

READING TRAUMA IN WILLIAM FAULKNER'S *THE SOUND AND THE FURY*:
BEYOND MIMESIS AND ANTI-MIMESIS

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ABSTRACT

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When faced with incomprehensible suffering, even the most loquacious falls silent amidst the weight of tragedy. While 20th-century paradigms in trauma studies have oscillated between the psychoanalytic models of mimesis and anti-mimesis, it is clear that trauma is a universally shared experience; it is a human experience. Trauma studies has routinely sought—in one way or another—to address this profoundly existential question regarding human suffering. Seeing as literature is itself a story of humanity, it is no surprise that trauma studies has a place within literary studies, but particularly, the literature of the American South.

In my thesis, I focus on William Faulkner and his seminal novel *The Sound and the Fury*. From the death of Damuddy to Benjy's howl at the end, the novel depicts traumatic event after traumatic event in a chaotic maelstrom of loss, sorrow, suffering, and death. I will prove that relying solely on the mimetic or anti-mimetic theory is not sufficient for a complete treatment of the novel's traumatic paradigm, as I believe the dialectical relationship between both models have a place in understanding the novel. Therefore, rather than reading *The Sound and the Fury* through a single lens of trauma theory, I propose that by analyzing the text through both the mimetic and anti-mimetic models of trauma theory, based on applying both models to each of the four sections of the novel, more clearly defines the traumatic experiences of the novel's characters situated in the South, and ultimately the resolution, or irresolution of their own traumatic experiences.

Overall, I believe that this novel is a tour de force because of its positive, even redemptive depiction of trauma which is oftentimes overlooked by many Faulkner scholars. Through this thesis, I hope to encourage further scholarly work exploring the interplay of both models of trauma within the many psychoanalytic schools of trauma studies, the literature of the South, and Faulkner's oeuvre. By continuing to study Faulkner's work through the lens of trauma studies that is not relegated to one model of trauma over the other, scholars might also be able to carry out Faulkner's message of stoic determination despite the inevitable and omnipresent presence of suffering and trauma that is universally shared by all of humanity.

KEY WORDS: William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury*, Trauma studies, Mimetic, Anti-mimetic, Jacques Lacan, Sigmund Freud, Victor Frankl, Cathy Caruth, Symbolism, Temporality, Villainy, Trauma theology.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vii
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER II: “I WAS TRYING TO SAY”: (RE)-DISCOVERING BENJY’S VOICE.....	24
CHAPTER III: ANXIETY, TRAUMA, AND CONTAINMENT IN QUENTIN’S MONOLOGUE.....	46
CHAPTER IV: “I’M NOT GOING TO MIND YOU”: TRAUMA, CONTROL, AND MEANING IN JASON’S SECTION.....	67
CHAPTER V: (RE) ASSESSING TRAUMA, RACE, AND THE RESURRECTION IN DILSEY’S SECTION	88
CHAPTER VI: (RE) FORMING THE TRAUMATIC LANDSCAPE: TOWARDS A NEW PARADIGM IN TRAUMA STUDIES AND THE LITERATURE OF THE AMERICAN SOUTH.....	110
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	119
VITA.....	128

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Memory believes before knowing remembers. Believes longer than recollects, longer than knowing even wonders.

—Faulkner, *Light in August*

William Cuthbert Faulkner (née Falkner) was born in 1897 at roughly the same time Sigmund Freud was formulating his early theories of trauma. Despite what Faulkner's own attestations of ignorance of Freud might entail, each man had a significant impact on each other's respective fields.¹ Freud's theories of trauma, beyond their treatment of psychological trauma on a clinical level, provide a lens for understanding the trauma and psychological complexities that are the hallmarks of Faulkner's fiction. Through their individual contributions to humanity's understanding of trauma, the literary efforts of both men have addressed the human condition of suffering present in the modern world.

To understand each author's contributions related to trauma, the history of trauma as a psychological concept first needs to be reviewed. The word "trauma"² entered the English lexicon in the early half of the 19th-century. Its emergence directly coincided with the rapid onset of the Industrial Revolution, a period notorious for the prominence of mechanical accidents, especially accidents caused by trains and railways.³ Yet among the scholars and scientists who studied the mind during this period of time (our protean

¹ In one of the class conferences at the University of Virginia, a student once asked Faulkner if he was familiar with the field of psychology. Faulkner answered "what little of psychology I know the characters I have invented and playing poker have taught me. Freud I'm not familiar with" (*Faulkner in the University* 268).

² By trauma, I turn to the Oxford English Dictionary's definition of trauma as "a psychic injury...caused by emotional shock the memory of which is repressed and remains unhealed; an internal injury, esp[ecially] to the brain, which may result in a behavioural disorder of organic origin" ("Trauma, n.").

³ Much of the historical framework of trauma within these pages is deeply indebted to Ruth Leys' *Trauma: A Genealogy* and Roger Luckhurst's *The Trauma Question*.

psychoanalysts), trauma was not associated with any sort of distress caused by a psychic wounding; rather, as Ruth Leys explains, “trauma was originally the term for a surgical wound, conceived on the model of a rupture of the skin or protective envelope of the body resulting in a catastrophic global reaction in the entire organism” (19). Such a definition reveals that physical wounding, not psychological wounding, was the basis for the 19th-century’s notion of trauma, and that trauma depended on the unfortunate presence of the accident. According to Roger Luckhurst, this correlation between trauma and physical accidents in the 19th-century helped develop early psychoanalytic concepts of trauma as an accidental occurrence in the psyche of the patient’s mind, as “trauma is inextricably tied to this accident cosmology: the psychological consequences of... accidents and disasters” (26).

With the omnipresence of traumatic misfortunes due to technological advancements, the psychologists of the late 1800’s explored how the mind reacted to both external (as with the accidents of the Industrial Revolution) and internal trauma: a completely new field of research. In the 1870’s, psychologists such as Jean-Martin Charcot and Pierre Janet emphasized the direct correlation between human physiological characteristics and the cause of hysterical symptoms (or diagnostic evaluations used to compartmentalize anyone suffering from symptoms of psychological distress). In particular, these psychologists believed that it was hereditary characteristics (especially family bloodlines) that ultimately lead to the cause of hysteria. Nevertheless, since it was impossible for such scientists to cure hereditary traits, they relegated the trauma of their patients to a “degenerative taint” that was impossible to fully resolve (Luckhurst 37).

Yet in the 1890's, Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer, the progenitors of psychoanalysis, offered a new approach to the theories of trauma outlined by these early psychologists. Both Freud and Breuer rejected the notion that hereditary predispositions fatalistically determined psychological traits when faced with traumatic experiences. While Freud and Breuer kept the idea that psychological trauma can be caused by exterior physical forces, they "were much more interested in the types of memory that possess sufficient traumatic force to produce symptoms" (Luckhurst 46). According to Freud and Breuer, it is, in fact, the incontrovertible relationship between both *mind* and *body* which creates traumatic neuroses. Yet over the course of Freud's psychoanalytic career, he had a convoluted relationship regarding the cause of trauma, as he developed two separately demarcated theories of trauma. Freud's first model of trauma, otherwise known as the "mimetic" model, revolved around unforeseen traumatic experiences during the psychosexual modes of childhood development.⁴ If a child after undergoing a moment of trauma during one of these phases in development did not correctly process the trauma, then he would repress his trauma into the recesses of his unconscious (Leys 4). These repressed memories would reoccur later in his life through the development of pathologies as a result of these "repressed erotic infantile wishes and fantasies" (Leys 33). This process of childhood traumatization in response to an incomprehensible event, which later returned to haunt the adult psyche, Freud termed *Nachträglichkeit*, or "deferred action." Such actions would haunt the adult mind through the repetition compulsion, or the mimicry of these aforementioned past childhood traumatic events. According to Freud, the patient experiences the repetition compulsion when he cannot

⁴ I borrow the term "mimetic" from Leys. For the remainder of this thesis, I will refer to Freud's early model of trauma as the "mimetic model."

remember a traumatic experience that he “has forgotten and repressed”; instead, he “acts it [the traumatic experience] out...reproducing it not as a memory but as an action...repeat[ing] it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it” (“Remembering” 150). In other words, the patient repeats the psychic trauma of his past through his physical actions in the present. Through this deferred action, the original site of the trauma, and the adult’s gaze backwards in time, are intertwined: he cannot understand the past without experiencing the present, and he cannot experience the present without fully comprehending the past (Leys 20).

However, with the onset of World War I, Freud began to question his earlier mimetic model of trauma. The Great War, writes Paul Fussell in *The Great War and Modern Memory*, is the defining cultural event of the 20th-century (80). It is evident that within the Great War’s truncated span of time between 1914 and 1918, European society and culture changed drastically; furthermore, the war left soldiers suffering from physiological and psychological trauma. On a physical level, the new weapons of WWI, such as gas and machine guns, left gruesome scars. Such physical pain inhibited soldiers from sharing their wartime experiences with noncombatants. In *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*, Elaine Scarry explains that “physical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it” (4). In other words, the soldier cannot fully express pain because it devours the very language that he must use to express pain into speech. Not only did the war affect soldiers physically, but it also changed them psychologically. Even when soldiers returned home to their families and friends, they could not truly go back to their old lives, as their physical and mental wounds prohibited

their seamless integration back into society.⁵ The rapidly emerging field of psychoanalysis (with Freud at the forefront) introduced the phrase “shell-shock” into the English lexicon as an omnibus term for the traumatic neuroses soldiers experienced during the war. Faced with the suffering soldiers experienced during the War, Freud came to realize that his earlier model of trauma—motivated by psychosexual trauma—did not always correlate with trauma that acted as an external, oppressive force (Leys 21). Freud thus began to reevaluate his past theory and started to redefine trauma “as a widespread rupture or breach in the ego's protective shield, one that sets in motion every possible attempt at defense” (Leys 23). This second model of trauma theory came to be known as “anti-mimesis.”⁶

The anti-mimetic model strongly depended on the influence of anxiety in the creation of traumatic pathologies.⁷ Anxiety is inextricably linked to trauma, for when the patient

⁵ Karen DeMeester also notes that “war veterans’ testimonies threaten the community’s social equilibrium and order by challenging its fundamental cultural and ideological assumptions...the testimonies may create a sense of instability and confusion in the community, and consequently cause it to suffer the same feelings of disorientation the veteran himself suffers” (660). In other words, society—consciously or unconsciously—pushes away veterans because of the possibility of their experiences transferring to society. Through these actions, British society supported “a social, political, and economic status quo that sacrificed a generation of men to the First World War” (662).

⁶ Just as I associated Freud’s first model of trauma with the mimetic model, I will refer to Freud’s second model of trauma as the “anti-mimetic model.”

⁷ Freud’s discussion of anxiety’s causes and effects is even more tenuous than his thoughts on trauma. Freud’s first concept of anxiety depended on the “repression of sexual libido,” for if the mind cannot adequately expulse the unresolved feelings of libido, the mind undergoes a comprehensive feeling of anxiety (Harari xix). Later in his clinical career, Freud developed his second theory of anxiety. In this model, he subdivides anxiety into automatic and signal anxiety. Automatic anxiety results from “cathexis withdrawn in repression” which is mitigated by the presence and influence of the superego (*Problem* 79-80). To put this concept another way, automatic anxiety derives from a situation that the ego thinks is traumatic and “is threatened in some way” (Harari xxxv). On the other hand, signal anxiety differs from automatic anxiety in that it is the mind’s “*anticipation* of a threat that is impending” that results in the formulation of signal anxiety (Harari xxxv, his italics). Therefore, Freud’s second theory of anxiety deviates from his first theory of libidinal discharge because anxiety is produced by psychological means rather than physical means, which subsequently leads from physical symptoms causing anxiety to anxiety causing physical symptoms (Harari xxii-xxiii).

encounters an external source of trauma, he creates defense mechanisms in order to protect himself from further trauma. These mechanisms greatly reduce any feelings of anxiety (and the inevitable onset of trauma) that the patient might face, as anxiety, according to Freud, “is the expectation of the trauma on the one hand, and on the other, the attenuated repetition of it” (*Problem* 114). Anxiety, therefore, acts “as the ego’s response to a traumatic experience...an experience that the subject is not prepared for, but which comes as a shock or a surprise” (Harari xxvi). Overall, the anti-mimetic model places more emphasis on the individual’s own experience with traumatic events caused by an outside source, while the mimetic model relies on the internal formulization of past traumas—based on one’s past development—that ostensibly affects the individual’s current mental state.

Yet the significance of Freud’s two disparate models of trauma did not end with the First World War and its traumatic aftermath. It was not until 1980 and the standardization of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in the DSM-III where Freud’s models of trauma were first integrated into the literature of psychology. With the advent of PTSD in the DSM-III, the psychological community now had a useful way to categorize the traumatic experiences of war (seen through the shell-shock soldiers experienced during WWI, WWII, the Vietnam War, and so on). Additionally, the DSM-III categorized other types of trauma. For instance, the 1970’s and 1980’s saw an emergence of cultural movements such as Recovered Memory and Courage to Heal which protested against sexual abuse and violence in society. These movements, through the “language of consciousness-raising and women’s empowerment,” had the “advantage of portraying the victim of trauma as in no way mimetically complicitous with the violence directed against her”

(Luckhurst 72; Leys 299). This example was only a part of the greater socio-cultural traumatic zeitgeist during these decades, as many other movements also explored the traumatic underpinnings “of those who survived the Hiroshima bombing, the victims of Nazi persecution, [and] the consequences of slavery and segregation on African–American identity” (Luckhurst 61). Through this socio-cultural emphasis on trauma, the activist community saw the development of “a general category of ‘the survivor’ that strongly linked trauma to identity politics,” which ultimately led to an exploration of trauma and its effects on other areas of study (Luckhurst 61).⁸

Following the social-cultural movements of the ‘70s and ‘80s, the decade of the 1990’s saw the creation of the first real academic literary study of the traumatic paradigm. In the early half of the 1990’s, Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, and Geoffrey Hartman mixed Freudian psychoanalytic theory, post-structuralism, and literary criticism into what scholars now understand as trauma studies. These scholars were particularly interested in trauma’s place in our readings of literary works, as the “literature of trauma is written from the need to tell and retell the story of the traumatic experience, to make it real both to the victim and to the community” (Tal 21). As Caruth writes, both psychoanalysis and literature are “interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing...indeed at the specific point at which knowing and not knowing intersect that the language of literature and the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience precisely meet” (11). Geoffrey Hartman’s seminal article “On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies” situated the psychoanalytic dialogue within the framework of literature and literary criticism. Hartman elucidated that literature, replete

⁸ The survivor being the individual who experiences trauma, while the witness is the individual who hears the testimony of the survivor’s traumatic experience(s).

with instances of the survivor/witness dichotomy, has “a way of receiving the story, of listening to it, of drawing it into an interpretive conversation” (541). Thus, this survivor/witness dichotomy within psychoanalysis is seen throughout literature, and through the oscillation between the psychological and the literary, trauma theorists strive for a new reconciliation between the clinical and the literary. Through this reconciliation, literature becomes a means to enact healing: both within and without the text (Hartman 541). Therefore, literary scholars must look beyond fully understanding trauma through simple psychoanalytic terminology but instead seek an “unsentimental acknowledgment of the human condition, and a view of art as at once testimony and representation” (Hartman 545). By realizing this personalized and universally shared (Forster 260) human connection between art and trauma, the field of trauma studies has “a more natural transition to a ‘real’ world often falsely split off from that of the university” (Hartman 544).

However, one must realize that these early trauma theorists based their understanding of trauma around their interpretations of Freud’s early mimetic model of trauma. Particularly, it was the concept of the repetition compulsion, spurred by the improperly registered trauma of the patient’s traumatic past, that was essential for these early trauma theorists. For example, the mimetic model’s reliance on the repetition compulsion clearly plays out in Caruth’s seminal book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. The repetition compulsion’s return to the past’s “unclaimed experiences,” as the title of her book denotes, is “not simply the attempt to grasp that one has almost died but, more fundamentally and enigmatically, the very attempt to claim one’s own survival” (Caruth 64). Yet for Caruth, Freud’s description of the repetition compulsion is not

sufficient to delineate the relationship between the individual and her traumatic past; instead, Caruth turns to Lacan's reinterpretation of Freud's repetition compulsion to explain what makes such experiences "unclaimed."

In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan discusses Freud's interpretation of the dream of the burning child that he outlines in *The Interpretation of Dreams*.⁹ For Freud, the dream of the burning child simply represents "the wish-fulfillment of a single father, tired and wishing to see his child alive once again"; however, according to Lacan, "what the father cannot grasp in the death of the child...becomes the foundation of his very identity as father" (Caruth 96; 92). For Lacan, the death of the child and the repetition of the death again through dream are intertwined with one another, as "the awakening embodies an appointment with the Real" (Caruth 105). Such a situation inevitably creates a dyadic relationship between the individual who experiences trauma, and the observer who witnesses such trauma. What is essential about Lacan's reinterpretation of the dream, Caruth writes, is that the "*awakening...is itself the site of a trauma*, the trauma of the necessity and impossibility of responding to another's death" (100, Caruth's italics). Caruth believes that the act of dreaming, or the return to a traumatic past through memory, allows the individual to awaken from the unknown, unclaimed experiences she was asleep to before.

Shoshana Felman explores this dyadic relationship between survivor and witness in far greater detail than Caruth. In particular, Felman, writes that it is with "*psychoanalytic*

⁹ The background of the dream involves a father—Freud's patient—who has recently lost his child from a terrible fever. Before being buried, the child is laid out on a bed while the father sleeps, exhausted from the traumatic ordeal of his child's death. While asleep, the father has a dream that the child is on fire, and then while aflame asks "father, don't you see I'm burning?" The father wakes up and discovers that a candle has fallen onto the bed by accident while he slept and that the flames have engulfed his child's bed like in his dream. For a detailed explanation of the dream, see Caruth's fifth chapter of *Unclaimed Experience* titled "Traumatic Awakenings (Freud, Lacan, and the Ethics of Memory)."

dialogue, an unprecedented kind of dialogue in which the doctor's testimony does not substitute itself for the patient's testimony, but *resonates with it*" is where truly healing begins (5, Felman's italics). The difficulty of such a dialogue lies with maintaining the legitimacy of the survivor, as those who decide to assume a role of the witness when they listen to another's trauma must realize "the pitfalls in the witness and in himself," which could lead to transference from survivor to witness (58).

As the field of trauma studies developed, scholars began to migrate away from the mimetic model of trauma that was so important to the work of Caruth, Felman, and Hartman. While the supporters of the anti-mimetic model never completely rejected the mimetic model, they were concerned with its problematically narrow scope. According to these scholars, the main problem with the early trauma theorists' reliance on the mimetic model was that they overly emphasized the transference of trauma between victims and perpetrators.¹⁰ Advocates of the anti-mimetic model believe instead that when scholars only focus on the transference of trauma between the survivor and witness, they run the risk of "identification with the aggressor or perpetrator" (LaCapra 146-147). Therefore, when the witness examines the relationship between survivor and victim, the witness must take care not to let the idea of transference shift the pendulum of sympathy from survivor to perpetrator, a position that is tenuous in the work of these early trauma theorists.¹¹

¹⁰ Another apropos name for transference is the "contagiousness of trauma" (LaCapra 142).

¹¹ Leys claims that Caruth's discussion of Tasso's epic *Jerusalem Delivered* makes this same blunder. Since "the murderer Tancred can become the victim of the trauma and the voice of Clorinda testimony to his wound," one could ostensibly extend this role-reversal of survivor and perpetrator to other relationships of trauma such as "the executioners of the Jews into victims and the 'cries' of the Jews into testimony to the trauma suffered by the Nazis" (297).

Additionally, supporters of the anti-mimetic model have developed various theories regarding how survivors can overcome their trauma, a position that they believe is lacking in the work of the early trauma theorists (LaCapra 65). One of the predominant theories of overcoming trauma within trauma studies is based on Freud's "Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through." Freud sought to mitigate the instances of his patients acting out, or in other words, repeating their "repressed...inhibitions and unserviceable attitudes and...pathological character-traits" (151). Freud believed that in order to work through trauma, the traumatic event should not stay in the past; instead, he believed that the survivor "must treat...illness...as a present-day force" ("Remembering" 151). The only way for the patient to overcome past trauma(s) is by dragging it into the light of the present within a medium or situation easily controlled. In order for lasting success, the patient must treat their illness as "no longer...contemptible, but...an enemy worthy of his mettle, a piece of his personality, which has solid ground for its existence and out of which things of value for his future life have to be derived" (152). Through this action, the patient breaks trauma's power over himself and renders it inert. Ultimately, working-through trauma involves first recognizing the origin of trauma in the patient's own life, then utilizing that trauma to improve his current situation. Yet Freud believed that such a process is inhibited by the transference of past trauma from patient to doctor. The patient, therefore, must realize that the hostility felt towards his doctor is a necessary part of the healing process. Without such a realization, the patient is doomed to repeat his trauma without any remediation of his symptoms. It is the doctor's role to "wrest from...[the patient] one by one out of the armoury" of his past "the weapons with which he defends himself against the progress of the treatment" ("Remembering" 151). LaCapra believes

that this situation is expedited through the employment of the middle voice, or an approach to oral communication that involves creating an equal footing between survivor and witness, to “counteract...a reenactment, or acting out, of that disabling dissociation” of trauma (42). Through this voice the witness can, or at least try to, find common ground with the testimony of the survivor (47).

Based on what I have just discussed above, it is evident that the models of mimesis and anti-mimesis have shaped the field of trauma studies. This conflict between both models continues today, with scholars choosing one side or the other, or attempting to break out of the restrictive limitations of only adhering to one particular model. One such example can be found in Reina Van der Wiel’s *Literary Aesthetics of Trauma: Virginia Woolf and Jeanette Winterson*. She does not agree with the literary criticism of other trauma theorists in the 21st-century, as their “analysis tends to consist of identifying ‘symptomatic’ moments or characteristics in the text,” rather than discovering how texts enact healing within themselves (48). Van der Wiel offers trauma theorists a different approach to the working-through theory by arguing that the symbolic language of modernist literature acts as a “container” for trauma, “offering a means to control, transform and gain distance from traumatic emotions” (48). What is the medium that one uses to contain trauma? Van der Wiel argues that through artistic creation survivors can “express and transform personal trauma into art” (72).

Other critics have turned to the work of different psychoanalytic schools of thought including the work of Viktor Frankl, as his emphasis on “giv[ing] meaning to suffering,” Karen DeMeester writes, “is an essential element for survival and recovery” (660). Frankl, who was imprisoned in several German concentration camps during World War

II, believes that the “striving to find a meaning in one’s life is the primary motivational force in man” (99). As opposed to associating this drive towards meaning along the same paradigm as Freud’s “will to pleasure” or Adler’s “will to power,” Frankl instead believed in a “*will* to meaning” which served as the incontrovertible basis for all of mankind’s existential pursuits (101, Frankl’s italics). How might one attain such meaning? According to Frankl, one can do so by creating art or by “doing a deed”; “by experiencing something or encountering someone”; or finally, “by the attitude we take toward unavoidable suffering” (111). However, if one shirks from his duties by not seeking one of these three essential goals, his meaning becomes “frustrated,” and he falls victim to an “existential vacuum” of despair and depression (106).

Notwithstanding the sort of model scholars choose to support in trauma studies, it is evident that trauma studies has emerged as a prominent subject within the literary criticism of today. One particular genre of literature that has received a great deal of attention is Southern Literature, as trauma theory has the capacity to discuss widespread cultural ailments including “events such as slavery, segregation, racism, and political violence” (Hinrichsen 605). These aforementioned ailments, which are omnipresent in Southern literature, clearly allow for a great deal of interdisciplinary cross-pollination between trauma studies and the literature of the U.S. South. Particularly, as Lisa Hinrichsen elucidates, “the vocabulary and paradigms of trauma studies, when rooted in the historical and cultural specificity of southern space and place, have enabled further theorizing of the field’s longstanding key concepts of memory and history” (609). Since trauma studies lends itself so well to studying literature, and especially Southern

Literature, it makes sense that I can extend my discussion of trauma to one of the most prominent authors within Southern literature: William Faulkner.

Despite the oceans of ink spilled by Faulkner scholars, it has been only within the last decade or so that scholars have begun to look at Faulkner through the lens of trauma studies. In “Freud, Faulkner, Caruth: Trauma and the Politics of Literary Form,” Greg Forter seeks to shift the main paradigm of contemporary trauma studies from the study of monumental events of trauma (such as the Holocaust), to punctuated, habitual, and systemic types of trauma (in the same line of reasoning as LaCapra, Leys, and Luckhurst). The locus of Forter’s arguments revolve around the idea that trauma can also affects individuals on a subtle, systemic basis (260). He continues that trauma does not have to be a shockingly vivid scene; rather, even racial “othering” over many generations is a form a trauma. However, what is unique about Forter’s argument is that he uses Freud’s early work on trauma—the mimetic theory—as the foundation for his reading of Faulkner.¹² These early theories reveal, according to Forter, that “manifestations of traumatic behavior are merely the expressions of a deep, structural trauma that compels all human beings toward regressive self-destruction” (269). Such structural traumas are simply the oppressive systems of power and racial discrimination present in our society—past and present. After explaining his rationale for choosing Freud’s earlier theories, Forter turns to Faulkner to illustrate how Freud’s ideas create “inventive and radically new forms for mediating psychosocial experience...[and] modern racism and misogyny with a concrete specificity that helps us to see why some ways of figuring these trauma[s]

¹² Forter’s reliance on Freud’s early models of trauma is intriguing because this earlier model, as I have discussed above, has a problematic relationship with transference, a fact that Forter does not address in his article. What is also interesting is that Forter is one of the few modern trauma theorists who has decided to use Freud’s earlier theories in his work.

are enabling while others are mystifying and politically crippling” (261). In the end, Forter’s explication of Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Light in August* reveals that while these same types of structural trauma are present throughout Faulkner’s oeuvre, Faulkner offers a way to “open up rather than foreclose a space for acting on the systems that traumatize” (282), a move unseen in the work of the trauma theorists of the 1990’s.

Other scholars have also explored the systemic presence of trauma in Faulkner’s oeuvre. Minrose Gwin distances her own interpretation of the middle voice from that of LaCapra, whom she feels does not account for the possibility that the middle voice can be racialized. Instead, Gwin purports that Faulkner’s use of the middle voice is inextricably linked to racial wounding. Gwin argues that the actual middle voice in these novels cannot fully be differentiated as either white or black; instead, the middle voice is “attached to voice rather than person and thus is not so much testimonial as dramatic and evocative, everywhere and nowhere, somewhat like race itself in Faulkner’s work” (29). In a similar fashion to Gwin, Dorothy Stringer believes that Faulkner’s works often exclude a real handling of racism by the unintentional omission of it from his texts. In *“Not even past”: Race, Historical Trauma, and Subjectivity in Faulkner, Larsen, and Van Vechten*, Stringer employs Freud’s description of the Fort/Da game to explain how the trauma of race in Faulkner can be worked through. Through the Fort/Da game, Stringer argues, “anxiety can be controlled, memory can be organized—that trauma, which seems so overwhelming in its adult manifestations, can nonetheless become subject to critical judgment” (2).¹³

¹³ Stringer also wants us to remember that as literary critics we can become problematic ourselves, since while the act of criticism itself “helps control the world of trauma,” it might result in “acting out traumatic repetitions” that are depicted within the text (2).

While scholars have used trauma theory to examine many of Faulkner's works, there has not yet been any comprehensive study done on *The Sound and the Fury* through the lens of trauma theory.¹⁴ Even in the annals of past Faulknerian psychoanalytic scholarship, the only two areas of study that remotely relate to trauma studies are studies involving the repetition compulsion and the primal scene. Perhaps the most notable use of the repetition compulsion is John Irwin's *Doubling and Incest, Repetition and Revenge: A Speculative Reading of Faulkner*. Irwin examines repetition in *The Sound and the Fury* through the character of Quentin Compson and argues that Quentin is locked in a repetitious relationship plagued with incestuous feelings for his sister, which eventually spirals into a profound sense of narcissism (35). Quentin's narcissism is linked to his love for his sister, as she replaces the loss of the Oedipal parent/child relationship between Quentin and his mother (43).

Some Faulknerian critics mingle the repetition compulsion with Lacanian psychoanalytic explorations into gender. Doreen Fowler argues that the language of *The Sound and the Fury* "is constituted of a ceaseless interplay of meanings and is the site of repression and return" (*Return* 2). Quentin, Jason, and Benjy's obsession with their own phallic lack (in the Lacanian sense of the term) causes them to "project their loss onto their sister Caddy, who occupies the position of mother in relation to her brothers" (*Return* 32). Additionally, as Donald Kartiganer explains in his introduction to Fowler's essay "Little Sister Death: *The Sound and the Fury* and the Denied Unconscious," the

¹⁴ While Kristen Fujie's doctoral dissertation *Ties of Blood: Gender, Race, and Faulkner* touches on traumatic miscegenation in *The Sound and the Fury*, she situates this form of trauma within the greater historical context of Faulkner's earlier novels (*Soldiers' Pay*, *Mosquitos*, and *Sartoris*). Moreover, this dissertation barely makes any reference to trauma theory or the psychoanalytic work of Freud and Lacan. Therefore, I can safely conclude that there have been no significant studies done on trauma studies vis-à-vis *The Sound and the Fury*.

novel is “a narrative of failed male passage into adulthood” (*Faulkner and Psychology* x). Because Quentin and Jason “have [been] separated from an imaginary dyadic unity” with their mother, “they project these feelings of lack of being onto women, and, in particular onto Caddy” who acts as a “mother-surrogate” (Fowler, “Death” 5). These same feelings lead to an objectivization of Caddy, and force Caddy to assume the role of “what...[Quentin and Jason] have denied: she is the return of *their* repressed” (Kartiganer, *Faulkner and Psychology* x). Subsequently, both characters are trapped in a “paradox,” unable to resolve their need for a “return to the mother and the wholeness she represents *and* to define an individual identity” (Kartiganer, *Faulkner and Psychology* x). Thus, the novel is not just about the absence of Caddy, but about how the men in the novel respond to her presence, or absence (Clarke 62).¹⁵

As seen above, many scholars believe that Lacan’s studies of the mind are complementary to any psychoanalytic study of Faulkner’s work. Nevertheless, one thing that is quite puzzling about trauma studies is that apart from a single chapter in Caruth’s *Unclaimed Experience*, Lacan is noticeably absent from the overall scholarly conversation of trauma. Perhaps this phenomenon results from Lacan’s implied understanding of trauma that is, unlike Freud’s explicit treatment, spread out across the span of his life’s work. As I will discuss in further detail in a later chapter, Lacan sees trauma as a “fixation or blockage” of “something which is not symbolized” (Fink 26). By communicating with an analyst, the patient’s use of language, or “the very antithesis of fixation,” allows him to transfer these fixations into signifiers which enable him to break

¹⁵ Deborah Clarke’s “Of Mothers, Robbery, and Language: Faulkner and *The Sound and the Fury*” takes a similar approach to that of Fowler, arguing that while Caddy’s brothers’ attempts to silence her role as a mother temporarily succeed, their victory evaporates because of “their own impotence and undoing” to control Caddy’s sexuality (65).

free from the trauma of his past (Fink 27). In other words, this language that Lacan speaks of “limits the wandering of the signifier surrounding the unfixable hole of the desire” (Apollon 112) by the act of the subject artistically writing down words. By writing down these signifiers, or in his words, “naming” the Other, the speaking subject might be able to overcome his anxiety, and ostensibly, work through the trauma he has endured (*Anxiety* 338).

The other area within Faulknerian criticism which correlates in some fashion to trauma theory involves Freud’s concept of the primal scene. This situation occurs when an individual observes a traumatic instance early on in his life that does not register in his psyche yet appears later to haunt his own adult life. Freud’s famous case study of the Wolf Man illustrates the significance of the primal scene. Because the Wolf Man witnessed his parents copulating at an early age, the trauma of this event haunts the individual later in his life through disturbing neuroses and dreams. Michael Zeitlin defines the primal scene as “the fundamental traumatic event in Faulkner’s novels” (89). André Bleikasten’s argues that *The Sound and the Fury* is a “writing out of this primal scene” of Damuddy’s death, as each brother is, in a different way, an example of this inability to grow up, to move out of the primal scene (*Casebook* xii). Therefore, the primal scene is not only a regular appearance throughout Faulkner’s oeuvre, but is also tied to traumatic repetition and repression.

I have chosen to analyze *The Sound and the Fury* through the lens of trauma theory for several reasons. First, because of the sheer volume of Faulknerian scholarship, coupled with the limited amount of space contained within a thesis, I am unable to extend my analysis to any other works in Faulkner’s oeuvre. Second, since many critics consider

The Sound and the Fury the greatest American novel of the 20th-century, it would be short-sighted not to explore this work within the emerging theoretical paradigm of trauma studies.¹⁶ Finally, as I have already discussed above, *The Sound and the Fury* is undeniably traumatic. From the death of Damuddy to Benjy's howl at the end, the novel depicts traumatic event after traumatic event in a chaotic maelstrom of loss, sorrow, suffering, and death.

However, in the following chapters I will prove that relying solely on the mimetic or anti-mimetic theory is not sufficient for a complete treatment of the novel's traumatic paradigm, as I believe the dialectical relationship between both of Freud's traumatic models have a place in understanding the novel. Moreover, while Faulknerian studies of trauma do not involve any Lacanian or Franklian theory, I will use the oeuvre of both psychoanalysts to complement my thesis' arguments. Therefore, rather than reading *The Sound and the Fury* through a single lens of trauma theory, I propose that by analyzing the text through both the mimetic and anti-mimetic models of trauma theory, based on applying both models to each of the four sections of the novel, more clearly defines the traumatic experiences of the novel's characters situated in the South, and ultimately the resolution, or irresolution of their own traumatic experiences.

In the first chapter titled "'I Was Trying to Say': (Re)-Discovering Benjy's Voice," I discuss the temporality of trauma in the novel by dialectically engaging with both models of trauma theory. Many scholars have studied the intricate layers of narrative comprising *The Sound and the Fury*, oftentimes lamenting the difficulty caused by its fragmented

¹⁶ Harold Bloom once wrote that "Faulkner is now recognized as the strongest American novelist of this century, clearly surpassing Hemingway and Fitzgerald, and standing as an equal in the sequence that includes Hawthorne, Melville, Twain, and Henry James" (1).

shifts in time. Jean-Paul Sartre once wrote that the characters in the *Sound and the Fury* have the “misfortune...in being time-bound...they never look ahead...they face backwards as the car carries them along” (257). While this fatalistic pronouncement might seem devoid of any hope or future, what Sartre fails to realize here is that Benjy’s position outside the normative timeframe of the novel’s other characters provides him with the ability to see things in a unique fashion. While Benjy cannot fully express himself linguistically, his own unique perspective, or what Caruth would call his “enigmatic language of untold stories—of experiences not yet completely grasped,” demonstrates how he might transcend his own disability (56). Even despite being trapped in the mimetic recapitulation of his trauma, Benjy’s timelessness enables him to escape the full effects of the suffering he endures. Yet, since Benjy’s disability prevents him from working through his trauma on his own, his sole hope is through LaCapra’s concept of the middle voice which can not only be seen through Benjy’s interactions with the novel’s other characters, but also with how the reader engages with the text of the novel. By inviting the reader to bear the burden of Benjy’s trauma, Faulkner’s use of the middle voice, therefore, allows Benjy’s traumatic story to become “real both to the victim and to the community” and accomplishes what trauma theorists see as the healing power of literary texts—both within and outside of the text (Tal 21).

In chapter two, “Anxiety, Trauma, and Containment in Quentin’s Monologue,” I explain that the foundational reason behind Quentin’s neuroses results from a fundamental lack of any parental affection early in life. Accordingly, he tries to replace the void where this love should be through another source: his sister Caddy, which becomes further complicated by the inclusion of the primal scene of her muddy

underwear. This scene causes Quentin to combine these feelings of love and death with what he desires the most: a need to love and be loved. This juxtaposition of death and desire which his sister represents causes him to experience anxiety in the Freudian anti-mimetic sense of the term. Yet, as I will explain, Lacan's concept of anxiety, which entails not realizing what the Other wants of you, is a more accurate representation than Freud's for the trauma Quentin experiences due to the primal scene. What Quentin's linguistic breakdown over the course of his monologue entails is that he cannot reconcile the primal scene's dichotomy of death and sexuality contained within his sister's muddy drawers. As a result of this tragic situation, Quentin commits suicide so that he might hopefully reach his apotheosis, or another plane of existence which both separates him from the anxieties of the world and reunites him with Caddy: the symbol of lost parental affection.

“‘I'm not going to mind you’: Trauma, Control, and Meaning in Jason's Section” is my third chapter. In it, the villainous character of Jason becomes the primary force which drives the narrative. Faulkner accomplishes this feat through the complexity of Jason's character, not because of his propensity towards vile and evil deeds. As I will argue, the complexity of Jason's character derives from the traumatic causes of his villainy. The primary event which leads to Jason's trauma is that he cannot reverse the decline of the Compson family line. Thus, this situation causes his will to meaning, in the Franklian sense of the term, to become frustrated, leading him towards the anti-mimetic condition of anxiety due to his failure to control the world around him. Through the use of irony and humor, therefore, Jason's fixation on the dual noögenic neuroses of power and pleasure pales in comparison to a concrete will to meaning in one's life. Instead of the

power he wishes, these two obsessions ultimately lead to Jason's existential frustration and the inability to work through his traumatic past.

In my final chapter titled "(Re) Assessing Trauma, Race, and the Resurrection in Dilsey's Section of *The Sound and the Fury*" I explore the interplay between historical racism and trauma in Dilsey's section. Some scholars attest that Faulkner's optimistic portrayal of his African-American characters in the novel lessens the unequivocally detrimental traumatic effects of racism they suffer. However, these same scholars, just as the early trauma theorists, overlook the presence of more covert forms of trauma such as historical and systemic racism. This paradigmatic shift coincides with contemporary (re) evaluations of trauma theory which attempt seek to modify some of the early presuppositions of early scholars such as Caruth who believed that trauma is always punctual or caused by momentous event of rupture caused by trauma early on in one's life. As I intimate in this chapter, any discussion of trauma vis-à-vis race must not only account for such punctual models, but also address how trauma can both damage societies and individuals over extended periods of time and inhibits any means of working through its deadly effects. Through Dilsey's character in particular, Faulkner seems to provide a means of working through the trauma induced by historical racism. Nevertheless, the novel's ending seems to reinforce this same traumatic, transhistorical racism it seems to renounce. Rather than remediating the presence of this systemic racism, or "racial wounding," in the lives of the novel's African-American characters, the novel's final scenes prevent, as Minrose Gwin writes, the "departure of racial trauma into history, keeping its impossibility alive—and the wound open" (32). Regardless, despite this resistance to working through trauma, the inclusion of an appendix to the 1946

edition of *The Sound and the Fury* offers a tenuously frail line of hope for a future free from the damaging effects of historical racism.

In my conclusion, I offer a clear statement of the value of trauma studies for understanding Faulkner in general and *The Sound and the Fury* specifically. I explain that the appendix to the 1946 edition to the novel reveals how both the mimetic and anti-mimetic models of trauma theory can work in unison. By doing so, I hope to encourage further scholarly work exploring the interplay of both models of trauma within the many psychoanalytic schools of trauma studies¹⁷, the literature of the South, and Faulkner's oeuvre. Thus, by continuing to study Faulkner's work through the lens of trauma studies that is not relegated to one model of trauma over the other, scholars might also be able to carry out Faulkner's message of stoic determination despite the inevitable and omnipresent presence of suffering and trauma that is universally shared by all of humanity.

¹⁷ As I will mention over the course of this study, this means including overlooked analysts such as Lacan, Frankl, and Jung.

CHAPTER II

“I Was Trying to Say”: (Re)-Discovering Benjy’s Voice

*Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.*

—William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*

In act five of *Macbeth*, Macbeth learns that his wife has just committed suicide. His wife’s death signals Macbeth’s final decline from the apogee of success as king of Scotland, to his eventual doom at the hands of Macduff. In Macbeth’s ensuing soliloquy quoted in the epigraph above, Macbeth comments on humanity’s temporal existence. Macbeth laments that time, by continuously reminding us “lighted fools” of the pleasures and pains of the past, and hopes and dreams of the future, always ends up leading us “the way to dusty death” (5.5.25). Macbeth claims that this ephemerality—this “walking shadow”—of time is only something a fool, or an idiot, might come up with; and rather than a meaningful attestation of one’s existence, time is inherently fatalistic, resigned to blustering insignificance, “full of sound and fury, / signifying nothing” (5.5.30-31).

Such rhetorical sound and fury in the face of existential despair sets the stage for the first section of Faulkner’s *the Sound and the Fury*. Oftentimes readers have difficulty following Benjy’s narrative voice, as the section’s time changes, disassociated collages of images, and non-linear narrative progression can be quite confusing. Faulkner’s own opinions about Benjy’s section, while characteristically ambiguous, seem to indicate that Benjy’s experiences, either traumatic or pleasurable, are not especially relevant because

Benjy does not really understand the significance of the world around him.¹⁸ For example, when asked in an interview with Jean Stein if Benjy could experience love, Faulkner answered that Benjy's mind did not contain enough sense to realize such emotions. Rather, Benjy's feelings of pain or pleasure, directly correlated to the loss of his sister Caddy, are significant in the same way an "animal" reacts to loss; and these feelings act as more of a narrative guiding technique which is, like Benjy, neither good nor evil but impassionate and distant (*Lion* 246). In a similar vein, a great deal of Faulknerian scholarship echoes Faulkner's own comments about the dispassionate, insignificant nature of Benjy's existence. Moffitt Cecil concedes that while "Benjy's sensibilities are exceptionally acute... [his] power to abstract, to generalize...is denied him...he has no word for pleasure or pain" (39). Moreover, Benjy lacks, as Noel Polk points out, an ability to communicate signifiers in a coherent manner; instead, Benjy, as a "nonlingual" being, understands the world only through direct experience (106, Polk's italics). Finally, Jean-Paul Sartre sees Benjy's relationship with time as "clockless," thoroughly relegated to his past with little hope for the future; "the present is not," Sartre explains, "it becomes...everything *was*" (255). Therefore, according to both author and critics, it appears that Benjy, an idiot in the psychological terminology of his day, is lost or even abandoned—condemned to a subhuman existence by a world he does not understand.

¹⁸ Faulkner's tendency to obscure his own true personal thoughts and opinions with contradictory statements and opaque language is always something one must consider when conducting any Faulknerian research. For instance, Faulkner calls his decision to title *The Sound and the Fury*, a name which "has produced titles for a dozen books," as a matter of pure coincidence (*Lion* 171). While it is indeed important to realize Faulkner's wavering opinions regarding his works, I stress that even such ambiguous statements can serve as a framework for understanding and evaluating what is hidden within them.

However, these critics ignore Benjy's own individual experience as the defining factor of the first section of *The Sound and the Fury*; they ignore Benjy's trauma. Instead of fixating on the *apparent* meaninglessness of Benjy's monologue, I view it, as Stacy Burton succinctly states, as the defining moment for "Faulkner's readers...as they too attempt to comprehend the history of the Compson family" (208). In this chapter, the traumas Benjy experiences in his monologue adhere to both models of trauma theory that I have outlined in the introduction to this thesis. In accordance with the mimetic model, which focuses on identifying how symptomatic moments of trauma in the past affect the present, Benjy is traumatized in response to his sister's departure. Through Freud's concept of deferred action, otherwise known as *Nachträglichkeit*, Benjy repeats the psychic trauma of his past through his physical actions in the present. Because of Benjy's compulsion (the repetition compulsion) to repeat the trauma of the lost Other of his sister, Benjy experiences anxiety: a psychological state caused by the influence of trauma.

Yet such feelings of anxiety are anti-mimetic rather than mimetic. Rather than the mimetic model's reliance on the internal formulization of past traumas based on one's past development, the anti-mimetic model emphasizes trauma being caused by the actions of an outside force. When faced with such anxiety caused by trauma, survivors either act out their trauma or work through it. Acting out trauma involves, as Freud explains, repeating "repressed...inhibitions and unserviceable attitudes and...pathological character-traits"; however, working through trauma involves first recognizing the cause of trauma in the patient's own life, then utilizing said trauma to improve his or her current situation ("Remembering" 151-152). Turning our gaze back to *The Sound and the*

Fury, I will argue that Benjy cannot work through his trauma on his *own*; instead, as evidenced by his obsessive behavior, he acts-out his trauma onto the physical world around him. However, unlike Sartre who believes that Benjy is relegated to his fate without any chance of a future, it is in fact Benjy's "enigmatic language of untold stories...of experiences not yet completely grasped" which engenders him with an extraordinary awareness of reality that enables him, to some extent, to come to terms with his own traumatic experiences (Caruth 56). Yet what ultimately allows Benjy to work through his trauma is understood through Dominick Lacapra's concept of the middle voice, or a form of communication that places both survivor and witness on equal hegemonic footing without denigrating the experience of the survivor or giving way to transference between either respective individual. Thus in this chapter, by dialectically engaging with the text through the dual traumatic modes of mimesis and anti-mimesis, I claim that Benjy's unique presence out of time, or what I call his timelessness, enables a reprieve from the sounds and fury of his traumatic existence; and while Benjy's own traumatic condition does not enable him to fully work through his trauma on his *own*, it is a testament to the necessary employment of the middle voice in the remediation of trauma.

As I have intimated above, the loss of Caddy is the most significant moment of Benjy's life. Benjy's caretakers (Luster, T.P., and Versh) routinely use physical objects, otherwise known as narcissi, to placate him when he slips back into past memories of his sister.¹⁹ Yet the absence of these objects is quite significant for Benjy, as it indicates the presence of the repetition compulsion:

¹⁹ Deriving from Greek myth, the term "narcissus" has been associated with Benjy's prized physical objects. Faulkner himself was the originator of this term (*Lion* 248).

There was a flower in the bottle. I put the other flower in it. "Ain't you a grown man, now." Luster said. "Playing with two weeds in a bottle. You know what they going to do with you when Miss Cahline die. They going to send you to Jackson, where you belong. Mr. Jason say so. Where you can hold the bars all day long with the rest of the looneys and slobber. How you like that." Luster knocked the flowers over with his hand. "That's what they'll do to you at Jackson when you starts bellering." I tried to pick up the flowers. Luster picked them up, and they went away. I began to cry. (31)

Luster's pronouncements of Caddy's name, combined with Caddy's propensity for wearing flowers in her hair (24), serves to cement Benjy's association between flowers and his sister. By throwing Benjy's flowers away, or knocking the flowers from Benjy's hand, Luster reinforces the traumatic absence of Caddy. Therefore, the oscillation between the presence and absence of Benjy's narcissi is evidence of the repetition compulsion. Even in the darkness of his home, or in the fading twilight, the presence or absence of his narcissi indicates his shifts into the recesses of his past memories:

In the corner it was dark, but I could see the window. I squatted there, holding the slipper. I couldn't see it, but my hands saw it, and I could hear it getting night, and my hands saw the slipper but I couldn't see myself but my hands could see the slipper, and I squatted there, hearing it getting dark. (70)

Even if he cannot see the slipper, Benjy's awareness of its absence vis-à-vis the loss of his sister nevertheless still haunts Benjy, as each time Benjy clutches his sister's faded and worn slipper he is reminded of her loss. Benjy's loss of Caddy correlates with his obsessive attraction to his narcissi, for as John Matthews explains, these "mementoes

become...arbitrary designates of loss,” reinforcing the traumatic separation from his sister (83). The above passage solidifies Benjy’s inability to “see himself,” or to realize the entire capacity of his existence; instead, he is fixated on the narcissi, on the repetition compulsion of his past traumatic experiences.

Indeed, Benjy’s own reaction to changes in his immediate surroundings causes him to recapitulate the ultimate source of his trauma: the departure of his sister Caddy from the Compson family home. As I have just intimated, the first indication of Benjy’s traumatic repetition is his attachment to narcissi. The second example of Benjy’s traumatic (re)enactment of the repetition compulsion is his fixation on senses, which again originates from the loss of his sister. Just as physical objects (such as flowers) cause Benjy to remember his past trauma, Benjy’s senses remind him of the trauma of his sister’s absence. These physical sensations usually signify shifts backwards into the recesses of time, as Benjy can easily detect other characters in the novel just by their scent, associating them with specific smells, such as his juxtaposition of trees with Caddy, or environmental conditions (such as rain upon the other characters)—even if what has happened to them occurred in the past. These sensory flashbacks Benjy experiences, according to Clementine Morgan, are prime indications of the traumatic experience, since unlike typical memories, traumatic memories are re-lived just “as if they are happening in the present, producing a stress response intended for emergencies...the emergency happened in the past, but the response is happening in the present” (54). Benjy’s sensory acuteness indicates that he can sense things that others cannot experience; for Benjy, unlike the other characters, is able to sense illness and

death.²⁰ At first glance, Benjy's associates the death of Nancy the family cow, who as Caddy says "fell in the ditch [until] Roskus shot her and the buzzards came and undressed her," with his mother's own worsening condition (21):

The bones rounded out of the ditch, where the dark vines were in the black ditch, into the moonlight, like some of the shapes had stopped. Then they all stopped and it was dark, and when I stopped to start again I could hear Mother, and feet walking fast away, and I could smell it. Then the room came, but my eyes went shut. I didn't stop. I could smell it. T. P. unpinned the bed clothes. "Hush." he said, "Shhhhhhhh." But I could smell it. (21)

.....

He [T.P.] laced my shoes and put my cap on and we went out. There was a light in the hall. Across the hall we could hear Mother. "Shhhhhh, Benjy." T.P. said. "We'll be out in a minute." A door opened and I could smell it more than ever, and a head came out. It wasn't Father... "Better keep him there." It wasn't Father. He shut the door, but I could still smell it. (22)

The ambiguous use of the pronoun "it" in conjunction with Benjy's sense of smell represents his inability to assign a signifier to the concept of illness and death. Yet despite his limited knowledge of both conditions, Benjy is adept at determining their absence or presence in the world around him. This situation occurs, as Rokus explains, because Benjy "know[s] lot more than folks thinks...he could tell you when hisn coming, if he could talk. Or yours. Or mine" (31). Therefore, the presence (or absence) of such

²⁰ Ross and Polk see Benjy's propensity for smelling illness as "simply another state of consciousness, or unconsciousness, for which he has no name either, no capacity to conceptualize as something different from when he is conscious" (*Reading Faulkner* 12). Unfortunately, Ross and Polk erroneously connect Benjy's extrasensory awareness to his dispassionate nature.

sensations delineates whether Benjy is, or is not, affected by the stimuli he encounters. When he smells Caddy in a certain way (such as associating her with trees or flowers), he is comforted, his world remains at ease; yet, when her scent wavers from the smells he expects (such as when he smells her new perfume), he repeats the trauma of his past. This traumatic repetition displaces his connection with the present, which ultimately hinders his being-within-time (his ability to stay within the present without falling back into the past). In other words, Benjy's continual flashbacks involving his sister place him in a limbo-like state between past and present.

Specifically, Benjy's repeated inability to pass through the opening, or the gateway, in the fence between his family's estate and his pasture represents his state of limbo-like, or even better said, purgatorial oscillation between past and present temporal states:

We went along the fence and came to the garden fence, where our shadows were.

My shadow was higher than Luster's on the fence. We came to the broken place and went through it. "Wait a minute." Luster said. "You snagged on that nail again. Cant you never crawl through here without snagging on that nail." (4)

In this passage, the physical action of snagging on the nail indicates the repetition compulsion's continual obstruction between the trauma of the past, symbolized by Benjy's home and everything that it stands for, and the freedom of Benjy's pasture. Instead of being able to free himself from his past trauma, Benjy's continual habit of snagging on the nail, the symbolic representation of his trauma ("again" and "again" as Luster says) exemplifies Benjy's inability to destroy the past's hold on his present self. Unfortunately, because of Benjy's continual snagging on the rail of his past trauma, he

experiences a warped sense of time, or “a timeless present (*Country* 325) as Cleanth Brooks calls it, in relation to the other characters around him:

“What is it.” Caddy said. “Did you think it would be Christmas when I came home from school. Is that what you thought. Christmas is the day after tomorrow. Santy Claus, Benjy. Santy Claus. Come on, let's run to the house and get warm.”
(7)

For Benjy, days such as Christmas have no significance; the fact that Christmas is “the day after tomorrow” does not register in his mind. Again, like with Benjy’s sensory acuteness, the nonlinearity of his temporal condition correlates to how trauma survivors experience trauma. As Morgan elucidates, many trauma survivors experience time in a strictly nonlinear fashion; moreover, trauma time “is more like a complex, dynamic web of information and experience in which...[one] can move in any direction” (Morgan 56). Ultimately, Benjy is trapped in an endless web of recapitulated trauma which he cannot even translate into verbalization; he cannot express his pain, which leaves him nothing but the sound and fury of his incoherent cries and causes him to act out his trauma.

According to Dominick LaCapra, acting out trauma is readily apparent in survivors, since “when one inevitably experiences trauma, one must either end up acting out or working through its manifestations” (142).²¹ Benjy acts out against the world around him through the sounds he makes, echoing what Caruth calls “the moving and sorrowful *voice* that cries out,” the voice “that is paradoxically released *through the wound*” (2, her italics). Benjy’s mournful, melancholic voice echoes his painfully

²¹ LaCapra adds that a great deal of trauma theory unfortunately tends to focus on acting out trauma rather than working through it. This emphasis on acting out excludes “all working through as closure, totalization, full cure, full mastery” of trauma (145).

traumatic separation from his sister Caddy. Such pain, according to Elaine Scarry, “does not simply resist language but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned” (4). As Cecil explains, these primordial cries for expression, for articulation, are exactly the cries Benjy makes over the course of the novel, as his ability to share his experiences with others to “abstract, to generalize...to think, is denied to him” (39). Take for example Benjy’s reaction to the alcohol given to him by Quentin:

They held me. It was hot on my chin and on my shirt. “Drink.” Quentin said.
They held my head. It was hot inside me, and I began again. I was crying now,
and something was happening inside me and I cried more, and they held me until
it stopped happening. Then I hushed. It was still going around, and then the
shapes began. (15)

Benjy cannot understand what is happening to him, why it is “happening inside” him, and why this liquid has such an effect on him. Thus, the alcohol that Quentin gives Benjy symbolizes his inability to communicate his traumatic experiences, and the “shapes” that he sees further illustrates that he cannot differentiate between a normal physiological state and a state of trauma, symbolized by his intoxication.

And just as Benjy reacts to the unknown experience of alcoholic intoxication, so does he react to the unknown traumatic absence of Caddy. Benjy confuses schoolgirls passing by his family’s property with his missing Caddy. Yet his cries are not meant for the girls but for the ghost of Caddy, or the Other that Benjy lacks:

They came on in the twilight. I wasn’t crying, and I held to the gate. They came slow. “I’m scared.” “He wont hurt you. I pass here every day. He just runs along

the fence.” They came on. I opened the gate and they stopped, turning. I was trying to say, and I caught her, trying to say, and she screamed and I was trying to say and trying and the bright shapes began to stop and I tried to get out. I tried to get it off of my face, but the bright shapes were going again. (30)

Despite his desperate, nonverbal cries for others to understand him, he is unable to say anything; he cannot relay his own feelings and experiences to the girls. All of what he is trying to communicate is summed up in the statement “I was trying to say.” By repeating this phrase three times, this passage cements Benjy’s problem with expressing his feelings into verbal speech. Due to his inability to express himself, Benjy transgresses societal norms. His punishment is castration.

Many psychoanalytic scholars who read the *Sound and the Fury* tend to view Benjy’s castration as the primary traumatic event of his life. Doreen Fowler believes that Benjy’s castration directly correlates to the Law of the Father. By passing through the fence separating his family’s estate into his pasture, Benjy transgresses the Law of the Father, which results in a “loss of difference, figured in this instance as the loss of consciousness and the severing of the external organs which signify male difference” (“Sister Death” 7). Perhaps, at an instinctual level, Benjy understands that something is wrong with him; he might sense that something is missing (in every connotation of the word). While his castration is significant, it does not address a problem that arises: how can Benjy truly understand what has happened to his body? If even simple alterations in Benjy’s surroundings are incomprehensible to him, then how can he understand his mutilation? Benjy cannot even comprehend the regularly punctuated intervals of night and day, the cicadas in the trees, or the onset of sleep:

Father went to the door and looked at us again. Then the dark came back, and he stood black in the door, and then the door turned black again. Caddy held me and I could hear us all, and the darkness, and something I could smell. And then I could see the windows, where the trees were buzzing. Then the dark began to go in smooth, bright shapes, like it always does, even when Caddy says that I have been asleep. (41)

Benjy cannot verbalize sleep, or the way “dark began to go in smooth, bright shapes”; he has no words to describe its occurrence. Instead of reawakening from the site of trauma, as in the case of Lacan’s re-envisioning of the dream of the burning child, Benjy awakens each day from sleep into a never-ending nightmare he cannot escape. Benjy is unable to recognize the diurnal changes in his surroundings; his mind does not fully realize the changes in his own body and cannot recognize his own castration. Benjy’s inability to relay his traumatic experiences to those around him hinders the progression of his language skills into something comprehensible and renders his communication with the outside world into his own muted form of language and gestures. Through Benjy’s episodic outbursts, he demonstrates how the inexpressibility of pain is an unequivocal part of the traumatic experience, as he is helpless in the face of the unclaimed experience of Caddy’s loss.

However, the deferred action of Caddy’s loss, revealed through Benjy’s anxious fixation on his narcissi and sensory experiences, correlates with the anti-mimetic model’s association of trauma caused from without, rather than the mimetic model’s emphasis on trauma resulting from unregistered traumatic events in one’s psyche. Because Benjy cannot communicate the loss of Caddy in a normal fashion, he experiences anxiety; for in

accordance with the anti-mimetic model, Benjy's feelings of anxiety result from his desire for the Other of his sister, as anxiety acts as a signal that the subject is searching for the Other that they lack (Harari 108). One such passage that demonstrates Benjy's fixation on the Other of his sister occurs on the day of his thirty-third birthday when he hears golfers calling for their caddies:

The man said "Caddie" up the hill. The boy got out of the water and went up the hill.

"Now, just listen at you." Luster said. "Hush up." "What he moaning about now."

"Lawd knows." Luster said. "He just starts like that. He been at it all morning. Cause it his birthday, I reckon." (16)

Benjy's feelings of anxiety surface when confronted with the name caddie, whom he mistakes for his sister's name, and the obstruction of the Other that he seeks. Therefore, because Benjy cannot reunite with his sister, he feels anxious because his desire for the Other is interrupted.

In the face of such anxiety, one's unconscious, according to Freud, would typically form defense mechanisms (such as repression, regression, sublimation, and so on) in order to protect the ego from any further harm. Perhaps on the surface, Benjy seems to use defense mechanisms to protect himself when he experiences trauma. For instance, one might claim that Benjy's reaction to his mother's sickness could be an example of regression:

Versh's hand came with the spoon, into the bowl. The spoon came up to my mouth. The steam tickled into my mouth. Then we quit eating and we looked at each other and we were quiet, and then we heard it again and I began to cry. (27)

In this passage, and throughout his monologue, it could be argued that Benjy regresses to an earlier childlike state; however, it is in fact his trauma that causes him to act in the fashion that he does. Benjy's reaction to this "it," this outside presence, this looming threat of doom signified by the cries of his sick mother indicates the presence of signal anxiety in the face of a possible threat to Benjy's stability. Through his crying, Benjy acts out his trauma as a result of an outside force, as the symptoms of his acting out—predominately his remonstrances and cries—are "*defenses against anxiety and attempts to avoid it*" (Harari 78, his italics). Overall, Benjy, as a result of his trauma, cannot defend himself against the trauma he experiences; thus, his ability to transmogrify his obsessive pathologies into signifiers is denied to him by his endless traumatic recapitulations, which inevitably devolve into a profound state of anxiety. Therefore, at this stage, Benjy seems unable to rectify, or work through, his current psychological distress.

As I have previously discussed, Benjy's repetition compulsions trap him within a limbo-like state which leads him to experience a warped sense of time, or a sense of timelessness, typical amongst trauma survivors. While this state is ostensibly deleterious, it nevertheless enables him, in some limited sense, to work through this trauma. Despite its position in the fourth section of the novel, the scene at the Confederate war monument indicates Benjy's timelessness. In this scene, Luster attempts to drive the carriage to the left of the monument, rather than his typical path to the right of the Confederate soldier. Benjy reacts deeply against this change in direction by "roaring" endlessly in protest (159). After Jason takes over from Luster and course-corrects the carriage, Benjy, his eyes "empty and blue and serene again," resumes his typical demeanor of placidity and

everything returns to its right place (160). Arthur Geffen has discussed this important scene, arguing that Benjy's refusal to travel clockwise instead of counterclockwise is his refusal "to become paralyzed by the [Confederate] monument and all it stands for" (194). While I do not completely disagree with this point, one must understand that Benjy is unable to comprehend time like any typical individual. Rather, Benjy is trapped in a purgatorial state between the events of his past (endlessly recapitulated), and the present he lives in; therefore, he is continually oscillating between the past (replete with unrequited trauma), and the present with no knowledge of what the future holds. The only aspect of the monument that matters to Benjy is the direction he travels around its circumference. Benjy does not understand the monument's significance because he cannot associate it with anything (smell, sight, or touch) from his past; the monument is merely cold marble to him, and Benjy cannot understand the implications (unless on a level akin to his unconscious realization of his mother's sickness) of rejecting Confederate nature of the monument. Therefore, since Benjy cannot fully understand the implications of the monument because of his state of timelessness, I believe that Benjy in some sense works through each of his traumatic episodes because he is only momentarily able to act out each moment before he forgets what has happened.

Unlike acting out trauma, working through trauma involves "critically engaging the tendency to act out the past," while at the same time being conscious of trauma's "presence in conjunction with the will to conquer its manifestations" (LaCapra 142-143). For Benjy, while his own position outside of time allows him some reprieve from the trauma he has experienced, it is his timelessness which prevents him from fully working through his trauma *on his own*, for in the typical model of working through trauma that

Freud outlines, the analyst must guide the subject into a state of self-realization which helps him fix his current pathological symptoms. Without this critical relationship, spurred by a self-awareness that Benjy lacks, one cannot hope to work through trauma.

If Benjy, based on his own mental shortcomings, cannot work through trauma on his own, is there any hope for his situation? Within traditional trauma theory, which again follows the mimetic model, scholars would probably argue that Benjy could work through his trauma through the clinical relationship between witness and survivor—particularly, through a methodology akin to Shoshana Felman’s concept of “re-externalization.” This form of witnessing involves invoking “a process of constructing a narrative, of reconstructing a history” through a “reassertion of the hegemony of reality and a re-externalization of the evil that affected and contaminated the trauma victim” (69). Another way of putting it is that the witness acts as a sort of paleontologist of the soul, recovering the fossils of the survivor’s traumatic past and reconstructing their fragments into a new whole body. However, I do not think such a model applies to Benjy’s situation, as his timelessness caused by his disability hinders any external witnessing attempts. Thus, instead of the re-externalization model’s emphasis on the witness’ role in the remediation of trauma, it is in fact the anti-mimetic concept of the middle voice that is most applicable to Benjy’s trauma. The middle voice, and the way it creates empathetic unsettlement, is the key to working through trauma. Through empathetic unsettlement, one creates a level footing between both witness and survivor “while recognizing the difference of that position and hence not taking the other’s place”

(LaCapra 78). In *The Sound and the Fury*, the two characters who exemplify the middle voice, and its ensuing empathetic unsettlement, are Caddy and Dilsey.²²

Caddy attempts to (re)establish the natural order of Benjy's world. Even though she tries to communicate with Benjy via language, something Benjy does not really understand, her efforts come from a place of love, affection, and the hope of mutual connection. In the novel, she tries many times to create an equal footing—empathetic unsettlement—between her and Benjy. For instance, she repeatedly asks him “‘what is it, Benjy.’ Caddy said. ‘Tell Caddy. She’ll do it. Try’” (40). Moreover, Caddy, unlike her mother, does not treat Benjy as a helpless child, saying that “‘you’re not a poor baby. Are you. Are you. You’ve got your Caddy. Haven’t you got your Caddy’” (9). While others tend to view Benjy as a nuisance and a burden, including his caretakers, Caddy selflessly acts as guide through her employment of the middle voice, and helps Benjy navigate a world he does not understand. However, as Caddy begins to place her affections on other things outside of her family home, her invocation of the middle voice in her personal relationship with Benjy wanes. This situation begins when she starts to pursue romantic relationships and starts wearing perfume, which Benjy reacts to:

Caddy came to the door and stood there, looking at Father and Mother. Her eyes flew at me, and away. I began to cry. It went loud and I got up. Caddy came in and stood with her back to the wall, looking at me. I went toward her, crying, and

²² One important factor to consider is that while the middle voice is a legitimate way of overcoming trauma, some forms of trauma are harder to heal than others. Referring to the survivors of the Holocaust, Felman writes that while testimony “cannot bring back the dead, undo the horror or reestablish the safety, the authenticity and the harmony of what was home,” it can nevertheless—through the “dialogical process” between survivor and witness—help the survivor at least understand the loss that they feel in their lives as a result of their traumatic experiences (91).

she shrank against the wall and I saw her eyes and I cried louder and pulled at her dress. She put her hands out but I pulled at her dress. Her eyes ran. (66)

Faced with changes in his sister's physical composition, Benjy acts out the trauma of these changes through his crying and pulling of Caddy's dress. Because of Caddy's actions, and Benjy's inability to differentiate her past self from present self, the middle voice between both characters wanes. While I must stress that the reduction of Caddy's use of the middle voice is unintentional, it is ultimately her family's banishment that results in the final conclusion of her relationship with Benjy. However, even after being cast out of the Compson home by her mother and brother Jason following the illegitimate birth of her child Quentin, Caddy still wants Benjy to be taken care of and not sent to Jackson. Yet despite all her efforts, the death of her mother, according to the novel's appendixes, reveals that Jason does ultimately send his brother to Jackson, for as the Compson family appendix reads, Benjy was "committed to the State Asylum, Jackson 1933. Lost nothing then either because, as with his sister, he remembered not the pasture but only its loss, and firelight was still the same bright shape of sleep" (310).

Yet unlike Caddy's gradual diminishment of the middle voice over the course of her relationship with Benjy, Dilsey's middle voice never wanes. Dilsey, by repeatedly treating Benjy with respect (such as inviting him into church for the Easter Sunday service), elevates Benjy to an equal status with the people around him. But Dilsey goes even a step further, calling Benjy "de Lawd's chile"—the child of the King (157). Geffen sees this placement of Benjy above the status of a common idiot as directly comparable to *les enfants du bon Dieu* of the Middle Ages who, as a result of their mental impairment, were thought to have the closest spiritual connection with the spiritual realm

(179).²³ One such indicator of Benjy's status, Geffen argues, is his extrasensory awareness of the world around him, which is often associated with "mysterious means which gifted people use to pierce through appearances to truth" (179). Such a position depends not on Benjy's mental capacities, Dilsey explains to Frony, as the "good Lawd dont keer whether he smart er not" (229; Geffen 179). Dilsey, therefore, by sharing the suffering of Benjy, is the prime example of a witness utilizing the middle voice.

While approaching Benjy's section can be difficult for readers, it is clear that both models of trauma apply to this section and culminate in how the middle voice is portrayed in the other characters' reduction of Benjy's trauma. But I believe that Faulkner also invites readers to employ the middle voice themselves. As I have shown above, there are many instances where Faulkner demonstrates Benjy's own traumatic pain. However, one more important scene that illustrates Faulkner's call for our involvement in the middle voice occurs when Compson children are playing in the branch near their house:

"I'll run away and never come back." Caddy said. I began to cry. Caddy turned around and said "Hush." So I hushed. Then they played in the branch. Jason was playing too. He was by himself further down the branch. Versh came around the bush and lifted me down into the water again. 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. (18-19).

²³ Cleanth Brooks takes a step further, arguing that Benjy "represents love in its most simple and childlike form," a theme which is regularly associated with Benjy as a Christ figure (*County* 324). While scholars would warn us to be careful when associating Faulkner's tenuous religious beliefs (which seem more akin to a form of Christian Stoicism) with Christianity, it is still evident that the parallels between Benjy and Jesus Christ (such as Benjy's age of thirty-three and Christ's same age at the time of his crucifixion) are worth consideration.

The noises Benjy makes exemplify what Elaine Scarry calls “de-objectifying” pain, or the process of rendering pain inert by breaking it down into a witnessable experience (6). When Benjy reverts to his gesticulatory methodology of articulation, he “moves up out of that pre-language and projects the facts of sentience into speech” (6). By this act, as Marjorie Pryse explains, Benjy’s section, with its complex and unreliable narrator, “has the effect of magnifying the power of the unknown for events that Benjy has not been able to assimilate”; and through his cries and whimpers, Faulkner solidifies the idea of expressing the inexpressibility of pain into something that we can witness (39). This allows the reader—the witness—to see him as an equal, rather than just a victim, and such de-objectification invites readers to look at him through the middle voice.

Benjy’s experiences in this first section of *The Sound and the Fury* unravels what it means for readers of the novel to reconcile another’s traumatic past with his or her own lives through the use of the middle voice. Yet as Faulkner illustrates through Benjy’s monologue, understanding another individual’s trauma is not always an easy matter. One clear illustration of this situation is found by comparing Caruth’s analysis of Alain Resnais’ 1959 film *Hiroshima mon Amour* to Benjy’s monologue. This film, told through dialogue in French, English, and Japanese (without subtitles) during the time of the Hiroshima bombings, comments on “the problem of an outsider’s knowing the inside of another’s experience,” as “the film dramatizes something that happens when two different experiences, absolutely alien to one another, are brought together” (Caruth 34). This situation occurs repeatedly in Benjy’s monologue, as readers are called upon to make sense of Benjy’s own traumatic experiences. Take for example Benjy’s reaction to his sister’s wedding:

“What you seeing.” Frony whispered. I saw them. Then I saw Caddy, with flowers in her hair, and a long veil like shining wind. Caddy Caddy “Hush.” T.P. said. “They going to hear you. Get down quick.” He pulled me. Caddy. I clawed my hands against the wall Caddy. T.P. pulled me. “Hush.” He said. “Hush.” “Come on here quick.” He pulled me on. Caddy “Hush up, Benjy. You want them to hear you. Come on, les drink some more sassprilluh, then we can come back if you hush. We better get one more bottle or we both be hollering. We can say Dan drank it. Mr. Quentin always saying he so smart, we can say he sassprilluh dog, too.” (38)

While most readers should be able to see that Benjy’s trauma results from the absence of his sister, both Frony and T.P. misunderstand Benjy’s speech; they mistake what he is trying to say as only cries for nourishment or intoxication rather than any meaningful attempt to communicate. This mistaken communication occurs throughout Benjy’s section, as apart from Caddy and Dilsey’s treatment of Benjy, the section’s other characters are unable to develop the middle voice in the face of Benjy’s trauma. Luster, for instance, thinks of Benjy as simply “deef and dumb” who “cant tell what you saying” (48).²⁴ Additionally, Benjy’s mother treats him as an infant well into his adult years. Finally, Jason’s cruelty towards Benjy originates in their childhood and carries on into adulthood as Jason intentionally inflicts pain when he destroys Benjy’s toys, which Caddy says Jason only does “for meanness.” (36). Therefore, both Caddy and Dilsey’s conciliatory treatment of Benjy is opposite other characters who mistreat Benjy, and just

²⁴ Luster’s opinions regarding Benjy’s communication is echoed by critics such as André Bleikasten who argues that “Benjy’s cries are just sounds,” and his inability to express his loss connects to his overall nature as a character that is “nothing but the bleak sum of his bereavements” (*Critical Casebook* xvii, xiii).

as the French man and Japanese woman in Resnais' film understand one another through their mutually shared understanding of one another's trauma, so does Caddy and Dilsey's use of the middle voice, a "new mode of seeing and of listening—a seeing and a listening *from the site of trauma*," open up a new way of understanding Benjy's traumatic experiences (Caruth 56, her italics).

When reading this first section of *The Sound and the Fury*, we must pay attention to how Caddy and Dilsey employ the middle voice, as their respective treatments of Benjy are models for how we should approach his section in turn. What both Caddy and Dilsey accomplish is the "free indirect style," otherwise known as *erlebte rede* of the middle voice (LaCapra 196). This aspect of the middle voice can be useful because it allows one to wrestle with the difficulty of understanding another's trauma by challenging it with "an ethos of uncertainty, risk, more or less indiscriminate generosity, and openness to the dialectically other, who is utterly unknown and may be 'monstrous'" (197). Through the lens of the middle voice, Benjy's section of *The Sound and the Fury*, with its traumatic undertones both mimetic and anti-mimetic, can be seen in a completely new light: a shining ray of hope into the dark abyss of suffering, sound, and fury that encompasses the entirety of the novel, for as Sartre writes, "a closed future is still a future," and "the loss of all hope...does not deprive human reality of its possibilities; it is simply a way of *being* toward these same possibilities" (259). Ultimately, Faulkner's treatment of Benjy harkens back to Hartman's hope that trauma studies can reconcile the world between the clinical and literary by creating healing forces within literary texts.

CHAPTER III

Anxiety, Trauma, and Containment in Quentin's Monologue

L'inconscient est structuré comme un langage

—Jacques Lacan

As demonstrated in the last chapter, Benjy's traumatic experience is brought to the surface by dialectically engaging with the text through both the mimetic and anti-mimetic models of trauma theory. Because of the loss of his sister, Benjy becomes trapped in the mimetic recapitulation of his trauma and is unable to work through it on his own. Yet Benjy's timelessness, as I termed it, allows him, to some extent, to avoid the full brunt of his trauma. Since Benjy cannot work through his trauma on his own, his sole hope is through the Lacaprian concept of the middle voice. The middle voice is seen through not only Benjy's interactions with the other characters in the novel, but also with the reader's interactions with the text: through Faulkner's invocation of the middle voice, readers may collaboratively share through the middle voice in the remediation of Benjy's trauma. Therefore, Faulkner makes Benjy's traumatic story "real both to the victim and to the community" and accomplishes what trauma theorists see as the healing power of literary texts—both within and outside of the text (Tal 21).

This is not the case in Quentin's monologue as any similar healing or reconciliation within the text is derailed by Quentin's suicide. Yet unlike critics such as John Irwin who equate Quentin's suicide with "a symbolic return to the waters of birth" (124), or André Bleikasten who sees it as an inevitable event of a mind "haunted" by the "pathology of time" (*Ink* 94), Quentin's suicide reveals the inherently traumatic paradigm of his

monologue. Such a situation results from an absence of parental affection in Quentin's own life. Because of this denied love, Quentin displaces his desire for love onto his sister, Caddy. But instead of a normal relationship with his sister replete with feelings of *storge* rather than incestual longing, Quentin's own affection is corrupted by the primal scene of his sister's muddy undergarments. This scene, which Bleikasten calls the most focal part of the novel (*Casebook* xii), hinders Quentin's ability to find any love at all over the expanse of the novel.²⁵

Because of the primal scene's accidental traumatization, or *malencontre* as Lacan would term it, Quentin encounters the Freudian anti-mimetic condition of anxiety, a psychological state caused by the influence of trauma from an external source. Yet Freud's interpretation of anxiety does not sufficiently explain why Quentin experiences anxiety. Instead, it is Lacan's concept of anxiety, which involves not knowing what the Other wants of you, which fully explains why Quentin is so deeply affected by the primal scene of his sister's muddy drawers. In the face of such anxiety, Quentin acts it out through neurotic obsessions and mannerisms; and while Quentin has the capacity to work through his trauma by symbolically containing it via the medium of language, he is ultimately unable to work through the primal scene of his sister's muddy undergarments. Thus, because of this psychological impasse, Quentin kills himself in what Bleikasten calls a "fool's bargain" so that his death will allow him to ascend to a state (his apotheosis) free from the damaging effects of his past traumas (*Ink* 103).

At the forefront of Quentin's traumatic experience lies his tenuous relationship with his parents. Through his hypocritical advice, Quentin's father transfers his brand of

²⁵ Even for Faulkner this scene was moving. As he states in his introduction to the novel, the "symbolism of the soiled drawers" was "perhaps the only thing in literature which would ever move me very much" (6).

deterministic fatalism to his son. This transference can be seen in Father's attempts to assuage Quentin's fears regarding his sister and her honor:

Father said...it was men invented virginity not women. Father said it's like death: only a state in which the others are left and I said, But to believe it doesn't matter and he said, That's what's so sad about anything: not only virginity and I said, Why couldn't it have been me and not her who is unvirgin and he said, That's why that's sad too; nothing is even worth the changing of it. (75)

On the surface, Father's advice to not waste energy on Caddy's honor since one "cannot even remember tomorrow what seemed dreadful today" seems helpful enough; however, Father later adds, with an attitude of resigned determinism, that not only is Caddy's virginity not worth saving, but nothing in itself is "worth the changing of it," as everything is inherently devoid of concrete meaning (77; 86). Through this advice, Father, as Bleikasten writes, "avoids the sterner duties of the father" by mixing his deterministic fatalism with a resigned or inefficient response to his son's actions (*Ink* 86). This unhealthy mix can be seen early in Quentin's famous opening lines of his monologue:

...when Father gave it to me he said I give you the mausoleum of all hope and desire; it's rather excruciating-ly apt that you will use it to gain the reducto absurdum of all human experience which can fit your individual needs no better than it fitted his or his father's.... I give it to you not that you may remember time, but that you might forget it now and then for a moment and not spend all your breath trying to conquer it. (73)

Father's attempt to help his son is again marred by his own deterministically fatalistic response to what he feels is the collective existential absurdity, or "reducto absurdum," of human existence. This passing of fatalism from father to son is reinforced by the symbolic transfer of Father's watch to Quentin. Because Father describes the watch as both a "mausoleum" and a symbol of hope, Father's contradictory advice acts as the basis of Quentin's obsession with time throughout the monologue.

While father's lack of affection derives from his fatalistically deterministic advice, Mother's lack of affection comes from judging and then treating her children as a burden or a curse:

...what have I done to have been given children like these Benjamin was punishment enough and now for her to have no more regard for me her own mother I've suffered for her dreamed and planned and sacrificed I went down into the valley yet never since she opened her eyes has she given me one unselfish thought at times I look at her I wonder if she can be my child except Jason he has never given me one moment's sorrow since I first held him in my arms I knew then that he was to be my joy and my salvation I thought that Benjamin was punishment enough for any sins I have committed I thought he was my punishment for putting aside my pride and marrying a man who held himself above me. (98-99)

Mother assumes that the cause of all her suffering results from external forces acting upon her own life. Benjy, because he was born with a mental disability, is a "punishment" from God for marrying a Compson; Caddy's promiscuity results from her selfishness and impure Compson blood; and with Quentin, his selfishness is the only cause of his inevitable suicide (207). However, Mother elevates Jason above the rest of

her children, going as far as to thank God that he is still alive and that Quentin died instead (161). She also supports Jason because she believes he most clearly follows the family bloodline of her Bascomb name, and she spends the rest of her life engaged in an imaginary struggle between her own Bascomb sensibilities and that of the Compsons', who she believes always "*look down on...[her] people,*" her name, and all the trials she has faced (81, Faulkner's italics). In this fashion, Mother's own self-centered obsession with herself and her family lineage obscures any meaningful connection with Quentin; and instead of finding a mother he can say "*Mother. Mother*" to, he equates her with a personified dungeon where he is "lost somewhere below...without even a ray of light" (81;141, Faulkner's italics). This equation, as Noel Polk intimates, is ultimately based on Quentin's need for affection, as he envisages his mother as a dungeon "because he cannot force the relationship between mother and security in his real life" (34). Therefore, Quentin undergoes a traumatic separation from his mother because of her failure to provide any parental affection to her son.

Because of the absence of an affectionate mother figure, Quentin seeks out an individual to love in order to replace the void left by his mother: his sister, whom Olga Vickery believes Quentin "turned to...for the love his mother denied" (75). Critics have repeatedly connected Quentin's transfer of affection from mother to sister to the Oedipus complex. As Doreen Fowler writes, for example, Quentin sees Caddy as a replacement for the lost "dyadic relationship with...[his] mother," as "Quentin's incestuous feelings exemplify his need to restore the symbolic order...[to] incorporate the Other with the self ("Sister Death" 5;11). While the arguments of such critics are sound, they overlook

Quentin's primal scene which is, I argue, the primary catalyst for his anxiety and obsessions later on in his adult life.

According to Freud, the primal scene occurs when an individual observes a traumatic event early on in his life that does not register in his psyche yet appears later to haunt his own adult life. Freud's case study of the Wolf Man is the foundational example of the primal scene. Because the Wolf Man witnessed his parents copulating at an early age, the trauma of this event haunts him later in his life through disturbing neuroses and dreams. What makes such an event *traumatic*, Greg Forter explains, is that it

...is the psychic result of a (sexual) knowledge that comes at once too soon and too late. It comes "too soon" in that the event communicating this knowledge happens before the infant can grasp its significance; and it comes "too late" because, by the time that infant is old enough to understand what has befallen him, it has, quite simply, already befallen him, is in fact lodged within him as an inadmissible past experience whose affective repercussions are exceedingly difficult to defend against. Trauma might in this sense be defined as the internal, retrospective determination of a momentous yet initially incomprehensible event's memorial significance. (264)

In other words, the subject will mimetically repeat the traumatic event of the primal scene and all its concomitant "psychical processes – phantasies, processes of reference, emotional impulses, thought-connections" as Freud calls them ("Remembering" 149). Freud explains that this situation occurs because while the details of the primal scene might be quite gone from the subject's everyday waking life, the traumatic event was never truly "forgotten" because it was never at any time noticed" ("Remembering" 149).

Thus, the act of witnessing such a traumatic event is not *entirely* dependent on the significance of the original act *itself*, but instead on how the event is an allegorical representation of the power of trauma to affect the subject at a later date in disparate fashions including, but not limited to, his sexuality (Forter 265-266).

Turning back to the novel, Quentin's primal scene occurs on the day of Damuddy's funeral when he, along with Versh, Frony, Jason, and Benjy see Caddy's muddy seat as she is climbing a tree in order to see what is happening inside her house:

"All right." Versh said. "You the one going to get whipped. I aint." He went and pushed Caddy up into the tree to the first limb. We watched the muddy bottom of her drawers. Then we couldn't see her. We could hear the tree thrashing.

"Mr Jason said if you break that tree he whip you." Versh said.

"I'm going to tell on her too." Jason said.

The tree quit thrashing. We looked up into the still branches.

"What you seeing." Frony whispered. (37)

As Bleikasten explains, Quentin sees Caddy's undergarments as "a virtual equation of sex (the muddy drawers) with death (Damuddy's funeral)" (*Ink* 48).²⁶ This juxtaposition of death and sexuality within the primal scene causes Quentin to forever associate both conditions alongside his sister: the symbol of his lost parental affection. This situation leads to Quentin experiencing feelings of anxiety in the anti-mimetic sense, as he cannot regain the parental affection he wishes his sister could provide.

²⁶ It also bears mentioning that Bleikasten associates the death of Damuddy with a biographical moment in Faulkner's own life, as his grandmother Leila Dean Swift, whom Faulkner and his family also called Damuddy, also died prematurely on June 1, 1907 when Faulkner was nine years old (*Casebook* xxiv).

Freud would categorize such anxiety as the ego's reaction against a threatening outside force. The ego would typically enact defense mechanisms in the face of such a threat, and by doing so, hopefully quell its presence. However, if "any excitations from outside...are powerful enough to break through the protective shield," then one could expect to see the emergence of traumatic pathologies (*Problem 29*). While Freud's concept of anxiety is indeed applicable to Quentin's monologue, it is in fact Lacan's concept of anxiety which fully explains why Quentin experiences anxiety as a result of the primal scene of his sister's muddy undergarments. In his seminar on anxiety, or *L'angoisse*, Lacan returns and expands upon Freud's concepts of anxiety. While I will not attempt to fully explicate every facet of Lacan's seminar (as this feat would likely require more space than what is available in this thesis), a brief description of Lacan's core concepts of anxiety will suffice for the purpose of my ensuing arguments. Lacan sees anxiety as a force that, as Roberto Harari succinctly summarizes, "can be located quickly from a phenomenological point of view," and not merely based, in Freud's eyes, on the reactions of animals to outside stimuli, or the "fear of an animal, of being closed in, or of heights" (75). Instead, Lacan believes that the analyst should view anxiety as an "opening toward a deeper understanding of temporality—one that departs dramatically from the conceptions of time that we have attributed to nature (evolutionary time, developmental chronology, linear historical unfolding, and so on)" (Harari lvi). Lacan illustrates his new approach to anxiety through his allegory of the praying mantis. In this vision, Lacan imagines himself within an unknown cave carrying a mask with an animal face superimposed upon his own. In this cave lies a monstrous creature in the shape of a praying mantis. However, since Lacan does not know what sort of mask he is wearing,

and as he is unable to see his own reflection in the eyes of the mantis, he does not know if the mantis sees him as a friend or a foe.²⁷ This allegory illustrates one of the most foundational elements of Lacan's concept of anxiety: not knowing what the desire of the Other (in the case of this allegory, the mantis) *wants* of me or *sees* in me, as this "Other puts me in question...[and] interrogates me at the very root of my desire" (*Anxiety* 153).²⁸

Returning to the novel, Quentin's Other is his sister. What causes his anxiety is his inability to reconcile the parental affection symbolized by his sister with the death and sexuality the primal scene of her muddy undergarments signifies. In accordance with the mimetic model, which highlights how symptomatic moments of trauma in the past affect the present (through Freud's concept of deferred action or *Nachträglichkeit*), Quentin acts out the psychic trauma of his primal scene by repeating elements of the scene through his physical actions in the present. Quentin's repetition compulsions can be seen through his various obsessive characteristics and mannerisms; or as Freud would call them, "inhibitions and unserviceable attitudes and...pathological character-traits" ("Remembering" 151). Quentin's three most important obsessions involve time, shadows, and water, which he each respectively uses as his "*defenses against anxiety and attempts to avoid it*" (Harari 78, his italics).

As I intimated earlier, Quentin sees time as irrevocably connected to his father's fatalistic determinism, or as Bleikasten renames it: the "Sisyphuslike repetitions of an

²⁷ Presumably because the mantis, if it is female, will eat a male mantis but not one that is female.

²⁸ When we turn to the original French of *L'angoisse*, we can see this distinction even more clearly defined. The question one must ask of the Other is not "*che vuoi?*" or "*que veux-tu?*" ("what wouldst thou" or "what does the Other want of me"), but instead "*que me veut-Il?*" or what does the ego "want concerning the place of the ego?" (*Anxiety* 6).

ineffaceable past” (*Ink* 96). For Quentin, the mere presence of time, and its physical representation in clocks and watches, leads him to recollect the primal scene:

There was a clock, high up in the sun, and I thought about how, when you don't want to do a thing, your body will try to trick you into doing it, sort of unawares. I could feel the muscles in the back of my neck, and then I could hear my watch ticking away in my pocket and after a while I had all the other sounds shut away, leaving only the watch in my pocket. (80)

By seeing the clock “high up in the sun” on the clocktower or hearing his pocket watch “ticking away in his pocket,” Quentin is reminded of death: one of the two elements of his primal scene. By associating time with death, Quentin sees time as a deterministic force he must always flee from. This belief is solidified by his father’s contradictory fatalistic advice, as he says that “time is dead as long as it is being clicked off by little wheels; only when the clock stops does time come to life” (82). As a result of this endless threat of time, Quentin tries to hide himself from the anxiety that time instills within him:

You can feel noon. I wonder if even miners in the bowels of the earth. That's why whistles: because people that sweat, and if just far enough from sweat you won't hear whistles and in eight minutes you should be that far from sweat in Boston. Father said a man is the sum of his misfortunes. One day you'd think misfortune would get tired, but then time is your misfortune Father said. A gull on an invisible wire attached through space dragged. You carry the symbol of your frustration into eternity. (100)

Quentin spends the entirety of his monologue trying to escape from its temporal presence and symbolic association with death; yet try as he must, Quentin cannot escape from

time, and like a gull guided by the invisible threads of fate from an unseen puppet master, Quentin believes that the misfortunes of time will always follow him wherever he travels—even into eternity. Thus Quentin, according to John Matthews, “spends the rest of his life...hoping to trick time into giving his past back to him, and, finally, deciding to defy time by taking his own life rather than letting time gradually steal it” (53).

On the surface, Quentin’s misfortunes are symbolically manifested within his monologue through the motif of shadows. As Bleikasten explains, Quentin’s shadowy figure is the most foundational indicator of Quentin’s mental instability (*Ink* 92). Yet, on an even deeper level, Quentin’s shadow is directly comparable to Lacan’s concept of the “specular image” or “double” (*Anxiety* 88) and leads to Quentin’s mounting anxiety of not knowing what the Other of his sister signifies. This shadowy self often accompanies Quentin’s sensory memories of his sister, as it indicates his inability to extricate from his mind the sexuality that the primal scene of his sister’s underwear represents:

When it bloomed in the spring and it rained the smell was everywhere you didn't notice it so much at other times but when it rained the smell began to come into the house at twilight either it would rain more at twilight or there was something in the light itself but it always smelled strongest then until I would lie in bed thinking when will it stop when will it stop. The draft in the door smelled of water, a damp steady breath. Sometimes I could put myself to sleep saying that over and over until after the honeysuckle got all mixed up in it the whole thing came to symbolis [sic] night and unrest I seemed to be lying neither asleep nor awake looking down a long corridor of gray halfnight where all stable things had

become shadowy paradoxical all I had done shadows all I had felt suffered taking visible form antic and perverse mocking... (163)

Quentin associates the twin smells of honeysuckle and rain with his sister. Both of these smells transport him back to the primal scene and are in fact an extended metaphor of his battle with his traumatic past. Each time these ephemeral memories resurface, Quentin wishes they would end, as their “shadowy paradoxical” nature reminds him of the uncertainty, fear, and isolation he associates with his sister as a result of the primal scene. Rather than remembering the past events of his life in a stable fashion, the specular image in all of its shadowy paradox nature threatens him and taunts him with the frightening possibility of disintegration into non-being, into an apotheosis which does not offer hope, but instead abounds in the “perversity” of endlessly repeating his past traumatic events. Even though Quentin repeatedly succeeds in eluding and outrunning the specular image of his shadowy double—the imprinted image of the past trauma of the primal scene—it still inevitably follows him, “dragging its head” and “whispering” to him as it leads him towards water, the symbol of drowning and death (128). Through this “shadowy paradoxical” self, the trauma of the primal scene continues to follow Quentin throughout his adult life.

Moreover, the motif of water symbolically represents Quentin’s solution to not knowing what the Other desires. For Quentin, water symbolizes not only his obsession with death, but also a hopeful end to his anxiety:

Where the shadow of the bridge fell I could see down for a long way, but not as far as the bottom. When you leave a leaf in water a long time after a while the tissue will be gone and the delicate fibers waving slow as the motion of sleep.

They dont touch one another, no matter how knotted up they once were, no matter how close they lay once to the bones. And maybe when He says Rise the eyes will come floating up too, out of the deep quiet and the sleep, to look on glory. And after a while the flat irons would come floating up. (111)

Quentin equates his own eventual decomposition with a leaf decomposing in water. When your body decomposes in water, Quentin notes, your body's composition, or its "delicate fibers," disintegrate slowly in the same fashion as the "motion of sleep"; and even if the fibers were once "knotted up," water unravels the knots and amalgamates them into its own structure. Quentin's image of his defenestrated, entombed self in water is Quentin's vision of his apotheosis, or his ascension to a state of being which is not relegated to the material or physical world but is instead separate from its influences. In this state, despite how awful his life was, or is now, Quentin will undergo a unification with all that he has lost and a separation from any trauma he once faced, or currently faces. In this apotheosis, Quentin pictures himself reunited with Caddy, his Other, the symbol of his lost parental affection, where she "will have only me then only me then the two of us amid the pointing and the horror beyond the clean flame" (112). Nevertheless, when Quentin mentions that his "eyes" will return from the dead as a result of the triumphant return of Christ ("He"), Quentin symbolically reveals that he is unable to separate the "I" of his own ego with that of his specular image, or double. Instead, Quentin's own visionary imagination is near-sighted, myopic, and one-dimensional to the extreme. Because he only focuses on how he ("I") can almost see the bottom of the river: his eventual tomb and entry point into the realm of his apotheosis, Quentin thus reveals

his inability to move beyond the own narcissistic illusions of his apotheosis and the shadow of his traumatic past.

Therefore, the motifs of time and shadow reveal Quentin's anxiety, while the motif of water indicates Quentin's desire for an apotheosis away from what he desires of the Other of his sister: the reconciliation of death and sexuality symbolized by her muddy drawers with the displaced parental affection she represents. Yet could Quentin have avoided his suicide and worked through his trauma? In Seminar I, or *Freud's Papers on Technique*, Lacan sees trauma, and the process of working through it, as inextricably linked to language, to the act of speaking:

[T]rauma, in so far as it has a repressing action, intervenes after the fact, *nachträglich*. At this specific moment, something of the subject's becomes detached in the very symbolic world that he is engaged in integrating. From then on, it will no longer be something belonging to the subject. The subject will no longer speak it, will no longer integrate it. Nevertheless, it will remain there, somewhere, spoken...by something the subject does not control. (191)

Freud, on the other hand, believed that the subject can work through his trauma by treating it "as a present-day force" which is "no longer...contemptible, but...an enemy worthy of his mettle, a piece of his personality, which has solid ground for its existence and out of which things of value for his future life have to be derived" ("Remembering" 151; 152). While Freud based his understanding of trauma on the deferred action of an event forming after the initial moment of trauma, Lacan adds that the presence of such trauma, as Bruce Fink clarifies, also "implies fixation or blockage...[of] something which is not symbolized" resulting from the subject not being able to *speak* or *integrate* the

traumatic event into the symbolic world (26). Moreover, this act of language, as Willy Apollon explains, is inextricably intertwined with writing, as it “limits the wandering of the signifier surrounding the unfixable hole of the desire” (112). By integrating the traumatic event into the symbolic world of the speaking subject through the presence of signifiers (“naming” the Other, as Lacan terms this action), the subject can conquer anxiety’s negative effects and work through his own trauma (*Anxiety* 338). In other words, instead of allowing anxiety to have free reign upon the subject, the artistic action of writing down words, or what Reina van der Wiel calls “symbol formation,” allows the subject to place his anxieties “onto external objects, whereby the ego gets room to develop an enhanced ability to tolerate conflicting impulses within” (54). Therefore, this act of artistic action through writing “functions as container by offering a means to control, transform and gain distance from traumatic emotions”; and while the “traumatic past cannot be un-known,” writing can “bring about the mental distance necessary” for the subject to work through his trauma (van der Wiel 48;14).

On the surface, Quentin seems to assume the role of a prototypical artist. Michael Millgate sees Quentin as an heroic “aesthete” tasked with transmitting his chaotic universe to his audience, while François Pitavy compares Quentin’s artistic vision to that of Keats and his urn (102;85). However, Quentin does not use language to symbolically contain the traumas of his past: his parent’s lack of affection, amplified by the primal scene of his sister’s muddy drawers. Instead, Quentin’s language acts as a fragmentary force, obstructing any means of symbolically containing his trauma within writing. One such example of Quentin’s destructive language occurs towards the end of his monologue when he remembers a conversation he had with Caddy as an adolescent:

then I was crying her hand touched me again and I was crying against her
 damp blouse then she lying on her back looking past my head into the sky I
 could see a rim of white under her irises I opened my knife do you
 remember the day damuddy died when you sat down in the water in your
 drawers

yes

I held the point of the knife at her throat

it wont take but a second just a second then I can do mine I can do mine
 then

all right can you do yours by yourself

yes the blades long enough Benjys in bed by now

yes

it wont take but a second Ill try not to hurt

all right

will you close your eyes

no like this youll have to push it harder

touch your hand to it

but she didnt move her eyes were wide open looking past my head at the
 sky

Caddy do you remember how Dilsey fussed at you because your drawers
 were muddy

dont cry

Im not crying Caddy (145-146)

Throughout this passage Quentin's speech displays a lack of syntactical and
 grammatological cohesion; moreover, Quentin's inconsistent use of the words "yes" and
 "I" indicates a lack of a consistent speaker. These sort of syntactical holes and fissures
 within the text indicate Quentin's extended failure to use language as an artist to work
 through his trauma. Instead of using language to separate his specular image (indicated
 by the repeated use of "I") into two distinct entities, Quentin cannot separate who is

speaking: he still holds on to a singular “I” rather than the plural “eyes.” As a result of this breakdown in communication, Quentin communicates through action: through the threat of physical violence, as he sees his and Caddy’s death—his apotheosis—as the only means to reach salvation from his trauma. Yet instead of following through this sacrificial murder, Quentin’s memories of the primal scene, which he orally communicates twice in this passage, cause him to cry out because he cannot symbolically contain its traumatic effect on his psyche.

As Quentin’s mental state deteriorates, his linguistic coherence wanes into an incoherent “vortex of his obsessions,” for “the less he speaks...the more he listens to the myriad voices of the past” (Pitavy 73). This linguistic fragmentation is seen through Faulkner’s use of italics and temporal displacement. Faulkner once said that he included these techniques to demonstrate that Quentin’s memories, or what was “clear to his half-mad brain,” were as evident to Quentin as to “anybody else’s brain” (*Lion* 248). In other words, Faulkner chose these techniques purposefully, not merely for stylistic purposes, because he saw that they were the most effective way to communicate Quentin’s degrading mental state over the course of his monologue. One of the most explicit usage of italics to show Quentin’s linguistic fragmentation is found close to the end of the section when he is preparing to drown himself:

A quarter hour yet. And then I'll not be. The peace fullest words. Peace fullest words. *Non fui. Sum. Fui. Non sum.* Somewhere I heard bells once. Mississippi or Massachusetts. I was. I am not. Massachusetts or Mississippi. Shreve has a bottle in his trunk. *Aren't you even going to open it* Mr and Mrs Jason Richmond Compson announce *Three times. Days. Aren't you even going to open it* the

marriage of their daughter Candace *that liquor teaches you to confuse the means with the end* I am. Drink. I was not. Let us sell Benjy's pasture so that Quentin may go to Harvard and I may knock my bones together and together. I will be dead in. Was it one year Caddy said. Shreve has a bottle in his trunk. Sir I will not need Shreve's I have sold Benjy's pasture and I can be dead in Harvard Caddy said in the caverns and the grottoes of the sea tumbling peacefully to the wavering tides...(167-168, Faulkner's italics)

In this passage, the memories from Quentin's life indicate Quentin's obsessions surrounding specific words or phrases from his past; every single word or phrase—italicized or not—is an amalgamative register of Quentin's past traumas (Pitavy 73). The passage also represents Quentin's wavering mental state in the final moments of his life, as he repeatedly jumps from his past trauma to his eventual suicide and its promise of an apotheosis. By hearing the clock tower he is reminded of his past fixation on death. Yet when he remembers the “peacefullest” Latin words “*Non fui. Sum. Fui. Non sum*” (translated, “I was not. I am. I was”), Quentin is comforted by the fact that his fear of death will be assuaged by the apotheosis he longs for. But with the sounds of the bells in the clock tower reminding Quentin of his sister's wedding, his mind falls back again to the memory of the primal scene of his sister. Yet immediately afterwards, the italicized words “*three times. Days*” indicates Quentin's mind shifting once again to his thoughts of suicide and hope of an apotheosis. As Ross and Polk explain, the combination of these three words indicates the presence of three possible allusions: Christ's resurrection, Peter's denial of Christ, or the folk legend that a drowning man resurfaces three times before he is drowned (67). Nevertheless, it does not matter which allusion Faulkner

intended, as each one connects to Quentin's fixation on death and his hope of an existence after death. Immediately following this allusion, Quentin remembers his sister's wedding and his father's contradictory, deterministic, and fatalistic advice. Quentin's father advises him to be cautious of the stupefying effects of alcohol; however, in the following sentences Quentin remembers that he hears Caddy telling him that their father is drinking himself to death, once more revealing his father's hypocritical advice. Finally, the passage above concludes with Quentin's resolution to drown himself, since for him, the sea acts as a gateway to reach his reunification with Caddy through his imagination of the apotheosis.²⁹

With each line, Quentin's own interior monologue continues to break apart at the seams, as "I" of his specular image begins to bleed like ink into the pages of the novel, rendering any hopes of linguistic containment a fainter and fainter reality. Soon after this passage, the final defenestration of Quentin's linguistic cohesion occurs in a conversation with his father regarding his supposed incest with his sister:³⁰

and he i think you are too serious to give me any cause for alarm you wouldnt
have felt driven to the expedient of telling me you had committed incest otherwise
and i i wasnt lying i wasnt lying and he you wanted to sublimate a piece of natural
human folly into a horror and then exorcise it with truth and i it was to isolate her
out of the loud world so that it would have to flee us of necessity and then the
sound of it would be as though it had never been and he did you try to make her

²⁹ Ross and Polk believe that the phrase "in the caverns and the grottoes of the sea tumbling peacefully to the wavering tides" also alludes to Eliot's "Death by Water" section of *The Waste Land* (146).

³⁰ Faulkner said that Quentin's confessed incest was not true and completely made up; however, as Ross and Polk clarify, we as readers do not have a clear indication if Quentin's incest was real or imagined (149).

do it and i i was afraid to i was afraid she might and then it wouldnt have done any good but if i could tell you we did it would have been so and then the others wouldnt be so and then the world would roar away...(171)

In uncharacteristic clarity, Father explains that Quentin's anxieties result from a desire to "sublimate," as water's gaseous state of water sublimates into ice, his feelings of affection towards his sister into something physical that he could direct his energies towards: his real or imagined incest. By this action, Quentin and his sister would reach an apotheosis and the "world would roar away." But rather than displaying some sort of linguistic containment through language, this passage's use of the lowercase "I," its lack of uppercase letters, and its uneven and chaotic syntax reveals that the voices in Quentin's head have become one entity without any differentiation; Quentin, as Ross and Polk explain, has "lost conscious narrative control" (149). Verily, Quentin's (and ostensibly the reader's) inability to differentiate between the voice of his father and his own voice (indicated in the text through the lowercase "I") reveals that Quentin's ego has become further entrenched in his staunch, narcissistic refusal to accept any difference between his self and his shadowy, specular self. Thus, his act of speaking, or the linguistic creation of his art becomes, as Pitavy explains, "a tool for decreation" (93) and designification rather than creation and signification.

By the end of his monologue, the words Quentin needs to use to symbolically contain his trauma fail him, leaving him with nothing but broken syntax and a "heap of broken images" of his traumatic past. In an apropos extended metaphor, Polk compares Quentin's final mental state to a "large fluid-filled balloon" that Quentin is:

...trying to flatten out, to control; but every time he steps on one spot, on one painful memory, the balloon erupts upward and outward at another point, constantly reshaping itself to its own pernicious energy. The protective walls he builds with his formal eloquence are constantly breached by visual intrusions from his past, italicized fragments of phrases and images that merger briefly, even flickeringly, in no apparent order or relation, through the barriers of his language before he is able to stamp them down again, in his futile effort to keep them from full verbalization. (110)

For Quentin, the traumas of his past are still “shadowy paradoxical,” and rather than using coherent language to express his desire to know what the Other wants of him, Quentin’s language—the tool necessary for artistic creation—deconstructs the very elements needed for him to work through his trauma on his own. As Stephen M. Ross points out, Quentin finally kills himself so that he can find a “silence in death, a soundless void away from...[the] loud world of voices,” the voices of his traumatic past (112).

CHAPTER IV

“I’m not going to mind you”: Trauma, Control, and Meaning in Jason’s Section

He Who Has a Why to Live for Can Bear Almost any How.

—Friedrich Nietzsche

As evidenced by the previous chapter, Quentin’s lack of parental affection acts as the foundational traumatic impetus for his neuroses later in life. Quentin’s attempt to assuage this lost love through another source—his sister Caddy—becomes complicated by the inclusion of the primal scene of her muddy underwear, which leads Quentin to associate death and love together with his most foundational desire: a need to be loved. This juxtaposition of death and desire, personified through the visage of his sister, leads Quentin to feel anxiety in the Freudian anti-mimetic sense of the term. Yet while Freud’s concept of anxiety provides a framework for understanding Quentin’s condition, it is in fact Lacan’s concept of anxiety which more accurately encapsulates Quentin’s experiences of anxiety deriving from the primal scene of his sister’s muddy undergarments. Instead of anxiety solely caused by the intrusion of an outside source, Quentin’s anxiety develops because he does not realize what the Other wants of him. Subsequently, Quentin’s struggle to transcend such anxiety reaches an impasse, and as revealed through Quentin’s linguistic breakdown in communication over the course of his monologue, he cannot reconcile the primal scene’s dichotomy of death and sexuality contained within his sister’s muddy drawers. Because of this psychological impasse, Quentin commits suicide in the hopes of reaching a transcendent state of being (his apotheosis), which both separates him from the anxieties of the world and reunites him with Caddy: the symbol of the lost parental affection he never received. Thus, this deeply

psychological monologue, marked by Faulkner's use of stream-of-consciousness, tragically concludes with Quentin's vain hope of redemption from the sounds and furies of his traumatic past.

Yet while intense introversion and interiority of thought emblematicizes Quentin's monologue, Jason's section of the novel begins by directly assaulting the reader's senses through the youngest Compson brother's vitriolic outrage towards all of existence:

Once a bitch always a bitch, what I say. I says you're lucky if her playing out of school is all that worries you. I says she ought to be down there in that kitchen right now, instead of up there in her room, gobbing paint on her face and waiting for six niggers that cant even stand up out of a chair unless they've got a pan full of bread and meat to balance them, to fix breakfast for her. (173)

In this passage, Jason's relentlessly methodical first-person point of view, punctuated by his continuous use of the phrase "I says," stands in stark narratological difference to the layered stream-of-consciousness found in Quentin's monologue. Through Jason's use of the first-person, coupled with his tone of hatred and resentment, Faulkner introduces Jason as one of his most intensely alive, vividly palpable personalities: not only, according to Cleanth Brooks and Eric Sundquist, one of Faulkner's greatest characters, but also one of his finest villains (128; 339).

What makes Jason's villainy so successful is the irreducible complexity of his character. Instead of a one-dimensional flatness, Jason's *modus operandi* behind his villainous behavior can be difficult to excavate from within the seemingly impenetrable fortress of his psyche. But while scholars may disagree on the specifics as to why Jason is

such a monster, they agree that Jason's past is an essential clue to determining his future villainy. Gary Lee Stonum, for example, writes that adult Jason's cruelty and resentment "indicates...that an earlier, repressed source of his pain is the absence of love and stability in [his]...family" (51). However, while critics such as Stonum correctly associate Jason's pain with the dysfunctionality of his family, their argument misses one important detail. Unlike Benjy who is abandoned by his family and exposed to a harsh world he does not understand, or Quentin, deprived of affection and corrupted by its absence, Jason's cruelty, resentment, and ensuing obsessional neuroses result from a different cause: a lack of concrete, existential meaning within his life.

Meaning is the focus of Viktor Frankl's school of psychoanalysis, otherwise known as the "Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy" (98). This school diverges from the previous two Viennese schools of psychoanalysis based around the work of Alfred Adler and Sigmund Freud. Unlike Freud who believes that the pleasure principle is the foundational motivation for existence,³¹ or Adler who believes that man is driven by a drive towards power and domination,³² Frankl instead held that the "striving to find a meaning in one's life is the primary motivational force in man" (99). He called this drive towards meaning mankind's "*will to meaning*," as opposed to Freud's "*will to pleasure*,"

³¹ Yet in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," Freud argues that not only is the pleasure principle a fundamental element of human meaning, but also humanity is intrinsically guided by an instinctual drive towards death. Freud found this "paradoxical situation" completely "bewildering," as the "hypothesis of self-preserved instincts, such as we attribute to all living beings, stands in marked opposition to the idea that instinctual life as a whole serves to bring about death" (39). Therefore, while Frankl is mostly correct in this assertion that pleasure is a guiding force in human drives towards meaning, he seems to have forgotten that Freud changes his mind about the pleasure principle in order to account for the death drive.

³² Specifically, Adler believed that humanity's primary "motivating force" was the drive towards "superiority" (Mosak and Maniaci 23). This drive was not always deleterious, as one could use power in a healthy manner. However, the will to power could lead to disastrous effects if "individuals attempt[ed] to gain their superiority at the expense of those around them, rather than for the betterment of all involved" (Mosak and Maniaci 23). It is this tendency of individuals to use the will to power to take advantage of others with which Frankl was most in disagreement with.

or Adler's "will to power" (101, Frankl's italics). The subject can reach such meaning in several disparate fashions: by creating art or by "doing a deed"; "by experiencing something or encountering someone"; or finally, "by the attitude we take toward unavoidable suffering" (111). If the subject does not devote his life to one of these three tasks, his meaning becomes "frustrated," and he falls victim to an "existential vacuum" (106). Once the subject is sucked into this vacuum of despair, depression, and resentment, he tends to fixate his life around what Frankl called "noögenic neuroses"³³ or a warped fixation on pleasure or power (101).

Turning back to the novel, Jason's inability to bear the traumatic chaos, disintegration, and neglect of his family home causes his will to existential meaning to be frustrated. Jason's frustrations begin early in his childhood, as he repeatedly tries to resist being controlled by his dysfunctional family, particularly his father and sister:

"Let them mind me tonight, Father." Caddy said. "I wont." Jason said. "I'm going to mind Dilsey." "You'll have to, if Father says so." Caddy said. "Let them mind me, Father." "I wont." Jason said. "I wont mind you" "Hush." Father said. "You all mind Caddy, then. When they are done, bring them up the back stairs, Dilsey."

"Yes, sir." Dilsey said. "There." Caddy said. "Now I guess you'll mind me." (25)

Jason's attempts to establish control over his life are superseded by Father's continuous delegations of authority to Caddy. This interaction leads to Jason's feelings of helplessness when he is unable to control the world around him. As Freud would maintain, Jason's helplessness signals that an outside force has been successful in its attempts to penetrate the ego's "protective shield," which otherwise is "an otherwise

³³ Derived from *noös* (νόησις), or the Greek word for mind or intellect (Frankl 101).

efficacious barrier against stimuli” (“Pleasure” 29). Jason’s helplessness, caused by his ego’s inability to protect itself against the threat of an outside force (in this case, the instability of his family), results in two disparate situations. First, Jason’s helplessness signifies that his childhood failure to enact control over the chaos of his dysfunctional familial surroundings can be defined as a purely “*traumatic situation*” (*Problem* 114, Freud’s italics). Second, Jason’s helplessness directly correlates to his ensuing anxiety in the anti-mimetic sense, as his subsequent cruelty, resentment, and desire to enact his own will by controlling others are his ego’s attempts to prevent the onset of anxiety. Therefore, through the mimetic model’s insistence on deferred action, or *Nachträglichkeit*, Jason’s anti-mimetic anxiety in the present works retroactively to mimetically affect his future actions. In other words, Jason repeats the psychic trauma of his lack of control as a child by ironically repeating elements of the scene through his physical actions in his present adult life.

Yet while one can ostensibly identify moments from Jason’s childhood which manifest themselves in symptomatic behavior as an adult, how does one move beyond Jason’s overwhelming villainy which seems to impart no hint of redemption? Freud, for all his expertise at locating traumatic neuroses and their ensuing manifestations in the subject, offers little hope of a cure. In “Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through,” his approach to the working through portion of the eponymous title of the essay lacks much development. For Freud, his approach to working through trauma follows a faint, experimental (“Remembering” 152), and ambiguous thread from the remembrance of the traumatic event, through the analyst’s hypnagogic suggestion, to the avoidance of symptomatic transference between analyst and patient in the present. Yet,

Freud barely mentions *how* the patient concretely works through his trauma. Instead, as Freud maintains, the doctor engaged in psychoanalytic dialogue with the patient “has nothing else to do than to wait and let things take their course, a course which cannot be avoided not always hastened” (“Remembering” 155). For all of Freud’s adeptness at unearthing traumatic, or in other words, symptomatic moments of trauma within the past of the patient, his solution to these events lacks development.

Within modern trauma theory, Freud’s same symptomatic, and markedly ambiguous, approach to working through trauma also applies to the study of literature. As Reina van der Wiel explains, the study of trauma vis-à-vis literature “often involves identifying ‘symptomatic’ moments or characteristics in the text” (26) instead of, what Roger Luckhurst calls, “a model of trauma that acknowledges yet seeks to *work through* the traumatic past” (213, Luckhurst’s italics). In *The Sound and the Fury*, Jason has the capacity to work through his own trauma by voluntarily bearing the burden of his suffering. However, he is unable to work through his cycle of hatred and resentment because his will to meaning becomes frustrated. As a result, Jason devolves into, as many individuals who have lost their will to meaning (Frankl 90), the oppressor rather than the oppressed: completely a villain. Though irony and dark humor, Faulkner demonstrates how a will to power, or a will to pleasure, pales in comparison to the foundational *logos* or will to meaning which Jason unconsciously seeks. Therefore, Jason’s failures—deeply ironic and oftentimes darkly humorous—are indicative of Faulkner’s own insistence that establishing a meaning towards which to strive is far more effective than a will towards pleasure or power.

Amongst the characters who fall beneath Jason's sphere of influence, Jason has the least control over his father. Instead, until his death, Father *inhibits* Jason from establishing control over the family household. Father's voice obstructs Jason's own will to control his family. For example, in the passage above from Jason's childhood, and throughout the entirety of Benjy's section, Father informs Jason that he will have to mind Caddy. Through these actions, Father inhibits Jason's own desire for control by controlling his son. However, Father's actions also lead to his son's mounting resentfulness of the power his father has, a situation which carries on throughout the rest of Jason's life. But Jason's animosity towards his father does not end with his father's death; on the contrary, his father's death deepens Jason's resentment of his father. When Jason looks at his father's grave during his funeral, he begins to think, in one of his few instances of self-reflection, about how "when we were little and one thing and another and I got to feeling funny again, kind of mad or something" (163). Even though he deeply resents Father, Jason carries his father's philosophy to its extreme limits. Instead of merely seeing the deterministic world of the dark dice man of fate carried out in the world around him, Jason sees the dice man as a barrier to the power over others he so dearly desires. Jason's amplification of his father's fatalistic voice into his own can be seen when he fails to intercept Miss Quentin and the man with the red tie in the final section of the novel:

The air brightened, the running shadow patches were now the obverse, and it seemed to him that the fact that the day was clearing was another cunning stroke on the part of the foe, the fresh battle toward which he was carrying ancient wounds. From time to time he passed churches, unpainted frame buildings with

sheet iron steeples, surrounded by tethered teams and shabby motorcars, and it seemed to him that each of them was a picket-post where the rear guards of Circumstance peeped fleetingly back at him. “And damn You, too,” he said. “See if You can stop me,” thinking of himself, his file of soldiers with the manacled sheriff in the rear, dragging Omnipotence down from his throne, if necessary; of the embattled legions of both hell and heaven through which he tore his way and put his hands at last on his fleeing niece. (241)

Jason not only sees himself as the stoic character his father lauds, but likewise believes that his own actions, or his control over his surroundings, have the possibility to reshape the cruelties of blind fate into what he desires: absolute power and control over others. But what makes this reenactment ironic lies in the fact that while Jason always resents his father’s influence in his life, Jason nevertheless unconsciously takes on his father’s own deeply fatalistic philosophy and amplifies it into a self-centered brand of utilitarianism in which, as Duncan Aswell has written, “each man is worth as much as his hands and brains can get for him” (212). Therefore, the currency for Jason’s utilitarianism is each person’s economic production value, based solely within the realm of material wealth.

Jason’s obsession, or “psychic anxiety” as Kathleen Moore rightly observes, over material wealth “is more than simple stinginess” (549). Jason’s obsessions surrounding money and wealth—the basis of his system of utilitarian philosophical system—also acts as a measuring rod for how much control he has over others. This assertion is supported by Frankl’s concept of greed, as he believes greed acts as a primary indicator of a frustrated will to meaning supplanted by a will to power (107). In a lecture at the University of Virginia, Faulkner once said that Jason’s propensity towards keeping his

hands in his pockets as a child “presaged” his “grasping” and “selfishness,” as Jason “may have kept his hands in his pocket[s] to guard whatever colored rock that he found that was to him, represented the million dollars he would like to have some day” (263). Jason’s tendency to keep his hands in his pockets symbolizes his reliance on money as a mechanism of control and manipulation. Through money, Jason shapes his world for his own purposes; and through money, he determines the worth of others by manipulating and controlling them through his relentless scheming, plotting, and counting. However, at the same time, Jason’s failure to remove his hands from his pockets ironically symbolizes his overreliance on material wealth, which as Versh discerningly points out to Jason, “if you keep them hands out your pockets, you could stay on your feet,” as “you cant never get...[your hands] out in time to catch yourself” (23). By allowing another person to pick him up from his fall, Jason ironically relinquishes his monetary control over others through his own clumsiness, causing him to look foolish: a “trussed fowl” as Quentin comically states in a childhood memory of his brother (85). Therefore, in an ironic and humorous turn, Jason’s ego not only flees from anxiety’s influence by his attempts at controlling others through the power of his wealth, but his own accumulation of money leads to his own downfall. Overall, money in Jason’s monologue acts as a symbol of Jason’s control over others, as it places them within his utilitarian world and signifies if he has successfully made them mind him or if he has failed in their intended purpose for materialistic accumulation, the sole reason he believes gives meaning to existence.

Within Jason’s utilitarian world led by its god of money, no one is exempt from his machinations for control. He first enacts this system on Jefferson’s black populace through cruel and senseless punishment if anyone fails to adhere to his standards. For

example, when Luster loses his nickel, his only money which he needs to go to the music show in town, Jason cruelly taunts Luster by offering one of his own tickets for a price:

“How much you want fer hit?” he says.

“Five cents,” I says.

“I aint got dat much,” he says.

“How much you got?” I says.

“I aint got nothin,” he says.

“All right,” I says. I went on.

“Mr Jason,” he says.

“Whyn't you hush up?” Dilsey says. “He jes teasin you. He fixin to use dem tickets hisself. Go on, Jason, and let him lone.” (202)

Jason does not even want to use the tickets himself and informs Luster that he in fact only wanted to come inside the house in order to burn the tickets. But Jason sees this opportunity to continue his control over Luster by taunting him with the threat of burning the tickets unless Luster has a nickel to pay for a ticket. Yet notwithstanding Luster's promise to “fix dem tires ev'y day fer a mont,” Jason burns every last one of the prized tickets. By doing so, Jason reinforces his control over Luster, and also cements within his own mind that this action is a punishment for the inferiority of Luster and those of his race for never being able to prove their mettle or worth within his system, since for Jason, all of the black race was meant only for the field:

[W]here they'd have to work from sunup to sundown. They cant stand prosperity or an easy job. Let one stay around white people for a while and he's not worth killing. They get so they can outguess you about work before your very eyes, like

Roskus the only mistake he ever made was he got careless one day and died.

Shirking and stealing and giving you a little more lip and a little more lip until some day you have to lay them out with a scantling or something. (198)

Jason's racism reflects several fundamental elements of his own view of the world. Since he believes that the black populace of Jefferson is lazy and untrustworthy to be left alone, they must travel back in time to the plantation life of Jason's ancestors: the best way for them to finally have some sort of lasting economic impact or utility. If they stay free, or "around white people," they will cease being useful and will not even be "worth killing." Jason says that the ultimate solution for them would be, like his brother Benjy, castration so that as common herd animals they can be made to do work without interruption (243). Therefore, Jason resents Jefferson's black populace because he sees them as outliving their utilitarian usefulness.

Despite Jason's small successes in controlling the black Jefferson populace, Faulkner demonstrates Jason's tenuous control over them in several instances within the text. As Faulkner writes in the appendix to *The Sound and the Fury*, Dilsey was Jason's "sworn enemy since his birth and his mortal one since that day in 1911 when she too divined by simple clairvoyance that he was somehow using his infant niece's illegitimacy to blackmail its mother" (330). Dilsey's protection of other characters from Jason supersedes his control by forcing him to mind her. Yet perhaps the most obvious revocation of Jason's control comes from Job, a coworker in Earl's general store. Jason, ever suspicious of treachery on the part of others, particularly those of different races, informs Job that if he wants to steal from Earl, he will look the other way. However, Job has figured Jason out. Job replies to Jason's subtle manipulation by replying:

“Whut I want to waste my time foolin a man whut I dont keer whether I sees him Sat'dy night er not? I wont try to fool you,” he says. “You too smart fer me. Yes, suh,” he says, looking busy as hell, putting five or six little packages into the wagon. “You's too smart fer me. Aint a man in dis town kin keep up wid you fer smartness. You fools a man whut so smart he cant even keep up wid hisself,” he says, getting in the wagon and unwrapping the reins.

“Who's that?” I says.

“Dat's Mr Jason Compson,” he says. (198)

Job, with all his common sense, realizes the exact reason for Jason's failures: Jason is too smart for his own good, which leads to him being a man who “fools a man whut so smart he cant even keep up wid hisself.” Yet Jason does not realize this fact, and without any further self-reflection about Job's words, immediately launches into an extensive and deeply racist tirade after Job leaves in his wagon (198-199). By this action, Jason humorously outs himself as a hypocrite because not only does he completely lack self-awareness, he also does not even realize that his actions are those of the “one thing [which] gets under...[his] skin”: a “dam hypocrite” (220). As Olga Vickery writes, Jason's hypocrisy quixotically mirrors Sancho Panza, as Jason “cannot imagine that there might be other facts, other aspects of the situation, than the ones that directly affect him; as a result, he sees certain things so clearly that all others escape him” (43). Jason, by investing all that he has into his own desire for control over the black populace of Jefferson, undermines his own machinations through his pride, only solidifying the ephemerality of his struggle for power rather than meaning.

Jason's own ironical struggle for power, and its concomitant failures with the black populace of Jefferson, is amplified in its malice, scope, and irony when it is directed towards his family. Particularly, the women of his family draw the greatest amount of his ire. With his mother, sister, and niece, this frustrated will to power is amplified and newly combined with Jason's frustrated will to pleasure. According to Frankl, one's will to pleasure works in accordance with Freud's theory that the pleasure principle is the primary motivating impetus for one's own life. Yet this drive towards pleasure, Frankl argues, should not be the most important avenue for finding meaning, as the will to pleasure typically leads to noögenic neuroses. Jason's search for pleasure instead of meaning can be categorized as a noögenic neurosis, but also more appropriately, as ambivalence in the Freudian sense of the term. Freud, in his early paper on instincts titled "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes," discussed the dualistic nature of both love and hate. He believes that the nature of many sexual neuroticisms (particularly binary opposites of sadism/masochism and exhibitionism/scopophilia) are dualistically intertwined. Freud extended these dualistic relationships to their core elements: love and hate. He believed that "since it is particularly common to find both of these [core elements of love and hate] directed simultaneously towards the same object, their co-existence furnishes the most important example of ambivalence of feeling" (133). What "feeling" means in this case is that if one mutually shares love and hate towards an object or individual, then this situation can be shown to be a form of ambivalence.

More than his other brothers, Jason is inevitably caught up within an Oedipal relationship with his mother, which simultaneously displays Jason's ambivalence, as "she is both threatening and desirable" since "she represents both what he lacks, and what

would make up that lack” (Moore 544). While Moore believes that an Oedipal motivation marked by ambivalence is the sole foundation of Jason’s villainy, Jason’s feelings of ambivalence, directed towards his mother, also reveal his oftentimes ironically subverted desire for control. Jason’s relationship with his mother, marked by ambivalence and a desire to control her, “cripples [him] psychologically and establishes his hopelessly clouded and myopic view of human life” (Moore 535). Notwithstanding this situation, Jason truly believes that his mother’s problems of mind and body could be solved if she relinquishes all control she has over him and allows him to take charge of the Compson family household:

“But something must be done,” she says. “To have people think I permit her to stay out of school and run about the streets, or that I cant prevent her doing it.... Jason, Jason,” she says. “How could you. How could you leave me with these burdens.” “Now, now,” I says. “You’ll make yourself sick. Why dont you either lock her up all day too, or turn her over to me and quit worrying over her?” (175)

Despite Jason’s position as her favorite child, Mother’s affection towards Jason is motivated by a familial obligation to the family lineage of her Bascomb family name; love is simply a wasteful byproduct of her own prideful obsession with blood and honor. Moreover, Mother’s obsession with blood applies to all the rest of the Compson household, yet most importantly for Jason, with Miss Quentin. After deliberating on whether to burn her niece’s child support checks, Mother states that as a Bascomb she does not “need nobody’s charity,” especially not of Miss Quentin, a “fallen woman” (210). Nevertheless, Jason believes that he has the ultimate solution to his mother’s problems with her niece: Mother must relinquish the controlling girdle of protection from

Miss Quentin; only by this action can she be free and not worry herself to illness because of the delinquent actions of her niece.

Such illness plays an important thematic role within both Jason's life and the lives of the rest of his family. Before arriving at Jason's struggle with illness, it bears mentioning that a great majority of the Compson household is also afflicted by illnesses of the mind or body. Benjy, of course, wrestles with his own mental disability. Damuddy's mysterious illness, and subsequent funeral, acts as a central image for the novel. Similarly, Quentin's suicide is a central element of the novel. Father's alcoholism, which is exacerbated by the suicide of Quentin, might also be considered an illness. Finally, Mother's illness causes her to be constantly bedridden over the course of the text. While Jason's illness is not so pronounced, he does experience repeated headaches. He assuages these headaches through camphor, a medicinal substance commonly used to treat pain ("Camphor"). In addition to camphor, his mother suggests that he use aspirin to cure these headaches:

"I wish you'd take some aspirin," she says. "I know you're not going to stop using the car."

"What's the car got to do with it?" I says. "How can a car give a man a headache?"

"You know gasoline always made you sick," she says. "Ever since you were a child. I wish you'd take some aspirin."

"Keep on wishing it," I says... (229)

But rather than merely indicating Jason's comedic refusal to accept medicine for his ailments caused by the emissions of cars, Jason's headaches are a symptomatic indicator

of his own frustrated wills to power and pleasure. Throughout the novel, cars act as a symbol for Jason's aspirations of wealth. Yet as his mother unwittingly points out, Jason's car, which he dearly loves, is the ironic agent of his demise: it makes him sick, and through its jolting, even makes his headaches worse (302). Yet unwittingly, Mother has the cure to the noxious fumes of his neurotic struggle for power which leads to his headaches: stop using the car, or in other words, stop trying to enact his will to power over everyone else. Instead, Jason ignores this advice and continues to use his car despite the pain it causes him. Towards the end of the novel, Jason's fight with one of the mechanics at a filling station signals the failure of his utilitarianism system of wealth and power. Because of his injuries suffered during this fight, Jason is forced to ask a youth to drive him home. What is comedic about this scene is not only that Jason has to pay more than he wished for this ride, or that someone else has to drive him, but especially that he has to be driven by a member of a race he detests and blames for his car's tire failure, and ultimately, his failure to capture his niece and her lover. Therefore, Jason's car, symbols for his obsession with power and control, ironically and comedically leads to his illness and downfall. Instead of assuming the role of the oppressor in complete control over his own environment, Jason's reversal from oppressor to oppressed solidifies what André Bleikasten has called the novel's "standard patterns of farce and comedy: Jason's story is that of the robber robbed, the persecutor persecuted, the victimizer turned victim" (*Ink* 119).

Jason's role as a farcically quixotic character also extends to his interactions with his sister and her daughter Quentin: the actors who draw the most ire from Jason and orchestrate his tragicomic ruin. Viewed together, both characters act as Jason's primary

antagonists and opponents in his struggles for control. As I intimated earlier, Jason's early attempts as a child to control his sister are thwarted by the voice of his father. Yet after his father's death, Jason slowly begins to seek revenge over his sister and her daughter Miss Quentin. At first glance, Jason succeeds in making Caddy mind him. One key incident of Jason's temporary control occurs when Caddy returns home to the Compson family estate after her illegitimate child is adopted by the rest of her family. Jason reminds Caddy that since his authority now extends to her daughter, she has to mind him, as he is the one that guides the fate of her and her daughter. Caddy now must obey her brother's actions by doing what he says, no matter how she feels about the situation or what she tries to do to shake Jason's control:

She just stood there looking at me, shaking like an ague-fit, her hands clenched and kind of jerking. "I did just what I said I would," I says. "You're the one that lied. You promised to take that train. Didn't you? Didn't you promise? If you think you can get that money back, just try it," I says. "If it'd been a thousand dollars, you'd still owe me after the risk I took. And if I see or hear you're still in town after number 17 runs," I says, "I'll tell Mother and Uncle Maury. Then hold your breath until you see her again." She just stood there, looking at me, twisting her hands together.

"Damn you," she says. "Damn you."

"Sure," I says. "That's all right too. Mind what I say, now." (198)

Jason's directed use of the phrase "mind what I say now" towards Caddy harkens back to their childhood when he repeatedly says he will not mind his sister and fails because of the voice of his father. Over the course of his narrative, Jason spends most of his energy

frantically attempting to control her life. He does the same with Miss Quentin. Jason, who sees himself as the standard for propriety, societal conformity, and upright moral behavior, seeks to control his niece by imposing this same standard of behavior on her. By doing so, he again unconsciously seeks to control her actions so as to prevent any instances of anxiety creeping into his mind that would arrest his desire for power and control.

One example of this situation is when Jason forces Miss Quentin to sign a check for an amount of money far less than what her mother actually sends her in the mail:

“You've got to learn one thing, and that is that when I tell you to do something, you've got it to do. You sign your name on that line.”

She took the pen, but instead of signing it she just stood there with her head bent and the pen shaking in her hand. Just like her mother. “Oh, God,” she says, “oh, God.”

“Yes,” I says. “That's one thing you'll have to learn if you never learn anything else. Sign it now, and get on out of here.” (206-207)

Jason, at least for the time being, maintains temporary control over his niece. This is solidified through the threat of violence, as in the case when he threatens to beat Miss Quentin for not going to school (148-149). Nevertheless, Jason ultimately fails to control both his sister and niece because of the unpredictability of their behavior. Brooks, in a quote meant for Caddy but applicable to Miss Quentin, writes that “even in her absence, [she] represented the threat of the irrational and incalculable” (308). It is Caddy’s love of her daughter, and her daughter’s love towards her, which stands in stark contrast to Jason’s harsh, utilitarian world of brutishness and money grubbing.

This love again indicates Jason's frustrated will to meaning though irony and humor, as Jason's attempt to control his niece leads to failure time and time again. Jason, full of hatred and resentment of Miss Quentin playing hooky and running around with the man in the red tie, cannot stop ambivalently chasing after his niece:

Well, I can stand a lot; if I couldn't dam if I wouldn't be in a hell of a fix, so when they turned the corner I jumped down and followed. Me, without any hat, in the middle of the afternoon, having to chase up and down back alleys because of my mother's good name. Like I say you cant do anything with a woman like that, if she's got it in her. If it's in her blood, you cant do anything with her. The only thing you can do is to get rid of her, let her go on and live with her own sort. (185)

Jason exclaims that the only way to deal with Miss Quentin is “to get rid of her” or “let her go on and live with her own sort,” while at the same time frantically hunting all across Jefferson county. With this ironically humorous passage, Jason revokes his own system of utilitarianism he has so carefully crafted around his life, as he cannot comprehend why Miss Quentin makes decisions based on something so irrational and non-utilitarian like “blood,” or anything outside his narrow utilitarian view of the world. But what really drives the humor of this passage, and many others in Jason's monologue, is that instead of noticing how hypocritically silly Jason looks chasing after his niece, or fighting with circus carnies, or not betting on a New York Yankees team in the prime of their dynasty, he further solidifies his own “ignorance of himself,” as “he is so completely concerned with the way his actions appear to other people that he never considers the impulses that drive him from within” (Aswell 214). By the end of his narrative, all his plans for monetary success are taken away from him by actions outside

the realm of his philosophical system. His life, as Bleikasten intimates, devolves to “nothing but a long and exhausting race against the clock,” and despite all his hope and dreams contained within the stashed money from his sister, these dreams are broken when Miss Quentin steals the money, as even all his control based upon “all his calculations, ruses, and precautions cannot save him from disaster” (*Ink* 116).

While one might champion Jason’s failures, this villainous character, as Bleikasten explains, is “neither wholly guilty nor totally innocent...[he is] like all of Faulkner’s defeated characters, the victim of circumstance as well as the agent of his own ruin” (*Ink* 120). Faulkner’s own employment of humor with Jason, as Bleikasten writes, indicates that we should not solely treat Jason with “unmitigated contempt and revulsion” (*Casebook* xvi). Rather, Jason, a “student offspring of a diseased family” (xvi), and deeply impacted by the traumatically dysfunctional household he inhabited throughout his life, should be treated with some modicum of pity, a pity similarly shared by Faulkner (Brooks 319). But what readers *should* at least recognize is that through Faulkner’s repeated use of irony and humor, he proves that Jason’s noögenic neuroses are hilariously insufficient replacements for his true will to meaning. Even though Faulkner calls Jason his “most vicious character” (*Nagano* 101), his success in crafting Jason’s ignominious character lies not only in the complexity of his villainy, but also the failures of his evil to completely destroy the lives of others. Indeed, Jason’s own life is indeed a testament to the power of evil to enact its control for a temporary moment of time, but ultimately its impotency in the face of the unconquerability and endurance of something more substantial such as the will to meaning and purpose within one’s own life.

CHAPTER V

(Re) Assessing Trauma, Race, and the Resurrection in Dilsey's Section

I believe like a child that suffering will be healed and made up for, that all the humiliating absurdity of human contradictions will vanish like a pitiful mirage, like the despicable fabrication of the impotent and infinitely small Euclidean mind of man, that in the world's finale, at the moment of eternal harmony, something so precious will come to pass that it will suffice for all hearts, for the comforting of all resentments, for the atonement of all the crimes of humanity, for all the blood that they've shed; that it will make it not only possible to forgive but to justify all that has happened.

—Ivan, *The Brothers Karamazov*

As the previous chapter entailed, Jason's villainy serves as the dramatic backdrop for his monologue. What cements the power of his villainy is not merely his capacity for heinous deeds, but also the complexity of his character. One such facet of his character derives from the traumatic underpinnings of his villainy. Because of his inability to remediate the traumatic dysfunctionality of his family home, his will to meaning, in the Franklian sense of the term, becomes frustrated, inevitably pushing him towards the anti-mimetic condition of anxiety as a result of not being able to control every aspect of the world he inhabits. However, in light of Jason's villainy, and the suffering and pain he imparts towards others, Faulkner seems to offer no hint of redemption, no chance of working through the trauma he experienced as a result of not being able to control the dissolution of his family. Yet Faulkner, through irony and humor, in fact reveals how Jason's fixation on the dual noögenic neuroses of power and pleasure is in the end self-defeating. Instead of leading to security in his life, these two obsessions ultimately lead to Jason's existential frustration and the inability to work through his traumatic past.

With the cold dawn of Easter morning, April 8, 1928, the fiery fury of Jason's monologue gives way to a subdued smolder—a pregnant anticipation of the future events

to come by the conclusion of the novel. However, the events of this final section, unlike the previous three sections of the novel, are delivered in a different narrative mode. Instead of the meandering, stream-of-consciousness collage of imagery seen in the monologues of Benjy or Quentin, or the brutish first-person perspective of Jason, the narrator in the final section is fully objective, fully omniscient. Notwithstanding this decision on behalf of the author, many scholars have agreed that Dilsey, the Compson family's African-American housekeeper, whom Faulkner called "one of...[his] favorite characters"³⁴ (*Lion* 244), plays the central role in this final section. According to Cleanth Brooks, Dilsey is the novel's primary "unifying and driving force" (342); and without a doubt, she is "the most memorable character in the last section" of the novel, André Bleikasten explains (*Ink* 134).

Nevertheless, Faulkner's omission of her first-person narrative voice from the final section of *The Sound and the Fury* raises questions surrounding the truthfulness and accuracy of his writing of race. Through this omniscient narrator, John Matthews explains, Faulkner's "effort[s] at third-person, objective narration" are "inevitably...colored by the legacies of racism" (*Lost Cause* 86). Many Faulknerian critics would agree with Matthews' assertions, as Faulkner's writing of many black characters within his oeuvre unfortunately seems to fall into what Irving Howe has called a Southern "traditional paternalism," or an intense, "central image...of longing and memory" for an antebellum past (268). As Ralph Ellison comments, Faulkner in fact inadvertently supports a "mentality in which the Negro is often dissociated into a malignant stereotype (the bad nigger)," a "benign stereotype (the good nigger)," or a mix

³⁴ Faulkner added in the same interview that it was "because [Dilsey] is brave, courageous, generous, gentle, honest. She is much more brave and honourous and generous than me" (*Lion* 245).

of both (266). Thus, according to these critics, what results out of Faulkner's tendency to create caricatures out of his black characters is the lessening of the deleterious effects of racism within *The Sound and the Fury*, for instead of denigrating the Compsons' treatment of their black servants, Faulkner seems to translate these horrors into what Philip Weinstein has called "normal prankishness" (48), completely in line with the tendency of Southern writers to place their black characters into a picturesque image of the past: "a benign cultural memory, frozen in dialect and obedience" (49). Therefore, unlike Faulkner's more nuanced treatment of the Compson family—with all their successes and failures—Faulkner's black characters within *The Sound and the Fury* are completely "free...[from] sound and fury"; undoubtedly, they are "thematically free from [the] trauma" of racial injustice (Weinstein 49).

These assertions by the above scholars are correct to some extent, as *The Sound and the Fury* does, at least on the surface, seem to trivialize the experiences of its black characters. However, the claims of these scholars that Faulkner's black characters are *completely* free from any traumatic description does not fully account for the intricacies of his writing of race and trauma in the closing section of this novel. By chastising Faulkner over his seemingly inaccurate writing of racially induced trauma in *The Sound and the Fury*, Weinstein and other scholars make the same innocent blunder that early trauma theorists made when they sought to define trauma in the 1990's without taking into consideration the possibility of more ubiquitous forms of trauma, such as historical and systemic racism.

This early trauma theory, based predominately on the work of Cathy Caruth, addressed how literary scholars and psychologists might write about monumental

traumatic events such as the Holocaust or the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki during the Second World War. Caruth has figuratively termed the punctual effect of such a traumatic event as the:

story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language. (4)

These “punctual” traumas, as Greg Forter terms them, act as a “psychic concussion that short-circuit[s]” the survivor’s “capacity to ‘process’ the traumatizing event as it took place” (259). This dichotomy between remembering and forgetting, between the unconscious repetition of the wound and its future manifestations, harkens back to Freud’s own notion of the repetition compulsion. Freud believed that his patients tended to repeat their past trauma in the present in a manner similar to what had happened to them before with no recollection of this past event (“Remembering” 151). To remedy this situation, Freud believed that the patient “must treat...illness...as a present-day force” instead of endlessly repeating the effects of this forgotten, primordial event of trauma (“Remembering” 150). Through this remembrance of the psychically rupturing traumatic event of such great magnitude, the patient might come to understand that the event was “no longer...contemptible”; rather, the event becomes integrated into his own psyche, “a piece of his personality...which has solid ground for its existence and out of which things of value for his future life have to be derived” (“Remembering” 152). In other words, as Forter explains, the primary remedy in the event of such a monumental traumatization must be for the patient’s psyche to “recursive[ly]...master what it has in some sense

failed to experience in the first instance” (Forter 259). Through this action, the patient thereby reclaims such a traumatic, “unclaimed experience” back into his own consciousness, back into a new paradigm of thought that is cognizant of the effects of the past upon the present.

When Weinstein and other Faulkner scholars criticize Faulkner’s treatment of race and trauma in *The Sound and the Fury*, their theories only consider this early model of trauma theory based on the writings of Freud and Caruth. But Faulkner’s omission of more overt forms of racially induced trauma suffered by the black characters in the novel does not belie his commentary on trauma caused by historical or systemic racism. Instead, Faulkner’s own writing of race in *The Sound and the Fury*, I argue, aligns with recent discoveries within the field of trauma studies. Such contemporary (re)interpretations of trauma theory seek to modify some of the early presuppositions of Caruth and others. Particularly, one problem with such an approach to understanding trauma is Caruth’s omission of continuous and ongoing forms of trauma which can even be, as Forter boldly claims, “more mundanely catastrophic than such spectacular instances of violence as the Holocaust” (260). One such example of this habitual, under the surface mode of trauma is the ongoing history of racially induced trauma across the span of United States history. This selfsame methodology of repetitious, transhistorical trauma can be categorized as a sort of “social repetition compulsion” (Forter 280). Since this type of trauma is reinforced and “socially sublimated into ongoing, systemic practices and patterns of behavior,” scholars can conclude that “the very mechanisms by which our societies reproduce themselves are in this sense caught up in perpetuating [the] injuries” of historically induced, and societally repeated traumas of racism (Forter 260).

Therefore, what always needs to be accompanied with any traumatic discussion of race is not just its punctured nature, but also the way it can damage societies and individuals over extended periods of time.

Such an emphasis on repeated, historical, and systemic evidence of racially induced modes of trauma within society has been the focus of recent trauma studies readings of Faulkner's oeuvre. Particularly, scholars have used this lens of trauma theory to examine Faulkner's treatment of race within many of his seminal works, including *Absalom, Absalom!*, *Go Down, Moses*, *Light in August*, *Soldiers' Pay*, and *Sanctuary*.³⁵ Since trauma studies readings of *The Sound and the Fury* are almost completely nonexistent amidst the readings of other Faulknerian texts, this thesis' final chapter will discuss Faulkner's treatment of race and trauma within the novel. Furthermore, this chapter will use Dilsey's section as a guidepost for understanding Faulkner's seeming omission of trauma vis-à-vis race within the novel. Through Dilsey's character, her interactions with the novel's other characters, the descriptions of the habitations of Jefferson's black populace, and most importantly, the Christological allegory and symbolism of Reverend Shegog's Easter sermon, Faulkner appears to offer a means of working through the trauma induced by historical racism. However, the ending of the novel repeats the same traumatic, transhistorical racism it seems to renounce, for instead of solving this problem of racially induced trauma, or this "racial wounding" as Minrose

³⁵ See Greg Forter's "Freud, Faulkner, Caruth: Trauma and the Politics of Literary Form"; Kristin Fujie's *Ties of Blood: Gender, Race, and Faulkner*; Minrose Gwin's "Racial Wounding and the Aesthetics of the Middle Voice in *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Go Down, Moses*"; Peter Ramos' "Beyond Silence and Realism: Trauma and the Function of Ghosts in *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Beloved*"; Dorothy Stringer's "*Not even past*": Race, Historical Trauma, and Subjectivity in Faulkner, Larsen, and Van Vechten; Tony M. Vinci's "A Sound 'Almost Human': Trauma, Anthropocentric Authority, and Nonhuman Otherness in *Go Down, Moses*"; and finally, Clifford E. Wulfman's "Sighting / Siting / Citing the Scar: Trauma and Homecoming in Faulkner's *Soldiers' Pay*."

Gwin terms it, the ending of the novel seems to prevent the “departure of racial trauma into history, keeping its impossibility alive—and the wound open” (32). Nevertheless, Faulkner’s inclusion of an appendix in the 1946 edition of *The Sound and the Fury* offers some semblance of hope for a future free from the debilitating, traumatic effects of historical and systemic racism.

One way the novel demonstrates this dualistic relationship between racial wounding and the possibility of resisting, or working through, its damaging effects is through the symbolism of Dilsey’s body at the start of her section:

[S]he stood in the door for a while with her myriad and sunken face lifted to the weather, and one gaunt hand flaccid as the belly of a fish, then she moved the cape aside and examined the bosom of her gown. The gown fell gauntly from her shoulders, across her fallen breasts, then tightened upon her paunch and fell again, ballooning a little above the nether garments which she would remove layer by layer as the spring accomplished and the warm days, in color regal and moribund. She had been a big woman once but now her skeleton rose, draped loosely in unpadded skin that tightened again upon a paunch almost dropsical, as though muscle and tissue had been courage or fortitude which the days or the years had consumed until only the indomitable skeleton was left rising like a ruin or a landmark above the somnolent and impervious guts, and above that the collapsed face that gave the impression of the bones themselves being outside the flesh, lifted into the driving day with an expression at once fatalistic and of a child's astonished disappointment.... (255-256)

Dilsey is not simply a victim of old age; rather, her body, which Faulkner appropriately describes as a “ruin or landmark,” is in a state of constant decay and erosion from the systemic racism she has experienced throughout her life. Instead of what once was a fecund, muscular body, she is almost a skeleton now: a ghostly figure housed within a sagging mausoleum held in disarray. Yet simultaneously, Faulkner indicates through imagery and metaphor that her spirit’s dwelling place has not fully been destroyed and its dust cast upon the wind. Instead, as Gary Lee Stonum has written, “the marks of time on her flesh are not simply scars representing time’s inevitable victories, but coruscations, points of incandescence that represent resistance to the erosion” (54). Likewise, her clothes denote a hint of royalty both “regal and moribund.” These clothes, which lie about her body’s withstanding and “impervious guts” outlining her ruinous face, indicates that while she accepts her state with a demeanor of stoicism, she simultaneously yearns—with childlike hope—for a day which brings about a redemptive narrative of hope and freedom. Through this description of her appearance, Faulkner transforms Dilsey, as Bleikasten has written, “into a sovereign figure” (*Ink* 133) which has stood steadfast amidst the damaging and traumatic effects of racism surrounding her.

These damaging effects of gradual and accumulated historical racism, combined with the possibility of working through these afflictions, can also be viewed through her interactions with the novel’s other characters. Despite being treated unfairly because of her race, Dilsey’s ability to endure these hardships of life enables her, as Olga Vickery explains, “to keep the Compson household in some semblance of decency” (49). Furthermore, Dilsey rebuilds what she can around her and shapes “order out of [the] disorder” of the Compson tragedy (Vickery 49). One example of Dilsey’s order-making

is the way she runs the household by herself (even in her old age). Not only does she feed the household on a regular basis, she has done so for so long that the mallet that she uses to beat biscuits is eroded significantly (277). Thus Dilsey, by “coordinating the meal” and “gathering about her the raw materials of food,” acts as a unifying and stabilizing centrifugal presence within the Compson family household (277).

Moreover, as discussed in this thesis’ earlier chapters, Dilsey protects Benjy, Miss Quentin, and Luster from Jason’s cruel villainy. She does the same in her section of the novel as well. For instance, instead of capitulating to the opinion of the “trash white folks” who believe that Benjy “aint good enough fer [a] white church,” or a “nigger church aint good enough fer him,” she says to Frony that “de good Lawd dont keer whether he bright er not. Dont nobody but white trash keer dat” (280). As evidenced by this pronouncement, Dilsey orchestrates the wellbeing and health of the Compson family household through her stabilizing, reliable presence.

However, some characters still resent Dilsey’s selflessness. Even though Dilsey has been with the family for over thirty years, Mother shows no gratitude or sympathy towards the Compsons’ dutiful servant. For example, while Dilsey does not have the best fluidity of movement, Mother ceaselessly calls her in the early morning of Easter for her hot water bottle (257). Mother, who never seems to appreciate her housekeeper’s hard work and believes that she must always “humor” (268) her lazy black servants, lectures Dilsey for her supposed “ingratitude” (268), cruelty, and insensitivity towards the Compson family:

“You’re not the one who has to bear it,” Mrs Compson said. “It’s not your responsibility. You can go away. You dont have to bear the brunt of it day in and

day out. You owe nothing to them, to Mr Compson's memory. I know you have never had any tenderness for Jason. You've never tried to conceal it." Dilsey said nothing. She turned slowly and descended, lowering her body from step to step, as a small child does, her hand against the wall. "You go on and let him alone," she said. "Dont go in dar no mo, now. I'll send Luster up soon as I find him. Let him alone, now." (261-262).

Mother informs Dilsey that she does not in fact have to continue serving the Compsons, especially Jason whom Mother knows Dilsey dislikes; instead, she is free to leave because she not only offers little to the stability or unity of the family, but also cannot understand how much Mother has suffered as a result of her housekeeper's laziness. Mother blames Luster, Dilsey's son, for her tardiness in completing her chores, exclaiming, "[I]f you permit Luster to do things that interfere with his work, you'll have to suffer for it yourself" (258). Nevertheless, even despite the cruelty of the Compsons' treatment of her, "Dilsey embodies the generosity of total selflessness" (Bleikasten, *Ink* 135), and like "a small child," she carries out her obligations dutifully, seeking to not further any disunity or disorder within the family she has worked so hard all her life to keep from unraveling. By these selfless actions, therefore, Dilsey appears to resist the damaging effects of historical racism.

Like Dilsey's body, and her interactions with the novel's other characters, the landscape of Jefferson also shows signs of and resistance to the habitual and systemic trauma of racial wounding. Faulkner describes the houses the black populace live in as originally housing "things of a once utilitarian value," but now is set in decay and dereliction amongst "the foul desiccation which surrounded" the area (280). Yet at the

same time, Faulkner's descriptions of these buildings—symbols for the black populace themselves—counteract this same decay, as the trees around the homes still hold the faintest glimmers of life: “burgeoning” with the “sad and stubborn remnant of September, as if even spring had passed them by, leaving them to feed upon the rich and unmistakable smell of negroes in which they grew” (280). But it is particularly the church where Dilsey and the rest of the black populace of Jefferson attend Easter service which showcases the damaging effects of racially induced trauma, and the concomitant resistance to such effects:

Notched into a cut of red clay crowned with oaks the road appeared to stop short off, like a cut ribbon. Beside it a weathered church lifted its crazy steeple like a painted church, and the whole scene was as flat and without perspective as a painted cardboard set upon the ultimate edge of the flat earth, against the windy sunlight of space and April and a midmorning filled with bells. (281)

Like the houses of the black populace of Jefferson, and the body of Dilsey before them, Faulkner describes this church as standing on the brink of ruin; it should, by all intents and purposes, not exist. Yet notwithstanding its weathered nature throughout the years, the church still stands, unbelievably picturesque, a backdrop at the “ultimate edge” of an existence beyond time and space—its beauty on the cusp of annihilation and ruin, a symbol of its racial wounding and resistance to such damaging effects.

Nevertheless, while the church's exterior certainly shows symbolic signs of racial wounding and resistance to such trauma, it is in fact the events which unfold within this place of worship that serve as the section's, and perhaps the novel's, most important evidence for this dualistic relationship. Through Shegog's sermon, or what Bleikasten has

called “a triumph of Faulkner’s verbal virtuosity” (*Casebook* xviii), this dualistic relationship between traumatic wounding and resistance is only amplified in its effects and scope. The narrator first describes Shegog, who is visiting from a larger church based in the city of Saint Louis, as an unimpressive character shrunken with age. His “wizened black face” is “like a small, aged monkey”; undersized, it is “dwarfed” by the local preacher (282). Shegog’s voice itself is also underwhelming, “sounded[ing] too big to have come from” such a small body (283). Moreover, the language of Shegog’s message is something undeniably out of place, something which the parishioners are deeply unsure of. With “thin, frightened, tuneless whispers,” the church’s choir of children exemplify this temerity, as they are completely overcome with “consternation and unbelief” over Shegog’s message (282). Yet, to be more precise, the narrator explains that what makes Shegog’s message so difficult to understand for the congregation is because he speaks “white man”; and as a result of such tonality, the congregation feels that he is only putting on a show like some sort of half-rate circus performer (283) with perhaps an ulterior, sinister motivation behind his actions (ostensibly involving the transference of money from the pockets of the parishioners to the eager hands of the preacher).

Yet when Shegog pauses for the first time during his Easter message, a sudden change, rippling out amongst the parishioners, occurs: all at once, “the congregation sighed as if it waked from a collective dream and moved a little in its seats” (283). His voice, which once was unemotional and flat, now exudes the warm sounds of a dialect which is “as different as day and dark from his former tone, with a sad, timbrous quality like an alto horn, sinking into their hearts and speaking there again when it had ceased in

fading and cumulate echoes” (283). With his voice’s renewed vigor and intimations of a language the parishioners can finally understand, Shegog’s voice cries out, fully enriched by the linguistic patterns of speech which are familiar to his audience: “Breddren en sistuhn!”...“I got de ricklickshun en de blood of de Lamb!” (284). With these words, the body of the preacher, who “was like a worn small rock whelmed by the successive waves of his voice,” is symbolically annihilated

until he was nothing and they were nothing and there was not even a voice but instead their hearts were speaking to one another in chanting measures beyond the need for words, so that when he came to rest against the reading desk, his monkey face lifted and his whole attitude that of a serene, tortured crucifix that transcended its shabbiness and insignificance and made it of no moment, a long moaning expulsion of breath rose from them, and a woman's single soprano: “Yes, Jesus!” (284)

With the narrator’s description of this event, those who are within the church begin to share in a communal experience of witnessing in the mode of what the apostles experienced as a result of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit during the day of Pentecost.³⁶ Just like the apostles, the congregation does not need words to convey their experiences; instead, the “hearts” of the congregation mutually understand each other, “chanting measures beyond the need for words.” This Pentecostal experience directly correlates with the dichotomy of testifying and witnessing found within the writing of many trauma scholars, as the Holy Spirit acts as a healing mediator—a witness—for the congregation’s traumatic testimony. According to the trauma theologian Hilary Jerome Scarsella, this is

³⁶ Acts 2:1-31.

supported by Christian theology, as the Holy Spirit typically acts as a Presence which does not leave us “alone in [our] suffering”; instead, the comforting “divine presence and solidarity” of the Holy Ghost “creates the possibility of post-traumatic transformation,” even though the survivor might not be fully healed from their experience (266).

Additionally, the Holy Spirit, who communicates through the mouth of Shegog, bears a striking resemblance with Dominick LaCapra’s concept of the middle voice that places both survivor and witness on equal footing without denigrating the experience of the survivor or giving way to transference between either individual. By engaging in communication through this middle voice, one can hope to at least begin to understand the traumatic experience of the survivor “while recognizing the difference of that position and hence not taking the other’s place” (LaCapra 78). Such witnessing and testifying between the Holy Spirit and the congregation acts in a manner Shoshana Felman would call “a performative engagement between consciousness and history,” allowing the congregation, or survivors from the systemic effects of transhistorical racism, to find solace without the need of language through their “struggling act of readjustment between the integrative scope of words and the unintegrated impact of events” (114). Thus, instead of the white-washed, dead, and empty language of Shegog’s early portion of his sermon, the Holy Spirit has now molded his speech into something which helps the black audience begin to work through their own suffering.

With the renewed vigor prompted by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Shegog begins to preach a message of redemption and hope to his congregation who sit enraptured and speechless “in and out of the myriad coruscations of immolation and abnegation and time” (284). Mirroring the biblical account of Easter, Shegog’s message

directly chronicles Christ's life, death, and resurrection. Shegog begins by warning his congregation that those who will not hear Christ's message will have "passed away in Egypt" like the Israelites during Moses' time as they are ultimately fated to die in the same way—no matter one's wealth or status (285). After death, when all of one's sins are laid bare before the throne of God, these same people who denied and rejected Christ during their lifetimes will plead with God to "let me lay down wid de Lawd...lay down my load"; however, God will reply that unless these "po sinner[s]" have "de ricklickshun en de Blood of de Lamb," then they are doomed for hell (285). Without this "ricklickshun," or the recollection and understanding of Christ's death and resurrection, then one is doomed for eternal damnation. Shegog illustrates this point by outlining a (modified) story of Mary and the baby Jesus from the Gospel accounts:

"Breddren! Look at dem little chiller settin dar. Jesus wus like dat once. He mammy suffered de glory en de pangs. Sometime maybe she heft him at de nightfall, whilst de angels singin him to sleep; maybe she look out de do en see de Roman po-lice passin." He tramped back and forth, mopping his face. "Listen, breddren! I sees de day. Ma'y settin in de do wid Jesus on her lap, de little Jesus. Like dem chiller dar, de little Jesus. I hears de angels singin de peaceful songs en de glory; I sees de closin eyes; sees Mary jump up, sees de sojer face: We gwine to kill! We gwine to kill! We gwine to kill yo little Jesus! I hears de weepin en de lamentation of de po mammy widout de salvation en de word of God!" (285)

John T. Matthews explains that this section of Shegog's sermon "parallel[s]...the biblical plight of the old testament Israelites and the bondage of African Americans" (*Seeing* 105). Shegog compares the congregation to Jesus as a child. Mary, with Jesus, is safe

from the harm of Herod's soldiers; however, the mothers who lose their children are not. As Matthews points out, by connecting the mothers and children who suffered under Roman persecution during the time of Christ to the black mothers in the audience, Shegog makes the relatability and effects of this sermon more apparent (*Seeing* 106). Likewise, Shegog simultaneously connects the sufferings and oppression suffered by Christ on behalf of the Roman soldiers with what the black congregation might have experienced under an unjust Jim Crow law system, for as Matthews again explains, Shegog's "sermon means to fortify and console victims of present racial terror under the hellishness of Jim Crow segregation" (*Seeing* 106).

Newly bolstered by the invocation of the Holy Spirit communicating his once cold, emotionless, and overly racialized message, Shegog offers a call to action for the parishioners: a story of redemption from the judgment of racism and a hope of working through the congregation's traumatic past. As Shegog's sermon nears its end, the congregation becomes more enraptured in his message. Their audible exclamations, "like bubbles rising in water" (286), demonstrate that the witness of the Holy Spirit has begun assisting them to work through and transcend their traumatic experiences. With an effluence of passion, the congregation sees the blood of Christ spilled at Calvary. With these horrible events, and after the exact moment when God "did turn His mighty face" amidst the "darkness en de death everlastin upon de generations" (286), Shegog ends his sermon with his most powerful message, a turn from the hopelessness and despair of Christ's death to the redemption of His resurrection:

"Den, lo! Breddren! Yes, breddren! Whut I see? Whut I see, O sinner? I sees de resurrection en de light; sees de meek Jesus sayin Dey kilt me dat ye shall live

again; I died dat dem whut sees en believes shall never die. Breddren, O breddren!
 I sees de doom crack en de golden horns shoutin down de glory, en de arisen dead
 whut got de blood en de ricklickshun of de Lamb!” (286)

Through these words, Shegog’s message shifts from his previous emphasis on death, trauma, and suffering to a promise of hope and redemption. Shegog explains that Christ’s suffering and death on the Cross were not in vain; rather, through this miracle, those who follow Him “shall live again,” as He “died dat dem whut sees en believes shall never die” as long as you, through the recollection of His blood, remember and believe that He died and rose again.

After the final notes of Shegog’s sermon, the congregation, with long intonations and a cumulative “long moaning expulsion of breath” (284) verbally signifies that their “unburdeninin” (230) has concluded: they have collectively undergone the “annealment and the blood of the remembered Lamb” of God (286). Dilsey, especially, summarizes the collective experiences of the congregation. When Frony asks her why she is crying, particularly so close to the presence of the judgmental eyes of Jefferson’s white populace, Dilsey replies “never you mind... “I’ve seed de first en de last...de begginin, en now I sees de endin” (287). According to Matthews, the “beginning and the ending” that Dilsey witnesses after the events of this Easter Sunday service

lifts her experience entirely out of earthly time—out of the suffering of her own life of bondage to the Compsons, out of the history that has determined the fate of her race, class, and gender. Dilsey’s faith consoles her with the promise of life beyond time, beyond history. (*Lost Cause* 82)

Despite what has occurred, and still occurs in their own lives as a result of historical and systemic racism, the parishioners depart with what Vickery has called an air of “triumph” and “peace” which “lend[s] significance not only to [Dilsey’s] own life but to the book as a whole” (49). With this newfound understanding, communicated through the indwelling of the witnessing Holy Spirit, Dilsey’s suffering caused by racial discrimination seems to be annealed—worked through—by means of the symbolic, redemptive healing of Christ’s blood. This action, according to Donald Kartiganer, thereby seems to reaffirm Faulkner’s “‘mythic’ view of the world, the assurance of an enduring order that presides over human existence, organizing it into intelligible history” (36). Therefore, with these events, it appears that Faulkner does in fact offer a triumphant conclusion to the racially induced trauma of historic racism that the novel’s black characters have experienced. Based on what these scholars have written above, readers can safely close their copies of *The Sound and the Fury* with the assurance that what has happened to the black characters during Shegog’s Easter sermon has satisfactorily led to their working through of systemic, racially induced trauma.

However, this is not the entire story, as it would clearly be “an understatement to say that...a resistance to working through trauma resides in Faulkner’s writing about race and Southern history” (Gwin 23). This same resistance applies to *The Sound and the Fury*’s ending, as its indeterminacy is anathema to the redemptive events of Shegog’s sermon. After a narrative digression following Jason’s failed attempt to recapture Miss Quentin and his stolen money, the novel ends with Benjy’s senseless outburst of rage from travelling in the wrong direction around the statue of the “Confederate soldier [who] gazed with empty eyes beneath his marble hand in wind and weather” (308). Therefore,

instead of a happy ending, or an ending which mirrors the resurrection of Christ which Shegog so adamantly preaches, the true ending of the novel is unequivocally ambiguous. Verily, as Bleikasten would attest, the novel lacks a “dramatic resolution, whether tragic or comic,” as “none of the novel’s tensions is eventually eased, nor are any of its ambiguities removed” (*Casebook* xvii); verily, any hope of redemption seen as a result of Shegog’s sermon seems now doubtful, exuding ambiguity and opaqueness rather than concrete truth. Jason, the epitome of racial injustice in the novel, will return from his failed recapture of Miss Quentin. His “rout,” as Bleikasten explains, is only temporary,” and “his power to harm” is only miles away from returning once more to torment Dilsey and her family (*Ink* 130). Similarly, Dilsey must return to the incessant demands and unappreciation of Mrs. Compson. Thus, it makes sense that in the narrator’s final descriptions of Dilsey’s body and clothing, reminiscent once again of his earlier descriptions at the outset of her section, she is once more arrayed in a decaying, “faded calico dress” (288). This indicates that her body is still affected by the ever-present burden of racialized suffering without any mention of remediation from this decaying condition. What this entails is that even though Dilsey and the other black populace of Jefferson have felt the “comfort en de unburdenin” (230) prompted by the witnessing of the Holy Spirit, they must still return to lives plagued by Jim Crow, by a society which cannot escape from the deeply racialized history of repeated racial wounding. This inevitable fact can be seen at the close of the novel when Luster attempts to drive Queenie and Benjy the opposite way around the Confederate statue. As a result of Luster’s attempt to change his quotidian routine, Jason responds with the threat of

violence towards his black servant, and actual physical violence towards his brother Benjy:

“Dont you know any better than to take him to the left?” he said. He reached back and struck Ben, breaking the flower stalk again. “Shut up!” he said. “Shut up!” He jerked Queenie back and jumped down. “Get to hell on home with him. If you ever cross that gate with him again, I’ll kill you!” “Yes, suh!” Luster said. He took the reins and hit Queenie with the end of them. “Git up! Git up, dar! Benjy, fer God’s sake!” (309)

With this threat of violence, or a reminder of the history of racialized trauma, Luster acquiesces to the commands of his “master.” Therefore, the novel seems to end not in a definitive finality of redemption but instead in an indeterminate resolution of racialized trauma. The hope for the reconciliation, for the working through of racial trauma through the witnessing of the Holy Spirit during Shegog’s Easter sermon on Christ’s life, death, and resurrection, appears to fall apart by the novel’s close.

While the events of April 8, 1928, offer two contrasting conclusions without any clear or obvious resolution to the novel, Faulkner’s addition of an appendix to the 1946 edition of *The Sound and the Fury* in fact supplies a possible solution to this impasse. Despite some critics calling this appendix “misleading” (Kartiganer 36), many others consider it to be, as Stacy Burton brilliantly argues, “an authoritative key for confused readers” (625). Faulkner himself supported this assertion. For Faulkner, the main motivating impetus for writing the appendix was to “clear up...[the] obscurity” of *The Sound and the Fury* (Blotner 237). In several letters written to his editor Malcolm Cowley, Faulkner believed that this appendix to *The Sound and the Fury* was “an integral

part” of the novel, and “the last change he would make in what was to remain his favorite among his own works” (Cowley 37). In the appendix, Faulkner charts a chronology of the Compson family from its early beginnings, through the events of *The Sound and the Fury*, and each member’s offstage fates after the conclusion of the novel. But interestingly enough, the appendix does not end with the Compsons, but rather with the “others [who] were not Compsons” (335); in other words, the appendix ends with the novel’s black characters:

T.P. Who wore on Memphis's Beale Street the fine bright cheap intransigent clothes manufactured specifically for him by the owners of Chicago and New York sweatshops.

FRONY. Who married a pullman porter and went to St Louis to live and later moved back to Memphis to make a home for her mother since Dilsey refused to go further than that.

LUSTER. A man, aged 14. Who was not only capable of the complete care and security of an idiot twice his age and three times his size, but could keep him entertained.

DILSEY.

They endured. (335)

Each of the first three entries reveals various forms of suffering indicated through T.P.’s poverty, Frony’s care of her mother Dilsey, and Luster’s care of Benjy. However, despite these descriptions, Faulkner also describes each of these three characters in a very positive light, completely different than the appendix’s earlier entries on the Compson family. Yet what is noticeably absent from this list of characters is a definitive description under Dilsey’s name. Even though the phrase “they endured” appears

immediately below her name, the use of the ambiguous pronoun “they” instead of “who” does not quite correlate with how Faulkner introduces the other characters in this list. Additionally, while the other characters’ descriptions appear to the right of their respective names, Dilsey’s completely lacks any such description to the right of her name, as the phrase “they endured,” which is usually associated with her, appears in a line following her name. One reason for this typographical anomaly is due to Faulkner’s nuanced return to the historical trauma of racism developed in the almost two decades after the first publishing of *The Sound and the Fury*. Dilsey’s endurance in the face of all that she has suffered over the course of her life (both within and without the narrative events of the novel) is a macrocosmic picture of the universal endurance of the novel’s black characters in the face of racialized trauma. Faulkner’s famous two-word description signifies not just Dilsey’s resistance to such trauma, or her family’s resistance, but her race’s resistance to a society plagued by the historical wounding of racism. Moreover, this resistance never discounts the reality that sometimes, as Shelley Rambo has written, “the past is not in the past. The body remembers. The wounds do not simply go away” (26). Therefore, Faulkner’s inclusion of the appendix as the true ending of the novel invokes the middle voice, as he keeps the reality of racial wounding alive by “articulating human pain without betraying it” (Gwin 24). By this action, Faulkner points towards a tentative future that might not resolve the traumas of historical racism, but nevertheless provides a longing gaze towards a future free from these ills.

What the appendix accomplishes, in lieu of the actual events of the biblical account of Shegog’s Easter sermon, is a rediscovery of the missing, unseen resurrection (whatever the term means for the reader) which never seems to arrive by the novel’s

close. This hope for a positive future that the resurrection provides indicates that the historical and systemic racism seen throughout the novel will not last forever; rather, as Scarsella comments, these “broader systems of evil in the world that traumatize, as real and devastating as they are, do not wield totalizing power” in light of the resurrection (270). The deleterious “power” of these institutions can be “subverted by [the] divine insistence on life and resurrection as an ultimate response to [the] terror and crucifixion” (Scarsella 270) exemplified through racial wounding. This anticipatory gaze towards the resurrection, towards the single, distant ray of sunlight shining down amidst the dark clouds of death and suffering, anticipates a final reconciliation (akin to what the words of Ivan describe in the epigraph to this chapter) to the suffering of the novel’s black characters, a positive future—even despite the fact that Faulkner does not entirely indicate that there will be such a future. By not forgetting the hope Dilsey’s section entails, readers can also, as Flora A. Keshgegian explains, “claim the present for the living, and create and transform the future toward a vision of how things might be” (234). Likewise, like the apostles who “encountered [Christ’s] resurrection life again and again, and testified to it” (Keshgegian 197), so can readers of *The Sound and the Fury* also transmit and testify Dilsey’s message of suffering, hope, and redemption themselves to others who need to hear the good news.

CHAPTER VI

(Re) Forming the Traumatic Landscape: Towards a New Paradigm in Trauma

Studies and the Literature of the American South

I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance.

—Faulkner, Nobel Prize Winning Speech for Literature (1949)

As shown in the previous chapter, the final section of *The Sound and the Fury* offers valuable insight into the problems and vicissitudes associated with racialized trauma and how difficult it is to redeem or work through its damaging effects. By ending with a description of the novel's African-American characters, I argued that the novel's appendix acts as Faulkner's tentative, hopeful glance at a future free from the debilitating effects of historical and systemic racism. Additionally, this appendix also serves as a serendipitous, macrocosmic summary of Faulkner's unique treatment of trauma within the novel at large. Falling in line with what I have argued throughout the entirety of the preceding chapters, Faulkner's treatment of trauma in *The Sound and the Fury* is not relegated solely to the mimetic or anti-mimetic models of trauma; instead, he uses both models dialectically to present a more nuanced and complete treatment of the traumatic experience. Through this appendix, therefore, Faulkner demonstrates how both models of trauma theory can work in unison, thereby offering a new paradigm of trauma theory for scholars studying Faulkner vis-à-vis trauma.

The appendix opens with a rough history of the Compson family line: from Quentin MacLachan in the 18th century to his descendants in the 20th century who inhabit the pages of *The Sound and the Fury*. The overarching narrative of this family history

displays how trauma has shaped the lives of the Compsons. Each member of this family seems to have wrestled with various types of neuroses caused by traumatic events. For instance, Charles Stuart, after failing to supplant an English king, survives an insurrection by his own British soldiers, the onset of the American army, and the loss of a leg to become a schoolteacher and gambler (318-319). Lycurgus, his son, fails at the business of running a plantation (320), while his son Jason II loses battles during the Civil War and battles with his bank over the mortgage of his house (321). Jason III, or Mr. Compson in *The Sound and the Fury*, is enamored with the past, and sits in melancholic remembrance “all day long with a decanter of whiskey and a litter of dogeared Horaces and Livys and Catulluses, composing (it was said) caustic and satiric eulogies on both his dead and his living fellowtownsmen” (322). Each member of the Compson family, therefore, displays the damaging effects of trauma through each of their individual histories chronicled within the appendix.

Faulkner’s description of the Compson brothers also falls in line with what has been established over the course of this study. Benjy is caught up in his warped sense of time and memory which mimetically reminds him of the loss of his sister Caddy. This leads to him repeating this loss through his obsessions and repetition compulsions caused by the retro determination of his past traumatic experiences. However, because of Benjy’s timelessness, he does not experience the full effects of this trauma. Instead, Faulkner’s invocation of the Lacaprian middle voice reveals that Benjy truly “lost nothing” from the absence of his sister, as even though she was gone, his world was peaceful as the “firelight was still the same bright shape of sleep” (333), leading him, to some extent, to work through his trauma.

Faulkner concludes Quentin's narrative by once again highlighting his obsession over his sister Caddy in the hopes that he might (re) attain the parental affection he never received. Quentin displaces this desire for love onto his sister which temporarily alleviates his trauma; nonetheless, this situation is ultimately sullied by the primal scene of her drawers. As a result of this event, Quentin cannot extricate his need for affection alongside the death represented by the primal scene. He becomes enamored with death above all...[loving] only death...in a deliberate and almost perverted anticipation of death as a lover loves and deliberately refrains from the waiting willing friendly tender incredible body of his beloved, until he can no longer bear not the refraining but the restraint and so flings, hurls himself relinquishing, drowning.

(323)

With these words, Faulkner (re) affirms Quentin's mimetic obsession with death leading from the lack of parental affection in his own life. As shown in a previous chapter, this predicament leads to Quentin developing feelings of anxiety because of the anti-mimetic pressure of an outside force. However, this anxiety results not merely from Freud's concept of anxiety, but from Lacan's which entails not knowing what the Other wants of you. Instead of realizing the causes of his afflictions, Quentin retreats further into his own neurotic mind in search for his apotheosis, for the hope of tricking his specular image from finding him and prevent the "Presbyterian concept of its eternal punishment" where Quentin, "not God, could by that means cast himself and his sister both into hell, where he could guard her forever and keep her forevermore intact amid the eternal fires" (323). Tragically, Quentin's attempts to reach this apotheosis leads to failure, as his capacity to signify meaning through language and reintegrating his own self through expression and

art becomes disintegrated to such an extent that he ends up committing suicide due to this psychological barrier.

Like his two older brothers, Faulkner's final description of Jason in the appendix reveals the dual effects of mimetic and anti-mimetic trauma on the youngest Compson brother. Jason's own incapacity to remedy the continual disintegration of his family acts as the foundation for his own villainous behavior later in life. Because of this mimetic manifestation of trauma caused by an earlier event of childhood trauma, Jason's will to meaning becomes frustrated in the Franklian sense of the term. This leads to anti-mimetic anxiety due to his helplessness to enact complete control over his own chaotic and traumatic life. He tries to assuage this need for meaning by distracting himself with the dual noögenic neuroses of pleasure and power. At first, the appendix seems to reveal that Jason has, to some extent, successfully established control and domination over the world he inhabits: he sells the Compson estate after his mother dies, commits his brother Benjy to the state asylum, and most importantly, believes that he is finally "emancipated...[and] free" from the black servants that worked for his family (332). As he boasts triumphantly in his final lines within the novel, "'in 1865,...Abe Lincoln freed the niggers from the Compsons. In 1933, Jason Compson freed the Compsons from the niggers'" (332). However, Jason's desire for control is both humorous and self-defeating in the appendix as it was within his section of *The Sound and the Fury*. He abandons his family estate not merely because he cannot stand his servants, but because Dilsey the cook, his "sworn enemy since birth," challenges his own tenuous hold on his surroundings (330). Moreover, even though he believes that the money he lost at the hands of his niece is of no real matter, he still routinely experiences dreams and memories of this lost money,

leading him to repeatedly fall into a wild and “red unbearable fury which on that night and at intervals recurring with little or no diminishment for the next five years, made him seriously believe [the rages] would at some unwarned instant destroy him, kill him as instantaneously dead as a bullet or a lightning bolt” (335). By its conclusion, the novel’s final picture of Jason situates him in a small room living a quiet, minimalistic life with the prostitute Lorraine for a lover, far from the great businessman and powerful man he once dreamt of being as a child who continually kept his hands inside his pockets in a futile attempt to guard his own material wealth.

Beyond the Compson narrators who dominate the novel’s main sections, the appendix devotes significant attention to two silent Compsons: Miss Quentin and Caddy. But instead of dedicating Miss Quentin’s portion of the appendix to her own narrative, Faulkner spends the entirety of this section in a digression involving the theft of her uncle Jason’s money and how it has tormented him even years after the heist. But with Caddy, readers are gifted with a long digression detailing the final events of her narrative life within the text, even though readers still never see her own point of view. Caddy’s generously extended section correlates with Faulkner’s own deep love of her who was his, as André Bleikasten explains, “secret muse and the very soul of the novel” (*Ink* 49); verily, she truly was his “beautiful one”—his “heart’s darling”—who was central to his writing of *The Sound and the Fury* (Blotner 6). One major factor which drew Faulkner to this character was that she exemplified the trauma he experienced after the premature deaths of his sister and daughter. As he writes in his introduction to *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner included Caddy within the novel in order to “manufacture the sister which I did not have and the daughter which I was to lose” (222). Therefore, I argue that

Caddy's presence within the novel, like the sun within our solar system which draws every other planet into its gravitational pull, acts as a force which grounds the dualistic models of mimetic and anti-mimetic trauma within the novel. While it is beyond the scope of this study to fully explore Caddy's traumatic experience within the novel,³⁷ it is clear from what little I have written about her over the course of the preceding chapters that her life does display trauma. From the primal scene of her muddy drawers to the loss of her daughter Quentin, Caddy's own life is marked by the universality of both modes of trauma. In the appendix, and after the events of the novel, she now lives a quiet life in exile with a former Nazi sergeant. Despite this unfortunate fate, Faulkner's description of her picture that the librarian finds reveals that Caddy has not fully succumbed to the trauma of her life. Rather, her picture is

filled with luxury and money and sunlight--a Cannebière backdrop of mountains and palms and cypresses and the sea, an open powerful expensive chromium/rimmed sports car, the woman's face hatless between a rich scarf and a seal coat, ageless and beautiful, cold serene and damned. (326)

Faulkner's description here of Caddy solidifies the fact that Caddy continued to live her life even though she was "doomed and knew it"; she, unlike her brothers, was self-aware

³⁷Any future study which studies the dialectical nature of trauma within *The Sound and the Fury* might make the focus of its investigation on the relationship between Caddy the character and Faulkner the author. Even though she does not mention trauma outright, Doreen Fowler has written about this topic in her comprehensive Lacanian study *Faulkner: The Return of the Repressed*. She believes that Faulkner's loss of his sister, as well as his daughter, resulted from "an unconscious desire to figure the primal lack he identifie[d]" from the absence of both of these loved family members (46). In other words, the character of Caddy within the novel acts as a "projected image of a repressed desire for completeness of being," fully exemplifying, "in a disguised form," Faulkner's "unconscious desire for the lost first other, for the mother of the imaginary relation" (Fowler 47). This relationship between absence, lack, desire, and motherhood could very well connect to the unquestionably traumatic nature of Caddy's character within *The Sound and the Fury*.

of the trauma inherent in her life and “accepted...[her] doom without either seeking or fleeing it” (324). Ultimately, she displays a resistance to the damaging effects of trauma as she “possesses the vitality, the courage, the capacity for love and compassion” which the majority of her family does not display (Bleikasten, *Ink* 55).

Finally, the appendix’s descriptions of characters outside of the Compson family tree demonstrates the influence of anti-mimetic, inherited, systemic, and historical trauma seen throughout the text (but especially in the novel’s final section). This evidence is supported by Faulkner’s inclusion of entries outlining characters who, even though not part of the Compson bloodline, nevertheless demonstrate how such anti-mimetic, racialized trauma can affect groups of people over extended periods of time.

Ikkemotubbe, the Chickasaw chieftain whose name means “Doom” (317), is removed from his own lands by selling them to the first Compson family settlers. Moreover, Andrew Jackson—the “Great White Father with a sword” (318) whose honor stands as his most prominent treasure—finalizes the purchase of Ikkemotubbe’s land on behalf of the early descendants of the Compson family. Such a brazen example of thievery establishes the influence of historical, anti-mimetic trauma on the heritage of the Compson family. Nevertheless, since the appendix ends with a description of the novel’s black characters, it serves both as Faulkner’s reminder of the traumatic history of these characters while at the same time presenting a thin sliver of hope towards a possible future free from the inherited effects of historical racism present throughout the family history of the Compsons.

Therefore, this appendix serves as a way of (re) illustrating how important both models of trauma theory are to interpreting *The Sound and the Fury*. Faulkner, as one of

the greatest Southern writers, provides a fertile ground for examining this dualistic relationship between both models of trauma theory. As Greg Forter points out, Faulkner's unique approach to multiple types of traumatization—both on the individual or “systemic” level—can “open up rather than foreclose a space for acting on the systems that traumatize” (282). This same dialectical approach to trauma theory must also be used when studying trauma within literature, but particularly, the literature of the South. “Despite trauma's conceptual thorniness and complicated history” (613), Lisa Hinrichsen explains, scholars who continue to work within the paradigm of Southern literature begin to discover “how literature configures and refigures trauma through the aesthetic power of narrative” which has only recently just begun to see any serious work (614). My wish is that future studies of Southern literature—with Faulkner at the vanguard—can follow my lead by emphasizing this dialectical relationship through not just Freud's school of psychoanalysis, but through other foundational analysts such as Jacques Lacan, Viktor Frankl, and Carl Jung (and so on) who have also studied the causes and effects of trauma.

Yet even more specifically, I stress that any scholarly study that also seeks to explore this dialectical relationship must, in the spirit of Freud's seminal essay “Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through,” take into consideration what “working through” means within the context of each text and how this affects the work at the level of reader, text, and author. By addressing these concerns, scholars, as Jung has written, might arrive at the heart of one of the most fundamental archetypical mysteries of myth and literature: how does one overcome trauma, pain, suffering, and misfortune when it inevitably arrives at your doorstep? (Kalsched 141). This question must be at the forefront of any serious study involving trauma and literature (Luckhurst 213), even though, as I have

shown in the cases of Quentin, or Jason, or Dilsey in *The Sound and the Fury*, a happy ending to trauma and suffering might not always be apparent and foreclosable as one might hope.

While Faulkner's work does not always offer a clear and obvious cure to suffering, it still exudes the stoic fortitude of its author which his Nobel Prize acceptance speech exemplifies. This deeply human-centered approach leaves the possibility open for finding some hope and reconciliation within his texts, for as with any of the great themes within Faulkner's work, trauma is constantly reworked: an ever-shifting and serpentine framework of dialogic discussion. Truly, Faulkner correctly sees trauma as something akin to Mary-Jane Rubenstein's definition of trauma: something which must be "constantly negotiated—thought where it seems unthinkable, un-thought where it seems commonplace, and ruinous of any philosophy that claims to have nothing to do with it" (292). By following his lead, readers and scholars might also come to understand that trauma is not solely based in the mimetic repetition or anti-mimetic systems of trauma and anxiety; rather, trauma is a fundamentally universal condition of human experience (Forter 260), a condition which both defies and demands attention for all those who seek to explore its manifestations within literature.

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Wulfman, Clifford E. "Sighting / Siting / Citing the Scar: Trauma and Homecoming in Faulkner's *Soldiers' Pay*." *The Faulkner Journal*, Vol. 31, no. 1, 2014, pp. 29–43. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1353/saf.2003.0010.

Zeitlin, Michael. "The Synthesis of Marx and Freud in Recent Faulkner Criticism." *A Companion to William Faulkner*, edited by Richard C. Moreland, Blackwell, 2007, pp. 85-101.

VITA

Samuel L. Dallaire

Education

MA in English Expected Spring 2021

Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas

GPA: 4.00.

BA in English and History, *magna cum laude* Spring 2018

Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas

GPA: 3.74

Teaching Experience

Graduate Instructor of Record, Department of English, Sam Houston State University, Spring 2020-Present. Courses Taught:

Freshman Composition 2 (Spring 2020; Fall 2020; Spring 2021)

Integrated Reading and Writing (Fall 2020)

Graduate Assistant, Department of English, Department of Communications, Sam Houston State University, Fall 2018-Fall 2019. Created syllabi. Graded and offered feedback on student writing. Developed and orchestrated classroom lectures. Regularly held weekly office hours. Courses included:

Freshman Composition (Fall 2018 [online class]; Spring 2019; Spring 2021)

Technical Writing (Spring 2019; Fall 2019; Spring 2021)

Literature and Film (Spring 2021)

Designing Written Documents (Spring 2021)

The English Romantic Movement (Spring 2019)

Creative Writing: Poetry (Fall 2018 [Online class])

Introduction to Film (Fall 2018)

Professional Service

Technical Writing Laboratory Worker Spring 2019-Fall 2019

Maintained Sam Houston State University's Technical Writing Laboratory. Assisted technical writing students and faculty in their respective technical writing projects.

Conference Presentations

“‘If There is a God what the Hell is He for?’: Faulkner’s *Light in August* and the Kierkegaardian Paradox of Faith.” Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association. El Paso, Texas. October 10-12, 2019.

“‘I Was Trying to Say’: (Re)-Discovering Benjy’s Voice in *The Sound and the Fury*.” Journal of the Portuguese Association for Anglo-American Studies (APEAA). Aveiro, Portugal. March 26-28, 2020.³⁸

Faculty forum lecture series. Sam Houston State University. April 9, 2021. “(Re) Assessing Trauma, Race, and the Resurrection in Dilsey’s Section of *The Sound and the Fury*.”

Professional Memberships

Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association (RMMLA)

Honors

Dean’s list: Fall 2014- Spring 2015; Spring 2017

President’s List: Fall 2016

³⁸ Conference cancelled due to COVID-19.