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**Disordered Memory and Fragmented  
Narration in William Faulkner's *The  
Sound and the Fury* (1929)**

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## **Dedication**

*To my parents who have always loved me unconditionally and whose good examples have taught me to work hard for the things that I aspire to achieve.*

*To my wife who has been a constant source of support and encouragement.  
I am truly thankful for having you in my life.*

*To my brothers and sister for their support and encouragement,*

*To my friends especially Sarra Bederina and Aicha Hocine for their  
consistent motivation and help.*

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## ABSTRACT

Each literary era claims a unique style and philosophy of literature, to which many authors ascribe. William Faulkner is a well-known American writer whose fiction stands for literary modernism. The present dissertation examines the literary modern experimentation in William Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury* (1929). Accordingly, the purpose of this research is to study the modern narrative techniques employed by Faulkner to achieve this experimentation with time and narrative devices. More accurately, this research seeks to investigate the use of disordered memory as well as fragmented narration in the studied novel. This investigation suggests that the use of different modernist techniques such as stream of consciousness, multiple point of views, fragmentation, and non-chronological time all serve Faulkner to achieve his goal of presenting a highly modernist novel. Additionally, to better achieve his innovative techniques, Faulkner uses two radically different narrators. The first narrator is mentally disabled and has poor cognitive skills that affect both his language and comprehension of time. The second narrator is highly educated and uses sophisticated language and who develops an obsession with time. Ultimately, disordered memory and fragmented narration are both employed effectively in Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury*.

## Résumé

Chaque époque littéraire revendique un style et une philosophie de la littérature unique, auxquels de nombreux auteurs attribuent. William Faulkner est un écrivain américain bien connu dont la fiction est synonyme de modernisme littéraire. La présente recherche examine l'expérimentation littéraire moderne dans le roman de William Faulkner *le son et la fureur*. En conséquence, le but de cette recherche est d'étudier les techniques narratives modernes employées par Faulkner pour réaliser cette expérimentation avec le temps et les dispositifs narratifs. Plus précisément, cette recherche cherche à étudier l'utilisation de la mémoire désordonnée ainsi que la narration fragmentée dans le roman étudié. Cette recherche suggère que l'utilisation de différentes techniques modernes telles que le courant de conscience, les points de vue multiples, la fragmentation et le temps non-chronologique servent tous Faulkner pour atteindre son objectif de présenter un roman très moderne. De plus, pour mieux réaliser ses techniques innovantes, Faulkner utilise deux narrateurs radicalement différents : le premier narrateur est mentalement handicapé et possède de faibles compétences cognitives affectant à la fois son langage et sa compréhension du temps. Le deuxième narrateur hautement éduqué qui utilise un langage sophistiqué et qui développe une obsession avec le temps. En fin de compte, la mémoire désordonnée et la narration fragmentée sont toutes deux employées efficacement dans le roman de Faulkner, *le son et la fureur*.

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# **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

Modernist literature has captured the social and historical ramification of late 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century. The content of the Modernist literature had dealt with general issues of modernism. Modernist writers had to find expression in innovative techniques and a new form to express the complex issues they were faced with.

William Faulkner is one of the greatest American writers. His novel entitled: *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) is considered to be a classic in American Literature in which he used new techniques to express his views of the modern world. Taking place in the imaginary Yoknapatawpha County situated in the American South, the novel relates the life of the Compson Family in the aftermath of the Civil War. In accordance with his observations of the world he lives in after the Civil War, he experimented on new narrative techniques. In fact, he attempted to imagine the realities of the inner working mind of his different characters.

This research attempts to shed light on William Faulkner's use of modernist techniques in his novel *The Sound and the Fury*, particularly his use of modernistic approach to the representation of time in his narrative as well as his experimentation with narrative devices. Through the use of these narrative techniques, William Faulkner sought to present the thoughts and memories of the Compson family.

This intended research is an attempt at a close examination and analysis of a fictional narrative. Our aim is to demonstrate the way in which Faulkner uses modernist techniques to provide the disordered memory of the Compson family as well as a fragmented narration of their story in his novel, *The Sound and the Fury*. We put forward that through the use of Benjy's narration (an idiot narrator) juxtaposed with Quentin's narration (a mentally disturbed narrator). Faulkner attempts to challenge the reader: in order to reconstruct the chronology of the events and make sense of the different

narrations; the reader has to work hard and completely focus on the narrative despite its fragmented narration.

One of the reasons of our choice to study William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* within this research is because the novel, a classic of American Literature, is radically different from other traditional American novels. In addition, this novel is considered a modernist work par excellence; hence it offers a good example of modernist techniques notably due to its distorted chronology, its fragmented nature and its narrative structure.

In this study, we are concerned with the modern narrative techniques that permitted Faulkner to use disordered memory and fragmented narration effectively in his novel *The Sound and the Fury*. This research has given rise to this fundamental question: how does William Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury* encompass modernist techniques? Accordingly, this question has thrown up sub-questions in need of further investigation:

- To what end does Faulkner use modernist techniques in his novel?
- How did Faulkner employ time in a modernistic approach?
- Why did Faulkner rely on a fragmented narration? And how is Benjy's narration different from Quentin's narration?

In consideration of finding out answers to the questions mentioned above, this research claims that Faulkner employs several characteristics of modernism in its narrative technique that foreground the use of fragmentation, stream of consciousness, and multiple points of view.

Faulkner used multiple points of view, fragmentation and stream of consciousness to insist on the fact that human consciousness is fluid; therefore, characters are presented through their inner thoughts rather than their actions. In *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner's narrative is disordered and fragmented. In addition to the fact that his narration does not follow a clear chronological order, Faulkner relies on two radically different narrators: Benjamin (Benjy) Compson and Quentin Compson among others. While the first one is mentally disabled, the second one in contrast is highly educated.

William Faulkner chose to tell his story in a complex way. The stream of consciousness technique is used effectively to represent inner worlds rather than the outer one. The mind styles of the narrators in this research, differ greatly; therefore, their style of narrative is relatively different.

William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, as a masterpiece of twentieth century in American literature, has been extensively studied. One of these studies is Suzanne Nalbantian in chapter entitled "Woolf, Joyce and Faulkner: Associative Memory" published in her book *Memory in Literature: From Rousseau to Neuroscience* (2003). She tries to scrutinise Faulkner's narrative techniques, especially his reliance on a mentally disabled narrator, Benjy Compson, in the first chapter and looks for the motives of such a choice. The writer combines literature and neuroscience in her study of memory which offers a helpful insight for our current study as we try to examine disordered memories of the different characters in the novel, and how it affects their narration, we are particularly interested in the narration of Benjy Compson and Quentin Compson, However, Nalbantian's explanation is relatively short and consequently does not provide a satisfactory discussion.

In addition, Stacy Burton's "Benjy, Narrativity and the Coherence of Compson History" (1995) is considerably important since it focuses on the narrative of Benjy, who is a mentally disabled character. Burton explores Faulkner's use of stream of consciousness as a modernist technique to narrate the history of a southern American family, she contrasts Benjy's stream of consciousness which is simple due to his mental handicap to his older brother Quentin who is a highly educated.

One of the most important studies about the novel we intend to study is Jean Paul Sartre's article entitled: "On *the Sound and the Fury*: Time in the Work of William Faulkner" (1995). Sartre examines Faulkner's use of time in the different chapters of his novel. He juxtaposes Quentin Compson's obsession with time in contrast to Benjy's inability to process time due to his mental deficiency. According to Sartre, Faulkner fails to present a promising future for his characters and holds them in a never-ending past and present cycle. Nevertheless, Sartre acknowledges that there is a future for Faulkner's characters, but it is distant if compared with his emphasis on the past, he uses Martin Heidegger philosophy of time and being to explain the link between past and future. Sartre in his paper criticises Faulkner's use of nonlinear time in his novel, his characters' obsession with the past, as well as his little interest in the future which may refer to absurdity as Heidegger explains that everybody relates to the future no matter how desperate they are. Nevertheless, this becomes comprehensible as there is no bright future since Faulkner narrates the decline of the Compson family.

This study is a descriptive analytical study which is based on a critical reading of Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*. Leaning on the New Critical School's concept of "close reading", this analysis essentially relies on extracting samples from the novel representing the themes related to the use of time as well as themes which best portray

modernist narrative techniques such as fragmentation, stream of consciousness and multiple points of view. And accordingly, analyse these extracted passages which are representative of the ways in which Faulkner used modernist techniques.

We should make clear that this research will be limited to the study of two of the main characters in William Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury*, namely: Benjy and Quentin. Our focus would be on these two characters because they best portray what we intend to study i.e. the disordered memory and fragmented narration in this novel.

The present study is divided into three chapters. The first chapter entitled: **“Theoretical Study of Modernist Techniques in William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*”** attempts to offer a literary background needed for this study. It mainly focuses on the introduction and explanation of modernism as well as the major modernist techniques used by Faulkner. Afterwards, the second chapter entitled **“Disordered Memory in William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*”** sheds light on Faulkner’s modernist approach to time and closely examine his use of non-chronological time that corresponds to the disordered memory. Subsequently, the third chapter entitled **“Fragmented narration in William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*”** focuses on the innovative narrative devices that Faulkner employs. Aspects which contribute to the complexity of Faulkner’s narration are his use of fragmentation, stream of consciousness, multiple points of view as well as a distorted chronology. Moreover, it will focus on the language in Benjy’s narration which is simple, yet difficult to follow due to Benjy’s deficient language.

# CHAPTER ONE

- **Theoretical study of Modernist Techniques in William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929)**

## 1. Introduction

Modernism is a movement which started around the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Modernism affected many scientific fields and arts and especially literature. Literary modernism is characterised by breaking away from traditions of the previous century and the use of innovative narrative techniques and experimentation in writing. William Faulkner's novel, *The Sound and the Fury*, is often considered as one of the most influential modernist novels in American literature.

This chapter offers the literary background needed for this study. It focuses on explaining modernism. In addition, this chapter aims to investigate the use of major modernist literary techniques in William Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury*.

## 2. Modernism

‘Modernism’, generally refers to modern thoughts and character (Butler 4). The term modernism encapsulates the practice of breaking away from traditions and previous traditional ways of writing. Originally created in Europe during the early 20th century and later on spread to the United States, modernism is a cultural movement that impacted different fields such as art, architecture, sciences, music, and literature. Modern artist sought to break from realism and the predefined conventions of writing through radically altering traditional forms as well as expressing a sense of modern life.

In 1949, William Faulkner was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature for his “powerful and artistically unique contribution to modern American novel” (Polk 31). As a matter of fact, Faulkner used several modernist narrative techniques in his fiction. These narrative techniques include stream of consciousness, multiplicity of narrative voices: omniscient/ first person narrator, fragmentation, flashbacks, foreshadowing and disordered time, as well as other techniques.

### 2.1. Definition of Modernism

In *the Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (2001), Chris Baldick defines Modernism as:

a general term applied retrospectively to the wide range of experimental and Avant-garde trends in the literature (and other arts) of the early 20th century, including Symbolism, Futurism, Expressionism, Imagism, Vorticism, Dada, and Surrealism, along with the innovations of unaffiliated writers. (159)

Accordingly, modernists sought to oppose former conventions and invent new trends. Furthermore, Baldick notices that: “Modernist writing is described mainly by a dismissal of 19th century customs and of their agreement in the middle of a writer and pursuer” (Baldick, 159). Therefore, it is evident that modernists’ main purpose was attempting to achieve a split from Victorian traditions. The modern era witnessed the emergence of innovative styles and experimentations. Among the pioneers of experimenting with these techniques, we can cite James Joyce (1882-1941), Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), William Faulkner (1897- 1962), in addition to poets such as T.S. Elliot (1888-1965) and Ezra Pound (1885-1972) who is best known for his slogan of “make it new” (Weinstein 7) in regard to modernism.

## **2.2. Historical Background of Modernism**

It is challenging to locate the dates of the Modernist Movement. The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is often considered as the beginning (Butler 13). By the turn of the century, Queen Victoria’s reign came to an end and it represented a symbolic disruption from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In addition to the symbolic disruption, this period witnessed the publication of many revolutionary theories, for example we can cite Albert Einstein’s theory of relativity, Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution, Max Planck’s Quantum Theory, Sigmund Freud’s interpretation of dreams, Henry Bergson’s conception of time, Karl Marx’s *The Capital* and Friedrich Nietzsche’s philosophy of will to power. This publication consolidated the break between the two centuries and illustrated the advancements made in the natural sciences, the social sciences and art. (Butler 13-15)

It is precarious to use the year 1900 as the date in which modernism started, in fact, “[s]ome literary historians locate the beginning of the modernist revolt as far back as the 1890s, but most agree that what is called high modernism, marked by an unexampled

scope and rapidity of change, came after the First World War.” (Abrams and Harpham 226); accordingly, works produced in the late 1800s and exhibit modernist tendencies are still included.

Despite the fact that the end of the Second World War symbolises a change in political, social, cultural and literary values, and subsequently, it should represent the endpoint of modernism since it is regarded as “a long-lasting period in art and literature of the twentieth century grows out of the Anglo-American experience which took place between the years 1910-1940. Sometimes its beginnings are shifted, and its *caesura* is moved up to 1945 or even beyond 1950 [the writers’ italics]” (Eysteinnsson. and Liska 15). However, the year varies from one place to another as a matter of fact, modernism thrived:

in France from the 1890s until the 1940s; in Russia during the prerevolutionary years and the 1920s; in Germany from the 1890s and on during the 1920s; in England from early in the 20th c. and during the 1920s and 1930s; in America from shortly before the First World War and on during the interwar period. (Cuddon 442)

Thus, it is difficult to determine a precise date as it changes from one country to another. It is noteworthy to admit that most literary critics use the year 1939 as the endpoint of Modernism. (Hanna 48)

### **2.3. Characteristics of Modernism**

Modernist literature is characterised by its tendency to break away from the traditions and established rules, as well as its interest in all that is constructed rather than

what is natural. In fact, “[m]odernist literature is characterised chiefly by a rejection of 19th-century traditions and of their consensus between author and reader” (Baldick, 159). This breach with tradition and conventional modes of form resulted in fragmentation and use of ground-breaking experimentation.

In addition, the progress made in different fields led to a rejection of old certainties, this is why modernists consider everything to be relative and reject absolute truth, unlike realists who tend to believe that reality could be attained by a process of observation (Baldick 162); modernists, then, tend to believe that truth is relative as each individual can make his/her own meaning of what is true. In other words, meaning is dependent on individual perspective which renders it personal; therefore, modernists usually use different narrators with different perspectives to tell a story in which the truth is implied in the middle of the different perspectives. In other words, multiple points of view were used as well as a rejection of a single omniscient point of view for a narrative to highlight that the consciousness of one character’s point of view is limited. Therefore, modern fiction has a tendency to limit the reader to one character’s point of view on a given action. In many cases, the selected point of view is often that of a naïve or a marginal person, for instance a child, an outsider, or a mentally disabled character to better express the confusion of reality instead of certainty.

Likewise, modernism witnessed a decreased level of experimentation in writing; modernists used a language that convey several meanings and diverse connotations as well as open endings or ambiguous endings since they represent better modern life. Their writing is also characterised by the absence of a coherent chronological order and leaps in time and decay of plot and characters in their writing. Most modernist narratives do not have a proper beginning, middle and/or end. Therefore, readers get confused to some

extent in regard to what the writer is attempting to convey. Modernists, no longer, used linear plots with abrupt climatic turning point and pre-determined resolutions; actually, the plot, theme and characters were not necessarily linear. Instead, modernists used discontinuous fragments, multiple plots, no appropriate beginning, middle and end which included open unresolved endings.

## **2.4. Themes of Modernist Literature**

Modernists tried to convey the essence of modern life through a plethora of themes they used. Usually implied and not directly revealed, themes such as breaking down of social and cultural norms, alienation of individuals, meaninglessness of modern life and uncertainty were used by modernists in an attempt to urge readers to make their own conclusions; as a result, modernist novels usually begin and end arbitrarily without a clearly defined resolution, instead they tend to give a lot of possibilities to draw attention to the nihilistic disorder that lays down beneath the Idyllic reality. Butler advances that the modern character becomes “a perfect instrument for registering the variety, the flux, the interpenetration, the simultaneity and randomness of experience” (64)

Themes of destruction and chaos were used by modernist writers to reflect the destruction that prevailed after the First World War and show what the modern man was capable of. Moreover, loss and exile are also recurring themes in modernism. Modernists rejected figures of authority, pre-established truths and religion. Modern characters are often subjected to isolation, loss and exile from society; they are often alienated and marginalised. Additionally, themes of breaking down social norms and cultural values and disillusionment were widely used by modernist writers.

### 3. Faulkner and Modernism

In his essay entitled: “‘Make It New’: Faulkner and Modernism’ (2007), Philip Weinstein advances that: “Faulkner and modernism: the topic has been exhaustively treated yet remains in -exhaustible.” (342). William Faulkner’s fiction displays many modernist characteristics. Firstly, he is famous for experimenting with narrative structures as well as narrative voices and his use of discontinuous narrative; consequently, it moves back and forth in time. Secondly, he heavily invested on the use of stream of consciousness in his writing. Furthermore, he uses intertextuality which is one of modernist techniques through which a writer’s text is connected to one or more texts. This connection is made implicitly by alluding to meanings or explicitly by quoting from the other text. Thus, the title of Faulkner’s novel *The Sound and the Fury* is associated with William Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* (1606). The title is taken from the closing lines a soliloquy at the end of his play, *Macbeth*: “it is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing” (*Macbeth*, Act V, Scene v) Moreover, Faulkner deliberately broke some rules of syntax and structure in his novels as an attempt to eradicate the conventional forms and rules of language. He invents new words, invests heavily in experimental modernist narrative techniques such as first-person narrator and stream of consciousness.

### 4. Modernist Literary techniques

In their attempt to break away from traditions and conventions, modernist writers experimented with new literary techniques to produce a new body of literature. They aimed to revolutionise the form and content of their work, and to grasp the essence of modern life.

## 4.1. Fragmentation

Modernists used fragmentation as a literary form. Through its use, they sought to underpin the fragmentation of modern reality and the modern world. Modernists' work was created out of scattered fragments instead of full explanations, coherent transitions and clear resolutions that were traditionally used before modernism. Narrative forms, plot and themes are broken down to fragments. For instance, William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* represents an example of fragmentation. The novel is fragmented in form; it is primarily constituted of disordered and nonlinear narrative. Faulkner's novel is full of fragmentary sentences that are connected to other events. The first chapter of *The Sound and the Fury* starts with Benjamin (Benjy) Compson's narration. Benjy is mentally disabled and has poor cognitive skills; henceforth, he cannot differentiate between the past and the present. The words that he uses in his narration are a juxtaposition of changes that occur in images, sounds and smells. The following passage is taken from Benjy's narration:

[...] Hush, now." Luster said. "Ain't I told you you can't go up there. They'll knock your head clean off with one of them balls. Come on, here." He pulled me back. "Sit down." I sat down and he took off my shoes and rolled up my trousers. "Now, git in that water and play and see can you stop that slobbering and moaning." [...] Caddy was all wet and muddy behind, and I started to cry and she came and squatted in the water. "Hush now." she said. "I'm not going to run away." So I hushed. Caddy smelled like trees in the rain. (Faulkner 16)

Accordingly, Benjy narrates an event with his servant, Luster; hence, we deduce that at this moment he is thirty-three years old then his narration, suddenly, shifts to his childhood: the river reminds Benjy of his sister Caddy when she smudged her underwear with mud. This passage exhibits Faulkner's technique of juxtaposing two separate events without proper introduction, leaving the narrative up to the readers to make necessary connections and relate the two separate events. Throughout Benjy's narration we can distinguish a fragmentation of time and memories. Benjy continuously reconnects present events with past ones as his disability renders him incapable of distinguishing time.

#### **4.2. Stream of Consciousness**

Stream of consciousness is a literary technique that was used by modernists in their attempt to capture the essence of the fragmented modern world. Through the use of stream of consciousness, modernists wanted to express their belief that people should be more concerned with their inner thoughts. As a matter of fact, modernists attempted to trace the non-linear process of thought of the modern character. These thoughts are not logically connected; they are characterized by their disordered flow. Stream of consciousness as a literary technique better captures the unorganised flow of insights, flashbacks, reflections, and memories.

Stream of consciousness is term coined by the psychologist William James in 1890 to refer to the continuous succession of experiences (Abrams 379). The term is used to describe the flow of one's internal thoughts, and it is used to refer to the psychological features of characters in fiction. Stream of consciousness is used by writers in their attempt to capture the in which the mind works. This technique better shows the natural flow and random movement of character's thoughts. Moreover, this technique helped writers to remove the logical transitions traditionally used; instead, the connection

between characters' thoughts is left up to the reader who is required to make the necessary associations between them. It is defined in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* as: "the continuous flow of sense-perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and memories in the human mind; or a literary method of representing such a blending of mental processes in fictional characters, usually in an unpunctuated or disjointed form of interior monologue." (Baldick 244). Stream of consciousness was used extensively in modernist fiction. It was pioneered by Dorothy Richardson in *Pilgrimage* (1915-35) and by James Joyce in *Ulysses* (1922), and further developed by Virginia Woolf in her novel *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and William Faulkner in *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) (Baldick 244). Indeed, this literary technique is used by Faulkner, in *The Sound and the Fury*, to bring to the forefront the inner thoughts and emotions of his characters.

Faulkner employs this technique in order to display the subjectivity in one's thoughts and the variance between individual's perspectives. Faulkner uses the stream of consciousness differently in each chapter. Benjy's section is challenging to many readers as they hardly understand his narration because of his mental disability. He relies heavily on images, smells and sounds to convey his narration, even if he uses very simple words making meaning out of his section becomes very difficult. For example, Benjy uses the smell of trees every time he refers to his sister Caddy: "[...] Caddy smelled like trees" (Faulkner 6).

In contrast to Benjy's section, Quentin uses very complex language in his section. The vocabulary Quentin uses reflects his higher education. However, his narration is centered on his sister's Caddy's promiscuity and his father's neutral response to it. His stream of consciousness is very rich with indicators of time; one can even deduce that he is obsessed with time and this obsession continues until when he commits suicide.

### 4.3. Point of View

In their experimentation with literary techniques, modernists employed shifting points of view in their narratives. Writers favoured the use of first-person and third-person limited narrators as an alternative for omniscient narrators. In modernism, reality and truth are considered as subjective concepts since they cannot be regarded objectively; they are shaped according to each person's perceptions. It is for this reason that modernists opted for the use of limited point of view in their narratives. In fact, the use of limited narrators permitted modernists to deliver the sense of uncertainty as well as a lack of awareness vis a vis the nature of human existence; it also allowed them to juxtapose conflicting and sometimes contradicting perspectives of multiple narrators to mirror the versatility of truth, and the flexibility of reality that many modernists praise.

Accordingly, it became common for modernist writers to use different limited narrators; for example, the poet T.S. Eliot used different speakers in his modernist poem "The Waste Land" and William Faulkner used several narrators in many of his novels. In his novel, *The Sound and The Fury*, Faulkner employs four different narrators to tell the story of the Compson Family. Divided into four chapters, each one has a specific narrator: Benjy, Quentin, Jason and Dilsey respectively. The latter's narration works as an omniscient third person narrator. That is to say, Faulkner starts with Benjy's narration which is considered to an objective narration to some extent because of Benjy's mental disability. Afterwards, it shifts to two subjective narrations: Quentin's and Jason's, then concludes with their maid Dilsey's objective narration. Through the use of this modernist technique, Faulkner sought to represent each character's mind and accentuate the difference with which different characters perceive a single event. In modernism, there is no single truth but multiple truths that depend upon the perspective of narrators, all the

narrators tell the story of Caddy Compson their sister, however, each one of her brothers gives readers a small parcel of what truly happened because their narrations are subjective. Faulkner leaves it up to readers to collect these parcels of truth about Caddy and deduce her entire story.

## 5. Conclusion

In this chapter, we sought to investigate the use of literary modernist techniques. In doing so, we attempted to lay a theoretical background by explaining literary notions such as modernism, its definition, historical background, characteristics and themes. Likewise, modernist literary techniques such as fragmentation, stream of consciousness and point of view. All along, we tried to give examples of these literary techniques in William Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury*. Indeed, Faulkner's modernist tendency is fully noticeable in his narrative. He used modernist techniques such as fragmentation, juxtaposition, stream of consciousness and multiple points of view to mirror the feelings of uncertainty, loss and disillusionment that characterised modern times.

## CHAPTER TWO

- **Disordered Memory in William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929)**

## 1. Introduction

In literary as well as literal world, time and memory have always been interrelated. In fact, remembrance of the past is achieved through the chronological succession of events. This chronological succession is sometimes interrupted or altered and consequently affects memory. Faulkner relies on time and memory to narrate the story and decline of the Compson family in his novel, *The Sound and the Fury*.

This chapter presents a close reading of the way in which Faulkner used non-chronological time in his narrative that results in a disordered memory of what happened to the Compson family with reference to Henri Bergson's theories of time and memory. Our aim is to examine different elements of time and memory in this narrative, therefore, this chapter will particularly focus on Benjy and Quentin's parts. Accordingly, both parts display two very different attitudes towards time: while Benjy shows no interest in time and somehow a complete absence of it, Quentin, on the other hand, develops an obsession with time. Thus, this chapter will focus on these two distinct parts and the factors that lead to this distinction between the two parts.

## 2. Time and memory for Bergson

French philosopher, Henri Bergson, wrote extensively about time and its representation in various literary mediums. In his philosophy, Bergson rejects the assumption that time functions in a predefined linear pattern which consists of the past, followed by the present, and then the future. Instead, Bergson advances that time functions in simultaneous way. He explains that the past directly affects the present; consequently, this present impinges the future. Bergson states that: “real time, ‘duree’ (duration), is [...] a spherical dimension where past, present, and future coexist and continually interact, shaping each other” (Qtd. in Haqshenas 41). In fact, the present represents “duration” which constitutes a meeting point for the three elements: past, present, and future. Nevertheless, it is important to note that despite his tendency to treat time in a heterogeneous way throughout his philosophy, Bergson insisted that succession in time sequences is essential. In his *Duration and Simultaneity: Concerning the Nature of Time* (1922), Bergson explains: “Where there is not some memory, some consciousness, real or virtual, established or imagined, actually present or ideally introduced, there cannot be a before and an after; there is one or the other, not both; and both are needed to constitute time” (Bergson 218). For Bergson, consciousness, memory and time are thoroughly connected. He further illustrates, in *Time and Free Will*, that: “When we add to the present moment those which have preceded it, as is the case when we are adding up units, we are not dealing with these moments themselves, since they have vanished forever, but with the lasting traces which they seem to have left” (Bergson 50). Accordingly, the three elements are significant and cannot be interpreted in isolation; instead, the three constitute a part of a web of knowledge that functions as a mean to rely

moments composed a memory of certain events along with time of occurrence and consciousness about its occurrence.

“Bergsonian Flux” is another important aspect of Bergson’s philosophy of time. In *Creative Evolution* (1911) Bergson explains the relationship between science and time. Scientifically speaking, time passes through moments set along a trajectory with a well-defined beginning and a well-defined end. Time progresses chronologically, as a matter of fact, it begins with the beginning and must end at the endpoint. But Bergson maintains that time does not always function in this “scientific” way. Science deals with time objectively while individuals, as Bergson puts forward, deal with time subjectively since it depends on their internal consciousness with their memories and feelings. Accordingly, there are two fluxes to deal with time: first one in the universal flux which is subjected to scientific reasoning, while the other one is individual flux which is subjected to internal consciousness.

Modernism emerged as a literary movement that sought to breakdown with old conventions and represent effectively the changes occurring in modern times. One of the main characteristics of modernism is the attempt to represent the prevailing state of turmoil and chaos. Consequently, the representation of time, as well as memory in modernism, was done in a disruptive linear manner. Many modern writers were influenced by Bergson’s philosophy in their treatment of time. William Faulkner, like many other modernist writers, experimented enthusiastically with the use of time especially in his novel *The Sound and the Fury*. Joseph Blotner, Faulkner’s biographer, advances that Faulkner allegedly agrees with “Bergson’s theory of the fluidity of time. There is only the present moment in which I include both the past and the future, and that is eternity” (Blotner 563). In contrast, Paul Douglass explains that:

No available evidence supports or refutes Blotner's and Adam's claims about Faulkner's reading. Virtually no philosophical works – classical or popular – were contained in Faulkner's private library, which included over 1,200 volumes from more than two dozen countries at the time of Faulkner's death, but no work of Bergson's. (Douglass 118)

In addition, Douglass affirms that “any discussion of Bergson and American Literature must deal with Faulkner” (Douglas 118). However, it is still a debate among critics whether Bergson influenced Faulkner or not. We do not aim to conduct a research about Bergson's influence on Faulkner, our aim is to briefly explain some notions of Bergson's philosophy of time that are relevant to our discussion of time.

### **3. Conception of Time in Faulkner's Narrative**

William Faulkner started to write his novel *The Sound and the Fury* in the fall of 1928. The novel represents the decline of the Southern American Compson family who lives in Yoknapatawpha County<sup>1</sup>, in northern Mississippi<sup>2</sup>. Often considered as Faulkner's best novel, *The Sound and the Fury* exhibits many modern and innovative techniques. Actually, these techniques allow the main characters to narrate the story of the Compson family through the use of stream of consciousness and fragmentation to better reflect the characters' disordered memory and subjective point of view. Faulkner's obsession with innovative experimentation with the concept of time is observed not only in *The Sound and the Fury* but throughout his other novels, such as *Absalom Absalom!* and *Light in August*. (Cuddon 2013)

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<sup>1</sup> Yoknapatawpha County is a fictional county in northern Mississippi. It was created by American writer William Faulkner and forms the setting for most of his work.

([https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/yoknapatawpha\\_county](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/yoknapatawpha_county) accessed on May 7<sup>th</sup> 2017)

<sup>2</sup> Adopted from <http://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/s/the-sound-and-the-fury/book-summary>

Besides, the plot of William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* is not chronologically ordered. The novel is divided into four parts, each part represents a particular date and is narrated by a different narrator. The first part is dated "April Seventh, 1928," and is narrated by Benjy Compson, afterwards, the second part is dated "June Second, 1910," and is narrated by Quentin Compson, then, the third part is dated "April Sixth, 1928", and is narrated by Jason Compson and finally, the fourth part is dated "April Eighth, 1928," and is narrated by Dilsey, the servant of the Compson family. It is noteworthy to take a close look at the order of these dates. While the years are disordered, the dates of April are correctly ordered and directly lead to Easter Sunday<sup>3</sup>, which according to Faulkner represents a symbol of renewal, rebirth and survival.

Many literary critics focused on Faulkner's use of time, among which we cite French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980). In his article entitled "Time in Faulkner: *The Sound and the Fury*," Sartre observes that for Faulkner "the past is never lost, unfortunately; it is always there, it is an obsession." Indeed, the past and the present are intermingled in Faulkner's novel. When asked about his conception of time in his narrative, he admits that: "there isn't any time [. . .] In fact, I agree pretty much with Bergson's theory of the fluidity of time. There is only the present moment, in which I include both the past and the future, and that is eternity. In my opinion time can be shaped quite a bit by the artist" (Nalbantian 92). Therefore, Faulkner's statement shows that his treatment of time and memory does not adhere to any preexisting theory and insists that it should depend on the artist's own wishes. Consequently, he opted for experimenting extensively with time and memory in his work. The results of his experimentation are

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<sup>3</sup> Easter Sunday is a Christian festival and feast that commemorates Jesus Christ's resurrection following his death and is observed with variations of date due to different calendars on the first Sunday after the paschal full moon. (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Easter%20Sunday> accessed on May 7<sup>th</sup> 2017)

evident in many of his novels and particularly in *The Sound and the Fury*. The narrative structure of this novel is non-conventional and does not follow a clearly defined linear order, that is to say, that the past and the present are continually mixed to defy chronological order. Faulkner uses different narrative devices in order to defy the linearity of time. Thus, stream of consciousness, multiple narrators and syntactic forms, symbolism and other to achieve his objective of destroying the chronological order of time in his novel. Literary critic, Suzanne Nalbantian, explains that:

Faulkner explored multiple dimensions of time within the stream of consciousness of his characters who have an associative range of memories. He juxtaposes those characters who can retreat to the past in Bergsonian experiences of 'durée' with those who remain more strongly connected to the present by a 'mathematical' consciousness of time. He also alternates between voluntary and involuntary memory sequences in his work. (Nalbantian 92-93)

According to Nalbantian, and throughout Faulkner's work, readers can notice the recurrent shifts between the past and the present and distinguish between two types of memory: the first voluntary while the second is involuntary. In *The Sound and the Fury*, characters are obsessed with the past and each one of the narrators develops a fixation on how the events of the past affect their present. In the three sections of the novel, Faulkner articulates the thoughts and voice of each one of the Compson brothers. Benjy, Quentin and Jason are deeply affected by the loss of their sister, Caddy Compson. Caddy's promiscuity, and later her forced departure leads to the decay of the Compson family.

Each one of her brothers retells his own version of this event but we can clearly notice that the reality each one of them tries to convey is subverted. Jean Paul Sartre puts forward that characters in Faulkner's novel suffer from "an excess of memories" (Sartre 231) that leads them to construct a clear and unchangeable idea of the past which directly affects the present and to some extent annihilate the future. Sartre observes that in *The Sound and the Fury* the present is overwhelmed by the past. (Sartre 230).

Moreover, "*The Sound and the Fury* demonstrates the interpenetration of all of characters' experiences, subjectivities bound with and restricted to the past." (Haqshenas 95) Faulkner's characters constantly depict the critical events subjectively, simply because they report what happens in the world around them as it originally develops in their minds. This is particularly apparent in the case of Benjy and Quentin.

The plot of the novel is often regarded as confusing because the linear order is disrupted. This disruption highlights the importance of the past in shaping the present and enquires about the significance of chronological order. Faulkner manipulates the chronological order in his novel. The first section of the novel takes place on April 7<sup>th</sup>, the third section on April 6<sup>th</sup>, and the fourth section on April 8<sup>th</sup>. While the second section, Quentin Compson's section, happens eighteen years earlier on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1910, the day in which he commits suicide. Furthermore, not only does the sections lack chronological order, but the scenes within each of the four sections also display a lack of coherent time order and the stream of consciousness is characterized by the absence of the limitations of chronology.

#### **4. Time according to Benjy's**

Benjy Compson is the narrator of the first part of the novel entitled "On April 7, 1928". This date, however, represents Benjy's thirty-third birthday. Throughout this

section, reader discovers Benjy's world and his innermost thoughts from the morning until night. The section reports only one day. Because of Benjy's limited cognitive skills which render him unable to distinguish time, readers are guided throughout his narrative by the change of his servants: each one represents a particular moment in his life and, in some way, compensate the lacking time indicators. Accordingly, Benjy is never left alone and always accompanied either by Luster, or T.P., or Versh, or Caddy, or Dilsey, or others.

Because of his mental disability, Benjy is unable to distinguish the past, nor make moral or social distinction. The language used by Benjy is simple and corresponds to his undeveloped cognitive skills. As a matter of fact, the language in Benjy's section has been extensively studied by various critics. Noel Polk, in his essay entitled: "Trying Not to Say: A Primer on the Language of *The Sound and the Fury*" argues that because of mental disability, Benjy is "pre-lingual" and as a consequence, the language in the first section refers to "*Faulkner's language*" (Polk 144). Through the use of italics, syntax, and stream of consciousness, Faulkner attempts to convey Benjy's primitive perception of the surrounding world. Due to his disability, Benjy can only report moments but he is unable to process their meaning. This failure at achieving meaning behind the occurring event permeates readers to truly experience what it feels like inside the consciousness of a disabled man.

The use of italics in Benjy's section constitutes an important feature. Because of his limited cognitive skills, the use of italics indicates a change either in place or in time. Time shifts in the first section are arbitrary: from one past event to another, from the present to the past and back again with no time signifiers. This reveals that Benjy does not make the difference between the past and the present. Thus, it is because of the use of

italics that readers make sense of the various random time shifts. In fact, according to Polk, “italics “represent images buried in Benjy’s unconscious which work their way into the front of his conscious life, his narrative present, elbowing April 7 out of the way, until it, too, pushes its way back into what registers, also in italics” (Polk147). Benjy lacks the ability to create a coherent chronological order of various moments in his consciousness; he is unable to distinguish the past from the present that is why Faulkner uses italics to help the reader make sense of Benjy’s conception of time throughout his narration.

Moreover, all along *The Sound and the Fury*, moments of the past and present are juxtaposed in such a way that they often overlap. One memory directs to another until these memories form a chain of events that are narrated, in the case of Benjy’s section, without any logical order. For example, in the first section, we can follow Benjy in his stream of consciousness as he jumps from one event to another. Benjy reports: “I went and Father lifted me into the chair too, and Caddy held me. She smelled like trees” (Faulkner 70). Afterward, he picks from caddy’s smell that leads him to another memory and continues his narration:

She smelled like trees. In the corner it was dark but I could see the window ...come on here to bed, so I can get up there before it starts. I can’t fool with you all night tonight. Just let them horns toot the first toot and I done game (Faulkner 70)

subsequently, his narration shifts to a third element, their room, and Benjy continues in his narration “We didn’t go to our room. This is where we have the measles. Caddy said” (Faulkner 70) for Benjy, one memory leads to another; thus, he moves from the memory of his father and caddy’s smell to another memory of Caddy’s smell and their

bedroom, which eventually leads him to third memory about their room. He constantly intermingles memories of past and present because he is unaware of the absence of logical connection between these different memories

## **5. Quentin's Obsession with Time**

Quentin Compson is the narrator of the second part of the novel entitled "June Second, 1910" the day in which Quentin commits suicide. Unlike his brother Benjy who has no sense of past and present, Quentin's obsession with time and clocks is highlighted from the very beginning of his section as he refers to his grandfather's watch. All along the second section of the novel, Quentin constantly notices clocks and watches. He asserts: "When the shadow of the sash appeared on the curtains it was between seven and eight O'clock and then I was in time again, hearing the watch. It was Grandfather's and when Father gave it to me he said I give you the mausoleum of all hope and desire" (Faulkner 93). As a matter of fact, Faulkner stresses upon the importance of the past and in accordance the importance of memory for Quentin when he becomes trapped with different time indicators such as the ticking of watches, the chiming of bells, the movements of shadows. Quentin's section is characterised by mixed and misplaced memories from the past and the present. Because of his intelligence, Quentin often makes sudden and unexplained jumps from one thing to another. His hyperactive mind drifts from one thought to another thought without logical control or chronology.

Faulkner reveals Quentin's obsession with time as well as his mind's weakness syntax, italics, and use of time as a central symbol in Quentin's narration. Accordingly, Faulkner relies on Quentin's language to reveal that he "is trying to shape his memory into an acceptable version of his life that will both explain his present misery and justify his decision to commit suicide, and language is the only tool he has to effect the shape he

wants” (Polk 150). Thus, the use of italics in Quentin’s section refers to inevitable memories of the past as well as Quentin’s “farthest remove from language.” (Polk 155)

Furthermore, Quentin attempts to free himself from the constraints of the past by breaking his grandfather’s watch, however, the watch keeps on ticking to symbolise that escaping the past is impossible. In fact, all over the second section, Faulkner portrays Quentin’s constant attempts to escape the past and stop time. His failure leads to his suicide.

## **6. Benjy in contrast to Quentin’s Narration**

Both Benjy and Quentin are affected by the loss of their sister Caddy. The two Compson brothers represent two contradictory characters that Faulkner juxtapose to examine the way in which each one’s conception of time will affect their memory and the way in which they report the events of the past. In Noel Polk’s words Faulkner, skillfully “juxtaposes telling episodes in the Compson family history by alternating between episodes. [. . .] Through these juxtapositions, these comparisons and contrasts of scenes, Faulkner creates meanings, hierarchies of emotions and significances” (Polk 148). Through this juxtaposition of the two radically different narrators, Faulkner conveys that despite each narrator’s different approach to time both of them effectively report the past in the form of disordered memories. While Benjy’s memories are disordered because he cannot make sense of time due to his mental disability. Quentin, in contrast, willingly breaks the chronological succession of events and disorder his memories in an attempt to escape the past.

## **7. Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter, we attempted to shed light on the use of time in William Faulkner's novel. Our principal concern was to examine the conception of time according to Faulkner with a reference to Bergsonian philosophy. We tried to analyze different moments in the narration of both the 'idiot' Benjy Compson and the 'suicidal intellectual' Quentin Compson narration. We concluded that disordered memory occurs as consequence of the disrupted linearity of the novel and lack of coherent chronological order.

## CHAPTER THREE

- **Fragmented narration in William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929)**

## 1. Introduction

This chapter shall examine how Faulkner employs ground-breaking narrative techniques in his novel. Indeed, the use of Fragmentation, stream of consciousness as well as multiple point of views contributes to the complexity of his narrative. Accordingly, we shall take a closer look at two characters narratives: Benjy Compson and Quentin Compson. While the first one is simple and incoherent due to the mental disability, the second one in contrast is complex and difficult to follow due to Quentin's perturbed mind. We attempt to exhibit that William Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury* is a modernist novel par excellence thanks to its fragmented narration, peculiar narrative structure and distorted chronology.

## 2. Narrative

Many critics maintain that “*The Sound and the Fury* is the quintessential American high modernist text” (Polk 1), as a matter of fact, it was through this novel that Faulkner introduced, for the first time, the technique of multiple narrators who used stream of consciousness, interior monologues and fragmentation to tell their stories. However, William Faulkner himself tended to consider his novel *The Sound and the Fury* as “his most splendid failure” (qtd. in Gwynn and Blotner 77) because Faulkner considers that the outcome of his narrative did not offer a satisfactory result for him. He explains that:

And I tried first to tell it with one brother, and that wasn't enough. That was Section One. 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 somebody else's eyes, I thought. And that failed and I tried myself--the fourth section--to tell what happened, and I still failed. (qtd. in Gwynn and Blotner 1)

Accordingly, as mentioned in the previous chapters, *The Sound and the Fury*'s chapters are not logically arranged. The narrative covers a span of four days, each of which is narrated by a different character. The first part of the novel presents the stream of consciousness of Benjy Compson on the date of April 7, 1928, the day before Easter. The second part of the novel relates Quentin's monologues on June 2, 1910, the day of his suicide. The third part of the novel is devoted to Jason's narrative on April 6, 1928, which

corresponds to Good Friday, which takes place a day before Benjy's part. The fourth and final part of the novel occurs on April 8, 1928, which corresponds to Easter Sunday.

Three of the four parts in the novel occur in the three consecutive days of Easter weekend of the year 1928, while one part occurs years earlier in the year 1910. We can notice that the four parts of the novel are not chronologically arranged, therefore, the tragedy that befell the Compson family is gradually told through fragmentation that will eventually make sense for readers despite its disordered chronology.

Through the use of these four narrators in this particular order displays a development from Benjy's part to Dilsey's part: Benjy's part is subjective but due to his mental disability it turns to an almost objective narration. Quentin's part is highly subjective, but his subjectivity is affected with his frustration with time. Jason's part is subjective in the way he only focuses on his own interests and the ways in which he can accumulate wealth. Dilsey's part offers a combination between subjectivity and objectivity, she examines closely the realities narrated by previous characters and offers an all-encompassing perspective of the story of the Compson family

In addition, the story of the Compson family is told by various narrators who show explicit signs of subjectivity. In fact, Faulkner, as many other modernist writers, attempted to show that in the light of modernism, there were no longer the notion of the objective reality, because: "modern novelists all knew that there was no such thing as objective reality, only each individual's sense of it. Hence their abiding fascination with consciousness, with the flickerings of subjective perception and the eddies of subjective experience" (Bleikasten 81). Accordingly, throughout the novel, different narrators tell the story of the Compson family from highly subjective point of views. This is especially evident in the case of the two first parts of the novel, through which Faulkner presents his

readers with two peculiar narrators, the first narrator is an “idiot” according to Faulkner, while the second narrator is “an educated half-madman” (Qtd. in Gwynn and Blotner 22)

Faulkner introduced many narrative techniques in his fiction such as stream of consciousness, interior monologue, soliloquy, multiple points of view, first person narrator as well as omniscient narrator, flashbacks, foreshadowing, juxtaposition, disordered time, fragmentation. Faulkner as well as other modernist writers including James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and T.S Eliot, to cite few, all experimented with narrative techniques. Faulkner uses innovative narrative techniques that consists of using multiple points of view of characters that shift from conscious to unconscious thoughts, as well as no sequential time shifts. He does so in order to involve his readers in the very process of thought and involve him in the act of unfolding the truth that lies behind characters narratives. In other words, instead of revealing the plot in a linear traditional way, Faulkner uses multiple narrators within the story, each of which offers a different narration of the same event. Usually characters narrate events that are situated in the past and rely on their own experience of that particular event, therefore, their narration is subjective.

Donald Kartiganer (1970) defines Faulkner’s technique in his narrative as

nearly all of Faulkner’s subsequent novels- and certainly all the major ones- are conceived as studies in fragmentation, violently juxtaposed stations of a broken world, apparently drawn together only by a common subject of concern or by parallel actions informing distinctly separate stories. The technique reveals itself in the sequence of voices in *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I lay Dying*, and *Absalom*,

*Absalom!*, in the subtly complementary patterns of *Light in August* and *The Hamlet*, the integration of two novels in *The Wild Palms*, or the oddly arranged days of *the Passion in A Fable* (p12)

The story told in Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury* is not complex but the narrative techniques used to tell the story are complex. This difficulty stems from many factors such as the disordered chronology, events are not sequenced chronologically but psychologically. This is why it is often considered as a complex novel for readers because they struggle with different parts of the novel to grasp the whole story.

It can be noticeable that Faulkner's technique consisted of presenting the same events and characters from different perspectives. Subsequently, readers discover the same event and characters in all chapters but each time with a different point of view, as each narrator offers his own impressions which is for the most part subjective. By using this technique, Faulkner keeps the attention of his readers by slowly unfolding the story. It is until the end of the novel that readers grasp the whole story.

### **3. Language in Benjy's Narration**

Benjy Compson is the narrator of the first chapter which consists of a long monologue. This chapter occurs in one single day, namely, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1928. Benjy is the youngest son of the Compsons, he is mentally disabled and often referred to as an idiot. Faulkner begins his novel with this narrator without giving any hints about Benjy's mental disability. Therefore, the opening lines of the novel are Benjy's thoughts: "You are not a poor baby. Are you. Are you. You have got your Caddy Haven't you got your Caddy?" (Faulkner 6). Faulkner used Benjy as a narrator in the first chapter to challenge his readers. Some critics suggested to change the orderings of the different narrators, more

precisely, to remove Benjy's narration from the opening chapter. Literary critic, Olga Kuminova, contradicts these critics' suggestion and explains that this re-ordering would "constitute a betrayal of the innovative, challenging, heteroglossic way in which the novel is written" (45). Furthermore, Kuminova argues that: "The figure of Benjy as an impossible narrator both sets and figuratively represents the whole novel's communicative plight" (Kuminova 42). Benjy is unable to speak, readers as well as other characters rely on the sound that Benjy utters to decipher his needs and rely on the most part on his cries and sounds to know that he is not feeling well.

Due to his mental disability, the observations of Benjy are directly reported to the reader without being ordered or processed through an intelligence. Benjy reports the events as they are happening; his language is very simple and he can get easily distracted. The following excerpt is an example: "They came on. I opened the gate and they stopped, turning. I was trying to say, and I caught her...she screamed...and the bright shapes began to stop..."(Faulkner 64).

Throughout this chapter, Faulkner posits a narrative that consist of intricate and incoherent stream of thoughts that are arbitrarily linked to each other by the use of long sentences, sounds, images and sights. Therefore, Benjy's narration does not follow a particular order or a plot line, in fact, his narration depends solely on whatever random connections he can make out of what caught his attention. As a matter of fact, Benjy does not interpret any situations or events but merely reports them.

William Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the fury* is often characterized by its fragmentary structure. Benjy's section is full of schemed fragmentation and jumbled tales. For example, "the kitchen was dark.... *Luster came back. Wait, he said.* It was dark under the trees" (Faulkner 48). Benjy starts his narration in the kitchen; he notices that the

kitchen was dark and immediately without notice jumps to other setting and time, this scene is interrupted by another memory and remembers that it is dark outside under the trees. Another example of fragmentation in Benjy's narration in his sudden shift from one setting to the other: "his hand came for another piece of cake. *That's right, Dilsey said. I reckon it'll be my time to cry next...*The long wire came across my shoulder, and the fire went away" (Faulkner 58).

#### **4. Language in Quentin's Narration**

Quentin Compson is the narrator of the second chapter which occurs on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1910. Unlike Benjy, Quentin is highly educated and he is obsessed with time and this becomes evident from the very first sentences of the chapter. Just like Benjy, Quentin also uses stream of consciousness in his narration. While Benjy's stream of consciousness is involuntary and he cannot control his ideas; he only can think of what comes to him naturally, Quentin's stream of consciousness, in contrast, is at times voluntary and at others involuntary. It becomes involuntary because several thoughts rush into Quentin's mind at once.

Moreover, Quentin's chapter is characterized by long and complex phrases that contain complex ideas. His high level of education influences his language; he uses difficult vocabulary and long complex phrases, as well as a lack of punctuation and syntax. The following passage is an excerpt of Quentin's section:

How can I control any of them when you have always taught them to have no respect for me and my wishes I know you look down on my people but is that any reason for teaching my children my own children I suffered for to have no respect Trampling my shadow's bones into the

concrete with hard heels and then I was hearing the watch,  
and I touched the letters through my coat (Faulkner 59)

Throughout this passage, Quentin used long sentences without punctuation and is hard to follow. Unlike Benjy, Quentin is both affected by mental content as well as outside action. External events are not numerous but they are reported in details since they occur in the day in which he commits suicide.

## 5. Conclusion

In this chapter, we sought to pinpoint the literary elements that shows that William Faulkner's novel *the Sound and the Fury* is a modern novel. Faulkner used stream of consciousness to display the thoughts of his characters. In addition, he used multiple narrators to offer his readers the chance to discover the story from different points of view. In this chapter we focused on the language used by Benjy's narration in contrast to Quentin's narration and the use of fragmentation in both narrations. All in all, *the Sound and the Fury* can be considered as a masterpiece of modernism since the novel is rich with modernistic features.

# **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

In accordance with the thesis statement, our task was to look at how Faulkner managed to use modernist techniques in his novel. Throughout the dissertation we tried to shed light on Faulkner's fictional narrative. The results of the research led to the conclusions that, indeed, Faulkner used innovative and modern narrative techniques in his novel *The Sound and the Fury*. Moreover, he employed time in modernistic approach, that is to say, he used jumps in time and events and took his readers in a nonlinear chronology.

In addition, Faulkner relied on fragmented narration to tell the story of the Compson family. We took a close look at Benjy's narration in contrast with Quentin's narration because the first one is a mentally disabled while the second is a highly educated character.

In the first chapter we tried to offer a literary background needed for this study. we tried to explain modernism. In addition, we investigated the use of major modernist literary techniques in William Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury*. Throughout this chapter, we offered examples of modernist literary techniques such as fragmentation, stream of consciousness and multiple points of view.

In the second chapter, we examined Faulkner's use of non-chronological time in his narrative that caused a disordered memory of what happened to the Compson family. we focused on Benjy and Quentin's behavior towards time: while Benjy shows no awareness of time and somehow a complete absence of it; Quentin's obsession with time made his narration difficult to follow.

In the last chapter, we tried to focus on the fragmented narration in the novel. We did so by comparing the language of Benjy's narration in contrast with Quentin's narration.

We concluded that fragmented narration came a result of the disordered memory of characters because they look at the present from the past viewing angle; development of events in this novel is like sitting in a bus looking at the view from the back; the view getting bigger and wider each time.

A future perspective is laid in the fact that this dissertation can be a starting point for further studies especially concerning time and fragmentation not only in *The Sound and the Fury* but in all of Faulkner's works.

At last, we hope that our study contributes to enrich our library, and that it will be of a great help to English Department students interested in American Literature.

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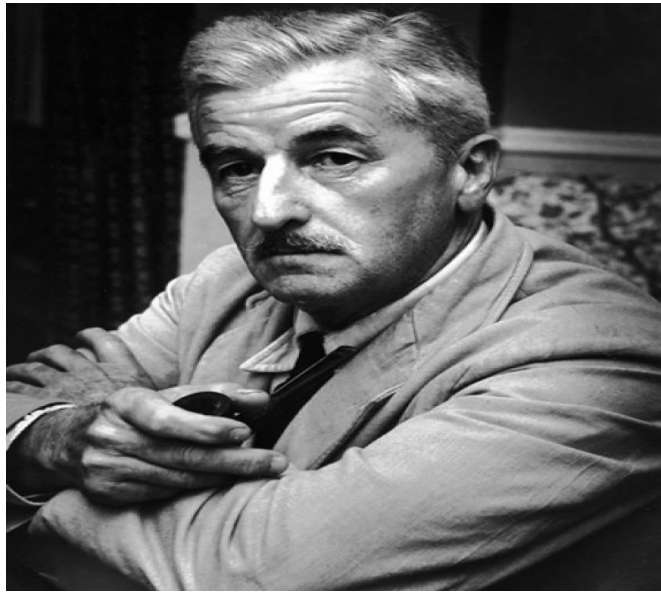
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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 01: William Faulkner's Biography

William Cuthbert Faulkner (September 25, 1897–July 6, 1962) was a Nobel Prize–winning novelist of the American South who wrote challenging prose and created the fictional Yoknapatawpha County. He is best known for such novels as 'The Sound and



the Fury' and 'As I Lay Dying.

Much of Faulkner's early work was poetry, but he became famous for his novels set in the American South, frequently in his fabricated Yoknapatawpha County, with works that included *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying* and *Absalom, Absalom!* His controversial 1931 novel *Sanctuary* was turned into two films, 1933's *The Story of Temple Drake* as well as a later 1961 project. Faulkner was awarded the 1949 Nobel Prize in Literature and ultimately won two Pulitzers and two National Book Awards as well. He died on July 6, 1962.

By 1919, Faulkner had enrolled at the University of Mississippi. He wrote for the student newspaper, the *Mississippian*, submitting his first published poem and other short works. However, after three semesters as an entirely inattentive student, he dropped out. He worked briefly in New York City as a bookseller's assistant and for two years as the postmaster for the university, and spent a short stint as the scoutmaster for a local troop.

Back in Louisiana, American writer Sherwood Anderson, who had become a friend, gave Faulkner some advice: He told the young author to write about his native

region of Mississippi—a place that Faulkner surely knew better than northern France. Inspired by the concept, Faulkner began writing about the places and people of his childhood, developing a great many colorful characters based on real people he had grown up with or heard about, including his great-grandfather, William Clark Falkner. For his famous 1929 novel, *The Sound and the Fury*, he developed the fictional Yoknapatawpha County—a place nearly identical to Lafayette County, in which Oxford, Mississippi, is located. A year later, in 1930, Faulkner released *As I Lay Dying*.

Faulkner became known for his faithful and accurate dictation of Southern speech. He also boldly illuminated social issues that many American writers left in the dark, including slavery, the "good old boys" club and Southern aristocracy.

Personally, Faulkner experienced both elation and soul-shocking sadness during this time in his career. Between the publishing of *The Sound and the Fury* and *Sanctuary*, his old flame, Estelle Oldham, divorced Cornell Franklin. Still deeply in love with her, Faulkner promptly made his feelings known, and the two were married within six months. Estelle became pregnant, and in January of 1931, she gave birth to a daughter, whom they named Alabama. Tragically, the premature baby lived for just over a week. Faulkner's collection of short stories, titled *These 13*, is dedicated to "Estelle and Alabama."

In 1946, Malcolm Cowley published *The Portable Faulkner* and interest in Faulkner's work was revived. Two years later, Faulkner published *Intruder in the Dust*, the tale of a black man falsely accused of murder. He was able to sell the film rights to MGM for \$50,000.

One of Faulkner's greatest professional moments came when he was awarded the 1949 Nobel Prize in Literature, receiving the award the following year. The committee deemed him one of the most important writers of American letters. This attention brought him

more awards, including the National Book Award for Fiction for *Collected Stories* and the Legion of Honor in New Orleans. He also won the 1951 National Book Award for *The Collected Stories of William Faulkner*. A few years later, Faulkner was awarded the 1955 Pulitzer Prize in Fiction along with another National Book Award for his novel *A Fable*, set in France during WWI.

In January 1961, Faulkner willed all his major manuscripts and many of his personal papers to the William Faulkner Foundation at the University of Virginia. On July 6, 1962, coincidentally the same date as the Old Colonel's birthday, William Faulkner died of a heart attack. He was posthumously awarded his second Pulitzer in 1963 for *The Reivers*.

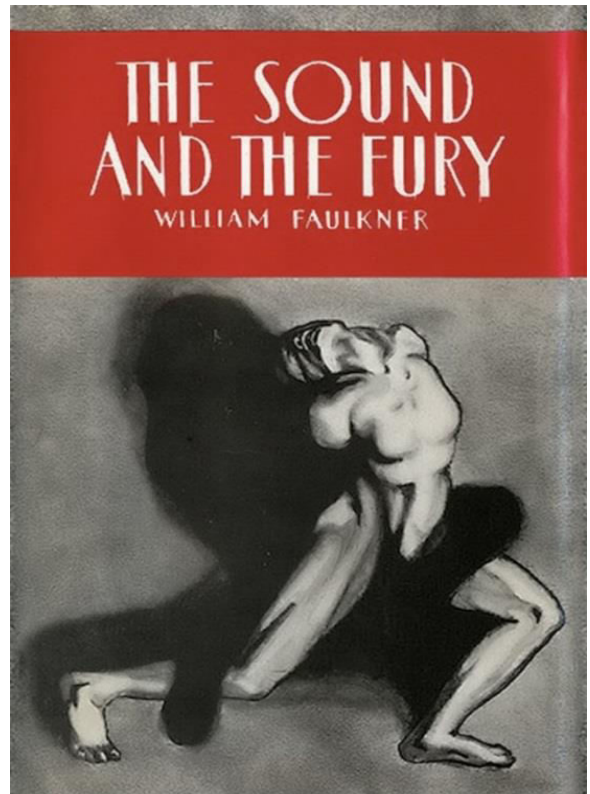
Faulkner created an impressive literary legacy and remains a revered writer of the rural American South, having expertly captured the immense complexities of both the region's beauty and its dark past.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Faulkner, William. "William Faulkner". *Biography*, 2018, <https://www.biography.com/people/william-faulkner-9292252>. (Accessed May 20<sup>th</sup> 2018)

## Appendix 02: Synopsis of *The Sound and the Fury*

The first major novel by William Faulkner, published in 1929. Life “is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.” This quotation, from Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, forms the basis of this masterpiece by Faulkner. This haunting tale is set in Faulkner’s fictional Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi, in the early 20th century. It describes the decay and fall of the aristocratic Compson family—and, implicitly, of an entire social order—from four different points of view. The first three



sections are presented from the perspectives of the three Compson sons: Benjy, an “idiot” with disjointed memories; Quentin, a suicidal Harvard freshman; and Jason, the eldest. Each section is focused primarily on a sister who has married and left home. The fourth section comments on the other three as the Compsons’ domestic servants, whose chief virtue is their endurance, reveal the family’s moral decline.

With *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner for the first time incorporated several challenging and sophisticated stylistic techniques, including interior monologues and stream-of-consciousness narrative.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> "The Sound and the Fury | Introduction & Summary". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Sound-and-the-Fury-novel-by-Faulkner>. (Accessed May 20<sup>th</sup> 2018)

## ملخص

كل حقبة أدبية تستدعي أسلوبًا فريدًا وفلسفة الأدب ، التي تنسب للعديد من المؤلفين .وليام فولكنر هو كاتب أمريكي معروف و يظهر خياله في الحداثة الأدبية .تدرس الرسالة الحالية التجربة الأدبية الحديثة في رواية ويليام فولكنر "الصوت والغضب ."وبناءً على ذلك ، فإن الغرض من هذا البحث هو دراسة تقنيات السرد الحديثة التي يستخدمها فولكنر لتحقيق هذه التجربة مع الزمن والسرد .وبشكل أكثر دقة ، يسعى هذا البحث إلى دراسة استخدام الذاكرة المضطربة بالإضافة إلى الرواية المتجزئة في الرواية المدروسة .يشير هذا التحقيق إلى أن استخدام تقنيات حديثة مختلفة مثل تيار الوعي ، وجهات نظر متعددة ، والتجزئة ، والوقت غير الزمني ، كلها عوامل تخدم فولكنر لتحقيق هدفه في تقديم رواية حديثة للغاية .بالإضافة إلى ذلك ، من أجل تحسين تقنياته المبتكرة ، يستخدم فولكنر راويين مختلفتين بشكل جذري: الراوي الأول معاق عقليًا ولديه مهارات إدراكية ضعيفة تؤثر على كل من لغته وفهمه للوقت مقابل راوي متعلم جدًا يستخدم لغة متطورة متزامنة بهوسه بالوقت .في نهاية المطاف ، يتم استخدام الذاكرة المضطربة والسرد المجزأ بشكل فعال في رواية فولكنر "الصوت والغضب."

