International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation, Vol.24, Issue 09, 2020
ISSN: 1475-7192

The Trends of Stream of Consciousness in William Faulkner's *The Sound and The Fury*

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Abstract

The paper explores William Faulkner's stream of consciousness technique for his novel ***The Sound and the Fury*** *(1929) which is among the best novels in the American literature and the period of the 20th century. His best works, and his finest writing features from 1929 to 1936, the years of the difficult moments of the Great Depression in America, where the economy collapsed and resurrected shortly thereafter. The paper deals with the origin of Stream of Consciousness with different examples of certain novels, and how Faulkner succeeds to apply this literary term in his novels; by playing with some events and time especially past and present.*

Keyword: *Consciousness, River, Psychology, Interior monologue, Chronological time, and mental state.*

Introduction

William Faulkner (1897-1962) is a reputable American writer. As a novelist, he is as renowned as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Henry James. He has many fans around the globe, and his works have been translated into different languages around the world.

Faulkner lived much of his childhood in and around his ancestral home town of Oxford, Mississippi, where he lived in a different strange employment and the years building up to the literary notoriety he composed in his free moment. At that time, he published his first book which is entitled as ***The Marble Faun*** (1924), a collection of poems. In 1929, he published his fourth novel ***The Sound and the Fury*** which helped him to gain an ever-growing reputation and publicity. In this novel and in those that followed, Faulkner's inclination towards technical experiments permitted him to study the psychological complexity of his protagonists and their relationships more carefully than the clear narrative style. In ***As I Lay Dying*** (1930), this technical virtuosity is particularly obvious. It is worth mentioning that Faulkner was motivated by his relationship with Sherwood Anderson to compose and complete his first novel ***Soldiers' Pay*** (1926), in a short time.

Faulkner's reputation started to progressively recede after a sequence of accomplishments in the late 1930s, causing him to give up a job as a scriptwriter in Hollywood to complement his revenue.Seven more books were written by Faulkner in the 1940s, including his popular ***Light in August*** (1932) and ***Absalom and Absalom!*** (1936). His fortunes were quickly relived after the publishing of ***The Portable Faulkner*** in 1946, featuring a wide selection of his writings.He won the 1949 Nobel Prize for Literature and a couple of Pulitzer Prizes followed in the following decade. Faulkner continued to shape his literary quest until his death on July 6, 1962, at the age of 64, in Byhalia, Mississippi.

The Trends of Stream of Consciousness in William Faulkner's *The Sound and The Fury*

The term 'Stream -of – Consciousness' was invented by William Henry James (1843-1916) in his most popular book ***Principles of Psychology*** in 1890. The flux of mind was described by him, its continuity, but its

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continuous transformation. James considered conciseness a mixture of everything that humans have and still live through. Each thought is part of personal consciousness and is unique and ever-changing.To better comprehend the significance of "Stream-of-Consciousness," let's cite James himself:

> No state once gone can recur and be identical with it was before. We feel things differently according as we are sleepy or awake, hungry or full, fresh or tired, differently in childhood, manhood, and old age. Experience is remolding us every moment and our mental reaction on everything is really a resultant of our experience of the whole world up to that date.[1]

Consciousness according to James is an ongoing method.This self-continuity is what time-gap cannot be broken in twain, and so, although a present thought is not ignorant of time–gap, it can still be regarded as continuous in certain portions of the past. Consciousness does not fitly interpret this, as it is present in the first instance. It is nothing united; it runs. A 'river' or a 'stream' is an allegory that describes it the most simply. It can be called the stream of reflection, of consciousness, or of life's perspective when it can be talked about it hereafter.[2]

However, a "Stream-of-consciousness" has been used for a long time in modern fiction to describe a method of narration in which the narrator records in detail what passes through the consciousness of a character. M.H Abrams usefully describes "Stream -of – Consciousness" as a

> Mode of narration that undertake to reproduce, without a narrator intervention, the full spectrum and continuous flow of a character's mental process, in which conscious and half – conscious thought memories, expectation and random associations.[3]

Moreover, James Joyce or Virginia Woolf did not, as anticipated, the first author to use the "Stream-Of – Consciousness" method in England (both 1882-1941) but Dorothy Richardson (1873-19570), whose participation in modernism was acknowledged. She had favored the word "inner monologue" and used it in her ***Pointed Roofs*** (1915), the first of an autobiographical series of novels known as ***Pilgrimage*** (1915-67).[4]

The Sound and the Fury (1929) is often considered a living example of 'Stream -of – Consciousness'; Its avant-gardist strategy to the voice of narration, in which all four parts of it are focused on the internal monologue with a specific personality, always fairly heavy with idiotic punctuated, is reminiscent of other excellent novels of the 1920s, such as James Joyce's ***Ulysses*** (1922) or ***Remembrance of Things Past*** (1871-1922) by Marcel Proust.

Modernism in the United States, however, was disparate and localized, especially as many American writers of the time relocated to Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. Faulkner stated that he was generally imperceptible to such cultural modifications and so far proposed with rather a little care that he had never read ***Ulysses***, even though he certainly had a copy; but at the height of his authority as an American novelist, there was still a situation for him.[5]

In this case, Faulkner writes in his technique as if in the minds of the characters: since the mind of an ordinary man springs from one situation to another therefore he informs the readers simply what the protagonists are thinking. 'Stream-of-consciousness' attempts to capture this phenomenon. Thus, in the **Benjy** Section, everything is presented through the seemingly unorganized succession of images, and in the **Quentin** Section through random associated ideas. Therefore, he shows these jumps from one to another without any indication of a change. This method differs radically from the older way the narrative is presented through logical succession and argument.

This method represents the progress of 'Free Association' psychology, science and interest as a method in the 20th century. It is different in each chapter written by Faulkner and therefore; the style which is used by him in **Benjy,** is easy. This means that every single phrase in the chapter is quite simple and straightforward. There are no hard words because, of course; the vocabulary of an idiot is simple and a dumb mind, scientifically does not work. In terms of fundamental images, Faulkner records that thought. So Benjy, when he enters the gate or farmhouse, remembers a new occurrence there. Similarly, the ideas of the idiot can be halved through thought and sometimes he returns to it and that thought is forever lost.Thus, by suggestion, Faulkner develops a strong tour de force that works in the mentality of a thirty-three-year ancient idiot, but he has still made it orderly enough for the reader to follow his ideas. While Faulkner's style was quite complicated in depicting a straightforward idiot's mind, his style then shifts drastically when he goes back to Quentin's complicated mind. It can be found long, difficult phrases associated with a larger and more complex vocabulary in **Quentin** Section. But only images and impressions concerned Benjy: Quentin

is interested in complicated and difficult to understand concepts. Quentin tries to resolve complex moral problems, so his section is more complex.[6]

Similarly, Quentin's mind is much more developed and his opinions move very rapidly from one concept to another. Quentin's chapter utilizes the method of presenting this chapter on the day that Quentin seems to be about committing suicide. Therefore, Quentin's mind only deals with one or two concepts – his sister Caddy's dishonor, and his father's nihilist philosophy. So these two themes are very obvious whenever Quentin's mind jumps back into certain concepts of the past. His chapter might be much more complex if Quentin was concerned with other stuff. And as the chapter is re-read, it is clear that each scene comes back to these occurrences. For instance,when he recalls his awkward interview with Dalton Ames in the bridge, Quentin rides with Gerald and suddenly asks if Gerald has a sibling. The battle that takes place is because Quentin mixes his same query and his same battle with Dalton with Gerald's current position.[7]

With **Jason's** Section of the book, the style shifts dramatically. Jason's mind is preoccupied, but a monomaniac's mind. He only wants to get cash and push others. So his section flows quickly because he is not disturbed by the complexities of life and does not have to worry about images or opinions. His section is ordained and simple because of incomprehension. The last section provides the first straight narrative. Here, Faulkner adapts his style to match the character of Dilsey. So there is a quiet esthetic of dignity; the reader introduces the events for the fourth components without any remarks or any complicated sentence structure. And in the final part, the light of the other three components of Compson is heavily regulated and orderly.[8]

Here, Faulkner's writing is minimalistic, not maximalist. The vocabulary of **Benjy** is restricted by his state of mind; thus, the novel starts provisionally with a reduction in resources. The opening of the novel also relies on one term being wrong: the golfers who are playing around Compson property, "Caddy " herself and" Caddy "called for the golfers who are commercially exploited.[9]

The slipperiness in the language also reverberates in the noises and overheated sounds to the reader's primal origins. Through the perception of Benjy, characters come into their voices as if to imitate how consciousness itself starts; sounds, after all, is the first feeling to evolve in the womb. This nebulous quality is never completely abandoned by the novel, even in the more materialistic and conniving chapter of Jason Compson. If anything Benjy sets the tone, the section of the book; in the voice of the university-educated and persuasive Quentin, is also continually on the verge of disruption until it finally falls into an unpunctuated mess of hardly processed concepts.[10]

The section seems to imply that there is no need to limit inarticulacy to those with diagnosed mental pathologies. Indeed, as the novel's name implies, the end's result is chaos and noise.The novel ends with a sequence where Luster, the black page, rides back to Compson on horseback with a quarreled Benjy. Luster hits the horse, Quentin, as a confederate soldier crosses a monument to her go quicker. Faulkner describes Benjy's subsequent bellowing as, "it was horror, shock; agony eyeless, tongue less; just sound"[11]. Equilibrium is scarcely restored in a cryptic and most likely ironic final paragraph:

> Ben's voice roared and roared. Queenie moved again, her feet began to clop - clop steadily again, and once Ben hushed. Luster looked quickly back over his shoulder, then he drove on. The broken flower drooped over Ben's fist and his eyes were empty and blue screen again as cornice and façade flowed by smoothly once from left to right; post and tree, widow and doorway, each in his order place.
>
> (***SF,*** 252).

Benjy is comforted by the obvious "order," but the generally strong facade and towers are still fowling; this seems like a provisional settlement. Faulkner's Mississippi hardly labors under the illusion of being 'rebuilt'; even an unknown man-child wails about crossing the monument of a murdered Confederate warrior.[12]

In reading ***The Sound and the Fury*** whose first three sections are interior monologues, the overlap of the actual occurrences and memories of previous occurrences instantly strikes the readers. In various respects, it is accomplished in an unprecedented way. The past is evoked the present most often, for instance, when he hears Golf Caddies quoted Benjy remembers his sibling Caddie. The viewer is only surprised by the abrupt subjectivity of the past and the fact that he understands nothing about the lives of the character expects what he learns from such meditations. Therefore, through the insistence of the impression of the past, particularly the impression of adolescence, Faulkner demonstrates that the present is contained in the past, which is what has been lived in the past and in the present. In this event, the past is not so much a reminder that it constantly exerts pressure upon the present and on what is under pressure.[13]

Therefore, consciousness is mainly a memorial. But not the same kind of memory that connects the present to the past that is known and is no longer present. Memory is an essential part of the truth, which shows itself not as memory knows nothing but a grasp on reality. However, since memory may not be anything but the sensation of the past, it can be concluded, and this lies at Faulkner's foundation — that's the true past.

The monologue of Quentin's ***The Sound and the Fury*** would be a perfect example of this concept. It can be read about the first one that Quentin had with a lover of his sister a few years earlier as he fought with another student, and this is what it truly experiences. In the context of August (which is not published as an outer monologue and thus demonstrates that this moment concept is not merely the consequence of a certain literary type) the section on Christmas childhood starts as follows: "Memory believes before knowing even wonders. Knows remember believes as a corridor in a big long garbled cold echoing building**…"**[14]

The true, then, is the past, there is always a future, always actual present. How can this be comprehended? Repeating the ancient adages is not enough. A person is what his background has created him, or yesterday's activities of a person are determined by his behavior.The present event is no longer important for these equations because of the primacy of the past, for nothing can be determined without the current. Either thing must be fully presented before it can be determined by another; an intrinsic requirement must also connect actual times. This is indeed, does not clarify Faulkner's lump in the present, which must not be unraveled chronologically, for then there is a sequence of comparative pasts and poses.

Faulknerian past is extra-temporal. The reality that an incident is slipping into the past does not imply that it becomes simple and pure memory marked with a deadline, but that it leaves temporality. As time is shift and dispersion, these concepts are hard to convey and not at all detailed in Faulkner.The past, which is no longer and can only be remembered, is no more temporary past. It is something current in the correct context of the term here and now. The past was and is therefore past, interested in moment, but as long as it remains, it is present. That's why it can be said that it is extra-temporal, but it is not in the higher domain, because every chronological present is accompanied by a continuous present.[15]

It takes on the meaning from the present and simultaneously incorporates in itself the present (the present is past because Temple is already a married woman, whom we had just seen raped). This should not be all of Faulkner's theory. It only refers to the way of life of his main and minor character as a moment is nothing beyond someone's time consciousness. Thus when it is said that present means past, that past takes the present back, then we talk about the hero who feels bound to a past that he cannot be ignored. It is when destiny comes up.

Having thus created the past-to-present connection, it should be found out what role the future plays in Faulkner. The future does not appear to be entering novels such as ***Light in August*** or ***Sanctuary***. At the start, the murder is already stated, so that the whole novel is but an investigation of the past in Sanctuary. There is indeed the development of occurrences, a very ordinary one in reality, and yet the feeling that the different personalities have a future can be noticed.[16]

They are moving forward, but backward. They are not lured by a feat or fascinated by a certain kind of behavior they madly throw themselves into as the heroes of Dostoevsky when they feel the call of fate. Christmas has no future idea. Although he understands vaguely that he is going to kill, this assassination is merely an emergence of the past to which he contributes nothing. Even before his actions, he realizes the meaninglessness of success. The future can be compared to the present: it cannot be sat because there is no reason for something like that to happen. However, whatever happens, the event takes over the color of the passed immediately without changing it in a small measure just as every one of the speeches of Reverend Hightower represents the role of his grandfather. The concept is the same; the past determines the present and the future, rather than the only truth. The present is the truth. It is not tolerable being the past, and therefore it is destiny as well.[17]

The past, therefore, was not only the unfoldment of destiny but is and will be. However, that neither the needed nor imperious growth is made possible. It counts little what occurs, as Faulknerian destiny does not rely on the fulfillment of a specific conditional case. The choice of the destiny of the course is in a sense superfluous because we do not deal with the kind of fatality which manifests in a dramatic evolution of the events from which we cannot add or remove any individual without altering the whole sentence. In this case, destiny is recognized as the term of life, whereas destiny is at the source of life in Faulkner, or, as Malraux says in his ***Sanctuary*** preface, it is always the past, the irrecoverable past.[18]

Conclusion

Throughout the novel, Faulkner adopts appropriate style for each chapter by using the technique of stream of consciousness. During the first section, there are no hard or complex words, because an idiot's vocabulary (Benjy)

would be easy. In the second section, where Quentin's intricate mind is described, it becomes complicated. Benjy is only interested in pictures and thoughts, while Quentin deals with complex and challenging concepts. Quentin attempts to address complicated social problems, making his chapter more difficult. Faulkner's style shifts dramatically in section of Jason. Jason's mind is engaged, but it is a monomaniac's mind. He is only worried about gaining cash and amusing others. This section flows quickly because Jason is not disturbed by the intricacies of life. Regarding the Stream of Consciousness, the three siblings have three distinct ways of interpreting events in the Compson family: the first three parts are prepared for an action that can only take place in the last chapter of the novel.

Although the groundbreaking honor of using this method goes to James Joyce and Virginia Wolf, it can be indicated with the statement that the method reaches perfection in Faulkner's hands. However, Faulkner gives this story drastic vividness and variety by using his creative power. In the piercing of scattered pieces, the reader's minds discover a very healthy and enjoyable practice and form the whole thing. It is quickly found that Faulkner's novel has separated motion and action, unlike novels with predominantly psychological orientation.The novelist's main interest is to expose each narrator's vital self or personality by using an interior monologue. Faulkner brings his readers so close to the narrator's core and mind as it is within the language's strength and scope. Not only this, the novel adds importance to judgment by simply juxtaposing the Compson family's past and present.

Notes

[1]Mitchell Evan and Brian Mitchell, ***The Psychology of Wine: Truth and Beauty by the Glass*** (Sanata Barbara: Proeger/ ABC-CLIO, 2009), 35.

[2]Dr. B.S Goyal and Dr. Santosh Goyal, ***James Joyce Ulysses*** (Delhi: Surjeet Publication 2008), 33.

[3]M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, ***A Glossary of Literary Terms*** 7th ed. (Boston: Wadsworth Learning, 1999), 299.

[4]Andrew Blades, ***20th century American literature*** (Harlow: Longman, 2011), 82.

[5]Goyal, 34.

[6]William Faulkner and David Minter, ***The Sound and the Fury*** (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1987), 54.

[7]Blades, 83.

[8]Ibid., 85.

[9]Gary Day, ***Modernist literature, 1890 to 1950*** (Harlow: Longman, 2010), 87.

[10]Ibid., 88.

[11]William Faulkner, ***The Sound and the Fury*** (New Delhi, General Press, 2019), 251. All subsequent quotations reference to the novel are taken from this edition, with the abbreviation (***SF***) and the page number(s).

[12]Robert Penn Warren and William Faulkner, ***Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays,*** ed. Robert Penn Warren (Prentice-Hall: Englewood Cliffs, 1966), 80.

[13]Taylor Hagood, ***The Sound and the Fury*** (New York: Grey House Publ, 2014), 136.

[14]Peter B. High, ***An Outline of American Literature*** (New York: Longman Inc., 2000), 73.

[15]Kathryn VanSpanckeren, ***Outline of American Literature*** (New York: The United States, Department of the State, 1994), 49-50.

[16]High, 74.

[17]Hagood, 137.

[18]Gail M. Morrison, ***The Composition of the Sound and the Fury.*** *Drc.Usask.Ca*,<http://drc.usask.ca/projects/faulkner/main/criticism/morrison.html>[Accessed June 1st, 2019].

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