ABSTRACT

Scholars have long linked William Faulkner’s experience as a screenwriter to his style as a novelist. This study asserts that best way to interpret Faulkner’s relationship to film is to search for the ways in which his novels reject filmic influence. This is accomplished primarily through readings of two novels. The narration of Sanctuary (1931) utilizes filmic techniques, especially ellipsis, yet it does so in a way that questions their usefulness for engaging audiences. Absalom, Absalom! (1936), meanwhile, develops a system of imagery that relies on uncertainty, a position that is epistemologically incompatible with that of studio era film. Taken together, these readings call for a new way of understanding the relationship between novels and films. While novel/film criticism tends to either focus on either the similarities or differences between the two media, this thesis suggests that texts can themselves signal a greater or lesser degree of engagement with the formal elements of another discourse.