

The Sound and the Fury published in October of 1929 was Faulkner's fourth novel, today this novel has generated many critical interpretations. After many documentation about the science what is today called 'psychology' I decided to use William Faulkner's character, Benjy Compson from the novel entitled *The Sound and the Fury* as a 'living' example of a slight schizophrenia which could possibly develop through the years. I arrived to this conclusion from his behaviour, his associations and the way he experiences the events that take place around him. In the following paper I would like to prove or give evidence of the complexity of this character which was created such way that probably neither Faulkner was aware of. This because we should be aware of the fact that this science is relatively young. The following approaches examine: the attitudes, language, behaviour and experiences of a mentally ill person.

The short introduction of the character which is in fact a self- introduction has nothing to do with dates or places, the introduction is in the first person narrative:

Through the fence, between the curling flower spaces I could see them hitting. They were coming toward where the flag was and I went along the fence. Luster was hunting in the grass by the flower tree. They took the flag out, they went to the table, and he hit and the other hit [...] we went along the fence and they stopped and we stopped...(Faulkner 1)

First I would like to examine the language Benjy uses throughout the narration. As it is observable from the quoted passage Benjy is incapable of structuring complex sentences as autistic or schizophrenic patients who are very economical with words. He explain the continuous action with the same verbs and nouns: "fence"(3), "hitting"(3). He is also incapable of using conjunctions other than the "and" , to link two clauses or utterances: "*and he hit and the other hit*"(Faulkner 1), "*and they stopped and we stopped*"(Faulkner 1), instead of saying "they stopped at the same time we stopped too" or just simply "we also stopped". At first glance these sentences moreover the whole narration part appears as an excerpt from a diary of a child but as we know these are the words of a 33 years old man, if we can call him a man. As a critic observed:

What seems most interesting is the way Benjy's comparative incapacity becomes his individual capacity and power. His inability to conceive of casual sequences enables him to notice a very great deal as it happens. And his failures at 'trying to say' become his 'saying' to the reader, sooner or later a reader ceases to regard Benjy's words as the language of an 'idiot'. (www.uea.ac.uk/j339/Faulkland.htm)

In the course of the reading the reader accommodates to the narrative style and gives up all the expectations and principles of grammar. Critics and even the creator of this character, Faulkner are likely to use Benjy's language, a language of an "idiot" which is rather a pejorative adjective for this language, but we must think about the fact that it can be labeled a language of an idiot only if we add that this is a one of a 33 years old man's. But anyway the meaning of the adjective 'idiot' today broadened its connotation so we must specify which of the many refer to this character. The 'stupidity' of this language generates from the fact that we tend to translate it from 'idiot-talk' into our own language, just to be able to get along with this text and to be able to appreciate it. The same critic made an observation which would support the earlier mentioned procedure:

If we think of Benjy's talk like another language we must not think of it as a fully decodable, interpretable language, even in principle. And *that* makes all the difference. We may hear or even speak Benjy's language -but we still- fairly fully understand each other's words or utterances. (www.uea.ac.uk/j339/Faulkland.htm.)

Another interesting feature of his language is that sometimes he uses statements as '*my throat made a sound. It made the sound again...But my throat kept on making the sound*' (Faulkner 38) and he repeats it several times, he speaks of his organs as if these were a separate entity, this can be also a sign of schizophrenia, as if his mind would be split and as if these organs would act against his will, as it is called at the schizophrenic patients a 'split personality'. But interestingly he is able to formulate this phenomenon: '*I couldn't tell if I was crying or not*' (Faulkner 38)

Crying also belongs to his language, but it is more a defense policy for him, as we all know he is mute and his thoughts are already translated to us by Faulkner. The problem which can make a conclusion of the linguistical approach is the fact that if we want to appreciate this text we are required 'to go on with something we can't actually succeed, in imagining something it is not all obvious has a sense to imagine' (www.uea.ac.uk/j339/Faulkland.htm)

A following approach of the psychopatology would be that of the free associations. This concept can be broadly examined during Benj's narration. To examine all these would require a whole study case but a few considerations are sufficient to illustrate my point. The technique called stream of consciousness is applied by Faulkner (as well as by James Joyce or Virginia Woolf), this technique presupposes a variety of free associations (past and present, things and perfumes and states of mind). But first I would like to give a brief definition of what an 'association' really means:

The successive items we hear or the chunks we create- may just be bonded together by so that each tends to elicit the next one in recall[...] Associations can function over long periods as well as short ones, and there is no specific limit to their number[...]. It does not matter whether presentation or auditory or visual.

(Nesser 228)

In Benj's case we can identify this associations a) by the passages written by Faulkner with italics or b) by the connotations of words (senses, perfumes as in the case of Caddy, who first smells like trees but as soon as she lost her virginity this perfume ceases to exist: *'I pulled at her dress and we went to the bathroom and she stood against the door, looking at me. Then she put her arm across her face and I pushed at her, crying'* (Faulkner 67). Benj associates the idea of his sister with the idea of his mother, Caddy for him is like a mother-figure, she means for him: protection, peace, order and above all love. Some older people who are mentally ill or especially schizophrenic develop a jealous delusion, with no apparent basis in fact, as Benj who figures out only by his olfactive senses that a sexual act took place in Caddy's life and she ceased to be the embodiment of purity. As Maureen McArdle observed these people earlier mentioned become fixated on the idea that the

relative who cares for them doesn't pay enough attention to them or doesn't love them enough. If the relative even talks to someone else the older person can erupt into a jealous rage (McArdle pp4)

A normal person can react to these associations, moreover there is a so called filter theory by which we can consider that our attention is similar to a filter. Some signals are 'passed' further, while others are 'rejected'. (Nesser 208) Only that information can affect our response or can be memorable which passes further, Benjy's mind is disturbed, however his filter functions but the response for us is hardly understandable because they are just simply confessed without any additional information. That is why it is important to notice that only those recollections are mentioned that created some kind of association with the present. The filter theory belongs to Broadbent. It is very hard to follow Benjy's narration because he jumps from one recollection to the other without any transition, and it is not a problem for him to do that, in the course of moments.

Benjy connects concepts similar to a brainstorm, past and present it makes no sense, he lost his sense of time. A healthy person organises the stimuli, they can leave behind those stimuli that are not connected to their actual activities. According to Atkinson schizophrenic patients react to a lot of stimuli at the same time and they can't handle the variety of these. (Atkinson 451) His memory of Caddy makes him moan, he instinctively knew that it was time for Caddy to arrive from school, so he wanted to welcome her at the gate. This moaning in the present annoys Luster because he doesn't know that Benjy remembered Caddy's arrival, he senses only the actual manifestation of these recollections. The *gate* 'It 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.' (Faulkner 50), and referring to the present 'Ain't nothing to quiet him, T.P. said. He think if he down to the gate, Miss Caddy come back' (Faulkner 45).

There is also a phenomenon which is closely related to the association and makes up the main part of Benjy's narration and this is called sinesthesia: such experiences when the modality of perception

is accompanied by another modality of perception, as 'colored hearing'. When we perceive the sound we can see the color of the sound, its perfume, taste or touch (Révész 138). The setting in the novel is described as if Faulkner employed Benjy to give the frame of the story, told by an almost perfect narrator who sees everything but doesn't ask why these happen. Faulkner leaves the reader to draw the conclusion: 'I could smell the bright cold' (Faulkner 4) or the entire Patterson episode functions mainly to contribute to the complete picture of the Compson world.

Another aspect that correlates the personality created by Faulkner is his reactions to the world around him. I would like to start with a quotation made by Faulkner himself:

To that idiot, time was not a continuation, it was an instant, there was no yesterday and no tomorrow, it all is this moment it all is now to him. He cannot distinguish between what was last year and what will be tomorrow, he doesn't know whether he dreamed it, or saw it.

(<http://everything2.com/index.pl?node-id=797391>)

Benjy as autistic or schizophrenic people has a good memory but he can't separate the present and the past which is an explanation for the fact that even past is so animate and close as the present. Schizophrenics usually can react normally to the life around them, they are often introverted and don't react to those stimuli that would make them happy or sad. According to Atkinson:

But this can hide sensual distortion and inner conflicts, consequently sometimes they burst out in fits of anger. Sometimes the patient manifests feelings that are not proper for the actual situation or thoughts. As their feelings are influenced by their thoughts it is not surprising that a disorganized way of thinking and sensual perception is accompanied by changes (Atkinson 451)

This can be seen or demonstrated in the passage when Versh and Quentin try to make Benjy drink, he describes it detailed; *'It was hot on my chin and on my shirt. Drink! Quentin said. They held my head. It was hot inside me, and I began again. I was crying now and something was happening inside me and I cried more, and they held me until it stopped happening'* (Faulkner 20).

It is clear for us that he can't explain his own 'feelings' or sensations, these burst out quick and start again in any minute, and they originate from those events that disturb his daily routine or order.

But as a conclusion we must add that a schizophrenic is of course still a human being, and indeed a thinker but what makes him different is the fact that his thinking and associations 'take him to' somewhere deeply strange. They live something that we can best enter imagining or entertaining. (Sass pp73)

Without these characters the link between literature and psychopathology wouldn't be so interesting and probably so obvious but our luck is that even though old-time novelists as Faulkner weren't aware of such phenomena as autism or schizophrenia, they succeeded in creating memorable characters both for literature and science. I would like to finish my paper with a quotation by James Mill who in 1829 affirmed the following:

Our ideas spring up or exist, in the order in which the sensations existed, of which they are copies. Instead of the creation of something new in each act of remembering there is only the arousal of something that already exists. (Dennis 281)