

A Vision of Reality :

Narrative Disintegration in

The Sound and the Fury

Arinori Mori

W. J. T. Mitchell argues that the essence of narrative deeply concerns “the very value of narrativity as a mode of making sense of reality”, especially of fictions (viii). He seems to suggest that narrative should give to that reality “a necessary relation between the fictions by which we order our world and the increasing complexity of what we take to be ‘real’ history of that world” (Kermode 67). If so, in narrative “events must be not only registered within the chronological framework of their original occurrence, but narrated as well, that is to say, revealed as possessing a structure, an order of meaning, which they do *not* possess as mere sequence” (White 5) : narrative as a way of understanding of the real world always needs some plot model, which is inherent and perceivable to us.

However, *The Sound and the Fury*, William Faulkner’s fourth novel, poses a question about this suggestion : in a word, the novel reveals a disguise of reality as narrative. While reading the novel we may suppose some story as an order of meaning, but after all we come to find that the novel rather shows such an assumed story to be disintegrated and dissolve into the ‘true’ real world of everydayness. This means that the reality we suppose is an illusion which our subjective thought invents and, at the same time, that *The Sound and the Fury* is Faulkner’s first turning point in his career, at which a new concept of reality is established.

This essay aims to examine how *The Sound and the Fury*, disguising

itself as a structured narrative, shows its own ideological vision: in doing so, I will also consider the significance of *The Sound and the Fury* in Faulkner's literary career.

First of all, we will argue that the understanding of the story of *The Sound and the Fury* is achieved at the cost of the personified narrators' individuality, and then we will examine that the story, which is grasped through reordering the events told by the three Compson brothers, makes another plot that can be seen as the "master narrative"¹ of the novel. Let us start with considering what kind of 'story' is found in *The Sound and the Fury*, examining the significance of Caddy Compson, the heroine of the novel, for that will lead us to the answer to our first question.

As Robert Humphrey points out, we can find a substantial plot in *The Sound and the Fury* (105). The motif of the plot is the exile of a fallen woman and makes a tragic master narrative of this novel.² It is the Compson brothers that tell the story throughout their sections from their own points of view, and in reading the sections we make the fragments of their memories into a sequence of reordered events. Though the master narrative emerges from this reordering, the narrative is fully understood only when the consciousness of the narrators as personified beings is disintegrated, and their self-destructive narration is caused by Caddy's absence.

In the narrative world of *The Sound and the Fury*, Caddy is absent from both the Compson familial code and the present time in the narrative world. As Caddy is divorced because of her illegitimate child-birth and returns to the Compsons to leave the baby named Quentin there, her mother, Mrs Caroline Compson, says, "she [the girl Quentin] must never know [Caddy's name]" and "that name is never to be spoken in her hearing" (199), and thenceforth her name has never been spoken among the Compsons. Thus Caddy's name is absent from the familial code. On the other hand, because

of her exile from the Compsons, she is absent from the present narrative world, except the inside of the Compson brothers' "interior" monologues. Thus in *The Sound and the Fury* she never appears as a substantial being but is only a recollected figure which in reality has already gone.

This deeply concerns the motivation of the Compson brothers' acts of narration. They regard Caddy's departure from the Compsons as their "loss" of her, and therefore they unwittingly but obsessively narrate on Caddy, so as to recover their loss in doing so: in other words, they attempt to fill her absence with their language. In this sense, their monologues are motivated by Caddy.³ This indicates that Caddy is the narrative origin which is always absent from the narrative world. But there is a crucial moment they cannot tell in their recollective monologues. Here I shall examine two examples, one of which is found in Benjy's monologue (that is henceforth called the Benjy section) and the other in Quentin's inner thought (henceforth called the Quentin section). In both examples the narrators try to recover the lost Caddy in their remembrance, but they eventually prove that they are incapable of doing so. First we will examine Benjy's girl-attacking scene in the Benjy section.

Careful reordering of the narrators' memories shows that Caddy's departing scene from the Compsons is absent from the text. Thus what occupy the narrators' interior monologues are either past memories concerning the already lost Caddy or present happenings which suddenly intrude upon their inner thought, and the latter often explicate what the former cannot. In the Benjy section, the girl-attacking episode exemplifies this.

When Benjy walks along the fence with Luster, he remembers that once he was looking with T. P. at schoolgirls passing by. Benjy is usually confined within the fence enclosing his house and, because of his lack of linguistic ability, he can neither talk with people outside the fence nor go

beyond it. Here the fence symbolizes not only his linguistic disability, but an obstacle that prevents him from communicating with others. As the following passage shows, it is impossible for him to trespass the border and to get the figure of Caddy :

It [the gate of the fence] was open when I touched it, and I held to it in the twilight. I wasn't crying, and I tried to stop, watching the girls coming along in the twilight. I wasn't crying. . . .

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. They were going up the hill to where it fell away and I tried to cry. (52-53)

Although Benjy tries to say something to the girls, who are his desired substitutes for "Caddy's comforting presence" (Radloff 58), he fails to get them: when he catches one of the schoolgirls, he is knocked down by the girl's father named Mr Burgess. This episode indicates that his failure in regaining Caddy is symbolically repeated : Benjy's vain attempt of regaining the lost Caddy and his impossibility of compensating for her by getting her substitute are not directly expressed by his monologue, but, as this example shows, are implicitly suggested by things and circumstances which seem external and irrelevant to Benjy's desired subject. Therefore such elements, to which even the narrator seems to pay little attention, are essential to make us know the state of his mind. It is the elements that define and clarify both his past experience and present condition.

Similarly, in the Quentin section it is rather various external elements than his internal confession that define and show his actual condition to us. Like Benjy, Quentin is also longing for Caddy as a substitute for both "their

[Benjy's and Quentin's] absent mother" (Matthews, *The Sound and the Fury* 49) and the lost honor and morality he sees in his sister. Although Quentin struggles to recover the loss compensatorily, he also fails.

Possessed with the feeling of the sin of incest with his sister, Quentin wanders around Cambridge and Boston on the last day of his life. For Quentin, imagining that sinful deed is a compensatory way to regain in his mind the innocent Caddy who has gone for ever. Virtually he has been deprived of his sister twice : first, by a blackguard named Dalton Ames, who seduced Caddy and deprived her of her virginity ; second, by a banker Herbert Head, who married Caddy and practically took her away from Quentin, though the scene of her actual departure cannot be found in either episode. However, Quentin symbolically re-experiences Caddy's departure as an accidental happening in the present, that is, as the episode of his encounter with a little immigrant girl.

When Quentin meets "a little dirty girl" (125) in a bakery, he calls to her, "Hello, sister" (125). As Matthews points out, the girl is Caddy who "reappears as little sister in another" (*The Sound and the Fury* 59), and Quentin unconsciously identifies the girl with Caddy in their childhood. He tries to take her back to her home, and this can be thought of as his compensatory attempt to get the lost innocent Caddy back.

But actually Quentin "can no more restore this child to her home than he can Caddy" (Matthews, *The Sound and the Fury* 60) : he only experiences the loss of Caddy repeatedly. While wandering about with the immigrant girl, Quentin is arrested by a sheriff and her brother and is deprived of the girl. This corresponds with the fact that Quentin was robbed of the substitute sister by the men who are the substitutes for the sister-robbers, that is, Dalton Ames and Herbert Head. This episode, which has neither causal nor logical relationship to Quentin's past experience of the loss of sister, shows to us the fact that Quentin was robbed of his sister, although

he never narrates it in his soliloquy.

From these examples one point becomes clear : it is that the personified narrators like Benjy or Quentin depend for defining their experiences to the reader less upon their subjective inner thought than upon accidental happenings, whereas such happenings are external to their inner thought and thus hardly seem concerned with their past experiences.

This leads us to the following conclusion. Instead of reordering the narrators' past memories, the accidental happenings which are external to them make it possible for us to realize the conditions of the narrators and the story of *The Sound and the Fury*. The happenings substitute for the missing scene, that is, the absent scene of Caddy's departure which originally causes them to narrate. At this moment, however, this implies that the frame of reference of the narrative of *The Sound and the Fury* is not the narrators' subjective consciousness but rather contingency: because of the lack of Caddy's departing scene, a crucial moment in their consciousness, only accidental incidents, which are external to their inner thought and therefore irrelevant, compensatorily define the narrative. On the other hand, this also indicates that the narrators' minds as the narrative world heavily depend for defining themselves upon such external elements, and that their consciousness is practically encroached by the external happenings. In this sense, *The Sound and the Fury* defines its narrative at the cost of the narrators' personalities.⁴ At this moment their assumed conscious worlds are disintegrated and leveled down with another kind of discourse, and this is the only way to make a narrative plot : this narrative disintegration of personal subjectivity paradoxically makes *The Sound and the Fury* a narrative.

Turning now to the consideration of the cruciality of the absence of Caddy's departing scene, which seems to me to be deeply connected with the disintegration of the narrators' consciousness, this will give us the key to

solve the problem of the “master narrative” in *The Sound and the Fury*.

As I have mentioned before, Caddy’s actual departure from the Compsons is not found in the text. She had left the Compsons twice : first, temporarily by her marriage with Herbert Head, and then for ever because of her illegitimate childbirth, but no narrator can describe the scene in his monologue. On the one hand, this absent scene can be regarded as the origin and starting point of the narrative of *The Sound and the Fury*, because it motivates the Compson brothers to narrate and lets them attempt to regain the lost Caddy in their monologues ; on the other hand, the scene is the goal and the ending of their narrative inasmuch as they can hardly tell what became of Caddy after her exile from the Compsons. In this sense, Caddy’s departure is the converging point of the narrators’ monologues. At the same time, the scene makes Caddy’s absence in the narrative prominent : the absence of the scene represents the incompleteness of the narrators’ attempts to regain her figure in their interior monologues. To make this point clearer, we should now argue the question of the “master narrative” in *The Sound and the Fury*.

The order of the four sections of *The Sound and the Fury* is not chronological, just as, because of the confusingly scattered fragments of memories, the narrative itself is not. They are ordered as follows : first, April seventh, 1928 ; second, June tenth, 1910 ; third, April sixth, 1928 and the last, April eighth, 1928. This zigzag movement of the dates means that the chronological reading and the forward reading, the reading page to page, collide with each other. However, if we look at this order from another perspective, another narrative plot emerges in accordance with the section order. That is Caddy’s life, especially of sexual maturation and fall.

As Douglas B. Hill Jr. argues, Caddy’s life is closely related with the anti-chronological temporality of *The Sound and the Fury*. According to Hill, each of the Compson brothers sees “Caddy in his mind *from* a consis-

tent sexual age—Benjy a child, Quentin an adolescent, Jason a man” (87). On the one hand, his comment indicates that Caddy in each section stands for their mental ages; on the other hand, that implies that the first three sections of *The Sound and the Fury* as a whole describe Caddy’s growing process (Hill 84-97).

Hill’s assertion supposes Caddy’s life as a narrative axis of *The Sound and the Fury*. The axis seems to propose the key to another reading which is less based on the chronological reordering of events. As we have already seen, the personified narrators’ consciousness is disintegrated by external elements without which neither the narrators nor we can define the narrative represented by *The Sound and the Fury*. However, thanks to this disintegration, we are able to recognize a new narrative spatiotemporality lying throughout the text. According to Hill, it is this spatiotemporality that forms a new narrative sequence which depicts Caddy’s maturing process. In this sense, Caddy’s life found in the three brothers’ monologues seems to form a kind of master narrative of *The Sound and the Fury*, and the Compson narrators tell their stories as some variants of the narrative. Here the two scenes in which we have examined the disintegration of the narrators’ consciousness will provide good examples again.

Benjy’s attack on schoolgirls means his attempt to regain the lost, “comfortable” Caddy; for Quentin, wandering about with a little girl is a compensatory try to bring his sister back to the innocent period. Here an example taken from the interior monologue of Jason, who is the third Compson narrator, will be a proof of this kind of narrative variants. Identifying Caddy with her profligate daughter Quentin, Jason chases the girl in the middle of his section. To Jason, the girl Quentin is equal to Caddy, but the two women signifies only “a loss of social prestige and wealth” (Dowling 49). His niece’s bad behavior disgraces the fame of the Compsons, just as Caddy once did. In addition, Jason once lost a “job in the

bank of which he had been deprived before he ever got it" (306) because of Caddy and is now sneaking Quentin's money in order to get the lost money back. Therefore to him catching her means to get back what he and his family lost, and thus he furiously pursues her. However, his attempt also fails eventually, as other Compson brothers did.

As the above examples shows, Caddy's fall and exile, which is repeatedly but indirectly represented by the Compson narrators throughout the first three sections of *The Sound and the Fury*, forms a sequence of the heroine's life-history as the master narrative of the novel. According to this narrative, the narrators depict their loss of both their sister and the values or entities they see in her.

Judging from the above, the Compson narrators repeat their experiences of loss as narrative variants of the biblical master narrative, that is, Caddy's fall and exile. Throughout the first three sections and thus interpenetrating the boundaries between them, the narrators try to narrate the absent scene of Caddy's departure, that is, the origin and goal of their narrative. In doing so, they repeat Caddy's maturing and fall, although they are also depersonalized.

Since the narrators' attempt of retrospective return to the origin is thus superimposed upon Caddy's life, the absence of the decisive moment has a crucial influence on the master narrative of *The Sound and the Fury*. As we have already known, Caddy's life as an immanent and already-built-in narrative runs throughout the text. But for the lack of its beginning and ending point, the master narrative is inevitably left incomplete. This means that the narrators' repetition never reaches the origin, either : rather, because of the absence of the crucial moment, the repetition does not function to complete the process but merely reveals its incompleteness. Hence we shall discuss this question, and for the discussion we now have to examine the fourth section of *The Sound and the Fury*, which is dated April

eighth, 1928.

Because this section is told by an anonymous and impersonal narrator, we henceforth call this section the anonymous section. Unlike other personified narrators, the narrator of this section offers to the reader a so-called external point of view, and his external and objective eye permits the reader to get rid of the subjective “filter” of the three Compson brothers’ consciousness and lets him perceive the world outside of their consciousness more clearly.⁵ The opening of the anonymous section exemplifies this :

The day dawned bleak and chill, *a moving wall of gray light out of the northeast which, instead of dissolving into moisture, seemed to disintegrate into minute and venomous particles*, like dust that, when Dilsey opened the door of the cabin and emerged, needled laterally into her flesh, precipitating not so much a moisture as a substance partaking of the quality of thin, not quite congealed oil. (265, emphasis added)

With the disintegration of the “moving wall of gray light,” implying the removal of the filter of human mind, the anonymous narrator’s clearer eye shows an objective vision of world to the reader, and the eye functions to disintegrate not only the conscious filter but the master narrative itself, thus we will argue this point.

Up to this point, we have seen several confusion of referents and their meanings : in the Benjy section, the schoolgirl attacked by Benjy is read as a substitute for the lost Caddy ; in the Quentin section, the immigrant girl symbolizes the innocent Caddy ; in Jason section, the girl Quentin is identified with the “fallen woman” Caddy. Here an example of such confusions found in the anonymous section is the most significant. In the middle of the fourth section, it is revealed that the girl Quentin has gone with Jason’s secret money which he has stocked illegally by stealing her

money. When Jason realizes the fact and rushes into her room, he finds it vacant :

The door opened, swung inward. He [Jason] stood in it for a moment, hiding the room, then he stepped aside. "Go in," he said in a thick, light voice. They [Mrs Compson and Dilsey] went in. It was not a girl's room. It was not anybody's room, and the faint scent of cheap cosmetics and the few feminine objects and the other evidences of crude and hopeless efforts to feminise it but added to its anonymity, giving it that dead and stereotyped transience of rooms in assignation houses. The bed had not been disturbed. On the floor lay a soiled undergarment of cheap silk a little too pink, from a half open bureau drawer dangled a single stocking. The window was open. A pear tree grew there, close against the house. (282)

Quentin ran away through the opened window, descending the trunk of the pear tree, which Luster and Benjy saw in the first section (dated April Seventh, 1928 : a day before the date of the anonymous section). Once that Quentin has escaped from her room is revealed, we understand that she really has been absent from the narrative world of *The Sound and the Fury* since the end of the first section, though that is concealed until the anonymous section. Here we are forced to identify Quentin with her mother Caddy : Quentin's escape in the present time substitutely repeats Caddy's exile from the Compson family in the past. Moreover, we notice that this vacant room which Quentin left in the text represents the absence of Caddy's departing scene, that is, the origin and goal of the narrative of *The Sound and the Fury* : absence repeats absence. This is what we have found out at our final destination of reading : that is not the recovery of loss but its repetition, or more precisely, its completion.

We can now propose an answer to our second question : what is the significance of the absent scene of Caddy's departure in relation to the

narrative disintegration? In pursuing a crucial moment in the master narrative of *The Sound and the Fury*, that is, Caddy's departing scene, we only find out that it is missing. Instead, the result of her departure is shown both to us and to the characters : it is a vacant room, that is, an absence which substitutes for another absence. This indicates that the master narrative is left incomplete : although most discourses of *The Sound and the Fury*—the fragments of narrators' recollection and perception—repeatedly and compensatorily appear to pave the way to the narrative origin, because of its absence, we are perpetually forced to return to the vacant room where Caddy and her daughter once lived but now no one exists, the room which symbolizes the absence of the origin. This means that the personified narrators' compensatory and retrospective attempts to represent the master narrative as their own variants are left incomplete. This incompleteness, however, causes *The Sound and the Fury* to repeat the narrative perpetually.⁶ Although this repetition produces nothing meaningful except letting the narrators narrate endlessly, only by doing so *The Sound and the Fury* can remain narrative : the process of revealing its own incompleteness as a narrative makes the novel as if being or having some narrative.

Judging from this result, we are now in a position to raise some questions about the narrativity of *The Sound and the Fury* : if the master narrative of the novel has no beginning or ending and therefore left incomplete, is it possible to say that in the text there is some narrative as we assume at all? In order to find an answer to this question, we have to make a further examination of the anonymous section.

As I have mentioned, the section is characterized by the anonymous narrator's objective but impersonal eye, and the eye reveals the disguised narrativity of the novel. This will be proved if we examine the passage about the girl Quentin's vacant room again. The room is described as

follows :

It was not a girl's room. It was not anybody's room, and the faint scent of cheap cosmetics and the few feminine objects and the other evidences of crude and hopeless efforts to feminise it but added to its anonymity, . . . (282)

What characterizes the room is its anonymity : it had been Caddy's, and was Quentin's, but now it is "not anybody's room." This means more than that the inhabitants of the room went away : the anonymity of this room indicates that the names of "Quentin" and "Caddy" also have disappeared from the text, and actually the names are never mentioned in the rest of the novel as direct indicators of particular people. Thus it is reasonable to say that becoming anonymous means for the women to show their own disappearance from the text, for their true entities are no more than their names spoken in the narrative text insofar as they are or become absent from the present narrative world. In this sense, that the girl Quentin's escape, which substitutes for her mother's disappearance, is revealed in the anonymous section means to reveal that the narrative of *The Sound and the Fury* virtually ended somewhere before the fact is shown, at least by the time when Quentin runs away in the first section.

However, this does not indicate that the anonymous narrator ends the narrative of *The Sound and the Fury*. Caddy and Quentin never disappear as long as they are in the Compson narrators' monologues, and the personified narrators, even the manchild Benjy, always invent their own narratives by recollecting their figures. Here it is conscious and subjective beings that enable narratives. However, once the impersonal narrator who has no memories of the past begins to speak, the narratives are disintegrated. He reveals not only that the personified narrators' narratives are not

fully true but that in reality their inner thought is for him not recognized as narrative at all. From his point of view, there is no narrative in the world of reality which he shows to us, so in his narration there is no causal relationship, although the reader or the characters may connect some events with their experiences so as to understand them as a sequence of related meanings or as a narrative.

In this sense, the anonymous narrator's impersonal eye reveals the fictionality of the text. He proves that narrative is invented only in someone's consciousness with some purposeful intention. Although both the reader and the narrators think as if there were some narrative, the reality they assume in the narrative is not immanent and necessary but only arbitrarily constructed,⁷ and the tragedy of the exile of a fallen woman, the master narrative we suppose in *The Sound and the Fury*, is also disintegrated "when we come to realise that tragedy is second-hand" (116). By doing so, however, the illusion of the narrative of *The Sound and the Fury* is paradoxically revealed.

This implies that *The Sound and the Fury* conceals its end as a narrative and delays its revelation till the last section. In this sense, the personified narrators' acts of narrating seem to be rendered rather to hinder the narrative world of the novel from sinking into "devastating *everydayness*" (Wadlington 60).⁸ Therefore the narrative of *The Sound and the Fury* buries itself in such everydayness once they stop narrating and its end is unveiled. Borrowing Adamson's phrases, that is the world of *sparagmos*, of disintegration which covers this world (243), and there the characters become desubjectified. Let us examine this world hereafter.

The last section is also characterized by its deadly silence. The section begins, as we have seen before, in the stillness of an early morning. Since almost all audible voices or sounds seem to be effaced except a few conversations occasionally heard, the section can be thought of as a silent

and dead world. This world eventually overwhelms all characters with its anonymity and everydayness, and one of the most notable victims of this power is Jason.

When Jason is told by Luster that his money was stolen by his niece, he starts to chase her in order to get his money back. During the chase he says to himself, "I'm Jason Compson. See if you can stop me. See if you can elect a man to office that can stop me" (306) : at this time he believes his power. However, he eventually cannot find her and gives up his money. This shows that Jason's subjective but selfish belief in his omnipotence is really powerless. In the world of everydayness, he actually has no authority and compulsorily recognizes that he is as impotent as an anonymous being who has no importance or significance. Recognizing this fact, Jason returns home.

Where Jason returns, there is only deadly quietness, and that is already prepared before he comes back. The house of the Compsons is also a part of the world of silence and immobility :

The fire had died down. There was no sound in the house. She [Dilsey] put on the apron, and went up stairs. There was no sound anywhere. Quentin's room was as they had left it. She entered and picked up the undergarment and put the stocking back in the drawer and closed it. Mrs Compson's door was closed. (298-99)

In this house time seems to stop, and there can hardly be found anything that indicates vital activity. This deadly still and changeless house is the world of everydayness and shows to us the true narrative world of *The Sound and the Fury*.

Benjy, another victim of this everydayness, is also powerless in the world. Like other people, having words means to possess individuality. But

now that he is deprived of language, his cry is no more than a meaningless sound, and thus he cannot speak any more. Thus he loses language in his mind and is buried in the silence of everydayness.

The last scene of *The Sound and the Fury* shows how the narrative world and the characters are engulfed by silence : in this scene, everything including Benjy and Jason is displayed in “its ordered place” (321). The scene begins with Benjy’s excursion to his favorite graveyard by coach. However, when the coach is turned to an incorrect direction, he suddenly begins to cry.

For an instant Ben sat in an utter hiatus. Then he bellowed. Bellow on bellow, his voice mounted, with scarce interval for breath. There was more than astonishment in it, it was horror ; shock ; agony eyeless, tongueless ; just sound, and Luster’s eyes backrolling for a white instant. “Gret God,” he said. “Hush ! Hush ! Gret God !” He whirled again and struck Queenie [a horse] with the switch. (320)

Since Benjy likes to go on a regular route, he roars in anger when Luster turns the coach to the wrong direction. Therefore Benjy stops crying when Jason corrects the direction and everything is set “in its ordered place” again, just as he likes it :

. . . at once Ben hushed. . . . The broken flower drooped over Ben’s fist and his eyes were empty and blue and serene again as cornice and façade flowed smoothly once more from left to right, post and tree, window and doorway and signboard each in its ordered place. (320-21)

However, the “ordered place” indicates a motionless state. There Benjy’s becoming silent implies that he loses not only language but his

individuality and is buried in the silence of world of everydayness. Since having voice means for the characters to exist as individuals in the narrative world, becoming voiceless means for them to vanish. In this sense Jason is also desubjectified in this world when he silences himself.

After Jason quietens Queenie, the narrator does not mention him, and even his voice is also not heard. This implies that Jason is also engulfed by the anonymity of everydayness just like Benjy. When everyone in the narrative world loses his individuality, *The Sound and the Fury* reveals its real world of perpetually motionless everydayness.

Here we should consider the influence of the anonymous section upon *The Sound and the Fury*. It is the anonymous narrator who reveals the illusion of the master narrative : he shows us that the narrative we assume to be in the novel is really not in it and is only invented in the narrators' and our conscious thought. By this revelation, the narrative loses its *raison d'être*. Instead, we recognize the true world of *The Sound and the Fury* to be an endless and meaningless world of everydayness, just as the phrase "To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow" in *Macbeth* depicts. In this world, nominality is diffused into anonymity, and the anonymity de-personifies the characters by depriving them of language. For example, the anonymity effaces the names of Caddy and the girl Quentin from the text, and therefore they disappear ; deprived of words, Benjy and Jason are engulfed by everydayness and lose their selves as subjective beings.

This shows the function of the fourth section of *The Sound and the Fury*. At first the section appears to embed the preceding sections that appear to be the personified narrators' subjective consciousness, but actually his eye takes away all subjectivity or individuality from the narrative world, and thus when we see *The Sound and the Fury* from this narrator's point of view, a wasteland version of a motionless world emerges from its everydayness. This is the world without a narrative, or a world after

narrative has gone, even though it had been. However, this is the real world in which man lives.

We are now in a position to say as follows : by forcing the reader to form a narrative pattern which is understood as the master narrative, *The Sound and the Fury* attempts to sustain its fake narrativity, and in doing so the novel disguises itself as a narrative. However, once the disguise is revealed, the novel unveils its wasteland everydayness : there everything eventually turns out to be motionless and silent, and subjective beings are robbed of their individuality and buried in the everydayness. In the world the epistemological conception of narrative is at stake : when *The Sound and the Fury* obtains everydayness, the true entity of the real world, and becomes an everlasting anticlimactic life, it is not recognized as a narrative any more. However, this is the world of reality *The Sound and the Fury* really represents, and there rests the strategy of *The Sound and the Fury* to problematize its own existence as narrative.

The Sound and the Fury proves the following things : by showing that the world to be understood as a narrative only with the frames of reference of subjective consciousness, the novel denies the illusion of the master narrative inherent in the text; by disintegrating the process of epistemological narrative making, it reveals its disguise as a narrative. And by showing these things, *The Sound and the Fury* disintegrates its *raison d'être* as narrative, and the novel narrates only to show this narrative disintegration. This suggests a vision of reality we have when reading so-called narrative texts. The reality we assume is no more than a constructed narrative form for understanding of a world, that is, a product of some intentional or ideological subjectivity. In this sense, there can be the true real world or reality insofar as subjective beings are, and if the world can be, it does not have any entity in itself: from our point of view, that is nothing but “devastating everydayness” (Wadlington 68). *The Sound and*

the Fury manages to depict this world by disguising itself as a narrative and revealing the fact in the process of reading. This is the way the novel problematizes the concept of narrative as describing the real world.

From what has been said above it should be concluded as follows: *The Sound and the Fury* denies the vision of reality with some entity. At the same time, this means that such ideological visions as suppose signifying process as/in narrative. However, this attitude also alludes to the ideology of self-denial. By showing this nihilistic vision of reality, *The Sound and the Fury* implicitly gives the real world an entity of nothingness. In this sense, this novel establishes its *raison d'être* through the process of convergence on self-annihilation.

In spite of its self-annihilating ideology, *The Sound and the Fury* offers to us a new version of reality. Giving up relying on human perception and consciousness and problematizing its infallibility of its existence, Faulkner manages to liberate the world from the prison-house of subjective entities (on the level of discourse, it is the language used by conscious thought). In this sense, we can say that *The Sound and the Fury* offers a new cognitive style in Faulkner's literary career.

Notes

- 1 I borrow the concept of master narrative from Jameson. He states that the master narrative "is the allegorical key or figural content of the first sequence of empirical materials" and "some deeper, underlying, and more 'fundamental' narrative" in terms of which "a sequence of historical events or texts and artifacts is rewritten" (28). However, this kind of narrative should not be found in texts inherently. Rather that is structured according to some ideological vision which gives us some form or way of understanding a world, although in most cases it is an approved archetypal narrative structure. This essay aims at disproving the assumed immanence of this kind of narrative in

texts.

- 2 What Caddy's life symbolizes is the motif of exile from the Paradise. Here Caddy is Eve, and the Compson family is regarded as Garden of Eden. She is exiled from there because she has fallen by a seduction. Davis and Milliner, for example, point out this kind of biblical context in *The Sound and the Fury*.
- 3 According to Baum, "Caddy's life is a cohesive force in the novel" and she "causes the other characters to speak" (34). In addition, Wagner states that Caddy is the "language-creator and giver" of the Compson brothers (50). In this sense, Caddy is the origin of the brothers' narratives and motivates them.
- 4 This is, for example, expressed in Benjy's monologue (Matthews, "The Discovery of Loss" 91).
- 5 Here the word "filter" indicates the "mental activity experienced by characters in the story world—perceptions, cognitions, attitudes, emotions, memories, fantasies, and the like" (Chatman 143). At the same time, however, its existence backs up characters' subjectivity. In *The Sound and the Fury*, characters are depersonified when their subjective filters are revealed.
- 6 The absence of an end, the "transcendent home. . . that we cannot [go back]" motivates repetition (Brooks 299). Because the Compson narrators cannot present in their monologues Caddy's departing scene, which is the absent and thus "transcendent home", their monologues do not end in their minds, and what puts an end to their monologues is the anonymous narrator's "defiltered" impersonal eye.
- 7 In this essay terms like reality or the real world indicate a world outside a particularized spatiotemporality which is epistemologically constructed. In this constructed spatiotemporality everything participating in structuring a narrative is regarded as if it actually existed and had its meaning and significance, and this kind of disguise characterizes the constructed and thus "fictional" world. Therefore the real world means a counter-space in which everything functions rather to reveal such a disguise as narrative.
- 8 According to Wadlington, the "period of Faulkner's great modern tragedies begins with a statement of the disqualification of such tragedy [as *Macbeth*] by its own logic [of a life without climax]. Put concisely, in the words of

Quentin's false comforter: 'tragedy is second-hand' (68). Being overwhelmed by everydayness of an anticlimax life may be a modern version of tragedy. However, we are perhaps not able to recognize that tragedy as a narrative any more.

Works Cited

- Adamson, Joseph. "The Rising of Dilsey's Bones : The Theme of *Sparagmos* in *The Sound and the Fury*." *Modern Language Quarterly* 49 (1988) : 239-61.
- Baum, Catherine B. "'The Beautiful One' : Caddy Compson as Heroine of *The Sound and the Fury*." *Modern Fiction Studies* 13 (1967) : 33-44.
- Bloom, Harold., ed. *Caddy Compson*. Major Literary Characters. New York: Chelsea House., 1990.
- Brooks, Peter. "Freud's Master Plot." *Literature and Psychoanalysis : The Question of Reading : Otherwise*. Ed. Shoshana Felman. Baltimore : Johns Hopkins UP, 1989.
- Chatman, Seymour. *Coming to Terms : The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca : Cornell UP, 1990.
- Davis, Boyd. "Caddy Compson's Eden." *Mississippi Quarterly* 30 (1977) : 381-94.
- Dowling, David. *William Faulkner*. Macmillan Modern Novelists Ser. Hampshire : Macmillan, 1989.
- Faulkner, William. *The Sound and the Fury*. New York : Random House, 1984.
- Hill, Douglas B. Jr. "Faulkner's Caddy." Bloom, 84-97.
- Humphrey, Robert. *Stream of Consciousness in The Modern Novel*. Berkeley : U of California P, 1954.
- Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious : Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. London : Cornell UP, 1981.
- Kermode, Frank. *The Sense of an Ending : Studies in the Theory of Fiction*. Oxford : Oxford UP, 1966.
- Matthews, John T. "The Discovery of Loss in *The Sound and the Fury*." *William Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury*. Ed. Harold Bloom.

- Modern Critical Interpretations. New York : Chelsea House, 1988. 79-102.
- . *The Sound and the Fury : Faulkner and the Lost Cause*. Twayne's Masterwork Studies. Boston : Twayne, 1991.
- Milliner, Gladys. "The Third Eve." Bloom, 68-72.
- Mitchell, W. J. T. Foreword. *On Narrative*. Ed. W. J. T. Mitchell. Chicago : U of Chicago P, 1981. vii-x.
- Radloff, Bernard. "Time and Timepieces : A Note on Quentin's Section in *The Sound and the Fury*." *English Language Notes* 23 (1986) : 51-57.
- Wadlington, Warwick. *Reading Faulknerian Tragedy*. Ithaca, Cornell UP, 1987.
- Wagner, Linda W. "Language and Act : Caddy Compson." *Southern Literary Journal* 14 (1982) : 49-61.
- White, Hayden. "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality." Mitchell, 1-23.

Synopsis

A Vision of Reality :

Narrative Disintegration in *The Sound and the Fury*

By Arinori Mori

The purpose of this essay is to consider how William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* disintegrates a vision of reality as narrativity through the process of reading.

This novel consists of a good amount of the fragments of the narrators' consciousness, and those fragments seem to need to be reordered into a sequence of events according to some temporal axis. But in doing so, the reader finds the personified narrators' consciousness to be disintegrated, and because of this disintegration, the reconstruction of the assumed temporal sequence becomes almost meaningless. This is because *The Sound and the Fury* seemingly has another semantic coherence within itself, and the reader must give up reordering the events in the text into a temporal sequence.

Instead, s/he attempts to read the narrative according to the coherence, which is assumed to be the master narrative of this novel. However, this attempt to complete the narrative of *The Sound and the Fury* also fails. This failure is caused by the lack of an essential element for completing the assumed plot model and constructing an autonomous narrative world of *The Sound and the Fury*. This lack, cooperating with the disintegration of the narrators' consciousness, repeatedly shows that the assumed narrative is left incomplete.

As a result, the narrative world of *The Sound and the Fury* reveals itself not to be an autonomous narrative space but in reality to be a world of devastating everydayness where no subjective being can exist. This is the self-annihilation of the text as narrative, and through the disintegration of its own narrativity *The Sound and the Fury* reveals that the real world does not have any entity as narrative in itself and shows our vision of reality to be no more than an illusion which our subjective thought invents. In this sense, *The Sound and the Fury* denies our ideological vision of reality which is understood as a narrative, and instead of it presents its own ideology of nihilism. In this self-denial, the reader can see another reality which is liberated from man's subjective recognition and thought, and through this process of self-disintegration this novel manages to show that new version of reality.