

The trends of stream of consciousness technique in William Faulkner's novels

Dr. MAHMOUD ALI AHMED

Associate Professor, English Language Department
Sudan University of Science and Technology, Sudan

Dr. NADA HASSAN MOHAMMED AHMED

Assistant Professor, English Language Department
Sattam University , KSA

Abstract:

This paper aimed to find out the use of stream of consciousness technique in the following novels: "The Sound and the Fury" and "As I lay dying" and "Absalom, Absalom". Faulkner was an American modernist author. He has used this literary technique in his three novels; He reflected the trends of stream of consciousness in the analysis of characters. These trends present Faulkner's ability to translate unspoken thoughts of unorganized succession of images, to reflect fluid rambling of the mind's conversation with itself. This technique enabled Faulkner to focus on the nature of psychological communication and to present the characters' impressions and to describe the world which those characters inhabit. Faulkner concerned with the human psyche to portray a character in a different style with specific psychological depth. He focused on the psychological content of the character to present its inner life.

He presented the trend of internal struggle to penetrate feelings and emotions of characters and explore their attitudes which formed their internal world. Stream of consciousness tended to transfer ideas and feelings inside the character's mind to encourage a reader to live with the character deeply. It found out the merits of human psyche to reveal the character's analysis in psychological style. Stream of

consciousness tended to find out the psychological spaces and dimensions inside the character.

Key words: stream of consciousness, Faulkner, human psyche.

INTRODUCTION

Stream of Consciousness is a term coined by William James in principles of psychology (1890) to describe the flow of one's inner experiences. He was the first to describe it as a continuous succession of experiences. This term is reserved for indicating an approach to the presentation of psychological aspects of character in fiction. Stream of Consciousness is a narrative technique in non- dramatic fiction intended to render the flow of myriad impressions—visual, auditory, physical, associative, and subliminal—that impinge on the consciousness of an individual and form part of his awareness along with the trend of his rational thoughts. Stream of Consciousness is sometimes confused with interior monologue, but it works with the sensation of the mind into a more formal pattern, a flow of thoughts inwardly expressed similar to a soliloquy. It has characteristics, they are: recording multifarious feelings and thoughts, exploring internal and external forces that influence individuals' psychology and absence of logical argument. The technique was a bold innovation that allowed readers to experience emotional, moral, and intellectual thought from inside a character's head and opened up new possibilities for point of view beyond traditional first or third person narration.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Stream of Consciousness has been used by modernist writers in 20th century. It is one of the distinguishing features of psychological novel. Psychological novel is a novel that focuses

on the complex mental and emotional lives of its characters and explores the various levels of mental activity. This study intends to find out whether William Faulkner reflects trends of stream of consciousness in his three novels to analyze his characters and their internal thoughts and feelings.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This paper focuses on the analysis of the characters in Faulkner's novels ("The Sound and The Fury", "As I lay Dying" and "Absalom, Absalom") through stream of consciousness as a narrative technique.

OBJECTIVES

This paper aimed to investigate the use of stream of consciousness in three selected novels ("The Sound and The Fury" , "As I Lay Dying" and "Absalom, Absalom"). More specifically, it answered the following objectives: to determine the trends of stream of consciousness technique; to identify stream of consciousness analysis in the three selected novels.

METHOD

The researcher used content analysis in three selected novels namely: "The Sound and The Fury", "As I lay Dying" and "Absalom, Absalom". They were chosen based on their models of the genre under the study. This paper attempted to present how the selected novels prove the trends of stream of consciousness as a literary technique.

William Faulkner stands as one of the most prominent American writers of the 20th century. Faulkner especially embodied the southern sensibility. His literature had significant influence on both popular and modernist literature. His literary reputation included poetry, novels, short stories

and screen plays; he owned two Pulitzer prizes for fiction and the Nobel Prize in literature.

He was born in New Albany, Mississippi in 1897. His family had accumulated a great deal of wealth before the American civil war. His family, like many southern families, had lost all of its financial power during the conflict. They moved to Oxford Mississippi. Faulkner would use Oxford as the basis for the fictional town of Jefferson in Yoknapatawpa County. He was bright; he felt no passion for his formal education. He dropped out of high school. He was employed in a bank in Oxford and began to write, in his early forays into writing. Faulkner emulated the poetic styling of John Keats, Aegermon Swinburne who addressed many of these early poems to a young woman Estelle Oldhter to marry someone who had better financial prospects. He tried to become a pilot for the USA army during the First World War but his application was rejected. He travelled to Toronto, Canada. He posed as an English citizen and joined the Royal Canadian Air force. By the time Faulkner reached France, the conflict ended. After returning to the United States, William Faulkner attended the University of Mississippi from 1919 until 1921.

Faulkner married Estelle Oldham in 1929. She brought her two children from a previous marriage, and the couple would also have two daughters. The oldest one died after only nine days, but he was still responsible for taking care of his new wife and young children. His family did not hinder his pursuit of extramarital affairs. He was known for his experimental writing style with meticulous evaluation of the utterance, diction and cadence and scrupulous attention to the details of characters' utterance and state of minds. He experimented intelligently with switching different perspectives and voices. He was talented at the arrangement of narrative chronology, sometimes breaking the time frame and recombining it with whole new aspect. His rich and brilliant baroque writing style

was developed in the extremely long sentences embedding with complex subordinate parts.

Narrative techniques provided Faulkner different ways of unfolding narratives which came to him unconsciously and instinctively and provided him a form of automatic writing. His techniques affording, whether conscious or unconscious whether original or borrowed create effects which help him to guide and control the readers' awareness of relationships between how he told a story and what he made that story mean. Faulkner innovated some techniques that suited his themes. He has also extensively used the techniques of interior monologue. His plots usually do not follow any chronological order. He holds up the revelations and creates nerve racking suspense. The plots within plots created to add to the weight of its meaning. His stories are complicated and oblique. They unfold themselves in a manner which determines both the subjective world of the character as well as his relationship with the outer world. He compels the readers' maximum participation in his experience.

His stories are complicated and oblique. They unfold themselves in a manner which determines both the subjective world of the character as well as his relationship with the outer world. He compels the readers' maximum participation in his experience. Faulkner took advantage of an innovative narrative structure which utilized multiple view points, often expressed by a characters' shift from conscious to unconscious thought, time shifts are that not always presented sequentially. He employs a narrator within the tale, who reveals the plot situated most often in the past based on his own experiences or what the others tell him. He uses several character narrators to provide different insights into specific events.

The problem of point of view in Faulkner's works embraces some of his fiction of techniques. He was highly influenced by Joseph Conrad and James Joyce.

He makes effective use of first person narration, third person narrative and stream of consciousness. In all his works, his narrative techniques to express his views of men's position in the modern world. He makes his readers participate both in the process of the story and in the extrication of the truth from the point of view of an omniscient narrator. He places several characters as the narrators of the same tale who convey the plot to the reader in the light of their own experience without the intrusion of an intermediary. The unusual treatment of the concept of time is one of Faulkner's innovations. His techniques were not only fundamental to an understanding of the modernistic form but heralded much of what would come later. The narrative techniques which are introduced in Faulkner's fiction are stream of consciousness, direct interior monologue, first person narrative mode, omniscient point of view, soliloquy, multiplicity of narrative voice, symbolism, allegory, flashbacks, imagery unrealism, point of view, allegory, flashback, imagery unreliable narrative, foreshadowing, temporal repetition disorders time, sequences, counter point or juxtaposition and elaborate speculation. Faulkner uses the advantages of omniscience to give histories and future to the characters.

Multiple narratives are considered to be the innovative techniques employed by Faulkner. It means use of multiple narrators or more number of narratives to narrate a single plot in a particular novel. On one level, Faulkner was a self-conscious modernist who took to heart the modernist credo "make it new". An unrelenting experimenter, he sought successively book by book, to expand on the innovative accomplishments of Conrad Joyce and Proust in the representation of time, space, and consciousness. On another level, Faulkner seems less sophisticated. His favorite novel, he repeatedly said, was *The Sound and The Fury*, because it emerged intuitively rather than according to any plan.

Faulkner demonstrated in his fiction many of the qualities typically attributed to literary modernism. They are:

- Experimenting with narrative structures, temporal frameworks, narrative voices and symbols.
- Exploring inner consciousness as a major theme.
- Adapting the abstract methods of modern painting to literature.
- Embracing communities steeped in tradition and history (both western and primitive tradition) as a relief from the upheavals and alienation of modernity.

All his life, Faulkner would struggle to reconcile these two divergent approaches to selfhood, the Victorian urged toward unity and stability. He had inherited as a child of the southern rural gentry and the modernist drive for multiplicity and change that he absorbed very early in his career as a self – identifying member of the international artistic avant– garde. Indeed, by the time he reached maturity, both had become so deeply embedded in his being that neither could effectively be suppressed or jettisoned. The tactic he ultimately arrived at for coping with this dilemma, most likely without being consciously aware that he was employing it.

William Faulkner may not have adopted a separate name for his literary self, but he was profoundly self-divided, as those who knew him well reported again and again. He reflected the authorial attempt to construct a self, contained, imagined world that vies to replace the lost world of political, cultural and theological order that vanished with Nietzsche's disappearance of god. The modernity of Faulkner partially resided in the negotiation of an essential contradiction between a rejection of the past and inevitable repetition of the past in that very rejection. In Faulkner, to return to Quentin's metaphor of the interconnected pools, these "postmodern" moments frequently appear in the form of a ripple effect- a

movement along the surface of the text far removed from the nascent occurrence that initiated the series.

A characterization of Faulkner's novel required understanding of what it meant to be a piece of fiction. He played with piece of fiction to comment on the story about his literature and how he viewed his past accomplishments. His fiction abided by Lacan's stages of linguistic development and he developed as an author and critic of language just as a child and matures. He dealt with the approaches to language after evolving into the symbolic and imaginary stage. The National Institute selected Faulkner to join its ranks, the same year he was awarded the O Henry Memorial short story Award. His writing was a skillful net of vivid narrative lines. His skill was also gaining Faulkner reputation in which his work was worthy of Scholarly study. Faulkner died in 1962 of a heart attack.

Faulkner works

Novels:

- Soldiers' pay
- Mosquitoes
- Sartoris
- The sound and the furry
- As I lay dying
- Sanctuary
- Light in August
- Pylon
- Absalom , Absalom
- The unvanquished
- The wild palms
- The hamlet
- Go down , Moses , and other stories
- Intruder in the dust
- Requiem for nun
- Affable

- The town
- The Mansion
- The Reivers , a reminiscence
- Flags in the Dust

Short fiction

- New Orleans sketchers
- These thirteen
- Doctor Martino – and other stories
- The portable Faulkner
- Three famous short novels
- Knights gambit
- Collected stories
- Big woods
- Selected short stories
- A Faulkner miscellany
- **Uncollected stories of William Faulkner**

Poetry

- Vision in spring
- The marble faun
- This earth , a poem
- A green bough
- William Faulkner : early and portry
- Mississippi Poems
- Helen

Drama

- Today we live
- The road to glory
- Slave ship
- To have and have not
- The big sleep
- Land of the pharaohs

Faulkner's themes

a- Modern society as wasteland

The image of modern society was a wasteland pervades Faulkner's writing. The mechanized, industrialized society dehumanizes man by forcing him to cultivate false values and by encouraging strophe of essential human virtues – courage, fortitude, honesty and goodness.

b- Individualism

The right of a man to live his own life is one of the Faulkner's central themes. Many of his stories and novels depict the numerous threats to individualism posed by modern society, by moral righteousness and moral rigidity, by taboos and by traditions.

c- Race relations

Created few problems to 20th century descendant, the racial situation is a constant source of agitation.

d- The prisoner of society

Faulkner presents social man as the end product of a process of psychological conditioning that practically eliminates his chance of responding naturally to the experiences of his existence. His feelings, his thoughts and his action are determined by his relations to his parents and his society.

Stream of Consciousness trends to explore and expose the unspoken thoughts of characters. Faulkner reflected this in the novel of *The Sound and The Fury* in Benjy and Quentin sections. The researcher revealed stream of consciousness and analyzed it. The first section in the novel, namely Benjy, served two purposes. They were:

A-it revealed Benjy's psyche or inner life.

B-it provided an objective record of certain dramatic events in the Compson's family.

Faulkner inserted the mind of an idiot and strolling in his mind to portray his limited abilities. His body was affected by some physical sensation and that activated his memory of similar experience in the past. There was no chronological order in anything Benjy mentioned. He was incapable of abstraction and generalization. There were many things which made impressions on his mind but he couldn't connect things. For example when he heard the golfers called the word Caddy in that time he remembered his sister whom he loved her more than anyone. Time had no meaning for him and the present and the past blended into one response for him. Many of the scenes of the past that he remembered were connected with his sister Caddy in one- way or another.

When Luster carried him through the fence, his mind automatically returned to an earlier scene, in which he was involved in the same type of activity. The thought of cold hands reminded him of an earlier episode. Uncle Maury once visited the Compson family for the Christmas holiday. He saw that Benjy was a worry to Mrs. Compson. He asked her to let Versh took him outside. Versh dressed Benjy and told him to keep his hands in his pockets. He went to the gate to wait for Caddy. He remembered Caddy's smell like tree. His memory caused him to start moaning. Luster couldn't understand why he mourned so much.

On one occasion, some girls came by then and Benjy wanted to say something to them about Caddy just to unburden his mind of the thought of Caddy. But the girls were frightened and ran away. He chased the girls trying to speak to them. His mother and Jason mistook the feelings of Benjy. He remembered these events and started moaning. Luster became angry when he didn't stop crying. Disley came out of the house at that time and scolded Luster and took him to the kitchen.

Benjy's mind suddenly jumped to the picture of Jason's cutting up of his dolls. Suddenly, he remembered the old occurrence of Jason's burning the two free passes without

giving them to Luster. When Luster started to get him ready for bed, he remembered the night of Dam Uddy's death and Disley took him to a room which wasn't their usual sleeping room. He refused to sleep alone. Caddy came and stayed with him.

Stream of consciousness in Quentin section

This section opened with Quentin noticing the shadow of the past and his remembering the watch his father gave him and the advice Mr. Compson offered about the need to forget time. He was of the conviction that there were no values worth anything in life that time curse all things. He tried to deny this philosophy but he was unable. He concerned time, he didn't like his father.

When his classmate Shreve came in and asked him about his classes, he told him that he would come later. The word later brought to his mind the views of his father on time. He remembered his father saying that virginity was only important to men, not women.

When he heard his daughter pregnancy, he wasn't upset at all. He tried to make Quentin understand that it was the man who invented virginity and women didn't care about it. This statement hurt his sensation because he was pure. His father couldn't remember any incident.

"They couldn't even remember tomorrow what seemed dreadful today". (The Sound and the Fury, p.61)

Quentin began to contemplate suicide. He tried to stop time before time allowed him to forget his bereavement and if his father was right and all human experience was absurd, then his sorrow feeling was absurd. He couldn't live without values. Suicide was his only way to escape from the absurdity of life. His memories became more devastating and horrible; thoughts of the neurotic mother, idiot brother, the cynical father and sinful sister, all these forced him to get rid of life by suicide.

Stream of consciousness in 'As I lay dying' novel

Stream of consciousness trend to transfer ideas, thoughts and perceptive inside the characters' head to the mind of the reader. Faulkner also revealed it in 'As I lay dying' novel. The researcher manifested it and analyzed it.

"I could just remember how my father used to say that the reason for living was to get ready to die along time." (As I lay dying, Page 135)

These words were said by Addie's father. They incarnated deep feeling in Addie that the death was not physically but it was spiritually. If a person didn't taste the real meanings of life, it meant the real death. The novel handled two kinds of death; they were physical and spiritual death. Spiritually, when Addie died in life and her longing for physical death was a relief from the suffering of life. She did not feel the real taste of her life in her marital relation with her husband. She sought the passion with another person to compensate that. Anse failed to obtain her emotionally and sexually. Cash's birth that the first causes Addie referred to Anse as dead. Birth became for Addie a final obligation and the last debts she might pay before preparing herself for death.

In the afternoon when the school was out and the last one had left with his little dirty snuffling nose, instead of going home I would go down the hill to the spring where I could be the times when they faulted, so I could. (As I lay dying, page134)

Faulkner portrayed sensation of alienation which dominated the wide space inside Addie. She was carrying perception of violence towards others and that was revealed in many situations. She was tough and beating her pupils. She treated her husband and children severely. She also had hatred profound inside her. She reached a level of hatred to all those who surrounded her that made her hated her father. She failed to love her husband, her children and her students.

He will save me from the water and from the fire- even though I have laid down my life, he will save me. (As I lay dying, page 133)

Faulkner reflected the feeling of affection of Addie for Whitefield in ornate style through her love for Jewel; she loved him more than his brothers. He was a fruit of a man whom she gave herself to feel real love and real sensation of safety which she deprived all her life.

My father is fish. (As I lay dying, Page 12)

This statement was said by Vardaman when he accused Peabody of killing his mother. Faulkner penetrated his innocent world and expressed his fear of death in a simple way. Vardaman brought a fish; the fish was chopped up into little pieces. The concept of fish pieces meant death. He connected it with his mother's death. He lost both his mother and his fish. The concept of death was reflected in a simple way when Cash was preparing a coffin for his mother and she saw that and the death of Vardaman's fish.

Words are no good; that words don't ever fit even what they are trying to say at. (As I lay dying, Page 136)

This expression was said by Addie. She had a profound concept inside her. A person couldn't express all his / her feelings by words because words were unable to portray emotions, feelings and thoughts in an accurate way. A person did not often take the form of a language, but a form of perception.

Stream of consciousness in 'Absalom, Absalom' novel

Stream of consciousness trend struggles are faced in everyday world. Struggles that usually don't have clear resolutions. Faulkner revealed it in 'Absalom, Absalom' novel. The researcher analyzed it. Faulkner portrayed Mrs. Rosa Coldfield imagination in a profound way. When she asked Quentin to visit her in her house; she was living with her deathless

memories for four decades with Stupen's story. She told him that may be he would enter the literally profession as many southern gentlemen and gentlewomen too were doing. She remembered the story of Stupen when he came to Jefferson with a horse and two pistols and no one knew his past. She would like her story to be told not because Quentin had literal inclination but he reminded her the past; his grandfather was a friend of Stupen whom he created obsession for her. She shared him in this story to convey an internal pain which was settling inside her.

Faulkner was sailing in the imagination of Quentin. He contemplated Rosa's appearance when he visited her; she was wearing black bonnet and shawl. The black color refers to sadness. She was recounting Stupen's story with poignant feeling.

Faulkner reflected an internal feeling of persecution which was dominating Rosa's spirit. When Rosa said to Clytie "*take your hand off me nigger*", (*Absalom, Absalom* page 176), she looked down upon her and reduced her value as a human being.

It was a summer of wisteria. The twilight was full of it and of the smell of father's cigar as they sat on the front gallery after supper until it would be time for Quentin to start, while in the deep shaggy lawn below the veranda the fireflies blew and drifted in soft random – the odor, the scent, which five months later Mr. Compson's letter would carry up from Mississippi and over the long iron New England snow and into Quentin's sitting room at Harvard (*Absalom, Absalom* page 201).

Faulkner shifted the time and place. The shift took time around the smell. He was sailing in the mind of Quentin when his father's smell dominated the place through the letter which he sent. At the same time he was in the north although his was father in the south, that smell incarnated the presence of his father in that moment.

William Faulkner designed his three novels' names 'The Sound and The Fury', 'As I lay dying' and 'Absalom, Absalom' from known resources to be distinctive and fixed. His protagonists in these novels were females.

William Faulkner used a very different style in narrating novel; *The Sound and The Fury*; he divided the novel into four sections with different narrators, with different chronological order and with different incidents. The most skillful section was the section narrated by Benjy who was mentally retarded; his age was thirty three years old. Faulkner conveyed perception and sensation of Benjy in an attractive way. Although he did not speak but Faulkner incarnated his weeping and his mourning to conversation was reflecting his character.

He was strolling inside Benjy and portrayed his simple and innocent world, especially his love for sister Caddy whom she was his all world. He loved her more than everyone. He used the technique of stream of consciousness in a profound style.

Faulkner recounted the story of Compson family. He explained their personalities through this section. Sailing in the character of Benjy was not easy for a novelist to write about and to draw the dimensions of the character was more difficult but he performed the picture in very a touching and beautiful way. It was the most complex and complicated section in the novel because the mentality of Benjy was very simple. He was an undesirable person in the family, they shamed of him. Caddy was the central figure in this section. Her character was lovable for the author. She was passionate, keen of her brother feelings and compensated him his mother pity.

Faulkner used all types of conflict in this novel. They were:

- 1- Man against man.
- 2- Man against nature.
- 3- Man against himself
- 4- Man against society.

He knocked the human inner psyche through different characters and situations. He touched aspects of human nature, love, fear, doubts, selfishness, humanity and irresponsibility in several attitudes. He also knocked religious sides through the character of black servant Disley. She was the only one in the novel; she was concerned with her religious duties. She was a symbol of kindness and patience. She was dealing with Benjy as one of her sons. The feeling of strong love was the love of Benjy to Caddy, the feeling of fear when Disley asked him to sleep alone. He was afraid and weeping, Caddy slept with him in the room. When Caddy married, he was afraid because he felt he was alone.

He explained doubts through Quentin; he was living in doubts and deception till he got rid of his life. He committed suicide. The feeling of selfishness was in two characters; they were Jason and his mother, he inherited selfishness from his mother, so she liked him more than his brothers. She did not give any care for her children; Jason was selfish. He did not care for anyone. He was very keen for his benefits.

The feeling of irresponsibility was incarnated in the character of Mr. Compson, the father of the family. He was passive and cynical. He had deep philosophy towards many affairs in life. The feeling of humanity was reflected in Disley. She spent all her life in the serving of the family without complains. She was very patient and decent. Faulkner dealt with the characters in a professional style. Caddy was passionate and sensitive. Benjy was innocent and very simple person.

The protagonist, Addie was a very tough and stubborn character. She died spiritually when she isolated herself from her husband and her children because she hated her husband. Here the author would like to convey specific message that the real death is spiritual. He penetrated her character and reflected her feelings aspects towards people around her. When she was a teacher, she did not deal with her pupils well. She hit

them. She did not reveal any love for her family. She was aggressive and implacable.

Addie expressed her love with the minister of the church whom she gave herself and the result of that affair was Jewel. The author conveyed the sensation of alienation if a person was among his or her family. She decided to be buried with her family in Jefferson not to be buried with them; she wanted to be very far from them even in the death. Faulkner drew her character in a distinctive style; he drew other characters in different styles. She was very patient. She saw her coffin before she died she was not afraid of death. She wished to come early to depart the world of her husband and to get rid of inner torments. Addie was severe and cold.

Faulkner used several narrators to recount the story of Stupen, the protagonist, Rosa Coldfield, Mr. Compson and Quentin. Faulkner drew a character of Rosa in deep dimension with strong memory with deep sadness.

Rosa was very intelligent to recount her story to Quentin, because his grandfather was a part of it. She recounted the story of Stupen in a way. His father told him the story in another way. When he went to Harvard, he recounted to his mate in a different way.

Each one of these characters had dimension and perspective of his or her own. She recounted her story with Stupen in profound and painful feelings, Mr. Compson recounted the story in a normal way and Quentin recounted in a very different way in the college. Each character expressed her feeling in different emotions.

Faulkner concentrated on the South. He mentioned it in his three novels. He wanted to convey message that the South had entity and nobility. He repeated two names from *The Sound and The Fury* in *Absalom, Absalom*, the names Mr. Compson and Quentin. Quentin had very wide imagination; he had changed most of incidents in the story of Stupen.

Faulkner used stream of consciousness in his three novels in a distinctive way.

Findings

1-Faulkner used stream of consciousness in his three novels as a narrative technique according to the meaning of psychological novel.

2- He reflected the trends of stream of consciousness technique in psychological style to present traits of a character.

3-He concentrated on the internal world of a character.

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