

Faulkner's "fierce, courageous being": Narrative and Neuroscience in *The Sound and the Fury*

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“Then the story was complete, finished. There was Dilsey to be the future, to stand above the fallen ruins of the family like a ruined chimney gaunt, patient, and indomitable; and Benjy to be the past. He had to be an idiot so that, like Dilsey, he could be impervious to the future, though unlike her by refusing to accept it at all. Without thought or comprehension; shapeless, neuter, like something eyeless and voiceless which might have lived, existed merely because of its ability to suffer, in the beginning of life; half fluid, groping: a pallid and helpless mass of all mindless agony under sun, in time yet not of it save that he could nightly carry with him that fierce, courageous being who was to him but a touch and a sound that may be heard on any golf links and a smell like trees, into the slow bright shapes of sleep” (*Mississippi Quarterly* 414).

Deep in the heart of northern Mississippi there is a town called Oxford. Here, there is a house named Rowan Oak. Built in 1844, the house was purchased by William Faulkner in the 1930's; in 1968, the house was named a National Historic Landmark; and, on August 31, 1970, writings were discovered that would profoundly change the state of a literary criticism focused on Faulkner. These would come to be known as The Rowan Oak Papers, a collection of hitherto unknown letters, manuscripts, and memos. The Rowan Oak Papers were purchased by the University of Mississippi in 1972, as well as copied and stored by the University of Virginia. Among the writings uncovered at Rowan Oak, were a number of attempts at an introduction to *The Sound and the Fury*. Two versions of this text were eventually published in 1972 and 1973 in *The Southern Review* and *Mississippi Quarterly*, respectively. Yet, neither of these introductions ever appeared in any edition of the novel.¹ Prior to 1972, no explanation, clarification, or condemnation of Faulkner's disjointed first chapter of *The Sound and the Fury* could claim anything other than abstraction and speculation as critics and readers tried to answer the question of *why*? Indeed, why would Faulkner write from the point of view of someone with

¹ Much of the textual history regarding “An Introduction to *The Sound and the Fury*” comes from Phillip Cohen and Doreen Fowler's 1990 article published in *American Literature*. In it, they outline the history of Faulkner's introduction, indicating that it was produced as a directive from a publisher looking to release a special edition of *The Sound and the Fury*. This edition was never printed, however, and remained hidden until the Rowan Oak Papers were discovered in 1970. Cohen and Fowler received special permission from the University of Mississippi's John Davis Williams Library to reprint portions of the manuscripts found at Rowan Oak. They repeatedly cite these in their outlining of the introduction's textual history.

a profound developmental impairment? Is it (I hesitate to say simply) a brilliant literary experiment, expanding the scope of subjectivity in fiction? Or, is Benjy symbolic, a representation of something more telling about Faulkner's life and Faulkner's mind? In "An Introduction to *The Sound and the Fury*," one finds these answers.

I say answers, because there is not only one. Benjy can be both an experiment in literary subjectivity and a literary symbol. Prior to the publication of *The Sound and the Fury* no work of fiction had so boldly ventured into the neuroatypical² mind, much less narrated from it. Most critics today recognize that narrating from a disabled, first-person perspective is a sort of "sub-genre" that has gained considerable traction following Faulkner's experiment (Sellevold 72; Bérubé 14-5). Contemporary works within this sub-genre include *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime* and *Martian Time-Slip*. Thus, *The Sound and the Fury* did expand the scope of literary subjectivity by making it possible to create a comprehensible narrative told by a neuroatypical mind. On this point, however, most people would happily disagree with me; while easily and entirely readable, the first chapter of *The Sound and the Fury* is – at the level of narrative – oppressively disjointed. Prior to the discovery of the Rowan Oak Papers, making sense of the first section's narrative was nearly impossible, as, to do this, one needs, at the very least some help from either literary critics or Faulkner himself. One needs, that is, "An Introduction to *The Sound and the Fury*."

Implicit to my argument is the notion that certain narrative elements rely upon an intact consciousness, and that these are missing in the first chapter of *The Sound and the Fury*.

Narrating from Benjy's point of view eliminates a certain amount of cognitive processing necessary to tell a story and assign meaning to it. Perhaps the best example of this is the lack of

² Here, and subsequently, "neuroatypical" simply refers to a broad class of individuals with diverse mental experiences such as intellectual disability (like Benjy), psychosis, mood disorders, etc.

temporal specificity in the novel; reading the text, it is easy to tell that the section narrated by Benjy on “April Seventh, 1928”, is not told in any kind of coherent chronological order. This is most evident, perhaps, in the name change that occurs throughout this section: “His name’s Benjy now, Caddy said. How come it is, Dilsey said. He aint wore out the name he was born with yet, is he” (Faulkner, 58). Throughout the rest of the section, Maury – his original name – and Benjy are used somewhat interchangeably (with Benjy being used more often). Benjy’s name change, then, indicates that, in this first section, he is narrating from many different points in time. Some critics have argued, however, that it is possible to distinguish between distinct periods in Benjy’s history. Specifically, the shifting attendance of certain caretakers helps mark particular moments in time with the presence of Luster, Versh, and T.P. marking Benjy’s present, early childhood, and teen years, respectively (Ross and Polk 5). This is a view that I will adopt in my analyses; I find Ross and Polk’s assertion that the presence of Luster indicates Benjy’s present particularly useful. Still, temporal uncertainty creates problems for the reader, as these shifts in time are unmarked by any sort of consistent punctuation, quotation, or explanation, and, without the detailed work of critics, a sequential understanding of *The Sound and the Fury*’s first section would be impossible.

In this text, I focus on *The Sound and the Fury*’s narrative incoherence in a similar way. Rather than examining Benjy’s capacity for temporal processing, however, I focus on his ability to process memory. I argue that Benjy’s narrative mirrors organic memory processes in the brain, and that, in so doing, the first section of the novel reveals the function of memory in narrative formation. My reading depends on the assertions made in “An Introduction to *The Sound and the Fury*” as well as ideas put forth in Michael Bérubé’s *The Secret Life of Stories: From Don Quixote to Harry Potter, How Understanding Intellectual Disability Transforms the Way*

We Read. Bérubé argues for a disability studies which “opens up the field...considerably” and focuses not on the diagnosis of certain intellectually disabled literary characters, but rather “cures disability studies of its habit of diagnosing fictional characters” (19-20) thereby offering “insight that leads us away from the actual (diagnosable) attributes of literary characters and toward an understanding of how tropes of stigma and de-humanization might work” (22). Intellectual disability in fiction, that is, has the capacity to serve as a critical lens through which themes, tropes, and extra-textual elements may be examined. Here, I aim to use this lens. At the beginning of this project, I felt a certain amount of pressure (both internal and external) to diagnose Benjy. That is not my goal. For, what benefit does it convey to posit the likelihood of Benjy having one disorder over some other? What kind of significant contribution does a diagnosis claim? These questions may have answers, but they are not, in my view, questions worth asking. That is because to answer them would be to impose a medicalized language onto Benjy’s disability, something that disability scholars are weary of given the inevitable pathologization that comes with such a vocabulary (Clare; Kafer).³

Instead, I will approach Benjy as an occasion for illuminating some of the neuroscientific underpinnings necessary for narrative formation. That is, how certain elements of consciousness are related to the very act of telling a story. More specifically, via an analysis of the first chapter of *The Sound and the Fury* as well as Faulkner’s attempts at an introduction to this text, I hope to demonstrate how memory and narrative are inexorably linked and how both offer insight into the

³ Both Clare and Kafer explicitly criticize the impact that medicine has had on disability, citing that the language forced onto disability by this institution develops the kind of “tropes of stigma and de-humanization” that Bérubé describes. For Clare, there are four “dominant paradigms of disability” and “the medical model insists on disability as a disease or condition that is curable and/or treatable” (359-360). Kafer writes on so called “crip time,” demonstrating that disabled temporalities are continually pathologized by the medical community which “has a long tradition of describing disability in reference to time” (25). Indeed, “‘chronic’ fatigue, ‘intermittent’ symptoms, and ‘constant’ pain” (Kafer 25) are all ways in which the medical community defines disability in terms of time, thus proliferating one of Clare’s dominant paradigms.

way that memory is cognitively processed. This relationship implies an interplay between literature and neuroscience. To start, then, scaffolding from both fields should be supplied.

Antonio Damasio and Kaspar Meyer, two of the most currently influential neuroscientists, define consciousness as the awareness of one's own existence as well as the awareness of objects and events outside an individual (4). By arguing for a dual perspective of consciousness, Damasio and Meyer provide a useful neuroscientific framework for this project: consciousness, they posit, has both an internal and an external component, an objective and subjective state. That is, consciousness is not only an intrinsic, personal experience but also an outward, observable one. For clarity's sake, the words internal and external – intrinsic vs. observable – need to be refined. Here, I will use “organic” to denote the internal, biological workings of the brain, and “behavioral” to signify the observable attributes of consciousness. It is possible to approach *The Sound and the Fury* in this way, asking the questions formed by Damasio and Meyer: “What does a conscious person look like to an outside observer?” and “What does consciousness look like from the inside perspective?” (Damasio and Meyer 4-5);⁴ and modifying them slightly to read “what does remembering look like behaviorally” and “what does it look like organically.” Whereas theories in neuroscience (which I will discuss later) such as the engram, and Reconsolidation Theory might answer the latter question, I plan to borrow techniques from literary criticism to answer the former. By doing this, what I aim to show is that both neuroscience and fiction (using *The Sound and the Fury* as an exemplary text) give insight into the conscious processing of memory.

⁴ From a behavioral perspective, the authors suggest that consciousness necessarily involves wakefulness, the presence of background emotions, (fatigue or energy; discouragement or enthusiasm), and the ability to exhibit attention, and purposeful behavior (Damasio and Meyer 4). Organically, consciousness is the “momentary creation of neural patterns that describe a relation between the organism, on the one hand, and an object or event, on the other” (5). That is, since consciousness implies both a personal awareness as well as a relational awareness to objects in the environment, the neural correlates of consciousness generate a sense of self vis-à-vis their response to sensory stimuli.

However, the rigidity with which the fields of natural science and literature treat one another locates this project in a rather difficult interdisciplinary space. That is why *The Sound and the Fury* must be used as an exemplary text and that is why the field of disability studies offers an indispensable critical lens. For, humanist methodology is partly incompatible with that of neuroscience, and vice versa. Still, some means of assessing the accurateness of Faulkner's portrayal of memory must be utilized. I share the apprehensions of literary critics who question science's ability to always and unequivocally "get things right" (Sellevold 73). Indeed, I do not seek to impose the opinions of neuroscience onto the critical study of literature. Likewise, the notion that fiction conveys truths about cognitive memory processes which are on par with those contained in neuroscience is a seemingly far-fetched conclusion. Disability studies, then, must serve as a helpful buffer between the two fields. Thinkers in this area level the playing field between literature and neuroscience by adopting an equally cynical stance toward both. That is, they are generally critical of representations of disability in both literature and the natural sciences.

I have already cited a few scholars who demonstrate how the medicalized language of neuroscience serves to pathologize disability in a way that upholds ableism and consigns atypical bodies to second-class citizenship. But, there is an equal inaccuracy regarding the representation of disability in literature. Matthew Cella, for instance, asserts that the environmentalist tradition in American fiction, as well as pastoralism itself (a classical foundation for this type of writing), upholds certain ableist inclinations by ignoring the important role that embodiment plays in rural life. It is important to note, briefly, that, although Cella does not cite *The Sound and the Fury* directly, the setting in the post-Reconstruction American south heavily implicates the novel.⁵

⁵ Historical background comes from Alan Brinkley's *The Unfinished Nation: A Concise History of the American People*. Brinkley paints a picture of the post-war South as a desolate place and argues that the region has not fully

Focusing on the accounts of disabled individuals in rural spaces, what he refers to as “auto/somatographies,” Cella points to the importance of how atypical bodies influence the experience of rural spaces. Likewise, a neuroatypical mind must experience memory in a divergent way. It is important to focus on this issue of embodiment, therefore. Eli Clare, arguably the most prolific writer in the field of disability studies, contends that renewed focus on the body is profoundly important to understanding the individual experience of societal subjugation. In short, Clare argues for a reclamation of the disabled body which has been stolen and represented as “broken and tragic” (362) in order to break through the oppression of an ableist society. Again, both literature and neuroscience are complicit in propagating this type of appropriated characterization. Clare’s appeal to reinstate a focus on the body carries wide implications for my project; I assert that Faulkner’s representation of Benjy’s narrative constitutes an accurate characterization of embodied memory processes.

Because I argue that, in some ways, Faulkner’s representation of disability accurately characterizes organic memory processes, and because disability studies calls for an increased focus on the body, an important distinction must be made. That is, it is not the depiction of Benjy’s *disability* that is correct. Rather, certain truths about memory processing are revealed via Benjy. In this project, embodiment equals organic processes within the brain; these electrical and chemical impulses are necessary to normal functioning of the human body (and thus qualify as microscopic forms of embodiment). Like scholars in disability studies, I recognize that Faulkner’s depiction of Benjy as “Without thought or comprehension; shapeless, neuter” (*Mississippi Quarterly* 414) is overtly problematic. Following the direction of this field, then – to

recovered because, in 1865, “Congress refused to seat the representatives of the ‘restored’ states” creating instead a “Joint Committee on Reconstruction” leading to a period of radical reconstruction which further devastated the already decimated Southern economy (399).

focus on and reclaim the disabled body – I reject Faulkner’s characterization of his disabled character and instead focus on how Benjy’s mind conveys certain embodied truths. Again, my focus on the organic nature of memory is the element of this project which qualifies as an increased focus on the disabled body. More than that, though, a focus on Benjy’s unique embodiment of intellectual disability is necessary for my subsequent analysis, as it allows for this isolation of organic memory in a narrative context. This focus reveals aspects of narrative and of memory, generally, that would not be possible without it.

Moreover, disability studies’ general mistrust makes it impossible to evaluate my claims using either literature or neuroscience independently. Instead, my hypothesis is that a third way must be applied, one that takes into account the issues of (1) medicalized language and (2) literature’s overlooking of the disabled body. Perhaps truth can be evaluated at the *intersection* of fiction and neuroscience: narrative. Here, I am drawing on Mark Turner’s *The Literary Mind: The Origins of Thought and Language*. In this book, Turner posits that the formation of narratives is “a literary capacity indispensable to human cognition generally” (5). Thus, certain cognitive impairments might make it impossible for Benjy to tell a story which meets Turner’s criteria of what a narrative is. That is, something which earns meaning via the “projection of one story onto another” (Turner 12). I keep Turner in mind throughout this text, applying his intersectional view to my analysis. Intersectional because “Narrative...informs everything we think, do, plan, remember and imagine” (Bérubé 3) and because “narrative has been a memory-enhancing device for some time now, ever since bards made a living by chanting family genealogies” (Bérubé 9). Storytelling, then, is the bedrock of the critical study of literary fiction as well as (according to Turner and Bérubé) an important neuroscientific advantage. This notion animates my subsequent focus on narrative. For now, however, I conclude that focusing on the

effects that disability has on narrative, and specifically how a purportedly impaired memory has on one's ability to tell, read, and understand a story should offer an interdisciplinary language within brain science and criticism.

Still, how does one measure the exactness of a claim at the intersection of two subjects? For one, neither academic discipline – neuroscience or literature – can be used to evaluate the other. Academic disciplines, in this case, must be referred to as “modes.” This distinction comes from Bruno Latour, who writes:

comparing conflicts of values in pairs – scientific versus religious, for example, or legal versus political, or scientific versus fictional, and so on – we shall observe very quickly that a large proportion of the tensions ... stem from the fact that the veracity of one mode is judged in terms of the conditions of veridiction of a different mode.” (17-8)

The rigidness that I mentioned earlier is addressed in these lines. A tension exists between academic disciplines which arises via methodological differences. The degree of accurateness of the claims made in one mode (specialization) are then evaluated in a different mode in which another scholar is operating. This evaluation of truth claims is what Latour calls “veridiction.” A neuroscientist, for example, would evaluate assertions made about memory in *The Sound and the Fury* from a neuroscientific point of view. But, to do this is to impose a neuroscientific language not only onto disability, but onto the field of literary criticism as well (something that I have already addressed via Sellevold). Thus, veridiction is the valuation of truth from the point of view of one particular subject. This entrenched subjectivity, Latour points out, establishes a “veridiction that has *nothing to do* with the epistemological definition of truth and falsity” (53). The veridiction of one mode, therefore, should not be applied to claims made in another mode. So, I must be careful not to apply the language of neuroscience to the findings of literary critics

and vice versa. Competing modes are what has allowed the hostile boundary between the humanities and the natural sciences to form, and it is what allows disability studies to reject its representation in both. Rather, the two must work together to develop a language of narrative formation which recognizes the role that both literature and brain science play while dealing overtly with the questions of how memory is affected by disability⁶.

Thus, my analysis of memory in *The Sound and the Fury* focuses mainly on its narrative function; this offers a language outside of both literature and neuroscience. I transition now into some of these analysis, and return to my central question, asking how Faulkner portrays memory through Benjy's narrative. Later, I will illuminate features of Benjy's narrative that utilize memory impairment to confound the plot. I'll mention here, however, that Benjy's memory in *The Sound and the Fury* both *is* and *is not* impaired; Benjy, though profoundly affected by his intellectual disability, is susceptible to cues which help him recall memories of loss. Faulkner's "Introduction to *The Sound and the Fury* deals with memory in much the same way by focusing on feelings of loss and grief. First, then, I address the question that has animated scholarship on *The Sound and the Fury* for some time, the question with which I began: *why* the first portion of the novel is narrated from a first person, disabled point of view? It is here that I return to The Rowan Oak Papers, to Faulkner's introduction, and to unravelling Faulkner's prolific literary experiment.

Caddy, the Engram

⁶ For the purposes of this text, narrative is a sort of universal mode of veridiction; it allows for the consolidation of neuroscientific memory and literary studies.

Faulkner wanted his first child to be a girl. Born on January 10, 1931, the child was named after his beloved aunt, Alabama (“Aunt Bama”), the favorite daughter of his famous relative, a confederate colonel. Two months premature, and very small, the newborn’s health was cause for concern. Erroneously, the doctor told Faulkner that the infant did not need an incubator, and, besides, the hospital did not own one. So, a few days after the child was born, Faulkner took his daughter home to Rowan Oak. A few days passed, Faulkner watched his newborn daughter languish. Finally, he decided to drive to Memphis to purchase an incubator. But shortly after he returned to Mississippi, on January 20, 1931, Alabama Faulkner died⁷.

The publication of *The Sound and the Fury* precedes this death. But, it becomes clear in “An Introduction to *The Sound and the Fury*,” written after both the novel and his daughter’s death, that Faulkner is dealing with loss. Moreover, Faulkner likens Benjy’s experience to his own. Here, the work of Cohen and Fowler is paramount to my reading of Faulkner’s introduction; these two provide a detailed history of the novel’s introduction, as well as copies of every attempt at a preface, even those that were incomplete. “In the drafts of the introduction published here for the first time,” say Cohen and Fowler, “[Faulkner] discusses even more frankly the profoundly intimate nature of the novel and seems to imply that *The Sound and the Fury* is the expression of his unconscious” (26).⁷ I have differing thoughts regarding this conclusion. On the one hand, Faulkner is clearly delving into his own state of mind in these introductions. For, “prior to *The Sound and the Fury* [Faulkner] had written three good, but not great novels. With *The Sound and the Fury*, inarguably a work of genius, he achieved a kind of artistic breakthrough” (Cohen & Fowler 263). Indeed, Faulkner himself writes, “it suddenly seemed as if a door had clapped silently and forever between me and all the publishers’

⁷ Biographical evidence comes from David Minter’s book, *William Faulkner: His Life and Work*.

addresses and booklists and I said to myself, Now I can write. Now I can just write. Whereupon I, who had three brothers and no sisters and was destined to lose my first daughter in infancy, began to write about a little girl” (*Mississippi Quarterly* 413). Thus, Faulkner is clearly cutting himself off from the outside world (at least from publishers) and looking inside his own mind for inspiration. On the other hand, however, an auto-exploration of the subconscious implies some level of sophisticated psychoanalysis which I do not think exists in the text. For me, these introductions represent not a survey of his own subconscious, but a comparison of two states of mind. That is, a paralleling of Benjy and Faulkner.

This comparison arises via an emotion. For Faulkner, the link between his mind and Benjy’s stems from his dealing with the loss of his daughter. That he “began to write about a little girl” before he was “destined” to lose his first daughter, provides a locus for Faulkner to examine his affective state by writing his introductions. Indeed, this is an issue that he returns to in a number of attempts. For example, one (unpublished) version of the introduction reads:

“And so I, who had never had a sister and was fated to lose my daughter in infancy...made myself a beautiful and tragic little girl. This was Caddy. She would have to be doomed and fated; I gave her for background a [house] family doomed to decay and symbolised [sic] by the decaying house. I could be in it, the brother and father both. But one brother could not contain all that I could feel toward her. I gave her 3: Quentin who loved her [with incest. Jason] as a lover would, Jason who loved her with the same hatred of [sic] jealous and outraged pride of a father, and Benjy who loved her with the complete [and] mindlessness of a child (Cohen and Fowler 277)^{8,9}

⁸ It is important here to note that there are two parts to Cohen and Fowler’s journal article concerning “An Introduction to *The Sound and the Fury*.” In the first, the authors develop their argument that in writing the introduction, Faulkner was able to search his own subconscious, and reveal, for himself, his deepest fears and desires. I quote very briefly from this section in the preceding paragraph. More useful for me, however, is the second part of the article which prints the incomplete and unpublished versions of Faulkner’s introduction.

⁹ The excerpts from Faulkner’s introductions include some bracketed text. These bracketed portions are quoted from Cohen and Fowler.

In this excerpt Faulkner puts himself in the novel. The outright admission that he “could be in it, the brother and father both” and that “one brother count not contain all that [he] could feel toward her” situates Faulkner within *The Sound and the Fury* in an interesting way; it is his grief that incites such auto-authorial positioning. Indeed, there is an explicit admission that *The Sound and the Fury*’s Caddy is the “beautiful and tragic little girl,” created somehow in the author’s mind before the tragic loss of Alabama Faulkner. This loss and the relating of Caddy to Faulkner’s daughter are the elements that link the novel to both the published and unpublished versions of Faulkner’s introductions, and I will demonstrate later, it is what links Faulkner’s mind to Benjy’s. Moreover, it is via these symbolic associations that literature’s insight into memory processing becomes clear; Caddy serves as a sort of narrative engram, a trace revealing how remembered loss shapes the experiences of both Benjy and Faulkner, altering their narratives, and utilizing non-normative states of consciousness to travel through time: grief on the one hand, and intellectual disability on the other.

To deal with *The Sound and the Fury* and its introduction – Benjy’s mind and Faulkner’s – in tandem, the engram must first be defined. Engram is loosely defined (further elaborated below) as “the neural circuitry that supports memory” (Eichenbaum 209). That is, an organic memory trace. The search for the engram began with Karl Lashley, who in 1950 summarized his life’s work as an attempt to “trace conditioned reflex pathways to the brain or to find the locus of specific memory traces” (3).¹⁰ Lashley’s main conclusion was that brain structures and neurons that support memory (the engram) were diffused widely, that nearly any part of the brain could support memory and that, often times, remembering was necessitated via an interaction between

¹⁰ “Conditioned reflex pathways” refers to experiments conducted using the classical conditioning paradigm introduced by Ian Pavlov. What Lashley means here, is that memory is observed via an animal’s behavioral response to a conditioned stimulus and that tracing a pathway of interconnected neurons constitutes a memory trace.

more than one part of the brain: “I sometimes feel, in reviewing the evidence on the localization of the memory trace, that the necessary conclusion is that learning just is not possible. It is difficult to conceive a mechanism which can satisfy the conditions set for it. Nevertheless, in spite of such evidence against it, learning does sometimes occur” (26). Given the complexity of the necessary organic inputs for a memory to form, then, the search for the engram continues.

Yet, more advanced techniques in neuroscience developed since Lashley have aided in squaring what he viewed as the significant spatial and energetic obstacles to learning. Using these methods, contemporary neuroscientists have defined three main memory systems which, as Lashley suggested, prove that memory is *diverse* (that almost any part of the brain can contribute) and that it is *diffuse* (formation of a memory depends on more than one part of the brain).¹¹ Perhaps the most important evolution regarding the quest for the engram is that memories are formed via “plasticity properties” (Eichenbaum 209). Plasticity refers to the brain’s ability to alter its physical structure in response to some event. Going back to the framework provided by Damasio and Meyer, organically, memory looks like a pathway of functionally and physically altered neurons and synapses, respectively. Behaviorally, it looks like altered comportment in response to the same event. Regarding grief, memory manifests organically as a universal and interconnected stream of nerve cells.

Mourning a loved one has been recognized in clinical psychology as an emotive state which can impact a number of behavioral and cognitive processes necessary for day-to-day functioning, including memory. In a study examining the effects of Prolonged Grief Disorder (PGD; a syndrome characterized by an abnormal grieving process) researchers suggested that PGD might result from an individual’s inability to incorporate loss into his or her wider

¹¹ The three main memory systems defined by contemporary neuroscientists are: a habitual memory system, an emotional memory system, and a declarative memory system (Eichenbaum 210).

autobiographical narrative and that such an incapacity might have to do with the person's level of dissociation (Hasson-Ohayon et al. 1723). Integration of loss fails when it cannot be connected to past memories, and PGD is enhanced via dissociation's effect on this process (Hasson-Ohayon et al. 1723). Though I do not seek to diagnose Faulkner, one might regard his assertion that he could be in *The Sound and the Fury* as something of a dissociative state. Dissociative not because Faulkner fails to incorporate his loss into his own personal narrative, but because, on account of his profound state of grief, he sees in Benjy a consciousness similar to his own.

Faulkner says as much in his introductions. I have already given one example of an instance where Faulkner inserts his grief into the narrative of *The Sound and the Fury*. But, his various introductions are replete with this theme. Here, one of the published introductions is worth quoting at length:

“I did not realize then that I was trying to manufacture the sister which I did not have and the daughter I was to lose, though the former might have been apparent from the fact that Caddy had three brothers almost before I wrote her name on the paper...when she quit the water fight and stooped in her wet garments above him, the entire story, which is all told by that same little brother in the first section, seemed to explode on the paper before me. I saw that peaceful glinting of that branch was to become the dark, harsh flowing of time sweeping her to where she could not return to comfort him...And that Benjy must never grow old beyond that moment; that for him all knowing must begin and end with that fierce, panting, paused and stooping wet figure which smelled like trees. That he must never grow up to where the grief of bereavement could be leavened with understanding and hence alleviation.” (*Mississippi Quarterly* 413).

Thus, Faulkner puts himself in the novel, again. As I have said, these documents are rife with instances such as this, in which Caddy is compared to Alabama Faulkner. But this excerpt contains an interesting corollary regarding the explicit mention of grief. It is here that the narrative engram takes shape, as Faulkner jumps from his own mind to Benjy's. The mention of Alabama first cites the author's sense of loss. This feeling is then imposed onto *The Sound and the Fury*'s narrative: Benjy, too, experiences “the grief of bereavement.” For Faulkner, this is a

seemingly seamless transition. That Caddy signifies for Benjy what Alabama was to Faulkner is, for the author, an obvious conclusion (indeed, he “could be in it, the brother and father both”). Still, I find that notion rather strange. For, to a certain extent, one must consider Faulkner’s introductions a defense of his decision to write from a first-person, neuroatypical point of view, a vindication of his literary experiment. Faulkner justifies this experiment by very overtly, and really rather casually, likening his own authorial mind to Benjy’s fictional one. The reason I find this comparison so strange is not because I think it’s wrong, but because of what it suggests about Faulkner’s attitude towards his own state of mind.

Before I go on, it is necessary to clarify a few things. Specifically, I am making a number of different comparisons, here. The first is supplied by Faulkner as the equity of emotion between Benjy and himself. The second is the comparison of Caddy, the character, to the engram. This is the more important comparison; it comprises the link between organic memory processes and narrative. Prior to illuminating this link, however, it is helpful to concretize Faulkner’s auto-association with Benjy.

What this association suggest is that, in some way, Faulkner feels cognitively similar to Benjy. Certainly, though, the author was not disabled; he was able to write and live and didn’t always rely on a care-taker like Benjy. Yet, they feel the same grief. Their experience of that emotion is the same suggesting that all of the cognitive elements of this experience are similar. But, how is this possible when Benjy’s understanding is so profoundly impacted by his disability? In fact, it can be said that a sort of stunted understanding, supplied by a non-normative state of mind, traps Benjy within that feeling of grief. This is exemplified in the excerpt above as Faulkner’s assertion “that Benjy must never grow old beyond that moment; that for him all knowing must begin and end with that fierce, panting, paused and stooping wet figure

which smelled like trees” (*Mississippi Quarterly* 413). It’s clear Benjy’s disability functions as a sort of emotional inhibitor; he is unable to grow up, to have the “grief of bereavement...leavened by understanding and hence alleviation” (*Mississippi Quarterly* 413) Using the scaffolding that Faulkner provides, then – the seamless transition from fictional to biographical mourning – one can say that he feels stuck by grief as well. Indeed, the return to Alabama and to Caddy time and time again should represent a degree of emotional stagnation (and thus dissociation) similar to that of Benjy’s. This theme is not only consistent with the implied dissociation of PGD, it mimics the organic memory trace.

In these introductions, Faulkner provides some clues for unravelling the portion of the novel narrated by Benjy. Specifically, as I have just demonstrated, the author defends Benjy’s atypical subjectivity by suggesting that his disability fixes his memory into a perpetual return to grief. Thus, anyone can understand Benjy; everyone, at one point or another, will experience bereavement. Faulkner certainly had; and looking back, that grief is the lens through which he professes an intimacy with his character. In this way, the kind of sorrow that Benjy experiences implies a universality and interconnectedness. These are narrative features consistent with Turner’s definition of a story – something that is universal in that it can be projected onto another similar instance. But, universality and interconnectedness are also organic features of the engram; the memory trace is, as Lashley describes it, is universal (requires multiple brain regions) and interconnected (observed as a series of adjacent, altered neurons). The narrative engram, therefore, must follow these guidelines.

In *The Sound and the Fury*, Caddy serves as such a narrative device; universality and interconnectedness are the characteristics which designate Caddy as an engram. I should clarify, briefly, that the term “engram” and “memory trace” mean the same thing. Within neuroscience,

engram is the term coined by Lashely to describe the “neural circuitry that supports memory” (Eichenbaum 209). Again, the characteristics that Lashley prescribes to a memory trace are that it is universal (can arise in virtually all any part of the brain) and that it is interconnected (relies on many, connected regions). So, without a doubt, Caddy globally represents grief. I have demonstrated that thinking and writing about what Caddy means for provoked memories of grief for Faulkner. This comparison constitutes Caddy’s universality – one of the engram’s requisites.¹² The comparison between organic processes and narrative technique gets hazier with regards to interconnectedness, however. Given the disjointed nature of Benjy’s chapter, it is difficult to see how any of the events chronicled by him are connected. It is possible, however, with a deeper look inside the text. Indeed, Faulkner tells us that “the entire story...is all told by that same little brother in the first section” (*Mississippi Quarterly* 413). Perhaps the best place to start, then, is the section of the novel that Faulkner cites as “the entire story.”

That is, “when she quit the water fight and stooped in her wet garments above him” (*Mississippi Quarterly* 413). During this water fight, after being told by her brother Quentin that she will get “whipped” by their mother if she takes off her wet dress, seven-year-old Caddy says, “‘I’ll run away and never come back’” (Faulkner 19). Benjy chronicles the following scene:

“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 in 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.” (Faulkner 19)

These lines offer an interesting insight into Benjy’s memory; in a way, *The Sound and the Fury*’s

¹² Here, what I mean by universally is that Caddy’s representation is the same for Faulkner and for Benjy, in the novel and the introductions. Recall that learning and memory are global organic brain processes; they can involve any part of the brain. Just like memory relies on many parts of the brain, then, a narrative engram such as Caddy should potentially involve every part of the narrative material, broadly defined: Benjy, Faulkner, the novel, and the introductions.

entire narrative is reported here. Indeed, Caddy as a narrative engram solidifies itself via an important puzzle presented in the lines above: that is, what exactly does “behind” mean? The potential problem with this word begins with the fact that the thought of Caddy running away causes Benjy to cry. After comforting him for a moment, Benjy relaxes and Caddy returns to play in the water. But, at the end of this passage, Benjy begins to cry again. Why? Between Caddy comforting him the first time, and the second time he starts to cry, nothing particularly tear-jerking happens to Benjy. The only thing that could potentially illicit his tears in this second instance (other than Caddy) is that he is put into the water by Versh – perhaps he does not like getting wet. Yet, Caddy is able to hush him again even though he stays in the water. Thus, that “Caddy was all wet and muddy behind,” is the thing which elicits tears from Benjy and calls into question the meaning of “behind;” Caddy is the stimulus that provokes emotions from Benjy, so what about “behind” makes him cry?

The novel and the introductions provide a potential answer to this question. That is, “behind” could refer to Caddy’s backside, wet and muddy from the water fight. Here, I will explore the possibility that “behind” refers to Caddy’s backside. I should note that this reading requires some context from elsewhere in the novel, as well as from Faulkner’s introduction. The reader of this text, then, should keep in mind that my conclusions will always reference the “behind” used in the scene in which the “entire story” is told – that moment by the side of the creek. This is an important consideration because the word (“behind”) allows for a multitude of transitions through the novel and the introductions.

Specifically, the notion that “behind” is Caddy’s backside refers to a scene in the novel in which she climbs a tree. The Compson children’s grandmother has just died and, because the funeral is taking place inside the house, they are sent outside. Unable to control her curiosity,

Caddy decides to climb a tree in order to get a view of the event. In this scene Benjy describes how Versh “went and pushed Caddy up into the tree to the first limb.” Below, they “watched the muddy bottom of her drawers. Then we couldn’t see her. We could hear the tree thrashing” (Faulkner 39). This becomes a rather prolific memory for Benjy; he circles back to this moment a number of times, marked in the narrative as “She smelled like trees” (43), or “Caddy smelled like trees” (44). In terms of characterizing how memory acts in the novel, this continual circling back (a theme that I will discuss in greater detail in the next section) is of great importance. For, the passage itself is a memory. Though it may be difficult to distinguish this at first; Caddy climbing and getting lost in the trees is not happening in the narrative present.

In fact, this experience is one of many temporally disconnected events. Importantly, there is hardly any narration at all from “April Seventh, 1928,” the date that marks the start of the first chapter. That Benjy narrates not from his present situation, but almost entirely from his memory as a series of disconnected events, has serious implications for this project; it demonstrates that he is able to remember and suggests that he might be able to accurately record events that either take place or become clearer (because they are narrated by another character) in subsequent chapters which, conveniently, fall chronologically *before* Benjy’s section and are therefore subject to remembering. Yet, although Benjy’s memories are temporally ambiguous, they are not as disconnected as they might seem. The tree scene helps demonstrate the interconnectedness required for Caddy to act as a narrative engram. Consider, for instance, the following few transitions: “T.P lay down in the ditch and I sat down, watching the bones where the buzzards ate Nancy, flapping black and slow and heavy out of the ditch. *I had it when we was down here before, Luster said. I showed it to you. Didn’t you see it. I took it out of my pocket right here and showed it to you.* ‘Do you think the buzzards are going to undress Damuddy.’ Cady said.

‘You’re crazy.’” (Faulkner 35). Here, Benjy jumps seamlessly (or, nearly seamlessly)¹³ from one memory – laying with T.P. in the ditch – to the narrative present – Luster hunting for his quarter¹⁴ – and then to the day of the funeral. In this instance, the narrative present can largely be ignored, as it simply reminds the reader of Benjy’s actual situation. More important is the transition from laying in the ditch, to the funeral. The image of the buzzards is particularly significant, as “watching the bones where the buzzards ate Nancy” elicits the memory of Caddy’s mention of buzzards undressing Damuddy (the Compson children’s grandmother). Thus, the remembered image of buzzards for Benjy lands him in another memory – one focused on Caddy, the tree, and her “muddy drawers.” Here, then, one is able to trace Benjy’s memory through time, and, though the temporal sequence may be difficult to trace, the memories are not.

That is because they are all interconnected. Recall that, organically, memory utilizes the plastic characteristics of the brain, and that the engram traces structurally altered synapses from one, to another, to yet another adjacent, altered neuron. Caddy, as a narrative memory trace, functions similarly, here. Caddy can be traced through each of Benjy’s memories; she is the glue that connects events (and therefore memories) in the novel. Another transition proves this point more effectively. Just after “The tree quit thrashing” Benjy remembers “*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” (Faulkner 39). There are a few important factors to consider in these lines. The

¹³ An interesting feature of Benjy’s section are the italics portions of text that interspersed throughout the narrative. These exist largely in Benjy’s section, though Quentin’s narration includes some as well. Though it is beyond the scope of this paper to deal with what this stylistic choice might convey, it is worth mentioning; I will be consistent in mirroring Faulkner’s style throughout.

¹⁴ Here, I am using the assertion of Ross and Polk that I mentioned in the introduction. That is, that Luster marks the novel’s present, and T.P. and Versh indicate other, distinct periods of Benjy’s history.

first, is that Benjy has climbed onto a box near the house that Caddy originally used to gain a view into the funeral. Not being tall enough, she eventually climbs the tree. Again, standing on this box, like the buzzards, is the stimulus which brings Benjy back to the day of the funeral, watching Caddy stand upon it. Then, his memory of the tree is interrupted by something which I consider to be outside of memory, but nevertheless related to it. Benjy has a vision, it seems, of Caddy “*with flowers in her hair, and a long veil like shining wind.*” This vision brings about what is presumably a violent reaction, as T.P tries to quiet him while Benjy “clawed his hands against the wall Caddy.” This is Benjy’s bereavement. His memory culminates in the realization that Caddy is gone, banished from the Compson family and not permitted to return. That is why *The Sound and the Fury*’s entire narrative is contained in the that scene in which Caddy stops playing in the branch, when she “smelled like trees in the rain” (Faulkner 19). Because, Benjy’s memory of the water fight in the brook, and his memory of his grandmother’s funeral, and every subsequent memory presented in the first chapter of the novel all end in “the grief of bereavement” (*Mississippi Quarterly* 413). Caddy the engram elicits this emotion for Benjy, tracing her way through each of his memories, providing a process through which the reader can understand them as essentially and necessarily interconnected.

The term “metonymic chain” should help clarify this point. Essentially, what Caddy represents, for Benjy as well as for Faulkner, is a crippling sort of grief. Yet, this emotion is not explicitly dealt with. Instead what happens is that one cue (the box, buzzards, or the tree) leads to a memory of Caddy. Like the engram, this cue then activates a series of associations leading to the realization of loss, and hence bereavement and grief. As a narrative element, then, an engram should be understood as a series of metonyms. In that case, Caddy operates as a metonymy for the all of the emotive associations that Benjy and Faulkner feel towards her.

So far, then, what I have shown is that, beginning with the scene on the bank of the branch which contains the “entire story” allows one to utilize the narrative scaffolding provided by Faulkner to understand some other events in the novel. Further, this frame functions much like an organic memory trace; Caddy connects that initial memory to many subsequent others. In my characterization of this narrative device, however, I have strayed from the importance of the word “behind.” Recall that my reading of the word postulates it as a reference to Caddy’s muddy backside. The reason I started with (and, subsequently got distracted by) the scene in which Caddy climbs the tree, is because of the mention of the “muddy bottom of her drawers” (Faulkner 39). During the water scene, too, Caddy was “all wet and muddy behind” (Faulkner 19). So, the two scenes are linked via their mention of the word “muddy” as well as the presence of Caddy. I have already demonstrated that other small narrative elements, too, are sufficient to connect memories in Benjy’s chapter (the buzzards and the box, for instance). Moreover, I have shown that the entire story is, prototypically, contained in Benjy’s memory of the river bank via Caddy’s operation as a narrative engram. Yet, the “muddy bottom of her drawers” carries increased significance with regards to both the global and interconnected nature of the organic engram – that is, that memory relies on many parts of the brain at once – and its narrative nature – that Caddy represents remembered grief for both Benjy and Faulkner, universally, in the novel and in the introductions. The comprehensive character of the narrative engram is further elucidated by the mud, then, because Faulkner discusses it in his introductions.

Indeed, this is a moment that Faulkner comes back to in four separate (unpublished) introductions. Moreover, his description of the scene in which Caddy climbs the tree solidifies her as a global, narrative engram; as they do for Benjy, the memories elicited by Caddy ends in sadness. He writes, “in *The Sound and the Fury* I had probably written the only thing in literature

that will ever move me very much: Caddy climbing the pear tree to look in the window at the grandmother's funeral while Quentin and Jason and Benjy [look up at the muddy seat of her drawers]" (Cohen and Fowler 276). Thus, this moment has, for Faulkner, an emotional significance similar to that of Benjy. The reader, I think, is to assume that it is grief that Faulkner feels, given his persistent comparisons of Caddy and his daughter, and his insistence that he "could be in it, the brother and father both." Here, I think another of the introductions is worth quoting at length:

They had been sent to the pasture to play to get them away from the house during the grandmother's funeral in order that the three brothers and the nigger children could look up at the muddy seat of Caddy's drawers (again hers was the courage, the courage which could face with honor the shame which she was later to engender[])...as she climbed the tree to look in the window at the funeral. And I had gone beyond that scene before I realized the symbology of the soiled drawers. I had already gone on to night and the bedroom and Dilsey – Dilsey, who was trying to hold the crumbling household together, already trying to cleanse with the sorry byblow of its soiling that body, flesh, whose shame they prophesied, as though she already saw the dark future and what she was to do – with the mudstained [sic] drawers scrubbing the naked behind of that doomed and courageous and tragic little girl. Then the story was complete, finished." (Cohen and Fowler 281).

Faulkner begins, here, with the very scene which elicits such a powerful emotional response from both Benjy and himself: Caddy climbing the tree. Yet, the analysis offered by him in the excerpt above goes deeper than emotion, even, to the power of a single memory in a single moment, opening up the possibility that Benjy's account that "Caddy was all wet and muddy behind" contains in it the entire story. For, "hers was the courage...which could face with honor the shame which she was later to engender." This defense of Caddy's courageous character is an outright allusion to her eventual exile from the Compson house. What is more, it is the soiled drawers which prophesy that shame, Caddy's eventual decline, and the eventual decline of the Compson family, generally. Indeed, it is the drawers that must be cleansed by Dilsey "with the sorry byblow," and, as she scrubs "the naked behind of that doomed and courageous and tragic

little girl,” the story is “complete finished” it is “all told by that same little brother in the first section.” Thus, Caddy’s “mudstained drawers” represent for Faulkner more than just a powerful, bereaved emotion. That image of Caddy climbing the pear tree in April encapsulates the entirety of *The Sound and the Fury*’s narrative. One memory, chronicled by Benjy on the side of the river bank, leads into another memory, which hoists Caddy into the tree. All this culminates in grief.

Therefore, how Caddy functions as a narrative engram should, by now, be quite obvious, considering my analysis of how the word “behind” might function in the water fight scene. As a metonym Caddy triggers feelings of loss, bereavement, and sorrow that both Benjy and Faulkner feel. The engram is characterized by a characteristic universality and interconnectedness. For the former, Caddy as engram mimics the universality of the organic brain in that she conjures the same series of associations (loss, bereavement, sorrow) for both Benjy and Faulkner. Unlike the singular, organic focus of a brain, however, hers is a universality of narrative. The organic memory trace snakes its way through many different brain regions, culminating in one locus, one memory. Caddy moves from text to author, concluding in one shared feeling, one equivalent experience. So, that Caddy represents the same experience for the character and the author qualifies her universality. In terms of interconnectedness, Caddy as engram connects the two types of texts (the novel and the introductions) via a linking of various associations. While memory traces in the brain rely on the plastic properties of individual neurons, narrative engram relies on a series of metonymic associations. Caddy like an engram, sets in motion a series of associations, travelling from one thing – the box, the tree, the buzzards – to a coherent memory which culminates in bereavement. She is, therefore, a metonymic chain, an engram, and a narrative element which helps consolidate neuroscience with the study of literature.

Benjy, Beginnings, and Remembering

I have already discussed the way that Faulkner treats linearity in *The Sound and the Fury*. That is, chronological time is repeatedly and indiscriminately broken. Consider, for instance, the example from the introduction regarding how a lack of temporal specificity in the beginning of *The Sound and the Fury* makes the extraction of meaning rather difficult. But, it is not just the novel that stands as an affront to the typical, linear structure of a narratives; the very existence of Faulkner's introductions does this as well.

The Sound and the Fury was written before the traumatic death of Alabama Faulkner. Yet, in his introductions, Faulkner is still able to convincingly liken Benjy's fictional loss to his "fated" one. Moreover, the simple act of writing the introduction after the initial publication of the novel challenges linearity (even though it is not unusual). Faulkner was originally commissioned to write an introduction to *The Sound and the Fury* in December 1932 by a publisher wanting to publish a special edition of the novel. This offer was originally declined but, due to increasing financial pressure, Faulkner eventually accepted and began work in August of 1932. The special edition never materialized, and no version of the novel has been published with an introduction (Cohen and Fowler 264). Normally, an introduction to a text might be considered a supreme beginning. However, like so many aspects of *The Sound and the Fury*, the publication of the introduction after the novel itself, and the fact that the two have never been printed together complicates the linearity – and thereby the very definition – of beginning.

Considering beginnings opens up onto a way of thinking which allows for a focused analysis of Faulkner's disjointed means of story-telling. For, as Edward Said puts it, "The beginning, then, is the first step in the intentional production of meaning" (5). In what follows, I

will adopt Said's notion that the beginning of a text is the initial site of the "intentional production of meaning." Thus, one must consider both Faulkner's introductions and the first chapter of *The Sound and the Fury* as initial sites for the "production of meaning," even though they were produced after the completion of the novel. What it means to produce meaning, however, is somewhat complicated for a work of literary fiction; authors can have many intentions and their works have many meanings. I think it is fair to say, however, that Faulkner simply set out to tell a story. Faulkner himself supplies evidence for this conclusion, he writes, "Art is no part of southern life [...] We have never got and probably never will get, anywhere with music or the plastic forms. We need to talk, to tell, since oratory is our heritage" (*Mississippi Quarterly* 410-3). From the horse's mouth: southern artists write "to talk, to tell," to narrate. Thus, his introduction and Benjy's beginning both constitute the first step in his attempt to tell a story.

To examine the narrative function of memory in *The Sound and the Fury* I first chose to focus on how Caddy serves as a story telling device which mimics organic memory processes. I used Turner's projection doctrine (the notion that stories are only stories if their meanings can be shared between similar recountings) to demonstrate how Caddy allows for a comparison of Benjy's experience to Faulkner's. But, Turner also asserts that narrative formation is "a literary capacity indispensable to human cognition generally" (5). Telling a story, then, that "production of meaning" that Faulkner assigns to Benjy, implies a behavioral capacity which belies some organic property. Put another way, if one can tell a story, as Benjy does, one must have some organic cognitive capabilities. Memory, I think, qualifies as one such capacity. Indeed, in what follows, I will demonstrate how it is Benjy's memory that allows *The Sound and the Fury*'s narrative to progress.

To illustrate how memory performs this narrative function, it is necessary to, again, look to how the novel progresses from moment to moment. That is, how Benjy's story moves from one distinct event to the other. Time, as I have said, is interrupted in these transitions and serves to confound, rather than illuminate, the status of his narrative. Memory, however, drives these shifts, from the very beginning:

“Through the fence, between the curling flower spaces I could see them hitting...Luster came away from the flower tree and we went along the fence and they stopped and we stopped and I looked through the fence while Luster was hunting in the grass.

‘Here, caddie.’ He hit [...]

‘Listen at you, now.’ Luster said. ‘Aint you something, thirty three years old, going on that way...Hush up that moaning. Aint you going to help me find that quarter so I can go to the show tonight.’ [...]

‘Wait a minute.’ Luster said. ‘You snagged on that nail again. Cant you never crawl through here without snagging on that nail.’

Caddy uncaught me and we crawled through.” (Faulkner 3-4)

Here, in the opening lines of the novel, Benjy stands on the edge of the Compson property, looking through the fence at the pasture which has been turned into a golf course, sold by his father to pay Quentin's way through Harvard. Then, Benjy hears her name and begins to cry. Again, Caddy is the engram in this instance; her name activates all of the metonymic associations discussed in the previous section. But the invocation of her name also provides a point of departure for the narrative, as, the reader is taken away from the present. One can tell that this scene begins in the narrative present because Luster is searching for his quarter. In the previous section, I also used this fact to distinguish Benjy's current moment. However, when Benjy gets caught on a nail in the fence, the reader is transported back to a memory of his. A memory in which Caddy unsnags him from the same nail on the same fence. Clearly, then, it is the activation of memory that drives the narrative forward (or, more appropriately, in circles).

Indeed, in every subsequent instance, when Benjy remembers something new, the

narrative seems to shift. Unsurprisingly, too, it is Caddy who serves as the circumstance through which memories change and Benjy's narrative progresses. These two points are clarified in the excerpt above. That Benjy is able to leave the present when he hears the golfers calling "caddie," solidifies Caddy's role as a narrative engram; she still carries with her all of the metonymic associations discussed in the previous section. Here, however, a new role for Caddy is revealed. That is, that she is the stimulus through which memories are activated for Benjy. Put another way, Benjy can only remember things if Caddy is somehow involved in those memories. With regards to the progression of narrative, the advancement of the "intentional production of meaning" (Said 5), this new role for Caddy slightly refines the notion that memory allows for shifts in *The Sound and the Fury*. That is, only memories of Caddy allow the narrative to progress.

There is one more transition which, I think, which clarifies this notion. It comes from a moment which I have already discussed – the moment just before Caddy climbs up the tree at the funeral, when Benjy and T.P. sees the box that she tried to use first. Thus, in one memory, his moments with T.P. and the box, Benjy is able to move into two other, distinct memories; the tree on one hand and the swing on the other:

“‘You Benjy.’ T.P. said in the house. ‘Where you hiding. You slipping off. I knows it [...]

Come away from there, Benjy, Luster said. You know Miss Quentin going to get mad.

It was two now, and then one in the swing. Caddy came fast, white in the darkness.

‘Benjy.’ she said. ‘How did you slip out. Where’s Versh.’ [...]

Charlie came and put his hands on Caddy and I cried more. I cried loud. [...]

‘Are you crazy.’ Caddy said. She began to breathe fast. ‘He can see. Dont. Dont.’ Caddy fought. They both breathed fast. ‘Please. Please.’ Caddy whispered.” (Faulkner 46-7)

In these lines, Benjy starts with the memory of a night spent with T.P., the night he stands on the

box and begins to remember Caddy scrambling up the tree at the funeral. Then, he shifts to the present, evidenced by the presence of Luster and the existence of “*Miss Quentin*,” Caddy’s illegitimate daughter. Finally, he rounds a corner of the house and sees the swing. Not surprisingly, this swing has a Caddy associated memory attached to it as well. It seems that Benjy once stumbled into her and Charlie in the swing. Charlie proceeds to initiate some sort of sexual encounter, which Caddy resists. This interaction foreshadows her eventual downfall, as Charlie is the father of Miss Quentin, clarified in the chapters told by both Quentin and Jason.

It should be clear, then, that, with regards to narrative memory, Caddy’s association allows for shifts from one memory to the other and that these moves allow the narrative to progress, revealing details leading up to her eventual exile. This fact also clarifies that Benjy does indeed possess a level of cognitive capability necessary to tell a story, which is, as Turner puts it, “a literary capacity indispensable to human cognition” (5). What I have done in order to prove that Benjy’s memories of Caddy are what allows for the narrative to advance, is use the second part of the theory put forth by Damasio and Meyer. That is, that consciousness is observed dually, both organically and behaviorally. I haven’t, in this section, looked so much for intrinsic cues which suggest organic occurrences. Rather, what I have done is to look at narrative more broadly, demonstrating how Faulkner “produces meaning” vis-à-vis a disabled character.

Here, disability studies is implicated, as some conventional features of narrative (linearity, for instance) are missing. Benjy seemingly has no relationship with time, he is “in time but not of it” (*Mississippi Quarterly* 414). His disability, then, frees the narrative from conventional expectations and allows for a more focused analysis of the cognitive features that do exist. These are observed behaviorally; narrative progression is viewed at a degree of abstraction, from the text to the reader. Thus, in *The Sound and the Fury*, memory functions as a

coherent form of consciousness, as a narrative device through which Benjy moves his story along, through which Faulkner produces meaning, and through which the reader observes and understands Benjy's consciousness.

Thus, it is important to remember that Benjy's neuroatypical mind is what allows me to make these claims. Again, his disability is what allows Faulkner to abandon some normative narrative elements, namely temporal linearity. Here, then, I will briefly return to the issue of linearity. I do this because the processing of time is something which is deserted in Benjy's narrative, as well as something that is twisted by Faulkner's "fated" reading of *The Sound and the Fury*. Recall that, in exploring the "intentional production of meaning" (Said 5), I have committed to reading Benjy's narrative as well as Faulkner's introductions as beginnings; that is what they are. In a Said-ian sense, this not only means that they serve as the initial steps in telling a story, but that they are "an order of repetition, not of originality" (Said 12). It is easy to see how Faulkner's introductions qualify as orders of repetition and not of originality; there are so many attempts that it is impossible to distinguish which one might be the original. In terms of Benjy's narrative, too, the fact that Caddy initiates each of his memory-mediated shifts suggests that he remembers in a cyclical manner. That is, Benjy always circles back to Caddy.

This fact opens up onto another theory in neuroscience called Reconsolidation Theory. The problem that Reconsolidation Theory tries to address is certainly related to the quest for the engram. However, it does more to address how this trace is established in the first place. Given that organic memory relies on an interplay between any number of global neural substrates, it makes sense that the formation of one coherent memory would require some sort of consolidation process – the making of a memory stronger via the integration of many individual neurons and various brain structures into one trace. What happens when a particular engram is

activated, however, is the question that necessitated the development of Reconsolidation Theory. For, prior to such a theorization, memory formation was viewed as “a one-time event, after which a memory is impermeable to disruption” (McKenzie and Eichenbaum 6). Importantly, though, “this view was challenged in the late 1960’s by studies reporting that a “reminder” cue made a completely consolidated memory again liable to the same agents that would block consolidation” (McKenzie and Eichenbaum 6).¹⁵ Put another way, what McKenzie and Eichenbaum report is that a cue which is supposed to activate an established engram, a consolidated memory, makes that trace vulnerable. That is, just because a memory is formed doesn’t mean it stays remembered. Neuroscientific inquiry into learning and memory, recently, has pretty well established that an activated engram requires reconsolidation, or else the recollection may be permanently erased (McKenzie and Eichenbaum 6, citing Nader; Dudai and Eisenburg, Lee, Alberini, and Sara). Organically, consolidation is the process of forming the engram. It is those structural and functional changes to neurons and systems that I explained earlier. Memory reconsolidation, then, is a simple re-activation of the molecular substrates that initially produced those changes.

To make this clearer, it may be beneficial to think in terms of metaphor. In this case, the engram should be thought of as a bus route. On the first round of the day, the bus reliably hits all of its stops in a prescribed order. This initial round is like memory consolidation, where electricity traces a path between adjacent neurons just as the bus travels between different stops. Every subsequent loop a driver of that particular route makes is like memory reconsolidation;

¹⁵ Here, McKenzie and Eichenbaum cite some important neuroscientific works from this decade. The first paper describes an experiment which sought to characterize the “temporal element” (Misanin et al. 554) of retrograde amnesia; that is, the failure to remember things that happened before some disruptive event. The experimenters used well known research paradigms in neuroscience to determine if reactivation of a memory trace after 24 hours (the time at which memories are considered to be fully consolidated) was sufficient to make the previously established engram vulnerable to disruption. Researchers concluded that “the primary determinant of amnesia for an event is not ‘the recency of memory’ for the event, but the state of the corresponding memory trace” (Misanin et al. 555).

he/she stops at the same places and makes the same turns according to the pre-established course. Now, say there is a new bus driver the next day who does not know the route as well. Maybe he/she skips a stop or makes a wrong turn. The route has changed. Thus, any error in the original pattern can change the nature of the route entirely. Luckily, memory traces are pretty robust, otherwise memory would be a very fragile thing indeed.¹⁶

The picture that Reconsolidation Theory paints, however, is one of activated vulnerability. Just like the bus where, if one stop is skipped or one turn misplaced, the entire route is altered, researchers observed that it's possible for a memory to be erased by the same cue that reliably activated the trace previously.¹⁷ This led neuroscientists to the by now well-established Reconsolidation Theory: remembering requires the reformation of the memory trace. The simple act of remembering, of activating an engram or driving a bus route, creates the possibility to introduce differences into these paths; this makes forgetting more likely.

Thus, memory itself can be considered an "order of repetition." Certainly, there is an initial event which forms the memory in the first place but, after that, memory exists in a constant state of beginning; to remember something, is to reform the memory from the start, over, and over again. The bus analogy helps her too, I think. Just like a route, an individual memory plays organically in a pre-determined pattern every time it is remembered. In this way, Reconsolidation Theory is bracketed around the engram; it depends on the successful re-tracing of the established memory trace. In *The Sound in the Fury*, this circularity is manifested by Caddy's initiation of the remembering of each event. This, again, represents an "order of

¹⁶ In some ways, however, memory is quite fragile. I am Karl Lashely's words: "I sometimes feel, in reviewing the evidence on the localization of the memory trace, that the necessary conclusion is that learning just is not possible. It is difficult to conceive a mechanism which can satisfy the conditions set for it. Nevertheless, in spite of such evidence against it, learning does sometimes occur" (26). Still, it is important to understand that memory reconsolidation pretty reliably traces the same established organic path (like a bus route on the street).

¹⁷ See footnote 15

repetition” that is in line with both Said’s writing on beginning and Reconsolidation Theory in neuroscience. Faulkner, however, exhibits a different pattern relating to these theoretical frameworks.

Said further characterizes beginnings as eccentric orders of repetition “where *eccentric* is used in order to emphasize the possibilities for difference within repetition” (Said 12). I left this out in the initial discussion of Said’s orders of repetition because “eccentric,” as defined here, does not fit Benjy’s memory nor does it square with Reconsolidation Theory. For, if the reconsolidation of a memory inherently allowed for the potential for “difference within repetition,” memories would be continually altered (this probably happens, anyway). Benjy, too, reliably reproduces Caddy’s image to initiate shifts in his narrative. Faulkner’s beginnings, however, are eccentric. That is, his introductions exhibit a variety of differences even though they are being repeated. Here, I will return to his mention of the “muddy bottom,” using three introductions as evidence for the eccentric nature of his repetitions.

I have chosen to bullet the various introductions in the order that they appear in Cohen and Fowler’s text as such:

- “in *The Sound and the Fury* I had probably written the only thing in literature that will ever move me very much: Caddy climbing the pear tree to look in the window at the grandmother’s funeral while Quentin and Jason and Benjy [look up at the muddy seat of her drawers].” (Cohen and Fowler 276)
- “Its fine to think you [have] will leave something behind you when you die, but its [sic] much better to have made something you can die with. Much better the muddy bottom of a little doomed girl climbing a tree in April.” (Cohen and Fowler 278)
- It’s fine to think you will leave something behind when you die, but it’s [much] better to have made something you can die with. Much better the bottom of a little doomed girl climbing a blooming pear tree in April.” (Cohen and Fowler 283-3)

In these excerpts, there is both repetition and difference. The first is probably the most different; Faulkner’s mention of the “muddy seat of her draws” is related to the emotional experience of writing about them. He says that this moment is “the only thing in literature that will ever move

me very much.” This, again, conjures Caddy’s metonymic associations, as Faulkner alludes to his emotions. Moreover, that he can die with the image of Caddy’s muddy drawers climbing the pear tree suggests that this image is, for Faulkner, etched into his mind in a distinctly felt way. And, although the second and third attempts may be basically the same, the language that Faulkner uses is distinct in each. Furthermore, although the second and third attempts may be pretty much the same, the blooming tree in the latter implies something rather important. That is, blooming suggests a return to life, springtime, which conjures thoughts about rebirth and the cyclical nature of the seasons. Faulkner’s eccentric repetitions, then, read thus: first he professes that he is moved by the scene, then he says he is so moved that he can die with it, finally suggesting a positivity in his feelings about the scene, focusing on the return of life and springtime as associations that he will die with.

In these introductions, Faulkner deals with the same scene, the same memory of Benjy’s, and the same emotion of his – that the writing of this scene is emotionally meaningful. But, the differences in the way they are written suggests that his process is eccentric. By continually and repetitively beginning, then, Faulkner’s initial sites for the “production of meaning” become open to the possibility for difference which Said describes. Regarding Reconsolidation Theory, too, Faulkner’s memory of this scene seems to change; his associations evolve from simply emotional, to definitively so, all the way to something enduring, cyclical. Much like Benjy, then, when writing the introductions, Faulkner’s memory seems to perpetually return to Caddy and to his relationship to his daughter.

Instead of starting with Reconsolidation Theory, as I did with the engram in the last section, I chose in this portion to introduce this framework later. Regarding the engram, I think an understanding of the organic processes of memory helps illuminate how Caddy functions for

Benjy and for Faulkner. That is, neuroscience helps clarify the narrative. In the case of Reconsolidation Theory, however, narrative helps clarify the neuroscience. The organic process of the reconsolidation of memory mimics the technique that Faulkner uses to advance Benjy's narrative. The abandonment of time and linearity (mediated by Benjy's disability) isolates memory and makes it the narrative element that drives the story. Moreover, Benjy can only remember vis-à-vis a cyclical return to the Caddy the metonym, representing a constant re-inscription of all of the associations linked to her character. Finally, Faulkner's eccentric repetition demonstrates how the reiteration of remembering can subject a memory to changes, variation within the trace. Caddy drives this narrative pattern of repetition with difference. The novel's continual re-activation of the narrative engram (Caddy) produces a clear order of repetition through which the cyclical nature of memory is revealed. Reconsolidation Theory mimics this narrative action; organic engrams are also subject to continual repetition. Eccentricity, repetition with difference, is revealed in Faulkner's introductions, wherein there are observable differences following successive activation of the narrative engram.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have tried to demonstrate how neuroscience and literature can work in tandem. In some cases, organic phenomenon described by neuroscience may be helpful as analogous paradigms, as in the case of Caddy, the engram. There, I showed how Caddy mimics the organic qualities of an engram, being universal in that she carries the same associations for both Benjy and Faulkner; and being interconnected in that she links the novel and the introductions. This notion, I think, can be utilized for many themes, tropes or characteristics

across many different texts, as, comparing different works of literature is common practice within the study. What I have demonstrated is that neuroscience offers a useful paradigm to help understand how these associations work. That is, neuroscience provides the notion that some narrative element can be universal and interconnected. Caddy as engram is universal because she sets off the same emotive state for both Benjy and Faulkner. Her interconnectedness is established by the equivalent set of associations that she triggers for the author and character, as well. In this way, that narrative element becomes *like* an engram; it mirrors organic memory processes.

In the second section, however, I demonstrated how evidence found in literary texts can predict the findings of neuroscience. I showed how memory functions in Benjy's narrative to allow for the shifts necessary for the story to progress. But the fact that he only remembers events associated with Caddy produces a cyclical narrative whereby meaning cannot be assigned outside of what Benjy associates with her which is always the same – grief, sorrow, bereavement. Thus, the narrative is always stuck in a cycle of remembering because it relies on Benjy's memory to move things along. This repetitive reliance on memory is related to Said's definition of a beginning as an "order of repetition, not of originality" (12). Because time is sufficiently arrested by Benjy's disability, it is almost impossible to distinguish which memory of Caddy is the original. The same is true of Faulkner's introductions, as, he returns to the same associations in various introductions. Yet, Faulkner's attempts also qualify as "eccentric" (Said 12) because there are differences between them. All this leads to Reconsolidation Theory – neuroscience's assertion that remembering is a cyclical process in which established memories are re-inscribed each time they are activated. In this way, literature offers a more accessible language with which to assess a complex memory process occurring organically.

Generally, however, there is more work to be done regarding organic or neurological memory. Narrative studies could utilize scholarship like that presented in this thesis. Considering, however, that narrative is a point of intersection for the two fields working in this project, a more specific claim might be that both neuroscience and literature should pay increased attention to the effects that organic memory processes have on story telling. Remembering is a very well-studied neuroscientific phenomenon. Likewise, literary studies has not failed to focus on memory (though its focus is not necessarily on organic memory). But the function of organic memory in relation to narrative formation is not clear. Extensive literature searches proved this point: they turned up nothing. Within these different “modes of veridiction,” then, there is room for a classification of things like memory in relation to narrative, especially. For, narrative is the thing which bridges the divide between literature and the natural sciences as “a literary capacity indispensable to human cognition generally” (Turner 5). I think that memory is an easily identifiable element which is often used in narratives. Therefore, its organic nature deserves more attention in both literary studies and neuroscience.

Here, I must be honest and own up to the backpedaling that this conclusion represents for my original hypothesis. I began this project with the idea that the idea that the languages of both literature and neuroscience were insufficient. That is, I thought that neither field on its own could adequately deal with the effect that organic memory has in *The Sound and the Fury*. To make this assertion at the beginning, however, was to “put the cart before the horse,” so to speak. I now find myself rejecting that initial hypothesis in favor of a more comprehensive view. For, I see now that both neuroscience and literature are necessary to the handling of the issues presented in this thesis. Thus, it is not that neither is adequate, but that both are necessary. Narrative, then, doesn’t so much *offer* a third way which rejects both literature and neuroscience.

Rather, it *occasions* a space within which they work in conjunction.

Furthermore, disability plays a very important, and in some ways understated, role in my analyses of *The Sound and the Fury*. Benjy's neuroatypical mind is what allows for the narrative isolation of memory in the first place. I owe everything to Benjy's disability, therefore. Benjamin Compson stands as the first example of a character with intellectual disability narrating from the first person in a work of fiction. As such, he represents a bold experiment in literary subjectivity. Upon reflection, I recognize that I have successfully avoided diagnosing Benjy. That is, I have not fallen into the pitfall that Bérubé cautions: that tendency for scholars to diagnose fictional characters instead of focusing on tropes of de-humanization. I hope, however, that I have given Benjy's unique experience enough space. That is, though my analysis relies so heavily on his matchless subjectivity, I have chosen not to map the contours of his consciousness beyond his abilities to remember and his atypical mind's effect on time. Still, I recognize that Benjy's disability supplies the circumstances necessary for a discussion of literature and neuroscience in tandem; without the distinctive experience supplied by his character, such a focused analysis of memory within a narrative may not be possible.

This project, therefore, fits best in the study of literature which is focused on the experience of those with mental irregularities. Here, I have chosen a novel in which one of the main characters expresses some level of intellectual disability. Mental health disorders, though, could also be considered viable for the study of distinct narrative elements that may be impacted, or even elucidated by, such subjectivities. The project, then, poses a challenge to both literary and neuroscientific scholars to focus on these sorts of texts.

I end here, then, with the idea that Benjy has provided a means through which literature and the natural sciences might be consolidated. This potential bridging depends, in this example,

on a disabled subjectivity. But, that does not necessarily mean that it has to. Mental health disorders, or even normative modes of consciousness, might allow for this type of study. In the case of this project, however, Benjy's intellectual disability was useful in isolating memory, one aspect of conscious experience. I hope, however, that an increased focus on narrative might remove the necessity for this focus on disability or mental health. As a universal mode of veridiction, the study of narrative has the potential to bridge the gap between literature and neuroscience. Though, upon reflection, I find that my thoughts on this matter have shifted somewhat from the beginning. Initially, I read Latour's assertion that "the veracity of one mode is judged in terms of the conditions of veridiction of different mode" (17-8) to mean that neither of the two fields I work within could be used to judge the accuracy of my claims. Again, this view occasioned my focus on narrative, that universal mode of veridiction. Now, however, I recognize that both literature and neuroscience are necessary components of this third way. That is, I have relied on both of these fields; I believe that they represent an equivalent veracity with which to evaluate the truth. Rather than cast them aside, rather than claim that neither was fit to assess Benjy's narrative and Faulkner's introductions, I have demonstrated that they both reach the same conclusion. For, the organic engram effectively defines the narrative characteristics of Caddy; and the narrative function of memory, for both Benjy and for Faulkner, accurately predicts the organic nature of memory as defined by Reconsolidation Theory.

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