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Disabled or Idiosyncratic? Rethinking Mind and Language in Faulkner's Benjy

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Abstract

This paper examines the construction of disability identity in William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929). In this novel, Benjy, the mentally disabled character, narrates the first chapter, one of the angles from which the story is told. This paper aims to show how Faulkner refashions various ideas about disability in his construction of Benjy. As such, it forms part of the emerging critical reconceptualization of disability informed by literary disability studies. It suggests that Faulkner criticizes the dynamics of normativity and constructs an empowering disability identity. The study incorporates different corpus stylistic techniques, based on thematic and transitivity analyses. These analyses revealed interesting ideas about Benjy's language, narrative voice and themes that support the construction of his idiosyncratic mind. Their findings constitute the basis for literary interpretations, allowing theories drawn from literary disability studies to be synthesized in support of disability stylistics.

Keywords: disability identity, social constructionism, literary disability studies, disability stylistics, mind style, empowering identity, extraordinary mind

1 Introduction

The Sound and the Fury is narrated in four chapters. Benjy is the youngest of the Compson children and the narrator of the novel's first chapter entitled 'April 7, 1928'. Quentin and Jason Compson are the narrators of the second and third chapters, entitled 'June 2, 1910' and 'April 6, 1928'. The fourth chapter is narrated from an omniscient perspective and it is not of interest to this paper.

Benjy's disability identity is a central concern in critical studies of the novel. Studies of Faulkner's text have made different arguments, interpreting Benjy as an 'idiot', 'animal' or 'autistic' character.

The term 'idiot' has been pervasive in scholarly interpretations of Benjy's character (Cecil, 1970; Gresset, 1982; Pitavy, 1983; Ware, 1983; Ross, 1989; Berk, 1991), due in part to the fact that Faulkner himself called him an 'idiot', 'I had already begun to tell [the story] through the eyes of the idiot child since I felt that it would be more effective as told by someone capable of knowing what happened, but not why' (quoted in Meriwether and Millgate, 1986: 235). Reliance on the conventional perception of Benjy as an 'idiot' allows poor readings of the

linguistic and literary constructions of his mental disability.

Other studies of Benjy (Brooks, 1990; Griffiths, 2002; Larson, 2014) have approached him as a dehumanized figure in the text, influenced by Faulkner's references to him as an 'animal' in his interviews: 'You can't feel anything for him because he doesn't feel anything (...) He was an animal', 'Benjy is incapable of good and evil because he has no knowledge of good and evil (...) He was an animal' (quoted in Meriwether and Millgate, 1986: 246, 235). Despite the fact that the animal imagery is present in the novel, these critics have overstated it, and by doing so, have neglected all the other ways in which Benjy is represented.

To move Benjy's character outside the realm of 'idiocy', a handful of studies (McLaughlin, 1987; Samway and Silver, 2010; Chaloupka, 2012) have linked his behaviours to 'autism', within a methodological approach where the 'Medical Model' of disability is more fully employed to study a fictional character. These studies have focused on medicalizing Benjy and overlooked the fact that he is a fictional character that is constructed through language. They have refused to distinguish between the actual experience of 'autism' and Faulkner's literary construction of mental disability.

These diverse responses to Benjy have underestimated his narrative potential and the distinctive language that Faulkner uses to construct his disability. They have shown an unawareness of the cultural perspectives and the shifting disability meanings raised by disability studies. While criticizing Faulkner's representation of Benjy, they have failed to notice how Faulkner produces a textual narrative using disability. To fill this gap, the main objective of this paper is to examine the linguistic and literary constructions of disability within the conceptual frameworks of 'disability stylistics' and 'literary disability studies'.

2 Frameworks and Methods

This paper examines the construction of disability, through a co-operative approach that integrates corpus stylistic and disability studies' perspectives. This approach would result in a deeper analysis of the text, that would not have been possible by keeping the corpus methods and the literary theoretical approaches unrelated.

2.1 Literary Disability Studies

Within the realm of 'literary disability studies', scholars use literary writings to examine how images of disability alter through time (Davis, 2013). This, according to Hall (2016: 17), invites readers to think about the literary representations of disability, processes of identification and ways in which disability reconfigures forms of literary writing. The study of Benjy from a literary disability studies' perspective, grounded in the social constructionist and

stylistic perspectives on disability, can shift critical understandings of Benjy and reshape perspectives on the construction of his disability.

A central argument of this paper is that Benjy's disability is socially constructed and the language of his narrative is richer than most critical studies have acknowledged. The 'Social Model' of disability is incorporated in this study. This model perceives the medicalization of disability as inappropriate, and rejects its focus on the state of illness rather than its social origins and effects (Davis, 1995, 2013; Oliver, 1996; Garland-Thomson, 1997; Shakespeare, 1997; Thomas, 2002). The strength of this model derives from its belief in the difference between impairment and disability. It perceives impairment as a medical trait or a health condition which affects the functioning of the mind or the body, while it understands disability as a form of social experience (Oliver, 1996: 33).

This paper draws on Davis' ideas (2013) and examines how conceptualization of normalcy affects understandings of disability. Davis' article on 'Constructing Normalcy' (2013) moves conflictingly to study the construction of normalcy rather than the construction of disability, arguing that the problem is not in people with the disabilities, but 'it is the way that normalcy is constructed' (9). Within this context, Garland-Thomson (1997) introduces the term 'normate', which resembles Davis' the 'norm' (2013), and is contrasted with the 'deviant Other' to reinforce normativity.

The deconstructive challenges to identity construction brought about by the postmodern notions of destabilization and difference have inspired this reading of Benjy. A postmodern view of disability recognizes the instability of identity and shows that the line between disability and normalcy is vague (Corker and Shakespeare, 2002). Central to Derrida's influence on postmodern thought is his concept of 'Différance' which explains that the traditional binary opposites are no longer to be understood as separate entities, but rather as terms that operate diacritically (1968: 20). Based on Derrida's ideas, the normate and the disabled are not the exact opposites, because 'Différance' exceeds opposition or dualism.

This paper develops a new reading of Faulkner's construction of disability identity. Following the postmodern view of disability, it recognizes the instability of identity and highlights Faulkner's empowerment of his disabled character. It destabilizes the normative notions and stereotypes emphasized in prior studies; this is intended to denaturalize the construction of disability and destabilize the cultural meanings of difference and deviance.

2.2 Disability Stylistics

The linguistic construction of non-normative identities can be examined using techniques from what would be called ‘disability stylistics’. Although there is not such a dedicated critical field of stylistics according to Hermeston (2017) which has attempted to explain its possible use in the analysis of literature, it would provide various stylistic tools to examine different perceptions of disability.

A study of ‘mind style’, as suggested by Leech and Short (1986) and Fowler (1996) for the stylistic studies of characterization, and for disability studies by Hoover (2016) and Hermeston (2017), can be advantageous for examining idiosyncratic modes of consciousness. This can be done in relation to the possible linguistic deviations in Benjy’s disability narrative.

‘Mind style’, according to Fowler (1996: 21), is ‘the world-view of an author, or a narrator, or a character, constituted by the ideational structure of the text’. According to Hermeston (2017), mental disability could be studied in terms of linguistic deviations such as ‘unusual transitivity patterns’, ‘under-lexicalisation’, ‘simple syntax’ and ‘non-standard spelling’ (Leech and Short, 1986; Fowler, 1996; Gregoriou, 2014).

The concepts of ‘foregrounding’ and ‘deviation’ would provide an important means of stylistic analysis to study the literary construction of mental disability (Hermeston 2017). Foregrounding involves deviations from linguistic or other socially accepted norms, when compared against the background of what is normal or expected (Leech and Short, 1986: 57). Deviations from linguistic norms are of interest in disability stylistic analysis, where foregrounding describes the stylistic effects of linguistic deviations.

This paper concentrates on examining ‘transitivity patterns’ to indicate Benjy’s mind style and destabilized voice. Linguistic deviations are also explored through ‘keyness’ analysis, by comparing Benjy’s disability narrative to his normative brothers’ narratives.

2.3 Corpus Stylistics

Corpus stylistic analysis provides neutral insights into the text, and the quantitative information adds objectivity to the investigation. It offers a useful way to identify linguistic patterns which are not noticed in conventional readings of the text (Stubbs, 2007; Mahlberg, 2010; Mahlberg and McIntyre, 2011; Ho, 2011).

However, as Sinclair (2007: 1) argues, empirical linguists ‘are always at risk of having their scholarly reports greeted with cries of So What? (...) The findings from careful data analysis are often fascinating to the researcher that he forgets that the rest of the world wants an evaluation of the data and not merely report on it’. Corpus analysis is more concerned with

procedure rather than outcome. The use of corpus methods without any interpretative analysis is incomplete. Within this context, McIntyre (2015) argues for an ‘integrated corpus stylistics’; in other words, to integrate corpus stylistics with other analytical frameworks and qualitative stylistic tools, like it has been suggested in this paper for the stylistic frameworks of ‘mind style’, ‘foregrounding’ and ‘transitivity’.

Equally important, this paper integrates corpus stylistics with literary criticism informed by critical disability studies. According to Stubbs (2007), corpus stylistic analysis provides a more detailed descriptive basis for the literary interpretations of the novel.

2.4 Analytical Frameworks

Through corpus methodology, thematic analysis is conducted to explore the language employed to foreground different aspects of Benjy’s disability identity. The transitivity analytical framework is employed to study the linguistic patterns associated with disability.

2.4.1 Keyness

According to Stubbs (2007: 1), ‘individual texts can be explained only against a background of what is normal and expected in general language use, and this is precisely the comparative information that quantitative corpus data can provide’. Reference corpora provide norms and can assist in the identification of linguistic patterns that point to significant stylistic features (Mahlberg and McIntyre, 2011: 207). One of the most common approaches is to choose a very general reference corpus. However, according to Sinclair (2004: 17), this approach is likely to draw attention to linguistic differences that are not sufficiently significant to be worth examining. For this reason, in this corpus analysis, a reference corpus that is similar in content is manually created by combining Quentin and Jason’s corpora.

The notion of ‘keyness’ is defined by Scott and Tribble (2006: 55-56) as ‘a quality words may have in a given text or set of texts, suggesting that they are important, they reflect what the text is really about, avoiding trivia and insignificant detail’. Keyness analysis leads to a closer thematic study that would reveal salient themes and linguistic features thematically relevant to disability construction.

Scott (1997) coins the term ‘keyword’ to refer to words which have a significantly high or a significantly low frequency in a specific text when compared to a reference corpus. Another way of considering keyness is to look for words with related meanings. By comparing ‘semantic domains’, researchers can focus on groups of words that individually are not statistically significant (Mahlberg, 2010).

This paper uses Wmatrix for keyness analysis because it automatically tags for semantic

domains. In Wmatrix, the statistical relationship is quantified by a chi-squared or log-likelihood (LL) statistic. Since the corpora are relatively small, in line with Walker (2010), this paper uses a cut off level of 10.83. This, according to Rayson (2008) and Walker (2010), can increase the statistical reliability of the results.

Keywords are examined using concordance lines which show them in different contexts. However, concordance lines only display information, they do not interpret it (Hunston, 2002: 65). The results obtained from the concordance analysis are interpreted using theories inspired from disability stylistics and literary disability studies.

2.4.2 Transitivity

This paper uses Halliday's transitivity framework (1985) to show how meanings are emphasized to foreground non-normative identities, more specifically in terms of voice, mental functioning, world view and idiosyncratic powers. Arguably, Faulkner attributes particular transitivity patterns to Benjy to stylistically foregrounds his idiosyncratic mind style.

The major process types associated with the transitivity system of the clause, and that this paper aims to explore are material, mental, verbal and behavioural processes. 'Material processes' are defined by (Halliday, 1985: 67) as processes of 'doing' and 'happening'. They are expressed with two main participant roles: 'the actor' which represents the doer of the process, and 'the goal' affected by the process.

Grouped into three sub-categories of perception, emotion and cognition, 'mental processes' are associated with two inherent participants: 'the senser', which Halliday (1985: 72) defines as 'the conscious being perceiving, reacting or thinking', and 'the phenomenon', which 'is perceived, reacted to or thought about'.

'Verbal processes' are processes of saying with three main participants: 'the sayer' who is communicating, 'the target' to whom the message is addressed, and 'the verbiage' that is the message being conveyed (Halliday, 1985).

'Behavioural processes', according to Halliday (1985), are placed somewhat between material and mental processes and embody psychological action. The basic components of behavioural patterns are the 'behavior' and the 'process'.

This paper uses Sketch Engine to identify transitivity patterns used to foreground Benjy's deviant mental functioning. This software enables the selection of the query types (lemma, phrase, word form and Corpus Query Language) needed for different types of investigation. It offers the possibility to manipulate concordance lines based on the type of analysis undertaken.

3 Quantitative Findings

This section generates the quantitative findings from thematic and transitivity analyses. Creating the balance between quantitative and qualitative analyses is the basic tenet of this study.

3.1 Thematic Findings

Table 1 groups salient words which are likely to relate to the construction of Benjy's disability identity, and filtered to include keywords that are investigated to address this paper's specific objectives.

Word	Raw Frequency in Benjy's Corpus	Raw Frequency in Quentin and Jason's Corpora Combined	Log-likelihood
Caddy	278	36	557.49
hush	105	17	198.52
fire	48	9	86.79
branch	27	3	56.07
hushed	23	1	55.15
cry	35	15	43.42
bottle	20	2	42.45
fence	34	15	41.41
quiet	28	13	32.97
bright	18	4	30.70
crying	30	18	29.09
bellering	10	0	27.34
cushion	12	1	26.34
smelled	18	6	25.74
bowl	9	0	24.60
tree	19	8	23.83
cellar	8	0	21.87
moaning	14	4	21.56
cried	15	5	21.45
ball	10	1	21.22
spoon	6	0	16.40
flag	8	1	16.18
moonlight	8	1	16.18
flower	9	2	15.35
shapes	9	2	15.35
gate	18	9	14.96
lighting	5	0	13.67
candles	6	1	11.25
flowers	10	5	11.18
balls	4	0	10.93
garden	5	2	10.92
moaned	4	0	10.88
slipper	6	2	10.88

Table 1 shows that words to do with silence are key in Benjy's corpus. The crying-related words are also salient. Names of objects are frequently used in Benjy's corpus in comparison with his brothers' corpora. The word *smelled* is key in the corpus.

Table 2 groups relevant key semantic domains in Benjy's corpus. *Sound: Quiet* is a salient semantic domain, indicating that silence is a dominant motif in Benjy's corpus. Within this

context, the semantic domain *Speech: Not Communicating*, although not salient, is relevant grouping the words *shut up and keep quiet* which implies silencing. The interesting point is that these words are mostly used with reference to Benjy also in the other corpora. The semantic domain *Sad* is key in Benjy's corpus, indicating the dominance of crying. The semantic domain *Sensory: Smell* is salient in this corpus, foregrounding the sense of smell as a powerful element.

Semantic Tags	Semantic Domains	Log-Likelihood	Words in Semantic Domains
X3.2-	Sound: Quiet	223.10	hush <105>, quiet <28>, hushed <22>
04.6+	Temperature: Hot on Fire	49.85	fire <48>, hot <4>, warm <2>, blaze <1>, burning <1>, lit<1>, burnt<1>, burn <1>
E4.1-	Sad	49.76	cry <35>, crying <26>, cried <15>, upset <1>
X3.5	Sensory: Smell	10.99	smelled <18>, smell <15>

3.2 Transitivity Findings

For the study of Benjy's transitivity profile, a search for the personal pronoun *I* is made with the use of Sketch Engine. This analysis concentrates on examining the transitivity roles attributed to Benjy as the grammatical subject of the clause, as it is concerned with Benjy's individual mental functioning rather than his role in passive constructions. The concordance lines obtained are sorted to the right to identify the different types of processes attributed to Benjy.

Process	Type	Frequency
see	Mental (perception)	32
smell	Mental (perception)	28
hear	Mental (perception)	21
feel	Mental (emotion)	2
hush	Behavioural	38
cry	Behavioural	24
look	Behavioural	7
listen	Behavioural	2
breath	Behavioural	1
go	Material	19
hold	Material	7
sit	Material	4
run	Material	4
get	Material	4
come	Material	2
eat	Material	2
clawed	Material	2
open	Material	2
pull	Material	2
cut	Material	1
fall	Material	1
move	Material	1
put	Material	1
touch	Material	1

Table 3 shows that 40% of Benjy's processes are mental processes, typically verbs of perception (*see*, *smell* and *hear*), foregrounding his role as a 'perception sener'. The results also show that Benjy is not attributed any type of mental cognitive verbs, a reflection of his mental limitations.

Benjy is not attributed any verbal processes. He does not speak in his narrative which is entirely mediated through interior monologues.

Another 35% of the total number of processes attributed to Benjy are the behavioural processes *cry* and *hush*, relating to the two opposing elements of voice and silence. However, although Benjy's frequent cries and hushes are regarded as behavioural according to Halliday's definition (1985), it is difficult to decide the process type as these verbs also denote attitude and *cry* would be taken as a verbal process if read in Kristeva's 'semiotic language' (1984).

Benjy's material processes, which constitute 25% of the total number of processes in his chapter are expressed in simple, past tense clauses with everyday verbs denoting his routine activities.

In the main, the transitivity construction of Benjy demonstrates through linguistic elements his idiosyncratic mind style. Benjy experiences the world through sensory functioning not cognition. He has limited linguistic and cognitive abilities but shows a high sensory awareness.

4 Qualitative Analyses

This section takes the analysis from quantitative to qualitative, and interpretations are drawn from disability stylistics and literary disability studies. More space is assigned to the interpretation of the patterns found in qualitative analysis, than to quantitative findings.

4.1 The Sound of Silence

The corpus stylistic analysis of Benjy's chapter reveals the disabled character's silence. The analysis presented here identifies the language used to express the distinctive functions of voice and silence.

4.1.1 Hushed when *Trying to Say*

Benjy's voicelessness is explored in the transitivity analysis which has shown that he is not associated with any verbal processes. One motif that relates to his voicelessness is found in the expression of his failed attempt to verbally communicate, *trying to say*. This is illustrated in the semantic domain *Trying Hard*; although this is not salient in Benjy's chapter, as it appears as a recurrent motif in the whole novel, it is worth studying by virtue of its link to voicelessness. It shows realizations of the lemma *try* frequently used with reference to Benjy. Nine instances of *trying* and 12 instances of *tried* refer to Benjy; of these, ten are followed by

the verbal process *say*. The example concordance lines support the view that Benjy cannot verbalize his feelings and ideas:

- 1-I went along the fence **trying to say** and they went faster.
- 2-I came to the corner of the fence and I couldn't go any further, and I held to the fence, looking after them and **trying to say**.
- 3-I opened the gate and she stopped, turning. I was **trying to say**, and I caught her **trying to say**, and she screamed
- 4-I was **trying to say** and trying and the bright shapes began to stop and I tried to get out
- 5-They looked at me, walking fast, with their heads turned. I **tried to say**, but they went on.

Benjy's voicelessness has been discussed in the prior literature (Ross, 1989; Bleikasten, 1990; Berk, 1991), but this has focused on documenting elements of silence in some of the scenes recalled by Benjy, rather than examining the language used to convey his voicelessness. Benjy's voicelessness has also been medicalized by critics approaching him as 'autistic' (McLaughlin, 1987; Samway and Silver, 2010). McLaughlin (1987: 23), as an example, claims that Benjy, like many 'autistic' children, 'is mute because he produces no recognizable words', principally stemming from him 'being unaware that speech has meaning'. These critics have failed to notice the social boundaries that foster Benjy's voicelessness. His silence is an outcome of social isolation, creating an atmosphere of social disablement, as much as it is created by his mental deficiency.

Between Benjy's voicelessness and his failed attempt to verbally communicate rests the hushing motif that is salient in his chapter. The concordance search reveals that of its 23 occurrences, *hushed* co-occurs with *I* referring to Benjy 17 times:

- 6-She went away. There wasn't anything in the door. Then Caddy was in it. "Hush". Caddy said. "I'm coming". **I hushed**.
- 7-Charlie went away. "Hush". Caddy said. "He's gone". **I hushed**.
- 8-Caddy said, "hush up Benjy. You want them to hear you". **I hushed**
- 9-"Hush. I wont anymore". So **I hushed** and Caddy got up
- 10-Luster said (...) " Now, git in that water and play and see can you stop that slobbering and moaning". **I hushed** and got in the water
- 11-He looked toward the house. "Hush." Luster said. " He fixing to give it back." He gave it to me and **I hushed**.
- 12-Luster said "Look there." The fire was there. **I hushed**. "Cant you set and look at the fire and be quiet like mammy told you." Luster said.
- 13-Dilsey opened the firedoor and drew a chair up in front of it and I sat down. **I hushed**. "What you want to get her started for", Dilsey said. "Whyn't you keep him out of there".
- 14-Caddy let me down, and **I hushed**. "Let him stay here, Mother. When he's through looking at the fire, then you can tell him."

Generally, the keyword *hush* is used in the imperative mood, and in 80 of its occurrences, different characters command Benjy to hush; Benjy is being silenced:

- 15-Now, just listen at you. Luster said. "**Hush up**. What he moaning about now".
 16-Dilsey was signing in the kitchen and I began to cry. "**Hush**". T.P. said. "Come on. Les go down to the barn".
 17-I had the spools and Quentin fought me and I cried. "**Hush**". Frony said. "Aint you ashamed of yourself. Taking baby's play pretty".
 18-Mother said, "how can I lie there, with hi, bawling down here. Benjamin. **Hush** this minute".
 19-Dilsey came up the stairs. "**Hush**." she said. "Hush. "Take him down home, T.P".
 20-Father was there, in his shirt sleeves. The way he looked said **Hush**.

Benjy is also ordered to stay quiet on many occasions and by different characters through the use of the words *quiet* and *shut up* that are salient in his chapter:

- 21-"You hush your mouth and **get quiet** then". Dilsey said.
 22-"You set and look at the fire and **be quiet** like mammy told you". Luster said
 23-I held to the fence. "**Shut up** that moaning". Luster said
 24-"Haven't you got your Caddy. Cant you **shut up** that moaning and slobbering" (...) Luster said.
 25-Versh said, "You shoe done it now. I'll declare if you aint **Shut up** that yelling".

These lines show that Benjy is a hushing target for many normate characters. By the recurrent hushes of Benjy, Faulkner foregrounds the silencing of a disabled character. The normate's hushes foster social disablement.

To sum up these ideas, one of the important aspects of Benjy's disability identity is his failed attempt to verbally communicate. His voicelessness is created from the outside, by means of the normate, being the group in power, not allowing him to communicate. It is, accordingly, a social construct rather than an individual attribute.

4.1.2 Idiosyncratic Cries

Faulkner uses distinct sounds to foreground Benjy's deviant voice. Based on the thematic salience of crying-related words and semantic domains, crying is established as the sound of Benjy's chapter.

The word *cry* occurs 35 times, out of which 26 occurrences are about Benjy's cries. The cluster *I began to cry* is repeated 17 times. The concordance search of this cluster reveals that the sources of Benjy's distress are mainly Caddy and his obsessing objects:

- 26-Caddy put her arms around me, and her shining veil, and I couldn't smell trees anymore and **I began to cry**. "Benjy", Caddy said. She put her arms around me again, but I went away.
 27-Her eyes flew at me, and away. **I began to cry**. It went loud and I got up. Caddy came in and stood with her back to the wall, looking at me.
 28-"I'll run away and never come back." Caddy said. **I began to cry**. Caddy turned around and said "Hush" So I hushed.
 29-It went to the door, and the fire went away. **I began to cry**.
 30-The long wire came cross my shoulder, and the fire went away. **I began to cry**.
 31-Then I couldn't see the swing. **I began to cry**.

The word *crying* occurs 30 times, 25 of which are related to Benjy. The word *cried* occurs 15 times, with eight occurrences of the phrase *I cried* referring to Benjy:

32-Caddy came in and stood with her back to the wall, looking at me. I went toward her, **crying**, and she shrank against the wall
 33-I pulled at her dress and 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**.
 34-Charlie came and put his hands on Caddy and **I cried** more. **I cried** loud (...) He came back. **I cried** louder and pulled at Caddy 's dress
 35-I saw her eyes and **I cried** louder and pulled at her dress.
 36-"Miss Caddy done gone long ways away. Done got married and left you. You cant do no good, holding to the gate and **crying**". Versh said

Concordance lines 32-35 show that Benjy cries to communicate his dislike of the change in his sister when she first wears perfume and dates Charlie. Concordance line 36 shows Benjy crying over the loss of his sister.

One of the first critics to discuss Benjy's crying is Bleikasten (1990: 189) who suggests that Faulkner employs crying as an articulation of Benjy's loss. This corpus stylistic analysis supports this view and takes it a stage further to show that Benjy's suffering mainly stems from the loss of his sister, expressed through moans and cries. Another point that might be added to this discussion, and that Bleikasten (1990) has overlooked, is that Benjy's cries over Caddy stem from his resistance to change.

Faulkner uses Benjy's cries to foreground his linguistic difference. This language, if understood, possesses meaning in the social context as it conveys Benjy's feelings and ideas.

In order to find further evidence to support the claim that crying is Benjy's voice, a global search for semantic domains that might relate to crying is made. This reveals that the semantic domain *Speech Acts* groups the words *moaning*, *howled*, *moaned* and *moan*, demonstrating that crying is the voice that Faulkner assigns to Benjy. A concordance search for these words (example concordance lines 37-40) reveals that Benjy's moaning is useless on many occasions:

37-"What are you **moaning** about", Luster said. "You can watch them again".
 38-Luster said. "Hush up What he **moaning** about now." " Lawd knows "
 39-"You cant do no good **moaning** and slobbering through the fence". Versh said
 40-"You get done with that **moaning** and play in the branch like folks". Luster said.

Overall, Benjy's frequent cries function as a response to pain, a resistance to change, and a means of communication. Rather than trying to understand what Benjy's cries are for, normative characters repress them with expressions of annoyance and control. At this point, Benjy's attempts to communicate through sounds are futile, as the normative is unable to interpret them. If crying is considered as the only voice of Benjy the other characters can hear, he is often silenced and is not allowed to express himself.

The focus on the language of voice and silence from a critical stylistic perspective of foregrounding and deviance would be useful in this study of disability. Benjy's disability is non-normative and deviant in terms of language and voice. This is linguistically foregrounded through the failed attempts to verbally communicate and the frequent hushes, to achieve the

stylistic effects of Benjy's idiosyncratic voicelessness. Benjy's idiosyncratic cries operate as elements that foreground his linguistic Otherness.

These ideas bring Spivak's notion of 'subaltern silence' (1988) into the realm of the linguistic discussions of Benjy's voicelessness. According to Spivak (1988: 307), in a white male-dominated culture, the female subaltern is not offered enough room to speak. While Spivak (1988) focuses on the female subaltern's silence, this paper broadens her ideas to examine the disabled subaltern. Spivak (1988) puts a special emphasis on the 'element of noise'; claiming that the communication between the subaltern and the non-subaltern is interrupted because of this. McLeod (2000: 195) endorses this view and argues that 'it is not so much that subaltern did not speak, but rather that others did not know how to listen'. The subaltern cannot speak because their voices 'cannot be properly interpreted'. Hence, subaltern silence is the 'result of a failure of interpretation and not a failure of articulation'. Benjy speaks, but his idiosyncratic voice is not recognized and properly interpreted within a normative culture. His voicelessness is socially constructed and meets Spivak's definition of subaltern silence (1988).

4.2 The World of Senses

The transitivity analysis has revealed Benjy's extraordinary sensory abilities. Benjy's sensory obsessions with objects also signify important segments in his life, indicating his idiosyncratic mind style.

4.2.1 Extraordinary Senses

In transitivity terms, Benjy is assigned the role of the 'perception sener' in his narrative, which exhibits a rich sensory world. Benjy actively uses and interprets different senses; repeated mentions of certain sense fragments are identified.

Verbs of perception frequently follow the modal auxiliary verb *could*. *Could + verb of perception* foregrounds Benjy's role as the 'perception sener'.

The investigation of the cluster *I could smell* demonstrates that Benjy possesses an exceptional sense of smell. The personal pronoun *I* referring to Benjy precedes all but one of the 11 occurrences of the cluster *could smell*. All concordance lines are sorted to the right to identify what Benjy smells:

41-I **could smell** the cold. The gate was cold.
 42-I couldn't feel the gate at all, but **I could smell** the bright cold.
 43-I **could smell** the clothes flapping
 44-Versh closed the door black. **I could smell** Versh and feel him.
 45-Her feet walking fast away, and **I could smell** it.
 46-A door opened and **I could smell** it more than ever
 47-My eyes went shut. I didn't stop. **I could smell** it.
 48-T.P. unpinned the bed clothes, he said. "Shhhhhhhh." **But I could smell** it.
 49-He shut the door, but **I could still smell** it.

Benjy's ability to smell the cold might signify his sorrow after the loss of his sister (concordance lines 41 and 42). This implies that Benjy is unable to perceive abstract concepts like loss, and can only articulate them through his senses.

Concordance line 43 shows that Benjy could smell the clothes flapping. Motion and smell merge in Benjy's troubled mind, resulting in unexpected sensory pattern. According to Polk (1993: 145-146), Benjy's mind does not distinguish among different sensations. However, although his queer sensory patterns reflect sense bewilderment, they still demonstrate an extraordinary ability to smell and articulate abstract concepts through sensory functions.

In concordance lines 45-49, *it* refers to death or sickness, showing that Benjy infers the death of his father through smell. The statement 'Father was sick there' verifies Benjy's perception and demonstrates his heightened sensory abilities. When Benjy talks about the smell he senses upon his father's death, he continues: 'He smell it. T.P. said. Is that the way you found it out?'. T.P. gets astonished at the way Benjy recognizes the death of his father through his extraordinary sense of smell.

Faulkner's attribution of a unique and strong sense of smell to Benjy is also revealed in the thematic analysis. The word *smelled*, repeated 18 times in the chapter, is used to compare Caddy's smell to the smell of trees and leaves. Benjy has the ability to sense anything that changes in his family, such as his father's death and Caddy's loss of virginity, manifested in the repeated statement 'I couldn't smell trees anymore and I began to cry', when she dates a man and on her wedding day:

50-Hello, Benjy. Caddy said. She opened the gate and came in and stopped down. **Caddy smelled like leaves.**
 51-What is it. What are you trying to tell Caddy. **Caddy smelled like trees** when she says we were asleep.
 52-Father lifted me into the chair too, and Caddy held me. **She smelled like trees. She smelled like trees.**

A close examination of *could* + *hear* points to Benjy's ability to react to auditory impressions. Out of the 38 occurrences of *could hear*, 20 instances follow the personal pronoun *I* referring to Benjy, and the remaining instances follow the personal pronoun *we*. Like smell, the lines show Benjy's idiosyncratic hearing abilities:

53-**I could hear** Caddy standing behind me,
 54-"Hush." Caddy said. "He's gone." I hushed. **I could hear** her and feel her chest going
 55-**I could hear** the clock and the roof and Caddy
 56-**I could hear** Caddy standing behind me
 57-I looked at the bright, smooth shapes. **I could hear** the fire and the roof
 58-**I could hear** the roof it's still raining
 59-I went to the bathroom door. **I could hear** the water.

Benjy's vision is also a main feature that highlights his sensory abilities. Benjy's visual sensation is intense and illustrated in the cluster *I could see*. These lines demonstrate Benjy's ability to react to his visual impressions. Visual images trigger sensory associations that bring back past memories:

60-Through the fence, between the curling flower spaces, **I could see** them hitting.
 61-Then **I could see** the swing and I began to cry.
 62-We could hear the roof. **I could see** the fire in the mirror too.
 63-In the corner it was dark, but **I could see** the window.
 64-**I could see** them flapping
 65-**I could see** the bright shapes

Benjy experiences the world purely through sensory associations. He exemplifies a unique mode of perception, one that is characterized by extraordinary senses and sensory associations, foregrounding his idiosyncratic mind style.

4.2.2 Sensory Obsessions

Benjy develops a unique mode of perceiving certain objects through sensory functioning. The thematic analysis of his chapter has revealed the linguistic patterns used to demonstrate this exceptional obsession with objects.

Object obsession has been discussed by some critics (McLaughlin, 1987; Samway and Silver, 2010; Chaloupka, 2012); however, their discussions are parts of their overall studies of Benjy's assumed 'autistic' behaviours. None of these studies has recognized how object obsession and sensory associations shape the text, and the way Benjy experiences the world through his senses.

Benjy's obsession with objects is identified through keyword analysis which demonstrates that the names of small everyday objects are salient (see Table 1):

66-"Has he got to keep that old dirty **slipper** on the table", Quentin said. "Why don't you feed him in the kitchen".
 67-I couldn't see it, but my hands saw it, and I could hear it getting night, and my hands saw the **slipper** but I couldn't see myself
 68-"Here". Dilsey said. "Stop crying, now". She gave me **the slipper**, and I hushed
 69- Take that **cushion** away, Candace. "He'll cry". Caddy said.
 70-Mother said (...) "He must learn to mind". **The cushion** went away. "Hush, Benjy".
 71- Mother caught me in her arms and began to cry, and I cried. Then the **cushion** came back and Caddy held it above Mother's head. I hushed
 72-"You can look at the fire and the mirror and the **cushion**" (...) Caddy said
 73-Caddy gave me **the cushion**, and I could look at **cushion** and the mirror and the fire.
 74- "Hush". she said. "You can go right back. Here. Here's your **cushion**". See.

Some of these objects recall Benjy's relationship with his sister. Concordance lines 66-68 show that in Caddy's absence, Benjy is obsessively attracted to her slipper, which fills the void created by her loss. The slipper functions as an object that comforts Benjy. Concordance line 66 illustrates Miss Quentin's reaction to Benjy's dining with Caddy's slipper. Upon Miss Quentin's remark about the slipper, Benjy moves backward in time to remember a past incident when Caddy fed him: 'I'll feed him tonight. Caddy said. Sometimes he cries when Versh feeds him'. Through this chronological move, Faulkner makes the reader aware that Benjy connects with Caddy through objects that belong to her.

While many critics, including Cecil (1970), McLaughlin (1987), Berk (1991), Griffiths (2002), Samway and Silver (2010) and Larson (2014), have regarded Benjy's communicative capacities as limited, the use of Caddy's slipper as a narrative technique demonstrates his powerful communication. Adding to his extraordinary sensory ability, Benjy uses sensory associations to narrate.

Concordance lines 69-74 illustrate Benjy's obsession with the cushion. This obsession in maintained through sight and might symbolize the mother figure in Benjy's mind. The cushion reflects Benjy's attempt to establish a comforting world through sensory functioning.

Another obsession for Benjy is fire, which consistently attracts his attention. *Fire* is a keyword in Benjy's chapter, and the semantic domain *Hot on Fire* is salient:

- 75-There was a **fire** in the house, rising and falling
 76-We went to Mother's room. There was a **fire**. It was rising and falling on the walls. There was another **fire** in the mirror.
 77-I began to cry. Then I looked at the **fire** again and the bright, smooth shapes went again.
 78-"Cant you set and look at the **fire** and be quiet like mammy told you", Luster said.
 79-"Here, look at the **fire**". Dilsey make your hand stop hurting.
 80-Luster said, "Look there." The **fire** was there. I hushed.
 81-I could hear the **fire** and the roof and Father took me up.
 82-We could hear the **fire** and the roof.
 83-The fire came behind me and I went to the **fire** and sat on the floor, holding the slipper. The **fire** went higher.
 84-We went to the bed. The **fire** went out of the mirror. I began to cry.
 85-A long piece of wire came across my shoulder. It went to the door, and then the **fire** went away. I began to cry.
 86-The long wire came across my shoulder, and the **fire** went away. I began to cry.
 87-Quentin looked at the fire. The **fire** was in her eyes and on her mouth.
 88-Caddy's head on Father's shoulder. Her hair was like **fire**, and little point of **fire** were in her eye.

Concordance lines 79 and 80 show Benjy's sensory impression of the of fire. Concordance 76-78 and 84-86 show that fire functions as an object of comfort to Benjy. Fire is depicted in his mother's room (concordance line 76); the reflection of fire on her hair and the fact that it does not reach it might reflect Benjy's distant relationship with his mother. The fire light is reflected in Miss Quentin (concordance line 87); her presence is highlighted by fire. Caddy is

identified with fire (concordance line 88); this description is more developed. This suggests that fire is developed as a sensory fragment that foregrounds Benjy's perception of femininity.

Benjy relates to his objects of obsession through sensations, and his world view is idiosyncratic. He develops extraordinary senses and extraordinary sensory obsessions with objects. Benjy's unusual transitivity and queer sensory patterns reveal an idiosyncratic mind style.

5 Literary Discussions: Illuminating Benjy's Extraordinary Disability

This paper is centrally concerned with elucidating the fluid and unstable nature of disabled identity. It suggests that Faulkner sympathetically approaches the disabled Other. Despite the fact that these findings have revealed Benjy's voicelessness and limited cognition, they have highlighted his idiosyncratic experience with language, communication, sensory associations and fragmentation through which Faulkner constructs a disabled, yet extraordinary mind. This paper coins the term 'extraordinary mind' in accordance with Garland-Thomson's notion of 'extraordinary bodies' (1997), to study Benjy's disability as a state of stunning difference. Benjy is discussed in terms of difference, exploring his extraordinary abilities that most critics have not accredited.

Some leading disability scholars have claimed that stories need normativity. Davis (1995: 09) argues that if disability appears in a novel, it is rarely represented centrally, as the novel's structure tends to be ideologically normative. According to Garland-Thomson (1997: 9), disabled characters are not usually the protagonists of stories. This view suggests that disability is often placed at the margin of literary narrative and employed only to reinforce normativity.

Although normativity creates Benjy's Otherness and deviance, Faulkner challenges this claim by giving him considerable narrative attention. Benjy is not only the protagonist of the story, but Faulkner shifts the core of the narrative inside his consciousness. Benjy's inability to speak makes the reader experience the story only through his perceptions. Faulkner recalls the story as an impression of Benjy's senses. Through the use of sensory associations, Faulkner offers a unique interpretation of consciousness. Faulkner, accordingly, rethinks marginal Otherness and places Benjy at the centre of narrative and linguistic discourses.

Benjy's voicelessness can be seen from a different perspective. Sounds and images replace words, and silence operates as an idiosyncratic mode of communication. Faulkner uses these semiotic elements as a means to develop an extraordinary voice.

Postmodern feminists Kristeva (1984) and Cixous and Clément (1986) believe that silence can be used to resist male linguistic dominance. Kristeva has identified two aspects of language: the 'semiotic' aspect that comes from the 'maternal' and is closed to the 'unconscious', and the 'symbolic' aspect that is identified with the 'father figure', and is associated with the 'conscious' (1984: 4). Kristeva argues that it is necessary for the female to establish another form of communication, to challenge masculine discourses and reinforce the feminine 'semiotic aspect of language', that is 'unspeakable and unavailable to conscious verbalization' (1984: 4-5). Allied with Kristeva's arguments, Cixous and Clément (1986: 38) have suggested constructing an 'idiosyncratic feminine linguistic discourse', and claimed that if the female relied on male linguistic discourses, she would become 'linguistically disabled'; silence challenges linguistic disability.

Benjy's silence is discussed in light of the postmodern feminist approach to female silence as a means of empowerment. Confronting normative linguistic discourses, Benjy can be read in Kristeva's notion of the 'semiotic' (1984) that challenges the conscious verbal language. Faulkner makes the non-normate resist linguistic normalcy and express himself in a normative culture, to celebrate an extraordinary disability identity. Benjy's silence meets Cixous and Clément's argument about the necessity of silence as an idiosyncratic form of expression (1986). Faulkner employs Benjy's verbal silence as an endeavour to articulate an idiosyncratic mode of expression.

Benjy proves capable of communicating his needs through sounds like crying and moaning. Bressler (2007: 195) regards his language as infantile, referring to Kristeva's study of 'maternal semiotic language' that represents the 'pre-lingual communication between the infant and his mother'. The language of imagery echoes relentlessly in the narrative where Benjy's role as the 'perception senser' is emphasized. Benjy speaks in the semiotic language of sounds and images, making his idiosyncratic voice more empowering than expected. This semiotic voice constitutes the traditionally marginalized Other's aspiration to escape normative-imposed silence. It challenges normative linguistic discourses constructed in the narratives of Quentin and Jason.

Benjy's cries manifest a desire to communicate, and crying is employed as a narrative voice. This idiosyncratic sound is not only used to reinforce a destabilizing narrative voice, but also to highlight Benjy's extraordinary communicating ability, that is undermined only by the normate's inability to interpret his language. Rather than emphasizing Benjy's voicelessness, in line with Spivak (1988), the normate's inability to listen should be highlighted.

Equally importantly, although Benjy's cognition is limited, he responds to sensory stimuli and makes associations through them. So, rather than emphasizing his disabled consciousness, Faulkner's use of sounds, smells and images to develop an extraordinary mode of narration and construct an idiosyncratic mind style is emphasized.

Benjy's semiotic language is a symbol of a unique voice and an extraordinary mind style. This abstract language of imagery, where symbols and sounds are substituted for words, demonstrates Faulkner's skill in turning mental disability into an extraordinary mind state.

6 Conclusion

This paper examines the language employed to construct disability experience and explores how Faulkner subverts linguistic and stylistic conventions to serve the literary purpose of constructing an idiosyncratic disability identity. It has revealed that disability identity is linguistically and socially constructed. It has shown the linguistic elements used by Faulkner to foreground Benjy's disability and revealed his idiosyncratic mind style.

Following the lead of disability scholars (Davis, 1995, 2013; Garland-Thomson, 1997; Bérubé, 2016; Hall, 2016) who have disassociated disability from impairment and moved towards a more positive identification of disability to broaden the considerations of the disability within literary and aesthetic contexts, this paper has approached the disabled Benjy as an extraordinary character. This approach would make a significant contribution to literary disability studies by subverting the dominant conceptualization of disability as a site of defect. It highlights an empowering identity for a character whose disability is socially created by his normative counterpart's understandings of normalcy. The concern with transgressed boundaries and the fluidity of identity is at the core of Faulkner's construction of mental disability. Faulkner challenges the stereotypical constructions of normativity and constructs an idiosyncratic disability identity.

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