William Faulkner and Miguel Delibes: The Art of the Story Teller

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Some critics have been proclaiming the death of the novel, the peculiarly Renaissance genre that grew along with the European bourgeoisie, who generally could and had the time to read. The novel, though it contained from the beginning, seeds of its present-day hybridization, was in contrast to poetry, an omnisciently narrated, lengthy prose story involving specific characters in a specific time and place. It was generally intended for private, silent reading unlike earlier narrative forms such as the epic or the medieval tales that were chanted or recited orally. Even the novel's closest relatives, the romance and other fantasy or adventure narratives, were often read aloud in castles and inns to groups of people who either couldn't read or had no access to the scarce copies of books.

The novel reached the zenith of its popularity and production in the nineteenth century, when as Ortega says it was the «fauna poética más característica». By the early years of this century its most talented cultivators no longer found its traditional form a viable medium for expressing their world view and thus began its supposed degeneration as a literary genre. Ortega was an outspoken and influential perpetrator of the death of the novel myth, especially in his essay *Ideas sobre la novela*. The novel, he said, had simply run out of material and was now indulging in ever increasing formal exquisitness in order to stay alive at all:

> En suma, creo que el género novela, si no está irremediablemente agotado, se halla, de cierto, en su período último y padece una tal penuria de temas

posibles que el escritor necesita compensarla con la exquisita calidad de los demás ıngredientes necesarios para integrar un cuerpo de novela. (1)

What Ortega failed to see was that literary forms, like other aspects of culture, need constant re-vitalización if they are to maintain their meaning and purpose in the society that produces them. This is ironically the principle tenet of his essay *The Modern Theme:*

> ...culture survives while it continues to receive a constant flow of vitality from those who practice it. When this transfusion is interrupted and culture becomes remote from life, it soon dries up and becomes ritualized. (2)

The two authors we propose to discuss here have not found the novel bereft of material, and while they have used formal techniques which would not suit Ortega's nineteenth century view of novelistic structure, they have never allowed form to become the end as well as the means of their art.

Out of the heterogeneous landscape of the novel in the last twenty years, the authors we have chosen as the focus of this study represent rather uninnovational national novelistic productions. The recent novel in both Spain and the United States has been unfavorably compared to the experimental movements in France and Latin America, the former boasting twenty years of *nouveau roman,* the latter the «boom» of the sixties. Even Faulkner, who can rightly claim an important influence on each of these fecund areas, did most of his formal experimenting in the twenties and thirties, returning to more traditional forms after the Second World War.

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(1) José Ortega y Gasset, «Ideas sobre la novela,» O. C., III (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1966), p. 390.

(2) José Ortega y Gasset, «The Modern Theme» (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), p. 61.

In the recent rush of interest in comparative literature, a noticeable lacuna exists in Anglo-Spanish studies. For example, there are excellent studies of the reception of Faulkner's work in France, England and Germany (3) but none for his reception in either Latin America or Spain, even though, as the French critic René-Marie Albérès says: «Faulkner ha seducido a todo el mundo y ha influido en los neorrealistas italianos y españoles...» (4) We believe a careful study would reveal his influence on other Spanish writers as well. An investigation of possible influence of Spanish writers on Faulkner would perhaps yield interesting results. (5)

This essay will prescind the question of influences (although Delibes recognizes that Faulkner held a canon for the relationship of novelistic form to material similar to his own) (6), in order to study narrative techniques that the two writers hold in commond and whch may help shed light on their particular arts, as well as on the future of the novel as a genre.

The principal problem for the narrator in every age, whatever his generic medium and limitations, has been verisimilitude—how the writer, chanter or teller of tales may suspend the audience in the fictional time and space.

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(3) See particularly, Stanley D. Woodsworth, «William Faulkner en France (1931-1952)» (Paris, 1959); William W. Pusey, «William Faulkner's Works in Germany to 1940: Translations and Criticisms,» «German Review» (Oct., 1955); Gordon Price-Stephens, «The British Reception of William Faulkner, 1929-1962,» «Mississippi Quarterly» (Summer, 1965).

(4) René-Marie Albérès, «Metamorfosis de la novela» (Madrid: Taurus, 1971).

(5) In several interviews, Faulkner has acknowledged his debt to Cervantes. He studied Spanish at the University of Mississippi and could have read other Spanish authors in the original or in French or English translations.

(6) «Yo, como siempre, te repito, he utilizado la técnica y la fórmula que me parecían adecuadas para desarrollar el tema que me pedía paso.» (César Alonso de los Ríos, «Conversaciones con Miguel Delibes» (Madrid: Novelas y Cuentos, 1971), p. 131.) «Faulkner escribió como escribió seguramente porque no sabía hacerlo de otra manera. Sus libros eran él. Su mundo eran sus libros.» (Ibid., p. 145.)

A consistency of narrative tone has always been essential to this process and was achieved in the classical (or Cervantine) novel through the omniscient author upon whose absolute knowledge we could always rely. He made us aware of the discrepancy between the character's conception of the world and «the way things really were», thus catching us up in the fiction as witnesses of the truth.

Ortega thought the most believable and durable novels in the omniscient author tradition were those in which the narrator merely presented characters acting in a particular atmosphere; he despised intrusive narrator commenting: «Emilia Pardo Bazán dice cien veces que uno de los personajes es muy gracioso; pero como no le vemos hacer gracia ninguna ante nosotros, la novela nos irrita.» (7) Delibes and Faulkner have found similar (and we believe successful ways) of breaking this rule which most contemporary novelists find excessively limiting. In their remolding of the traditonal genre, they have (probably unconsciously) resorted to techniques of narration reminiscent of the pre-novelistic tradition. For the most part these are devices that were discarded in the Renaissance novel in order to maintain the kind of objectivity that Ortega thought essential.

Both novelists are basically story tellers who found the only modern outlet for their art in the novel. Their novelistic creeds reflect this approach: «Yo entiendo que novelar o fabular es narrar una anécdota, contar una historia» (8), says Delibes; and Faulkner: «I am telling the same story over and over, which is myself and the world.» (9) The modern story-teller's plight, his unseverable tie to the printed page and perhaps permanent divorce from the direct presence of his audience is dramatized in *Parábola del náufrago.* Delibes presents the novelist in the act of

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(7) O. C., III, p. 391.
(8) «Conversaciones con Miguel Delibes,» p. 143.
(9) «The Faulkner-Cowley File,» ed. Malcolm Cowley (New York: Viking Press, 1966), p. 14.

dictating his story, presumably to a secretary, or perhaps in this dehumanized world even to a tape-recorder. The punctuation is spelled out as though it were being indicated orally: «Entre Jacinto y Genaro existía ya un lenguaje inexpresado que hacía ociosas las palabras punto y aparte.»

In the novels we use as examples here, the omniscient author is almost entirely absent except for the last section of *The Sound and the Fury,* a section which Faulkner says he included because he thought he had failed as a story teller in the earlier parts:

> And so I told the Idiot's experience of that day, and that was incomprenhensible, even I could not have told what was going on then, so I had to write another chapter. Then I decided to let Quentin tell his version of that same day, or that same occasion, so he told it. Then there had to be the counterpoint, which was the other brother, Jason. By that time it was completely confusing. I knew that it was not anywhere near finished and then I had to write another section from the outside with an outsider, which was the writer, to tell what had happened on that particular day. And that's how that book grew. That is, I wrote that same story four times. None of them were right, but I had anguished so much that I could not throw any of it away and start over, so I printed it in the four sections. That was not a deliberate *tour de force* at all, the book just grew that way. That I was still trying to tell one story which moved me very much and each time I failed, but I had put so much anguish into it that I couldn't throw it away, like the mother that had four bad children, that she would have been better off if they all had been eliminated but she couldn't relinquish any of them. And that's the reason I have the most tenderness for that book, because it failed four times.

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(10) Faulkner at Nagano.» pp. 103-105, quoted in Michael Milgate.

With this one exception, the omniscient author has been replaced by an oral narrator, who frequently participates in the events as well.

This narrator, although he is incorporated into the fiction, uses many of the artistic devices that Homer used to tell the story of Ullyses, that the anonymous poet (or poets) used who chanted «El poema del mío Cid», or that Chaucer invented to relate his *Canterbury Tales*. In order to suspend the reader's (or the audience's) time and substitute that of the tale, the oral narrator uses all kinds of hidden psychological persuaders, images, dialogue and direct appeals. If the oral narrator has a bias toward a certain interpretation of the events, he must employ all his art, using subtle repetitions and suggestions in order to convince. He also must keep in mind that his audience will not be able to rely on the printed word, re-read that part he didn't understand or remember, stop and look up words he does not know in the dictionary. And then too, the narrative time must in some way reproduce the lived time in order to make the story believable. Faulkner refers to this central problem of the oral narrator's art through Quentin as he listens to Rosa Coldfield telling Thomas Sutpen's story:

> It should have been later than it was; it should have been late, yet the yellow slashes of mote-palpitant sunlight were latticed no higher up the impalpable wall of gloom which separated them; the sun seemed hardly to have moved. It (the talking, the telling) seemed (to him, to Quentin) to partake of that logic- and reason-flauting quality of a dream which the sleeper knows must have occurred, still-born and complete, in a second, yet the very quality upon which it must depend to move the dreamer (verisimilitude) to credulity—horror or pleasure or amazement—

«The Achievement of William Faulkner» (London: Constable and Co., 1966), p. 90.

> depends as completely upon a formal recognition of and acceptance of elapsed and yet-elapsing time as music or a printed tale.

Delibes and Faulkner (and many of this century's best novelists) reject the appeal to logic and chronoligical time, traditional descriptions of ambience, etc., that are all a part of the traditonal novelist's art. The chronology emerges latantly but is a no less effective means of achieving narrative truth. The French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty points out that «deformed reality» (i. e., achronology, elliptical expression, and non-representationalism) in art are «only in theory deformations: for in fact they restore the living reality which the intellect in its arbitration distorts». (11). He uses the example of two parallel lines (such as railroad tracks) visually converging in the distance: «The rails converge and do not converge; they converge *in order to* remain equidistant below.» (12). Merleau-Ponty's paraphrase of Paul Klee's notion of latent structure enlightens this process:

> There is that which reaches the eye directly *(de face)* ...the frontal properties of the visible; but there is also that which reaches it from below—the profound postural latency where the body raises itself to see and that which reaches vision from above like the phenomena of flight, of swimming, of movement, where it participates no longer in the heaviness of origins but in free accomplishments. (13)

In the remainder of this essay we will observe Delibes's

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(11) Maurice Merleau - Ponty, quoted by Marjorie Grene, «The Aesthetic Dialogue of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty,» «The Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology,» 1 (1970), p. 69.

(12) Maurice Merleau-Ponty, «The Primacy of Perception» (Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 187.

(13) Quoted from Paul Klee, «Wege des Naturstudiums» (1923) in ibid.

and Faulkner's oral narrators and the methods by which they convince us of the truth of their story.

Several of the narrators are logically unfit as conveyors of truth. Benjy is an idiot, Quentin is on the verge of suicide, Jason has just been robbed of his life-savings, Rosa Coldfield is an embittered old woman, Carmen is a narrow-minded middle-class woman of limited experience. But these conditions lend themselves to the primary requirements of the story teller's art: vivid imagery, repetition of key parts of the story for clear comprehension, non-literary language which is easily accessible to every audience, withholding of key information to maintain interest and suspense, etc.

Benjy, as a speechless idiot, views the world in images and his interior monologued version of his family's history is based on them. (14). Benjy registers chronological time in an elemental system of heat and cold, damp and dry. The time sequence of his narration is chaotic but the reader can follow it through his sense perceptions. People also come into focus through his senses, generally by smell rather than the normal person's recognition by sight: «She [Caddy] smelled like trees»; «I like to smell Versh's house»; or «The bed smelled like T. P. I liked it».

His images are primal, even primitive; like ancient man he has a fascination for fire and reflections which help orient us in his world: «She led me to the fire and I looked at the bright, smooth shapes. I could hear the fire and the roof.» He watches a family fight in the mirror, then the people recede as the mirror and fire images fuse: «Father brought Caddy to the fire. They were all out of the mirror. Only the fire was in it. Like the fire was in a door...» Perhaps because his world lacks the elaborate supra-structures of civilization he senses sin and death before the rational characters do. When his grandmother dies he

(14) The image may be a key to Faulkner's own art, particularly in «The Sound and the Fury», which he said he first conceived as the image of a little girl's brothers viewing her muddy drawers as she climbed a tree to look into the house at her grandmother's funeral.

says, «A door opened and I could smell it more than ever...» We quite naturally accept this almost supernatural or prophetic quality of Benjy's vision because his language speaks to our primary senses.

Benjy tells his version of the story first; his view is primary and prior to all the others which build on the sights and smells of the atmosphere he has created. Quentin's pre-occupation with past time, Jason's view of life as money and Dilsey's almost mythical interpretation of the Compson family («I seed de beginnin, and now I sees de endin») rest on the primal images of Benjy's elementary world view. His time and space, which are related only to the present moment of his physical being, are prior to Quentin's obsession with the dead time of the past, Jason's constant speculation about the future and Dilsey's ordered acceptance of chronological time and its inevitable march.

When Carmen narrates Mario's story during the five hour wake she holds beside his dead body, she is ostensibly talking about herself. But the effect at the end of the novel is for Mario's character to stand in relief as her own recedes into the shadows. Her language is banal and repetitive; she uses the stock phrases of her limited world to evoke over and over again the same events and the same opinions. Her re-iterative phrase most often chides Mario for not having given her the material things so important to the middle class woman: the silverware, a different apartment, another maid, a car, etc. And she criticizes his failure to comply with rituals of their class:

> Mario que a lo mejor me pongo inclusive pesada, pero no es una bagatela eso, que para mí, la declaración de amor, fundamental, imprescindible, fíjate, por más que tú vengas con que son tonterías. Pues no lo son, no son tonterías, ya ves tú, que, te pones a ver, y el noviazgo es el paso más importante en la vida de un hombre y de una mujer, que no es hablar por hablar, y lógicamente, ese paso debe de ser solemne, inclusive, si me apuras, ajustado a unas palabras rituales,

acuérdate de lo que decía la pobre mamá, que en paz descanse.

Thus her language like Benjy's, through repetition of the objects essential to her world view, spins her tale. The tirelessly repeated material goals and petit bourgeois morality provide an ironic counterpoint when she discloses toward the end of the novel that she has come very close to committing adultery, the capital sin of her class.

The counterpoint and correcting for personal bias in the narrative viewpoint, as in an oral narrative situation, must be done in these novels by the reader himself. There is no Sancho or omniscent author to point out that those really were windmills and not giants. The materials for an approximation of the truth are implicit in the text but the reader must make the final interpretation. In *Absalom! Absalom!* we have several versions of Thomas Sutpen's story, all somewhat deficient. Miss Rosa's version is, like Carmen's narration, a highly colored and personal account because she is too emotionally involved in the events. Thomas Sutpen shocked her puritan proprieties and for her he can only have been a demon. Mr. Compson's version is more reliable but we soon discover that he doesn't have all the facts. And Quentin and Shreve merely reconstruct many of the important scenes at Harvard, at great temporal and spatial distance from the actual events. They are like the fifteenth century balladeers who selected the moments of greatest dramatic interest in the epic stories and dreamt up likely dialogue and actions to fill in the personal aspects of the stories that were left out of the epic versions. Faulkner suggests the balladeers function when Miss Rosa reminds Quentin of the children's lyrics about her broken engagement: «Rosie Coldfield, lose him, weep him, had a man but couldn't keep him.»

Like the epic poets, Delibes and Faulkner have their oral narrators use epithets and other colorful stock phrases to remind us of the principle characters whose identities might not always be clear in the context of an orally narrated story. They give the epithet or acclarative phrase in parentheses as an aside to the audience: «She (Miss Rosa) was born in 1845...» ...«fluid cradle of events (time)»; «'¡Oh, Dios! ¿Dónde vamos a parar?', se dice (Jacinto)»; «Le cuesta mucho elaborarlas (las ideas)». The narrator may have a side comment to make about the action, a personal interpretation that he wants to clarify and that too is indicated in parentheses:

> She could have known no more about it than the town knew because the ones who did know (Sutpen or Judith: not Ellen, who would have been told nothing in the first place and would have forgot, failed to have assimilated, it if she had been told— Ellen the butterfly, from beneath when without warning...)

The narrator frequently tries to conjure up the actual scene as it must have taken place, inviting us to join him in his speculation: «I saw the price which she had paid for that house and that pride; I saw the notes of hand on pride and contentment...» Or «It seemed to Quentin that he could actually see them: the ragged and starving troops without shoes». Or a passage from one of Jacinto San José's oral confrontations with his mirror image: «Y ahora, ya le ves, le llevas un hueso y bien, tan contento, y no se lo llevas y también, bien... Anda, mírale ahora. Y es que la mosca no es lo malo...»

Suspense, even mystery, are the results of a circular narrative method in which both Faulkner and Delibes display exceptional talent. The same events are mentioned again and again; with each repetition, new details are revealed. We have the essential outline of the story almost immediately, in the first few pages, but there must be more to the story. Additional information frequently sheds light on the mystery and simultaneously deepens it. Carmen recounts over and over her ride in Paco's car, but each time she moves closer to the final revelation that he took her to the «Pinar» and that she nearly committed adultery. Delibes says that this technique is a

> fórmula de círculos concéntricos... los personajes y el tema de la novela están ya prácticamente definidos en los primeros capítulos. En los siguientes, el núcleo central se va ampliando, como cuando tiras una piedra al río, en círculos cada vez más grandes, con nuevas anécdotas sugerencias y matices. La historia, pues, apenas progresa: esencialmente, se enriquece. (15)

Faulkner could thus have described his own technique in *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom! Absalom!* What Benjy leaves out either Quentin, Jason or the author supply in later sections. Benjy introduces the important scenes but we only latently understand their significance, especially their moral significance, which is precisely the «mystery »of Delibes novel as well. In *Absalom! Absalom!* Faulkner approaches the classical mystery story that centers on a dark, complex murder. Only this time the murderer is known, and the motive remains to be discovered. Each narrator theorizes and hypothesizes a solution to the secret and the reader is left to sift the available evidence and draw his own conclusions. The linear chronology of the traditional narrative is thus replaced with a circular or layered chronology in which we come to feel that the narrated events have occurred simultaneously

Faulkner and Delibes, like so many other twentieth century novelists have rediscovered the Bible, the most ancient extant narration, as a source of themes and images. But the writers under consideration here draw on Biblical style and narrative techniques as well as themes and images. The accumulative Biblical rhythms and chant-like quality of their prose underscore the ritual, timeless aspects of the stories they are telling. Jack Ludwig has pointed out that

> Southern [U. S.] writers use pitchmen's and Biblical rhythms as a kind of music in reserve. Ordinary discourse and narrative, particularly that form which derives from Hemingway, is neither incantatory nor lyrical; the contemporary novelist is attracted to characters... who are unlimited and uninbibited stylistically-Irish and Welsh bards, Yiddish mammas, Negro preachers, carnival pichmen, common blue-tongued monologuists... Conformity of character and the manners in the twentieth century has its equivalent in the colorlessness and predictability of contemporary talk and rhythm. (16)

Carmen and Miss Rosa are precisely the latter kind of character, but their idiom is turned to the former purpose. In their artistic re-elaboration of it, the repetition serves an ironic and complex function, as in the Bible, which relies for its effect on crude (i. e., non-literary) metaphor, repetition and parallelism, all the basic tools of the oral story teller, incorporated during centuries of oral tradition. The rhythms and repetitions that Faulkner and Delibes have in common with many passages of the Bible are essential to the effective emersion of the reader in the novel's time. This effect is exemplified in the Negro Easter service that Dilsey attends toward the end of *The Sound and the Fury:*

> 'Brethren', the minister said in a harsh whisper, without moving.
> 'Yes, Jesus!, the woman's voice said, hushed yet.
> 'Breddren en sustuhn!'His voice rang again, with the horns. He removed his arm and stood erect and raised his hands. 'I got de ricklickshun en de blood of de Lamb!'They did not mark just when his intonation, his pronunciation, became negroid, they just sat

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(15) «Conversaciones con Miguel Delibes,» p. 131.
(16) Jack Ludwig, «Recent American Novelists» (University of Minnesota, 1962), p. 36.

swaying a little in their seats as the voice took them into itself.

When' de long, cold — Oh, I tells you, breddren, when de long, cold— I sees de light en I sees de word, po sinner! Dey passed away in Egypt de swingin chariots; de generations passed away. Wus a rich man: whar he now, O sustuhn? Oh I tells you, ef you ain't got de milk en de dew of de old salvation when de long, cold years rolls away!'

Carmen's trite speeches are introduced at the beginning of each chapter by a passage from the Bible. The Bible quotation provides a stylistic counterpoint to her language because she uses a similar rhythmic repetition but in a context devoid of transcendance:

> *Es un orgulloso que nada sabe, que desvaría en disputas y vanidades, de donde nacen envidias, contiendas, blasfemias, suspicacias, porfías de hombres de inteligencia corrompida y privados de la verdad, que tienen la piedad por materia de lucro,* y a mí no me la dais, Mario, a vosotros lo que os fastidia de Higinio Oyarzun es el Dos Caballos, hablèmos francamente, y que a los quince años de estar aquí, haya entrado en sociedad, cosa que ni tú ni los de tu camarilla habéis conseguido, ni conseguirás, por la sencilla razón de que sois unos hurones, para qué vamos a engañarnos, que ni tenéis trato ni sabéis poneros derecha la corbata.

Carmen, like the psalmist of the Old Testament, airs the wrongs against her and simultaneously begs forgiveness for her transgression. Her method is designed to make her own sin seem small in comparison to the injustices done her. She effects that curious balance of self-righteous indignation and reverant humility that one finds in the. psalms.

The essential irony in the narrative techniques that

Faulkner and Delibes share reveals a morally ordered world. The moral concept of any particular narrator is distorted but the corrections the reader is forced to make by the implied irony discloses the moral intent. Both writers recur to pre-novleistic devices—chiefly allegory—to achieve this moral effect. Delibes reverses the ancient allegorical technique of endowing animals with human qualities in order to make a moral point. In *Parábola del náufrago,* men become animals when their lives as dignified human beings are no longer possible. The change to the animal form is gradual, but it clearly begins to occur at a point in the story when the man is no longer human in spiritual terms, no longer commands self-respect or dignity. Thus when Jacinto San José capitulates in his struggle with a nightmare garden that holds him prisoner, his body begins to assume the characteristics of a goat.

Faulkner uses this technique in a less extreme way when he portrays the downfall and degradation of Mink Snopes (by name and characteristics always something of an animal who acts on instinct). Mink's animal-like cunning and savagery are provoked when the farmer Houston treats him as less than human and pushes him beyond the limits of human dignity. So Mink ambushes Houston in a dishonorable cat-like murder. Mink murders Flem at the end of *The Mansion* not so much because Flem made no effort to keep him from going to prision for Houston's murder, but because Flem degraded him and made him look ridiculous before the entire prison community. In order to keep Mink in prison when his sentence is nearly over, Flem convinces Mink to dress as a woman and try to escape; the guards are forewarned and Mink is caught and humiliated as well as sentenced to another twenty years.

The many similarities we have pointed out in Faulkner and Delibes' world views and novelistic techniques are undoubtedly due to a complex set of reasons. But surely an important factor in the formation of each writer was his provencience form and life-long affiliation with a specific geographical region with a long, rather clearly defined historical and folk tradition — Old Castile and northern Mississippi. The popular language that gives a rhythmical dimension to their narrative, the affinity for popular (un-novelistic) narrative techniques, the structured, morally centered world view all seem to stem from a close identification with a traditional community. Their narrators are spokesmen for the good and the bad elements in the community values. Miss Rosa is clearly a product of her strict Calvinist upbringing and it colors her entire interpretation of the story. Carmen sees Mario's actions only in terms of middle class Spanish values.

Although Delibes and Faulkner are criticizing the closed-mindedness of their native societies, they are unashamedly a part of those traditions. Perhaps Quentin speaks for Faulkner at the end of *Absalom! Absalom!* when he answers Shreve's question: «Why do you hate the South?»:

> 'I dont hate it', Quentin said, quickly, at once, immediately; 'I dont hate it', he said. *I dont hate it* he thought, panting in the cold air, the iron New England dark; I dont. *I dont! I dont hate it! I dont hate it!*

The narrative tone of Delibes novels carries the same effect:

> El escritor detecta unas cuantas verdades de la vida española, pero su crítica se queda entre la ironía y la ternura. Ama aquello que denuncia. No se decide a hacer la proclama total, a romper con todo. Si se decidiese, no habría escritor, iría contra la sustancia misma de su obra, porque él se nutre en ello su razón de ser. (17)

These writers' identification with the natural world (both have been avid hunters), their predilection for uneducated folk in life and in fiction frequently show through their narratives in the form of folk humor that is charged with an ironic vision. They both seem to share the view that narrative fiction is an essential part of man's social life and expression and they agree that the novelist's art should be a voice for his community:

> —Ellos dicen: la sociedad es confusa, luego debemos servirle un arte confuso. Pero te paras a reflexionar sobre esto y llegas a la conclusión de que entonces la novela no es más que el eco de una sociedad, un simple reflejo. Y te rebelas contra esto porque entiendes que el arte debe ser voz y no eco. (17)

Faulkner said in his Nobel Prize speech that «The poet's voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail» (18).

Both Delibes and Faulkner have been accused of being «old-fashioned» and perhaps they are in a world where the visual image evoked on movie and television screens and in photograph - oriented magazines has corrupted the imagination and made it unwilling to conjure scenes merely from the written or spoken word. If that particular area of the world of the imagination survives in the future it may do so partly thanks to writers like Faulkner and Delibes

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(17) «Conversaciones,» p. 144.

(18) William Faulkner, «Nobel Prize Spech,» printed in «Essays, Speeches and Public Letters,» ed. James B. Meriwether (New York, 1966).