

UDC 820(73)31 Faulkner  
Original scientific paper

Accepted for publication on 26 December 1984

## Telling the Stream and Streaming the Tale (Narrative Juxtapositions and Fusions in Faulkner's "Absalom, Absalom!")

Sonja Bašić

Faculty of Philosophy, Zagreb

This paper is an attempt to vindicate William Faulkner's importance as a modernist, much closer to James Joyce than is usually assumed. It starts from the assumption that Faulkner's narratives — in the narrower sense of narrative mediation or transmission — can be arranged along a continuum spanning the poles of mimesis and diegesis. These two narrative modes are also, however, juxtaposed and fused *within* the narratives themselves. The author proceeds to analyse these complex juxtapositions and fusions within *Absalom, Absalom!*, comparing them to those found in *The Sound and the Fury* and *Ulysses*. She concludes that, "telling its stream and streaming its tale", *Absalom* appears in every respect more complex and more original (Joyce-free) than the *Sound and the Fury*, presenting a unique blend of narrative devices, which both entice and defy critical effort.

This paper forms part of a larger project<sup>1</sup> dealing with modernist narrative modes — notably those of James Joyce and William Faulkner — and the ways in which they in turn involve and distanciate the reader. It wishes above all else to vindicate Faulkner's importance as a modernist, and as

1) Three of my texts are particularly closely related to the concerns of this paper. They are: "Joyce's Fire and Ice: the Reader of *Ulysses* between Involvement and Distanciation". *Studia romanica et anglica zagradiensia* vol. XXVI, num. 1—2, Zagreb 1981 to appear shortly in *International Perspectives on James Joyce*, published by Whitston; "From James's Figures to Genette's Figures: Point of View and Narratology". *Revue française d'études américaines*, no 17, 1983 and "Faulkner's Narrative Discourse: Mediation and Mimesis". *New Directions in Faulkner Studies*, University Press of Mississippi, 1984.

sign him to a place which is much closer to Joyce than is customarily assumed.

More specifically, the paper has resulted from the proposition that Faulkner's narrative — in the narrower sense of narrative mediation or transmission — can be placed along a continuum spanning the poles of mimesis and diegesis<sup>2</sup>, owing to narrational differences characterizing even those works which are closely related through setting, theme, ideology and other stylistic elements. With its three sections consisting of basically mimetic, psychologically motivated interior monologue, *The Sound and the Fury* rests on one end of this narrative continuum, that of mimesis or showing<sup>3</sup>. *Light in August* veers towards the other pole, marked by diegesis or telling, followed by novels such as *The Mansion* or *The Town* and reaching its extreme manifestation in works such as "Was" or *The Reivers*.

The attempt to assign a place on this narrative continuum to *Absalom, Absalom!* is particularly challenging. While very close to *The Sound and the Fury* on many counts, this novel exhibits a markedly different strategy of narrative mediation which deserves closer study. This study must begin with a re-examination of interior monologue, undeniably one of the most outstanding devices of modernist fiction.

Many fiction theorists, incorporating influences stemming from linguistics, formalism and structuralism, have recently directed their attention to the technique of interior monologue, sharpening our awareness of its antecedents and collaterals, its mimetic and generic roots and formal (linguistic) properties, and the possibilities of new classifications and categorizations. Among these theorists are Gérard Genette, who in his *Narrative Discourse* has given us a comprehensive theory of narrative, and Dorrit Cohn, who in *Transparent Minds, Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (1978) has concentrated more narrowly on the presentation of consciousness and dealt most extensively with problems related to the present study.

All these theorists stress that, being formally unmediated, interior monologue can — or should — paradoxically be considered a "non-narrated" form, a form closer to "showing" than to "telling". Another question considered by all of them is the relation of interior monologue to the notion of mimesis. Genette and Cohn, for instance, underline the mimetic aspect of interior monologue, but they do so in different ways, both of which throw light on the arguments of this paper. For Genette this mimesis is formal, even grammatical. In Genettes' approach, interior monologue is seen as an imitation of inner speech which takes the form of untagged direct speech, while its referential and psychological dimensions remain in the background. Genette tends to ignore the reasons for which it has been

---

2) Cf. Gérard Genette: *Narrative Discourse. An Essay in Method*. Cornell University Press 1980. See also his *Nouveau discours du récit*, Seuil, 1983.

3) I have tried to demonstrate this in the paper on Faulkner cited above.

named "stream of consciousness", even ridiculing its striving for inchoate effect, haphazardness. He insists on the grammatical independence of the mode, and calls it *immediate speech*, laying great stress on Joyce's description of Dujardin's technique in *Les Lauriers sont coupés* as quoted by Valéry Larbaud: "In that book the reader finds himself established, from the first lines, in the thought of the principal personage, and the uninterrupted unrolling of that thought, replacing the previous form of narrative, conveys to us what that personage is doing and what is happening to him"<sup>4</sup>

Although Cohn also relies on formalism, she seems to have a more literal notion of mimetic representation. She tries to underpin the credibility of internal monologue by discussing modern developments in psychology and psychoanalysis which supposedly allow us to conclude that interior monologue does in fact imitate the way in which we verbalize our thoughts. She also connects the mimetic psychological roots of the technique with notions of realism. Imitating "the spontaneous unrolling of thoughts at a random moment",<sup>5</sup> interior monologue is seen as an effort to create "realistic reproductions of the character's mental idiom"<sup>6</sup>. Speaking of Molly's chapter in *Ulysses*, Cohn points out "the realist intent of Joyce's low-mimetic colloqui"<sup>7</sup>. In Bloom's and Stephen's monologues she also stresses their naturalistic and realistic aspect at the expense of other stylistic elements, which in my opinion are at least equally important when regarding *Ulysses* as a whole. Differing from Genette, she makes a sharp distinction between interior monologues in a third person context (Stephen and Bloom, Joe Christmas) and monologues standing by themselves (Benjy or Penelope). The former, she claims, must rely more on verisimilitude (and be more realistic). She calls them *quoted monologues* and does not separate them in theory from more traditional tagged forms. The latter mode she calls *autonomous monologue*, grounded in the present, its *locus classicus* being "Penelope". She devises a subdivision of this class, grounded in the past, and calls it *memory monologue*. The examples of this sub-class are the monologues of Benjy, Quentin and Jason in *The Sound and the Fury*. She considers Benjy's monologue as a "radical departure from monologic verisimilitude... difficult to imagine in the context of a third person novel, where we expect figural language to be as real as its fictional speaker"<sup>8</sup>. We can agree with her on this up to a certain point. It is true that it would be difficult to present Benjy in the technique of "Calypso", for instance. On the other hand, in Cohn's overall approach I miss an awareness that modernist interior monologue is "figural" not only because it

4. Dorrit Cohn: *Transparent Minds. Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction*. Princeton University Press 1980. Her translation, p. 173, differs slightly from the English version of Genette's book.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 264.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 265.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 260.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

refers to (human) figures, but because it exemplifies more strictly the literary entities which Genette has so aptly and elusively in French — called *Figures*. From my point of view Benjy's monologue has great credibility as a verbal simulation of a *very* simple mind, regardless of the fact that in "reality" idiots of Benjy's kind perhaps do not verbalize at all. Obversely, Penelope may be written in the "low mimetic" mode, as Cohn has suggested, but *Ulysses* or *The Sound and the Fury* certainly cannot be considered to be realistic novels. Their mimetic, even realistic, affiliations are counter-balanced by eminently poetic techniques such as compression, allusiveness and metaphorical density, as well as by great mannerist or rhetorical foregrounding, which characterize much of their techniques of showing and telling alike. Gratefully accepting the invaluable clarifications and distinctions of Genette or Cohn, I feel the need to combine them with some older, muddier concerns which have a place in a reader-oriented criticism as elements leading to reader involvement or distanciation. It seems to me, for instance, that the workings of modernist narrative cannot be fully fathomed without a renewed study of the novelist's expressive use of language (moving from realistic illusionism to impressionism and beyond, in the attempt to recreate experience through language) and also of its novelists' symbolist legacy (especially the tendency to create self-enclosed, even hermetic works, as well as works in which the borderline between genres is more blurred). It is particularly thanks to the former that the modernist "nonnarrated" monologue can — contrary to Cohn's insistence on the purely verbal nature of the flow it imitates — tap and recreate (if only by connotation) the secret, un verbalized depths (indeed, it would not be fully justified as a narrative mode if it did not).

Especially important in this respect are the various strategies by which interior monologue fluctuates between a mimetic transparency and opacity. In *The Sound and the Fury* this movement from transparency to opacity coincides with the time shifts between the recent and more distant past. It is also related to a-chronology and withholding of information. Of the three interior monologue sections, Quentin's is stylistically and thematically most opaque. Benjy's is stylistically much simpler, but strikes us as strongly defamiliarized at first reading because of its lack of reference. Jason's is the most transparent in every way. Both Benjy's and Quentin's sections, just like Bloom's and Stephen's in *Ulysses*, often achieve opacity ("screens of language" Hugh Kenner calls them) by means of a number of "poetic" devices: Leitmotifs, symbols, rhythmic modulation, allusiveness etc, leading mainly towards our engagement, involvement, but also our distancing through irony, parody and stylistic discrepancy. A parallel movement from transparency to opacity can also be noticed in modernist narrative proper, in telling. In *Ulysses* the telling — at its simplest in the introductory pages of "Calypso" for instance — achieves extreme distancing in the parodies and juxtapositions of vastly different styles in the second part of the novel.

Returning to the problem of narrative transmission, it should be pointed out at this juncture that it was partly as a reaction against the realist-impressionist insistence on showing, i.e. the mimetic concept of ways in which reality is apprehended by the consciousness and the senses, running the gamut from Flaubert through James's point of view to "stream of consciousness" writing, that formalist-structuralist critics set about to reinstate the glories of telling, narration proper, the mode which does not try to camouflage the true nature of the genre to which it rightfully belongs. Genette's *Narrative Discourse* is probably the most extensive and most completely elaborated contemporary apology of telling. In a rather drastic statement Genette affirms that in narrative literature the only possible mimesis *in words* is the mimesis *of words* found in dialogue and (interior) monologue. All the rest is diegesis, narrative proper, telling, the more or less overt transmission of a story between the narrative instance (narrator, author) and the reader. Regardless of the traditional coupling of mimesis and the novel, perhaps supremely exemplified by Auerbach's *Mimesis*, in Genette's system interior monologue, as a manifestation of showing, is regarded as more mimetic than telling.

The argument of this paper rests on the proposition that of all English and American novelists William Faulkner is closest to James Joyce in his extreme manipulation of narrative strategies between showing and telling, mimesis and diegesis. I further wish to stress that, using an enormous variety of narrative devices, both writers also often drive them to paradoxical extremes. These extremes are manifested in juxtapositions of (often "bared") devices, and also in *fusions* executed in ingenious, frequently unprecedented ways.

In *Ulysses* it is within one novel, one chapter, one passage, even within one and the same sentence, that the reader is often either boldly bounced and buffeted or slyly persuaded to move back and fro between stylistic, narrational and other poles. One of the great modulations, intertwinements, in modernist fiction is that of the shifting point of view and voice, contaminating the authorial and figural idiom. In *Ulysses* this is perhaps most easily discernible in the early Bloom and Stephen chapters. Cohn discusses very perceptively the inextricable, fascinating mergers of author and protagonist in this novel, which usually are not even formally classifiable as free indirect style. She points out, for instance, that the Bloom narrator and Stephen narrator differ significantly in style and diction. (It would follow, quite paradoxically, that the idiom of the Stephen narrator is closer to Stephen's idiom than to that of the Bloom narrator — with whom he shares his identity as author!) In *Ulysses* it is particularly difficult to nail down the sources of the authorial and figural voices because, I believe, it is one of the purposes of this novel to *prevent* us from finding out, by obliterating the person of the author and camouflaging the various points of view, by merging persons and idiolects. This assimilation of the Stephen-narrator with Stephen exemplifies the merger between authorial narration

and the character's interior monologue, a merger which is easily demonstrable in spite of being impossible to unravel.

Another kind of merger, more difficult to approach through the channels of narratology, results from the effort to use language as experiential activity, make language get "under the skin" of experience, become its verbal equivalent. One great example of this is the sentence: "Wine soaked and softened rolled pith of bread mustard a moment mawkish cheese", recreating Bloom's experience of eating and drinking in "Lestrygonians"<sup>9</sup>. Who narrates this sentence? Is this sentence a recreation of Bloom's sense impressions from the inside, or a presentation from the outside? The sentence is unstructured, distorted, truncated. Characteristically there are no pronouns, and what are the verb forms? Could they perhaps all be past participles? In that case we might see this sentence as avoiding the clutches of point-of-view compartmentalization and trying to transcribe an experience, lying much deeper than words, certainly not interior monologue, perhaps stream of the senses, rendered through words devoid of rational or syntactical links. This example in fact indicates one of the ways in which interior monologue *can* evade its own genre and join another, poetry, by relinquishing the role of the narration. Another, more complex passage in the same chapter recreates the effect of wine drinking linked through association to a memory of lovemaking with Molly:

Glowing wine on his palate lingered swallowed. Crushing in the winepress grapes of burgundy. Sun's heat it is. Seems to a secret touch telling me memory. Touched his sense moistened remembered...<sup>10</sup>

Here third person narration is dovetailed into interior monologue. With what effect? Joyce seems to be trying to achieve some sort of impossible unity of language and experience. He is working his theme simultaneously from the inside and the outside. Here the sentences in third person also seem to want to relinquish their status as narration, to stop telling and to show instead. In these examples the fusion of telling and showing, third person narration and interior monologue seems swamped by another modernist effort, to use language as an expressive means, thus also to combine impressionism with symbolism. In such cases the categories of person or point of view as elaborated in some contemporary formalist critical systems are of rather limited use.

Like Joyce, William Faulkner is also a master-creator of modernist narrative labyrinths. It is my proposition that he is particularly inventive and innovative in *modulating, merging and fusing various techniques and effects in the specific field of narrative transmission*. Juxtapositions of various types of narration also abound in his work. Within one novel, *The Sound and the Fury*, the interior monologues of the first three sections are mutually juxtaposed and then jointly contrasted to the last section, which

9. *Ulysses*, Penguin, p. 174.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

is narrated. In its interiorization and highly impressionist notation *The Sound and the Fury* as a whole is juxtaposed to the much more overt telling of Faulkner's trilogy, for instance. Studying Faulkner's narrative corpus more closely, we discover with considerable surprise that, contrary to what might be expected, he has used interior monologue extensively only in two novels: *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*. All the other novels are more or less predominately narrated (*The Sound and the Fury* itself incorporates a superb specimen of "classical" non-omniscient narration).

Of these two novelists Joyce is the supreme experimenter in that each of his four fictional works is utterly different from all the others. Faulkner performs a different, equally astonishing feat: without ever losing that certain unmistakable faulknerian ring, *he presents us with a variety and complexity of narrative modes which has hardly been surpassed by any of his peers*. It is not simple, however, to draw clear distinctions between these modes. Especially challenging and intriguing in this respect is the puzzle posed by the narrative of *Absalom, Absalom!* and it is on this puzzle that I should like to test my thesis concerning Faulkner's modernist narrative juxtapositions and fusions.

## II

Formally *Absalom* is a novel of telling, and in that sense is less mimetic on the whole than *The Sound and the Fury*. It also abounds in other traits which destroy the mimetic effect. For instance, its sentence: it is full of dashes and brackets, interpolations and afterthoughts which unduly prolong it, and uses a language literally cluttered with poetic and rhetorical figures which stress the artificial, "writerly" aspect of the text. This property of the novel can be illustrated by the following emblematic example:

... and the Quentin Compson who was still too young to deserve yet to be a ghost, but nevertheless having to be one for all that, since he was born and bred in the deep South the same as she was — the two separate Quentins now talking to one another in the long silence of notpeople, in notlanguage, like this: *It seems that this demon — his name was Sutpen — (Colonel Sutpen) — Colonel Sutpen. Who came out of nowhere and without warning upon the land with a band of strange niggers and built a plantation — Tore violently a plantation, Miss Rosa Coldfield says) — tore violently. And married her sister Ellen and begot a son and a daughter which — (Without gentleness begot, Miss Rosa Coldfield says) — without gentleness ...*<sup>11</sup>

The first part of this quotation, unitalicized, is authorial narration using explicit and direct statement in a way unthinkable in *Ulysses* or *The Sound and the Fury*. Even more unthinkable is the phrase "like this", implying an awareness of the discourse of the novel which is disguised, as a

11. *Absalom, Absalom!*, Vintage Books, p. 9.

rule, in the realistic mimetic tradition of storytelling. In the italicized passage, in which the two separate Quentins are talking to one another, Faulkner does not imitate the flow of the mind. Quentin is presented as a formal, ironical, even self-conscious narrator telling a story to himself, correcting it as he goes along, insisting on certain formulations. *Absalom*, then, is less mimetic than *The Sound and the Fury* on two counts: it is told at the same time as the monologues of the Compson brothers are shown, and it is also more overtly and artificially told than the narrated last section of *The Sound and the Fury*. This latter rhetorical and figurative excess in *Absalom* has been stressed by many critics and does not require elaboration. The former has been rather neglected by the critics. It should be stressed, however, that this novel swarms with signs pointing to the mechanics of telling — inquit formulas, for instance, an incredible amount of literal notations of "saying" and "telling" and "thinking" and "guessing". These signs flout the mimetic conventions followed by stories which supposedly "tell themselves", and the conventions of interior monologue in particular. It is at this point, however, that we might pause and look for the "counterthrust" — a sign of showing, juxtaposed to or merged with the telling.

Returning to our manifest theme — the fortunes of interior monologue in *Absalom, Absalom!* — we must point out that formally interior monologue has a dominant position only in Chapter Six. Outside that chapter we *only* find interior monologue (nearly exclusively Quentin's) in very short passages scattered throughout the novel. The dominant strategy of narrative transmission in *Absalom* is to juxtapose a number of narrators both in linear and vertical sequence: some seem to alternate with Quentin (Rosa, Shreve, Mr Compson), and some are retold by Quentin (Mr Compson again who transmits what he was told by his father or by "the town", by "them"). The narrative relay is often stressed very strongly. Chapter Five, spoken by Miss Rosa, for example, begins like this: "*So they will have told you doubtless already how I told that Jones*", then a little later: "*they will have told you doubtless*", and again: "*so they will tell you*" — three references to telling and re-telling on one single page<sup>12</sup>. *Such devices expose and underline the narrative transmission*: Rosa recapitulates to Quentin the version she believes he heard from "them" (the people of Jefferson), only to complement or refute it with her own interpretation, which begins two pages later and goes on for forty more. Looking more closely at the narrative strategy of chapter Five, we find no sign of authorial narration in this chapter until the very last page when Rosa stops talking. Rosa's story is rendered as *spoken* by her, *recounted* to Quentin. To complicate matters, it is printed in italics, which in Faulkner is usually a signal for interior monologue. Could this be an indication that Faulkner is reproducing Rosa's telling as Quentin *hears* it? And, if this is so, is it relayed by Quentin verbatim or processed by, even reworded through, his consciousness?

12. *Absalom, Absalom!*, p. 134.

With echoes of Larbaud - Joyce in our mind, we notice that we are introduced to Rosa's speaking from the "very first sentence" of the chapter. The first authorial sentence in normal type appears on the last page. It says: "But Quentin was not listening." As this sentence is in turn followed by an impressionistic authorial rendering of Quentin re-living and/or recapitulating a scene described by Miss Rosa, this may mean that the text in italics was interrupted by the writer at the moment Quentin had stopped listening. Seen in this way, this would be a reproduction in veritable *trompe l'oeil* fashion of the moment in which she said something momentous, her words remaining unrecorded only because the protagonist had stopped listening. Done, moreover, in a supremely mimetic way, some kind of extreme Jamesian dramatization (which is the prototype of showing!). The author, namely, does not retell us the scene, he dramatizes it. "He (Quentin) couldn't pass that. He was not even listening to her; he said, 'Ma'am? What's that? What did you say?'" And the reader hears her shocking revelation only when Quentin hears it, after she has repeated it: "There's something in that house." Are we to suppose, then that Quentin stopped listening at the moment the italics stopped? Or did he perhaps *not* listen to *any* of it, but imagined, dreamt up himself a story which, as the novel repeatedly stresses, he knew anyway? Her speech, if speech it is, is not introduced by an inquit formula. The author does not tell us whether the text before us is spoken by her directly or reproduced (re-quoted) by Quentin. We do not know and, as in *Ulysses*, I think we are *not meant* to know. This is only one of the innumerable complications of narrative transmission in this novel, which leaves us wondering: what *are* the narrative modes of *Absalom*? And how far can the reader distinguish between its strategies of showing and telling?

Another sign that this novel might be characterized by a specific form of showing-telling contamination is, for example, the way in which Wash Jones's message to Miss Rosa concerning the killing of Bon is communicated to the reader. Chapter Three, which consists entirely of Mr Compson's rather straight narrative (*not* placed in inverted commas), ends with only the first sentence — a question — spoken by Jones. The full text of Wash's message (three more sentences carrying the vital information) come only at the end of Chapter Four, which is Mr Compson's narrative too, this time put in inverted commas. These three additional sentences, also spoken by Mr Compson are, however, divided from his preceding narrative by a passage of authorial narration concerning Quentin. They are also introduced by three present participles, a way of avoiding exact placing in time, the way in which Faulkner often introduces unstructured texts meant to be taken for interior monologue. No explanation (such as we would expect in a realistic text) is given for the interruption of Mr Compson's story at the end of Chapter Three (such an explanation would underline the mimetic nature of the story). As stated in Chapters Two and Four (but *not* in Chapter Three), Mr Compson's story is delivered in the evening hours preceding

Quentin's ride to Sutpen's Hundred with Miss Rosa. Sheherezade, the classical overt narrator or fabulator, interrupts her stories at certain times for a well-known reason, and both facts are duly reported to us in the course of the narrative. Here, however, Mr Compson's telling is interrupted without any explanation, and the narrative of Chapter Four starts *da capo*, more or less where it began in Chapter Two, leading us through another version of the story, ending where Chapter Three ended, with the addition of three sentences spoken by Wash: "Then you better come on out yon. Henry has done shot that durn French feller. Kilt him dead as a beef."<sup>43</sup>

We have been exposed here to narrative manipulation creating suspense which, however, in traditional narrative terms is inexcusable because it is completely arbitrary (indicating a post-modernist, fabulatory flouting of realist illusion). If we *wanted* to interpret it mimetically, though, we could explain it as a product of the haphazard, random nature of memory, of the "stream of consciousness". If Quentin identifies himself with the protagonists of the novel, if he half relives and half creates their story, then the events of the story can be jumbled freely and randomly as they would if Quentin was shown thinking about them.

Another example of the discontinuity which characterizes the "stream of consciousness novel" occurs in Chapter Four. Mr Compson produces Bon's letter on page 89, but Quentin gets to read it only on page 129. The narrative separates the two points, just as Bloom's interior monologue separates the moment at which he looks at the menu from the moment when he gives his order in "Lestrygonians".

Another example of delayed information is the fact of Bon's blood and parentage revealed to us late in the novel (and remaining conjectural to the very end.). Compared to similar revelations in Dickens' novels, for instance, where they are always carefully engineered by plot complication, here the narrative works by analogy with interior monologue devices. In the early chapters we are left in the dark (as we are in Henry James's novels), listening to Miss Rosa and Mr Compson, who are equally ignorant of the fact. Then we learn it as if by chance, "overhearing" the conversation between Quentin and Shreve who, the mimetically minded reader supposes, are certainly not mentioning it for the first time.

Considering these and similar examples, we become aware that *Absalom* is a very special kind of narrative, in which the techniques of telling seem to be supplemented, blended with the techniques of showing. *The technique of interior monologue is used very sparsely in the novel, but some of its devices are simulated in certain hybrid strategies.* Analogies also arise, of course, from the overall a-chronology of the narrative, which, as we know, is one of the most outstanding characteristics of the stream of consciousness novel.

13. *Absalom, Absalom!*, p. 133.

Although their excessive rhetoric frequently affects us as anti-mimetic, the narratives in *Absalom* often do "sound like" modernist interior monologues. Why? Along with the arguments which we have just outlined, we should be aware that *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom* share an intensely "impressionist" presentation; these narratives are very vivid records of sense-impressions. Furthermore, they are rambling, sinuous, discontinuous, often capricious and repetitive, all qualities characterizing the conventions of the modernist stream of consciousness novel with its fixation on memory and psychological time.

Chapter Six is an excellent example of the amazing variety of narrative modes in *Absalom*, the only chapter, moreover, in which interior monologue dominates.

The chapter begins with an introduction into the Harvard setting. It consists of third person narration focalized through Quentin *now*, followed by Mr Compson's letter announcing Miss Rosa's death, and returning to narration focalized through Quentin, but through Quentin *then*. For about one page this authorial narration of the ride to Sutpen's Hundred becomes heavily figurative and suggestive, "experiential":

behind the fat mare in the moonless September dust, the trees along the road not rising soaring as trees should but squatting like huge fowl, their leaves ruffled and heavily separate like the feathers of panting fowls, heavy with sixty years of dust, the roadside undergrowth coated with heat-vulcanized dust . . .<sup>14</sup>

It also takes on symbolic, mythical proportions when Rosa and Quentin are addressed by a cloud of — historical? — dust. Then, after a short dialogue between Quentin and Shreve at Harvard, we are presented with six pages of Shreve's conjectural narration punctuated by Quentin's "Yes". Then Quentin repeats how Shreve sounds "just like father"<sup>15</sup>, and the narration modulates into Quentin's interior monologue (introduced by "thinking", and sounding strangely like Shreve). Another indication that this may not quite be Quentin is the fact that his own stream is punctuated once by his own formula of assent: "Yes, Quentin said" printed in Roman type. Also that Shreve's question which follows is placed in brackets, as if it had to be set apart for some reason. This is in turn followed by the third person narration of Quentin's visit to the Sutpen graves with his father. Here it is very strange indeed that the story Sutpen tells should be rendered as passing through Quentin's mind (perhaps in the form previously summed up by Shreve?), and be set in italics, while his own childhood memory is recounted by the author (as if Sutpen were closer to him than to his own experience). Then comes Mr Compson's narration<sup>16</sup>, mixed with authorial narration and some rather mimetic dialogue, followed again by Mr Compson's

14. *Absalom, Absalom!*, p. 175.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 181.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 188.

story, very long and very elaborate this time (about the octoroon and Charles Etienne), not "sounding" like Mr Compson in the early chapters at all:

The boy had been produced complete and subject to no microbe in that cloyed and scented maze of shuttered silk as if he were the delicate and perverse spirit-symbol, immortal page of the ancient immortal Lilith...<sup>17</sup>

It is interesting to note that here as elsewhere in this novel, one character often speaks in different idioms and styles, while different characters often sound like one another. At least once more in a subsequent interior monologue in this chapter Quentin says of Shreve: "He sound just like father"<sup>18</sup> and then goes on to repeat, *not* quote, a sentence previously spoken by Mr Compson ("Beautiful lives women live..."). The sentences immediately following are difficult to attribute. This is formally Quentin's stream of consciousness, but is he speaking his own words or remembering, paraphrasing his father's? It is in this section that Quentin also modulates his monologue into direct self-address in the second person — another reiteration of the highly significant motif of Quentin "not listening"

*But you were not listening, because you knew it all already, had learned, absorbed it already without the medium of speech somehow from having been born and living beside it, with it, as children will and do: so that what your father was saying did not tell you anything so much as it struck, word by word, the resonant strings of remembering.*<sup>19</sup>

Both thematically and formally, then, Sutpen's story is Quentin's story. If this is so, then *Quentin's first person narration about Sutpen is also his own memory monologue!*

In still another, later scene, Quentin silent, immobile, intent, as if in a trance, both involved and quite impersonal at the same time, even oracular, is described by the authorial voice like this:

"Wait, I tell you!" Quentin said, though still he did not move or raise his voice — that voice with its tense suffused restrained quality: "I am telling" *Am I going to have to have to hear it all again he thought I am going to have to hear it all over again I am listening to it all over again I shall have to never listen to anything else but this again forever so apparently not only a man never outlives his father but not even his friends and acquaintances do*<sup>20</sup>

Quentin here is telling what he has been hearing and *is* hearing in his mind all the time but the words he is hearing have perhaps never even been told to him because, as Faulkner explains in the example quoted before this one, he learned the story simply by living in the South, by being Quen-

17. *Ibid.*, p. 196.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 211.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 213.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 277.

tin Compson. *This is an example of Faulkner transposing an aspect of the theme directly into the medium of narrative, into a merger of various types of transmission.* In many places the voices of the male narrators (Miss Rosa on the whole remains apart as a woman should!) sound alike and are also merged with the authorial voice. These voices, moreover, both tell and (more ramblingly) talk aloud (soliloquize?), speak in the manner of thinking, think as if they were formally soliloquizing (Judith: "If happy I can be I will, if suffer I must I can."<sup>21</sup>), all three: telling, talking and thinking transposed often into formalized, rhetorical, *written* idiom, more removed from psychological and idiolectic credibility (mimeticism) than *The Sound and the Fury*.

It is here that we may pause again and remind ourselves that Dorrit Cohn has very aptly reminded us of the shifting, unstable borderline between memory monologue (lodged in the past) and autobiographical first person narration. With regard to all the first person narration in *Absalom* (which is ostensibly not autobiographical because the narrators are not recounting their own lives but those of the Sutpens) we may perhaps ask ourselves: *aren't these narratives (Miss Rosa's and Quentin's in particular), also monologues of sorts?* In support of this thesis we can argue that neither Rosa nor Quentin seem to have a life of their own. The Sutpens inhabit them like demons and their narratives are exorcisms. *Talking about the Sutpens, about history, defeat, tragedy and loss — they are monologizing about themselves.* They talk about the Sutpens as the Compson brothers talk about Caddy and their own family. *Formally they are mostly telling, but their telling seems to follow stylistically the "uninterrupted unrolling of a thought process"; it is a-chronological, discontinuous, highly digressive and emotional.*

Quoting a passage from Molly's monologue in *Ulysses*, Dorrit Cohn speaks of

the sentences that regularly turn a reflective gaze back on each narrative sentence — generalizing, questioning, evaluating: and this discursive language retards, and eventually displaces, the narrative language, as the concern for the present moment again prevails.<sup>22</sup>

In spite of the differences, Rosa's talking/telling, especially in Chapter Five, in many ways answers Cohn's description. In the light of Cohn's remarks, we might perhaps say that Rosa's narrative is a monologue in spite of itself, that here she is *both telling her stream and streaming her tale*. If, in addition, we consider the possibility that her monologue-narrative is related through Quentin's consciousness, or even created by it, the whole affair becomes fathomless. I am aware, of course, that speculating in this fashion I have left the well-defined shores of Cohn's or Genette's critical approach, a thing which probably cannot be done with impunity. But

21. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

22. Cohn, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

*Absalom* forces one to cross borderlines, because this is what Faulkner is constantly doing himself.

The notion of consciousness which transpires from such speculations is, of course, different from Dujardin's. It does not remain tied to the mimetic concept of the flow of an individual mind, geared to everyday pragmatic reality, and apprehended through the senses. Rather, it is an analogue, a model (which could not exist without its simpler mimetic predecessor, however), imitating Faulkner's vision of some kind of collective consciousness, a tragic notion of history through which Quentin has always known what he knows, a tragic notion of humanity even, (because Shreve can identify with it), transcending the personal particularity of much stream of consciousness fiction, rising to the impersonality of great art.

### CONCLUSION

In this paper I have indicated the importance of several modernist fusions: the mergers of third person narration and quoted monologue (Stephen and Bloom), of first person narration and memory monologue (the brothers in *The Sound and the Fury*), the inside/outside recreation of sensations and emotions (Bloom in "Lestrygonians") or the constant modulating from involvement to distancing and vice-versa. *Absalom* seems to be specifically characterized by its own original juxtapositions, modifications and intertwinements (mergers) of mimetic and diegetic forms of narrative transmission.

As an exemplary case of modernist complexity in the field of narration, *Absalom, Absalom!* can be considered, along with *Ulysses*, as the hub of the modernist wheel, the centre on which many narrative paths converge. In its density and its juxtaposition and fusion of devices, both of which are eminently modernist traits, *Absalom* is complementary to *Ulysses*. Both novels combine involving, experiential writing with distancing, deliberate (mannerist?) artificiality. Both novels also straddle the modernist and post-modernist positions. (Faulkner is perhaps closer to post-modernist fabulation, while at the same time trailing behind him some pre-modernist, aestheticist luggage which Joyce had written out of his system in *The Portrait of the Artist*).

*Ulysses* is a summa of modernism, a repository of all its devices — and vices. Analogous to *Ulysses*, *Absalom* is the supreme example of the fusion and juxtaposition of the two modernist pulls in the more limited field of narrative proper, specifically between narration and interior monologue. Seen in this perspective, and quite apart from any sweeping evaluations, *Absalom, Absalom!* appears in every respect more complex and more original (Joyce-free) than *The Sound and the Fury*, a veritable narrative maze. Telling its stream and streaming its tale, this masterpiece both entices and defies critical effort.

NARACIJSKE JUKSTAPOZICIJE I FUZIJE U ROMANU *ABSALOM, ABSALOM!* WILLIAMA FAULKNERA

Rad polazi od uvjerenja da je William Faulkner jedan od najistaknutijih modernista, mnogo bliži Jamesu Joyceu nego što se pretpostavlja. Iznosi se teza da moduse naracije u Faulknerovim djelima — u užem smislu pripovjedačkog prenošenja ili posredovanja — možemo poredati u širokoj lepezi koja je raskriljena između dva pola, između *mimesis* i *diegesis*, onako kako ih je interpretirao Gérard Genette. Ta se dva pripovjedačka modusa pokazivanja i kazivanja (engl. showing i telling), međutim, vrlo često međusobno suprotstavljaju ili pak prožimlju *unutar* jednog djela. Na primjeru romana *Absalom, Absalom!* autor analizira takve naracijske fuzije s posebnim obzirom na mijene i preobrazbe tehnike unutarnjeg monologa, pokazujući na brojnim primjerima Faulknerovo kombiniranje mimetskog i dijegetskog prenošenja priče. Autor zaključuje da upravo u tim kombinacijama leži glavna razlika između *Absaloma* i romana *Buka i bijes*, koji mu je tematski i stilski neobično blizak, i da je upravo zahvaljujući toj razlici *Absalom* naracijski originalniji od *Buke i bijesa*, kao i manje ovisan o Joyceovu *Uliksu*.