

Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* and
Reinventing the Traumatic
Modern Sublimity

إحياء نظرية السمو والصدمة في رواية فوكنر

«الصخب والغضب» في العصر الحديث

إعداد

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Abstract

The study of the sublime began with the third century philosopher Cassius Longinus, who provided a detailed discussion of the sublime in his work *On the Sublime*. This research validates the exceptional relationship between psychology and the sublime. It rereads the traditional conceptions of the Romantic sublime through the psychological depictions of the intricate interactions among the characters in William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*. The approaches that have been applied for analysis are the aesthetic theory of the sublime in addition to the psychoanalytic theory. The selected novel aptly exemplifies the two associated notions: the novel as an aesthetic illustration of subjectivity, and the novel as a reflection of its psychological aspects. These theories reveal the change in the interpretation of the sublime from a Romantic view of a (subject-object) relationship to a more modern (subject-subject) association. The sublime functions are delineated not through the earlier, traditional and overwhelming natural magnificence but are demarcated by moving towards more domestic experiences. This new perspective is dependent on the recognition of social objectification and reciprocal empathy between the characters. The research focuses on how the experience of the sublime tends to be an emotional response, involving delight, fear, and, exaltation. Sublimity is at the core of a dynamic and contemporary representation of subjectivity that evaluates objectification. The research establishes how Faulkner has developed a view that reconsiders the function of the sublime in the modern world.

Key Words:Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury, modern sublimity, sublime, subject, object.

المستخلص

في علم الجماليات نظرية السمو تعني صفة العظمة سواء كانت جسدية أو أخلاقية أو فكرية أو جمالية أو روحانية أو فنية التي تتجاوز كل الإحتمالات التي يمكن عدها أو قياسها أو محاكاتها وتعزى أول دراسة للسمو إلى لونجينوس ومن بعده إيدموند بيرك وإيمانويل كانط. يتناول هذا البحث العلاقة الاستثنائية بين علم النفس ونظرية السمو حيث يعيد قراءة المفاهيم التقليدية للسمو بالعصر الرومانسي من خلال التصورات النفسية للعلاقات المعقدة بين الشخصيات الرئيسية في بعض الأدبيات مثل "الصخب والغضب" لويليام فوكنر. توجه الشخصيات في الرواية آنفة الذكر طاقاتهم للحصول على قوة مطلقة للسيطرة على التحديات التي تواجه ذاتهم ووجودهم. يتم تطبيق التحليل عبر النظرية الجمالية للسمو بجانب نظرية التحليل النفسي. تمثل الرواية المختارة بشكل مناسب المفهومين المترابطين: الرواية كتوضيح جمالي للذات، والرواية باعتبارها انعكاساً لجوانبها النفسية. تكشف هاتان النظريتان عن التغيير في التفسير التقليدي للسمو من وجهة نظر رومانسية لعلاقة (الذات والآخر) إلى ارتباط أكثر حداثة وهو (ذات وذات آخر). وبذلك لا يتم تعريف نزعة السمو فقط من خلال المفهوم التقليدي لجمال الطبيعية كما في القرن التاسع عشر ولكن يتم تعريفها من خلال الخوض بداخل العلاقات البشرية. يعتمد هذا المنظور الجديد على التسليم بنظرية الموضوعية الإجتماعية والتعاطف المتبادل بين الشخصيات. يركز البحث على كيفية احتواء تجربة السمو الإستجابة العاطفية بين الشخصيات والتي تتطوي على عدة عناصر مختلفة كالبهجة، والخوف، والتمجيد. من وجهة نظر هؤلاء الروائيين هناك حاجة ماسة لإعادة تعريف وظيفة السمو في الأدب المعاصر. يتضمن إعادة التعريف على إعادة النظر إلى موقع (الذات) والنظرية التقليدية إلى (الآخر) من خلال التعبير المتداخل القائم على أسس جمالية ونفسية للشخصيات.

The research establishes how Faulkner has developed a view that reconsiders the function of the sublime in the modern world. Through direct confrontation of the traditional practice of objectification in the sublime aesthetic process, or the theoretical discourse surrounding the early twentieth century poetics, Faulkner presents the possibility of the multifaceted psychological working of related mutual experiences. He reveals the female character as the one who both enacts and receives the acts of violence as a subject-shattering power of empathy, the role of the 'object mother'. Her existence only seems satisfied with being her objectified, which is seemingly out of step with the rest of the story.

The research focuses on how the experience of the sublime tends to be an emotional response, involving delight, fear, and, exaltation. Sublimity is at the core of a dynamic and contemporary representation of subjectivity that evaluates objectification. It enables one to rethink the psychological precepts of sublimity, subjectivity, objectivity, and processes of communication that lie therein. The requirement of the sublime has not died; however, in the absence of the specific term that once denoted it, it has been democratized, transformed, and dispersed throughout the modern culture. The sublime is an enduring fixture of mental life, necessary for personal growth and collective change.

The traumatic sublime is a consciousness formed by the resentment and despair that is sensed when the mind fails to absorb the occasion's magnitude merged with an awareness of its proximal attempt to represent and reinvent the incidence of the traumatic occasion. In *The Sound and the Fury*, Caddy plays the role of the "differend", highlighting the idea of the absent-present role which is examined and put into perspective here.

The process of recalling the past due to trauma causes a persistent disturbance upon the present moment, which is evoked negatively at constant representation. Thus, the traumatic sublime stimulates and merges both the nostalgic and the immediate. Lyotard refers to the immediate as "intuition, like sensation... but

of the object rather than the ‘subject.’” (*Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, 10,11). Lyotard relates the nostalgic and the immediate with the modern and the postmodern, respectively. In other words, the nostalgic of the subject is recalled and integrated with the immediate that is evoked by the object. According to Lyotard, the nostalgic and the immediate is related to the modern and the postmodern. In the modern sense, the unrepresentable exists as the missing contents in the text with instances of consolation; in the postmodern, it refers to the unrepresentable as presentable, without offering any matter for solace or pleasure. Hence, if the Romantic traditional sublime is compared to the traumatic sublime, one can refer to the Romanticized method to forget the past, while treating the traumatic sublime as a tactic of symbolic recollection, not only of the terror and violence but also as a record that explains Caddy and the Compson family.

In his book, *Lyotard, Literature and the Trauma of the Differend*, Dylan Sawyer argues that the conflation paradox of trauma’s “recurring instant” of the modern and postmodern enables “the traumatic sublime to not simply promote new methods of representation that endeavour to evoke the unrepresentable in presentation itself but also force notice of the unrepresented in the unrepresentable—that which is overlooked even in “absent presentation”, perpetually incomplete” (173). It is the absent-presence role of Caddy, which will be discussed in detail in this chapter.

The scope of the overwhelming, absolute, even transcending powerful sublime may reveal several inquiries: How can the structure of meaning underlying Faulkner’s narrative be explained in the context of the discussion on the sublime? What is the interrogation between the ‘sublime’ and the modernist discourse of narration in the novel *The Sound and the Fury* on society, history, the past, and the traumatic personal?

Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane describes the modern novel as a “high aesthetic self-consciousness, associated with a thrust away from realism and towards style, technique,

towards form in one word, as tools to penetrate life deeper” (Eysteinnsson 16). Meaning in modernism is defined by its shattered, discontinuous, fragmented traditional ways of understanding, causing a crisis of comprehension therein. As Renée van de Vall comments: “Silence indicates gaps in our comprehension, gaps that should be respected, rather than bridged. The sublime is a name for one kind of gap.” (qtd. in Sawyer 160). Within an aesthetic frame, the explanation of fragmentation and gaps in a literary context can be reorganized. Therefore, the treatment of the dualistic nature of absent-presence of Caddy reveals how her traumatic life is the impact and effect of the life of the Compson Family. Caddy’s silence or absent-presence role in the text unavoidably highlights the confusion, miscommunication, fragmentation, and depression of the other characters.

Faulkner’s novel is narrated from several perspectives, showing a complex example that problematizes the modern quest of the subject’s epistemological. The novel includes four narrations by different narrators: Benjy, Quentin, Jason, and an omniscient narrator. The chapters in the novel are presented by various narrators from different viewpoints. The action in the novel revolves around the disillusionment of the Compson family. Each member of the family presents the corruption of the Southern ideals in his/her own way. The multiple viewpoints shed light on the multiple facets of the relative modernist standard of the discourse. This helps immensely in explaining the relation of the nostalgic with the immediate in the traumatic experience of the characters. The last chapter, which is narrated by an omniscient narrator from among the family members, presents a different viewpoint that can be considered as a connection that ties up all the fragmented parts of the novel to a great extent. The last chapter, which is narrated by the family servant “Disely” reveals Caddy as a “nostalgic figure”, which is connected in “immediate” relation to each narrator. It sheds light on how the events of a text can be viewed from another perspective that affirms Caddy’s

subjectivity in an apparently objective form. Luis M. García Mainar, a critic, puts it in the following manner:

Caddy's femininity and low-class behaviour stand for this surplus meaning which her family and the novel cannot assimilate. The proof of this incapacity to assimilate her on the part of the novel is the attempt to construct her as a nostalgic figure, a consumerist female, which links her to Dilsey's mythic status—in fact one way of subjecting femininity by presenting it as natural and therefore outside the public arena—or to the threats of modern life—she is also stigmatised as consumer, as the voracious female... [who] threatens patriarchal society. (72)

One of the crucial elements of the novel is the explanation of the relations between the modernist concerns of the time and the text. Sawyer explained how Lyotard regards “trauma as a force that interrupts representational models. ... Lyotard follows Freud and particularly his concept of (deferred action)” (167). Lyotard explains the process of trauma in the following manner:

The first blow... strikes the apparatus without observable internal effect. It is a shock without affect. With the second blow there takes place an effect without shock [bringing with it] anxiety... it comes back from the first blow, from the shock, from the “initial” excess that remained outside the scene, even unconscious, deposited outside representation. (*Heidegger and “the Jews”* 16)

According to Sawyer, “trauma is understood to disrupt the progression of linear time and so is felt to be “monstrous, unformed, confusing [and] confounding.” (167). The focus is not on the aspect of the cultural background and social studies of the text itself. Rather, this chapter refers to Caddy's symbolisation and its signified adherence to an aesthetic explanation of the

psychology of different subjects. The novel is very focused on Caddy, who plays a major role in the lives of her brothers, the three narrators. Their deepest feelings appear to be revolving around her. Caddy is the source of love for a severely retarded thirty-three-year-old man “Benjy”, the symbol of lost purity and honour for the melancholic Quentin, and the object of hatred and missed opportunities for vicious Jason. The lives of the three narrators are affected by the unstabilized world created by their sister. Caddy’s adventures in love and romance and her subsequent promiscuity and marriage changes not only her life but also the world of Benjy and, particularly, Quentin who cannot detach from her. Subsequently, Mrs Compson forbids to take Caddy’s name after Caddy’s husband realizes that the child is not his own. Caddy’s daughter, Miss Quentin, is raised by the Compsons to be another promiscuous, rebellious girl. She eventually steals money from her uncle, Jason. The radical change in the new cultural and social conditions of America was accelerated between 1898 and 1928; this is also the chronological timeframe over which *SF* is spread.

Faulkner creates Caddy’s character as being in direct correlation to the traumatic experience of her siblings and even her mother. At some stage in the novel, Mrs Compson chose to wear black as a reaction to one of Caddy’s transgressions. Benjy, the idiot son, loses all the sense for the external world and becomes even more abandoned than before for Caddy’s sin. The intellectual son, Quentin, establishes his entire life on Caddy’s honour. The ineradicable influence of Caddy’s sin, Quentin, has caused confusion in his shallow existence and ruined all the order and stability. Jason, the third narrator, uses Caddy’s sin for withdrawing money from her and mistreating both her daughter and her. Therefore, it is not surprising that Miss Quentin grows to be her alter ego. The identity of the three narrators tends to be extracted from their reflection in Caddy; she appears to be the location of both self-recognition and reflection of the difference they tend not to admit to. Caddy appears to be a defining force for the family that must be present and absent together, and this

correlated position appears to be suppressed, since she may have recreated this reflection of difference with which the family members have recognized themselves. Nevertheless, Caddy is the vital component to the family, which needs to be suppressed and veiled in order to maintain its welfare. In his essay, "Psychological Aspects of Evil in *The Sound and the Fury*," Michel Gresset says, "the whole family is involved in her failure to emerge "normally" from it" (145). Caddy's failure stems from the fixed frame of the identity that the family has formed for her. Her sense of being submissive to the eternal laws of femininity pushes her to withdraw herself by excluding her body from the rest of the family. However, her escapist mechanism is paralleled by the disorder in the entire family. The Compson family are confined to the values of the 1860s. They exaggerated Caddy's sin out of proportion throughout the entire novel, except in the last chapter, in which she was re-evaluated. Michel Gresset describes Caddy as:

...woman and essence of woman, a being with whom Faulkner felt in such close relationship that she could only be described through an aura of epithets» associations, shifting of registers and symbols: a presence above all, since she is more action than words, more intuition than reasoning, and is not allowed a section like her brothers but a honeysuckle-intoxicating, full-bodied triumphant presence. (144)

Slavoj Žižek recognizes this rebellious component as the real which 'stands behind the constitution of the self and whose repression produces the fantasy of unity of the individual' (24). It resembles "the commodity A can express its value only by referring itself to another commodity B... in the value relationship" (ibid.). In the case of Caddy, it seems as if "the body of B [Caddy] becomes for A [the family] the mirror of its value...[however] the other commodity B is an equivalent only in so far as A relates to it" (ibid.). To elaborate "in the structure of the commodity-form it is possible to find the transcendental

subject: the commodity-form articulates I advance the anatomy” (Žižek 16). The truth underlying Caddy’s character—as a symbol for the family’s inner life—is the same, that is her subjectivity with all her extreme revelations is continually the object of their efforts to diminish her and confine her to one meaning. Her resistance in the rebellious female figure of Miss Quentin reworks the passive role of Quentin.

To put the novel in the theoretical aesthetical frame of the sublime, it must be remembered that the imagination in the sublime process is marked by its failure to provide a significant explanation of the sublime object. The failure of the imagination is expressed in the following manner: ‘sublimity *now* describes moments when we recognize that any of our ways of comprehending the world are illusions” (Drakhayini 340 emphasis added). Faulkner’s own declaration of the novel in 1929 is that it is a “most splendid failure” (qtd. in Donaldson 359). Faulkner’s expression of such a “failure” as the “most splendid” could be a reference in this research light as an attempt to reach the limitlessness of literary sublimity. This can be inferred as an indication of his awareness of the reciprocity between the internal and external aspects of the sublime and the result that the sublime is a space that cannot be attained or grasped. In this research, the sublime is considered a reflective process between two subjects rather than a subject and an inanimate object in nature. Such a view of studying the double test of identity, and the discovery of the harmony with the internal self and the external world, does not imply a gross simplification of the movement and the situation in *SF*. Such a view which combines both aesthetics and psychanalysis is essential for being the organic centre from which stem and to which converge all the psychological and even psychic complications, thereby making the novel a dense whole rather than a simplification (Civitarese 2-4).

To refer to the meaning of sublime, one needs to know that it refers to the overwhelming sensation that is created upon the confrontation of the internal thoughts of a subject that wants to absorb the vastness, obscurity, grandeur, or awe of a vast or magnificent object. According to Lyotard's theory of sublimity, this magnificent object could be a piece of art, notion, or occasion that can be represented. Due to the limitation of the imagination to capture or duplicate the object in the sublime process, the unattainable and the unrepresentable are deferred (*Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, 141). When the subject begins to define or present the object of sublimity (a work of art, event, a thought in another's head, or idea), it unconsciously begins to diminish all points of comparison. Hence, in the concept of the sublime, the gap between what the subject can perceive and what the external universe affords as conceivable ways of representing it is essential (*ibid.* 59). Due to the shortage of tools in language or in painting, the sublime object always remains inaccessible or inexpressible in its overwhelming intensity. Then, the failure of the sublime can be revealed in cognitive and descriptive ways to adequately represent the universe. The object of sublimity does not certainly relate to limitlessness and infinitude; even microscopic objects can inspire sublimity. Therefore, everyday objects can be a source of sublimity (*ibid.*, 103).

The modern interpretation of the sublime involves extracts from previous theorists and philosophers, characterizing the elements of the inaccessible and unrepresentable. For example, for Lyotard, multiplicity prevents an absolute form in language. Thus, language appears to be unable to deliver the fixed, and whole meaning is discontinuous and fragmented: "inconsistency broke the modern novel into fragment... These fragments bespeak a broken culture" (Matz 39-40). For example, Benjy, who due to a mental disorder cannot understand the chronological time of events. Benjy's section contains events that occurred in 1928; nevertheless, Benjy correlates most of these events to others that occurred in 1989-1902. In the scene on page (SF14), Faulkner uses three time periods that make the determination of the time of

this section difficult to identify. The branch episode relates to the same branch in another time because the children talk about their ages. This scene reveals most of the characteristics of the characters—such as Caddy’s promiscuity, Quentin’s responsibility of Caddy, and Jason’s mania for money. Moreover, when Benjy’s name is changed from Maury to Benjy, the reader does not become aware until the last portion of Benjy’s section (*SF* 19-22).

The death of their grandmother “Damudday” evokes a number of deaths—particularly Quentin’s and Mr Compson’s—afterwards in Benjy’s mind, with little indication of whose death is the subject of the scene (*SF* 28). These episodes in Benjy’s section reveal how much he is fixated on Caddy, as the reader knows that he becomes anxious about any changes associated with her. In the dominant layer of the storytelling, Benjy’s non-linear narrative reflects a deeper perspective than that of his sister, the object of everyone’s obsession. Benjy’s apparent incompetence and the subsequent suppression acts against him reflect not only Caddy’s promiscuity but also the decline of the Compson family and its sterility. Just as the castration of Benjy, for example, put an end to the family lineage, the promiscuous actions of Caddy cause the family name to become impure. To once again establish a connection to the idea of sublime, Benjy’s castration reflects his traumatic experiences with his family and the conventions of the Southern society. Kia Erikson indicates that the traumatic experience exists because “Our memory repeats to us what we haven’t yet come to terms with, what still haunts us” (184). Therefore, the reader witnesses the uselessness of the Southern values and dominating conventions, which situate Benjy and Caddy as traumatic scapegoats for the smearing of the Compson name.

In modern terms, the sublime clarifies the competence to grasp incompetence in order to absorb what is represented as fixed. To be clearer, while the modern sublime rejects the Romantic conception of nature, transcendence, and reason, it refuses to connect the magnificent, unlimited, and the fearful with

notions of reason or divinity. Rather, the sublime sustains the failure to absorb the limitlessness and the infinitude. For example, Lyotard celebrates the idea that the sublime “puts forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself” (qtd. in Johnson 122) and, hence, seems to rework in immaterial forms of art. Lyotard concludes, “the modern aesthetic is an aesthetic of the sublime...it is nostalgic; it allows the unrepresentable to be invoked only *as an absent content*, which form, thanks to its recognizable consistency, continues to offer the reader or spectator material for consolation and pleasure.” (qtd. in Marie 17 emphasis added). The modern sublime differs from the emphasis of the Romantic conception of the sublime on immanence rather than transcendence. Therefore, an insistence on the association between the sublime and otherness/difference is inherent to the investigation in this chapter.

The limit of the imagination in the notion of sublimity is located when it attempts to represent an unrepresentable object (Johnson 118). Sublimity emphasizes the issue of irresolvability with regard to the ability and inability of the object to be presented. Lyotard’s rereading of the sublime in Kant focuses on the conflict of irresolvability between can/cannot be presented. Faulkner’s text of *SF* contains micro-moments that exemplify the encounter between the sublime subject and object. The symbolization of the character Caddy in her encounters with the people around her marks her unspoken heroine role in their lives. Benjy’s idealization of her and Quentin’s attempts to lessen her to an ideal symbolic existence destroys all of them.

According to Susan Donaldson, the unrepresentability of meaning is the dissolution of meaning in the sublime. Hence, the absent presence of Caddy signifies that the issue of repression and victimization is irrecoverable. The tragedy of Southern traditions reveals the crux of the problem, which is the denial of the Compson family to match up to the principles of the modern world. All the family members represent their failure to keep up with the principles of a past time, which is represented in the

Southern values; each character represents his own experience of the failure in their specific ways. Caddy fails to maintain her honour; Benjy fails to resist castration and retain his manhood; and Quentin fails to save his sister from becoming a promiscuous girl. Faulkner depicts family disillusionment throughout the novel by in a very artistic manner. The frustration is essential as an aspect of the traumatic life they were struggling through. Kai Erikson comments that “trauma involves a continual reliving of some wounding experience in daydreams and nightmares, flashbacks and hallucinations, and in a compulsive seeking out of similar circumstances.” (184). Benjy’s flashbacks and Quentin’s hallucinations result from their disillusionment of living in the old ideals of the South, representing these ideals symbolically through Caddy. Paul Valéry wrote, “Our memory repeats to us what we haven’t understood... Our memory repeats to us what we have not yet come to terms with, what still haunts us” (qtd. in Erikson 184).

Kimberly WedevenSegall observes, “the traumatic sublime uses symbols and disturbing images to reformulate a character’s past” (42). The disillusionment of the Compson family implies the omission/deferment of meaning (e.g. Caddy who is, after all, a difference). Thus, Quentin cannot reposition himself within the space of the timeless and an erotic sublime; he only remains differing and deferring. Whereas the sublime categorizes the irrepresentable and the unattainable, the meaning is continually deferred because no one can extract a fixed sublime condition or ideal. This represents the core of complexity in the Compson family’s life, which is the deferred and discontinuous implication both in language and in cognition—that is, the disillusionment of the Southern ideals, their inability to detach these ideals, and the traumatic consequences are actually representable occurrences of the mode of the sublime. The entire family lived in the past and they cannot detach it, creating a series of traumatic sublimations that leads to their futile destiny. Erikson demonstrates that the “traumatized people often scan the surrounding world anxiously, breaking into explosive rages” (184).

Caddy's role can be defined against the significance of the traumatic sublime and points to what? The text has hidden larger meaning is revealed by the innate paradoxes. Caddy draws a path that refers to what can be beyond itself, that beyond is the sublime (whether pastoral, erotic, ethnic, etc.). In terms of sublimity, one intends to highlight through the novel how the reciprocal process between two subjects reminds one that sublimity seems to be unattainable. This reciprocity reminds one of the imagination's failure to grasp and represent the absolute. The opposition of pain and pleasure constructs the "imagination's inevitably failed attempt to present to thought an intuition that would adequately correspond to an idea of the absolute" (Johnson 120). It can be considered as a hidden part of the sublime's entity, an entity which is always deferred and irrepresentable. In order to relate this once again to trauma, it is not a psychological state depending on static and imprint images as the leading scholar Cathy Caruth, it is a manner of juxtaposing between the protagonist's aspiration for a wilful self-image resistant female and obliteration of the family. Caddy likes to wield power as an act against the Southern traditions, but at the same time she plays both the maternal and paternal roles with her brothers. The intersubjective communication between Caddy and the characters continually established the oppositions and the inconsistencies in the relationships with those around her. On one hand, Caddy ultimately establishes herself as an individual and unconventional. On the other hand, Caddy's sin can be considered as a redemption for the family from being riddled with drunkenness, cynicism, faithlessness, and mental obstruction. However, when this redemption is gone, the family is still shattered.

Since the existence of the idealized envisioned figure "Caddy" represents a violent event and confusion within Quentin, for example, her presence troubles him and the focus shifts from one subject to another subject. He begins to be obsessed with her loss of virginity, and she moves to a symbolic level of this obscured image of the past and it signifies historical violation, which began with WWI. Being so obsessed with his sister's

honour offers him detachment from the reality of her promiscuity and the ruin of his Southern ideals. In other words, Quentin's vision of an obscure symbol of lost idealization not only prompts the symbolic wound but also functions as a psychological defence. The word "obscure" relates to the traumatic sublime through "Quentin", who prompts an idealized envision of the symbolic level of another subject "Caddy", creating new image that blurs the traumatic sense of losing the Southern tradition and fostering a detachment. However, such a protective shield does not last for a long time, as he eventually commits suicide. The focus is ascertained through the characterization of Caddy in relation to her brothers. Attention is paid to Benjy's and Quentin's sections, to the micro-moments of the novel among Benjy, Quentin, and Caddy through which they experienced the sublime—the "cognitive failure in the face of the sublime" (Shaw 3). In fact, there is a kind of a diminishment of the sublime. The metonymic image/concept in which the sublime subjects entail a place beyond human recognition and perception. In other words, the sublime "refers to the moment when the ability to apprehend, to know, and to express a thought or sensation is defeated" (Shaw 3).

Both Benjy and Quentin highlight how the moment of encounter in the sublime process provokes sensations, which resemble those declared by Shaw, from the other characters while integrating with each other. Faulkner's description of Benjy's castration, Quentin's epistemological and verbal failure regarding Caddy's loss of virginity are considered reflective occasions with the absent-present symbol. These signifiers that represent sublime micro-moments can refer to a broader meaning, aesthetically, culturally, philosophically, and historically in *SF*.

In the essay "Faulkner's Versions of Pastoral, Gothic, and the Sublime," Susan Donaldson interprets the association between Southern ideals and their contradiction, modernism. The equivalent struggle is predominant in *SF*. Donaldson rereads how perceptions can be interpreted in transcendent terms. She illustrates how Faulkner refers to moments that are half-articulated

and that contained transcendent vision. For example, water is used in a revered meaning in the novel—it is not a symbol of life, but a symbol of life full of sin. Water in Quentin’s drowning scene resembles the idea of a “return to the womb” as well as death. In the subject-subject sublime, the moment of elevated vision remains persistently unobtainable and implicit. For example, the deferred language in *SF* is caused by such an unarticulated sublime. To the two narrators (Quentin and Benjy) ‘strain to catch sight of and capture their ever-absent sister Caddy, whose character eludes the narrative nets cast by each of the novel’s four sections” (Donaldson 365).

According to Donaldson, Faulkner’s works celebrated the notion of the sublime in a kind of dichotomy between elevated and idealized perceptions and the failure to represent these perceptions in writing. The incompatible conflict of the subject/object, representable/irrepresentable appears in the thematic discourse of *SF*. The novel relates Caddy’s character, as a spectacle, to her consideration as an object of much ideological speculation. Although Caddy has no narration in the novel, she is the central character and all the other narratives are constructed around her. This, on one hand, proves her absent-presence; on the other hand, it indicates her own subjectivity that found much violence and repression through the entire novel.

One of the essential themes in the novel is the lack of love and family affection. The deprivation of love motivates the miserable fate of the entire family. The parents are trapped in their sense of self-centredness. This is a description that is common with the previous chapter. Mrs Compson cares only for Jason, who has the money, which is similar to Mrs Morel who cares only for her yearnings using her sons as substitutes for her absent husband. Mr Compson fails as a father figure in *SF* because he struggles and conveys a rather pessimistic view of life to his children through all the advice, he gives them, instead of positive thoughts. Hence, the lack of love is common among these

modernist novels. It also appears to be the stimulus of Caddy's brothers' obsessions with her and the creation of the sublime.

Traditionally, the source of love is the mother. Mrs Compson, the mother figure in the novel, fails in her role as a mother and contradicts everything a mother should be. She is self-centred, incapable of giving any true affection to her offspring. She considers Benjy as a curse on her. She rejects him completely. Mrs Compson changes his name to Benjamin from Maury, which was her brother's name. She does this to avoid bringing any shame to her family name. She lives based on a romantic illusion of herself as a Southern "Lady." Her appearance and ornaments are an end in themselves. Her job as a mother was thrown upon Benjy's sister, Caddy. Mrs Compson's inability to relate emotionally and maternally heightens Caddy's tenderness and affection towards Benjy, which is a big contrast.

Drawing on how Caddy's character functions as an object of speculation in the novel, it is explored how both Caddy and Benjy are subjected to violence, which is a metaphor for the violence embedded in ideological construction; in this case, this is the ideology of motherhood. Clarke states that "because the brothers control the terms of the narrative, Caddy exists as a sister rather than a mother. The problem, however, is that she serves as a mother as well, not just to Benjy but to all of her brothers, who find themselves confronted with problematic maternal ties to both their biological and symbolic mothers" (21). Her physical body is tortured and excluded because she is the "abject" mother whose body is everywhere excluded and not formally included. In relation to trauma, Cathy Caruth notes that the "trauma can issue from a sustained exposure to battle as well as from a moment of numbing shock, from a continuing pattern of abuse as well as from a single searing assault, from a period of severe attenuation and erosion as well as from a sudden flash of fear." (185)

In essence, the body of the mother figure makes her an abject figure, as Julia Kristeva suggests. She not only relates the abject to the sublime, but discusses how fear relates to the mother figure. Kristeva writes, "The abject is edged with the sublime" (11), and she continues, "For the sublime has no object either...The 'sublime' object dissolves in the raptures of a bottomless memory" (12). Kristeva links the complicated problems of language, imagery, and memory to the act of 'sublimation'; she also indicates a larger problem of the sublime—that is, it has no real object. In fact, she relates the sublime to perception, which marks it as subjective (12). Ultimately, the abject and the sublime promote the loss of the object that is necessary for transcendence. When it comes to the mother, Kristeva explains that "fear of the archaic mothers turns out to be essentially a fear of her generative power" (77). In the language of the sublime, "generative power" suggests the infinite. Women, unlike men, represent the infinite, as their bodies are always capable of producing another, an endless familial line. This connection to the infinite suggests that the mother is often not only represented as "abject" but also sublime; however, in Faulkner's work, sublimity lies not in Caddy's object but subject status. Ultimately, she establishes herself as individual and unconventional. In his essay "Narrating the Sublime," Adam Jabbbur argues that "the sublime consists not merely of our failures and anxieties; it consists also... of our ability to overcome these through play of our cognitive faculties" (14). Therefore, the stories of Quentin's and Mr Compson's internal conflicts are their internal alternation, which dramatizes the struggle to transcend destructive belief systems and the fear of abandoning familiar ways of life.

According to Edmund Burke, "Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling" (39). Like the 'sublime object,' Caddy's abject figure, often a criminal figure, exists at a distance

on the periphery of society. In essence, the Southern ideals represented by Mr Compson and Quentin invoke a sense of social terror needed to maintain order and, thus, remains distanced from the functions of society, much like distance and terror necessitate the sublime experience. The ‘sublime object’ invokes the transcendence through the interaction of pain and pleasure; it provokes pain, but the mind’s ability to dominate that terror through reason results in pleasure and enjoyment. The critic Luis M. García Mainar points out that:

Caddy’s role as the real kernel of the popular is also amenable to further readings. According to Lacan, the real is that which resists symbolization, the traumatic point which is always missed but always returns, no matter how much we try to neutralize it, to integrate it into the symbolic order... [she is] an element of enjoyment. ... she embodies enjoyment, an excessive joy that goes beyond the limits of the symbolic represented by her family (71).

Unlike the traditional sublime of Burke and Kant, Žižek considers the connections between social discourses and symbolic or sublime objects that represent larger transcendent, ideological structures. For Žižek, the sublime object represents the paradox of symbolic structure often associated as the failure of language in articulations of the sublime by Burke and Kant. Using Jacques Lacan’s discussion of subjectivity from a psychoanalytic perspective, Žižek writes of the sublime in the following manner:

The paradox of the Sublime is as follows: in principle, the gap separating phenomenal, empirical objects of experience from the Thing-in-itself is insurmountable—that is, no empirical object, no representation... of it can adequately present... the Thing (the supersensible Idea); but the Sublime is an object in which we can experience this very impossibility, this permanent failure of the representation to reach after the Thing. (229)

The sublime, which relies on feeling, as Žižek notes, gives pleasure and displeasure through the subject's attempts to understand the symbolic network. It is a conception in which representation will always fail to accurately convey the "Thing" or that which it is meant to represent, whether it be emotion or inanimate object. The "Thing-Idea" can be associate in this discussion to trauma experience and its effects. According to Lyotard, trauma's "occurrence unavoidably results in a traumatised victim, a voice severed from its own logosunable to wholly identify the extent—or possibly even the existence—of the damage caused."(159) Caddy as a complicated version of femininity, represents the object for everyone's obsession. Žižek defines the sublime object as a physical object that exists in an "in-between" position, seen but not seen clearly; similarly, many subjects inhabit "in-between" positions that promote sublime encounters, offering a 'sublime subject' as another possible position that exists in between the subject/object discourse of the traditional sublime. Žižek elaborates,

Thus, by means of the very failure of representation, we can have a presentiment of the true dimension of the Thing. This is also why an object evoking in us the feeling of Sublimity gives us simultaneous pleasure and displeasure: it gives us displeasure because of its inadequacy to the Thing-Idea, but precisely through this inadequacy it gives us pleasure by indicating the true, incomparable greatness of the Thing, surpassing every possible phenomenal, empirical experience. (229)

Caddy's absent-presence plays this role. The absent-presence of Caddy plays an essential role that retains the symbolic significance of the family. Caddy reflects the revolutionized woman, a female figure that exceeds the borders of the Southern Compson family's frame of values. One that can be negotiated from inside and outside the text to be read with and against the popular culture. She is related to several perceptions created by the three different narrators.

As Žižek writes, “The sublime object is an object which cannot be approached too closely: if we get too near it, it loses its sublime features and becomes an ordinary vulgar object—it can persist only in an interspace, in an intermediate state, viewed from a certain perspective, half-seen” (192). The ‘sublime subject’ is a character, a subject, who would traditionally inhabit the position of the “object” in the subject/object dynamic of the traditional sublime.

Unlike discussions of power dynamics in issues of subjectivity and identity, pain does not have an object. In some ways, pain and the violence that produces it are purely about the subject who feels and cannot express that feeling. Elaine Scarry indicates that pain actually deteriorates language: “[P]hysical pain—unlike any other state of consciousness—has no referential content. It is not of or for anything. It is precisely because it takes no object that it, more than any other phenomenon, *resists objectification* in language” (5 emphasis added). For Scarry, pain is essentially passive: “[P]ain only becomes an intentional state once it is brought into relation with the objectifying power of the imagination: through that relation, pain will be transformed from a wholly passive and helpless occurrence into a self-modifying and, when most successful, self-eliminating one” (164). Thus, pain requires a complex relationship with representation, either through language or the imagination.

In the novel *SF*, the violence revolves around Caddy and Benjy as two subjects, the pain inflicted through childbirth, the unbearable life of parenthood, and the pain they inflict on each other. Faulkner represents a multilayered account of violence, both physical and ideological, that reveal the problems of language and the possibility of intersubjectivity. Caddy’s narrative voice is absent through the entire novel, and Benjy’s is unordered and incomprehensible; the reader only sees Caddy and Benjy through the judgmental eyes of others who refuse to engage in acts of empathy because they consistently view the mother, Caddy, as an object. It does not matter who Caddy is but what she

is supposed to be: the perfect, idealized, Christian, white, Southern mother. Caddy's absent presence shows how others refuse her yearnings and ignore her subjectivity. Caddy's maternal body is the Žižekian 'sublime object.' Her body, which is almost always linked to objects, signifies traditional womanhood and the idealized and gendered images of motherhood reflected through social structures.

The placement of Caddy's tremendous influence without her participation in the narration shows that even while absent, Caddy is a subject rather than an object. The narrative structuring of the text that allows Caddy to speak without her voice present in the text suggests that she is a transcendent figure. No longer is one able to consider her a simple object, as the community and family do—Caddy's subjectivity must be taken into account. For Quentin, the mother figure inspires a kind of self-split, as he cannot reconcile his own beliefs with his love for his sister's life, which eventually leads to his suicide.

Caddy answers to all what happens around her is that if there was any real maternal love in her life, she would have been a different person. She is doomed to be a victim for her family and all the people around her. Her love adventures are a kind of negation to the hypocrisy and artificial reputation of the Compson family. Caddy's reality is emphasized through reactions and this emphasizes her subjectivity and her struggle to fight the dismay of the Compson world.

In the conclusion of *SF*, the specular relation dissolves and nothing can replace it, save a return to the original situation. This was "horror; shock; agony eyeless, tongueless" (335). The shattering of the self, of the imaginary representation of the subject and the failure of the sublime that does not lead to the beyond of the present, but a return to the same deafening horror, a "bellowing sound, meaningless and sustained" (301), "hopeless and prolonged" (303), an indefinitely repeated echo of this shattering explosion, "mounting toward its unbelievable crescendo" (335), inconceivable since it bears no relation to time

and, thus, cannot find its resolution in any possible decrescendo. “Whether a hiatus or a howl, it is an eternalized moment of horror, which nothing can dispel, save the reestablishment of the specular relation, that is dumb idiocy closed upon itself, like a fist around the narcissus” (Pitavy 102). While Quentin and Benjy do not become completely accountable to the new social community that Caddy represents, they are shown as being haunted by the past; it is a troubling embodiment that refuses her seductive self-rationalization. By tracking the interaction of recalling past events and the immediate occurrences, *SF* reveals a female presence by recollecting symbols of and partially obscuration. She is a representative of the “differend”. Instead of the romantic voice that looks for a harmonious integration, it is the desperate voice and oppressed minds of the troubled which are the major figures for the traumatic sublime. As Lyotard’s states:

the traumatic sublime is a sensation unable ever to be sated or savoured and one that ultimately finds more impetus from impossibility than possibility itself. As a result,... it finds accord with my understanding of the call of the *differend*; indeed, the traumatic sublime is a result of the impossibility of the *differend* to ever attain total resolution or unmediated resonance of the inaudible. (Lyotard, *Literature and the Trauma of the Differend*, 173 emphasis added)

Thus, Faulkner’s characterization in *SF* is entangled by its complexity and it invokes a deep-rooted wish to reread his perceived story through the eyes of the overwhelmed literary cosmos. His style of writing requires fragmentation and obscurity of language to reflect the departure, absent-present, and different that narrates the tragic story. This obscurity comes parallel with the complicated relation of the sublime with the trauma. Both men and women are exposed to trauma, however, the Modernist literary movement at the beginning of the twentieth century alters the author’s imagination in renovating the artistic ways that adhere to cultural changes. Among these is the overwhelming implication of the modernist female transforming her situation

from an objective to an active subject, who were allowed to be actual women and not angels or ornamental dolls, even when they faced acute trauma. *The Sound and the Fury* outlines various subjectivities while also emphasizing that the subject-subject sublimity which renders a modernist version of subjectivity.

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