

Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*: A Cubistic Mural

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Abstract. Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* transforms itself easily into a cubistic visual image. His visual sense is highly developed and is shown in such passages as his description of the characters, settings, and feelings in the novel.

In this work Faulkner chose a subject comparable in its complexity to the combined still life subjects of Picasso and Braque, the cubist figures of Picasso, Metzinger and Gleize, the light and luminosity of a Cézanne landscape or interior, and the events and settings of DeLaunay. The beginnings of chapters 6 and 7 of *Absalom, Absalom!* describe the same still life, though the second description adds more angles and overlays the first, recalling a cubist painting or *papiers collés*.

Just as Cézanne "dipped his brush in light," Faulkner penetrates *Absalom, Absalom!* with light varied to modulate or illumine. In Faulkner's prose, sentences are often interrupted with parentheses and the parentheses are interrupted with parentheses; he also uses phrases enclosed by dashes. His vocabulary is prodigious. If he can't find a word in his paintbox, he invents a new one. In keeping with the color sense of the analytic cubists, Faulkner's word colors are more likely to be shades than tints. The complete image supports a conceptual understanding of the whole and reality of the south.

Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom* creates a definite underlying feeling, a melancholic, lyrical, downward pull. This emotional quality more nearly matches the approach of DeLaunay in his *The Town of Paris* or *The City No. 2* or even his *Simultaneous Windows*. Actually Faulkner synthesizes the energetic light of *Town* the darkness and foreboding of *City* and the singing, poetical, luminous quality of *Windows*. In *Absalom, Absalom!* Faulkner has painted and written a very long and large mural, not a picture.

The Mural

The mural exposes transparency over transparency over transparency through which the planes, acres, and angles tilt and mingle and overlap their muted, lyrical colors

to reveal the space-separated and touching people and things of the South. The sand ochre and wisterialilac pastel meet and leave and overlay the luminous mauve, the gray, the black, the ghost white. Angles of black are shocked by bits of actual-lace. The image delicate and shattered reveals itself. Shafts of ochre light transverse the people, the weather-gray houses, the delicate flowers, the tomb interiors, as though reconstructed by the original viewer from the important pieces of broken glass from many pictures. The pieces, different view-pointed, are fused and built into an edifice where space and time cannot be separated. The words of a pasted note and two letters guide the contemplator through this decadent and melancholic architecture of the South's spirit, where the original surface of canvas, when the paint is thin or worn, can be occasionally glimpsed. The lasting master-piece impression ghosts into a realistic, romantic, cubist dream-reality.

Faulkner's novel transforms itself so easily into cubistic visual image that it is not surprising to find that Faulkner, very early, was drawn to the visual arts. When he was a child his mother discovered his drawing talent and encouraged its development. From these childhood years she remembered an anecdote about his frustration over his lack of verbal descriptive ability and how he, instead, used a drawing to communicate. "Oxford had begun to use a new tank wagon for sprinkling the streets. He had come home excited from watching the operation of that more sophisticated equipment and eager to describe it to his family. When he realized that his description was inadequate he quickly drew a picture of the wagon with its valves and sprinklers, so detailed as to astonish his mother."⁽¹⁾

Faulkner continued drawing. At fourteen he submitted a drawing to a national magazine. He produced cartoons in high school. In 1917 he published his first work of any kind, a drawing, in the University of Mississippi annual. His drawings appeared in the yearbook up to 1922. These, as well as his drawings published in that university's 1925 humor magazine, were clearly the most outstanding visual work in either of those two publications during the period.⁽²⁾

In 1921 Faulkner spent time in New Haven, Connecticut, and New York City, where he worked on his writing and drawing. In New York, his boss at Lord and Taylor encouraged his money-making plans by telling him that his drawings could be easily sold. Faulkner felt he could support himself with graphic designs for advertisements while trying to establish his writing credentials.⁽³⁾

(1) William Faulkner, *Mayday*, introd. Carvel Collins (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), pp. 9-10.

(2) Faulkner, p. 10.

(3) *Ibid.*, p. 11.

During these early years, he regularly included sketches with his letters. While in Paris in 1925 he grew a beard, and to augment his descriptions of himself he sketched self-portraits. His attraction to art and artists is also well documented in these Paris letters. At the same time he was writing his early novels he was also looking at modern art. In this year he mentioned he had taken lodging "on the left bank of the Seine, where the painters live." He made friends with a sculptor and many painters and in his letters used awe-struck phrases to describe them, such as "I have met . . . a real painter." He explored the Louvre and especially enjoyed "the paintings of the more-or-less moderns, like Degas and Monet." He went "to a very, very modernist exhibition . . . futurist and vorticist." He spoke of seeing "Rodin's museum, and two private collections of Matisse and Picasso (who are yet alive and painting) as well as numberless young and struggling moderns. And Cézanne! that man dipped his brush in light."⁽⁴⁾

Faulkner's sojourn in Paris came little more than ten years after Picasso and Braque's cubistic breakthrough, the most important painting development of the century. The futurist and vorticist groups were highly affected by cubism though they might have claimed the contrary, and cubism, in turn, was directly linked to Cézanne's work. Some of the other "struggling moderns" mentioned by Faulkner in his letters to his mother were undoubtedly also involved with these new techniques in some way.⁽⁵⁾ Faulkner's developing awareness of cubism shows in a line from *As I Lay Dying*; he describes "the square squat shape of the coffin on the sawhorse like a cubistic bug."⁽⁶⁾ However, he was developing his experimental attitude toward writing while in Paris. He tells his mother and great-aunt, "I have written a poem so modern that I don't know myself what it means."⁽⁷⁾

In 1925 newspaper piece, "Out of Nazareth," Faulkner lamented what he saw as his lack of artistic talent. He wrote "that his New Orleans friend Spartling's hand has been shaped to a brush 'as mine has (alas!) not' and added that 'words are my meat and bread and drink.' From then on his drawing and painting would be intended only for private consumption."⁽⁸⁾

(4) Joseph Blotner, ed., *Selected Letters of William Faulkner* (New York: Random House, 1977), pp. 10-24.

(5) Warren Beck, *Faulkner* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), p. 43.

(6) William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying* (New York: Random House, 1964), p. 209.

(7) Blotner, pp. 17, 20.

(8) Faulkner, *Mayday*, pp. 11-12.

In 1926 he wrote a poem about himself, "Bill." "First and last/His whole heart's dream' had been 'With space and light to feed it through his eyes/But with the gift of tongues he was accursed.'" *Mayday*, a private handwritten book for a friend, created in this same year, included several Faulkner watercolors.⁽⁹⁾

Faulkner's visual sense was highly developed. This is shown, not only by his interests, but also from such passages as his description of Miss Rosa Coldfield in *Absalom, Absalom!*: "the wan haggard face watched him above the faint triangle of lace at wrists and throat from the too tall chair in which she resembled a crucified child,"⁽¹⁰⁾ or in the description of Bon's lawyer's feelings, "the water backing up from the stick and rising and spreading about him steady and quiet as light and him sitting there in the actual white glare of clairvoyance" (*A, A!*; p. 302). In this passage he also changes sound to sight by using the phrase "quiet as light."

According to critic Bram Dijkstra, it is difficult to ascertain "the range of interests which may have helped to determine the ultimate character of an artist's work." But he maintains that the shaping comes in "the formative years of the artist's life."⁽¹¹⁾ Faulkner's formative years were heavily influenced by his art interests, these lasting into adulthood with an appreciation of Cezanne and that artist's resultant impact on him.

Dijkstra points out the difficulties when "the elements of one medium are translated to the conditions of another." But he maintains, "The development of painting following Cézanne created a tracery of influences which extends far beyond the visual arts proper, and which has, in one way or another, left its imprint on the structure of literature as well."⁽¹²⁾

One of the few Americans during the early 1900s who was interested in Cézanne's legacy via Picasso and Braque was photographer and New York gallery owner, Alfred Stieglitz. He, with a handful of others, published in 1915 the magazine *291* where this translation of elements from one medium to another was described. In March of that year an article appeared describing how "a polyphony of simultane-

(9) *Ibid.*, p. 11.

(10) William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 8. All subsequent references to this work will be cited parenthetically as *A, A!*.

(11) Bram Dijkstra, *The Hieroglyphics of a New Speech, Cubism, Steiglitz, and the Early Poetry of William Carlos Williams* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969). pp. ix-xi.

(12) Dijkstra, pp. ix, xiii.

ous voices can be achieved in literature by carefully transposing the practices of Picasso and Braque to the realm of language." The next issue followed up with an example by Katherine Rhodes called *Mental Reactions*. "A stream of consciousness technique of thought flashes was interspersed with advertising slogans and disjointed comments of seemingly passers-by." This type of writing was known as "simultanism."⁽¹³⁾

Picasso and Braque had pictured on one canvas surface the essential elements of objects, often simultaneously including different points of view of the same object. This technique crowded a great many interrelationships into a small area to give the viewer a sense of heightened reality. When the object to be viewed was compressed into a greatly reduced place and time, the experience of vision and the understanding of that vision were intensified. Robert DeLaunay, following the lead of Picasso and Braque, expanded the concept of compression to include a conscious manipulation of the passage of time. DeLaunay is a "simultaneist" who used cubist technique to paint a series of events on his canvas. Such events, as those in the painting *The Town of Paris*, would require a long time to experience in actual life. Dijkstra says, "*The Town of Paris* has intensified our understanding of each object beyond the range of our usual experience, intensified the complex reality by rearranging . . . the traditional lines of temporal experience."⁽¹⁴⁾

In *Absalom, Absalom!* Faulkner also presents a "polyphony of voices" on the same historical subject, sometimes at the same time, sometimes with time superimposed on time. Miss Rosa Coldfield speaks while Quentin sometimes follows her voice and sometimes is lost in the thought of his own voice. Rosa even interrupts her own voice with deeper expressions of consciousness. Mr. Jason Compson's voice overlays Miss Coldfield's voice with his view of the Sutpen story while Quentin is again sometimes lost in the thought of his own voice. The characters of the Sutpen story speak simultaneously with their reteller's voice. Quentin and Shreve speak or "think" simultaneously about the Sutpen saga and at various times "sound" like Mr. Jason Compson. Quentin and Shreve even enter the being of Henry Sutpen and Charles Bon and it is unclear who is speaking.

Faulkner also changes speakers very quickly to compress the passage of time and heighten the reader's experience and understanding of that experience. At the end of chapter 4, Mr. Compson is telling Jason how Henry came to shoot Charles Bon. Interspersed with his tale are the words of the letter written by Bon to Judith

(13) *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

(14) *Ibid.*, p. 71.

many years before. The voice passes to Quentin who reconstructs Henry's and Charles's words at the gate to Sutpen's Hundred. Then abruptly the voice returns to Mr. Compson who leaps time and mouths Wash Jones's words as he had shouted them to Rosa in front of her house after the shooting. Chapter 5 immediately changes scenes and time but picks up with Miss Rosa's voice recounting the same episode involving Wash. Behind all this is the author's voice. The reader is thrust back and forth through time to view the same episode from several vantage points, experiencing the story through the many superimposed voices and the simultaneous times. These voices and times become fused in an extended single vision.

In 1922 James Joyce published *Ulysses*, another example of the "simultaneous" approach. During one of Faulkner's class conferences at the University of Virginia in 1958, a student asked Faulkner if any writer in Europe during Faulkner's travels there had influenced his writing. He replied, "I knew Joyce, I knew of Joyce, and I would go to some effort to go to the cafe that he inhabited to look at him. But that was the only literary man that I remember seeing in Europe in those days." However, Faulkner maintained, "I think the artist is influenced by all in his environment. He may be more sensitive to it because he has got the materials, the lumber that he's going to build his edifice."⁽¹⁵⁾

The environment of the 1920s and 1930s jolted and transformed people's view of it. William Fleming, a noted author, points out the influence of Einstein's Theory of Relativity. Einstein showed a world "where everything moves; any calculation or prediction, to be valid, must be based on the relative position of the observer." He says historical philosophers showed "that the past still exists in the present — so that past must be an integral part of relativity." He sums up, "Such a relative world, in which all things appear different to each person and each group depending on educational, geographical, historical, ethical, and psychological backgrounds, can be understood only in terms of many frames of references."⁽¹⁶⁾ Fleming sees cubism and simultaneity as similar products of this new approach to the environment. Additionally, he attributes some direct and indirect literary development to the effects of cubism. The structure, characters, and story in Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* illustrate Fleming's summation of that new worldview and its influences.

For this book Faulkner washed his raw canvas, "the best virgin bottom land in the country" (*A, A!*, p.34), with Old Ikkemotubbe and the Chickasaw Indians. They

(15) Joseph L. Blotner and Frederick L. Gwynne, eds., *Faulkner in the University* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1959), pp.57-58.

(16) William Fleming, *Arts and Ideas* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974), pp. 393-94.

were the original human layer to adhere to the land with the swamp, the mosquitoes, the river, the trees, the wild turkey, and the deer, "light and colored like smoke" (*A, A!*, p.359). On this foundation Faulkner began to build his "edifice." That the land is basic to Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* can be seen in a letter the author wrote to his publisher in 1934 when the book was still in the early stages. "Roughly the theme is a man who outraged the land, and the land then turned and destroyed the man's family."⁽¹⁷⁾ Although Faulkner's final art work did not follow the second half of the statement, it did reflect the first half, and the Sutpens' design fails. The house finally burns down and Miss Rosa Coldfield dies. The paint begins to flake away and the canvas, the land, shows through.

Faulkner chose a subject so complex as to compare with the combined still life subjects of Picasso and Braque, the cubist figures of Picasso and Metzinger and Gleize, the light and luminosity of a Cézanne landscape or interior, the events and setting of a DeLaunay. The beginnings of chapters 6 and 7 describe the same still life, though the second description adds more angles and overlays the first. On Quentin's dormitory room table lies an open text and on that a white oblong envelope. A lamp on the table casts an angular light on the "sloped fine hand" (*A, A!*, p. 173) of his father's writing. Then chapter 7 adds an empty coffee can containing a pipe. Within the same still life the pipe is also pictured "smoked out and overturned and cold with a light sprinkling of ashes about it" (*A, A!*, p. 217). Also added are the angled arms of Shreve, first reaching for the pipe, then crossed and resting on the table. Quentin's arms lie either side of the text where the new opened letter is located. The letter itself is at an angle that distorts the writing and is three-quarters unfolded. Faulkner writes this as though the reader is first looking down at the table, then across the table at Shreve, then across the table from the other direction. The reader has very little sense of movement or passing time. The three views seem superimposed. The description recalls cubist paintings or *papiers collés*.

None of the chapters is seen from a single view. The most complex, angled, overlaid, built-up portrait is that of Thomas Sutpen. Miss Rosa describes him from her angle of vision, colored by her family's view. Mr. Jason Compson describes him from his angle, colored by descriptions from his father's viewpoint. Quentin describes Sutpen as he sees him, colored by descriptions from Miss Rosa's and his father's angles of vision. Shreve adds his perspective colored and derived from Quentin's viewpoint. Behind this is the master cubist, the author, painting his character like Picasso painted *Ambroise Vollard* or Metzinger painted the woman in *Tea Time*,

(17) Blotner, pp. 78-79.

or Gleize painted the *Lady with Animals*. The viewer must decipher the reality of what is seen or read.

Varying light penetrates *Absalom, Absalom!* to modulate or illumine. On the very first page of the novel, when Quentin sits with Miss Rosa, “yellow slashes full of the dust motes” (*A, A!*, p. 7) shine through the lattice into the room. Bon’s lawyer Shreve imagines, feels the “actual white glare of clairvoyance.” When Sutpen felt shut out from the front door as a boy he ran to the woods until “there was no sun at all where he crouched though he could still see sun in the tops of the trees around him” (*A, A!*, p. 235). When Quentin’s grandfather accompanies Sutpen on the search for his escaped architect the sun goes down and they continue in torch light:

He would look back now and then and see the horses’ eyes shining in the torch light ... and the shadows slipping along their shoulders and flanks ... and the niggers ... with the pine torches smoking and flaring above them and the red light on their round heads and arms ... hard and shiny, glinting like glass or china and the shadows they cast taller than they were at one moment then gone the next and even the trees and brakes and thickets there one moment and gone the next. (*A, A!*, p. 245)

In the last chapter, Quentin lies in the dark at Harvard but the window “became visible against the faintly unearthly glow of the outer snow” (*A, A!*, p. 360). These passages recall Faulkner’s letter from Paris to his mother, describing the way Cézanne “dipped his brush in light.”

Like DeLaunay in his *The Town of Paris* Faulkner chooses a particular setting and presents within it a series of events. And also like DeLaunay he presents them with a cubist’s technique. Faulkner has chosen Jefferson, Mississippi, and Sutpen’s Hundred of Yoknapatawpha County as his basic setting (though other settings jut into and affect this one—Appalachia, the eastern coast states, the West Indies, and New Orleans). His events take place in the years leading up to the Civil War and the years stretching after it into the early part of the twentieth century. They compose the story of Thomas Sutpen and the people affected by him. The events are not told in chronological order but as a number of people, each from a different perspective, remembered, interpreted, and saw these events arranged. Interpretation is laid on interpretation until the plot and its events are seen by the reader in much the same way the reader sees the characters.

When Picasso and Braque broke with the traditional single viewpoint, as they did in analytical cubism in 1907-1910, they developed their idea of the multiplicity of viewpoints. They realized that the artist might portray the front of an object at the same time the back, side, top, bottom, inside, and outside views might be shown.

Only the views and elements essential to a revelation of the fundamental nature of the object were used. Because they were not arranged in their single linear perspective positions but had several views being shown simultaneously, objects had to retain their volume but become transparent. This created overlapping as well as juxtaposed lines and planes. The composition became overwhelmingly angular.⁽¹⁸⁾ As shown, Faulkner certainly uses this multiple viewpoint technique to reveal faceted characters and events. He, too, reveals these viewpoints under the transparency of others. Images are plainly seen on various planes in areas of light and dark.

To force the fundamental nature of the South to the surface, Faulkner makes each of his characters operate within and reflect a different plane of southern experience. Miss Rosa is the Christian maiden turned spinster. She is a rigid martyr to society's values. Mr. Compson is the more liberal, accept-things-as-they-are Southerner. He is an experienced, educated Bayard, drawn to the sweet, beautiful, southern magnolia melodrama of honor and love and courage. He doesn't know what to do with the South's underlying ugliness. Shreve is the Northerner who thinks that "It's better than the theatre, isn't it ... No wonder you have to come away now and then" (*A, A!*, p. 217). He recognizes the downward, insane spiral of the southern system but doesn't feel it strongly or comprehend the way it tugs at Quentin.

Miss Rosa and Quentin are both layers of outraged sensibility. Neither has the resources to cope with the truth of his or her society. Miss Rosa has lived death for forty-three years entombed in her decaying house. Quentin shakes himself closer toward suicide in his cold tomb of a dormitory room. Mr. Compson's and Shreve's planes of experience also relate at slightly different tilts. Both accept the South—one on the inside, one on the outside. Neither recognizes the emotional turmoil of Quentin.

On other levels there are Thomas Sutpen, Quentin's grandfather, Ellen Coldfield and her father, Judith, Henry, Charles Bon, Clytie, Wash Jones, and Jim Bond. Quentin's grandfather underlies Quentin's father but has more curiosity. Ellen is the frail southern lady. She doesn't have the fortitude of a Miss Rosa or the calmness of a Judith. She swoons away to die in bed. Mr. Coldfield is the gumptionless counterpart of Thomas Sutpen who also is making a new life for himself in Mississippi. He is hypocritical and concerned with putting up a good, clean, industrious Christian front. Rosa hates them both. They had both rejected her. Like Miss Rosa, Judith is martyred to societal constraints and lives the rest of her years in death. Henry and

(18) Guy Habasque, *Cubism*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (Paris: Editions d'Art Albert Skira, 1959), pp. 41-52.

Charles are both Sutpen's sons, though one is painted black, the other white. Charles and Clytie are both miscegenated southern products. Clytie is in the middle of the black and white system. Charles dares the system. Wash Jones is the South's "poor white trash." Jim Bond is the symbol of the idiocy of the southern tradition and value system. Thomas Sutpen relates to and reflects them all.

Thomas Sutpen, himself grew up as "poor trash." Then, logically, calmly, he embraced the traditional southern caste system while raising himself to its highest aristocratic plane. He mated with blacks and whites. He jugged in and out of these people's lives, tilting them, bending them, reflecting them, repelling them, exposing them, and existing outside them. He saw through the South's transparent system but he could not penetrate its opaque feelings and motives. Unlike them his plane was new and ruthless and energetic; theirs was old and self-preserving and decaying.

All of these viewpoints and angles and planes and things and people clutter the space of land and years. Very few things actually happened. One setting is central and spotlighted, but the views and counterviews and overlying views and planes and angles of relationships crown into the field of vision. Some events are actually fabricated from a character's viewpoint if the story seems to have left a blank space. The result is a complex cubist structure.

Faulkner's way of writing prose, his handling of the brush and paint, reflect his structure and content concerns.⁽¹⁹⁾ His sentences are often interrupted with parentheses and the parentheses are interrupted with parentheses. He frequently uses phrases enclosed by dashes. He may leave out conventional punctuation. A sentence more than half a page in length may be juxtaposed with a sentence less than a line long. His is a prodigious vocabulary. If he can't find a word in his paintbox, he invents a new one.⁽²⁰⁾ He joins words to show new relationships. Examples abound on the first several pages of *Absalom, Absalom!*. Within one line he uses "hearing-sense," "self-confound," and "long-dead" (*A, A!*, p. 7). He alerts the reader to changes through a switch in brushes to present italics.

Overlaid are his word choices within sentences and phrase arrangements. He often writes word series to combine sparsely through the relationship of words the essential, sometimes seemingly contradictory facets of the moment or atmosphere or

(19) Walter K. Everett, *Faulkner's Art and Characters* (New York: Barron's Educational Series, 1969), p. viii.

(20) Everett, p. ix.

effect.⁽²¹⁾ Immediately, in the second line of the novel, the reader experiences the afternoon from several different angles and depths at once: “long still hot weary dead September afternoon” (*A, A!*, p. 7). When Miss Rosa reaches the drive at Sutpen’s Hundred following the shooting she approaches “the house, the shell, the (so I thought) cocoon-casket marriage-bed of youth and grief and found that I had come, not too late as I had thought, but come too soon” (*A, A!*, p. 136).

In keeping with the color sense of the analytic cubists, Faulkner’s word colors are more likely to be shades than tints. When yellow afternoon light pierces the lattice and window of Miss Rosa’s office, it is darkened and turned to ochre with dust motes. The first impressions of Sutpen are associated with the color red. But this red is not bright. It is the dark red of blood on Sutpen’s skin after he has been fighting, the earth-brown red of his horse, the reddish color of his beard, the clay and pottery glaze of his skin. Later it is the deep red glare of torchlight on mud-covered skin. Gray and weathered is the colored impact of Sutpen’s house. The southern war uniforms are gray. Even pastel-wisteria colors are laden with a too-sweet, too-heavy decadent feeling in an associational phrase like “There would be the dim coffin-smelling gloom sweet and over-sweet with the twice-bloomed wisteria against the outer wall” (*A, A!*, p. 8). Faulkner calls lilac a color of mourning. To this he adds the gray-mixed rose color—mauve. Black and darkness pervade, the white of lace, the white of envelope, the white snow, the white of light.

The complete image creates a conceptual understanding of the whole and reality of the South. It is not a distorted view. It is in keeping with cubistic aims to create the higher reality of the concepts of their subjects. The question, “What is the South?” is answered totally by *Absalom, Absalom!* through its essential features. The question, “What is still life (or other subject) ? is answered totally by a cubist painting through its essential features also.

However, Faulkner’s work has a richness of its own. The final image of the analytical cubism of Picasso and Braque is rather austere. Cézanne, their forerunner, painted more lightly and colorfully but still with a straightforward approach. Faulkner’s *Absalom Absalom!* creates a definite underlying feeling, a melancholic, lyrical, downward pull. This emotional quality more nearly matches the approach of DeLaunay in his *The Town of Paris* or *The City No. 2* or even his *Simultaneous Windows*. Actually Faulkner synthesizes the energetic light of *Town*, the darkness and foreboding of *City*, and the singing, poetical, luminous quality of *Windows*.

(21) Beck, p. 35.

Although the cubists were often trying to create an image outside the flow of time, to make their finished works vehicles for the “instantaneous perceptions” of many elements, they realized that both the process of painting and the process of viewing, the “reintegration,” occurred within the flow of time.⁽²²⁾ Picasso and Braque painted rather small canvases. A large cubist painting for them measured roughly two feet by three feet. This smallness adds value to the idea of “instantaneous perception.” However, Robert DeLaunay who deliberately introduced the time element into his image, *The Town of Paris*, covered a space roughly ten feet by thirteen feet. The time needed to view and comprehend, “to reintegrate,” his complete image is significantly extended. A novel, such as Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!* also takes time to write and to read. Faulkner has painted and written not a picture but a very long and large mural.

(22) Dijkstra, pp. 68-72.

إن لوحة فوكنر آبسجوم آبسجوم تخلق شعوراً ضمناً واضحاً هو عبارة عن شعور عاطفي حزين وكئيبي، شعور بالانحدار نحو الهوة، وهذه النوعية العاطفية تتفق كثيراً مع منهج الرسام التكعيبي ديلوني في لوحاته مدينة باريس والمدينة رقم ٢ وحتى النوافذ المتزامنة.

ففي الواقع يركب فوكنر في قصته آبسجوم آبسجوم الضوء الفعال نفسه الموجود في لوحة مدينة باريس، الظلام المنذر بالشر نفسه المرسوم في مدينة رقم ٢، الخاصية الغنائية الشعرية نفسها المضيئة للوحة النوافذ المتزامنة، ففي رواية آبسجوم آبسجوم نجد أن فوكنر قد كتب، بل رسم ولون بالفعل لوحة حائطية كبيرة وغزيرة المعاني وليس مجرد صورة عادية.

رواية أبسلوم أبسلوم - لوحة حائطية تكعيبية

سوزان جميل فكهاني

أستاذ مساعد، قسم اللغات الأوروبية، كلية الآداب والعلوم الإنسانية،

جامعة الملك عبدالعزيز، جدة، المملكة العربية السعودية

ملخص البحث . إن رواية الكاتب وليام فوكنر أبسلوم أبسلوم تحول نفسها بسهولة إلى لوحة تكعيبية مرئية، فالرواية تثبت أن إحساس الكاتب المرئي بالغ التطور ويظهر ذلك جليا من خلال المقاطع التي يصف فيها الكاتب الشخصيات المختلفة ومشاعرهم ومواقع وأزمنة المشاهد.

اختار فوكنر في هذا العمل موضوعا يمكن مقارنته من حيث التعقيد بموضوعات بيكاسو وبراك التي يعبران فيها عن الحياة الساكنة من جهة، وبالشخصيات التكعيبية التي يرسمها سيزان ومواقع وأحداث ديلوني من جهة ثالثة. إن بدايات الفصلين السادس والسابع لرواية أبسلوم أبسلوم تصف الحياة الساكنة ذاتها، وإن كان الوصف في الفصل السابع يضيف مزيداً من الزوايا والطبقات مما يجعله يطغى على الفصل السادس. وهذا يذكرنا بالرسم التكعيبى أو بالرسم التجريدي، فكما «غمس سيزان فرشاة رسمه في الضوء»، كذلك يغمر فوكنر روايته بضوء يزيد أو يخفف توهجها. في كتابات فوكنر الثرية نفسها نجد أن الجمل غالباً ما تقاطعها جمل اعتراضية بين أقواس، وهذه الجمل الاعتراضية أيضاً تقاطعها جمل اعتراضية أخرى بأقواس. كما أنه يستخدم شبه جمل أو عبارات فيها شرطة (خط أفقي صغير) في معظم كتاباته. أما بالنسبة لمفرداته، فهي مدهشة وهائلة، فهو عندما لا يجد كلمة مناسبة في صندوق ألوانه يقوم بابتداع كلمة جديدة. ومن أجل أن يحافظ على حاسة الألوان الموجودة عند الرسامين التكعيبين البارعين في التحليل، جعل فوكنر ألوان كلماته ظلالات أكثر منها ألوانا مخففة. والمنظر والصورة المكتملة المرسومة في أبسلوم أبسلوم تدعم وعيا إدراكيا لكل الجنوب الأمريكي وحقيقته.