

# Darwin, Cognition and Literary Evocations of the Mind: The Case of *Requiem for a Nun*

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*Abstract: William Faulkner is one of the American writers who does not clearly and easily make the case for the significance of ideas in his fiction but argues that his literature is not inimical to ideas. It flourishes upon ideas, but it does not present ideas partly and neatly. It involves them with the "recalcitrant stuff of life," and it is the literary critic's job to deal with that involvement. Sensibility to contemporary movements in science is a literary prerequisite, and Faulkner, in particular, understood the need for "interdisciplinarity," which he fulfilled with his notions of evolution. There are notable manifestations of Darwinian ethos in his literature, and *Requiem for a Nun* stands ahead to present his notions of evolution. This paper analyzes the evolutionary ideas through the explanation of cultural and societal evolution embedded in the text. The transformation of textual spaces and transition of fictional minds in Faulkner's fiction seem to align with David Herman's notion of "modernist authors" and Jakob Johann von Uexküll's idea of *umwelt*. Therefore, this paper studies the evolutionary consciousness of the text through Herman and Uexküll's perspectives.*

The mind and the body  
Together form the *kaya*  
Define the surroundings  
Emerge through evolution  
And reflect *Maya*  
(Sain Lalou, from the song "Make a soul-trap beyond the air")

The soul defines the mind  
And Mind renovates body  
The body decorates nature  
An evolution to nurture  
(Shah Abdul Karim, from the song "In the festivity of mind")

Charles Darwin finds "grandeur" (12) in nature and in life, and the stylists of evolutionary fictions incorporate the notion of "grandeur" to their narratives through the portrayal of the mind, experiencing nature. William Faulkner may not be a follower of Darwin, but as a modernist author he is definitely influenced by the Darwinian notions of evolution. This article aims to explain the aspects of Darwinian evolution in William Faulkner's fiction *Requiem for a Nun* through the spectacles of David Herman's perspectives on "modernist authors" from his essay "Re-minding Modernism" published in *The Emergence of Mind* and Jakob Johann von Uexküll's idea of *umwelt*. *Umwelt* (plural: *umwelten*; from the German *Umwelt* meaning environment or surroundings) is the biological foundation that lies at the very epicenter

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of the study of both communication and signification in the human and non-human or animal (Deely 13). The term is usually translated as “self-centered world” (Deely 13). Von Uexküll theorized that organisms can have different *umwelten*, even though they share the same environment (cited in Deely 13). Herman also defines the modernist authors as “*umwelt* researchers” who manifest the vantage points in their narratives to exhibit the consciousness of fictional minds (Herman 266). The operation of this consciousness in relation to its surrounding evokes the cognition of Darwinism in *Requiem for a Nun*. William Faulkner seems to incorporate the societal evolution and the cultural evolution in this regard. These evolutionary aspects evoke different *umwelten*, representing the consciousness of the fictional minds and the textual spaces. This article, therefore, locates and analyzes the evolutionary minds and spaces in Faulkner’s *Requiem for a Nun*.

Much of Faulkner’s fiction display a Darwinian ethos, but, an acceptance of evolution does not manifest that everyone has, idealized in his brain, a duplicate copy of the exact words of Charles Darwin. Learning is often a convoluted process, and Faulkner’s road toward Darwinism was greatly determined by his “upbringing in the South: half a century elapsed following the Civil War before the South as a whole began to enter the mainstream of scientific research and another half passed before it began to become an equal in such research” (Wainwright 65). Thus, much of Faulkner’s Darwinian understanding came to him in an ancillary manner over several decades. His attitude towards evolution, therefore, reveals a personal change, an intellectual progress that bears evidence to the emergence of modern America, following Darwinism that challenged older ways of thinking.

Experiencing the English naturalist’s rational effect upon epistemology from a number of sources, Faulkner became responsive to their significances. In his book *Darwin and Faulkner’s Novels: Evolution and Southern Fiction*, Michael Wainwright mentions Faulkner’s approach to literature manifesting the philosophical effect of Darwinian thoughts. According to Wainwright, Darwin’s ideas on evolution certainly helped the artistic delineation of his Southern Republic of Yoknapatawpha which came from the *History of English Literature (1863-1867)* written by French critic and historian Hippolyte Taine. He adds that Faulkner never owned a copy of this work but “he was definitely aware of the kind of determinism originated by Taine” (67), and Ludwig Lewisohn’s compendium, *A Modern Book of Criticism*, which he read while in Normandy during 1925. These books have accustomed him to the critic’s ideas.<sup>1</sup> Faulkner’s “hand-written explanations to this volume are numerous” (Wainwright 67); their manner signals his productive engagement with Taine’s *History*. Wainwright also discovers that the Darwinian inspired *Creative Evolution* of Henri Louis Bergson was also highly rated by Faulkner who recommended it to a friend with the commendation that “it helped me” (cited in Wainwright 67). Specifying Wainwright’s views, the intellectual association between Faulkner and his stepson, Malcolm Franklin that had begun with “a series of lessons in herpetology” led to their reading anthropology and discussing “Darwin and variations in species” (Wainwright 67). Wainwright emphasizes Faulkner’s continued engagement with the subject: “[w]ill you get me a good Darwin?” he asked a New York friend, “I want it for my fifteen-year-old boy, who is messing with anthropology. *Origin of the Species*, I mean, and what about Huxley?” (cited in Wainwright 68).

*Requiem for a Nun* appeared twenty-five years after his first recorded engagement with Darwinian notions. Faulkner's notions on evolution have come to the forefront in the narrative sections of *Requiem for a Nun*. The titles of three major sections, "The Courthouse (A Name for the City)," "The Golden Dome (Beginning Was the Word)," and "The Jail (Nor Even Yet Quite Relinquish-)," not only focus on his knowledge of Darwin's evolutionary theory but also present his appreciation of subsequent adjustments to scientific epistemology. In 1948, for example, George Gamov, Ralph Alpher, and Hans Bethe had suggested the Big Bang theory as the origin of the universe (cited in Carroll 103). Just after three years of Hans Behte's Big Bang Theory, *Requiem for a Nun* narrates the event that delineated Jackson's topographical position in the space and that site's eventual status in Southern affairs as "one see the one spawn one mother- womb, one furious tumescence, father-mother-one, one vast incubate ejaculation already fissionating in one boiling moil of litter from the celestial experimental Work Bench" (Faulkner 88). Faulkner's nuclear terminology expresses a cutting-edge knowledge of physics while recalling "far less obscurely than Darwin does – the anteriority of divine existence" (Carroll 104).

According to the Darwinian model, societal development and the outbreak of inter-ethnic conflict accompanied the emergence of modern man. Those more skilled as artisans, asserts *The Descent of Man*, win in this struggle for existence:

We can see, that in the rudest state of society, the individuals who were the most sagacious, who invented and used the best weapons or traps, and who were best able to defend themselves, would rear the greatest number of offspring. The tribes, which included the largest number of men thus endowed, would increase in number and supplant other tribes. Numbers depend primarily on the means of subsistence, and this depends partly on the physical nature of the country, but in a much higher degree on the arts which are there practised. As a tribe increases and is victorious, it is often still further increased by the absorption of other tribes. (128)

In Europe, concludes Darwin, "the men of the Bronze period were supplanted by a race more powerful, and, judging from their sword-handles, with larger bands; but their success was probably still more due to their superiority in the arts" (128). Darwin's conclusion was that "at the present day civilized nations are everywhere supplanting barbarous nations, excepting where the climate opposes a deadly barrier" (129). The unpleasant consequence of such progress, he argues, is:

the most closely-allied forms, – varieties of the same species, and species of the same genus or related genera, – which, from having nearly the same structure, constitution, and habits, generally come into the severest competition with each other; consequently, each new variety or species, during the progress of its formation, will generally press hardest on its nearest kindred, and tend to exterminate them. (86)

*Requiem for a Nun* incorporates the Darwinian model closely in respect of societal growth. David Herman, in his essay "Re-minding Modernism," discusses that the narrative (on societal growth) of modernist writers based itself less "on the fictional world" than "fictional-world-as-experienced" (243). The scope of nature and the characters' or narrator's experience in this modernist fiction fall within the domain of psyche "including sense impressions, emotions, memories, associative thought pattern and so on" (243). The vicious newcomers, in the text, tend to be rapacious males whom

indigenous folks fail to distinguish as a threat until it is too late. Deceptive penetration of the established state is the result. Faulkner's perception on the appearance and evolution of societies in the American South posits this intra-special notion of "world-as-experienced" as one check on the vigorous spread of *Homo sapiens* (91). In colonial America, the pillagers are Caucasians, people whose progress wiped out not only "Northern indigenes but also the stratigraphic traces of autochthonous existence" (Godden 158):

not because of the grooved barrel but because they could enter the red man's milieu and make the same footprints that he made; the husbandman printing deep the hard heels of his brogans because of the weight he bore on his shoulders: axe and saw and plow-stock, who dispossessed the forest man for the obverse reason: because with his saw and axe he simply removed, obliterated, the milieu in which alone the forest man could exist; then the land speculators and the traders in slaves and whiskey who followed the husbandmen, and the politicians who followed the land speculators, printing deeper and deeper the dust of that dusty widening, until at last there was no mark of Chickasaw left in it anymore. (Faulkner91)

The biological legacy does not leave genealogical attributions. The manor of Louis Grenier, the original owner of Frenchman's Bend, reveals this veracity:

his manor, his kitchens and stables and kennels and slave quarters and gardens and promenades and fields which a hundred years later will have vanished, his name and his blood too, leaving nothing but the name of his plantation and his own fading corrupted legend like a thin layer of the native ephemeral yet inevitable dust on a section of country surrounding a little lost paintless crossroads store. (Faulkner25)

The unrelenting coming of settlers even removes past existence of the patriarchal ancestry: "new names and faces too in the settlement now – faces so new as to have (to the older residents) no discernible antecedents other than mammalinity, nor past other than the simple years which had scored them; and names so new as to have no discernible (nor discoverable either) antecedents or past at all" (Faulkner 26).

Mankind of the boundary, whatever their race, have become an "anachronism out of an old dead time and a dead age" (Faulkner 88). The cultural inferences, both creative and emotional, that evolutionary science conveys, thereby, perform on the stage of the established Faulknerian aesthetic.

Jakob von Uexküll<sup>11</sup>, the originator of the idea of *umwelt*, also discusses evolution and popularizes the balance between body and cell system and environment. He states that the mind and the world are inseparable, because it is the mind that interprets the world for the organism (cited in Tonnessen 286). Von Uexküll explains, "in our body the majority of the body's cells were to decide in place of the cortical cells, which impulse the nerves should transmit" (cited in Tonnessen 286). Similarly, Faulkner explains, "all living organisms in Jackson behave as subjects, responding only to signals and signs and, not only to causal impulses" (89). This literary biological foundation has procreated a cultural superstructure based on mind and environment. For Faulkner's paradigm, as for present-day genetics, biological edifice has its equivalent in the cultural environment. Natural selection works by the denunciation of unstable genes; survivors reproduce and tend toward solidity. Cultural diffusion has similarly given rise to a type of evolution, which is moving at a pace faster than

thebiological one. Language is the foundation of this environment. If a single word, name, or phrase is sufficiently unique and remarkable to be articulated in its context, then it is one "meme" (Wainwright 25). Wainwright defines a gene "not in a rigid all-or-none way, but as a unit of convenience, a length of chromosome with just sufficient copying-fidelity to serve as a viable unit of natural selection" (25). Similarly, a "meme" is a "replicating entity" subject to differential survival in cultural terms (26). The chief benefit of "memes" over genes is their ability to survive in non-somatic forms. The subtitle of the second section refers to the beginning of the "word" which is similar to "meme." Words are playing themselves in this section. The word "absolute" (Faulkner 88) turns into "quasi-absolute" (Faulkner 89) when Joseph Johnson faces an emotional outburst. When Joseph is reaching the extreme point of his anger the word "quasi-absolute" is turning into "obsolete-absolute" (Faulkner 89). The readers find the environment around The Golden Dome is also going through a transition with the emotional transition of Joseph. Thus, the character's *umwelt* is causing the evolution of a word and surroundings. Similarly, Temple Drake reacts to the topography of Yoknapatawpha, and her word "mad" responds to the first phase of her thoughts and turns "manning-madness" (Faulkner 92). Eventually, when she expresses her failure to visualize Yoknapatawpha as her home, she picks up the word "dreading-madness-madhouse" (Faulkner 92). These words work like "memes" which evolve with the change of psychological states of different characters in the text. Therefore, the *umwelten* of characters are causing the evolution of words and environment.

On the basis of Yoknapatawpha's *sumwelt*, *Requiem for a Nun* manifests the association between Faulkner's literature and the cultural evolution. "The Courthouse (A Name for the City)," for instance, narrates the argument at which cultural evolution becomes a manifesto. This narrative section begins with the account of the town's formation, a moment which is signifying the importance of communal records. During this early stage of Yoknapatawpha, local land grants and loans are accepted with the need for their safe storage. Before this comprehension, the community had existed as a settlement and then as a village, pioneering people with a frontier attitude in which "personal liberty and freedom were almost a physical condition like fire or food, and no community was going to interfere with anyone's morals as long as the amoralist practised somewhere else" (Faulkner 23). However, an eccentric group follows its amorality within the localities of the village. There is no alternative but to imprison them in the community's provisional jail. To secure a cell door that until now has never required fastening, the locals put Old Alec Holston's padlock from the federal mail pouch. Local troublemakers could be relied upon to serve their time. The outlaws are not so courteous; they escape, taking the padlock with them.

Not operative for protecting the mail, since it could easily be cut from the leather pouch, the lock nonetheless conveys a symbolism which its vanishing has made obvious: the village is no longer a sovereign of the United States but is knotted to the federation. This link may be easy to evade but the necessary self-restraint in keeping the relationship is a responsibility that ensures liberty. The stealing of the lock, as Faulkner's philosophy advocates, is a serious business: the community "had already realised its seriousness from the very fact that Peabody had tried to make a joke about it which everyone knew that even Peabody did not think humorous" (25). Ratcliffe (also known as Ratliff) somewhat solves the dilemma. He suggests putting the cost of a replacement lock on the Indian settlement ledger and let America pay. Written down in

this way, they can write off the debt: “they could have charged the United States with seventeen thousand five hundred dollars worth,” in Ratcliffe’s arrangement, “and none would ever read the entry” (25).

Thomas Jefferson Pettigrew, the federal mailman who cherishes the lock, will not allow such an evasion of accountability. From the moment the lock is stolen, “Pettigrew sets himself up as arbiter of right and wrong in the settlement” (26) and thereby personifies “the whole vast incalculable weight of federality, not just representing the government nor even himself just the government; for that moment at least, he was the United States” (Faulkner 26). To write off the padlock is a violation of the mutual trust guaranteeing the federation. This is a matter of finite liberty, autonomy as its own prisoner, so another solution is required. Peabody settles the dilemma with his pronouncement that “we’re going to have a town” (Faulkner 27). The formation of a community topographically identifiable on a map of the United States sustains the federal connection. With Peabody’s suggestion that “her name’s Jefferson now,” the town is objectified through the process of naming (Faulkner 27). This vocabulary satisfies the mailman. Kinless, he senses that his existence, and by parallel the federal constitution, will last in perpetuity on the map of America. This change is especially appropriate: Faulkner portrays Mississippi as evolving out of prehistoric ages and Pettigrew displays an evolutionary essence. He is “a pterodactyl chick arrested just out of the egg ten glaciers ago,” a man “so old in simple infancy as to be worn and weary ancestor of all subsequent life” (Faulkner 34). For the inhabitants, however, the concept of a town remains barely plausible until the construction of a courthouse. Then “somewhere between the dark of that first day and the dawn of the next, something happened to them” (Faulkner 35). This recognition of the courthouse as symbolic hub of Jefferson instantly effects a shift towards the impersonality of a modern urban environment. Consequently, the men working on the project are “a little unfamiliar even to one another” (Faulkner 35).

David Herman discusses the evolution of textual environments in the narratives on modernist authors. Herman states that “modernist narratives suggest the degree to which perceiving, acting, and thinking are inextricably interlinked with the constant cross-circulation among these activities accounting for the intelligent agents’ enactment of a world. Thus, modernists emphasized on the tight coupling between mind and the world” (264). Moreover, this “cognition between the mind and the world evokes the notion of *umwelt*” (Herman 265). The evolution of cultural superstructure, in *Requiem for a Nun*, stresses on the interlinked factor of the mind and the world. First, Faulkner incorporates Darwin’s ideas for specific narrative tracks: for instance, the planning and building of Jefferson. Sutpen’s French employee, as part III launches, is the architect of the courthouse. Faulkner echoes this character from *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) and presents the evolutionary mechanism associated with Jefferson’s development. The undefined interface, the evolutionary tension between the primitive and the erudite, is blatant in the architect’s existence. He tries to escape Yoknapatawpha but is “overtaken and caught in the swamp” by “Sutpen and Sutpen’s wild West Indian headman” (Faulkner 96). They pluck him from this primordial space to resume stamping, or marking out, Mississippian civilization. Sutpen’s Frenchman also supervises the brick-making process. The slabs produced from his brick-mound correlate to replicating entities, their final distribution in the town’s superstructure equivalent to the bodily manifestation, or phenotype, of genes. Natural selection does indeed build with bricks,

and its effect could be labeled as the tactics of brick substitution with Faulkner's deliberately anthropomorphic metaphor corresponding to Wainwright's articulation on Darwin's use of analogy in *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication*:

I have spoken of selection as the paramount power. Let an architect be compelled to build an edifice with uncut stones, fallen from a precipice. The shape of each fragment may be called accidental; yet the shape of each has been determined by the force of gravity, the nature of the rock, and the slope of the precipice, events and circumstances, all of which depend on natural laws; but there is no relation between these laws and the purpose for which each fragment is used by the builder. (qtd. in Wainwright 5)

Variations, suggests Darwin, are resolute in a similar fashion by immutable laws that have no connection to the living structure which is slowly erected through the power of selection, whether natural or simulated. Continuing his analogy, Darwin argues that if an architect succeeded in building an edifice, "[w]e look at some highly complex and excellently adapted organism, variability sinks to a quite subordinate position in importance in comparison with selection, in the same manner as the shape of each fragment used by our supposed architect is unimportant in comparison with his skill" (249).

Faulkner's sharing of these ideas is obvious in the genetic matrix from which Jefferson and its inhabitants' minds evolve and from which it "will never be able to get away" (97). Jefferson's original buildings see and exhibit the evolutionary paradigm. The jail, for example, "had seen all: the mutation and the change" (Faulkner 196); a building in uninterrupted development, constructed by "successive layers," as if resonating "men and women and children in their successive overlapping generations" (Faulkner 197). Over the years, the jail's basic structure, "the old mud-chinked logs of the ground floor," stays intact despite the imposition of a "by-neo-Greek-out-of-Georgian-England" exterior (Faulkner 199). Built from a "vener of brick," trickery appears prevalent as the facade, a representative of civilized Jefferson, attempts to conceal "the old ineradicable remembering" of our evolutionary succession (Faulkner 199).<sup>iii</sup>

The second approach to the outlining of a cultural superstructure emphasizes Cecilia Farmer's biological and cultural implication. As with so many of Faulkner's characters, the Civil War is a turning point for Cecilia. She meets her future husband during the struggle and marries him upon the end of hostilities. Despite her anemia, Cecilia gives birth to her twelve sons (Faulkner 147). She is stronger than her husband who is injured in the battles. She represents the matriarchal figure of generations to come. It is inconclusive whether the character is idealized by a divinely-led evolution or not. However, Cecilia Farmer's life would never have been recorded, insists Faulkner, had she not scratched her name on the jailhouse window on the day war broke out. By scratching that pane, she created a permanent mark. With Cecilia, Faulkner commits to creating a few "moments of being" (Darwin 96) from an ordinary life, but sees and presents her in her human principles. These "moments of being" create an existence that represents the evolving human strength in agonizing circumstances. The "moments" characterize the evolution of human history from a vulnerable existence to a stable and civilized being. Moreover, Faulkner's thin pane of spoilt glass carries meaning in terms of new historicism. The preeminent way to

emphasize the value of the past in our changing world, suggests Faulkner, is to inspect the events in that period, recognizing that the two eras, although markedly different, are at the same time a whole.

Faulkner is manifesting a paradigm “in which preceding generations of evolution account for the present state of living phenomena” in the world (Godden 200). This model demands not only biological variation but also the hyperboles and misunderstandings of cultural inheritance that both endow history with a questionable legitimacy. The medium for Cecilia’s trace reveals this caution, the windowpane that bears her name becoming nacreous over time with “a faint quiet cast of apocrypha” (Faulkner 151). With dubious validity, Faulkner associates and frames every text. His “apocrypha” is a form of mythology that lasts longer than history; mythology can even overwhelm the trace. Evolution creates this uncertainty because the evolutionary essence, by its very nature, moves on. Social progress, as suggested in *Requiem for a Nun*, advances the ability to evolve. The frequency of evolutionary acceleration increases; consequently, biological barriers provide less hindrance to *Homo sapiens*. Jeffersonians, for example, observe humankind’s impact on nature with the defoliation of their town: “The last forest tree was gone from the courthouse yard,” and in their place, “formal synthetic shrubs contrived and schooled in Wisconsin greenhouses” (Faulkner 183). There is, moreover, a change to the medium of the South’s circumambient ethos. National Radio means “no more Yoknapatawpha’s air nor even Mason and Dixon’s air, but America’s . . . one air, one nation” (Faulkner 187). By the 1940s, therefore, “the last old sapless indomitable unvanquished widow or maiden aunt had died” (Faulkner 185) and “in its surface aspects,” as Noel Polk concurs, “Jefferson becomes indistinguishable from all other cities its size” (135). The old Southern nature, once of introspection, now spreads to a vision as wide as can be humanly envisaged: “one universe, one cosmos” as radio telescopes produce electromagnetic waves that bounce back to the earth from distant constellations. Faulkner represents the doom of humankind as an express train “grooved ineluctably to the spidery rails of its destiny and destination” (140). These two rails, like the two chromosomal rods of biological heirloom, direct mankind along a “steadfast and durable and unhurryable continuity against or across which the vain and glittering ephemerae of progress and alteration” wash (Faulkner 141). The foundation of human life is biological inheritance, and Cecilia Farmer is part of the *Homo sapiens*’s Southern destiny. This course is not inexorable. Culture, as *Requiem for a Nun* submits, can provide essential anticipation.

Faulkner embodies the evolutionary cognition required for cultural proliferation. Biological evolution “favors genes with three properties: longevity, fecundity, and accuracy of replication” (Wainwright 57). Genes with longevity have more time for reproduction, fertility ensures a rapidity of replication, and replication accuracy prevents the demise of genetic descendants. Taken together, these properties enable a gene to become more numerous in the gene pool (Wainwright 57). Thus, sampling a gene pool over a significant duration, the later sample will contain a larger proportion of varieties with high longevity, fecundity, and copying-fidelity. Successful memes exhibit sustainability but, as Faulkner confirms, stability often occurs after a number of transmission blunders. The post trader of Pettigrew’s time was named Ratcliffe, but “a hundred years later, [the name] would still exist in the county, but by that time it had passed through two inheritors who had dispensed with the eye in the transmission of words, using only the ear, so that by the time the fourth one had been compelled by



simple necessity to learn to write it again, it had lost the 'c' and the final 'fe' too" (Faulkner183)<sup>iv</sup>. The biological conclusion is stark: after a few more twenty-first-century generations, no William Cuthbert Faulkner genes may survive; his memecomplexes, as exemplified by the Jefferson of Ratcliffe to Ratliff, will remain vital.

Faulkner states that the writer traces "a desire to leave some mark on the world so that people after you will know that for a little while Smith was here, he made his scratch" (Wainwright 27). Therefore, according to Herman, Faulkner can be viewed as an "*umwelt* researcher" because he is the "explorer of the lived phenomenal worlds that emerge from, or are enacted through, the interplay between intelligent agents and their cultural as well as material circumstances" (266). For Faulkner understood the power of nature to be the power of motion, and evolution to be the universal process. The narrative sections of *Requiem for a Nun* express the "interplayed" principles particularly well; movement may not mean change, but evolution does. "The process of reading leads into divergence and variability," writes Herman (265). He continues, "Even while we are observing how closely human beings conform in the taxonomy of events we learn how differently they feel and think" (Herman 265). *Requiem for a Nun* with all its "overtly complex ordering, has as its particular deep counter-enterprise the establishment of individual diversity beneath ascribed typologies" (Godden 143). The love story of Cecilia Farmer, her scratched name on the jailhouse window, analogous to Faulkner's Kilroy and Smith, assigns the importance of individuality. As Von Uexküll explains, the "individuality maintains *umwelt* through its ontological niche which keeps the phenomenal world of a being intertwined with other phenomenal worlds, thus integrating this being into the society of phenomenal subjects" (qtd. in Tonnessen 287). Therefore, the science of psychology is expressed through Faulkner's science of fictional narratives.

Faulkner's affiliation with science also benefits from his knowledge of Ice Age theory. Faulkner used to discuss Agassiz's Ice Age Theory with his stepson Malcolm (Wainwright 19). Swiss-born American naturalist Louis Agassiz (1807-1873) had reasoned that fossil remains of bygone tropical megafauna suggested extinction due to the sudden arrival of a global freeze (cited in Wainwright19). "The gigantic quadrupeds, the Mastodons, Elephants, Tigers, Lions, Hyenas, Bears, whose remains are found in Europe from its Southern promontories to the northernmost limits of Siberia and Scandinavia," in Agassiz's argument from 1866, "may indeed be said to have possessed the earth in those days. But their reign was over. A sudden intense winter, that was also to last for ages, fell upon our globe; it spread over the very countries where these tropical animals had their homes, and so suddenly did it come upon them that they were embalmed beneath masses of snow and ice, without time even for the decay which follows death" (cited in Wainwright 20).

Darwin assumed the concept of a Great Ice Age but found the views of Scottish geologist Charles Lyell more agreeable: extinction by gradual elimination due to subtle changes in climate, invasion by competing species, and excessive predation by man (cited in Wainwright 21). In the Darwinian paradigm, therefore, extinction is a natural consequence of increased rarity. "If we see, without the smallest surprise, though unable to assign the precise reason, one species abundant and another closely allied species rare in the same district," he argues in *A Naturalist's Voyage*, "why should we feel such great astonishment at the rarity being carried one step further to extinction" (176). Within twenty years, on the publication of *The Origin of Species* and throughout

its subsequent editions, Darwin would concede that “the geographical and climatical changes which have certainly occurred within recent geological times, must have rendered discontinuous the formerly continuous range of many species” (321). Nevertheless, he continued to prefer natural selection as the primary, and almost exclusive, mechanism for special extinction:

It is most difficult always to remember that the increase of every living creature is constantly being checked by unperceived hostile agencies; and that these same unperceived agencies are amply sufficient to cause rarity, and finally extinction. So little is this subject understood, that I have heard surprise repeatedly expressed at such great monsters as the Mastodon and the more ancient Dinosaurians having become extinct; as if mere bodily strength gave victory in the battle of life. Mere size, on the contrary, would in some cases determine, as has been remarked by Owen, quicker extermination, from the greater amount of requisite food. (295)

In Faulkner’s model, the Earth’s topography, existing “longer than the miasma and the gigantic ephemeral saurian,” finally emerged from “the Great Ice Age as a series of recessional contour lines like the concentric whorls within the sawn stump (of a tree)” (21-22). Therefore, the numinous “laboratory-factory” had spawned the “unalien shapes” which inhabit the world today, and “*Homo sapiens* beings” are the most “familiar of all” among them (Faulkner 24).

To conclude, it seems obvious that evolutionary narrative in *Requiem for a Nun* manifests a cognitive platform where modernist methods interweave with the *umwelten* of minds and spaces, and stand together as Darwinian ethos. William Faulkner’s narrative of progression evolves literature of modern America as Darwinism evolves the older ways of thinking. Faulkner begins with the evolutionary aspects of societal growth in *Requiem for a Nun*. The evolutionary topography of Yoknapatawpha evokes the transitions of consciousness in its fictional characters. The conflicts within this narrative zone present the conflicts in minds which contribute to the evolution of spaces in Yoknapatawpha. Therefore, Faulkner incorporates the Darwinian model in respect of societal growth. He also signifies the *umwelten* of all the living organisms as they respond as subjects to all the signals and signs, not only to casual impulses. The subjects also form a literary biological foundation which contributes to the evolution of a cultural superstructure. The evolving culture in Yoknapatawpha maintains a “tight coupling between the mind and the world” (Herman 264). The evolutionary tension between the primitive and the erudite is blatant in the existence of Faulkner’s cultural entities. In *Requiem for a Nun*, he represents the evolutionary cognition required for cultural proliferation. Furthermore, Faulkner’s affiliation with Darwinism also benefits from his knowledge of Agassiz’s Ice Age Theory. So, his evolutionary aspects on society and culture, in *Requiem for a Nun*, make him a pioneering author promoting cognition of Darwinism in literature. “We don’t know what man might evolve into,” he says shortly before his death in 1962, “just how low he is, what flea he is on, something that we can’t even see, it is so great, so vast” (cited in Wainwright 198). *Requiem for a Nun*, as a sequel of *Sanctuary*, has other aspects of Darwinian evolution which have further research possibilities. The evolution of sexual politics and the evolution from race to ecology can be prominent research areas among them.

**Notes:**

- i Wainwright mentions that Faulkner's copy bears the autograph of J. Hamilton Basso and the date is 7 December 1923. Lewisohn's compendium was intended to counter the humanism of Paul Elmer More and Irving Babbitt with the radical aesthetics of writers such as Randolph Bourne. (25)
- ii Jakob Johann von Uexküll (8 September 1864 - 25 July 1944) was a Baltic German biologist who worked in the fields of muscular physiology, animal behavior studies, and the cybernetics of life. However, his most notable contribution is the notion of *umwelt*, used by semiotician Thomas Sebeok and philosopher Martin Heidegger. His works established biosemiotics as a field of research (cited in Tonnessen 281).
- iii Another building that testifies to the importance of the past to this emergence is the Holston House Inn, "the original log walls and puncheon floors and hand-morticed joints of which," the narrator enthuses, "are still buried somewhere beneath the modern pressed glass and brick veneer and neon tubes" (Faulkner 201).
- iv One notes the mutation present in Ratcliffe's name in the following quote from the Penguin Books edition of *Requiem for a Nun*. He is a man who "had invented or evolved a scheme so richly rewarding that he – Ratcliffe – had not only been unable to forestall him and do it first, he – Radcliffe – couldn't even guess what it was after he had been given a hint" (Faulkner 121)

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