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TEXTUALITY AND INTERPRETIVE LOGIC:
the construction of *fabulae* and character in Quentin's section of Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury

by

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Abstract

Textual determinacy cannot be construed either as an inherent aspect of textuality, nor can it be discounted altogether as an invalid epistemological category. Instead, the construction of a text necessarily anticipates and exploits the pressure of a reader's interpretive, abductive logic. This allows the prefiguring in the text of readerly recognitions which become meaningful in terms of the intertextual and linguistic systems which structure that readerly logic. This logic drives the reader to comprehend (to see-together) the text's signs by finding in the texual assemblage patterns of consistency and coherence which allow the segmentation of the text into clusters which operate as planes of "aboutness" or isotopies. The possibilities of organization or segmentation are delimited by the reader's "competence" which is a function of his or her access to culturally erected structures of communication, whether these are specifically "Literary" structures or more general models accessible through the reader's knowledge of generic or linguistic patterns of semiotic organization. There is, of course, a continuum of textual behaviour with regard to the rigidity of the text's anticipated manipulation of the reader, and its poles have been variously designated "open and closed" or "readerly and writerly" textuality. This paper's analysis of "Quentin's" section of William Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury investigates its textual function with regard to these categories in the production of two istopies: those describing the *fabulae* and the focal character of the section.

Like open or writerly texts, this section works to erode the reader's ability to interpret through the most specific and semantically pre-structured forms of literary competence. But unlike open and writerly texts, the section under consideration does not then work to tolerate a plurality of interpretive possibilities. Instead, it exploits this relatively clear space to elicit a highly unique, but highly determinate and reproducible set of interpretants.

Quentin's section closely regulates the readerly production of interpretants in at least two instances through the arrangement of information such that the reader, governed in both the construction of individual

isotopies and the textual meaning configuration by the principles of contradiction and non-confirmation, finds only one arrangement (albeit of varying semantic density) which can be constructed from the textual information and which will successfully, productively, engage the other meaning levels of the text.

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Dedication

To my parents, whose having done everything so right has blunted my own opposite tendencies, allowing this poor accident of words to meet equally unsuspecting paper.

Contents

1) Introduction and background 1

1.1) Preliminary considerations 1
1.2) Project objectives 2
1.3) Methodological considerations 4

2) A survey of pertinent theoretical discussions regarding textual determinacy and the role of readers in interpretation 8

2.1) Culler's descriptive semiotics and Fish's critique of stylistics 8
2.2) Fish's authority of interpretive communities and Riffaterre's reading universals 13
2.3) Meaning and non-meaning 17
2.4) Iteration, textuality and interpretive autonomy 20
2.5) Abductive logic, readerly, writerly, open and closed texts 24
2.6) Comprehension and consistency building 27
2.7) *Fabulae*, convention and metonymic extension 30

3) Quentin's section of The Sound and the Fury 33

3.1) Hypothesis 33
3.2) The textual location of Quentin's section 35
3.3) Determinacy of the *fabulae* in Quentin's section 38
3.3.1) The primary *fabula* 38
3.3.2) The secondary and tertiary *fabulae* 42
3.3.3) The embedding of the *fabulae* 45
3.4) Quentin's character as narrative isotopy.... 54
3.4.1) Beneviste's *histoire* and discourse as narrative strategies 54
3.4.2) Character isotopy as absent intertext 58
3.4.3) Time as an indicator of Quentin's psychological profile 61
3.4.4) The reader and the many voices of Quentin.... 67

4) Textual polyphony and interpretive monologism 69

5) Conclusion 71

Endnotes 74

Works Cited 83

It began with the picture of the little girl's muddy drawers, climbing that tree to look in the parlor window with her brothers that didn't have the courage to climb the tree, wanting to see what she saw. And I tried first to tell it with one brother, and that wasn't enough. That was section one. And I tried with another brother, and that wasn't enough. That was section two. I tried the third brother because Caddy was still, to me, too beautiful and too moving to reduce her to telling what was going on, that it would be more passionate to see her through someone else's eyes, I thought. And that failed and I tried myself - the fourth section - to tell what happened and I still failed.

William Faulkner

In Aristotle's *Poetics*, the episode is an important concept. Aristole did not like episodes. According to him, an episode, from the point of view of poetry, is the worst possible type of event. It is neither an unavoidable consequence of preceding action nor the cause of what is to follow; it is outside the causal chain of events that is the story. ... Life is stuffed with episodes as a mattress is with horsehair, but a poet (according to Aristotle) is not an upholsterer and must remove all the stuffing from his story, even though real life consists of nothing but precisely such stuffing.

But ... we realize the relativity of the concept of the episode, a relativity Aristotle did not think through: for nobody can guaruntee that some totally episodic event may not contain within itself a power that someday could unexpectedly turn it into a cause of further events. ...

We can thus complete Aristotle's definition of the episode, and state: no episode is a priori condemned to remain an episode forever, for every event, no matter how trivial, conceals within itself the possibility of sooner or later becoming the cause of other events and thus changing into a story or an adventure. Episodes are like land mines. The majority of them never explode, but the most unremarkable of them may someday turn into a story that will prove fateful to you.

Milan Kundera
Immortality, 304-305

1) Introduction and Background

1.1) Preliminary considerations.

William Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury has been the subject of massive critical attention, primarily since the 1950's. Most of this criticism has been interpretive in nature, in that it has attempted to elicit and articulate the hidden "truths" which this particular novel encodes. Most often these "truths" have been the products of a critic's singling out a particular aspect of the text[1], often character or plot or theme, and then using that aspect as a signifier of a metaphysical truth structure which is expressed in a critical discourse; the critic translates from the text's "ideolect" to an established critical sociolect. The critical discourse chosen enables the critic to articulate the textual "truth" in the terms of a critical tradition, using a specific language historically developed to articulate, and by articulating understand or make "universally" (to the initiates of the discourse) comprehensible the textual aspect which has been identified.

The textual quality which necessitates (or, to be cynical, provides an opportunity for) this translation to critical discourse is the "literary" nature of the text; its particular use of language, narrative structures and located, non-universal verbal perspectives. The critic must explain the function of the identified aspect's particular textual manifestation on the textual truth being critically elucidated; s/he must decode the text's "style".

It is something of a commonplace in criticism of Faulkner, especially of The Sound and the Fury, to comment on his style. This excerpt is from a 1939 review by Conrad Aiken:

> And once, if one considers these queer sentences not simply by themselves, as monsters of grammar or awkwardness, but in their relation to the book as a whole, one sees a functional reason and necessity for their being as they are. They parallel in a curious

> and perhaps inevitable way, and not without aesthetic justification, the whole elaborate method of *deliberately withheld meaning*, of progressive and partial and delayed disclosure, which often gives the characteristic shape to the novels themselves. It is a persistent offering of obstacles, a calculated system of screens and obtrusions and ambiguous interpolations and delays, with one express purpose; and that purpose is simply to keep the form - and the idea - fluid and unfinished, still in motion, as it were, and unknown, until the dropping into place of the very last syllable. (203)

Aiken alludes to a connection between "form" and "idea"; he indicates that the meaning of the text is somehow influenced by the particular way the text is structured, is built and operates. While extremely pertinent this is not particularly original to Aiken. Jean Paul Sartre, in an essay about Faulkner from the same year, recognized this function of the critic with regard to this connection. He writes: "A fictional technique always relates back to the novelist's metaphysics. The critic's task is to define the latter before evaluating the former" (79). The critic then must choose an appropriate way of thinking and speaking (attributed in this case to the novelist) before being able to discuss the particular aspects of the text under examination.

1.2) **Project objectives.**

Jonathan Culler modifies Sartre's formulation. Instead of speculating about the novelist's metaphysics or about some "idea" of the text's he exhorts criticism to investigate the **ways** in which those ideas are produced in readers **by** texts. That texts produce ideas through interpretation is a given for Culler, but criticism should be concerned not with debating the fidelity of certain ideas to certain texts, but with the ways in which those ideas arose and the ways in which fidelity between text and idea is established and regulated. This paper, taking its cue from Culler, will examine the effect of the form of a section of

this novel in the production of a certain related sets of ideas through interpretation.

Accordingly, I will not assert that the critic or interpreter is corrupting some primal language of the text, or somehow distorting the text's "truth". By definition the text's ideolect, the particular combination of voices, techniques and conventions it uses, is unique and therefore incommunicative as such. The interpreter, this paper will assume, is capable of perceiving the text on its own terms, but is incapable of understanding it except in the terms of the various, communally held ways of understanding to which s/he has been exposed. Although the interpreter may perceive that any given way of understanding cannot fully comprehend the text on its own terms, this paper will assume that the inevitability of this shortfall. Any way of thinking about the text will be inadequate yet it is impossible to actually "understand" a text holistically in that it is impossible to communicate that understanding except through a linear account of a potentially inexhaustible number of different ways of understanding. This project, then, will not attempt to reproduce such an account and argue for its greater validity or superior perspicuity with regard to other such critical accounts of The Sound and the Fury. Instead I will, as much as possible, avoid the quest for interpretive "truth" altogether, recognizing it as a necessary, yet unattainable interpretive goal. Rather, I will investigate the way in which one section of this text interacts with various strategies of interpretation, exploiting some and discouraging others, to elicit highly reproducible interpretants[2] across various readers with regard to certain modes of interpretation.

I will argue that this text elicits a form of response reaction which has not been thoroughly theorized. In the two interpretive fields

I will investigate, this text tightly regulates the reader's ability to influence the nature of the elicited interpretant. But it does so in a way not described by either Umberto Eco's distinction between closed and open text or Roland Barthes classical (readerly) and writerly text (see section 3.1 for a fuller explanation). But a further explanation of the theoretical field surrounding these concepts is necessary before this argument can be elaborated. Accordingly, this paper will first touch on some of the arguments surrounding the theoretical issues of textual determinacy and reader response before proceeding to examine the way in which certain aspects of Quentin's[3] section of The Sound and the Fury (those being the "stories" or the *fabulae* of the section and the character of Quentin himself) are elicited and regulated by this notoriously fluid and stylistically challenging text.

1.3) Methodological considerations.

The bulk of criticism of Faulkner's work, especially from the 50's to the 80's, was produced under a slightly different notion of criticism than that described above. While these critics recognized that criticism was limited in its ability to explain the text, they cast this not as an epistemological inevitability but as a shortcoming of the critic. The text was a meaningful whole; the critic's job was to get beyond his or her interpretive perspective and apprehend the text in its totality. Criticism should strive for perfect balance and lack of bias, as the critic should strive for objectivity and to diminish the interpretive influence of personal prejudice which would interfere with his or her sensitivity to the text's true nature. The critical schools which these presuppositions implicate are labelled "holistic" (71) by

theorist Stephen Mailloux, in that they are most often concerned with ideas of "unity of final meaning" and the coherence of the parts of the work into a "total meaningful pattern" (Brooks and Penn Warren 94, 173).

The limitation of such a critical paradigm lies in the necessity of the critic to suppress his or her own interpretive activity, seeing it instead as a function only of the text and a way of getting to the text's "truth", its final meaning. "Ultimately" writes Mailloux, "holistic interpretation can only describe the author's attempt to communicate a thematic message or to provide an aesthetic experience of the artistic whole" (71). This "artistic whole" is independent of the reader and of the language in which it is written. It is art, and as such the language is merely its mode of manifestation, and the reader merely he who strives to apprehend the nature of the work through his understanding of language and the world. The emphasis of this type of criticism on the "organic relationships" (Brooks and Penn Warren 173) of the parts of work to its unitary whole (whether that is found in the text or the author's intention or metaphysics) necessarily neglects investigation into the conventional constitution and communicative functioning of the text.

By extension, this critical paradigm also presupposes the stability of the textual object of interpretation. Critical argument in each instance is first faced with the task of establishing the parameters and nature of the object being interpreted. The critic must maintain that these parameters are not established by the critic but are inherent to the work, immanent to the most relevant, most valid or most "true" nature of that work. The production of a "new" interpretation necessitates the modification of earlier interpretations; room is cleared for the latecomer either by undermining either the interpretive priorities or the interpretive practices of the earlier interpretations.

However, that each new interpretation must partially discredit at least some prior interpretations does not invalidate the concept of stable meaning in a text or in authorial intention. Rather, this notion is recovered through the assertion of *readerly* instability, based on a continuum of "competence". The critic attempts to reproduce in other readers interpretants similar to that which he or she has articulated by persuading, through his or her criticism, the reader to accept the parameters which s/he has identified. This acceptance curtails the signifying potential of the text by allowing the reproducible description of a specific interpretant which sits at or near the top of the thereby established hierarchy of potential interpretations.

But the text eludes the ability of both the interpreter and text producer to perfectly control the interpretant elicited in the reader through the intersubjective nature of textual communication. This inherited conventional field which governs communication restricts the author in that it makes words unable, as a Faulknerian character says, to "ever fit what they are trying to say at" (1964: 163). But while the author is condemned to produce texts which are never exactly identical to what s/he **means**, the text does not fall as an empty cipher into the lap of the reader who can find anything s/he wants in it. The text restricts the reader's absolute interpretive freedom in that it maintains, across every reading, a stable material form which is constituted by schematically arranged signs. This stability facilitates the abovementioned perception that meaning, accessible through the shared knowledge of pertinent textual conventions, actually lies "in" the text and provides the illusion of textual determinacy.

In the 70's and 80's the hegemony of the holistic critical paradigm in the North American academy was eroded by the advent of several alternative critical models which were based on often rather

different presuppositions. Namely, several of these models presuppose the absence of an "organic" wholeness inherent to the text, maintaining rather that what completion the text can be said to have lies in its actualization outside of its existence on the page in a specific, materially located act of interpretation. This interpretive act in these models posit a reader interacting with the text's schematized aspects through intersubjective conventions and communally developed perceptual processes. The text may anticipate and manipulate these processes and conventions for effect, but presumes the reader's access to them for its communicative effect.

Along these lines, semiotician Michael Riffaterre breaks with those who find meaning in and confine it to functions of the "organic" text, claiming that

> ...the object of interpretation is not the literary text but the literary phenomenon: that is, the reader's experience of the text, the dialectic exchange between a coded message and its decoder. (1981: 228)

His claim articulates a key presupposition of these critical models which have as their object not the "true" meaning of a text, but the way in which textual meaning of any sort arises in readers in encounters with text. Under such theoretical models the text has no independent history apart from its interpreter but comes into being at the moment of its recognition AS text, as a system of significant and coded (-able) structures interacting to produce communicable messages. The "reader" of the text is simultaneously the "writer" of an interpretant which is not identical to the text, but rather is the text of the primary text's interpretation by a specific person in a specific situation.

This claim complements reception theorist Wolfgang Iser's contention that the reproducibility of the text's interpretation does not arise from its inherent meaning, but from the reader's building of meaning for the text by engaging it through interpretive strategies and

reading conventions. His reader must first possess or attain the qualities of the "phenomenological reader"; one who has access to all of the conventions required to actualize (to "concretize", in the terminology he uses) the text. The reader is then guided by the text to conform to its "implied reader", a term which "incorporates both the prestructuring of potential meaning by the text, and the reader's actualization of this potential through the reading process" (Iser xii). The reader-becoming-implied-reader is guided by the text to choose and use, from the entire corpus of communally held interpretive practices to which s/he has access, those which produce a maximally meaningful interpretation of the text. Under his model the reading subject is the site of textual actualization, but that reader is guided by the text in the use of intersubjective conventional systems of meaning constitution for the ability to carry out the processes of interpretation.

2) A survey of pertinent theoretical discussions regarding textual determinacy and the role of readers in interpretation.

2.1) Culler's descriptive semiotics and Fish's critique of stylistics.

We can start by elaborating Culler's position, alluded to above. He would like literary criticism to abandon what he identifies as the "cumulative" model borrowed from the physical sciences in which the object of investigation is presumed to have a finite, objective, stable and ultimately knowable nature. Pointing to the field of semiotics, in which structuralist and post-structuralist investigations have undermined the possibility of the rigorous maintenance of terms such as

'subject', 'object' and 'finite closedness', and by extension the possibilities of absolute stability and knowability with regard to textuality. Instead of working toward filling in some finite set of possible readings of given literary texts, with notes toward their taxonomic location within the general system and indications of dominant or typical readings, he appeals for work in "descriptive semiotics" which would elucidate the ways in which these readings of texts are produced and regulated. Culler's project works to explain the text's function in communication rather than the identification of its significance (Culler 1981, Communication). There are dangers to this project, not least the relatively small value potential institutional consumers of this criticism place on its methods and objectives. As he puts it,

> When interpreting, [the critic] can write with energy and arrogance, avoiding the banality that always threatens a descriptive semiotics. The semiotician courts banality because he is committed to studying meanings already known or attested within a culture in hope of formulating the conventions that members of that culture are following. The fact that one's labours, if successful will lead to an explicit account of what is implicitly known, explains why the semiotician may be tempted by interpretation. Why not offer a new reading instead of trying to explain the conditions of old readings? (1981, Pursuit: 9)

Culler's retreat from interpretation to description is both complicated and complemented by the critiques of Stanley Fish which similarly problematize the critical project of interpreting literary works, yet question the validity of any distinction made between interpretation and description.

Fish's general project is indicated by his statement that "interpretive strategies ... give texts their shape, making them, rather than, as it is usually assumed, arising from them" (Fish 168). In Fish's well known "saturation bombing" (Barbara Smith in Fish 247) of stylistics he principally targets the stylistician's practice of

recognizing or describing formal patterns within a text and the concomitant ascription of meaning to those patterns[4]: "The search for a paradigm of formal significances is a futile one" (Fish 77) he writes in his "What Is Stylistics and Why Are They Saying Such Terrible Things About It?". The critical procedure in question presumes, as Fish illustrates with some rather bald examples, a fully determinate text in which isolated stylistic features and formal patterns produce identifiable effects which in turn participate to produce the meaning *gestalt* which was the feature of the organically unitary text. But, Fish claims, this unitary textual structure with its organic wholeness of meaning was the creation of critics who had **written** a text with these qualities in the process of their **reading** of it. Thus, for Fish the practice of assigning meaning to formal and stylistic textual features is untenable simply because it is a readerly function being passed off as one inherent to the text. He writes: "All you need is a meaning and a formal pattern (any meaning and any formal pattern will do) and the pressure of the question 'how do they relate' and a relation will always be found" (251).

Fish assured his place among the American pragmatists (including Jeffery Stout and Richard Rorty[5]) when he moved from being merely opposed to the seemingly arbitrary assignment of meaning to stylistic features, to the denial of the objective existence, (not to mention semantic properties) of those formal features. Fish points out that merely identifying formal features in a text is itself an act of interpretation. Meaning is elicited by the selective creation of certain sets of formal features, with the implicit decision to leave other potential features (which could at least complicate and at most controvert the chosen meaning pattern) latent and unrecognized. He writes:

> I assert that the act of description is itself interpretive and that therefore at no point is the stylistician even within hailing distance of a fact that has been independently (that is, objectively) specified. Indeed the very formalism that supposedly grounds his analysis - the system of rules and definition that constitutes grammar - is no less an interpretive construct than the [text] it is brought in to explain... (Fish 246)

The problems of Culler's descriptive semiotics reconsidered in this light become more apparent. Culler insists that his project would take as its object the interpretive procedures made in the translation from literary to critical texts. But the critical text thus produced would itself be a translation (this time from one form of critical discourse to another, "semiotic", discourse) and potentially subject to the same critique, revealing it too as an interpretation and undermining its claim to objective descriptiveness. Fish's criticism illustrates that Culler's method is not itself value free in its object and goals; its interpretive nature is not completely obscured in its "elaborate pose of objectivity"[6]. Like the later Roland Barthes, Fish implicitly questions the claim of any critical metalanguage, including that of semiotics, to provide an account of the "true" functioning of textuality. Instead, Fish illustrates that however sophisticated and useful the vocabulary and conceptual system of semiotics, it is, like all other discourses, ultimately valid only on its own terms, affirming once again Wittgenstein's famous remark that "in language, truth is only possible in tautology".

Fish's point in this respect is persuasive, but his ensuing absolute denial of the ontological validity of the text and invalidation of any attempt to define "text" is less so. His project in this regard seems both strenuously revolutionary and remarkably inconsequential. Certainly it works to fend off the return of the objectivist demons which haunted stylistic criticism, working also to undermine claims that a text can be phenomenologically reduced to immanent meanings which

appeal to apoditic or intuitive faculties of reception.

Perhaps this work has been spectacularly successful; more probably it was informed by developments in a field which has now largely supplanted that which was the object of Fish's ire. Fish's mighty sword of invective now seems to be striking a man of straw; whether it was originally so is impossible to gauge. But with the advent of structuralism in the late 60's and 70's in North America the conception of the text as a *structure* in which meaning is relational replaced the conception of the text as an aggregate of semantic units (including the "formal devices" so despised by Fish) meaningful through some form of referential correspondence (Hawke 16). Criticism in the field of semiotics, including structuralism and post-structuralism, do not presuppose the ontological priority and objectivity of the text; instead, textual meaning is perceived as provisional and relational, the product of difference within conventionally defined, socially constructed semantic fields. Using the categories of C.P. Peirce, even meaning production with iconical and indexical signs relies on convention (to determine the metonymic association of sign to referent)[7], while texts constructed from symbols (including linguistic texts) are admittedly arbitrary - meaning is not inherent in the signs themselves, nor by extension could it be immanent in a larger semiotic construction, a text. In this vein Riffaterre writes:

> ...the text is perceivable only through the grids of preconception and assumption that the reader brings with (sic) him. (1981: 227)

That the text is constituted by a series of conventional rather than ontological recognitions on the part of the reader does not fundamentally affect the semiotic project's task of attempting to determine how these recognitions are produced and to what regulation they are subject.

To say, as Fish does, that there is no text outside of its

potential recognition as a conventional structure within an interpretive community is an almost tautological absurdity in that a text, at least in its modern secular forms, is a linguistic structure of communication. Fish seems to recognize as much in his consideration of Barthes' semiotic project of removing the "bad faith" in the transcendental or inherent nature of textuality (181-196). He quotes Ricoeur who writes: "structuralism is Kantianism without a transcendental subject" (182). To assert then that communicative acts in any form are meaningful only in the shared understanding of the nature of their conventionality by the participants in the communicative act is hardly earth-shaking.

2.2) Fish's authority of interpretive communities and Riffaterre's reading universals.

But Fish goes much further than semioticians do in denying even the functional category of text. He takes aim at the latter's attempts to maintain the text in an expanded form, in which the text not only "signals its own structure" (Martin Joos in Fish 69), but extends its supremacy "by adding the performance of the reader to what the text signals and, by signalling, controls" (69). In response he asserts that ultimate interpretive authority resides in an "interpretive community" (the nature of which he does not theorize), which sharply defines the interpretive potential of its constitutive individuals in the reading (writing, for Fish) of texts.

Fish's interpreter seems to have absolute and unguided reign over a small and strictly determined set of reading practices and strategies. Implicitly then, as there is no text prior to its moment of reading for Fish, the member of any given interpretive community could only read an

extremely small number of texts, or more precisely is extremely limited in the range of interpretants s/he could write in response to any text encountered. If Fish's interpretive communities are exclusive enough to produce "as many readings as there are readers", this exclusion would have to extend not only to texts written in other languages than the interpreter's own, but also to the many dialects, argots and jargons of Fish's interpreter's own language which are not accessible to his or her interpretive community.

Pity me, the Fishian interpreter who happens to be a Canadian born in 1969, encountering Reverend Shegog's sermon in The Sound and the Fury:

> Dey passed away in Egypt, de swingin chariots; de generations passed away. Wus a rich man. whar he now, O breddren? Wus a po man: whar he now, O sistern? Oh I tells you, ef you aint got de milk en de dew of de old savation when de long, cold years rolls away!" (368-369)

The English competence specific to my dialect would allow me to make no more than the most minimal assertions of meaning from this paragraph. From this rich text I could write only a very poor interpretant, an interpretant probably very similar to that elicited by any paragraph written in any other dialect of English as foreign to mine as this one.

Certainly though, comes the objection, the case above overextends Fish's claim to the point of absurdity. Of course members of interpretive communities have some flexibility with regard to the interpretive strategies they can utilize. In fairness to Fish, this theoretical possibility should be played out as well.

So, encountering this paragraph, I resort to the practices of a different interpretive community, I use my knowledge of the dialects of Black Americans, of people from the Southern states, of the specific jargons produced around Christianity in different cultures. In doing so I would be striving to "write", as my interpretant, a text which is to

the greatest extent possible the "same" text which a member of that foreign interpretive community would write. My only motivation for doing so would be the feeling on my part that my indiginous interpretive strategies were somehow inadequate with regard to this particular piece of text, and I would have to cede that the interpretant written using the "foreign" interpretive strategies is somehow more valid than that produced the strategies of my indiginous community. In making that concession I would by extension, have to conceed that the text has both a prior existence (in that it guides me to look outside of my own interpretive community for interpretive conventions) and validates responses hierarchically. I would have to cede that every reading is not as good as any other, and in doing so I would be betraying the claims of Stanley Fish.

Riffaterre proposes a theoretical model of interpretation which succeeds in avoiding some of the pitfalls which surprise Fish. Like Iser's, Riffaterre's reader has access to a much wider set of strategies which are potentially if not instantly accessible to interpreters in many different socio-cultural situations. This reader is then guided by the text in the use and application of these strategies to produce a fairly consistent interpretant or read-product. Unlike Fish, Riffaterre places the text at the center of the interpretive act, the source of stimuli which produce interpretive response. He writes:

> ...the text leaves little leeway to readers and closely controls their response. It is thus that the text maintains its identity despite changing times, despite the evolution of the sociolect, and despite the ascent of readerships unforseen by the author. (1990: 57)

Far from being the writer of the text during reading, the reader is in fact "written by" the text: his or her readings may vary and change, but the reader must work toward the median of all possible readings, becoming "wholly submissive to the letter of the text" (1981: 227).

In "The Interpretant in Literary Semiotics" Riffaterre identifies three primary recognitions which, for him, regulate the reproducibility of the text's readings and facilitate this process of submission to the text: artifice, monumentality and catachresis (1985: 41).

The recognition of the *artifice* of the text is the acknowledgement that the text is an intentional and conventional arrangement. That is, that the text is a semiotic structure inhabiting a communicatory nexus which involves a site of intention (a posited abstraction labelled "author") and a site of reception (an abstraction derived from the text labelled "reader") which is able to process the conventionally arranged schemata to elicit information in the form of a message. The text could be meaningful without this recognition, as a first edition of a rare book is worth a certain amount of money, or as a delightful pattern can remind one of sun dapples seen through leaves. But this meaning arises from the text's potential to **signify**. By contrast, the recognition of the **communicative** function of the text involves, necessarily, a recognition of its artifice and, by extension, its intentionality[8].

The second is a recognition of the text's *monumentality*; the recognition that its meaning is conventionally produced and governed through participation in intertextual and linguistic systems which always pre-exist the reader and inevitably exceed his or her competence. This recognition prevents the reader from solipsistic actualization ("I know everything and I therefore know exactly what and all this text means") of the text which would result in the perception of meaning as a self-evident quality in the text. Instead, the reader is aware that the text has been previously read and that his or her reading can never fully actualize all of the text's communicative potential. This recognition guides the reader to select interpretive frames within which to read instead of automatically producing a determinist reading

springing from the reader's inability to move outside of the perceptive frames which form the parameters of his or her "default"[9] sociolect or ideolect (akin to his or her interpretive community).

The third "universal" is *catachresis* or ungrammaticality: the deviation of the text from the conventional norms invoked by its monumentality. Recognizing that the text is artificial and recognizing the cultural conventions which govern its meaning, the reader encounters textual fragments which resist his or her interpretive strategies, which are inassimilable through the monumentally erected default strategies of interpretation.

This disruption forces the reader to modify or abandon the strategies s/he had first employed and to scrutinize the fragment for clues which might direct the reader to an intertext or to a strategy which would allow the integration of the previously inassimilable textual fragment.

2.3) Meaning and non-meaning.

Riffaterre's formulation of reading thus relies heavily on the presupposition of coherence, in the form of a "hermeneutic model", a frame which would govern the organization of the text's meaning into a "single stable interpretation of that text" (1983: 7). Significantly though, he does not invoke coherence as an inherent feature of the text (as the New Critics cast the property of unity), but as a criterion to which the reader subjects the text following his or her recognition of the text **as** text, and to which the text conforms in manoeuvring the reader's interpretation.

Eco indicates that the interplay of this "uncontrollable drive" (1990: 59) on the reader's part to comprehend (to see-together, to make

cohere) is anticipated and exploited by "internal textual coherence" (1990: 59). The reader is driven to find meaning in the text, and the text is constructed to channel that desire by the arrangement of its constituent signs such that they can be organized through a shared set of communal interpretive conventions to allow the correspondent production of interpretants by the reader. The work is not unitary in itself, nor is coherence inevitably and merely the product of the reader's drive to find it in all things recognized as text. Rather the presumption of coherence in things recognized as text is a communicational maxim which allows the successful negotiation of a message within the confines of what Eco calls "the Global Semantic System" (1979: 68), a loose arrangement analogous to the largest definitions of intertextuality, implicating language and all its possible textual usages. A collection of random marks or words becomes text when a pattern of coherence is identified which allows the seeing-together or comprehension of those marks or words. This pattern can be said to **signify** in that it is recognized as accidental or incidental. But a **communicative** text indicates the condition of intentionality, and the reader does not cast his or her interpretive activity as an attempt to construct patterns of coherence, but to **re**-construct those patterns in accordance with their intentional arrangement in the text.

Certainly the construction of a text within Eco's system (the GSS, for short), given the almost infinite recombinability of semantic fields, offers unlimited possibility of incoherence, which can be inevitably and easily found. Poststructuralist works often demonstrate that the nature of language operation within this system is such that patterns of coherence from which derive textual meaning can always be made to be break down and scatter into non-meaning; the "text" can be dissolved, the justifying distinction between itself and the collection

of random words can be eroded.

But though central, this conclusion is not original to the poststructuralists. Eco notes that C.S Peirce in the 19th century "insisted on the conjectural element of interpretation, on the infinity of semiosis, and on the essential *fallibilism* of every interpretive conclusion" (Eco 1992: 144). Accordingly, Eco characterizes deconstruction as *pretextual* rather than *textual* reading "performed not in order to interpret the text but to show how much language can produce unlimited semiosis" (1990: 62). Deconstruction's philosophical function of "reversing and displacing the conceptual order as well as the non-conceptual order with which it is articulated (Derrida 195)" while valid, accompanies but does not itself invalidate investigation into the workings of how those conceptual and non-conceptual orders are erected and maintained. It is precisely the reader's drive to coherence which allows a text to be resolved into a set of conceptual orders, and which motivates the vast elisions necessary to do so. The reader's actualizations of tiny fractions of given semantic fields results in the formation of new connective paths between the rhizomic nodes of the Global Semantic System which facilitates the communication of "meaning" in a text. The elicitation of "sense" from a text, while always carried out with the recognition that it is mis-sense, is an intentional non-recognition of the omnipresent possibility of non-sense. Semiotic accounts of interpretation are thus not fundamentally opposed to deconstructive accounts; rather they working toward different ends in the same field, taking as given, but necessarily bracketing the objections of the other to produce their accounts.

2.4) Iteration, textuality and interpretive autonomy.

For Wolfgang Iser, following the phenomenological theories of Roman Ingarden, textual meaning is unlike that which arises from the perception of objective phenomena. His account of reading addresses the reader's anti-entropic function in the production of that meaning while recognizing the potential for infinite textual incomprehension and incoherence. Text, in this formulation, differs for the interpreter from objective phenomena in that it is recognized as being schematized and constructed to communicate instead of merely assuming meaning (being significant) in relation to the interpreting subject. Therefore the text is not perceived but must be "ideated" (Holub 91). For Ingarden, "all objects have an infinite number of determinants, and no act of cognition can take into account every determinant of any particular object" (Holub 25). But objects communicated in texts, in that they are accessible only through the "concretization" of the text's "schematized aspects", must remain primarily indeterminate, as the textual sign can only communicates a few of the determinants of the referred-to object; the others are latent in the reader's ideation of the sign. "In theory then" Holub writes, "each literary work, indeed, each represented object or aspect, contains an infinite number of indeterminate places" (25). Ideation thus reduces the text's signifying potential (through metonymic extension, metaphoric connections, intertextual overcoding, etc) to a point of tolerable indeterminacy, with the concomitant elision of the remaining infinity of possible determinants.

The reader's autonomy is the measure of the text's (in)ability to regulate the elision of its own infinite indeterminacy. The sign alone can mean almost anything, in that it can be iterated in almost any context which will determine the semantic aspects relevant in the

particular usage. Culler, commenting on Derrida, writes that "total context is unmasterable, both in principle and in practice. Meaning is context bound, but context is boundless" (1982: 123). This is the argument made by pragmatists; that the meaning of any text springs from its contextual "use" in every separate moment of reception. Eco's following comment on Peirce complements this notion, but introduces an idea which curtails this unbounded readerly autonomy:

> ...Peirce is affirming a principle of contextuality: something can be truly asserted within a given universe of discourse and under a given description, but this assertion does not exhaust all the other, and potentially infinite, determinations of that object. (1990: 37)

While infinite semiosis is possible for a sign, it is curtailed by that sign's involvement in text, though the interpretants of a text as a whole presumably could be enacted on an infinity of possible grounds and could thus engage in infinite semiosis. Since the sign's interpretants are textually structured, infinite semiosis is checked by the text which imposes parameters of response[10]. The sign's textual situation provides it with a series of grounds which enable the reader to posit hypothetical patterns of semantic disclosure, and proceed to "blow up" certain of the sign's semantic potential and "narcotize"[11] of the rest.

Riffaterre contributes to this conception; for him, the text erects a structure of internal references which guides the determination of its semes (1985: 46). The text becomes the sign's functional context; and that text is constructed in a convention governed "universe of discourse" which determines the way the sign's signifying potential will be brought to determinacy. The reader cedes the absolute interpretive freedom to see any given sign in any given context when s/he recognizes it as a sign-in-combination, as a part of a text. A text can be determinate, then, not because there is an inherent connection between the words and the things represented, nor because the author's intent

guarantees one potential meaning configuration among other, equally valid configurations. It is determinate inasmuch as it erects the parameter which regulates the range of potential comprehensive meaning-configurations which it can generate[12]. Riffaterre invokes this principle as well, writing: "the best evidence that we have for this universal [monumentality] is that it manifests itself in the endless instability of reading, but one that, remaining circular, cannot escape the orbit of the text" (1985: 53).

As the text becomes more complex and interwoven the more it relies for comprehension on conventions of interrelating signs. As the ability to see the signs together becomes more and more dependent on the specific and often exclusive interrelations of the signs with each other and with reading conventions, the smaller the amount of potentially feasible hypothetical combination patterns, and the less the ability of the reader's default interpretive conventions to bring the text to comprehension. The potential of the reader to build consistency and minimize contradiction, to see fragments of the text together and to see the text as a whole together diminishes as the text increases in size and complexity. As the textual fragments are forced to participate with larger and larger numbers of other fragments their possible determinations become increasingly delimited. This is particularly true of the textual form under investigation in this paper, the novel. Michael Toolan explains:

> In the case of extended prose fiction, the text constitutes a world, and economy, and a major contextual frame, within which the meaningfulness of particular patterns is constituted. Beyond the contextualizing discourse of the novel itself, its words and structures make appeal to larger, less determinate contexts: the intertextuality of the literary canon, genres, conventions, and so on, and the infinitely varied uses of the language in other historical or contemporary contexts. But it remains the case that there is in the novel a depth of intratextual context framing and constituting any formal effect perceived, to a degree which has no analogy in shorter literary forms. The 'covers of a book' are indicative of a distinct enclosing of the novel-text and novel-

world. (62)

These conditions can be partially reversed by the comprehensiveness of the interpretive strategy which the reader brings to bear on the text. These conditions presume, of course, the ability of the empirical reader to become the implied reader from the virtual state of the phenomenological reader: for the reader to have access to all of the conventions necessary to actualize the text, and to be able and willing to manipulate those conventions (through the processes described above) in order to "comprehend" the text in a maximally meaningful configuration.

To say that the actual or empirical reader of a text is actually guided to **become** the implied reader may be a misrepresentation. The empirical reader recognizes in the text indications of a set of conventional attributes, a way of reading which the reader can then use to interpret the text. This is the implied reader, a set of conventions among the field of possible conventions; a ground of interpretation which the empirical reader can use in the production of his or her interpretant. To say that the reader "becomes" the implied reader implies (in turn) that the empirical reader abandons his or her otherness with regard to the implied reader. In fact s/he does not necessarily abandon her ability to critique this implied reader, s/he sees this implied reader as merely a (textually sanctioned and perhaps "correct") way, among other ways, of reading the text in question.

Ideological overcoding is a readerly response which interferes with the "otherness" between the empirical reader and the implied reader. Instead of starting with a phenomenological reader who has equal access to (and the will to use any of) a complete field of conventional interpretive strategies, the reading process begins with an ideological reader who is limited to or committed to the use of a

particular set of interpretive strategies. This reader then reproduces its own image in the text, working to understand the sanctioned or correct textual meaning as one which is identical with that produced through his or her set of interpretive strategies. Ideological overcoding of the text works to erase contradiction and obscure the reader's perception of unrealized meaning potential[13]. However, this is not an aberrance but an inevitable reality, to some extent, in all reading acts; Iser's phenomenological reader is merely an ideal construction in which ideological overcoding has been made negligible, the corollary to the New Critical reader who has successfully overcome all personal prejudice and become perfectly sensitive to the text. It is the inevitability of ideological overcoding, coupled with the impossibility of realizing the conditions of the "phenomenological reader" which ensures the irreproducibility of textual interpretants across readers and prevent the possibility of textual determinacy.

2.5) **Abductive logic, readerly, writerly, open and closed texts.**

The processing of a sign cluster recognized as text by a reader involves that reader's movement to "single out hidden rules or regularities" (1979: 26) within the text. This is what Eco, following C.S. Pierce, calls abductive logic[14]. It is through this logic that texts are interpreted[15], and in anticipation of this logic that they are constructed. Abductive logic is that which allows the formation of hypotheses regarding the bonds and organizational structures (the rules) through which everything in a text (the case) can be seen to cohere

together (the result- comprehension). It operates by isolating planes of consistency and recognizing instances of contradiction. This reading practice, which Eco indicates must be inherent to human psychology, is here articulated by St. Augustine: "any interpretation given of a certain portion of text can be accepted if it is confirmed and must be rejected if it is challenged by another portion of the same text" (from *De Doctrina Christiana* 2-3 in Eco 1990: 59).

This logic could be associated with what Roland Barthes calls "readerly" tendencies in both the construction and reception of texts. He writes:

> ... the readerly is controlled by the principle of non-contradiction, but by multiplying solidarities, by stressing at every opportunity the compatible nature of circumstances, by attaching narrated events together with a kind of logical 'paste'. (1974: 156)

The readerly involves attempts to minimize incoherence and to establish clear referentiality according to "the law of the Signified" (1974: 16) and the "law of solidarity" (1974: 181) in which "everything holds together" (1974: 156).

Complementing Barthes' comments on the "readerly" and "writerly" are Eco's categories of "open" and "closed" texts which correspond in turn to the relative amount of reader autonomy in the actualization of the text. The individual reader is, of course, absolutely able to interpret anything at all from a text. But as a communicative structure the text can be said to validate certain interpretations: the formation of the interpretant from the text must be able to be explained with reference to existing intersubjective connections and dynamics within the Global Semantic System. For Eco, a closed text is, like Barthes' "readerly"; one which conforms tightly to conventional models and attempts to negate the interpretive influence of the reader's subjective situation. It is the axis which approaches degree zero of reader

autonomy, squeezing out the reader's ability to choose interpretive strategies. It does this by either eliciting strategies which are themselves the transparent default strategies "in" the reader's sociolect (in our society, perhaps, those involved in romance or detective novels), or by stubbornly resisting comprehension except through the reader's absolutely correct application of a specific set of reading conventions[16]. When reading a closed text the abductive attempt to find patterns through which to bring the text to meaning is short-circuited by the recognition of the text's alignment with previous textual models (even if that model is only the heuristic tool hypothesized as "authorial intent"), the reader can merely reproduce those models' abductive strategies in his or her contemplation of the present text.

The "open" text for Eco is a "work-in-movement", one that "offers the interpreter, the performer, the addressee a work to be completed" (1979: 62). Not that the text allows the reader a space free of conventional response in which to actualize the text; the reader is autonomous only within the field of possible communicative acts. Eco writes, "[the] possibilities which the work's openness makes available always work within a given field of relations" (1979: 62). The text still constrains its interpretation except that like Barthes' "writerly", the micro-modifications to interpretive convention which arise from readers' personal biases and socio-cultural location are more tolerated, making the process of reading actually that of "writing" an interpretant. The more ways the text tolerates being brought to comprehension the more "open" or "writerly" it is and the less "faithful" its interpretations will be: its interpretant becomes less reproducible across varying reading situations.

2.6) Comprehension and consistency building.

The anti-entropic drive to coherence which serves to regulate readerly autonomy also forms an integral part of Iser's reader-response theory. He writes:

> By grouping together the written parts of the text, we enable them to interact, we observe the direction in which they are leading us, and we project onto them the consistency which we, as readers, require. (284)

These groups form continuously shifting gestalts, produced through the drive for consistency by the intersection of the text-to-the-point-of-reading with "the individual mind of the reader with its particular history of experience" (284). Paying homage to E.D Hirsch's distinction between "meaning" and "significance" he distinguishes this provisional read-product from what one suspects is a variety of the New Critical 'organic totality of meaning'. This gestalt, he writes:

> is not the true meaning of the text; at best it is a configurative meaning; '... comprehension is an individual act of seeing-things-together, and only that'[17]. (284)

Robert Holub clarifies these contentions of Iser's,

> Even if the intent of the text is to deny consistency-as one might encounter in a modern novel- the reader involved in the production of this meaning will arrive at this conclusion only by means of the principle of consistency building. (90)

Barthes' "readerly" text, with its fidelity to the principles of non-contradiction, compatibility and logical coherence seems to be that which most perfectly exploits the reader's "consistency building". But, as Holub points out, all texts, including what Barthes might identify as the most "writerly", also exploit this readerly principle of consistency building in their reliance for interpretation on abductive logic. The writerly text may in fact exploit this principle more so than do classical texts in that the reader of the former text is forced to "make" the interpretant instead of passively accepting it, as is the

case with the latter's reader.

For Eco a text which Barthes might call perfectly "readerly" is one which is identical to those which preceded it and would not signify anything other than has already been signified. It has the potential for alternate signification of course, but the reader, looking as always for maximal economy in comprehension can theoretically attain that end through recourse to the work's default conventions established by the reader's *deja lu*, his or her "already-read". This text is trapped on the Global Semantic System's already worn paths: it has no ability to create new connections or enact unique recombinations. Considering this theoretical possibility Eco writes:

> If code allowed us only to generate semiotic judgements, all linguistic systems would serve to enunciate exclusively that which has already been determined by the system's conventions: each and every utterance would be - even though through a series of mediations - tautological. (1979: 67)

This, of course, is not the case. How then is the production of "new" meaning possible; how can a text be "writerly", escaping tautological "readerliness"[18].

Riffaterre alludes to a useful solution which exploits this readerly drive to build consistency through the intratextual grouping of sign clusters. He writes that the reader can misinterpret a work through the "failure to recognize a verbal sign [through] ... an irrelevant segmentation of the verbal sequence" (1981: 227). This implies that the reader's abduction of patterns of possible determination among the sememes in a text involves the segmentation of the text, the clumping of the sememes into larger signifying units which have meaning *gestalts* not identical to any of their constitutive sememes. This segment, the new significant unit, is rendered more semantically dense when it is itself determined in relation to the text's other significant units. "Writerliness" can come from the

uniqueness or inventiveness with regard to convention of these recombinations, though the recombination must be "grammatical" enough to permit its recognition as a semantic macro-unit. The reader's difficulty comprehending these unfamiliar patterns of segmentation and combination is what make "writerly" texts so often nearly unreadable.

After breaking with the reader's unquestioned use of default conventions the "writerly" text can offer one of two interpretive possibilities. It can be constructed to tolerate a plurality of interpretants, produced through a wide range of potential interpretive strategies. Or it can exploit the reader's interpretive vulnerability and resist comprehension through any but a very specific set of inter- and intratextual groupings, contradicting or refusing the reader's attempts to integrate other provisional textual groupings with the whole except through the reader's use of the specific interpretive strategies which it was constructed to sanction.

Barthes' conception of the "writerly" text does not address the fact that the production of interpretants by readers in response to texts can never be completely free. In reading the reader finds in the text a template for the production of the interpretant; s/he seeks and inevitably finds internal textual coherence when s/he recognizes the schemata as text. A reader could choose not to see a text in a group of words but, even if there were in fact no originary intention to the arrangement of these words, when s/he decides that these words together form an artificial and therefore communicative text, his or her presumption of intent leads him or her to at least posit patterns of coherence which s/he will attempt to reconstruct, though the resultant interpretants might not be very simple, economical, or comprehensive.

The "writerly" text is merely one which is constructed such that its internal textual coherence is *inclusive*, allowing many possibilities

for the construction of interpretants. The text which has broken with default conventions can also be not-writerly (though Barthes in S/Z does not address this form of text) in that its internal textual coherence is *exclusive*; the reader's possibility of constructing economical, simple and comprehensive interpretants is very restricted and is a function of his or her abduction of a very specific set of groupings, arrangements and interrelations. Invoking Toolan's comment above, the potential for economical comprehension and coherence diminishes while the possibility of contradiction and non-comprehension (not being able to see-together) rise as the text increases in size and complexity. This may explain why, as Barthes notes, the writerly novel is so very rare (1974: 5).

2.7) *Fabulae*, convention and metonymic extension.

Textual reading conventions, visualized perhaps as the reader's knowledge of the ways the semantic connections in the Global Semantic System have been established, are used to economize the process of communication by allowing the reader to assume (and thereby granting access for the text) vast amounts of information not specifically identified in the text. These assumptions are used to guide the organization of sememes into isotopies.

These isotopies are planes of "aboutness" constructed by the reader which have as their perimeters lines drawn through the various textual segments which allow the reading-together of various signs, as thermoclines or contour lines establish meaning structures in their respective data sets. The isotopy allows the identification of units of significance (thus facilitating Riffaterre's process of verbal

segmentation or Iser's grouping) which are then oriented in relation to a single ground, on "a single level of sense" (Eco 1979: 28).

One of these isotopies dealing specifically with narrative texts is the *fabula*. The *fabula* then is not the "meaning" of the text, though it can supply an interpretant of the text; it is a series of abduced macropropositions about narrative events organized as an isotopy which participates, informs and interacts with the other aspects of the text's total meaning configuration[19]. This configuration functions for the reader as a marker of the text's monumentality, and as such, must be posited but can never be fully described; the reader must presume that the text has a "complete" meaning, but in that meaning is dispersed in a pattern best conceptualized in terms of Deleuze and Guattari's metaphor of the rhizome. The text is a node in an intertextual field of lines which potentially connect it to every other node, every other text, as every other text sends lines which penetrate this node. Some lines can be followed, many can be simultaneously sensed, but total meaning is eternally incommunicable in that only one line can be communicated at a time.

The construction of the *fabula* is accomplished by the reader through the conventionally guided process of metonymically extending an identified attribute into a cosmological fact; making that attribute into a condition of the novel's possible worlds. The *fabula* does not require the presumption of determinate non-narrated events for its construction; it merely helps the reader by giving him or her a range of possibility in which to abduce the text's various patterns. Given a certain textual result, something mentioned in the text, the *fabula*, with its hypothesized nature and attributes, provides a field in which the reader can speculate regarding what non-narrated event might have occurred to produce that result.

Similarly, the reader's processing of the narrative's events, her or his movements of anticipation and retrospection through which the *fabula* is constructed, is guided conventionally. The reader's knowledge of how to presume a world and a story for the *fabula* from the few details of attribute and event narrated is culturally stored but (presumably) accessible to the reader of the narrative; the reader, encountering a textual mention of "supper" has a cultural repository of possible "suppers" from which to draw, and is prepared to allow the text's "supper" be like or take as its point of departure any of them. In this way the text can manipulate the construction of the *fabula* through the exploitation of the reader's presumptions.

The final reason the reader forms *fabulae* in narrative texts is primarily heuristic. *Fabulae* are not "in" the text as such, but their construction, however provisional, is required by the text to bring a certain set of information to meaning. This *fabular* isotopy is an abstraction derived from the text's plot in which the reader organizes events occurring in the novel's possible universe along a temporal axis, which have the status of events chosen for narration from the largely elided set of possible events in that world over that time period. The maintenance of a distinction between a particular set of events and others provides the interpretive value of creating from them a textual macro-segment which allows this set to function together as an extended unit in relation to other such units.

The identification of lines of distinction allows the intensification of text's semantic density in that it allows another potential relation to be generated by the interaction of this unit with the text's other isotopical units. Of course it is possible to read narrative texts without acknowledging a temporal organization to the textual date, but that reading would result in quite a different

interpretant. Because that reading would ignore an information set which the text had anticipated, the interpretant produced would be far less complex and integrated than that anticipated by the text.

At the level of the *fabula* the open or writerly text tolerates the simultaneous possibility of several contradictory macropropositions regarding the temporal progression of events in the story. The closed text, on the other hand, guides the reader to a far narrower range of macropropositions. The *fabula* of the closed text is said to be more determinate in that it is more reproducible; a reader who does not recognize the conventions required to bring the this isotopy of the text to meaning can actualize only minimal or non-sense. The open text is more forgiving in that it tolerates less readerly competence and flexibility by allowing comprehension to be attained through a far greater range of conventional response.

3) Quentin's section of The Sound and the Fury.

3.1) Hypothesis.

I will hypothesize that the formulation of the *fabulae* of Quentin's section of The Sound and the Fury uses a strategy of Barthes' writerly text while demonstrating the properties of Eco's closed text. It resists the reader's initial application of default conventions, yet instead of then tolerating comprehension through a wide range of interpretive strategies it uses the reader's ensuing disorientation to undermine the latter's ability to confidently have recourse to conventional and intertextual models to propose the macropropositions which constitute the *fabula*. While undermining the relevance of the

reader's intertextual competence, it insists for comprehension on the reader's abduction of extremely specific patterns within the text. It seeks to short-circuit the transparent extension from attribute to world and the orientation of event in *fabula* which a text's alignment with default convention economically allows and requires. It tolerates little readerly bias in the choice of conventional tools with which it can be brought to meaning, and it does not passively yield a comprehensive set of *fabulae* to the reader's primary interpretive strategies. It maximizes its own autonomy at the expense of both the reader and the conventions used to read texts in its genre.

The narration of The Sound and the Fury alludes to and presupposes a highly determinate *fabula* which motivates and organizes the information presented by the narrator. It also presupposes that the narrator as well as the addressee (the role which the reader is forced to assume) are familiar with this *fabula*, which is of course not the situation: it makes an appeal to a common frame while the reader must acknowledge her or his "incompetence" with regard to that appeal. The text speaks to us, the readers, as if we already understand the story being spoken about. As this is not the case, we are forced to try to keep up with the narration while simultaneously trying to reconstruct the subject of that narration. In forcing the reader to chase after the text in order to participate with it in the way that it demands the text inscribes the reader's inadequacy and makes the reader receptive to the particular ways in which it is inscribed to be read.

As the information piles up, which the narrator presumes the reader is organizing in terms of the alluded to common frame (the story) the frustration of the reader mounts. S/he recognizes that s/he should be remembering this information, yet s/he is unable to do just that because s/he is not privy to the mnemonic key (the common frame, the

fabula to which the narrator alludes) which would facilitate that process of remembrance. This frustration stems from the reader's inability to assume the characteristics of the addressee which the narrative presumes.

The inconsistency of "Quentin's" narrative voice in particular results in the invocation of a reader with varying amounts of competence. The voice with which he narrates the events of the day of his suicide characteristically requires for comprehension only the addressee's standard or default knowledge of narrative convention. Other voices, which presumably articulate other levels of consciousness, appear to be virtually self directed, though their emergence in the narration of "Quentin's" voice indicates that they have as their addressee precisely that "conscious" Quentin (Q_n -> Q). The reader, in order to develop the competence to organize the *fabulae*, must, along the way, develop the ability to understand Quentin well enough to intercept this information directed toward "him". To organize the information presented in his section the reader must organize the information presented by the voices of Quentin by engaging it on two mutually dependent isotopical planes. The narration becomes doubly significant; it tells both Quentin's story and how Quentin thinks, yet reduces both of those ends to a function of the other.

I will now test this hypothesis with a closer examination of "Quentin's" section of The Sound and the Fury.

3.2) The textual location of Quentin's section.

Quentin's section of course does not stand alone within the novel; it interacts with the other sections such that while it has an internal

"meaning" structure, it also informs and is informed by the rest of the novel. Its isotopies integrate information previously related in the linear text manifestation and are subject to modification through the integration of information presented in succeeding sections of the novel. While Quentin's section can be read alone, its semantic density increases as its meaning segments (which can vary in size from one of its phonemes to an entire genre which it may gesture toward, provided they function in the relation as a single semantic unit) combine with those in the other parts.

The attempt to bracket the other sections of the novel in this discussion may be more difficult with this text than with others because of its particularly rhizomaic, interdependant meaning structure. As Sartre notes below, every scene seems to inform the interpretation of every other scene:

> In the classical novel action involves a central complication... but we look in vain for such a complication in The Sound and the Fury. Is it the castration of Benjy or Caddy's wretched amorous adventure or Quentin's suicide or Jason's hatred of his niece? As soon as we begin to look at any episode, it opens up to reveal behind it other episodes, all the other episodes. Nothing happens; the story does not unfold; we discover it under each word, like an obscene and obstructing presence, more or less condensed, depending on the particular case. (79)

An analysis of the development of *fabula* and character in Quentin's section cannot avoid having to, in some cases, consider the ways in which that development emerges from the interaction with other isotopies (ie. themes) and with other narrative sections. For the sake of clarity this analysis must inevitably sacrifice the account of all but the most relevant intratextual interaction of Quentin's section with the rest of the novel, and the isotopies drawn out (the *fabula*, Quentin's character) will necessarily be incomplete and provisional given the limited information available only in the one section. The isolation of isotopies from the narrative in this analysis is done under

no pretence that this account is a "complete" or "representative" translation of the novel into critical discourse. I agree with Sartre when he writes that the reader attempting to isolate these isotopies is "telling another story" (79) which is not identical to the novel. But, as mentioned above, this "incompleteness" is an inevitable consequence of the translation from novel to criticism.

This analysis will recognize at least two disparate moments of reading; the first reading, in which the text is encountered as a temporal sequence of information, and a re-reading, or holistic contemplation in which the consideration of the text is less influenced by the linear distribution of this information. This distinction will be maintained, though it will be rarely invoked. Neither *fabulae* nor character portraits are sets of information whose organization mirrors the narrative distribution of their constituent information. One can speak of *fabulae* or character at any given place in the linear text manifestation, it is not necessary to wait until the end of the text, when, presumably, "everything drops into place". The reader carries these isotopies with him or her as s/he moves through the text; at any given place these isotopies are a fact and a tool for the reader, though the information which they organize may be arranged in greater or lesser states of determinacy or provisionality and subject to reconstitution and modification as more information is encountered.

3.3) Determinacy of the *fabulae* in Quentin's section.

3.3.1) The primary *fabula*.

Quentin's section opens with the following:

> JUNE SECOND 1910
>
> WHEN THE SHADOW OF THE SASH appeared on the curtains it was between seven and eight oclock and then I was in time again, hearing the watch. It was Grandfather's and when Father gave it to me he said, Quentin, I give you the mausoleum of all hope an desire; its rather excruciating-ly apt that you will use it to gain the reducto absurdum of all human experience... (93).

Following the linear text manifestation the reader first encounters the temporal marker "June Second 1910" (93), which, following the conventional assumption of correspondence between the marker date and the action of the *fabula*, s/he posits as a provisional perimeter for the temporal field of the section's *fabula*. The first sentence, "When the shadow of the sash... in time again..." (93) identifies a precise moment assumed to be a member of the set delimited by the temporal marker, though this moment is separated by the use of the past tense from the moment of locution. It also indicates a change of state ("was in time again") with a subject ("I") and the indication of that action's involvement in a past sequence of events ("again"). The pronominal identification "I" is conventionally assumed to correspond to the provisional subject of the *fabula*. Any attempt to assume the co-textual correspondence between this pronoun and its previous textual referent "Benjy" is discouraged partly by the conventionally recognized section or chapter break between its occurrence and that referent, and primarily between the difference in language use patterns which had characterized the previous "I" referent. The speaker, or at least the speaker's focal

character, is different, though the different temporal identification of the two sections allows the possibility of carrying the previous referent "Benjy" over by distinguishing between the current "Benjy-1910" and the "Benjy-1928" of the first section. However, this difference in language use patterns between the two sections discourages the reader's privileging of that possibility[20].

The next sentence, "It was Grandfather's and when Father gave it to me he said Quentin, I give you... his or his father's", resolves the pronominal referent of the fabular subject "I" through the introduction of a proper name "Quentin" (recognized from the first section of the novel, yet unclear as to attribute (male or female?, age?) and *fabular* function [what part does he play?]), and begins the process of indicating the "world" of the *fabula* through the indication of some of the subject's relationships. This sentence relates an action (the act of remembering) which participates in the *fabula*, now provisionally labelled "what happened to Quentin on June second 1910".

But the material remembered occurs on a different time level, that of an indeterminate past within Quentin's life. This poses a problem for the reader because it falls outside of what has been presumed to be the limits of the first *fabula*. The reader has a number of choices:

1) S/he can bracket the temporal marker at the beginning of the section and adopt the much vaguer *fabular* perimeter "what happened in Quentin's life" with the resultant diminution of organizational potential.

2) S/he can look for the pattern with which the remembered events relate to each other and to those within the first *fabula* and decide whether these remembered events are significant primarily paradigmatically or syntagmatically.

2a) If the reader decides that the primary significance of these

events is to the events of the previously posited first *fabula*, then they function merely to inform those events of June second 1910 and act to determine the attributes of the set of possible worlds in which the *fabula* occurs. This decision indicates that their inclusion in the narrative is merely the result of provocation by the events narrated in the first *fabula*, and the significant semantic data to be accrued is in the relationship between these events and those which provoke them. These events then would be chronologically peripheral to the narrative *fabula*. This choice would result in the maintenance of the *fabula* bounded by the line "June 2 1910", informed by temporally irrelevant events somewhere outside that boundary.

2b) If the reader decides that the primary significance of these events is syntagmatic rather than paradigmatic then s/he decides that their primary meaning arises from their relation to one another rather than their relation to the events of the first *fabula*. With this decision the reader can posit a secondary *fabula*, provisionally labelled "what happened in Quentin's life to June 2 1910".

These three possibilities are never mutually exclusive, nor must the reader explicitly choose one or the other. They are separated here to isolate the most probable interpretive possibilities that co-exist in the reader as s/he moves through the text. As new information is processed it encounters these *fabular* possibilities, which are in turn evaluated on their ability to engage the new information and organize it in a meaningful relation with already encountered information. All possibilities are simultaneously maintained, though the textual information may lead the reader to privilege one possibility over the others at given places in the linear text manifestation. Presumably the reader would only have to make a choice between these possibilities at the end of the text, but the inevitable sense of having missed something

prevents the reader's declaring one possibility absolutely determinate and the other's invalid. This decision is probably not consciously made by the reader, but is fundamental to and indicated by any attempt on the reader's part to communicate the organization of the story in the text, even to him or herself. Information encountered remains nebulous until the reader has to think "What does this mean, how does this fit, what is going on here?", whereupon choices must be made, options weighed and lines drawn.

Moving through Quentin's section of the text the reader does indeed encounter a series of narrated actions and events which can be made coherent by identifying their temporal interrelation within the set delimited by the section's title; we can believe, and make determinate until textual contradiction, that these events actually occurred on June 2 1910 in the novel's world. The abduction of this consistency encourages the reader's provisional grouping of these events into a primary *fabula* within this temporal perimeter. Members of this set from the section include Quentin's getting up, mutilating his watch, sitting on the streetcar, talking to the boys on the bridge, encountering the little Italian girl, fighting with Gerald, etc: all, we can assume, are events which occurred on the novel's June 2 1910.

The decision to group these events together apart from other narrated events could be indicated by their distinctive narrative treatment. These actions are all narrated in the simple past tense with careful identification of the speakers in any narrated situation which includes dialogue and the relatively conventional diegetic modulation of dialogue by the speaking voice. The events of June 2 1910 maintain a continuity of stylistic presentation which corresponds to their temporal unity. The narrative consistency of these events described above would be enough to discourage the reader's choosing option 1) in which no

distinction is recognized. Clearly these events are to be seen-together somehow. But the choice between 2a) (the excluded events subordinate to these) and 2b) (the excluded events a distinct temporal sequence which interacts as a group with this set of events) can only be made through a consideration of the nature of these events excluded from this, the provisional primary *fabula* .

3.3.2) The secondary and tertiary *fabulae*.

This seeing-together of a certain set of events does not **require** the other events alluded to or narrated in the novel to be organized into a secondary *fabula*, though it tolerates that possibility; this is the difference between option 2a) and 2b) alluded to above. But the reader, exploring the text's meaning potential, will probably at least hypothetically group the novel's other events syntagmatically, in order to see if another isotopical field can be maintained which would generate a meaning-producing semantic interaction with the one already erected; this grouping would be guided by the questions: "Does this make sense?", and "What sense does it make with regard to Quentin's June 2 1910?". Whether this syntagmatic grouping is sustainable or not, these events will be organized in some fashion, even if in the way indicated by option 2a), in which they are seen as extensions of the primary *fabula*, indicators of the possible world in which that *fabula* occurs.

These possible worlds are projected by the reader from narrated details of the environment in which the section's action occurs, as well as textual information regarding the attribute, character, and behaviour of the narrative's actors. This projection involves the metonymic

extension of this specifically narrated detail through the reader's invocation of frames[21] which guide these extensions. For option 2a), these events are understood merely to indicate the "history" of Quentin's world from which the reader, invoking from intertextual and common frames causal patterns, can attempt to understand motivations for his behavioral or narrative patterns related in the *fabula*. But if the syntagmatic interrelation of these remembered events should assume primary significance independent of direct paradigmatic significance, the reader can follow option 2b) and construct a secondary *fabula* embedded in the primary *fabula*, which could be labelled "events in Quentin's life up to June second 1910".

Neither option in fact appears to satisfactorily organize these events. The narration of these events does not indicate that they have a form a *fabula* unified syntagmatically. They cannot really be seen together in the form of a separate and distinct "story", in the Aristotelian sense; they are not narrated in the form of a "causal chain of relations". Quentin does not remember a series of events which cause one another; instead he remembers a series of episodes which have "blown up" so to speak and influence the events of the day of his narration. These episodes are not linked causally; rather they are linked by a common catalyst, an agent which has caused those episodes to intrude into his thoughts and narration on his final day. Oddly enough, the secondary *fabula* seems to presupposes another isotopy, another field of meaning for its own comprehension; there is a hole where the organizing agent should be. To find that agent the reader may seize upon a key distinction between the narrative presentation of these events and those of the primary *fabula*. These events are almost always bits of dialogue, remembered speech situations which involuntarily disrupt the primary narrative. Gone is the almost generic voice which characterized the

narration of the primary *fabula*, narrating events with all respect for narrative conventions. Instead, the diegetic function almost disappears with regard to the remembered speech events; there is no objective narrator giving the reader a frame in which they can be oriented. The remembered events of the second *fabula* are much more dialogic; they appear merely as voices, very personal, very located and anything but "objective". And these voices always imbricate, either as a speaker, an addressee a subject or a theme, one person, one set of relations to Quentin. Caddy, the reader can abduce after finding this pattern in the collection of remembered events, is that agent which organizes these events, and her story, that isotopy.

The events of the secondary *fabula* can be seen then to assume a mediating role. They are embedded in and provoked by those events of the primary *fabula*, but their interaction with that primary *fabula* can only be determined through its own determinate relation, with the indicated but largely elided events of a tertiary *fabula*. The reader makes sense of June 2 1910 by looking toward the events remembered, but those events only make sense in light of what happened between Caddy and Quentin, events which are largely unnarrated. This chain of determination ending in an aporia is the primary mechanism through which this section controls the determination of its *fabulae*. Of course the information distribution of the novel is structured to allow the reader to gradually organize the relations between the *fabula*, though the information presented by the end of Quentin's section is not enough for the reader to formulate the *fabula* with any degree of determinacy. These provisional formulations are carried by the reader into the novel's later sections as s/he moves through the text and with the integration of new textual information they become more and more determinate until the necessity of maintaining their separation into

distinct spheres of meaning-organization disappears and they are subsumed into a larger, archi-*fabula*: "the recent history of the Compson family".

3.3.3) **The embedding of the *fabulae*.**

"Open" texts, as I have mentioned, tolerate the reader's forecasting potential directions and shapes of the *fabula* through his or her use of a relatively wide variety of conventional frames and interpretive strategies, with the resultant potential for several equally "valid" *fabulae*. To encourage this plurality the open text must discourage the reader's use of the habitual interpretive strategies, the default strategies, as I have labelled them in this paper, which s/he has been trained to take to texts recognized by the reader as the type (genre, subgenre) of the one in question. The text can do this by anticipating the use of these strategies and ensuring that their use will elicit contradictory or non-confirmatory information patterns. Or the text can work to establish dissimilarity between itself and what had been established as its textual type. When the reader senses that it is not a faithful member of the expected established textual category, the use of interpretive strategies established for that category becomes much more provisional, and the need to cast about for alternate strategies emerges.

Eco's "closed" text, on the other hand, encourages the reader to form expectations based on that reader's knowledge of conventional frames. This forecast is either corroborated or invalidated by the text, but in either situation the text arbitrates the "truth" of the *fabulae*. Like Barthes' classical or readerly text, the reader is merely

presented with a "referendum": "the poor freedom either to accept or reject the text" (1974: 4). Accepting the text means producing an interpretant which is very similar to those produced by other readers in response to that text; the text makes sense, and the reader can communicate that sense to and largely find agreement with other readers. Rejecting it means being unable to construct from that text a meaning pattern of any coherence or density; the text makes little sense and what sense it does make is largely specific to the reader. Commiseration is unlikely, unless the other reader has followed a similar pattern of ideological overcoding. The *fabula* of the closed text is highly determinate and highly reproducible, though, Eco cautions, the very solidity and determinacy of that macro-segment makes it more accessible to being plucked from its textual context and engaged in the reader's preferred intertextual frames and ideological biases[22]. Should the reader accept the text, s/he is then free to use it, as a whole, in any way s/he likes.

The model Eco uses for a typical "closed" text is the detective story, in which the reader, accompanying the narrator or focal character, attempts to construct a secondary *fabula* which acts an organizing principle in response to the question "What happened?" (and, implicitly, "whodunit?"). Like the detective story, "What happened between Caddy and Quentin?" is the object of the reader's forecasts in Quentin's section of The Sound and the Fury. But there is a significant difference which contributes to this text's unusual function; unlike the typical detective story the experience of the focal character of this novel does not parallel that of the reader; we do not know what Quentin knows, and find out Caddy's story at the same rate he does. Caddy's story is already known by the focal character, and we, the readers are presumed by the narration to have similar access to this story[23]. Since

this story is required for comprehension yet not explicitly outlined in the text it operates as an absent intertext, an extratextual body to which the reader presumably has access. Unlike the secondary *fabula* which is a series of embedded events, the tertiary *fabula* is primarily a series of embedded **impressions** of events detectable by the effect they have had shaping the events of the other *fabulae*. The reader will construct it in the meaning void its absence leaves in the other *fabulae* which require it for their own determination[24].

The following passage can be used to demonstrate the way in which the *fabulae* are embedded:

> ...and then Mrs Bland said, "Quentin? Is he sick Mr MacKenzie?" and then Shreve's fat hand touched my knee and Spoade began talking and I quit trying to stop it.
> "If that hamper is in his way, Mr MacKenzie, move it over on your side. I brought a hamper of wine because I think young gentlemen should drink wine, although my father, Gerald's grandfather"
> *ever do that Have you ever done that In the grey darkness a little light her hands locked about*
> "They do, when they can get it," Spoade said. "Hey Shreve?" *her knees her face looking at the sky the smell of honeysuckle upon her face and throat*
> "Beer, too," Shreve said. His hand touched my knee again. I moved my knee again. *like a thin wash of lilac coloured paint talking about him bringing*
> "You're not a gentleman," Spoade said. *him between us until the shape of her blurred not with dark*
> "No. I'm Canadian," Shreve said. *talking about him the oar blades winking him along winking the Cap made for motoring in England and all time rushing beneath and they two blurred within the other forever more he had been in the army had killed men*
> "I adore Canada," Miss Daingerfield said. "I think it's marvellous." (183-84)

The primary *fabula* is marked here by the conventional use of Roman typeset[25], by the fastidiously conventional narrative presentation (punctuation, spatial arrangement of the text, identification of speakers), and by the diegetic "storytelling" voice. Mrs Bland is identified as the speaker of the first section and her speech is sequentially organized by the phrase: "and then Mrs Bland said...".

The only aspect of this first sentence which interferes with the

reader's attempt to posit a determinate "message" is the final "it" (which has an unclear antecedent). The only aspect which deviates from conventional narrative expression might be the narrator's use of three successive clauses joined by "and then". However, the reader, familiar with the disintegration of Quentin's voice in periods of psychic stress, can normalize this latter slight unconventionality in the developing isotopy "Quentin's psychological status". The antecedent to the "it" must be bracketed until further information is given.

The discussion of wine by Mrs Bland contributes to the thematic isotopy of "Romanticism and the aristocratic South", though this theme is an extremely nebulous set of ideas and would probably elude such easy labelling[26]. Quentin contemplates this theme elsewhere in other sections with regard to his father and mother, his sister, her first lover Dalton Ames, her husband Herbert, Gerald Bland (who is metonymically reduced in this regard to his motoring Cap and his rowing). This theme is touched on in the exchange between Spoade and Shreve ("you're not a gentleman." "No, I'm Canadian") and functions to organize the final italicized words of the segment[27].

The reader, following Mrs Bland's discourse on wine and young gentlemen, is abruptly interrupted by the intrusion of an italicized segment of text. The italics serve to indicate that the information in this segment is narratively distinct from that in the Roman typescript. Recognizing from the narrative presentation that the text in italics is constructed along the conventions of stream-of-consciousness, the reader can posit that this material is a transcription of Quentin's thought. As well, because the "narrator" of this section (the entity who is telling Quentin's story in Quentin's voice) speaks from sometime after the events of the primary *fabula* and does not indicate the existence of events between what happened on June 2 1910 and the time when this

narrator sets down the story, the reader can assume that the events in the italicized script are from **before** June 2 1910. Typologically and narratively distinct from the events of primary *fabula* the reader must toss this italicized information into some sort of file until its nature and relation to the other events becomes clearer; this file eventually develops into the secondary *fabula*.

The repeated phrase of the italicized section ("*ever do that Have you ever done that*") has as its object merely the pronoun "that" but its referent is fairly easy to naturalize. The reader recognizes through common and intertextual frames that "to do it" is a euphemism for participating in sexual activity, most often intercourse. Extending a pattern of consistency which is not contradicted, the reader posits that the object of contemplation in this italicized fragment (the "her" described) is Caddy and the speaker is Quentin. Caddy's involvement allows the reader to reinforce the semantic possibility that "to do it" refers to sexual activity, as this relation has been previously established and has consistently recurred.

The narration is fragmentary: the small pieces of quoted dialogue ("*Have you ever done that*?" mixed together with diegetic description ("*In the grey darkness*") contrast directly with the immediately preceding, conventionally ordered narration. The reader can abduce that this contrast, between normal or conventional and aberrant or unconventional narrative, consistently accompanies Quentin's contemplation of Caddy's sexuality. Therefore the reader can tentatively posit that this subject somehow interfering with Quentin's "normal" (sane) organization and presentation of information.

The reader, in order to bring this segment of text to meaning, must recognize a primary *fabula* in which an event of that *fabula* (the act of remembering/daydreaming signified by the shift in typeset)

disrupts the narration of its events. This act, in turn, functions as a narrative frame in which facilitates the narration of verbal events temporally outside of the parameters of the primary *fabula*. These embedded, framed, verbal events are shaped by another, alluded to but largely unnarrated set of events, those of the life of the person who is the subject of these events: Caddy. The reader does not have to **know** what these alluded to events actually consist of, s/he merely has to recognize, out of heuristic necessity (to keep things straight) that they are separate and function to motivate the other *fabular* sequences.

That the interruption of this italicized segment coincides with the narration of the words of a different speaker (Spoade) may lead the reader to hypothesize that this segment (the moment of this section's locution, Quentin's act of remembering) occurs simultaneously to the (unreported but in this way indicated) end of Mrs. Bland's speech. The change of speaker seems to tune Quentin back in, as he resumes his recording of the present conversation, only to be interrupted once again by his contemplation of his sister, continuing the description precisely where he had left off, his narration proceeding through a chain of associations. From "*her knees*" to "*her face*" (association: "parts of her body") to "*looking at the sky*" (association: attribute of her face) and "*the smell of honeysuckle*" (association: Caddy's sexuality). The increasing frequency of the interruptions of the narration of the primary *fabula* by events of the secondary *fabula* may help the reader to more fully determine the referent of the sentence "*... I quit trying to stop it*". The "it" refers to the disintegration of Quentin's narrative voice, motivated, we have posited, by his unbearable awareness of Caddy's sexuality. The occurrence of the word "*honeysuckle*" in this segment reinforces the presumption that this in fact motivates the narrative disruptions. It has been repeatedly associated with both

Quentin's contemplation of Caddy's sexuality and his intense emotional, even physical discomfort[28].

These patterns of alternation continue: the primary conversation moves from wine to "gentlemen", Quentin's remembrance moves from Caddy (through frame "sexuality") to her speaking of "him" (another undetermined pronoun, though to cohere in Quentin's contemplation it would have to be a "him" sexually implicated with Caddy, *ergo*, a lover) to the explicit mention of "oar blades", previously associated with Gerald Bland, a central symbolic focus of the theme of Southern Romanticism.

The mention of these oar blades collapses the previous parallel but separate progresses of the two *fabulae* and illustrates their paradigmatic alignment through Quentin's conception of Caddy. Caddy could have never met Gerald; he is a participant in the present events, she is (to Quentin) the focus of remembrance of past events. As well, the events of the two *fabulae* are separated not only temporally but geographically. The reader, abandoning the possibility of a "real" link, looks for a metaphorical link by testing possible chains of association which might connect the two. S/he finds it with the convergence of Caddy's lovers (especially Dalton Ames) and Gerald in an abduced common type which has the attribute of untroubled, self-identical masculinity (which largely coincides with the frame "gentleman"). Quentin himself recognizes and draws attention to this parallel, by relating distinct attributes of Gerald (the motoring Cap) and distinct attributes of Ames (*he had been in the army had killed a man*) and notes that "*they two blurred within the other forever more*". The "two" alluded to are easy to identify through co-textual references (Gerald and Dalton), but "the other" in this phrase remains indeterminate. Once again, the reader is forced to abandon the search

for a "real" character who displays the attributes of both Bland and Ames because none are apparent or indicated. Instead, the very indeterminacy of "the other", in addition to Quentin's pattern of organizing his experience with regard to literary/cultural frames[29], may lead the reader to posit that "the other" functions as precisely the abstraction of the type previously inferred, "the ideal masculine gentlemen". The semantic value of "the other" also indicates that the quality of alterneity may inform the type, rendering it for Quentin: "the ideal masculine gentleman **which I am not**".

This abduction in turn allows the integration of the succeeding words "*forever more*": these words indicate both Quentin's conviction that he can never fit that type, and that Quentin is speaking in terms of eternal time rather than human time. Since the former is accessible to Quentin only through death and since the reader has no evidence that Quentin is in immanent danger of dying, s/he can abduce that Quentin is indicating the possibility of a self-induced death. He is in a suicidal frame of mind. This conclusion sends ripples back through the files of loosely stored information the reader has accumulated but not known how to organize. Suddenly details such as Quentin's mention of the flatirons and the river[30] can be brought to a relatively determinate sense with regard to both Quentin's character and the various stories he narrates.

These abductions are not necessary on the reader's part; the text in no way compels them. But they serve to bring otherwise unorganized information to meaning, to textual comprehension. Each abduction that the text anticipates that the reader does not make leaves more textual information latent and unorganized, and one less plane on which the text makes sense. Abductions that the text does not anticipate will probably be abandoned by the reader because contradictory information will be

encountered or the abduced plane will not engage the other isotopies in a way which generates relevant semantic data. From the information above the reader could abduce that "the other" referred to might be Shreve, on the basis that Shreve is present at the moment narrated in the primary *fabula*. But this abduction is not confirmed by any other textual data; there are no other attributes of Shreve which would indicate a connection with Gerald and Dalton Ames. And it does not engage with any consistency any of the other isotopies, especially the one in question, the thematic isotopy "the Romantic conception of the Southern Gentleman". In fact, Shreve's attributes contradict the themes of this isotopy "I'm not a gentleman, I'm a Canadian". The reader can still make the abduction, but the text, anticipating the reader's adherence to certain principles (among them consistency and non-contradiction in abduction), discourages its formation.

I have been attempting to analyze ways in which this text can regulate the process of its reading to elicit a set of reproducible *fabulae* by exploiting the principles of textual interpretation to force its varied readers to respond in similar ways. But the comprehension of the events related continually return to their functions as attributes of the focal character, especially with regard to the terminal event of the primary *fabula*: Quentin's suicide[31]. So, when the reader realizes that the logic of the *fabula* lies in the causal motivations between the events of that *fabula*, s/he must turn to a consideration of the speaking character who narrates those events. This turn is the subject of analysis in the following section.

3.4) Quentin's character as narrative isotopy.

3.4.1) Beneviste's *histoire* and discourse as narrative strategies.

If the events of the tertiary *fabula* could be labelled "those events in Caddy's life which affect Quentin", their ability to motivate the events of the other *fabulae* depend on their treatment, their interpretation, by the focal character who is organizing them in order to inform his actions. This internal interpretive logic which organizes the *fabulae* could be labelled "Quentin, who responds to these events in this way and generates this peculiarly unconventional text". His section, paradoxically enough, forces the reader to construct a highly determinate picture of Quentin in order to allow his or her realization of the idiosyncrasy of Quentin's own interpretive practices which he uses to justify his decision to carry out his terminal act. The reader, paradoxically, has to be "sane" (lexically, intertextually and abductively competent and disciplined) in order to "understand" Quentin from the text and to recognize the "insanity" of Quentin's reading of his world: we have to understand Quentin in order to understand his mis- or alternate understanding of his world and story[32].

Faulkner remarked that with this novel he had tried and failed four times to tell the story of Caddy Compson, choosing each time to make her the object of another's discourse rather than a speaking subject. He justifies this choice on the grounds of passion: that Caddy's story would provoke "passionate" responses in its tellers. It is precisely this passion which influences Quentin's telling of Caddy's story, and this passion which prevents his narration of those events from being objective and dis-passion-ate. Instead, Quentin's self has

developed in relation to his passion for Caddy, and it is this self which determines the way he narrates, and acts out, his own stories. In these stories then the reader finds the traces from which s/he can construct another field, another isotopy which is inextricably intertwined in the stories narrated, that being the psychological portrait of the focal character, Quentin.

This series of abductive movements which the text requires of the reader is similar to those of Freudian psychoanalysis, as the following comments by Emile Beneviste indicate:

> All through Freudian analysis it can be seen that the subject makes use of the act of speech and discourse in order to "represent himself" to himself as he wishes to see himself and as he calls on the "other" to observe him. His discourse is appeal and recourse: a sometimes vehement solicitation of the other through the discourse in which he figures himself desperately, and an often mendacious recourse to the other in order to individualize himself in his own eyes.... *Langue* is a system common to everyone; discourse is both the bearer of a message and the subject's instrument of action. ... There is thus an antimony within the subject between discourse and language.
>
> But for the analyst, the antimony establishes itself on a very different plane and assumes another meaning. ... within the history in which the subject has situated himself, the analyst will provoke the emergence of another history, which will explain the subject's motivation. (67-68)

In order to understand why Quentin does what he does, the reader must determine the relative veracity of the incidents narrated and then locate them within secondary and tertiary *fabulae* which are primarily "hidden", elided from the narration; alluded to but not narratively extant[33]. Then the reader *cum* analyst projects a portrait of the subject (Quentin) which naturalizes the motivational relation between the events of the other *fabulae* and those of the first. Given the relation of the stories: "Quentin remembers *x*, and then does *y*" the reader builds a picture of a character shaped by the pressure of the question "Given what we know about Quentin's environment and background, what kind of person is he, thinking in what way, that he would remember

that *x* and then proceed to do that *y* ?". The reader is more limited than the psychoanalyst in that s/he cannot elicit this "hidden" history from a living subject, nor can s/he pose questions to determine the veracity of this history. S/he has only the text, but, operating on the assumption that the text is comprehensible and internally coherent, s/he can confidently fill in the vast areas which are left unsaid if that filling in helps to make sense of what is related.

Beneviste's use of the word "discourse" in relation to *histoire* parallels that erected above between "discourse" and *langue*. "Discourse", he writes elsewhere, "[is] every utterance assuming a speaker and a hearer, and in the speaker, the intention of influencing the other in some way" (209). *Histoire*, like *langue*, is systemic and abstract in its nature[34]. Dorrit Cohn comments that "In contrast with this purely expressive and subjective mode [discourse], the complementary *histoire* is a purely narrative and objective mode, characterized by ... the exclusive exclusion of all references to personal speakers or listeners" (188). Discourse is *langue*-in-relation, *langue* used in communication between concrete individuals[35].

Benveniste's distinction, for our purposes, is useful in providing an opposition with which to describe potential reader response. When reading, the reader constructs a provisional file labelled "story" (*histoire*) which includes a set of criteria to orient the encountered textual information in a distributive pattern: the *fabula*. Simultaneously the reader organizes different aspects of the same information in a file regulated by the logic of discourse, resulting in a far different distribution of that textual information: the focal or narrating character[36].

But Beneviste's use of "discourse" with regard to psychoanalysis as well as with regard to narrative convention informs our project in

another way. The reader of Quentin's section recognizes in the narrative unconventionalities s/he encounters points of departure from the practices of *histoire* which s/he can account for by appealing to their coherence in the logic of discourse. Often, primarily in the narration of the events of the secondary *fabula* the speaker deviates from the practice of trying to be narratively invisible in absolute conventional conformity. Instead this speaker allows the dynamics of that situation (including the psyche of the speaker with regard to his object of contemplation and his apprehension of his addressee) to shape the narration; the diegetic voice fades, explicit connections between dialogues disappear, the veracity and narrative reliability of the events narrated become questionable even in terms of the novel's own world and voices argue positions and debate with each other instead of attempting to speak "objectively". It is in these deviations from narrative objectivity that the reader can "psychoanalytically" abduce the psychological attributes of the focal character.

This abduction is complicated by the refusal of the speaking voice to identify and maintain a consistent "other" who is the addressee of the monologue. It is much easier to establish the attributes of a variable if it maintains a stable relation to a constant. Quentin's voice assumes widely divergent rhetorical postures depending on his addressee. "His" voice moves from frustrated impotence in his encounters with his father's impermeable cynicism, to bossy bitterness in his encounter with Herbert, to an often pleading, desperate tone with Caddy. Like a composite photograph though, these "snapshots" of Quentin-in-relation can be used to assemble a fairly coherent portrait of the speaker. And like Benveniste's Freudian analyst who finds the hidden psychological profile of the patient "behind" the stories and comments s/he makes, so the reader attempting to make sense of Quentin's

narration similarly construct his psychological profile to account for the narrative idiosyncrasies of "his" voice.

3.4.2) Character isotopy as absent intertext.

Michael Riffaterre erects a model of reader response which helps to make Benveniste's distinctions more useful in terms of textual interpretation. In Riffaterre's model the reader, encountering something which violates the systems, structures and strategies (the "grammar") being used to interpret the text, posits, and thus searches for, a pre-existent field of meaning which will allow the integration of those "ungrammaticalities". He deals specifically with the movement of a reader to a specifically "literary" intertext as the criterion for determining a text's "literariness" (1990: 56). But his model, it seems to me, can function in a more general form.

He writes:

> When we speak of knowing an intertext, we must distinguish between an actual knowledge of the form and content of that intertext, and a mere awareness that such an intertext exists and can eventually be found somewhere. This awareness itself may be enough to make readers experience the text's literariness. They can do so because they perceive that something is missing from the text: gaps that need to be filled, references to an as yet unknown referent, references whose successive occurrences map out, as it were, the outline of the intertext still to be discovered. In such cases, the reader's sense that a latent intertext exists suffices to indicate the location where this intertext will eventually become manifest.
>
> (1990: 56-7)

The reader, encountering a series of discrepancies, constructs from them an outline which can be cross-indexed in the reader's encyclopedia of literary intertexts for matches. These intertexts can then be used as frames in which to extend (and thereby make sense of) the "world" of the text.

Riffaterre speaks of the "discovery" of the intertext by the reader because the text signals the reader to presume (and act upon the presumption) that there is an intertext to be discovered. But Riffaterre's model functions as easily without the necessity of an external and pre-existent intertext. Rather, the text's mere signalling of an intertext through its ungrammaticalities is enough for the reader to construct the provisional frame which would naturalize, make comprehensible, the ungrammaticalities. As Riffaterre says, before the reader can "discover" the pre-existing intertext (if any) s/he must construct its "outline" in the shape needed to naturalize the text's ungrammaticalities. But this very process of recognizing an exterior meaning field, even if that meaning field is never actually discovered, is enough to (at least) partially neutralize the ungrammaticality. We may not "get" the allusion to some extra-textual meaning field, but at least we can know that there is something we are not "getting" that explains some odd features of the text. And by looking at the nature of the text's "deviation" we can probably speculate with a fair degree of certainty as to how that extra-textual meaning field was meant to contribute to the text. Again, the reader never actually has to find the intertext for the grammaticality to be (at least minimally) neutralized.

If an intertext is a separate, pre-existing, textually organized body of knowledge Quentin's section presumes at least two central absent intertexts. One, discussed above in section 3.3.2, is the tertiary *fabula*: Caddy's story[37]. The second, discussed immediately above in 3.4.1, is Quentin's psychological profile. The reader does not need to be able to actually eventually to know exactly what happened between Caddy and Quentin, or to find a file in some psychiatrist's office with "Quentin Compson" written on it; s/he only needs to presume its

existence because its existence is presumed by the text for its own comprehension. Instead, the outline constructed from the ungrammaticalities, the traces which "deform" the text, substitutes for the presumed but absent referent. Presuming that the text is potentially comprehensible the reader can, by extension presume that the text is constructed so that this outline will contain all data pertinent and necessary to actualize the text's isotopies. Presumably the outline will generate as much information in the text as the reader's actual knowledge of the extra-textual "original" would generate without forcing the reader to ingest and sort superfluous information associated with the latter.

The portrait of Quentin functions like an absent intertext in the story. The reader abduces it in the way described above, but narratively it operates as a body of information presumed necessary but outside the text. As the narrator is speaking in a voice without an apparent external addressee, recording Quentin speaking to himself in a way, that narrator does not provide a description of Quentin: "Quentin/speaker" presumes that "Quentin/addressee" knows enough about who "Quentin" is to understand why his narrative is shaped as it is.

I will analyze below the way in which the absent isotopical frame "Quentin's psychological profile" can be constructed from his "ungrammatical" treatment of a specific cultural system with a specific and culturally encoded "grammar" or way of perception and articulation: time.

3.4.3) Time as an indicator of Quentin's psychological profile.

Quentin's psychology is available to the reader as in the related terms of the way in which he interprets his world and organizes his stories, and the way in which he uses that faculty to motivate or inform his actions. A perceptual system which obsesses Quentin's interpretive faculty is time; he sees its markers everywhere and its descriptions saturate his narrative. The reader, considering the numerous manifestations of time in his section can posit that time functions for Quentin as a perceptual template and an organizing system. It gives (or rather, forces on him) a way of seeing the world and a language, a thought structure in which to organizing responses to the world. It also functions as a type of other such templates and systems of structuring perception and thought. In this regard Quentin's contemplation of time can be extended to implicate other such socially constructed "grammars" or ways of articulating, and thus perceiving, his reality.

These "grammars" include the socially erected system of behaviourial codes which govern Quentin's possibilities of action; as a member of particular society, with a particular location within that society Quentin is called upon to behave in certain ways. By extension, certain forms of behaviour are prohibited. In that these codes work to make themselves invisible, structuring the nature of the world, these behaviours come to be perceived as normal or natural and the others aberrant or unnatural. These codes manifest themselves to Quentin primarily aurally in the sense that his text is generated primarily in response to voices speaking to or with him. The voices of his father and mother, of Mrs Bland, of Shreve, of his siblings, of other texts;

family histories, Southern histories, the Bible, Literary texts and genres, stories of saints: all carry the inscription of worlds structured by certain systems of perception with certain possibilities for action[38]. His own behaviour, his ability to see himself in the world is a function of his ability to speak himself to himself, to tell himself his own story. The integration, ("monologization" - making into one voice), of the many discordant voices he encounters into a single voice in which form this articulation is stymied by its inability to, as Addie Bundrun says, "fit what it is saying at". With the languages and texts available to him Quentin can only speak self-condemnation, with the perceptual templates he encounters he can only perceive self-aberrance with regard to his own desire, the incestuous desire for Caddy: "That had no sister" [94], Quentin repeats when encountering yet another situation in which his desire cannot find an expression or image.

Quentin literally has no Time for his desire for Caddy. In the day by day march of his life he is unable to conceptualize a time which includes Caddy. His only alternative, besides suppressing this desire (which refuses to be suppressed and disrupts his "normal" organization and presentation of the world) is to conceptualize a place or an existence outside of Time in which this desire is not unspeakable or aberrant. Quentin's resultant desire to "lose time" (102), realized in his suicide, is similar in many ways to Addie's yearning to physically wring out some reconciliation between physical reality and language, to "shape and coerce the terrible blood to the forlorn echo of the dead word" (Faulkner 1964: 167) which had "tricked" (1964: 165) her. This desire is literally consummated in her affair with Reverend Whitfield.

The parallel between Quentin's "time" and Addie's "words" emerges in another place, when Quentin speaks of his disarmed watch "not knowing

it couldnt even lie" (203). Eco, in his Theory of Semiotics, indicates that semiotics is "the discipline studying everything which can be used in order to lie" (7). As both Addie and Quentin sense and resent, both "time" and "words" are systems which structure information according to social convention and cultural logics, obscuring the transparent and unimpeded (presumably unrestrictive) perception and communication of an immutable inherent reality. Quentin's watch's inability to lie refers to its inability to contradict other watches, to misrepresent Time. However, its continued ticking indicates that it is still functioning in Time; that Time continues even after its most immediate material indicator has been disarmed. This ticking is like words for Addie; of the air rather than the earth, they are perfectly free in their unreality, to contradict, to trick and to lie because they have no inherent connection to the underlying real which they obscure as they pretend to represent. Similarly, Quentin's watch only has the possibility of lying or not-lying because it is fundamentally unconnected, for Quentin, to "real" time, to the out-of-time. Quentin's characterization of the mechanical plane of time (upon which watches can lie) indicates that the alternate, the out-of-time, is a place beyond semiotics where contradiction is not possible. The reader, having seen how Quentin's desire is contradicted by all the logical, perceptual and hierarchical structures he encounters, can thus see how Quentin might desire a state of non-contradiction in which his desire itself is either realized or abolished: Hell or nothingness (heaven does not seem to be an option to Quentin, implicitly one of the damned); either way death promises the end of contradiction for Quentin.

In a famous paragraph, Quentin recounts his father's saying that "you will use it [time] to gain the reducto absurdum of all human experience which can fit your individual needs no better than it fitted

his or his father's" (93). Here again is the dichotomy, echoing Beneviste's *langue* and discourse, between the systemic and the particular, the individual and the social. As an individual Quentin's needs are not fitted by templates such as time, yet requiring those templates to think and perceive he realizes that they nevertheless inevitably provide the "reducto absurdum" (sic) of experience, the absurd (arbitrary and unjustifiable) structures which are at the end of any absolute reduction beyond which one cannot think or speak. This ill-remembered sentiment of his father's may find its way into Quentin's narration because it is so relevant to Quentin's own case. Time does not fit his needs; he feels the disjunction between its organization of the universe, aligned with and mutually reinforcing other systemic structures, and the real, the site of his desire. He is prevented by these inherited systems, including that of Time (manifest in his watch) from articulating or perceiving of a space in which his desire can operate.

Quentin's narrative's treatment of time indicates his obsession with the "grammar" of time through his frequent construction of "expressions" in the language of time from the phenomena of his environment. This testifies to his inability, as one who has spent a long time "getting into the mechanical progression of it" (104) to "lose time" by resisting this perceptual habit. One of his first narrated actions is, as mentioned, the neutralization of his Grandfather's watch as a timepiece by pulling off its hands. But instead of rendering the watch non-meaningful, non-significatory, Quentin merely reduces the semantic density of the information communicated; it cannot communicate the time but its residual "clicking of little wheels" (94) remains an indexical signifier of Time. Quentin reads the ticks or clicks, abducing from them a rule which renders them sensible and meaningful:

Time.

And this ticking is insidious in the way that its reception is conditioned to reach beyond itself to structure thought. Quentin notes that Time is seemingly always present, if perhaps its perception is occasionally latent, remarking that

> ... I dont suppose that anybody ever deliberately listens to a watch or a clock. You dont have to. You can be oblivious to the sound for a long while, then in a second of ticking it can create in the mind unbroken the long diminishing parade of time you didn't hear. (93-94)

Upon recognizing clicking as a significant phenomenon within the field Time, "you", the interpreter, extend, along the rules governing Time, this phenomenon throughout your world: whether you hear the ticking or not, you know that it was there, because we know the properties of a watch in our world.

Even discounting the ticking and chiming which Quentin is unable to ignore through the day, the reader can abduce that for Quentin all the world is potentially a clock. In the opening paragraph Quentin remarks, "When the shadow of the sash appeared on the curtains it was between seven and eight oclock" (93). "Time", inextricably informs Quentin's perception. Its structure brings, for Quentin, the things of his world to meaning: the sash is no longer a sash; it is an impromptu sundial. It seems that these symptoms of his "mind-function" (94) are not restricted to "constant speculation regarding the position of mechanical hands on an arbitrary dial" (94). Almost without the effort of his conscious will he includes in his narration other expressions of Time constructed from the phenomena he encounters. Shadows are well established temporal indicators corresponding to sun-time: Quentin's noting of shadow movement, across a stoop for example (107), indicates his ability to use this phenomena to remain aware of the progression of Time. In another instance he notes that he is standing "in the belly of

[his] shadow" when "The chimes began, the half hour" (124). Using these two significant constructions Quentin can pinpoint his position with regard to Time almost exactly.

He also is able to chart his movement abductively with reference to more specific and less conventional signifying structures. On page 97 he gives a detailed account of his colleague Spoade's invariable state of dress against an axis of Time. Later, seeing Spoade with his shirt on he remarks, rather mysteriously, "then it must be" (118). If the reader thinks to refer back to the previous description s/he can neutralize the indeterminacy of this sentence fragment, producing "it [the time] must be (about noon)". But the reader, having been given no field in which to firmly locate this description of Spoade's dress, will probably have forgotten this information and will not abduce the rule which allows the integration of this ungrammaticality. Instead, faced with the absence of a stated object in the fragment (must be **what**?) and its inclusion of a pronoun without an easily identifiable referent (**what** must be?) the reader may pick up from the dangling verb "to be" intertextual echoes of the frequently hit chord "existential necessity"[39]. These echoes provide an extensional world (an intertextual frame) in which the reader, remembering no more determinate option, may provisionally bracket this information. Should the reader make the co-textual connection of this phrase to the earlier description of Spoade this echo and the partially drawn intertextual outline is not supplanted or invalidated; its line merely recedes and adds to the semantic density of the text's meaning rhizome. For our purposes though this "ungrammatical" fragment is an example of Quentin's unconventional narrative treatment of time, an unconventionality which can be used to contributes to the reader's psychological portrait of Quentin. It is a route into the "mind" of the focal character.

3.4.4) The reader and the many voices of Quentin.

But how is the reader of Quentin's section to construct "Quentin" when s/he so frequently encounters segments of text like the following:

> God, I'm glad I'm not a gentleman." He went on, fatly intent. *The street lamps* do you think so because one of our forefathers was a governor and three were generals and Mother's weren't
> any live man is better than any dead man but no live or dead man is very much better than any other live or dead man *Done in Mother's mind though. Finished. Finished. Then we were all poisoned* you are confusing sin and morality women dont do that your Mother is thinking of morality whether it be sin or not has not occurred to her
> Jason I must go away you keep the others I'll take Jason and go where nobody knows us so he'll have a chance to grow up and forget all this the others dont love me they have never loved anything with that streak of Compson selfishness and false pride Jason was the only one my heart went out to without dread
> (123-124)

This textual segment is, in any sense of the word, "ungrammatical". Not only are conventional rules of punctuation, sentence construction and typography not followed but the narrative "grammar" of orienting dialogue with a diegetic narrative voice is not followed either: the arrangement of these voices indicates the almost mechanical transcription of a fragmentary dialogue involving several voices in which the orienting function of narrator is at an absolute minimum. However, with reference to previously established verbal patterns the reader can isolate the voices of (respectively) Shreve, Quentin, Quentin's father and Quentin's mother.

The text in italic script, ungrammatical even within the unconventional grammar which governs the surrounding text, must be assumed to participate in a different mode of narrative presentation, perhaps, as in its occurrence in segments discussed above, the narration of a different level of consciousness. It is "Quentin's" voice but corresponding as it does to another layer of his consciousness it is merely one other voice of Quentin on a continuum of possible voices.

The extreme dialogism of Quentin's section, also alluded to above and obvious in this excerpt, complicates the reader's attempts to construct the isotopy "Quentin". Andre Bleikasten notes that "the deeper [Quentin] moves into his monologue, the less he *speaks* and the more he *listens* to the myriad voices of the past" (93); Quentin, as an organizing voice, recedes and is replaced by the largely unorganized and unoriented babble of many voices as in the above segment. Not only must the reader attempt to find out how Quentin thinks from what he says, s/he must also come to terms with the fact that most of the text presumably generated by Quentin is not consciously articulated by "Quentin" as the narratorial voice of the focal character, but is the passive transcription of the text of the voices which appear in that character's mind, these voices not yet monologized, not brought into the single voice of Quentin's narratorial consciousness.

In 3.4.3 we hypothetically established the motivation for the absence of a controlling, hegemonic consciousness in Quentin which is able to monologize the dialogic encounters of his past. But this attribute of Quentin's psychology can be established from another direction: the reader can construct "Quentin" precisely where he grammatically should be but is not. His outline emerges when he is considered in his unfulfilled narrative role, in the inability to synthesize a monological voice for himself, in his inability to marshall the other voices and subordinate them to a voice which speaks for himself. In an odd way it is precisely this state of cacophonous polyphony which allows Quentin to finally "express" himself through action. Because he is unable to speak as himself, to articulate the condition of his desire, he cannot reconcile the contradictions and the multiple, foreign perspectives of the voices he has encountered and remembers, except through one action. His suicide is quite literally a

statement, though not in the sense that it was constructed to have any communicative or semantic value. Rather this extralinguistic "utterance" presents the only possibility in which Quentin can recover and articulate, monologically, without contradiction or plurality the self-identicality of his existence; dying is the only way in which he can recover control over his self and is the only way in which he can truly articulate his desire.

4) **Textual polyphony and interpretive monologism.**

The textual excerpt above is structured polyphonically in that it is not subordinated to, and expressed in the terms of, an organizing voice. But in its very interpretation, exemplified in the analysis provided immediately above, this segment still anticipates the reader's monologizing drive, the desire of the reader to find a meaning in these disjointed and various voices. There is no narrator telling the reader what to make of this segment, but make something of it the reader does, as I have done at the end of 3.4.4.. Finding it absent in the text, the reader provides the monologic function, eliciting that unnarrated voice of meaning. As mentioned above, where finding none but recognizing text, the reader will supply the coherence. And, as a communicative structure, the text will anticipate and reward this interpretive drive, though, as here, it may not be in the form of a monologic narratorial voice.

There are two determinate facts which in the novel's world which are never explicitly mentioned. These are Quentin's death by drowning on June second 1910 and his sexual desire for his sister. Conspicuously absent from the narrative, these "facts" of the *fabula* are called into

existence because of their necessity; they allow the orientation of the other events of Quentin's world and the attributes of Quentin's psychology. The reader "knows" these facts because only these could pull the textually narrated details into the patterns in which s/he finds them. The voice which articulates these facts is provided by the reader but for that is no less a part of the text; it articulates not what Quentin **says** or **thinks** but what "Quentin" **means**. As it is ultimately the reader who organizes the textual information, whether or not s/he follows a textually provided organizing voice it is s/he who provides the text's monologism.

Ultimately, this monologizing tendency is a function of abductive logic. These many voices of Quentin, relating to the many layers of his consciousness and degree of control over other voices, are cast by the reader as the results of some process. S/he then searches for patterns of consistency, a rule, which would generate such results; "Quentin" and "Caddy's story", absent intertexts, are such rules which allow the normalization of narrative irregularities. While Quentin may never explain himself or articulate what he wants to do, the reader of his section is driven to be able to communicate precisely that; Quentin can never tell of his desire for his sister and his intent to commit suicide, but the reader, by "understanding" Quentin from his can articulate that which he leaves unsaid. He remains trapped in polyphony; the reader, in finding out what his text **means**, supplies monologism.

Like Quentin, strives for non-contradiction. Finding the opposite in Quentin, the reader works to erase it in a voice of consistency which integrates even the narrative fact of contradiction as an aspect of the isotopy which is the character's psychology[40]. Unless the reader is prepared to say "I don't know" when asked "Why did Quentin commit

suicide?", s/he must construct this monologic voice; it is the voice of the answer to that question. Although this novel is textually dialogic it functions, through the anticipation of interpretive strategy, as monologically as many more conventional novels. After reading, perhaps several readings, everything indeed can be made to hold together, and readers can tell each other what they think it "means". The reader works to bring the open text to a close, to make the writerly text readerly.

5) Conclusion

To summarize:

Textual determinacy cannot be construed either as an inherent aspect of textuality, nor can it be discounted altogether as an invalid epistemological category. The text cannot dictate its own interpretation, though at the same time the interpreter is not free to elicit anything at all from a material assemblage of signs recognized as text. Instead, the construction of the text anticipates and exploits the pressure of the reader's interpretive, abductive logic to manipulate the reader's recognitions in the text of schemata which become meaningful in terms of the intertextual and linguistic systems which structure that readerly logic. This logic drives the reader to comprehend (to see-together) the text's signs by finding in the texual assemblage patterns of consistency and coherence which allow the segmentation of the text into clusters or meaning groups; planes of "aboutness" (isotopies). The possibilities of organization or segmentation are delimited by the reader's "competence" which is a function of his or her access to culturally erected structures of

communication, whether these are specifically "Literary" structures or more general models accessible through the reader's knowledge of generic or linguistic patterns of semiotic organization.

There is, of course, a continuum of textual behaviour with regard to the rigidity of the text's anticipated manipulation of the reader, and its poles have been variously designated "open and closed" or "readerly and writerly" textuality. This paper's analysis of "Quentin's" section of William Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury investigates its textual function with regard to these categories in the production of two istopies: those describing the *fabulae* and the focal character of the section.

Characteristically for open or writerly texts, this section works to erode the reader's ability to interpret through the most specific and semantically pre-structured forms of literary competence, freeing a space for itself by taxing to a greater extent the reader's abductive competance and forcing him or her to elicit an interpretant with recourse primarily to the less pre-structured systems of information organization (those of language, genre and textual mode). But unlike open and writerly texts, the section under consideration does not then work to tolerate a plurality of interpretive possibilities. Instead, it exploits this relatively clear space to elicit a highly unique, but highly determinate and reproducible set of interpretants.

The open text seeks to minimize the potential for contradiction in the reader's abductive processing of the textual schemata, in that way tolerating in the reader widely diverse patterns of isotopical comprehension and facilitating, in turn a relatively large potential for the reader to find patterns of consistency and coherence when s/he mutually engages the total set of isotopies. This text works to allow many different, but equally dense, isotopical configurations which the

reader might recognize as the "meaning" s/he gets from the text. In contrast, Quentin's section closely regulates the readerly production of interpretants in at least two instances through the arrangement of information such that the reader, governed in both the construction of individual isotopies and the textual meaning configuration by the principles of contradiction and non-confirmation, finds only one arrangement (albeit of varying semantic density) which can be constructed from the textual information and which will successfully, productively, engage the other meaning levels of the text.

Endnotes

1. The following will govern the basic usage of these terms in this paper: "a *text* is a finite, structured whole composed of language signs... a *story* is a fabula that is presented in a certain manner. A *fabula* is a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors" (Bal 5). Following Eco however, *plot* will be used to identify "the story as it is actually told, along with all its deviations, digressions, flashbacks, and the whole of the verbal devices" (1979: 27), which corresponds to Bal's definition of *story*. The former is preferable because *story* has been translated at various times to correspond with both terms of the original distinction made by the Russian formalists: *fabula* and *sjuzet*.

2. Closely following the definition proposed by C.S. Peirce, *Interpretant* will be used in this paper to identify the meaning response produced in the reader with regard to a certain way of reading or interpreting the text.

3. The section in question will be identified by its "narrator", Quentin, although more properly this narrative voice cannot be Quentin's due to the text's necessary unwillingness to provide a narrative frame in which Quentin could transcribe or communicate this text. Leona Toker, following Gerard Genette, makes this distinction:

> A "focal character" or "focus" is the character who provides the center of vision in a particular stretch of discourse. He is to be distinguished from the "narrator" or "voice" who is supposed to be performing the narrative act. (133)

While I accept the validity of this distinction, the increase of precision garnered by its continued use in this study would be outweighed by the awkwardness of the terms. Thus, succeeding references to Quentin's voice should be understood as the transcription by an unnamed narrator of some of the text generated (whether or not articulated or transcribed by that character) by the focal character "Quentin".

4. In his introduction to Bakhtin's Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics Wayne Booth describes this critical manoeuvre as an extension of neo-Aristotelian functionalism.

5. Fish and Stout are the two explicitly named by Rorty's use when he continually refers to "we pragmatists" (95) in his essay in Interpretation and Overinterpretation. Rorty and Fish are referred to as proponents of "contemporary American pragmatism" (118) by

uller later in the same book.

. J. Sigman 1993, in written comments regarding one of my oursework papers. An interesting elaboration of this comment is rovided by Richard Rorty (Eco 1992: 89-108) who claims that emiotics betrays its essentialist nature in its attempts to discover" how language and texts operate, to discover "what is *eally* going on in the text" (105), with the presumption that there s somewhere a "code of codes" (89) which will finally stabilize nterpretation and render it fully distinct from readerly "use" of exts, a distinction which Eco proposes and which he and (he laims) Fish do not recognize.

. See Eco (1976: 201) for a discussion of analogy and Peirce's conical signs.

. Eco writes:

> ... let us define a communicative process as the passage of a signal ... from a source ... to a destination. ...
>
> A signification system is an autonomous semiotic construct that has an abstract mode of existence independent of any possible communicative act it makes possible. ...
>
> It is possible ... to establish a semiotics of signification independently of a semiotics of communication: but it is impossible to establish a semiotics of communication without a semiotics of signification (1976: 9).

Culler (1981 Communication) extends this distinction to literary emiotics.

. In my reading I was unable to find a term which expressed the et of conventions closest to hand of a given reader, the onventions which are tried first, which are prompted by the first extual recognitions. "Default" is used in computer terminology to efer to a set which needs not be identified, which can be presumed o be in operation unless otherwise identified. For example, the extual recognition of a specific genre includes the reader's rimary employment of a set of conventions or expectations which perate unless the text indicates the necessity of their odification or abandonment.

10. See Riffaterre, 1985: 53.

11. See Eco 1979: 23 for a fuller use of this terminology.

12. Eco says as much in a response to Rorty which involves an analysis of the latter's own reading practices. He writes: "the text remains the parameter for his acceptable interpretations"

Eco, 1992: 141).

3. See Eco 1979: 22.

4. See Eco (1976: 131-133) for a more detailed examination of bductive logic.

5. "The logic of interpretation is the Peircean logic of bduction" (Eco, 1990: 59).

6. These are the texts which Riffaterre holds up as his model for literary" textuality. He writes: "...the text's anomaly is such hat no coherent interpretation can be arrived at without solving he problem that it poses" (1985: 43).

7. The material in inverted commas is from E.H. Gombrich, *Art and llusion* (London, 1962), 278.

8. Eco provides a persuasive, if conservative, answer in the form of "latent valences in the Global Semantic System" in his essay 'The Semantics of Metaphor" (1979: 67-89). His GSS operates along hizomaic logic which he himself refers to as DeleuzoGuattarian. Deleuze and Guattari offer their own much more stimulating and speculative ideas on the subject using their vegetable metaphor of he rhizome to theorize a "linear semiosis", elucidated primarily n the fifth plateau of their A Thousand Plateaus (Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987. 111-47.).

9. See Eco, 1979: 27.

20. See Kazula (1967) for an excellent analysis of the distinctive hetorical strategies, syntactical preferences and grammatical differences between the three Compson brothers' sections. She argues that each brother has a distinct stylistic identity in the text, which precludes the reader's confusing one voice for the other.

21. Eco writes that "Common frames come to the reader from his storage of encyclopedic knowledge and are mainly rules for practical living [Charniak, 1975]. Intertextual frames, on the contrary, are already literary 'topoi', narrative schemes [see Riffaterre, 1973; 1976]" (1979: 21). This distinction however may be untenable, collapsed by the conventionality governing the constitution of both types of frames. Eco also writes, with regard to representation as transformation: "Transformation does not suggest the idea of natural correspondence; it is rather the consequence of rules and artifice... Similitude is *produced* and must be *learned* [Gibson 1966]" (1976: 200).

2. See Eco (1979: 125-143) for a discussion of a closed text which communicated so coherently as a text, that it was engaged as a single signifying unit in an ideological context in which it functioned completely differently from that which the author foresaw. In The Sound and the Fury almost all critics agree on the sequence of the events of the *fabula(e)* (see Cowan 103-108 for a detailed fabular chronograph), and the attributes of the "world". There is little question as to what happened, allowing for the brothers' tendency to colour things, or in Quentin's case to occasionally make things up; the discussion has been primarily what to make of what happened", how to interpret these events in this world that we all generally agree on. The formation of the *fabulae* follows the pattern of a closed text, but in the text's reticence to guide the meta-interpretation, it acts as an open text.

3. This is not entirely accurate.

Benjy functions as both the focal character and presumed addressee of "his" section; although the narration would certainly exceed his ability to articulate it presumably represents his ability to understand. The narration then is shaped not by Benjy as the generator of text, but as an interpreter of events-as-text (see Ross, 172).

Quentin's narration of the primary *fabula*, in its conventionality, seems to presume a standard reader of journalistic/descriptive prose. This conventionality is disrupted by the narration of the events of the tertiary *fabula*. These disruptions subvert the function of the text from that of communication to that of simply verbal response to psychic stress.

Jason is the only narrator who presumes a model reader (or listener, more precisely) with any specific competence; one who is familiar with the family's history, but not with the specific details of his own interaction with Caddy, i.e. his meeting with her at their father's funeral.

Also, see above section 3.1.

4. See section 3.4.2 for a more detailed discussion of this idea.

5. This however is not consistent through the section. Events of all the *fabulae* occasionally appear in Roman type, though the primary *fabula* never appears in italic type.

6. This, however, does not matter. The reader does not have to label the isotopy in order for it to function, s/he merely has to recognize the interrelation and mutual organization of the members of the set, whatever its label.

27. Much writing has been done on Quentin's Romanticism. Notable is Francois Pitavy's "Through the Poet's Eye: A View of Quentin Compson. Pitavy considers Quentin's organization of his life as text an attempt to read it through intertextual frames (St. Francis, Jesus) and through the textual/legendary/cultural Romantic idea of "the lost south". His use of these models inevitably indicates the failure and absurdity of he and his sister's lives, motivating his eventual suicide.

28. See pp. 160, 166, 188, 191, 211.

29. See above, note 26.

30. The extended segment which this fragment is excerpted from involves an extended secondary *fabula* reverie chronologically embedded in this primary *fabula* discourse on masculinity and gentility. This reverie concerns Quentin's encounter with Dalton Ames and Quentin's absolutely inadequate attempt to assert his gentility/chivalry/masculinity in defending Caddy from Ames, fainting instead "like a girl" (201). The substitution between Dalton and Gerald results in a response in the primary *fabula* motivated by events of the second: Gerald's derogation of woman sexually ("Leda lurking in the bushes whimpering and moaning for the swan, see." [207]) recalls the phrase of Ames' which resonates frequently through Quentin's section "theyre all bitches" (199).

This sentiment, expressed by the latter in Quentin's encounter with Ames, was elicited by Quentin's question "did you ever have a sister did you" (199), and followed immediately by his futile attempt to physically assault Ames. To Gerald's derogation of women Quentin responds with exactly the same phrase (206) followed by an identical physical attempt.

But his foreknowledge of Gerald's puglistic superiority (206) indicates that Quentin must have been seeking confirmation of his non-masculinity, of his "otherness", which in turn would indicate that he was also confirming its "forever more", seeking perhaps confirmation of the justice and necessity of his self-administered death sentence.

31. While Quentin's suicide is not "in" the narrative, it is in the *fabula* because it is necessary to the integration of other narrated detail. The narrative may indicate events, but the fabula, as a series of propositions, integrates and brings those events to meaning. And it is in the *fabula* if not the narrative that Quentin's suicide becomes a determinate "fact" of the novel.

32. The use of sane/insane and understand/misunderstand are relative and reflect only a conventional association of sanity and "right" understanding with the promotion of one's own self-interest which is almost inevitably aligned with self-preservation.

However, these words also imply that Quentin is being evaluated against some extratextual norm of behaviour and thought. This is not the case here; these terms are used only to erect a rhetorical opposition between Quentin's interpretation which is highly idiosyncratic and shaped by the pressures of his individual situation and psyche, and the reader's, which must be highly conformist and regulated by the perception of textual structures.

33. Leona Toker makes an interesting distinction between rhetorically and realistically motivated gaps with regard to the narrative presentation of information regarding the *fabulae* and the novel's world. Both are narrative strategies of character portrayal.

The latter, she explains, are those gaps which are produced to reinforce the reader's impression of the limitations of the focal character's perception. Thus Benjy's narration is fragmented with odd time shifts, conventions of "stream-of-consciousness" narrative and the emphasis on sense perceptions of what is present and the elision of what is not actually present to consciousness.

A rhetorical elision is the result of the focal character's deep desire to repress the narration of certain information of which he is fully aware, to keep this information from the addressee, even if the addressee is the character himself. An example of rhetorical elision is the absence of Quentin's decision to commit suicide, even though it motivates his actions and influences his contemplation of all he encounters on his last day.

See 3.4.2 for a broader discussion of how gaps and unconventionalities can be used as strategies of character portrayal.

34. In this parallel Beneviste, like Barthes, is again following Saussure in making *langue* the systemic paradigm for other semiotic structures of signification.

35. This idea of language use interpellating and anticipating an "other" is similar to what Bakhtin calls "double-voiced discourse", "which inevitably arises under conditions of dialogic interaction, that is, under conditions making possible an authentic life for the word" (1984: 185).

36. These possibilities, I believe, are specific to the textual object of narrative interpretive conventions. It is of course possible, and perhaps inevitable that the reader should erect micro- (textually non-comprehensive) meaning configurations by drawing other fields of comprehension, seeing different parts of the text together not as a textual whole, finding interesting micro-patterns between parts of the text and current events or the day's dinner menu. The reader is free to ignore these narrative

conventions of speaker and story and derive aesthetic pleasure from finding ways in which the text's semantic segments can be combined into different patterns through the invocation of frames not elicited by the narrative conventions: etymological, contextual, personal etc. I have no objection to Barthes claim that textual pleasure can be derived from reading precisely without the principles of coherence, consistency and non-contradiction (1975: 3).

Following, with reservations, Eco's distinction between "interpretation" and "use" (which is not he, insists the same as Hirsch's "meaning" and "significance") these strategies, I believe, will not produce an interpretant that is textually comprehensive (which will potentially engage all the text's semes) and economical. That is not to say that these readings are invalid, merely that textual determinacy in narrative texts relies on certain, perhaps arbitrary, reading practices in order to elicit a maximally comprehensive and economical exploitation of the text's semes. These practices, while semantically productive and aesthetically pleasing, violate the presumed communicative nature of the text, and are marginalized by this presumption.

Texts such as Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow (New York: Viking Press, 1973) and Joyce's Finnegans Wake (New York: Viking Press, 1966 [c1939]) erode the reader's ability to comprehensively or economically organize textual information in the files described above, and encourage rather than discourage the simultaneous readerly invocation of these reading practices which are not specific to the conventions of narrative prose text. Riffaterre writes of texts which rely exclusively on such practices, "In such cases ambiguity *is* the signifier, and the text is literary merely because it cancels communication and offers language as an object, not as a means to something else" (1983: 8). In an odd way though, in the texts mentioned above, the reading practices above actually recover their communicative function when the reader draws them into another level of "aboutness", making "play of language and reading conventions" yet another, perhaps even hegemonic isotopical level which informs and interacts with the other planes upon which the reader brings the text to meaning.

While these reading practices certainly could be brought to bear in the interpretation of Faulkner's works, his texts discourage the development of this isotopy by tightly controlling the reader's access to comprehension through the exploitation (identification with and disruption of) reading practices more specific to narrative prose, especially the development of "story" (fabula) and "character" (discourse).

37. See section 3.3.2.

38. On the inaccuracy of Quentin's memory of these voices and texts: co-textual or intertextual references can establish inconsistency which can be accounted for by a narrator who has, at least occasionally, for whatever reason, misrepresented "truth". Quentin quotes his classically trained father saying "reducto absurdum" (93) instead of the latin "*reductio ad absurdum*" (See Matthews 61). As well, he remarks that his father had said "down the long and lonely light-rays you might see Jesus walking, like" (94). This reference collapses the biblical story of Jacob's ladder (*Genesis* 28: 11-13), with the story of Jesus' walking on water (*Matthew* 14:22-33, *Mark* 6:45-52, *John* 6:16-21). As well, Quentin relates a voice saying at his sister's wedding "*Quentin has shot Herbert*" (130), though this remains unconfirmed and contradicted by Herbert's ensuing divorce of his sister.

39. Some echoes of this chord may resonate from the philosophy of Sartre or Dostoevsky or Kierkegaard, from Wordsworth's "Ode to Duty", or from the chorus of Beethoven's Opus 135 "The Weighty Resolution" [*Der schwer gefasste Entschluss*]: "Must it be? Yes, it must be!" [*Es muss sein*? *Ja, Muss es sein*!]. This last reference thanks to *pan* Milan Kundera's insightful discussion of this piece (1984: 195-196). He writes: "The words *'es muss sien!' acquire a much more solemn ring; they seem to issue directly from the lips of Fate*" (195). In Quentin's case too, when these words are removed from object and antecedent these words can seem to the reader to "issue directly from the lips of [Quentin's] Fate".

40. The textual movement from novel to critical discourse, especially in its drive to describe "the novelist's metaphysics" virtually necessitates the resolution of the novel's dialogism into a voice (of "the critic") striving for monologism. Thus the following passage, in Quentin's voice, has been endlessly cited in criticism of The Sound and the Fury:

> ...They all talked at once, their voices insistent and contradictory and impatient, making of unreality a possibility, then a probability, then an incontrovertible fact, as people will, when their desires become words. (145)

To identify this with what Quentin "means" or what Quentin "thinks" is to privilege in criticism the novel's instances of monologism, without recognizing that segment's dialogic position within the novel. But while the epigrammic quality and aphoristic style of this segment may make it easily translatable into critical discourse, these same qualities undermine its very monologic claims to truth. These qualities are most characteristic not of the "voice of the novel" but of a voice *in* the novel, of a character which the novel does not indicate is to have privileged access to truth. This character is of course Quentin's cynical, alcoholic

father. Quentin's momentary assumption of his father's articulation patterns should not indicate the articulation of "**truth**", but of **a** truth, one produced by one of several truth producing systems which Quentin allows play in his voice. This relativity however, is not easily preserved in the movement of this segment from novel to criticism.

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