a comic book when by “spinning fast enough to alter the pitch at which his molecules vibrated, Barry Allen discovered he could cross over to a second Earth” (112).

So, with the multiverse begun in a Barry Allen story, his being included as a pivotal player in a story that would result in its demise seems quite obvious. His role would be much more pronounced than most would expect though since the issue following Supergirl’s death the DC universe also saw the death of its most famous speedster. At the beginning of *Crisis*, The Flash had been trapped in the universe and then began appearing randomly to superheroes in the narrative present. Since all of time and space seemed to be in flux, The Flash seemed a normal but quite likely pivotal piece in the puzzle that was befuddling the DC superheroes. Eventually though, his time fluctuations are brought to an end when he is captured by a powered-up Psycho Pirate working in conjunction with the Anti-Monitor.

So, following Supergirl’s disruptions of part of the Anti-Monitor’s machinations in the previous issue, the scene shifts to The Flash’s role in the Anti-Monitor’s countermove. The Flash has been captured due to the Psycho Pirate’s psychic ability to project primal emotions upon his victims and has therefore paralyzed The Flash with fear. At the same time, the dangerous merging of the universes towards their mutual

destruction has been momentarily halted by Supergirl's sacrifice. His ultimate plan remains in place as his Qwardian warriors are building an antimatter cannon that he intends to use in order "to obliterate the five remaining positive matter universes" (Wolfman, *Crisis* #8, 14). But even in captivity, The Flash soon reveals that his heroic abilities have not been thwarted as a result of his captivity as he escapes the Psycho Pirate's prison and then uses his former captor's powers to gain access to the antimatter cannon and destroy it. However, his destruction of the cannon does require drastic measures, and The Flash must run against the antimatter flow of the cannon which ultimately kills him as the time stream tightens around his body. As he dies, the momentary glances that the other heroes have been seeing of The Flash prove to be his final moments interspersed through time.

The original Silver Age superhero and discoverer of the DC multiverse died heroically attempting to save it from the Anti-Monitor's planned destruction. If the stakes of *Crisis* were not clear to DC's readers following the death of Supergirl, they should have been abundantly clear with this sacrifice. Even in comic book narratives where death is typically far from a permanent fixture, Barry Allen's version of The Flash would remain in comic book heaven for over two decades. Following his death and *Crisis*, his nephew Wally West, the former Kid Flash, would take over his Scarlet Speedster mantle and become perhaps the most successful legacy character DC Comics has ever seen maturing into and defining the role of The Flash for a whole new generation as well as being the version of The Flash used for the *Justice League* and *Justice League Unlimited* cartoons.

Barry Allen's death would not be the end of the *Crisis* conflict though. There would be a large villain team-up led by Brainiac and Lex Luthor that would take over three of the remaining five Earths followed by two more major conflicts with the Anti-Monitor. At the conclusion of *Crisis*, all but one universe was destroyed. Characters from Earth-2 who were different from counterparts on Earth-1 such as Jay Garrick's Flash and Alan Scott's Green Lantern were absorbed into the history of the New Earth while redundant characters like Earth-2 Superman were written out of history. The Charlton, Fawcett, and Quality comics heroes found their way into the New Earth history as well, and the DC universe became one centralized narrative. As Will Brooker states "Post-Crisis, the embarrassing moments of the 1950s and 1960s could simply be wiped out of history. There was to be no Rainbow Batman, for instance, no Bat-Mite, no Ace the Bat-Hound, no Batman in Ancient Rome, no Robin shouting 'Come on, big boy!' to a pink alien" (qtd. in Klock 19).

In his recent treatise on the superhero genre titled *Supergods*, popular comics writer Grant Morrison offers a counterpoint to Brooker's assessment of *Crisis* and instead argues that the multiverse should not have been eliminated and claims it as

an elegiac continuity audit made to purge all story meat that was seen as too strong for the tender palates of an imagined new generation who would need believable and grounded hero books. There were complaints that the parallel-worlds system was too unwieldy and hard to understand, when in fact it was systematic, logical, and incredibly easy to navigate, particularly for young minds that were made for this kind of careful categorization of facts and figures. There was Earth-1, where regular DC

superheroes lived; Earth-2, where their revived Golden Age counterparts, now twenty years older, existed; Earth-3, where all the heroes had evil counterparts; Earth-X, where the Nazis had won the war and where the characters that DC had acquired from Quality Comics—Uncle Sam, the Ray, Phantom Lady, Doll Man, and the Black Condor—were stationed in a never-ending battle against robot Hitler and his nightmare of techno-National Socialism. Is that really so hard to follow? (214)

Despite Morrison and others lamenting of the loss that was the multiverse as a storytelling device, the central idea of this new status quo would stay intact while writers still attempted to tell stories from different perspectives resulting in the creation of the *Elseworlds* imprint. The creation of the multiverse had allowed DC Comics creators a great deal of latitude in generating narratives for the iconic characters. They did not have to necessarily be tied down by the long and complicated histories of these characters that had evolved over dozens of different creators. Fans would obviously want future characters to stay true to the primary characterizations of their favorite characters and pay homage to the stories that came before, but the idea of seeing familiar characters in different situations whether it be in more modernized settings or back in time in the American West or medieval Europe held a lot of appeal.

Additionally, the multiverse presented an interesting narratological tool. In allowing writers and artists to establish their stories within the long narrative of DC Comics and its world while also allowing them plenty of latitude to tell their own original stories with the characters, often to the point that the similarities were mere homage, the company was allowing counternarratives to exist within the structure of the primary

narrative. While these counternarratives did not hold to the traditional view of counternarratives in that they did not necessarily represent the narratives of repressed voices, the multiverse still allowed for such a possibility. If nothing else, it allowed creators to tell the stories that the corporate entity of DC Comics might have been reluctant to allow within the confines of the main universe. These new narratives were different yet similar and allowed for what Martin McQuillan refers to as “the haunting of the one in the other” (22).

With the removal of the multiverse following *Crisis*, DC returned to the one central narrative, but along with the *Elseworlds* imprint, remnants of the old multiverse remained. And as Geoff Klock explains “[t]he irony of *Crisis* was that its methodology, in simplifying continuity, was used to make superhero comics all the more complex, convoluted, and rich: any attempt at simplifying continuity into something streamlined, clear, and direct...only results in another layer of continuity” (21). The universe’s history would once again become convoluted despite editorial’s desire otherwise and would require the creation of “hypertime” and the *Zero Hour* miniseries in order to explain how some things had changed as alternative timelines intersected with the new central one as well as the pre-*Crisis* multiverse. Despite the elimination of the multiverse, the narrative of the DC universe became even more complex as counternarratives refused to be silenced. Twenty years later, DC would relent and return the multiverse as a result of events in the miniseries *Infinite Crisis* and *52*. The miniseries *52* concluded with a return of the multiverse, but DC has done little with it since the return. Other than generating more event comics such as the much-maligned *Countdown to Final Crisis*, characters from other universes have seldom showed up in DC Comics. Geoff Johns did use it for a

couple of storylines by bringing the Superman of Mark Waid and Alex Ross's *Kingdom Come* into his *Justice Society of America* run as well as briefly returning Power Girl to the "new" Earth-2. Grant Morrison has hinted at a broader use of it in his follow-up to *Infinite Crisis* titled somewhat ironically *Final Crisis*, at least until DC decides to do another one, and his recent *Multiversity* project defined the multiverse for the new 52 reboot.

As McQuillan summarizes the ideas of Edward Said in reference to counternarratives, he asserts that in order to truly understand the narrative-mark, one "must also read the counternarratives which both contest and constitute the narrative-mark" (24). While the counternarratives present in the DC multiverse do not seem to hold the importance of other counternarratives seen in literature, the narrative device that the multiverse presents in its medium does allow for an interesting dynamic in storytelling. When DC decided to incorporate the predominantly African-American characters from the Milestone imprint into the DC universe, much speculation arose as to whether they would be incorporated into the main DC universe or into the multiverse as just another potential counternarrative which some suggested would further marginalize them. The debate continues.

In September 2011, DC decided to do another *Crisis*-like reboot with its comics line. The company announced that all current titles would be coming to an end with the conclusion of the latest mega-event *Flashpoint*, and a renumbering of titles would begin including new first issues of seventy year old titles *Action* and *Detective Comics*. Considering *Flashpoint* was a series centered on time travel and the creation of a possible apocalyptic world where the Justice League never came to be for various reasons, DC

decided to use its denouement as an opportunity to restart again in a way that had not been done since the original *Crisis*. Of course, much like the original *Crisis* aftermath, DC attempted “to have its cake and eat it too.” Titles that had not sold well or ones where the current crop of creators wanted to change the status quo were drastically altered as exemplified with the erasure of the marriage between Clark Kent and Lois Lane; whereas, titles that had been selling well such as Batman and Green Lantern were hardly touched at all by the change.

DC argued that the new universe, dubbed the DCnU or new 52 by fans, was created to continue the stories for another generation of fans and to entice older fans who had drifted away to return. Characters are now much younger with DC establishing in the first issues of *Justice League* and *Action Comics* and countless interviews that the first superheroes first appeared on the scene five years ago. However, they initially left unanswered for fans what other major timeline changes may have occurred as a result of the *Flashpoint* timeline merge. They fostered the claim that everything from the previous twenty-five years of comics publication history still occurred with only slight differences from its original depiction. The death of Superman still happened although evidently without him dying in the arms of his then-fiancée Lois Lane, since the two never even dated in this universe. Barbara Gordon still became Batgirl, was paralyzed by Joker’s gunshot, returned to crimefighting as the disabled hero Oracle whose computer skills know no rival, and then returned to being Batgirl again, which is a bit confusing given the five year timeline. The new timeline became even more complicated when examining a character like Batman and his different Robin partners whose characters supposedly remained untouched by the changes of this new universe. Shoehorning the

previous twenty-five or so years of stories into the five-year definition becomes quite difficult if one sits down and thinks about how quick some things would have had to have occurred. In the two years since the revamp, DC has struggled with how to accomplish the streamlining that they have attempted to achieve with their narrative.

The decision to not revamp the entire universe continues to make things more complex with former storylines still considered canonical but obviously changed due to characters within those storylines whose histories have obviously changed in ways that would prevent the storyline from occurring as it did previously. A retelling of Batman, by one of DC's more acclaimed creators currently Scott Snyder, titled *Zero Year* has been a major influence on DC history in the new 52 as many other characters have been written into the storyline via tie-ins with their own series. *Zero Year* has served a particular need to reshape the histories of the various Robins and Barbara Gordon's Batgirl addressing some of the problems mentioned above when the DCnU was introduced. The multiverse has been reintroduced with an *Earth 2* comic that widely diverges from the Earth-2 of pre-*Crisis* as it has no connection whatsoever to World War II. Instead, this comic focuses on an Earth where the Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman were believed killed as a result of Darkseid's invasion of that Earth, and now Jay Garrick's Flash and Alan Scott's Green Lantern are part of a team of "wonders," as superheroes are referred to on this Earth where Wonder Woman was the first hero to appear in its history. These new heroes now combat a rising threat by first Darkseid's general Steppenwolf, and then later by his assassin and former lieutenant initially believed to be the formerly-believed deceased Superman who has turned evil. Another comic *World's Finest* follows the adventures of Powergirl and Huntress, formerly known

as Supergirl and Robin of Earth 2, who have been trapped on the main DC Earth. And finally, the very first company-wide event of the DCnU arrived at the end of 2013 titled *Forever Evil* in which the evil Justice League of Earth 3 known as the Crime Syndicate arrive on the main DC Comics Earth, defeat the heroes, and rule as despots. It has become abundantly clear that possible worlds will remain a steadfast entity within comic book storytelling.

Even Marvel has gotten on board with possible worlds despite a history that for the most part avoided multiverses (despite its main universe's designation as Earth-616) leaving such concepts as mere plot devices in *The Fantastic Four* and opting instead for retcons, sliding timelines, and alternate future timelines in *X-Men* comics. The debut of the Ultimate Universe in 2000 was a huge success and led to the commercial rise of Brian Michael Bendis who has since become highly influential with regular Marvel universe titles such as the *Avengers* and *X-Men* franchises. The Ultimate Universe had great impact on how Marvel Studios portrayed several of their heroes cinematically, particularly Nick Fury. An alternative, younger version of Marvel's heroes would lead to changes to the regular Marvel comics universe. Brian Michael Bendis now resides at the helm of such changes as his *Avengers vs. X-Men* miniseries leading to the Marvel Now! Imprint which would be Marvel's equivalent to DC's New 52. Bendis's *Age of Ultron* miniseries would additionally wreck havoc to the comics universe timeline bringing the regular Marvel universe in greater contact with the Ultimate universe. The utility of PWT as a method for companies such as DC and Marvel to play around with the canonicity of their narrative universes has proven that PWT will continue to play a large role in the shape of comics narratives for some time.

CONCLUSION

As demonstrated by the various topics covered within the previous chapters, the implications of PWT are quite boundless. From examining the methods that narratives utilize to generate a world from the text to the infinite tangential plotlines that can be created from the allowance of possibility of divergent worlds arising from the original center one, PWT enables creators of various media to generate narratives that build upon the narrative worlds established by others. This dissertation presents the major scholarship of PWT then used that framework to demonstrate how the theory can be utilized to examine a plethora of texts across various media. It also examined how PWT has been a great tool in narrative creation along the spectrum of authorship from the lone author artist to corporate entities. Many aspects of narrative supply the world-building actions that lie at the heart of PWT thus allowing authors to create the worlds which give stories their ultimate complexity, and once one central world has become ontologically intricate then it allows the author of the narrative and any others who might come later to journey into tangential worlds.

William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha period was examined in Chapter Two in order to illustrate how an author can build a narrative world whose complexity adds to the narratives that continue building upon it. Faulkner's example followed Sherwood Anderson and others who had given their narrative worlds paramount attention, and many writers since have attempted to continue the standard established by Faulkner. Many of the same themes were explored across the novels as Faulkner matured, and therefore the development of Yoknapatawpha can also be studied simultaneously with the

development of the Mississippi novelist as an artist. With his first foray into the fictionalized version of his hometown in *Sartoris*, Faulkner made many awkward first steps in dealing with the literary themes with which he would eventually become synonymous, but at the same time a world was developing in which his later novels could shine. After that false start, *The Sound and the Fury* would allow Faulkner to use the Compson family to demonstrate how the old families of Mississippi and The South struggled in the modern age as Yoknapatawpha illustrated an ideal pasture from which to observe the human condition's struggle during Faulkner's era. In *As I Lay Dying* and *Sanctuary*, Faulkner further expands his examination of the rural Mississippi community as he brings individuals and families from the periphery of its society into his narrative to give a more complete outlook to his narrative world's humanity. The pinnacle of Faulkner's art and Yoknapatawpha's depiction can be found in the creative high watermarks *Light In August* and *Absalom, Absalom!* With these monumental narratives establishing Yoknapatawpha as one of literature's great narrative destinations, Faulkner continues to explore this world he has created in *The Unvanquished*, *The Hamlet* (and the rest of the Snopes trilogy), and *Go Down, Moses*. Faulkner demonstrated how narratives can be used not only to tell the story of a particular text but also to continually world build as one narrative shapes the world of the next. Faulkner novels became known as texts taking place in a particular world, a world he developed from one text to the next.

Of course, PWT deals with narrative worlds shaped by more than one author/creator, and with the corporatization of narratives the implications of PWT become even more important. Licensed properties like *Star Wars* and *Harry Potter* illustrate how the original narrative created by an individual or small group of creators

can morph into a narrative landscape upon which multiple future authors may generate characters and plots of their own that further deepen the mythology of the original narrative. The third chapter of this dissertation focused on how these two particular examples developed rich histories and geographies within their narrative through narratives written by creators other than the originals, be they well-known authors hired by the license or fans merely dabbling in the narrative world they have come to love and wish to interact with. In today's corporately-driven creative environment where risks are rarely taken and bean counters tend to prefer to roll out established properties in a plethora of new media releases, the ability to take well-known narrative worlds and contribute new aspects to those worlds may be one of the few ways creativity is still promoted.

PWT allows these narratives to broaden and develop the worlds in which they take place become more complex, and it offers fans a way to interact with the storylines that they have come to know and enjoy. Licensed properties that once would have resulted in crystallized narratives which fans could remember fondly but never visit again can now be returned to again and again with new novels, comics, and cartoons. These new texts bring the fan back to the world almost perpetually. Additionally, fans can also take part in developing the narrative that is continually morphing and allows them to create their own tangential capillaries in the narrative via video games, fan fiction, or interactive sites like *Pottermore* where one can become a student at Hogwarts and get his or her own wand and be sorted into a House. Fans no longer merely observe a narrative but instead become fully immersed in its world.

This sophistication of narrative exists beyond the realms of literary classrooms reading Faulkner and in the minds of nostalgic geeks continually returning to licensed properties introduced to them as children. PWT has also become quite transformative in the living rooms of the average American as well. The household appliance once frequently coined the “Idiot Box” has become the vehicle to explore narrative realms as complex and magnificent in scope as the most immersive novels have in the past. The television became the centerpiece in the average American home in the 1950s by delivering formulaic shows with narratives quickly tied up within setting as was the case with the standard police procedural. However, it began to become so much more by the early 1980s as documented in Steven Johnson’s *Everything Bad is Good For You*. Prime-time television being delivered into homes each night began to add not only socially aware subject matter but also the serialized storytelling narratives that had become popular in daytime soap operas. Whereas nighttime television consumed by the average family had been more familiar with the tidiness of one episode arcs, daytime viewers were quite familiar with continuing arcs and subplots propelling the narratives of their favorite shows forward. Children who frequented the matinee shows at the local theater were also more familiar with the serialized storytelling form, so adding this type of narrative to night-time television habits was a natural evolution. Doing so while bringing social consciousness to primetime proved revolutionary.

Television has become the bastion for complex narrative with much credit for that stemming from the time allowed for the story to develop. Unlike the approximate two to three hours limit that a movie must adhere to, a television series can number close to a hundred viewing hours depending on how many seasons it lasts. Whereas even a film

that morphs into a sequel-laden franchise is limited to only a dozen or so hours of narrative time and must rely on becoming a licensed property with paratexts to achieve the same level of narrative time. Only lengthy novels are allowed this much space to mature their world via narrative, and creators from Rod Serling to current showrunners have crafted immersive spaces for their viewers. PWT has benefited this literary television movement by demonstrating how the sole author, as represented by the head writer/showrunner, interacts in with teams of writers to create narrative worlds. An individual artist dreams up the world and a corporate hierarchy propels it forward through the work of various writers working in the employ of the production company as well as the paratexts that the overall corporation frequently endorses as television shows have become licensed properties. The corporation works in conjunction with the original writer. It takes his or her work to various other media forms where they can be continued by others to meet the demands of audiences looking for narrative citizenship in this universe.

And these universes began to become places where narratives shared a world with one another as exemplified in the essay by Dwayne McDuffie “Six Degrees of *St. Elsewhere*.” Television shows began to crossover into one another and while McDuffie downplays the phenomenon, many fans did try to piece how all of this might fit together. McDuffie asserts that it cannot or should not matter if these narrative universes fit together as long as a good story is able to still be told. He asserts that if we become tied to the continuity of narratives sharing space in the same universe as a PWT scholar would be apt to do then all the narratives implode as the figments of imagination in an autistic child’s mind as represented in the last scene of *St. Elsewhere*. McDuffie equates

such implosions to the universe-rebooting series such as *Crisis on Infinite Earths* which ties together the subjects of the fourth and fifth chapters of this dissertation.

Perhaps, no other narrative medium truly explores the potential of PWT as well as superhero comics. Like modern television, comics thrive upon the serialized format to tell long narratives across multiple issues, acting similarly as a unit of media as that of a single episode of television. Even long before soap operas, comics had already begun to explore the potential of this format, and by the 1980s were exploiting it as much as possible to the point that a reckoning would be required.

In his essay, McDuffie references one of the first company-wide crossover events in comics history, *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, and uses it as an illustration of the type of narrative that would be required should television viewers insist on strict continuity across the many television shows he connects via *St. Elsewhere*. *Crisis on Infinite Earths* served not only as a landmark series commemorating the 50th anniversary of DC Comics. It also served as a reset button for tying together all of the loose narrative threads generated over the course of that long publishing history. It brought the various possible worlds that had been narratively generated by DC Comics together, banding the heroes of those various worlds together in an attempt to prevent their annihilation by a near-omnipotent being. As only one universe survived this cosmic encounter, *Crisis on Infinite Earths* streamlined all of these possible worlds into one, but the precedent of the series would linger on for longer than the denouement of the miniseries.

Possible worlds filled with alternative Earths and divergent universes remain a proliferating force within superhero comics. Different imprints have resulted in companies creating new worlds where different versions of their characters can have their

tales told. Miniseries like *Crisis on Infinite Earths* become quite regular as the revenue-generating mega-events of every other summer. DC and Marvel both realized that continually teasing the possibility of these multiple universes even while returning to a streamlined singular one whetted the appetites of fans who enjoyed such possibilities. Movie and television projects also increased the need for PWT as the narratives of comic books began to be licensed and distributed via the mediums of television and film which created divergences from the original narratives for practicality sake or based on studio, production, and directorial whims. Possibilities abound for infinite narratives with crises only truly serving as marketing ploys.

PWT has been explored in this dissertation in a multitude of narratives, but the possibilities for more research are truly as boundless as the infinite potential worlds that might narratively spring from any of the texts examined here. The mechanism of PWT has allowed our pop culture to become more literary by generating complex narrative worlds exceeding with the potential. Mainstream shows like *LOST* even demonstrated how the general audiences of networks like ABC can even be guided down these ever-multiplying narratives. In fact, taking a view from *LOST*, physicists like Brian Greene and Neil DeGrasse Tyson have alluded that perhaps even our universe is only one of many, contrary to Leibniz's initial thesis. What multiple narratives of our individual selves might be out there waiting to be told?

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