

“PEDICULI” ETC.: IMITATIONS OF IMITATIONS BY “MUSHROOM” POET “WILL FALKNER”

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CONFUSION ABOUT IDENTITY OF FIRST PARODY ON FAULKNER

Literary criticism can be manifested in a variety of forms or styles; a formal review is just one of a number of ways to assess literary values. In the case of William Faulkner, it can be said to forebode the critical trend that followed, at least until 1946 when Viking Press published *The Portable Faulkner* edited by Malcolm Cowley, that the first reaction against the would-be poet on the campus of the University of Mississippi in 1920 was designed to hold up to ridicule “the embodiment of affectation and foreign decadence”¹ through the form of “a parody to W. Falkner’s great poem, entitled, ‘Une Balad [sic] Hedes [sic] Femmes Perdues.’”² The parody, the first of a series of personal attacks on the fledgling Faulkner, is of much interest in that it suggests the quality and extent of an antipathy the fellow students on campus had to him. What is puzzling and baffling, however, is that neither Carvel Collins nor Joseph Blotner seems to have succeeded in locating and identifying the parody, which was printed first in *The Mississippian*, the weekly student newspaper, on February 11, 1920, and then reprinted the next day in the Oxford *Eagle*, the town’s weekly newspaper. Carvel Collins, for example, only notes: “Most of [the Faulkner poems published in *The Mississippian*] were more sophisticated than the verse other students wrote for the newspaper, and the discrepancy created opposition to Faulkner’s work. On February 4, 1920, the week after he published ‘Une Ballade des Femmes Perdues,’ a fellow student parodied it. After Faulkner published ‘Naiads’ Song’ and ‘Fantochez,’ which the paper mis-set as ‘Fantouches,’ the parodist struck again, with ‘Whotouches,’ signed ‘J.’”³ The title of the first parody was not revealed by Collins, although that of the second was introduced. What is more confusing is that there is no parody or ridiculing item to be found out in the February 4, 1920, issue of *The Mississippian*, as Collins suggests. Joseph Blotner also has provided a perplexing explanation of the appearance in the Ole Miss student paper of the first travesty Faulkner has ever been the target of. Although Blotner notices in the student newspaper

1) Joseph Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography*, Two-Volume Edition (New York: Random House, 1974), Vol. I, p. 269.

2) “Dedicated to Will Falkner,” *The Mississippian*, Feb. 11, 1920, p. 4.

3) Carvel Collins (ed.), *William Faulkner: Early Prose and Poetry* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1963), pp. 7-8.

of February 11, 1920, the squib entitled "Dedicated to Will Falkner" in which the dedicator announced that he had written a parody to W. Falkner's great poem, entitled, "Une Balad [sic] Hedes [sic] Femmes Perdues," the biographer only remarks that "the parody would not appear until May 12,"⁴ a fact that suggests that Blotner also seems to have failed to catch the location and identity of the elusive parody. Sure enough, on May 12, 1920, *The Mississippian* published an amusing travesty by "Lordgreyson," entitled "Une Ballade d'une Vache Perdue." Yet, the travesty mentioned above is anything but the very first parody to Faulkner's work introduced in the squib in the February, 11, 1920, issue. The fact is that the squib, entitled "Dedicated to Will Falkner," and the parody related to it, entitled "Pediculi," were separately printed on different pages, one on page 4 and the other on page 8, supposedly through the editors' inadvertence or surprisingly rough layout, in the Ole Miss student newspaper on February 11, 1920. Both Collins and Blotner probably checked, apparently to no avail, with the Oxford *Eagle*, which, interestingly and unmistakably enough, printed both the squib and parody together on the same page in the February 12, 1920, issue.⁵

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF FAULKNER'S POEMS IN *THE MISSISSIPPIAN*, WITH REACTIONS FROM OTHERS AND THE POET'S RIPOSTES ADDED

In order to have a look at both influences Faulkner got from various predecessors and reactions he created in fellow students, it may be advisable to assemble and arrange the related pieces under common motifs for comparison. Before proceeding to the assortment, however, it will be helpful to make a chronological listing of all the Faulkner's poems published in *The Mississippian*, together with attacks on "Count No 'Count" garbed in reviews, squibs, and parodies, the would-be poet's rare responses to those sallies, and, amazingly, a defense of the scourged poet, without doubt, the first sign of acceptance of the greatest-Mississippian-to-be in the history of American literature.

- (1) Oct. 29, 1919. "L'Apres-Midi d'un Faune," p. 4. (Previously published in *The New Republic*, Vol. XX (Aug. 6, 1919), p. 24.)
- (2) Nov. 12, 1919. "Cathay," p. 8.
- (3) Nov. 26, 1919. "Sapphics," p. 3.
- (4) Dec. 10, 1919. "After Fifty Years," p. 4.
- (5) Jan. 28, 1920. "Une Ballade des Femmes Perdues," p. 3.

4) *Faulkner: A Biography*, Two-Volume Edition, Vol. I, p. 264.

5) See Hiroshi Takahashi (comp.), "Faulkner Items in the Oxford *Eagle* (Part 2)," *Journal of the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Shinshu University*, Cultural Science No. 17 (Feb. 1983), pp. 60-61.

- (6) Feb. 4, 1920. "Naiads' Song," p. 3.
- (7) Feb. 11, 1920. ["Dedicated to Will Faulkner," p. 4.] (An anonymous squib and introduction to the parody below.)
 ["Pediculi," subtitled "Reticulus [sic] Capitis," p. 8.] (An anonymous parody of Faulkner's "Une Ballade des Femmes Perdues." The first response that has ever been given to his writings.)
- (8) Feb. 25, 1920. "Fantoques," p. 3.
- (9) Mar. 3, 1920. "Clair de Lune," p. 6.
 ["Whotouches," subtitled "Just a parody on Count's 'Fantouches' [sic] by Count, Jr.," and signed "J."] (A parody of Faulkner's "Fantoques." J. is apparently identified as Louis M. Jiggitts, one of the student paper's editors.)
- (10) Mar. 17, 1920. "Streets," p. 2.
 "A Poplar," p. 7.
 ["The Ivory Tower," signed W. Falkner.] ("One of the very few responses [Faulkner] has ever made to the reactions of his readers, a reply to the student 'J' who had parodied two of his earlier poems."⁶)
 ["Meats," subtitled "A dainty little parody on Count's 'Streets,' by Count, Jr., Duke of Takerchance," and given the attribution "From Pall Vaserline."⁷]
- (11) Mar. 24, 1920. ["The 'Mushroom' Poet," signed "J."] ("[Apparently] the first published commentary on Faulkner's works."⁸)
 ["Eheu! Poetae Miselli," signed "L. M. J.," and followed by P. S.: "With apologies to Count for the vulgar Latin phrases."⁹]
- (12) Apr. 7, 1920. ["The Editor, The 'Mississippian,'" signed W. Falkner, p. 1.] (Faulkner's riposte to "The 'Mushroom' Poet," by J.)
 ["Cane de Looney," with the attribution "From Peruney Prune," and followed by "Note: Apologies to Count and Count, Jr.," p. 4.] (A travesty of Faulkner's "Clair de Lune," amounting to a harsh personal attack. Blotner suggests that "some new poetaster had joined in the game."¹⁰)
 ["Poetry" in "The Cynic's Ban," p. 4.] (Anonymous comments on the recent "one Poetic Issue after another." Blotner says, "presum-

6) See Carvel Collins (ed.), *William Faulkner: Early Prose and Poetry*, pp. 8-10.

7) See *Faulkner: A Biography*, Two-Volume Edition, Vol. I, p. 268.

8) See *William Faulkner: Early Prose and Poetry*, pp. 13-14.

9) See *Faulkner: A Biography*, Two-Volume Edition, Vol. I, p. 269.

10) *Ibid.*, p. 269.

ably Jiggitts' work."¹¹⁾

[“The ‘Mushroom Muse’ and the ‘Hayseed Hoodlum,’” signed “F.,” p. 8.] (The first defense Faulkner has ever had. Blotner remarks: “the tone was different from that of both Jiggitts and Faulkner. There was no acrimony, and the barbs aimed at Jiggitts were rather conventional and nonvenomous. It was as if one fraternity brother were engaging another in a kind of good-natured ritual jousting.”¹²⁾

- (13) Apr. 14, 1920. “A Clymene,” p. 3.
- (14) Apr. 21, 1920. “Study,” p. 4.
- (15) May 5, 1920. [“Chimes,” signed “J.,” and followed by “P. S. To identify hm [sic] you may go by this: He is from Meridian. His name starts with H. and ends with N. He is a blonde [sic],” p. 4.] (J.’s weak answer to F.’s “The ‘Mushroom Muse’ and the ‘Hayseed Hoodlum.’”)
- (16) May 12, 1920. [“Une Ballade d’une Vache Perdue,” signed “Lordgreyson,” p. 3.] (According to Blotner, this is a parody to Faulkner’s “Sapphics,” concocted by Paul Rogers, one of the staff of *The Mississippian*, under one of his pseudonyms, who had found out the poem entitled “Sapphics” in Swinburne’s works when browsing in the library.¹³⁾
- “Alma Mater,” p. 3.
- (17) Oct. 13, 1920. [“Prize Poem,” p. 4.] (The student paper reported that the prize of \$10.00 for the best poem published in *The Mississippian* in 1920 had gone to Mr. William “Faulkner [sic].”)
- (18) May 4, 1921. “Co-Education at Ole Miss,” p. 5.¹⁴⁾

MOTIF OF LOST LADIES: FROM VILLON TO FAULKNER, AND TO OLE MISS POETASTER

BALLADE DES DAMES DU TEMPS JADIS

11) *Ibid.*, p. 269.

12) *Ibid.*, p. 270.

13) Joseph Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography*, One-Volume Edition (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), p. 82.

14) See also Carvel Collins (ed.), “Notes on the Text,” *William Faulkner: Early Prose and Poetry*, pp. 123-134.

Dites-moi où, n'en quel pays
 Est Flora la belle Romaine,
 Archipiades ne Thaïs
 Qui fut sa cousine germaine;
 Écho, parlant quand bruit on mène
 Dessus rivière ou sur étang,
 Qui beauté ot trop plus qu'humaine?
 Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?

Où est la très sage Héloïs,
 Pour qui fut châtré et puis moine
 Pierre Esbaillart à Saint-Denis?
 Pour son amour ot cette essoine.
 Semblablement, où est la roine
 Qui commanda que Buridan
 Fût jeté en un sac en Seine?
 Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?

La roine Blanche comme un lis
 Qui chantoit à voix de seraine,
 Berthe au plat pied, Bietrix, Aliz,
 Haramburgis qui tint le Maine,
 Et Jeanne, la bonne Lorraine
 Qu'Anglois brûlèrent à Rouen;
 Où sont-ils, où, Vierge souveraine?
 Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?

Prince, n'enquerrez de semaine
 Où elles sont, ne de cet an,
 Qu'à ce refrain ne vous remaine:
 Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?¹⁵

— François Villon

UNE BALAD [sic] HEDES [sic] FEMMES PERDUES

'Mais ou [sic] sont les nieges [sic] d'antan'

15) François Villon, *Poésies* (Gallimard, 1973), pp. 69-70.

I sing in the green dusk
 Fatuously
 Of ladies that I have loved
 — Ca [sic] ne fait rein [sic]! Helas [sic], vraiment, vraiment

Gay little ghosts of loves in silver sandals
 They dance with quick feet on my lute strings
 With the abandon of boarding school virgins
 While unbidden moths
 Amorous of my white seraglio
 Call them with soundless love songs
 A sort of ethereal seduction

They hear, alas
 My women
 And brush my lips with little ghostly kisses
 Stealing away
 Singly, their tiny ardent faces
 Like windflowers from some blown garden of dreams
 To their love nights among the roses

I am old, and alone
 And the star dust from their wings
 Has dimmed my eyes
 I sing in the green dusk
 Of lost ladies — Si vraiment charmant, charmant.

— W. Falkner.¹⁶

DEDICATED TO WILL FALKNER.

Yielding to the requests (?) of thousands, I have written a parody to W. Falkner's great poem, entitled, "Une Balad [sic] Hedes [sic] Femmes Perdues." If you will find this poem in the *Mississippian* of January 29, 1920, you will get the significance. If my parody does not have clearness, please remember that I am modelling it after the Count's both in substances [sic] as well as form. Thank the author.¹⁷

16) *The Mississippian*, Jan. 28, 1920, p. 3.

17) *Ibid.*, Feb. 11, 1920, p. 4.

"PEDICULI."

Rediculus[sic] Capitis.
 They feed on the pink flesh sumptuously,
 Of parts that I have loved
 Venerunt, viderunt, vicerunt..
 Gay little pests with tickling feet,
 They dance with quick feet on my shoe strings
 With the abandon of boarding house fleas,
 "While unbidden moths amorous of my white seraglio."
 Call them with soundless love songs,
 A sort of silent conversation.

They hear not, alas, my pediculi,
 But brush me with feeling kisses;
 Stealing not away
 They still linger,
 Aye still, yet not still.
 Venerunt, vederunt [sic], vicerunt.¹⁸

It is conspicuously sensed and noticed that Faulkner is no match for Villon, one of the greatest French poets in the fifteenth century. Despite the same motif of nostalgia for lost ladies, there can be clearly perceived an enormous difference between the two poets in richness of imagery and allusions. Villon longs for the noble and enthralling dames celebrated in history and legend such as Flora, Anchiades, Thaïs, Écho, Héloïs, the queen who commanded that Buridan be thrown into the Seine, la roine Blanche, Berthe au plat pied, Bietrix, Aliz, Haramburgis, and Jeanne la bonne Lorraine, while Faulkner's yearning goes for the lost girls whom he once loved.

As for the parody, "pediculi" is a Latin plural form of "pediculus," whose meaning is "a little louse." "Rediculus" in the sub-title may be a mis-set spelling for "pediculus," and "capitis" is a plural form of "caput," meaning "the head." The arty-crafty work can be safely said to have been ingeniously concocted, modelled after Faulkner's ballad in tone and form, though not very closely. The gap between the original and the concoction in terms of motif is enormous enough to provoke a laugh. The real significance this travesty has for our Faulkner research is that it is the first of a flood of reactions that have ever inundated Faulkner's writings, though in a twisted form.

18) *Ibid.*, Feb. 11, 1920, p. 8.

**MOTIF OF PUPPETS: FROM VERLAINE TO FAULKNER, AND TO OLE
MISS POETASTER**

FANTOCHES

Scaramouche et Pulcinella
Qu'un mauvais dessein rassembla
Gesticulent, noirs sur la lune.

Cependant l'excellent docteur
Bolonais cueille avec lenteur
Des simples parmi l'herbe brune.

Lors sa fille, piquant minois,
Sous la charmille, en tapinois,
Se glisse, demi-nue, en quête

De son beau pirate espagnol,
Dont un langoureux rossignol
Clame la détresse à tue-tête.¹⁹

— Paul Verlaine

FANTOUCHES [sic].

a [sic] Paul Verlaine.

Scaramouches [sic] and Pucinella [sic]
Cast one shadow on the mellow
Night, and kiss against the sky

And the doctor of Bogona [sic]
In his skull cup [sic] and kimono
Seeks for simples with pale avid eyes

19) Paul Verlaine, *Oeuvres poétiques complètes*, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Gallimard, 1962), p. 114.

While his daughter half naked
Glides trembling from her narrow bed
To meet her lover waiting in the moon

Her lover from the Spanish Main
Whose passion thrills her with a strain
La lune ne grade [sic] aucune rancune
W. FALKNER.²⁰

WHOTOUCHES.

Just a parody on Count's "Fantouches [sic] by Count, Jr.

Hannabolus brings in the dish
Full of sausage and of fish
And sets them before the Spaniard

And the sausage of Bologna,
In its thin skin and kimono,
Seeks alack! for foolish eaters.

While the wiener wurst unclad
Glides trembling from the plate
To meet a rapacious mouth.

A big mouth from the Spanish main,
Whose jaws crush it with a strain —
How long the old aucune raccoon!

— J.²¹

It may be easy to notice not a few variants from Verlaine's original in Faulkner's translation, which took so many liberties that it should be called a free composition based on Verlaine's poetry rather than a close translation. Here again, it may have to be acknowledged that Faulkner is no match for Verlaine. There is no coherence in Faulkner's rhymes. To look over how Faulkner changed situations for his own poetry, it will suffice to quote Blotner as saying: "[in] his 'Fantoches,' which had appeared in his *Fêtes*

20) *The Mississippian*, Feb. 25, 1920, p. 3.

21) *Ibid.*, Mar. 3, 1920, p. 6.

Galantes of 1869, Verlaine had used two traditional figures from the Italian *commedia dell'arte*: Scaramouche, a braggart soldier, and Pulcinella, a roguish wit. Together they plot in the moonlight as "the doctor from Bologna" picks medicinal herbs while his passionate daughter slips out to the arbor to meet her ardent and dashing Spanish pirate. In his translation, Faulkner kept the French word as the title, instead of using 'puppets' or 'marionettes.' He also kept Verlaine's rhyme scheme, but he changed the sex of Pulcinella, presenting her and Scaramouche as lovers embracing against the mellow night sky. The other characters were the same, but Faulkner's last line departed materially from the original, in which the love-pain of the pirate is like the song of the nightingale. In the last line he reverted to French: 'La lune ne garde aucune rancune [The moon takes no notice].' In *The Mississippian* 'Fantoche' became 'Fantouches,' while Scaramouche gained a final s and the doctor's city was Bogona rather than Bologna."²²

The misprinted title "Fantouches" urged the poetaster, who had apparently parodied Faulkner's "Une Ballade des Femmes Perdues" by anonymously presenting "Pediculi," to attack again, this time under the pseudonym "J." or "Count, Jr." It may have to be recognized that, like in the previous case, the parodist has succeeded in creating some amount of humor by closely modelling it on Faulkner's in terms of tone and form.

"THE IVORY TOWER": FAULKNER'S RIPOSTE TO TWO PARODIES

Ben Jonson, himself a strong advocate of Mirth, has said that laughter is one of our most valuable possessions. Which is quite true: Imagine what this world would be without it. Yet mirth requires two things: humor and a sense of humor. I flatter myself that I possess the latter; but — and I am sure I am unprejudiced — my unknown "affinity" has notably failed in producing the former. I will state further, that in his present vein he will never achieve it without asking — and accepting — collaboration. It were not sufficient that I boldly make this statement lest the reader justifiably cry "Wolf!"; yet the matter is scarcely worth exhausting either my vocabulary or the reader's patience, so I shall be as brief as possible.

(1.) The first poem submitted by him was stupid, for my own poem was stupid. One sees at a glance then, the utter valuelessness of an imitation of an imitation. (2.) This though, was not the only way in which the poet sinned. The most deplorable thing was his meaningless and unnecessary parading of his doubtless extensive knowledge of the Latin language. To my mind there is nothing as vulgar as a conscious mingling of two languages — unless, of course, the mingling gives shades and tones that the work would not otherwise possess. Whatever tones and shades his poem possessed could have, it

22) *Faulkner: A Biography*, Two-Volume Edition, Vol. I, p. 265.

seems to me, been drawn in single language (its clarity could have been enhanced, in all probability, by adhering to some simple language such as an early Aztec dialect). This though, is beside the point.

The second poem is not worthy of note, closely resembling the first in being a vulgarly stupid agglomeration of words. . . . if this be humor, then I have lost my sense of it; unless humor is, like evil, in the eye of the beholder.

However, if he has, by any chance, gained the effect for which he has so palpably striven, the answer is, of course, simply *de gustibus*.

William Faulkner.²³

It is of some interest to notice that Faulkner, in his response to the parodist, condemned the poetaster's "meaningless and unnecessary parading of his doubtless extensive knowledge of the Latin language," combined with the vulgarity of a conscious mingling of two languages. The charge contains some risky claims that are likely to backfire and undermine Faulkner's own imitation-oriented indulgence in the French language as well as in the tones and styles used by French Symbolists.

"THE 'MUSHROOM' POET": FIRST PUBLISHED COMMENTARY OF FAULKNER'S WORKS; AND FAULKNER'S RESPONSE

I feel it my duty to answer an article that appeared in the last issue of your very estimable paper. This article seems to have been written by a peculiar person who calls himself William Falkner and who from all accounts undoubtedly resides in the remote village of Oxford, Miss. He says he "flatters" himself that he possesses a sense of humor. I say he flatters himself if he says he possesses anything. "I boldly make this statement lest the Editor justifiably cry 'Bull.'" I shall, of course, make this article very brief, desiring to conserve the valuable space in this paper and also my own exhaustible energy for some more serious subject.

I feel, Mr. Editor, like kicking myself three successive times, each a trifle severer than the former. I tried so hard to find what the Count was "driving at," and only that he, himself, admits his work was "stupid." Modesty forbids me using a stronger epithet than "stupid."

I have written the parodies to give Count's poems a meaning; and behold! how little he appreciates my humble efforts.

But permit me to wander. Mr. Editor, wouldn't this be a fine University if all of us were to wear sailor collars, monkey hats, and brilliant pantaloons; if we would 'mose'

23) Carvel Collins (ed.), *William Faulkner: Early Prose and Poetry*, pp. 9-10.

along the street by the aid of a walking prop; and, ye gods forbid, if we should while away our time singing of lascivious knees, smiling lute strings, and voluptuous toes? Wouldn't that be just too grand?

Since Count used a quotation, allow me the same liberty. I use the words of Lord Byron, "He brays, the Laureate of the long-eared kind."

And now, allow me to apologize for wasting your valuable time on such a subject and permit me to remain,

Your humble servant,

— J.²⁴

The Editor,

The 'Mississippian.'

Dear Sir: —

An anonymous squib in the last issue of your paper was brought to my notice as having a personal bearing. I could, with your forbearance, fill some space in endeavoring to bite the author with his own dog; but I shall content myself by asking him, through the columns of your paper, where did he learn English construction?

Yours truly,

W. FALKNER.²⁵

EDITOR'S NOTE ON CONTROVERSY AND FIRST DEFENSE OF FAULKNER POETRY

Poetry.

Ye humble scribe will not attempt a dissertation [sic] on such a difficult subject. He only wishes to comment on the poetry that has appeared in the *Mississippian*. Many of us are inclined to smile at these poetic attempts; but we might try ourselves before we begin to criticize. Some of us have been inclined to think the *Mississippian* is one Poetic Issue after another. Don't be too harsh on these "embryo poets. [sic] Try to wade thru it all, and read in a poem of your own for trial. Just remember all our poetry is "homemade" and that always lends a charm that "bought" or borrowed goods can never give.²⁶

24) *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

25) *The Mississippian*, Apr. 7, 1920, p. 1.

26) *Ibid.*, Apr. 7, 1920, p. 4.

THE "MUSHROOM MUSE" AND THE "HEYSEED HOODLUM."

I feel it my duty to answer an article that appeared in the last issue of your very estimable paper. This article seems to have been written by a peculiar person who signs himself "J," and there is very incriminating evidence to the effect that his customary habitat is in the Chinatown section of Canton, Mississippi. I say he flatters himself if he says he possesses anything but "Bull." Speaking of quadrupeds, I can well see how appropriate it is for him to sign himself "J."

I think some gentle reader should undertake to defend Count in this controversy. Of all the by-products of nature, a poet is the least able to protect himself in such a dilemma.

A jelly-bean can cling to his "vine," a woman can lean on her tongue, but what can a poor muse prop himself with?

It is not intended to infer that Count could not answer this article as well as anyone else. However, he is probably now, in his fancy, with the keen discernment of a poetic eye, measuring the dimple on the knee of some fairy, figuratively speaking, so that he can convey to our thirsting souls in rhythmic verse its full significance. Rather than have him interrupted in this, I burden my weak shoulders with the task, and for once in my life perhaps place nobility under obligations to me.

"J"'s following Count's passionate outbursts with some of his Possum Hollow poetry, adds about as much dignity and calm to the majestic pose and sweep of Count's literary course as a tomato can tied to a poodle's tail. Everytime Count moves some of "J" junk rattles along with it, which naturally throws the whole thing into discord and "inharmonious nothings," if I myself might indulge in poetic license. I have often heard the expression "poetic license." Granting Count has poetic license, then "J" ought to pay a fine for what he writes.

It is my contention that poets are more practical and do more real good nowadays than ever before. In these days of high prices they are almost indispensable. Count is striving to get mortal eyes turned away from these extravagant things, and is trying to teach us to be content with the cheaper things of life, fancies of different kinds, etc. You can look over the whole menu of fancies and to use some of "J"'s corrupted, or rather corrugated Latin (that is, it has its ups and downs) none of them cost as much as a "centus widia holus init". On the other hand, "J," not being a true poet, ever thoughtful of the "innerman," unwilling to admit the superiority of mind over matter, writes a piece on "ham." Disgusting! "J" admits that he is not a poet, but says his writings are "parodies." If he could appreciate the full significance of the word, I might suggest that they are more "paronoaic [sic]," than "parodic."

The only excuse he has for this propensnty [sic] to pester the poets, seems to be that

he is giving them meaning. Ha! well might one use a raindrop to measure the ocean's depth, choose the movement of a turtle to explain the eagle's flight, or listen to the screech of the "J" bird, to interpret the love notes of a dove.

Poets don't sprout in every garden of learning, and how can they grow and bloom into a genius when they are continually surrounded by bitterweeds.

So here's to the "Mushroom" poet, may the beautiful Spring prove a stimulant to his efforts. For, were it not for my periodic soarings among his "weakly" flights of fancy, I might despair.

— F.²⁷

The sound bites were effective and rather heart-swelling, thus suggesting a possibility of the "Mushroom" poet growing to bloom into a "genius," a fact that apparently led to Faulkner's great relief and confidence. A big brother was watching.

By the way, it must be added that the article by "F." quoted above is a full text directly from *The Mississippian*, which is just a bit different from the abbreviated one used by Carvel Collins in his *William Faulkner: Early Prose and Poetry*.

MOTIF OF MOONLIGHT: FROM VERLAINE TO FAULKNER, AND TO ANOTHER POETASTER

CLAIR DE LUNE

Votre âme est un paysage choisi
Que vont charmant masques et bergamasques
Jouant du luth et dansant et quasi
Tristes sous leurs déguisements fantasques.

Tout en chantant sur le mode mineur
L'amour vainqueur et la vie opportune,
Ils n'ont pas l'air de croire à leur bonheur
Et leur chanson se mêle au clair de lune,

Au calme clair de lune triste et beau,
Qui fait rêver les oiseaux dans les arbres
Et sangloter d'extase les jets d'eau,

27) *Ibid.*, Apr. 7, 1920, p. 8.

Les grands jets d'eau sveltes parmi les marbres.²⁸

— Paul Verlaine

CLAIR DE LUNE.

From PAUL VERLAINE.

Your soul is a lovely garden, and go
There masque and bergamasque charmingly,
Playing the lute and dancing and also
Sad beneath their disguising fanchise [sic].

All are singing in a minor key
Of conquerer [sic] love and life opportune,
Yet seem to doubt their joyous revelry
As their song melts in the light of the moon.

In the calm moonlight, so lovely fair
That makes the birds dream in the slender trees,
While fountains dream among the statues there;
Slim fountains sob in silver ecstasies.

— W. FALKNER.²⁹

CANE DE LOONEY.

From Peruney Prune.

Your gleam is a lovely red one and so
To markque and bermarkque charmingly,
Dangling around your neck white inlay also.
Awkward in the hands of most, certainment!

All are singing in no minor key,
With supreme grace and nonchalance
They pose in joyous revelry, humoresque!
Walks groan beneath bacterium — avalanche.

28) *OEuvres poétiques complètes*, p. 107.

29) *The Mississippian*, Mar. 3, 1920, p. 6.

Not in calm moonlight, but in fair day,
 Bearing you lightly, lovingly, but firmly.
 Seeing Cowart [sic], entranced, she murmurs,
 "Who is the beau-u-tiful man with cane?" coyly!

(Note: Apologies to Count and Count, Jr. [sic]³⁰)

There seems to be not so much to say about the comparisons between the three poems, for the gaps are too clear, suggesting Faulkner's almost direct translation of Verlaine's original and a new poetaster's direct personal attack on the embryo poet on campus. So harsh were the situations surrounding Faulkner in 1920.

MOTIF OF SAPPHO AND APHRODITE: FROM SWINBURNE TO FAULKNER, AND TO LORDGEYSON, NEW KID ON THE BLOCK

SAPPHICS

(*Poems & Ballads* I.)

All the night sleep came not upon my eyelids,
 Shed not dew, nor shook nor unclosed a feather,
 Yet with lips shut close and with eyes of iron
 Stood and beheld me.

Then to me so lying awake a vision
 Came without sleep over the seas and touched me,
 Softly touched mine eyelids and lips; and I too,
 Full of the vision,

Saw the white implacable Aphrodite,
 Saw the hair unbound and the feet unsandalled
 Shine as fire of sunset on western waters;
 Saw the reluctant

Feet, the straining plumes of the doves that drew her,

30) *Ibid.*, Apr. 7, 1920, p. 4.

Looking always, looking with necks reverted,
Back to Lesbos, back to the hills whereunder
Shone Mitylene;

Heard the flying feet of the Loves behind her
Make a sudden thunder upon the waters,
As the thunder flung from the strong unclosing
Wings of a great wind.

So the goddess fled from her place, with awful
Sound of feet and thunder of wings around her;
While behind a clamour of singing women
Severed the twilight.

Ah the singing, ah the delight, the passion!
All the Loves wept, listening; sick with anguish,
Stood the crowned nine Muses about Apollo;
Fear was upon them,

While the tenth sang wonderful things they knew not.
Ah the tenth, the Lesbian! the nine were silent,
None endured the sound of her song for weeping;
Laurel by laurel,

Faded all their crowns; but about her forehead,
Round her woven tresses and ashen temples
White as dead snow, paler than grass in summer,
Ravaged with kisses,

Shone a light of fire as a crown for ever.
Yea, almost the implacable Aphrodite
Paused, and almost wept; such a song was that song.
Yea, by her name too

Called her, saying, "Turn to me, O my Sappho;"
Yet she turned her face from the Loves, she saw not
Tears for laughter darken immortal eyelids,
Heard not about her

Fearful fitful wings of the doves departing,
 Saw not how the bosom of Aphrodite
 Shook with weeping, saw not her shaken raiment,
 Saw not her hands wrung;

Saw the Lesbians kissing across their smitten
 Lutes with lips more sweet than the sound of lute-strings,
 Mouth to mouth and hand upon hand, her chosen,
 Fairer than all men;

Only saw the beautiful lips and fingers,
 Full of songs and kisses and little whispers,
 Full of music; only beheld among them
 Soar, as a bird soars

Newly fledged, her visible song, a marvel,
 Made of perfect sound and exceeding passion,
 Sweetly shapen, terrible, full of thunders,
 Clothed with the wind's wings.

Then rejoiced she, laughing with love, and scattered
 Roses, awful roses of holy blossom;
 Then the Loves thronged sadly with hidden faces
 Round Aphrodite,

Then the Muses, stricken at heart, were silent;
 Yea, the gods waxed pale; such a song was that song.
 All reluctant, all with a fresh repulsion,
 Fled from before her.

All withdrew long since, and the land was barren,
 Full of fruitless women and music only.
 Now perchance, when winds are assuaged at sunset,
 Lulled at the dewfall,

By the grey sea-side, unassuaged, unheard of,
 Unbeloved, unseen in the ebb of twilight,
 Ghosts of outcast women return lamenting,
 Purged not in Lethe,

Clothed about with flame and with tears, and singing
Songs that move the heart of the shaken heaven,
Songs that break the heart of the earth with pity,
Hearing, to hear them.

1866.³¹

— Algernon Charles Swinburne

SAPPHICS.

So it is: sleep comes not on my eyelids.
Nor in my eyes, with shaken hair and white
Aloof pale hands, and lips and breasts of iron,
So she beholds me.

And yet though sleep comes not to me, there comes
A vision from the full smooth brow of sleep,
The white Aphrodite moving unbounded
By her own hair.

In the purple beaks of the doves that draw her,
Beaks straight without desire, necks bent backward
Toward Lesbos and the flying feet of Loves
Weeping behind her.

She looks not back, she looks not back to where
The nine crowned muses about Apollo
Stand like nine Corinthian columns singing
In clear evening.

She sees not the Lesbians kissing mouth
To mouth across lute strings, drunken with singing,
Nor the white feet of the Oceanides
Shining and unsandalled.

Before her go cryings and lamentations

31) Yusaburo Okakura & Sanki Ichikawa (eds.), *Select Poems of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, Kenkyusha English Classics (Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1926), pp. 63-66.

Of barren women, a thunder of wings,
 While ghosts of outcast Lethean woman, lamenting,
 Stiffen the twilight.

William Falkner,
 University, Miss.³²

UNE BALLADE D'UNE VACHE PERDUE.

Part Premie're [sic].

The flowing reeds entwined her knees,
 As the wind came thru them, lispig,
 Sighing, and onward thru tall trees
 Persued, silent leaflets whispering.
 Many secrets of things forlorn,
 They told her who stood beneath them,
 Her whose tired limbs, since early morn,
 Had gone leagues the land o'er. Ahem!

Part Deuxie'me [sic].

Stood the implacable Betsy,
 On a rounded mound uprising,
 Becoming a bit unresty:
 That form against the horizon
 Silhouetted. With rounded curves,
 Stood Betsy, her form in rythm [sic],
 (Quite enough to upset one's nerves)' [sic]
 Swaying, disdainfully swaying. Ahem!

Part Troisie'me [sic].

Sad, to her eyelids came not tears,
 Tired, to her thighs came not resting.
 Waving tresses draped, not her ears,
 As she stood there nude, divesting
 Herself of flies that swarmed on her
 Far; far from her home this heifer
 Had wounded and now she was lost,

32) Carvel Collins (ed.), *William Faulkner: Early Prose and Poetry*, pp. 51-52.

And could not find her way home again. Ahem!

LORDGREYSON.³³

"Few readers could know," Blotner remarks in his two-volume edition of Faulkner biography, "that 'Sapphics' was a condensation, in most lines word for word, of Swinburne's twenty-stanza poem of the same name. Again Faulkner seemed to luxuriate in rich imagery and a not unpleasant despair. The sleepless, lovelorn speaker relates a vision of Aphrodite, but it is a vision of the goddess of love in her cruel aspect."³⁴ Sure enough, in Faulkner's condensed version, Sappho, the most important figure in Swinburne's "Sapphics," is completely absent, thus giving much less impact and effect to Faulkner's. There is no denying that the dramatic momentum created by tension between Sappho, the Lesbian, and the implacable Aphrodite in Swinburne's original has been visibly lessened by the shift of emphasis from Sappho to Aphrodite in Faulkner's adaptation.

As for what brought out the pastoral parody named "Une Ballade d'une Vache Perdue," Blotner again has provided an informative elucidation in his one-volume edition of *Faulkner: A Biography*. (By the way, Blotner still seems to have misunderstanding about the parody promised in the squib, "Dedicated to Will Falkner," published on February 11, 1920, when he says, "On May 12 there appeared a parody which had been promised three months earlier in another anonymous letter."³⁵ As has already been mentioned earlier, the parody notified beforehand in the squib or letter of February 11, 1920, had been printed on the different page of the student paper on the same day.) Blotner notes: "When 'Sapphics' had appeared in November, one of Paul Rogers' friends stopped him. 'Hey,' he said, 'look what the Count's got in this issue of the paper.' When Rogers began to read, he remembered, 'The very first lines hit me, and I drew aside to finish the poem, knowing at last that I was not a poet and that Faulkner had the stuff in him — or thinking so at any rate.' Not long afterward, however, browsing in the library, Rogers discovered the unacknowledged source of the poem when he came across a set of Swinburne's works. He confided his discovery to Drane Lester, his co-worker on the staff of *The Mississippian*, and they agreed not to tell anyone about the plagiarized poem the paper had published. When Rogers completed his parody of Faulkner's work, it came out under one of his many pseudonyms, Lord Greyson, and was entitled 'Une Ballade d'une Vache Perdue.' . . . It must have amused others besides its author. Not the least of these, apparently, was the author of 'Une Ballade des Femmes Perdues,' who, more than fifteen years later, would take up the subject in a piece he would call 'Afternoon of a Cow.'"³⁶ What Paul Rogers aimed at in presenting such a concoction seems to

33) *The Mississippian*, May 12, 1920, p. 3.

34) *Faulkner: A Biography*, Two-Volume Edition, Vol. I, p. 253.

35) *Faulkner: A Biography*, One-Volume Edition, p. 82.

have been not so much disdainful ridicule upon Faulkner as to imply that there was someone who knew the unacknowledged source of Faulkner's "Sapphics," a situation that suggested a bit of shift of estimation on Count No 'Count occurring on campus. The parody prompts us to feel that it has something of affinity with Swinburne's original "Sapphics" rather than with Faulkner's condensation. The parodist, for example, used an impressively strong phrase, "the implacable Betsy." Which had certainly been derived from Swinburne's "Sapphics," where the poet called the Greek goddess of love and beauty "the white implacable Aphrodite" in the third stanza and "the implacable Aphrodite" again in the tenth stanza, while Faulkner adopted in the second stanza of his "Sapphics" "the white Aphrodite," a weaker and more sensuous epithet. (29/9/1993)

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