Unveiling the Intricacies of William Faulkner's Literary Works through the Bakhtinian Theory

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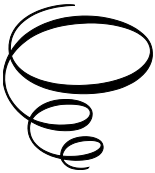

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To My Mother and Father

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

Welcome to this intellectually stimulating exploration of William Faulkner's extraordinary narrative style and language. This book delves deep into the multifaceted world of four of Faulkner's seminal novels: The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying, Light in August, and Absalom, Absalom! Our journey is guided by an in-depth analysis of Faulkner's unique narrative experimentation and the complex interplay of voices within his works.

By drawing upon the profound theories of Mikhail Bakhtin on polyphony and dialogism and Tzvetan Todorov's perspectives on narrative construction, this book presents a rigorous and comprehensive examination of Faulkner's literary craftsmanship. It firmly establishes the polyphonic nature of Faulkner's fiction, highlighting the unique use of double-voiced discourse and the author's skillful integration of multiple voices.

By acknowledging the multitude of voices and perspectives within Faulkner's novels, this book sets out to directly challenge and dispel misconceptions about Faulkner's characters as mere reflections of the author's viewpoint. It addresses the misinterpretations that have led to incorrect assumptions about Faulkner's beliefs, inviting readers to reconsider their understanding of his works.

As we navigate through the intricate narratives of Faulkner's works, we thoroughly consider the multiplicity of voices, avoiding oversimplified text readings. This journey necessitates an examination of the complex characters, the author's deliberate narrative levels, and his stylistic choices, including the deliberate omission of particular punctuation and capitalization.

Readers play a crucial role in gaining valuable insights into Faulkner's narrative construction, the varied perspectives offered by character narrators, and the intricate blending of experiences and memories with imaginative reconstructions. Ultimately, this book aims to deepen your appreciation for Faulkner's ingenuity in crafting polyphonic works that reflect the rich diversity of society through his masterful storytelling.

We invite you to embark on this intellectual odyssey through William Faulkner's captivating narratives, exploring the vibrant dialogue of his time and uncovering the profound layers of meaning that define his literary legacy.

Enjoy the journey!

Mostafa Rahmati Kargan

INTRODUCTION

According to Bakhtin (1984), truth cannot be found within the mind of a single person; instead, it is born out of the collective search for truth between people engaged in dialogic interaction. Similarly, William Faulkner believed that no individual can fully comprehend truth, as it only becomes apparent from multiple perspectives. As such, this study aims to offer a fresh interpretation of Faulkner's novels, which have long been a subject of controversy and diverse interpretations among critics and readers alike.

Faulkner's novels have sparked controversy among critics for decades, and the author would likely have found the discourse amusing. The overarching goal of this book is to explore how Faulkner's characters express themselves and represent different perspectives on the world. The book employs Bakhtin's concepts of polyphony and dialogism as a framework. Bakhtin's theories offer new intellectual challenges and critical dimensions for analyzing the language of Faulkner's characters. Therefore, a portion of the introductory chapter is devoted to explicating and defining Bakhtin's selected literary theories on narrative and the novel's language. The chapter also includes a survey of recent Faulkner scholarship to provide context for the current state of research. It is fascinating to observe how Faulkner's novels have been received differently by various generations and regions, from mixed admiration and suspicion to dismissal as a regional and insignificant novelist.

Faulkner's literary talent was first recognized by French critics such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Maurice Coindreau, and Andre Malraux, rather than his homeland. While American critics saw him as merely portraying local color, the French were able to grasp the dilemma of twentieth-century man in his works. Faulkner's novels remained controversial among critics even after Malcolm Cowley rediscovered him in America during the late 1940s. His novels have been analyzed from various perspectives, including social, historical, political, and psychological. Although numerous studies have shed light on Faulkner's works, some focus on only one perspective and fail to provide a comprehensive analysis. This has resulted in critics distorting the work to support their viewpoint.

Additionally, many studies on Faulkner's works need to pay more attention to the significance of language. Early American critics, including

Malcolm Cowley, Cleanth Brooks, and Robert Penn Warren, have played an instrumental role in promoting Faulkner's name and making his works more accessible to the general public. It is essential to acknowledge their efforts in explaining the cultural and social aspects of Faulkner's texts, making reading his works more manageable. However, these critics have also set a literary trend that focuses solely on the ideas in Faulkner's works, often ignoring or even apologizing for the language used by the author. This trend has resulted in establishing a Faulknerian literary school, which analyzes, praises, or attacks the ideas presented in Faulkner's works without acknowledging the artistic talent that enabled Faulkner to convey these ideas through fiction. Even more crucial is that many of these critics need to recognize the role of point of view as a dialogue in his novels despite making valuable contributions to Faulkner's criticism. As Bakhtin would put it, the "dialogic" nature of Faulkner's fiction (Dialogic Imagination 1981) is evident in every novel, with characters engaging in conversations between themselves and the reader.

Unfortunately, many of Faulkner's critics have overlooked the distinctiveness of his works, much like critics of Dickens and Dostoevsky. They needed to have understood the dialogic nature of his texts, assuming his characters were mere mouthpieces for the author's opinions. In reality, these characters were independent voices, expressing many perspectives on the world (see Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, 47). By analyzing the diverse language used by Faulkner's characters, we can discern that each one offers a unique worldview. Bakhtin points out that these languages mirror different social languages (Dialogic Imagination, 357).

Faulkner's novels testify to his ability to give voice to many perspectives, offering a glimpse into his time's varied social and individual languages. We encounter an array of languages that exist independently of the author: the language of the intellectual, the layman, the aristocrat, the black person, the poor white farmer, the honest person, the shrewd businessman, the perverted, the moral, the fanatic, and the liberal. Faulkner's task was not to invent these languages or the people who use them; he had to represent how people speak and think. This was no easy feat, requiring a great deal of honesty and impartiality on his part, as well as a sensitive ear and an open mind. It is natural for any writer to suppress minor voices to achieve unity, but Faulkner managed to avoid this pitfall.

My inspiration for understanding the meaning behind Faulkner's novels came from my personal experience of reading his works. Like many others, I was warned about the difficulty of his writing style and the challenges of comprehending his stories. However, over the years, I have found the task not only to be rewarding but also enjoyable. From the beginning, I was

captivated by something special about his novels. While works like The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom! are often discussed. Unfortunately, few people, beyond the critics and their students, take the time to read these great novels. As for me, I have read Faulkner's significant works multiple times, constantly feeling that there is still more to discover within the text. I am endlessly fascinated with Faulkner's ability to minimize his presence through the expert use of various narrative voices. As a result, the reader is left to tackle the text alone, without the assistance of an omniscient narrator or a dominating authorial point of view.

Occasionally, I have felt let down when I have read a critical book or article that promised to delve into a specific aspect of a Faulkner novel, such as race, gender, or religion. More often than not, I was left with a sense of disappointment that Faulkner had been misunderstood and misinterpreted. It was easier to find a way to demonstrate the inadequacy of these approaches once I discovered Tzvetan Todorov's poetics of the novel. Only through Todorov's "Reading as Construction" did I find a method to read Faulkner in a way that did justice to his work. This approach allowed me to organize my insights and ideas and to recognize Faulkner's lack of commitment to a specific point of view or message in his writing. Unfortunately, some of Faulkner's critics were unable to appreciate this and labeled him a misogynist, racist, regionalist, and traditionalist.

Todorov's insights helped to clarify the messages conveyed through the voices of the narrators and characters. However, I still needed help understanding their language and its significance within the narrative. After studying Bakhtin's work, Todorov's ideas about the relationship between the" narrator and reader could be combined with Bakhtin's concepts of the doublevoiced and dialogic nature of the narrative to shed light on two critical features of Faulkner's novels. These features included the discrepancy between a character's words and the reader's beliefs and Faulkner's distancing of himself from his characters - a fact that some critics had overlooked. By applying Bakhtin's theories of the polyphonic and dialogic novel, I hope to offer a unique perspective on Faulkner's works, specifically The Sound and the Fury, Absalom Absalom!, As I Lay Dying, and Light in August. Bakhtin's work on Dostoevsky's writing demonstrates how various characters can express different points of view and how this dialogue can capture the essence of the time it was written. Similarly, Faulkner's sensitivity to language has long been a subject of fascination for literary critics. At the core of this study lies the question of point of view.

This book explores Faulkner's use of dialogical and polyphonic narrative in the works above. It also aims to reveal the intricate interplay between the author, characters, and reader. Each Faulkner novel can be read constructively

and dialogically, although this undertaking is beyond the scope of this study. By sharing my interpretation, readers can better appreciate Faulkner's works. To accomplish this, I rely on the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian philosopher and thinker who actively participated in the intellectual discourse of 1920s Russia. Bakhtin's concepts form the basis of my methodology, and I will elaborate on those most relevant to my book. Despite facing significant obstacles, including exile and censorship under the Soviet regime, Bakhtin continued to write and is now recognized for his contributions to literary criticism.

However, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, his work gained traction in the West thanks to Slavonic scholars translating it for English-speaking audiences (Morson and Emerson 1990 xiv).

In their book Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics, Morson, and Emerson point out that Bakhtin has been characterized as various types of thinkers, including structuralist and poststructuralist, Marxist and post-Marxist, speech act theorist, sociolinguist, liberal, pluralist, mystic, vitalist, Christian, and materialist. Meanwhile, Michael Holquist and Katrina Clark, who authored the sole biography on Bakhtin, believe that he is undoubtedly one of the most influential thinkers of the 20th century. Bakhtin's writings encompass a broad range of fields, including linguistics, psychoanalysis, theology, social theory, historical poetics, axiology, and philosophy of the person. Moreover, he has also produced several specialized works on Vitalism, Formalism, Dostoevsky, Freud, Goethe, and Rabelais. Despite his considerable status among anthropologists, folklorists, linguists, and literary critics in the West, the philosophical work that underpins his contributions to these areas remains largely unknown. As a result, significant discrepancies in establishing his reputation have yet to be fully resolved (1984 vii). During his book defense on Rabelais in 1946, Bakhtin identified himself as an "obsessed innovator" but noted that such individuals are seldom understood. Despite many efforts over the past five years to explore Bakhtin's ideas and the potential contribution of his theories to literature, much still needs to be learned.

Bakhtin's significant contribution to literary studies lies in his various concepts used to analyze the complex and multi-narrative structure of the novel. His theory of language and the novel is rooted in dialogism, and he believes that the "novel" genre represents the dialogical nature of language and truth. Dialogism is a concept fully explained in "Discourse and the Novel," it is an omnipresent theme in Bakhtin's work. Polyphony, formulated in his book on Dostoevsky (1973), is the foundation of dialogism and serves as an umbrella term for discussing Bakhtin's various theories on the dialogic nature of reality and language. While Bakhtin never explicitly referred to

dialogism, scholars have attributed the term to his concepts. Dialogism is the epistemological mode of a world immersed in heteroglossia where every element is interconnected and contributes to a larger whole, as defined by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Meanings are in a state of constant interaction, with each having the potential to influence others. This results in a dialogic imperative, where true monologue is impossible as everything is determined at the moment of utterance.

According to Bakhtin, dialogism is the process through which meaning is developed from the interactions between the author, the work, and the reader/listener. The surrounding context, including social and political factors, further influences these elements. Bakhtin's view on how meaning is generated in Dostoevsky's dialogic novel is that it is not constructed as a single consciousness absorbing other consciousnesses but as a whole formed by the interaction of multiple consciousnesses. This interaction does not support the viewer who objectifies an entire event according to some ordinary monologic category. As a result, the viewer becomes a participant. In summary, Bakhtin's dialogism relies on three constitutional principles:

- the relation between the work and the world
- the interaction of the author and the hero
- the relation between the author and the reader

According to Bakhtin, the author, character, and receiver are integral to the literary work. Their presence is not considered outside the artistic event but in how they are perceived. The author views the receiver as the one towards whom the work is directed and, in turn, determines its structure. It is worth noting that dialogism was briefly mentioned in ancient Greece but overshadowed by other rhetoric and dialectic forms. Bakhtin developed dialogism to respond to various schools of thought in the twentieth century. As Holquist and Katerina Clark pointed out, dialogism is not merely a literary theory or philosophy of language but a reflection of the relationships between people and things beyond religious, political, and aesthetic boundaries.

In his work "Freudenism: A Marxist Critique," Bakhtin (Todorov, l984) argues that no human exists outside of society and objective socioeconomic conditions. Rather than being born as an abstract biological organism, a person is born as a member of a particular social class and nationality, with their personal and cultural creations informed by this social and historical localization. Bakhtin's concept of dialogism supports this idea, stating that an utterance is not solely the product of the speaker but rather emerges from the interaction and social context of the speakers involved.

According to Michael Holquist, *dialogism* can be defined as a pragmatic theory of knowledge that seeks to comprehend human behavior by analyzing language. This epistemology depends on re-conceptualized ideas of self and language. Bakhtin further argues that discourse is the primary site where the dialogical nature of reality is most clearly demonstrated. For Bakhtin, language, whether in life or literature, is dialogic - multifaceted, multilayered, and full of words with everchanging meanings. His strategies focus on how speech intersects with speech. Bakhtin identifies the utterance - not the sentence - as the fundamental communication unit. Let us examine the utterance briefly to differentiate the three senses in which Bakhtin discusses dialogic reality. An utterance (which can range from a single word to a novel) is what one person says to another and assumes an author and a listener. Unlike a sentence, an utterance is always directed at someone and ends with a pause that anticipates, invites, and awaits a response. It is shaped dialogically; I shape my utterance in anticipation of what you will say, and your response shapes my original utterance. It is formed "on the border" between interlocutors in conversation. An utterance assumes that two speakers share a semantically everyday context. Bakhtin defines an *utterance* as what is said and what is left unsaid but implied. (Clark and Holquist, Bakhtin 207) An utterance always provides an assessment, and for Bakhtin, an evaluation always has ethical implications and assumes "answerability" - owning and taking responsibility for one's choices. (Morson and Emerson, Creation of a Prosaics 134)

Morson and Emerson provide clarification on Bakhtin's concept of utterance, which encompasses three distinct meanings:

- Every utterance is a joint creation of the speaker and listener, as their interactions shape its foundation.
- An utterance can either be monologic, with only one point of view, or dialogic, with two distinct voices present.
- *Dialogue* is a global concept that offers a view of the world and truth.

Bakhtin recognized the importance of a theory that accurately reflects the dialogic nature of reality and truth, leading to the polyphony that defined Dostoevsky's novels. He credited Dostoevsky with creating a new genre of novel that constructed a polyphonic world, challenging the established forms of the monologic (homophonic) European novel.

Bakhtin's analysis establishes a crucial connection between the "polyphonic" and "dialogic" novel. Bakhtin argues that the polyphonic novel is inherently dialogic since dialogue pervades "all human speech and all relationships and manifestations of human life." This includes everything

that holds meaning and significance (Problems of Dostoevski's Poetics 40). Scholars Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist share this perspective, believing that "polyphony" and "dialogism" are interchangeable terms (242). Similarly, David Lodge views polyphonic form and dialogical structure as two sides of the same coin (After Bakhtin 86). While Lynne Pearce acknowledges these two terms' interconnectedness, she subtly distinguishes between them. According to Pearce, "polyphony" relates to the macrocosmic structure of the text, while "dialogue" refers to the reciprocating mechanisms within smaller units of exchange, down to individual words (21).

This book considers "polyphony" and "dialogue" interchangeable, where a polyphonic text is always dialogic and vice versa.

As defined by Bakhtin, polyphony describes the existence of numerous self-governing voices, declarations, and awareness in Dostoevsky's literature. According to Bakhtin, this multiplicity of unconnected and distinct voices and consciousnesses constitutes the authentic polyphony of fully realized voices in Dostoevsky's works instead of simply a collection of characters and destinies within a uniform, authorial world. Despite the unity of predetermined events, each consciousness and their respective world remain separate and distinct (Bakhtin, 1973,4).

The essence of the concept lies in the idea that despite various languages and voices existing in the same context and being interdependent, they maintain their autonomy, with no voice being subordinate to another. Instead of carrying a piece of the novel's meaning or "truth," each voice in the polyphony co-creates a dialogue with the other voices. This dialogue is the "truth" of the text rather than leading towards its meaning. As readers, our voice adds to this dialogue, and our participation becomes the text's truth for us.

Bakhtin outlines the features of the polyphonic novel, a new genre of fiction that has gained evolving critical understanding. He examines Dostoevsky's use of polyphony, which can serve as a model for Faulkner's work. Bakhtin identifies Dostoevsky's genius in creating the polyphonic novel as his ability to think not in thought but in points of view, consciousnesses, and voices. According to Bakhtin, the characters in the polyphonic novel become subjects and enter into dialogue with the author and readers. They are not objects of authorial analysis or mere spokespersons for the author's monological worldview. A character's consciousness is presented as someone else's, yet it is not turned into an object or closed. It remains open and does not become a simple object of the author's consciousness.

The polyphonic perspective is one in which the author's voice exists alongside the voices of other characters. Bakhtin does not view polyphony as a form of relativism since the author is not a detached spectator. Instead, in a polyphonic novel, characters engage in dialogue with the author who created them, fostering a relationship that allows for a deeper exploration of each character's position. This requires the author to be present and create a sense of being alongside or being by each character. By doing so, everyday events can be experienced in a more meaningful context.

Bakhtin also notes that Dostoevsky was not the first to write a polyphonic novel, nor was he the last. However, Bakhtin eulogizes Dostoevsky's unique contribution to the genre, highlighting the "Dostoevsky in Dostoevsky" that sets his work apart. Bakhtin often talks about Dostoevsky's characters, who possess their perspectives, ideas, and voices and engage in dialogue with the author throughout the novel. This makes each character an unpredictable and accessible voice, never fully "solved" or finalized until the end of the story.

Bakhtin eloquently conveys the idea of the unfinalizability of the hero in Dostoevsky's novels. According to Bakhtin, the hero recognizes their incompleteness and potential to defy any external definition. They continue evolving and shaping their identity as long as they are alive. In a polyphonic novel, the hero holds a crucial role, standing alongside the author as an individual who listens, responds, and challenges the author's perspective. They possess a profound self-awareness, able to reflect on themselves and their surroundings. (Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics 50). Bakhtin's concept of "self-consciousness" refers to an individual's ability to comprehend oneself and others, shaping one's identity. In a polyphonic novel, the self-conscious hero stands out from the monologic heroes by deconstructing the fixed image of an "embodied" hero. The introspective protagonist assumes the role of the storyteller, adeptly conveying a multifaceted narrative that sheds light on their persona from all angles. Bakhtin posits that Dostoevsky's fascination with the protagonist stems from their singular perspective on the world and self, which allows them to interpret and appraise their reality. Hence, Dostoevsky attaches significance not to how the protagonist presents themselves to the world but to how the world manifests itself to the protagonist and how they interpret it.

In a polyphonic novel, the author aims to uncover the hero's ultimate understanding of himself and the world. This is achieved not through the author's description of the hero but through the hero's own words. The author creates a more authentic and dynamic character by allowing the hero to speak for himself. However, this does not mean that the author is passive in the process. The author is highly active and involved, organizing and

participating in the dialogue without imposing a final word on the events described. The hero's freedom is thus limited only by the author's artistic design.

The author of a polyphonic novel organizes their discourse about a character as if they were present and capable of answering the author. This creates a relationship between the author and the character, allowing for independence, freedom, and even rebellion. The characters in a polyphonic novel are not invented but created by the author to exist within the logic of their self-consciousness. Bakhtin describes this relationship as a dialogue, where the hero is seen as a fully valid "thou," another, and autonomous "I." This profound dialogue occurs in the present moment of the creative process, not in the past.

Polyphonic novels demand intense dialogic activity from the characters, author, and reader. Each must expand, deepen, and reorganize their consciousness to accommodate the autonomous consciousnesses of others without sacrificing their own. Dostoevsky's polyphonic novels feature a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices, with a plurality of independent and unmerged consciousnesses. Thus, a linear plot or character development resulting in exposition and closure cannot account for the pluralistic world of the polyphonic novel. The plot in such novels does not finalize characters or events; instead, it places individuals in various situations that expose and provoke them, bringing people together and causing collisions and conflicts. These interactions, however, exceed the bounds of plot-related contact. According to Bakhtin, the "double-voiced discourse" is a distinct feature of the novel, arising from the dialogic interaction of language. Such interactions involve relations like agreement-disagreement and affirmation-negation between any two utterances, which cannot be fully explained through linguistic analysis of narration alone.

Bakhtin's interests lie in speech phenomena such as stylization, skaz, parody, and dialogue, which he believes require special attention in novel studies. These phenomena, which he considers the best dialogical expression, fall under double-voiced discourse. In polyphonic novels, dialogically oriented discourse is crucial, while monologically closed-off discourse, which expects no response, plays a negligible role (Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics 63). It is the double-voiced discourse that establishes the polyphonic nature of fiction. Bakhtin categorizes novelistic discourse into three types: The first type is a direct, unmediated, and referentially oriented discourse from the author. In novelistic prose, this is the author's direct speech or the implied author's. This category encompasses naming and informing. The second type is "objectified discourse," which is speech that the author understands and treats as someone else's discourse. This is the "discourse of

a represented person," i.e., the character's speech (Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics 199).

As Bakhtin defines it, double-voiced discourse is a type of discourse in which two semantic intentions or two voices occur simultaneously. Unlike in single-voiced discourse, the two voices in double-voiced discourse do not merge completely. This unique characteristic of double-voiced discourse, where two voices are distinct yet coexist, is what Bakhtin refers to as the quintessential expression of dialogicality.

The creation of double-voiced discourse involves taking a discourse that has been objectified and adding the writer's private intentions and consciousness while retaining the original speaker's intentions. This process allows us to hear both the original speaker's point of view and the second speaker's evaluation of the utterance from a different perspective. Double-voiced discourse presents the audience with two distinct perspectives: the original speaker's point of view and a second speaker's evaluation of that viewpoint. This incorporation of multiple perspectives is crucial in polyphonic novels, as noted in Morson and Emerson's Rethinking Bakhtin (1990, 65).

According to Bakhtin, double-voiced discourse can be divided into "passive" and "active" categories. In the passive form, the author uses the words of another for their purposes without directly acknowledging the other's speech. This type of double-voiced discourse can be further broken down into "unidirectional" and "vari-directional" forms, exemplified respectively by "stylization," "skaz," and "parody." In contrast, active double-voiced discourse occurs when the discourse of another influences the author's words in some way. Here, the other's speech has a direct impact on the author's own words. Bakhtin refers to all forms of active double-voiced discourse as "reflected" words, which have a solid connection to the discourse of others. Bakhtin also introduces the concept of "heteroglossia," an improved version of the idea of polyphony, in his work, The Dialogic Imagination.

According to Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia, the novel is composed of various social speech types and individual voices, which are artistically organized. This diversity can include different languages, social dialects, professional jargon, and languages used by specific generations, age groups, authorities, and social circles. The stratification of any given language at a particular moment in history, including languages used for sociopolitical purposes, is necessary for the novel as a genre to exist (Dialogic Imagination 262-63). Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia refers to the presence of multiple social voices, indicating that language is inherently diverse. Within a novel, various social speech types exist that create a stratification of

language, resulting in differences between dialects and socio-ideological languages. Heteroglossia is produced through the internal differentiation and stratification of different registers in a language, and it reflects a struggle between official and nonofficial registers. It enters the novel through authorial speech, the speeches of narrators and characters, and inserted speech genres. While polyphony deals with individual voices, heteroglossia deals with social voices. Bakhtin believed that the novel had a unique capability to express the "dialogized heteroglossia" of everyday life, as the novel's language is a system of languages that mutually animate each other. It cannot be analyzed as a single unitary language. Bakhtin's insights on language are crucial to the study of the novel. According to him, each character's speech represents their belief system, and in the novel, these convictions are challenged and contested. This conflict occurs between the novel's different belief systems or languages, such as character voices, narrator observations, and genre combinations. Bakhtin sees this diversity of voices, or "heteroglossia," as the defining characteristic of the novel. The novelist can weave together different themes and perspectives through these various languages. In accordance with Bakhtin's perspective, novelists must embrace diverse languages in their writing, as highlighted in The Dialogic Imagination (299). The novel itself is inherently diverse, comprised of various voices and styles that create an internally heterogeneous language rather than a homogeneous one.

Before delving into my research, it is worth acknowledging recent studies on language in Faulkner's works, including Walter Slatoff's Quest for Failure, Warwick Wadlington's Reading Faulknerian Tragedy, Stephen Ross's Fiction's Inexhaustible Voice, Edwin Hunter's Faulkner's Narrative Practice and Prose Style, Arthur Kinney's Faulkner's Narrative Poetics, Robert Dale Parker's Absalom, Absalom!: The Questioning of Fiction, and Judith Lockyer's Ordered by Words. These studies, among others, demonstrate a shift in the way Faulkner's novels are being analyzed, with an overdue newfound emphasis on language. For too long, language in Faulkner's works has been approached indirectly, ambiguously, and apologetically. Only recently has Faulkner's use of language been viewed as a barrier preventing readers from fully grasping the ideas expressed in his works.

For decades, Faulkner's critics were preoccupied with interpreting his works for readers. However, they needed to recognize his exceptional ability to capture language. More crucially, they overlooked the significance of language as a point of view in Faulkner's writing. Arthur Kinney's Faulkner's Narrative Poetics is an early attempt to address this issue. He explores the role of voice and the reader in shaping the meaning of Faulkner's

works. While Kinney offers valuable insights, he still needs to develop his ideas fully. His study is excellent, albeit lacking the supportive arguments in the poetics of critics such as Todorov and Bakhtin. These perspectives help us understand the role of language as a voice in the novel. Unlike his predecessors, Kinney recognizes Faulkner's intention to present characters' points of view from within. He notes that Faulkner's work is shaped to reveal the vision of his characters, which in turn becomes his style. Ultimately, the truth lies not in the source or fact but in the perception of fact or alternative ways of seeing facts. Kinney believes this perception must be sufficiently embodied in the novel so readers can experience it alongside the characters. According to Kinney, the character narrators in Faulkner's novels have unique perspectives contributing to the author's style. Todorov also emphasizes the importance of perception in understanding Faulkner's work. However, Kinney refers to the readers' perception as a collective consciousness, which I am afraid I have to disagree with. While readers from the same period and culture may react similarly, individual differences in taste, values, and beliefs lead to diverse interpretations.

Another critic, Stephen Ross, focuses on the formal aspects of Faulkner's writing in his book Fiction's Inexhaustible Voice. Ross categorizes Faulkner's narrative voices into four types and dedicates a chapter to the writer's voice. Despite demonstrating familiarity with Bakhtin's ideas, Ross's limitation of Faulkner's voices to four or five shows a misunderstanding of both the writer and theorist and restricts Faulkner's creative potential.

Ross offers valuable insights into the study of Faulkner's works by highlighting the significance of voice in conveying meaning. He stresses the importance of paying attention to the various voices in Faulkner's novels to comprehend them fully. Although Ross's observations are noteworthy, he overlooks Bakhtin's ideas on the polyphonic novel, which would have helped him recognize that there is no limit to the number of voices in Faulkner's works.

Ross correctly asserts that Faulkner's text requires us to respond to the different voices present (Ross, 1989, p. 12). He also accurately notes that critics neglected the role of voice in Faulkner's works for a long time. However, Ross's shortcoming is his attempt to reconcile contradictory views and theories. His statement that "Any use of 'voice' raises essential issues concerning a fiction's discourse and its implied human origins" is an erroneous oversimplification of a complex topic (Ross, 1989, p. 11). While it is true that voice plays a crucial role in fiction, its implications extend far beyond what Ross suggests. Although voices in Faulkner's text certainly exist, their very existence is shaped by the dialogic nature of his writing. Walter Slatoff delves into the nuances of Faulkner's narrative style in his

book Quest for Failure, highlighting oxymorons as a rhetorical device. While Faulkner employs several narrative styles, Slatoff's study was an early attempt by critics to examine the language used in Faulkner's work rather than apologizing for its nonconformity to traditional "literary language." Slatoff's work, however, falls into the trap of monologizing Faulkner's fiction, failing to recognize its dialogic nature. Although Slatoff emphasizes the ambiguity of Faulkner's style, he overlooks the marathon sentences that are often perplexing and obscure. (Slatoff 1960, 141) Although Slatoff may not have a deep understanding of Faulkner's use of "marathon sentences," a quote from Helen Swink's 1972 essay sheds light on the oral origins of Faulkner's narrative style. Swink suggests that Faulkner's non-stop sentences prioritize the immediacy of spoken language rather than the visual nature of reading, thus imposing an oral pattern on the text. On the other hand, Slatoff's evaluation of Faulkner focuses on his inability to maintain a consistent perspective. In The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying, and Absalom, Absalom!, Slatoff proposes that the narrators only touch on specific events that align with their interests and tendencies. (Slatoff 147) Although Slatoff effectively acknowledges the narrator's responsibility in selecting the events they recount, he falls short in elucidating the weight of this responsibility. Slatoff overlooks that the events the narrator chooses to convey are influenced not only by their inclinations and preoccupations but also by their identity and values.

Slatoff highlights an essential aspect of Faulkner's narrative style - his refusal to take a definitive point of view. Slatoff, however, expresses his dislike for this aspect of Faulkner's work. Faulkner often presents explicit interpretations of events or analytical commentaries, but he deliberately makes them suspect, inconclusive, or incoherent. This tendency is particularly apparent in his interpretive or philosophic passages, which are often disorderly. The more explanatory or intellectual the content, the less coherent it tends to be. Faulkner's intellectuals - who offer most interpretations - often need to be more coherent. (147-48) Surprisingly, Slatoff needs to appreciate the value of these contradictory commentaries. On the one hand, they allow Faulkner to maintain his characters' independence. On the other hand, they encourage readers to participate in the narrative and form their interpretations of characters and events. Furthermore, Slatoff confuses Faulkner's point of view with the viewpoints of some of his intellectual characters, such as Gavin Stevens.

Bakhtin's examination of the author's role within Dosteovsky's novels provides a compelling response to Slatoff's claim that the author and narrator shape the hero's character and reality through their viewpoints and descriptions. On the other hand, Dostoevsky shifts this power to the hero,

allowing them to illuminate their reality from all angles. As a result, the hero's selfawareness becomes the primary focus, transforming the world and providing a new perspective. (Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics 49). Clearly, Dostoevsky inspired Faulkner, and he even managed to enhance what he had learned from the master of fiction. One of Faulkner's early critics, Edwin Hunter, explored the role of the narrator in Faulkner's novels in his study "William Faulkner: Narrative Practice and Prose Style." Hunter recognized the effectiveness of techniques like narrative experimentation but needed to delve into the topic in depth. According to Hunter, "narrative practice" refers to the methods storytellers use to convey their stories. Faulkner used some of his unique techniques, while others were borrowed from other novelists. However, what is most important is that all of Faulkner's techniques bear his distinct personal stamp. Hunter also noted that Faulkner's interest in people, rather than just ideas, was a significant factor in his writing. However, Hunter needed to explain how Faulkner was able to create such true-to-life characters. Faulkner's characters are not puppets speaking on his behalf but authentic representations of how real people think and speak. He imbues his characters with the ability to understand different perspectives and tests his ideas through their voices.

Hunter commends Faulkner's remarkable talent for creating a vast array of characters but criticizes his tendency to pigeonhole them into narrow categories. He writes that Faulkner's literature is set against the backdrop of three major wars and the struggles faced by women and some men who persevered through insurmountable obstacles for three generations after the

War of the Sixties. Faulkner's work moves beyond the inhumanities and bitterness of Reconstruction to explore the changing economic landscape brought on by the railroad, automobile, and airplane. It delves into the growth of cities, shrinking wilderness, and cotton production. However, Hunter notes that Faulkner's most significant contribution to literature lies within the characters he creates. His novels and short stories feature 1454 named characters, while his novels alone, including Requiem for a Nun, contain 1309 characters. Hunter classifies

Faulkner's characters as "good" or "bad." He explains that each of the nine characters in The Hamlet possesses a unique quality: a moral weakness paired with charm, unwavering perseverance, a puzzling inability to understand themselves, an unwavering dedication to their life plan, a love for God's world and its inhabitants, and a resolute determination to achieve their goals. These characters are defined by a compassionate creator who portrays them as fully human and leaves them to their own devices while still possessing a strong belief in their potential (121-22).

Hunter identifies an essential aspect of Faulkner's novels: the independence of the characters from their creator. However, his analysis is limited by a tendency to generalize about these characters, preventing him from fully appreciating their complexity and role in Faulkner's fiction. In his work on Absalom, Absalom!, Robert Dale Parker explores Faulkner's narrative techniques, drawing on theories of structuralism, post-structuralism, and social and cultural historicism. Parker focuses primarily on the narrative and its narrators but also considers the reader's role. While Parker's insights are valuable for novice and casual readers, his scholarly approach can confuse some due to a lack of clearly defined critical methods.

In Absalom, Absalom! Parker delves into essential themes such as voices and narration methods. He offers insight into how the narrative comes together and takes shape as we read it. I agree with Parker's analysis, as this study aims to explore these aspects of the Faulknerian novel in depth. However, while Parker's work brings fresh perspectives to our understanding of Absalom, Absalom!, he overlooks the dialogic nature of the narrative. Parker fails to acknowledge the conversations and interactions between the narrators themselves, as well as with absent characters such as Mr. Compson, General Compson, Thomas Sutpen, Judith Sutpen, Henry Sutpen, Charles Bon, Quentin Compson, and Shreve McCanon.

This book aims to explore a particular aspect of Absalom, Absalom extensively! Judith Lockyer's work, Ordered by Words: Language and Narration in the Novels of William Faulkner, published in 1991, aims to conduct a comprehensive and original analysis of Faulkner's use of language and narrative style. Lockyer's study attempts to incorporate Bakhtin's ideas but needs to be revised as she mistakenly believes that the language in the novel only represents the author. Lockyer misunderstands both the writer and theorist as she identifies the anxiety that some of Faulkner's characters have towards language within the author himself. According to her, "Faulkner locates his anxieties about the possibilities and limitations in the language in his men of words. The questions they raise about language also challenge Faulkner's authority as a writer" (1991 ix). However, this causes Lockyer to miss the point in reading Faulkner and Bakhtin, as she overlooks the crucial aspect that both men strive for. While this study acknowledges and builds upon previous works, including Lockyer's, it seeks to correct certain misconceptions surrounding Faulkner's novelistic art. Additionally, it aims to explain Bakhtin's ideas as they are applied to clarify Faulkner's narrative practices and his attitude towards language, which are not solely personal, as Lockyer suggests. To provide a preview of the upcoming chapters, let us take a brief look at their outlines.

In the initial chapter of The Sound and the Fury, the author delves into the intricate multi-voiced narrative of a family detailing their downfall and loss of morality. Through the dialogue between the Compson brothers - Benjy, Quentin, and Jason - Faulkner skillfully illustrates the various personal, social, and historical implications of a society's decline. These brothers are not merely puppets of their creator but relatively independent individuals capable of challenging the authoritarian and monolithic discourse.

In the second chapter, As I Lay Dying is analyzed for its polyphonic narrative and used as a conceptual tool to test language as a point of view. The novel features fifteen narrator characters, including seven members of a poor rural family and eight neighbors from the community, each with their own personal, social, and religious background. Despite viewing the same events, each character interprets them differently. The chapter also delves into Faulkner's mastery in allowing his characters to express their worldview and be challenged by the unique languages of other characters.

Chapter three delves into Faulkner's Light in August, analyzing the use of a biased external narrator to filter the multilayered narrative. The chapter also explores the social and ethical dialogue among the narrators as they engage with each other and the community's valueoriented language.

Moving on to chapter four, Absalom, Absalom! is examined through Bakhtin's concept of unfinalized dialogue, which tests the past through the present. The novel's four major characternarrators employ their knowledge of history and human nature to comprehend the tragedy of Sutpen. In addition, the chapter scrutinizes the narrative features of Absalom, Absalom!, as a polyphonic novel, emphasizing the limitations of knowledge and language as means of communication and apprehension of reality.

The concluding chapter consolidates the arguments presented in the previous chapters and summarizes their main points. Finally, the significance of Bakhtin's literary theories in contemporary theory criticism to solve the issues of language and point of view in Faulkner's fiction is discussed.

CHAPTER 1

THE SOUND AND THE FURY

> "Only in communion, in the interaction of one person with another, can the 'man in man' be revealed, for others as well as for oneself" (Bakhtin 1984, 252).

A. Dialogical Approach to Narrative

The profound insights of Bakhtin and Todorov on the novel provide a rich intellectual landscape for interpreting The Sound and the Fury. Todorov's emphasis on the narrator's role in shaping the novel's meaning, and Bakhtin's framework that revolves around the interplay between narrator and character discourse, are both intellectually stimulating. Bakhtin's notion that every utterance, in real life and fiction, is directed towards a listener, whose response is considered, resonates in Faulkner's work. His character narrators demonstrate a keen awareness of their audience, be it another character or the reader. Moreover, according to Bakhtin, Todorov, and Faulkner, reading is an active process. Bakhtin argues that 'responsive understanding,' a term he uses to describe the reader's active engagement with the text, is a pivotal force that contributes to the articulation of discourse, representing an active presence that discourse perceives as either a reinforcement or a challenge, thus enriching the discourse (Dialogic Imagination 280-81).

The initial three sections of the novel present a complex narrative structure, with narrators engaged in dialogues among themselves and other characters. Benjy, Quentin, and Jason exhibit a heightened sensitivity to each other's words, actively seeking and anticipating responses from one another. While Benjy and Quentin strive to isolate themselves from the world to preserve their connection with Caddy, Jason strives to assert his perspective and gain acknowledgment from the external world. As a result, each of these sections portrays an internal dialogue between the narrator, sometimes represented by a family member such as Mr. Compson or Mrs. Compson, and an external listener, such as the reader, adding to the narrative's intrigue and challenge.

Bakhtin's argument regarding the role of language in narrative emphasizes the unique perspective each character presents, which is valuable due to its inherent limitations and specificity (Dialogic Imagination 313). He posits that individual characters and their discourse are not the novel's primary focus; instead, the 'heteroglossia, 'a term he uses to describe the coexistence of multiple voices and languages within a single social group or individual, is essential to the genre. In The Sound and The Fury, this is evident in the distinct voices of Benjy, Quentin, and Jason, each with their unique way of expressing themselves. Viewed in this light, the initial sections of the novel can be interpreted as detailed portrayals of the struggle and testing through which each character shapes their discourse (Burtion 1995, 208). Like Dostoevsky's characters, Faulkner's creations engage in an ongoing battle with the words of others across all domains of life and ideological expression (Dialogic Imagination 349).

B. Benjy's Narrative: Would Anybody Listen to Me and Understand My Pain

Although he is a mentally retarded person who cannot speak, Benjy seems to address his discourse to an audience, a listener, or a reader. His section represents his attempt to relate to someone's loss of Caddy. Benjy's awareness of an audience is revealed in his first sentence.

Through the fence, between the curling flower spaces, I could see them hitting. They were coming toward where the flag was and I went along the fence. Luster was hunting in the grass by the flower tree. They took the flag out, and they were hitting. Then they put the flag back and they went to the table; the other hit. Then they went on, and I went along the fence. Luster came away from the flower tree and we went along the fence and they stopped and we stopped and I looked through the fence while Luster was hunting in the grass.

> "Here, caddie." He hit. They went away across the pasture. I held to the fence and watched them going away. "Listen at you now." Luster said. "Aint you something, thirty-three years old, going that way. After I done went all the way to town to buy you that cake. (The Sound and the Fury 1)

If Benjy is not addressing his narrative to someone, why would he describe the scene with such detail and quote Luster's scolding? Later on, he relates Caddy's words and acts of kindness toward him, Dilsey's loving and caring behavior, his mother's selfish remarks, and the words of other family members. He is a significant character narrator of the Compsons story. As we have to suspend our expectations of what we consider realistic

in fiction, we also have to suspend our disbelief and accept that Faulkner is letting Benjy relate his story in his own words. Thus the language of a mentally retarded Benjy is represented. Faulkner chooses Benjy, an idiot, to tell the story of the Compsons. However, Faulkner respects his character-narrator by refraining from manipulating Benjy's discourse and meets Bakhtin's view in creating him.

The author constructs the hero not out of words foreign to the hero, not out of neutral definition; he constructs not a character, nor a type, nor a temperament; in fact, he constructs no objectified image of the hero at all but rather the hero's discourse about himself and his world. (Problems of Dostoevsky & Poetics 53)

The language used by Benjy, representing the communication of an individual in Benjy's condition, aligns with our understanding of an individual with cognitive challenges attempting to express his distress. "At first glance, Benjy's narration may appear disjointed, distinctive, and isolated from the broader historical context. However, it exhibits a localized coherence that engenders reader reliance, exemplifies the dialogic construction of his identity, illustrates how his fixation on the past shapes his current perceptions, and underscores Benjy's significance for other household members and for Faulkner's audience, who similarly strive to comprehend the Compson family's history" (Burton 1995, 208).

In Faulkner's narrative, although the Compson family's story is initially presented through Benjy's perspective, it would be inaccurate to perceive Faulkner as a manipulative author of his narrator's discourse. Benjy's language is deliberately contrasted with the language of the other members of his family. As a narrator who conveys events without grasping their significance, Benjy's narrative functions to elucidate the language of certain characters while also laying bare the hypocrisy and ineffectuality of others.

In contrast, Benjy endeavors to suppress certain characters, such as Luster, while emphasizing the words of others, such as Mrs. Compson, Mr. Compson, and Caddy, whose utterances become intertwined with his narrative. Luster's interjections disrupt Benjy's narrative, as he frequently instructs Benjy to cease his vocalizations. Benjy, in turn, occasionally disregards Luster's directives, expressing his irritation. An illustrative instance of Benjy's emphasis on the words of others is evident in the following excerpt, where we discern that Mrs. Compson has altered our narrator's name from Maury, her brother's name, to Benjy.

> “That's right.” Dilsey said. “I reckon it'll be my time to cry next. Reckon Maury going to let me cry on him a while, too.”
> “His name's Benjy now,” Caddy said.

> "How come it is." Dilsey said. "He aint wore out the name he was born with yet, is he ?"
> "Benjamin came out of the bible," Caddy said.
> "It's a better name for him than Maury was."
> "How come it is," Dilsey said.
> "Mother says it is," Caddy said. "Huh," Dilsey said.
> "Name aint going to help him."
> "Hurt him neither. Folks don't have no luck, changing names. My name been Dilsey since fore I could remember and it be Dilsey when they're long forgot me."
> "How will they know it's Dilsey, when it's long forgot, Dilsey," Caddy Said.
> "It'll be in the Book, honey," Dilsey said Writ out (70-71)

In his work, Faulkner adeptly utilizes heteroglossia in its myriad forms. For example, the language employed by Dilsey is notably distinct from that of Mrs. Compson, not solely due to its African American vernacular but also owing to its underlying ideology. Dilsey's expressions of kindness and straightforward faith in God and humanity contrast with Mrs. Compson's superficial and insincere beliefs. Consequently, Dilsey's language effectively exposes the inherent hypocrisy within Mrs. Compson, which is already discernible within the language she utilizes.

The contrast between Mrs. Compson's language and that of Benjy and Caddy serves as a focal point among the various linguistic styles employed by the characters. A continuous interplay of dialogues unfolds throughout the narrative. Arguably, it is within this section and the concluding segment that Faulkner's perspective is most overtly unveiled. Nonetheless, subtle traces of his viewpoint can also be discerned in the preceding two sections, where Faulkner's stance is reflected in the portrayal of the narratives of the other two characters, Quentin and Jason. In this regard, Bakhtin says:

The author manifests himself and his point of view not only in his effect on the narrator, on his speech and his language (which are to one or another extent objectivized, objects of display). But also in his effort on the subject of the story as a point of view that differs from the point of view of the narrator. Behind the narrator's story we read a second story, the author's story, he is the one who tells us how the narrator tells stories. and also tells us about the narrator himself. We actually sense two levels at each moment in the story: one, the level of the narrator, a belief system filled with his objects, meaning and emotional expressions, and the other, the level of the author, who speaks (albeit in a refracted way) by means of this story and through this story. The narrator himself, with his own discourse, enters into this authorial belief system along with what is actually being told. We puzzle out the author's emphases that overlie the subject of the story while we puzzle out the story itself and the figure of the narrator as he is revealed