



LUND
UNIVERSITY

Aili Pettersson Peekler
ENGK01 Literary Seminar
Autumn Term 2011

The Use of Allusions in William Faulkner's
The Sound and the Fury

English Studies
The Centre for Languages and Literature
Lund University
Supervisor: Birgitta Berglund

Contents

Introduction	1
Biblical Allusions	2
Pre 19 th Century Allusions	7
19 th Century Allusions	11
Post 19 th Century Allusions	15
Conclusion	19
Works Cited	20

Introduction

The literary term *allusion* springs from the Latin verb *alludere*, which, according to *Encyclopedia Britannica*, means “to play around”, or “to refer to mockingly”. However, if one uses this etymological definition, the use of literary allusions goes far beyond an amusing play with words. As a part of the larger concept of intertextuality, allusions are frequently used in order to strengthen the bond between author and reader, as well as creating another level to the literary work enclosing it. The use of allusions makes it possible for the writer to deepen the meaning of his or her story by enriching the text and creating a discourse involving both earlier works and the reader.

Also according to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, “an allusion can be used as a straightforward device to enhance the text by providing further meaning, but it can also be used in a more complex sense to make an ironic comment on one thing by comparing it to something that is dissimilar”. This quotation points to the complexity of allusions, a complexity that hints at how it might require some effort from the reader to fully understand and appreciate them. Some allusions might not even be intentional by the author, but regardless of this fact they still contribute to the work and provide a possibility to improve the reader’s interpretation of it.

William Faulkner is an author widely known not only for his rather complicated and experimental writing, but also for his pervading use of intertextuality and allusions. Drawing parallels to a wide range of literature Faulkner demands quite a lot from his readers, expecting them to recognize and decipher these allusions in order to fully understand his texts. In his novel *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) this is made especially clear; along with a rather innovative narrative technique that further complicates the novel there are a great number of literary allusions which, when deciphered, contribute to and enrich the perplexing story.

In this essay I am going to analyze how the literary allusions used contribute to Faulkner’s story by locating and interpreting these allusions. I will discuss the different allusions found in the novel, and by mapping these allusions, I will try to account for any major influences and intertextual patterns present in the novel. I am also going to categorize the allusions found depending on to which era the literary work referred to

belongs. The main purpose of this essay is thus to state the allusions used in *The Sound and the Fury* and, by analyzing their importance, to show in what way(s) they play a substantial part in the understanding of Faulkner's novel.

Biblical Allusions

Since the Bible has been a most influential piece of literature ever since it was written it should not come as a surprise that the work of a writer obviously fond of literary references is pervaded by biblical allusions. As Donald Palumbo states in his article concerning the concept of God in Faulkner's writing, "Faulkner is heavily influenced by the Judeo-Christian tradition, which pervades his work on every level of analysis and from which he borrows concepts, symbols, images, and allusions central to the meanings of those works" (142). This statement illuminates how important the analysis of the biblical allusions in Faulkner's work is, an importance Julia Kristeva very elegantly pinpoints in an interview on intertextuality; "[i]f one reads Faulkner without going back to the Bible [...] I believe one cannot reconstitute the complexity of the text itself" (Kristeva¹). With this in mind the analysis of the biblical allusions used in *The Sound and the Fury* should appear as a matter of course in an essay concerning the use of allusions in a Faulkner novel.

The occasions where Faulkner refers or alludes to the Bible in *The Sound and the Fury* are indeed many, although the degree of legibility may vary. Some of the more evident allusions refer to psalms, as when Mrs. Compson exclaims "he was to be my joy and my salvation" (96), referring to her favourite son Jason and how he is her only hope. This fragment alludes to Psalm 51, which includes the lines "restore to me the joy of your salvation / and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me". Equally obvious are the places where Faulkner makes allusions containing Biblical names, a device that immediately makes the reader aware of the Bible's presence. In one of Quentin's more

¹ This quote is originally from an interview with Julia Kristeva, conducted by Margaret Smaller, published in *Intertextuality and Contemporary American Fiction* in 1985 and translated by Richard Macicsey. There is no proper dividing into paragraphs, which is why that cannot be referred to.

or less confused and confusing monologues his forgetting of a glass leads him to think “I had forgotten the glass, but I could *hands can see cooling fingers invisible swan-throat where less than Moses rod*” (157). In this passage he refers to Exodus 17 and the story of how Moses is able to bring cooling water from the rock at Horeb by striking it with his rod.

These rather obvious and verbatim allusions can also be seen as a means used to make the reader alert to more subtle and comprehensive ones. By looking closer at the more conceptual allusions used in *The Sound and the Fury*, places where allusions are used in order to create all-pervading ideas and understandings can be found. One such all-pervading idea is the Eden Myth. This myth is particularly present in a scene very central to the novel, namely the scene where Caddy has climbed a tree in order to be able to watch her grandmother’s funeral through the window. The importance of this scene is emphasized by the many places and times where Faulkner has stated it to be the actual reason for the rest of the novel. In one of the 1957 and 1958 sessions at the University of Virginia where students got the chance to ask Faulkner questions about his works, one student who asked Mr. Faulkner if he had made any conscious attempts to use Christian references when writing *The Sound and the Fury* even received the answer “No. I was just trying to tell a story of Caddy, the little girl who had muddied her drawers and was climbing up to look into the window where her grandmother lay dead” (Gwynn and Blotner 17).

Despite Faulkner’s own refusal of any connection between this scene and the scenery of the Garden of Eden, or any other Christian connection for that matter, there are several similarities that indicate otherwise. First of all, the actual episode when Caddy climbs the tree begins when “[a] snake crawled out from under the house” (40). Needless to say, the snake is an animal strongly connected to the Bible, and it certainly plays an important role in the Garden of Eden. Moreover, the tree Caddy climbs is a fruit tree, and she climbs it in order to do something forbidden, just as Eve eats the fruit in the Garden of Eden in order to gain forbidden knowledge. Further suggestion for this connection appears a couple of pages later when Dilsey orders Caddy to get down from the tree with the words “[y]ou, Satan. [...] Come down from there” (47). In having Dilsey call Caddy “Satan”, Faulkner makes the reader highly aware that other, more

expansive, allusions might be present in the text, an awareness that clearly makes the setting of the mythical garden nearer in mind.

Further allusions to the Garden of Eden are made in a passage where Quentin recalls Caddy's wedding day, thinking that "*the curtains leaning in on the twilight upon the odour of the apple tree her head against the twilight her arms behind her head kimono-winged the voice that breathed o'er eden clothes upon the bed by the nose seen above the apple*" (98). The repeated mentioning of a tree, here even an apple tree, immediately carries the mind to the Tree of Knowledge and Good and Evil and thus to the Garden of Eden. Quentin's recalling of a "*voice that breathed o'er eden*", presumably the voice of Benjy, further indicates a connection with the Eden myth, and as John T. Matthews argues, all these parts considered "we may see that Faulkner wants to recall the scene of Eve's temptation by Satan in the Garden of Eden" (116).

If the scenery of this crucial event is to be rendered as the Garden of Eden, then it should also be appropriate to argue for severe similarities between Caddy and Eve. As mentioned earlier, Caddy is the one who is disobedient to her father and climbs the tree on the day of Damuddy's funeral, just as Eve is disobedient to God when she eats the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. The fact that Caddy's muddy drawers disgust both Jason and Quentin adds a sense of "filthiness" to her, as if she is a sinful person, just as Eve is sinful when eating the forbidden fruit. Furthermore, Benjy often refers to his beloved sister as "smelling of trees", which again can be said to allude to the Garden of Eden and therefore support the idea of Caddy as an Eve figure. When Quentin, in another of his contemplating sessions, thinks "[d]one in Mother's mind though. Finished. Finished. Then we were all poisoned" (95), we are given further evidence concerning this idea. Caddy is "poisoned" by her promiscuous behavior, just as Eve is poisoned by eating the apple in the Garden of Eden. As indicated by this passage, Caddy's behavior also affects the whole Compson family, much in the same way as Eve's disobedience and subsequent poisoning affects the whole humanity according to the Eden myth.

As for the male characters, there are connections with biblical persons in both Benjy and Quentin. To start with, there is Benjy's age. He is 33 years old at the time when *The Sound and the Fury* takes place; an age many critics have argued not coincidentally coincides with Christ's age at the time of his crucifixion. Likewise, most

of the events of the novel are set during the Easter holidays. This fact is but one that illuminates the Biblical manifestation present in Faulkner's novel, and this manifestation indicates that the obvious similarities between Christ and Benjy should not be dismissed without further analysis.

There is also the question of Benjy's name. First christened as Maury (after Mrs. Compson's brother whom she is very fond of), he is renamed Benjamin when his mental retardation cannot be overlooked any longer. In spite of not being the name of Christ, the fact that Benjamin is a biblical name makes the Bible substantially present in the novel, and the way in which the etymology of Benjy's name is discussed several times further emphasizes this. Benjy himself once remembers a conversation between Caddy and Dilsey where Caddy, when confronted with the change of Benjy's name, states that "Benjamin came out of the Bible [...] It's a better name for him than Maury was" (58). Quentin reflects over Benjy's connection to the Bible when remembering him as "Benjamin the child of mine old age held hostage into Egypt" (154), referring to Genesis 42-44 where Benjamin, the son of Jacob and Rachel, is kept as a hostage by his brother Joseph.

Further details supporting the idea of Benjy as a Christ figure are present when Dilsey is talking to Benjy (not bothered by the fact that he might not understand what she is saying, let alone answer her) after Reverend Shegog's Easter sermon. She tells him "[y]ou's de Lawd's chile, anyway. En I be His'n too, fo long, praise Jesus" (281). These words can be interpreted as meaning that Dilsey will be the "Lawd's" child when she dies and supposedly comes to heaven, while Benjy, because of his holy characteristics and utmost innocence, which will be dealt with later, already is the "Lawd's" child.

Richard North claims that "[b]oth Benjy and Christ possess the capability of existing outside of time" (13), another correlation between the two characters. He further explains how the limitation of Benjy's mind forces him to exist in a state that is best defined as "outside of time", since he bounces between different days of his life depending on the experience of his senses. A sudden sound or smell can take Benjy's mind years backward, which creates the feeling that he exists in a world where time does not matter. Even though this characteristic is not something Benjy himself is aware

of, it is just the way he functions, the capacity of existing outside of time is a capacity positively shared with Christ.

Ultimately, Benjy Compson is a character who, just as Jesus Christ, endures and suffers for things he does not deserve to suffer for. However, there is also a great difference between the two characters present in this particular aspect. Because as much as Benjy suffers from abuse he clearly has done nothing to deserve, he still suffers involuntarily. His mind is simply too deficient to deliberately make such a decision as to suffer for other people's sins, and this fact is often put forward by critics who claim that Benjy Compson by no means is supposed to be a Christ figure. What these critics do not take into consideration is the fact that allusions also can be used in order to "make an ironic comment on one thing by comparing it to something that is dissimilar", as the *Encyclopedia Britannica* puts it. By comparing Benjy to Christ, Faulkner is able to throw light upon both the similarities and the differences between these two characters; a light that elegantly deepens the reader's understanding of Benjy Compson. The characteristics Benjy does share with Jesus Christ are accentuated by these allusions, but the limitations of his mind stand out even clearer when compared to a character as widely worshiped as Jesus, since most people certainly do not regard the mind capacity of Jesus Christ to be limited.

The comparison between Benjy's brother Quentin and Christ is another relationship that can be said to be ironic. There are indeed similarities between the two, and the allusions used to make this comparison are as evident as in the case of Benjy. The part of *The Sound and the Fury* that Quentin narrates takes place on June 2, 1910, a date that was a Thursday. Even though this of course could be a mere coincidence, Quentin's qualities as a Christ figure suggest otherwise. For instance, Quentin has his own version of the Last Supper where he shares bread with the little Italian girl whom he spends some time with (115-132). Even more significant is the fact that this Thursday is the last day before Quentin's suicide, just as the Holy Thursday is the day before Christ's crucifixion.

Furthermore, Quentin, just as Christ, gives his life up. But if the ironic difference between Benjy and Christ was that Benjy did not suffer voluntarily, the same proclivity in the Quentin case is based on the fact that he does not sacrifice himself for the behalf of anybody else. Quentin does end his own life, but his death is in no way a

gesture of sacrifice for other people. While Christ suffers deliberately, Benjy suffers because he has no choice, and when Christ dies for the sins of humanity, Quentin dies because he simply cannot stand the life he is unable to make any sense of. By making these allusions partly ironic, Faulkner does not only manage to create the complexity achieved by the use of allusions in his novel, he even constitutes a complexity within the allusions themselves.

Pre 19th Century Allusions

Leaving the several occasions where Faulkner makes reference to the Holy Scripture, there are also an extensive number of allusions to literary works written closer in time. To start with, there is of course the title. Using a quotation from Macbeth's famous soliloquy in the fifth scene of the fifth act of Shakespeare's play was certainly not something Faulkner did haphazardly. Strengthening this thesis is the critical consensus about the importance to the novel of the title, and along that Macbeth's speech, which becomes fairly easy to understand when taking a closer look at the lines in question:

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,
Creeps in this pretty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing. (Act V, Scene V)

These words are spoken by Macbeth upon his being told that Lady Macbeth has died, and as will be argued henceforth they are words of great importance to the novel as well as applicable on several of its major themes.

As Carvel Collins suggests, “[i]t seems possible to demonstrate that several elements of *The Sound and the Fury* stem from a systematic exploitation of this

Shakespearian passage” (32). Most obvious of the connections between Faulkner’s novel and Macbeth’s soliloquy is perhaps Benjy Compson, the idiot telling a tale full of sound and fury. The fact that Faulkner’s novel starts with Benjy’s section, even though this makes the story considerably difficult to understand, points at the significance of the speech. Similarly, one of the few things Benjy actually finds solace in is light, and more specifically the light of fire. Whenever he starts his bellowing and needs to be comforted he is told to look at the fire, an occupation that most times makes him quiet again. In relation to the phrase “[o]ut, out, brief candle!”, Benjy’s despair as well as the evanescence of life present in the play and echoed in the novel are clearly shown.

Another indubitable relation between the speech and the novel can be seen in Quentin’s obsession with shadows. The places where shadows are prominent in Quentin’s narrative are plenty, and there is a clear relationship between his way of looking at life and the dismal phrase “[l]ife’s but a walking shadow”. One example of a passage that seems to refer explicitly to Macbeth’s speech is when Quentin is on his way back to his room at Harvard, thinking “the stairs curving up into shadows echoes of feet in the sad generations like light dust upon the shadows, my feet waking them like dust, lightly to settle again” (155). Collins asserts that the word “shadow” appears at least forty-five times in Quentin’s chapter (34), and further indication of the importance of shadows is proved by the fact that the word first occurs already on the second page of the novel. Here Luster is looking for his lost quarter with Benjy, who tells us that they “went along the fence and came to the garden fence, where our shadows were. My shadow was higher than Luster’s on the fence” (12).

The connection between Macbeth’s famous speech and *The Sound and the Fury* can in fact expand even more, and the significance of the title thus covers much more than what might be thought at first. One such relation is suggested by Lawrence Thompson, who claims that Macbeth’s speech “nicely reflects an important element in the attitudes of Faulkner’s three major protagonists of chaos, Mrs. Compson, Quentin, and Jason” (223). He further argues that these three characters have a way of denying their own responsibility for their miserable situations, just as Macbeth denies that he is to blame for Lady Macbeth’s death. This way of expanding the meaning of the title goes well in line with what Faulkner once said when asked about the significance of the title, namely that:

The title, of course, came from the first section. I thought the story was told in Benjy's section, and the title came there. So it – in that sense it does apply to Benjy rather than to anybody else, though the more I had to work on the book, the more elastic the title became, until it covered the whole family. (Gwynn and Blotner 87)

However, *Macbeth* is not the only one of Shakespeare's works alluded to in *The Sound and the Fury*. Several critics have pointed out the similarity between Quentin Compson and Hamlet, a similarity suitably patent when taking into consideration that they are not only tragic heroes; they even share the same fatal flaw. Hamlet and Quentin are both highly indecisive, which creates the rather timid tendency to fail in action. Collins, for one, states that "[n]ot only is [Quentin] [...] presented in obvious parallels to Hamlet, but he is shown to be weak when he faints in the conflict with the potent Dalton Ames" (52-53). Collins here points to a very important similarity between the mind and personality of Quentin and Hamlet, namely that of weakness and failure. Due to his vacillation, Hamlet is unable to take revenge for his dead father, just as Quentin is unable to take revenge for the treatment of Caddy. When contemplating things such as "I was I was not who was not was not who" (154), and "[n]on fui. Sum. Fui. Non sum" (157), meaning "I was not. I am. I was. I am not", the parallels to Hamlet's existential brooding become strikingly obvious.

Further allusions are made both to Shakespeare's metaphysical poem "The Phoenix and the Turtle" and to *Othello*. In making use of the rather unusual word "defunctive" when Quentin describes a lane he is walking on just after he has run away from the little Italian girl (122), Faulkner makes a possible allusion to "The Phoenix and the Turtle", in which Shakespeare uses this particular word in the poem's fourth stanza. The fact that this poem happened to be one of William Faulkner's favorites, which is affirmed by Blotner in his biography of Faulkner (456), further strengthens the thesis that he did not use the word casually. As for the more famous *Othello*, Faulkner once uses the expression "the beast with two backs". It is Quentin who remembers this well-known phrase, which in Shakespeare's work describes the intercourse between Othello and Desdemona, in one of his desperate monologues about Caddy's sexual promiscuity (135). Just as in the case with the Biblical allusions, these verbatim allusions to Shakespeare's work can be said to serve as a means to make the reader aware of other,

more thorough, allusions to the writer and thus highlights the earlier discussed meanings of Faulkner's allusions to Shakespeare.

Another 17th century writer who obviously inspired Faulkner when writing *The Sound and The Fury* is Andrew Marvell. When Quentin, perhaps ironically, is reciting Mr. Compson's words, thinking "[m]an the sum of his climatic experiences Father said. Man the sum of what have you. A problem in impure properties carried tediously to an unvarying nil: stalemate of dust and desire" (114), the combination of the last two nouns makes the reader aware of the presence of Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" with the lines "And your quaint honour turn to dust, / And into ashes all my lust". The romantic intention of the poem creates a highly ironic contradiction when placed in the context of Quentin's mind, considering the deep troubles he has with love and sexuality, an irony well in line with earlier examples of how Faulkner uses allusions to make contradictory parallels. By alluding to a poem that deals with sexuality and romance, Faulkner makes an ironic comparison to the character of Quentin. The imagery of dust and ashes also creates further connection to Macbeth's speech with its description of dusty deaths and blown-out candles, as does the shared theme of death present in Marvell's poem and Shakespeare's play.

As for mythical characters alluded to, Quentin has often been compared to Narcissus, the young man who was so fascinated by his reflection that he died in contemplation of his own beauty. The places where Quentin looks at his own reflection in the water are indeed many, and his fascination by it is clearly manifested. Standing at the bridge where he intends to commit suicide, he thinks:

Where the shadows of the bridge fell I could see down for a long way, but not as far as the bottom. When you leave a leaf in water a long time after awhile the tissue will be gone and the delicate fibres waving slow as the motion of sleep. They don't touch one another, no matter how knotted up they once were, no matter how close they lay once on the bones. And maybe when He says Rise the eyes will come floating up too, out of the deep quiet and the sleep, to look on glory. (107)

Several passages that emphasize Quentin's fascination with looking at himself in the water (a fascination given further depth considering the fact that he is planning a death in the water), also throw light upon his previously mentioned obsession with shadows,

since it often is not only his reflection, but the shadow of himself he sees in the water. When he first arrives at the bridge, thinking “my shadow leaning flat upon the water” and soon adds, “[n]iggers say a drowned man’s shadow was watching for him in the water all the time” (85), this is clearly shown and Quentin’s obsessive fascination with reflections, shadows and death are all connected.

A narcissus also occurs in the novel when Luster gives this particular flower to Benjy in order to keep him quiet, an incident that makes the Greek myth closer in the mind of the reader with its very appearance (281). However, that this should be something symbolical or intended by the author is refuted by Faulkner himself who once said that “[t]he narcissus was given to Benjy to distract his attention. It was simply a flower which happened to be handy that fifth of April. It was not deliberate” when asked if the narcissus named had any particular significance (Stein 74). Anyhow, Faulkner’s well-known habit to be somewhat deceptive when answering questions about his work makes it reasonable to still consider the narcissus as a bearer of deeper significance, and it undoubtedly awakes the tragic myth in the mind of the reader.

Further strengthening the idea that an allusion does not necessarily have to be intended by the author are the several theories about how allusions actually exist in the mind of the reader rather than in the work itself. Joseph Pucci discusses this in his book *The Full-Knowing Reader: Allusion and the Power of the Reader in the Western Literary Tradition*, where he claims that the allusions in any literary work might expand to much more than the author was aware of in the writing process. When discussing the idea of “the active reader”, Pucci states that “the full-knowing reader is active in a unique way in that she constitutes the allusions” and that “allusive meanings exist only in the mind of the reader and, therefore, that in constituting an allusion, a reader adds something to the text she reads that is otherwise not there” (43). If acknowledging this theory, there should hence be no doubt about the importance of the flower Benjy receives

19th Century Allusions

Faulkner uses several literary works produced during the 19th century as material for his allusions as well. Starting in the Quentin section, an obvious allusion to the work of George Gordon Byron (more widely known as Lord Byron) is to be found in the encounter between Quentin and Herbert Head, Caddy's husband to be. During the conversation Head is talking about "country girls" whom he seems to find silly, and suddenly exclaims, "[w]ell, anyway Byron never had his wish, thank God" (88). Very likely referring to the wish that "womankind had but one rosy mouth" expressed by the protagonist himself in the sixth canto of Byron's poem "Don Juan", Head's seemingly spontaneous exclamation can be argued to bear much more significance than its impulsive appearance might indicate. First of all, Lord Byron's long poem about the romantic Don Juan is in itself satirical. Presented as a man who is inconveniently easy to seduce rather than a philanderer, Byron's Don Juan strikes the reader of the poem as a man victimized by his own easily won feelings. By bringing up this character, Head makes a mocking comparison of Don Juan and the young Quentin, who has a very troubled relationship to romance and similarly can be said to be a victim of his own feelings. Head thus sticks to his superior tone and makes Quentin both more neurotic and more certain of his deep dislike of the man who is going to marry his beloved sister.

Another interesting point about Head bringing up Lord Byron is the poet's relationship to his own half sister Augusta Leigh, which according to many historians and critics was of an incestuous nature. Quentin's endless attempts to convince Mr. Compson that he and Caddy have committed incest, a lie he finds less humiliating than the fact that his sister has had sexual relations with other men, makes the allusion to a poem by Lord Byron especially interesting. Supposing that Head knows of Quentin's feelings, his literary comment becomes even more apposite. Evidence that Head does suspect Quentin's improper and troubled feelings for Caddy is to be found in another section of their conversation, in which Head says:

Candace talked about you all the time up there at the Licks. I got pretty jealous I says to myself who is this Quentin anyway I must see what this animal looks like because I was hit pretty hard see soon as I saw the little girl I don't mind telling you it never occurred to me it was her brother

she kept talking about she couldn't have talked about you any more if you'd been the only man in the world husband wouldn't have been in it (100)

By explaining how it never struck him that the man Caddy talked so much and so lovingly about actually was her brother, Head lets the reader understand that he might know about the inappropriate nature of the siblings' relationship, which the reader of course already is initiated in.

A second expansive 19th century poem alluded to is Sir Walter Scott's "Marmion". This piece of narrative poetry contains a part called "Young Lochinvar", which tells the tale about a knight named Lochinvar. This brave young man intrudes upon the wedding of the fair lady he loves (who is about to marry another, seemingly unworthy, man) and manages to ride off with the woman in question in front of all the wedding guests. This allusion too is present in the conversation mentioned above, and again it is Herbert Head deriding Quentin when he says "[y]oung Lochinvar rode out of the west a little too soon, didn't he?" (88), making it clear that Quentin will not be able to save his younger sister from marrying Head in the same way as Lochinvar saved his loved one, and that Quentin should have stayed "in the west" instead of trying to rescue his sister.

What the allusion to this poem also does is spread light on Quentin's tendency to fail in action, a tendency earlier discussed in the section about the similarities between Quentin and Hamlet. By comparing Quentin to the brave and enterprising Lochinvar, "so daring in love, so dauntless in war", his incapability to be anything but a self-doubting intellectual becomes strikingly clear. Although he considers Herbert Head to be a "blackguard" unworthy of Caddy's love, and although he knows that Herbert Head is not the father of the child Caddy carries, Quentin will never be able to prevent the marriage. He surely wishes to keep his sister from marrying this despicable man, just as young Lochinvar prevents his love from marrying the man he describes as "a laggard in love, and a dastard in war", but he simply is not able to be the classical romantic hero he so longs to be. This incapability can in fact be argued to be a major reason for why Quentin decides to commit suicide, and therefore shows the cruelty of Head's ironical comparisons as well Faulkner's elegant habit to expand the complex minds of his characters by making allusions.

“Kubla Khan”, Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s famous and chimerical poem, is another literary work alluded to several times in the novel. As will be discussed, the imagery of this poem is of great importance and easily connected to the mind of Quentin Compson, but first it is necessary to state some of the places where the poem in question is referred to. The first example is present when Quentin stands on the bridge where he has just decided his suicide will take place. Looking at his own shadow in the water he thinks “debris half submerged, heading out to the sea, and the caverns and the grottoes of the sea” (85). A similar language and imagery is used just after he has stepped off the trolley car in Boston, imagining the water which is going to end his life, thinking “[t]hat’s where the water would be, heading out to the sea and the peaceful grottoes” (104). A third example of this allusion appears in the end of Quentin’s chapter, when he meditates on how much his family had to give up in order to send him to Harvard and how he knew already back then that he would be dead within a year. Here he uses the words “in the caverns and the grottoes of the sea tumbling peacefully to the wavering tides” to describe the water he conceptualizes in a stumbling and confusing interior monologue (158).

What these examples have in common is the imagery of water, a symbol whose importance to especially Quentin has already been discussed. They all deal with “caverns” and “grottoes”, and present a clear link to “Kubla Khan”, in which Coleridge describes how the sacred river Alph makes its way to the sea “through caverns measureless to man”. Water is indeed an important part of “Kubla Khan”, and the way Coleridge describes the sea as “sunless”, and similarly talks about “a lifeless ocean” makes it very appropriate for an allusion made by Quentin. The complicated feelings towards water as presented in “Kubla Khan” alternates between describing it as sacred and chaotic; as fertile or dead with frightening caverns and grottoes that appear so big as they seem “measureless to man”. This intricate approach towards water is most definitely shared by Quentin, who is frightened by it since he knows that it will end his life, yet cannot bring himself away from it. The many and long parts where Quentin looks at water or imagines it point to the importance of it, and his relationship to it is, as argued, very much like the feeling procured by Coleridge’s poem.

A fourth 19th century writer whose work is referred to is John Keble. His wedding hymn “Holy Matrimony” opens with the lines “The voice that breathed o’er

Eden”, a line repeated many times in Faulkner’s novel. Keble’s hymn goes on to describe the beautiful proceedings of a holy marriage, and this holiness makes a very ironic comparison to a wedding central to *The Sound and the Fury*, namely Caddy’s wedding to Herbert Head. This wedding has severe consequences for all three Compson brothers and changes their lives drastically; Benjy loses one of the few things he loves and perhaps the only person who actually loves him; Quentin has to face the fact that his sister is growing up and accept that her promiscuity, which he despises, has consequences; and Jason ultimately ends up taking care of Caddy’s illegitimate daughter due to this wedding. By making an allusion to a hymn about a holy marriage, Faulkner makes an ironic comparison and elucidate how the Compson brothers find Caddy’s wedding to be everything but holy. It is a marriage forced on Caddy by the fact that she is unmarried and pregnant, and her pregnancy is of course a clear sign of her promiscuity.

A second allusion embedded in the repeated mentioning of the “voice that breathed o’er Eden” can be found in Rudyard Kipling’s “The Sergeants’ Weddin’”. This poem, which also contains the phrase “the voice that breathed o’er Eden”, is about a marriage between two persons who are both “rotten bad”; the man is described as a rogue and the woman as a whore. As Wolff, Nitschke and Roberts argue, “Faulkner may have made use of similar irony in the inferences he made about Caddy's impurity prior to her wedding” (2), pointing to the similarities between Caddy and Head and the characters in Kipling’s poem. When Quentin remembers Caddy’s wedding day with the earlier discussed words “*the curtains leaning in on the twilight upon the odour of the apple tree her head against the twilight her arms behind her head kimono-winged the voice that breathed o’er eden clothes upon the bed by the nose seen above the apple*” (98), the connection between the phrase discussed in this section and these two wedding poems as well as how the allusions serve as to underline the depraved nature of this marriage is clear.

Post 19th Century Allusions

As for Faulkner's contemporary writers, there are allusions to some of them as well. When Shreve tries to explain what proceeded Quentin and Gerald Bland's fight, he retells in what a depreciatory way Bland was talking about girls, paraphrasing Bland and saying, "[t]alking about the body's beauty and the sorry ends thereof and how tough women have it, without anything else they can do except lie on their backs. Leda lurking in the bushes, whimpering and moaning for the swan, see" (151). Present here is an allusion to William Butler Yeats' "Leda and the Swan", which in turn deals with the Greek myth about how Zeus transformed himself into a swan and seduced Leda. Yeats' poem suggests that Leda was unable to resist and drive away the swan, due to the fact that her body was "laid in that white rush". The way this allusion is used in *The Sound and the Fury* is similar; Leda is "whimpering and moaning *for* the swan" (emphasis added), as if this woman's desire compelled her to let something distinctly sinful happen, which, according to Bland's degrading way to talk about it, definitely is to be despised.

This allusion provides a deeper understanding of Quentin's mentality in several ways. An explanation to why he felt the urge to start a fight with Gerald Bland is given in Shreve's retelling of it. The fight starts right after Bland has finished his contemptible monologue about women, and the words Quentin fervently utters before punching him are "[d]id you ever have a sister? did you?" (151), which shows how personally offensive he finds Bland's way of talking. Quentin is unable to stand Bland's talk about girls as promiscuous and easily persuaded, as unable to resist the swan, since it reminds him of his own as well as his family's thoughts of his sister's behavior. Bland's comments as well as his whole persona might also remind Quentin of Caddy's former lover Dalton Ames, whom he similarly tried to fight once. The fact that a long remembrance of the interaction between Ames and Quentin is present just before Quentin's failed attempt to fight Gerald Bland further proves that Quentin's urge to hit Bland springs from a recurrent need to protect Caddy.

As for novels written in the 20th century, there is a possible allusion to F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. M. Thomas Inge discusses whether or not Fitzgerald

inspired William Faulkner in the introduction to his collection of Faulkner's contemporary reviews, where he states that "Faulkner had his eye on the contemporary literary marketplace then dominated by the satiric authors of the jazz age" during the period he was writing *The Sound and the Fury* (xi). Fitzgerald can certainly be said to be a satiric author of the jazz age, and the place where his most famous novel is alluded to is in the end of Faulkner's novel, when the man at the circus has beaten up Jason. On his way away from there Jason sees "a sign in electric lights: Keep your [...] on Mottson, the gap filled by a human eye with an electric pupil" where there actually is an inserted picture of a human eye in the running text (275). This unconventional way of inserting a picture in a novel as well as the fact that it appears only once indicates that it is something that should be analyzed, and another sign of an eye in the contemporary literature of the time is the sign with Doctor T. J. Eckleburg's eye in *The Great Gatsby*. This particular eye gazes out over the valley of ashes, a dystopian and morally bankrupt wasteland, and by letting his version of it look at Jason, Faulkner compares him to this landscape and thus illustrates the morally bankrupt character of Jason Compson.

Another wasteland alluded to in *The Sound and the Fury* is T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land". It is a poem known for its great number of allusions used, and there are several examples of where Faulkner alludes to it in his novel. In one of Benjy's flashbacks, where he remembers when the Compson siblings were children, he describes Caddy with the words "[h]er hair was like fire, and little points of fire were in her eyes" (70), a likely allusion to the lines "Under the firelight, under the brush, her hair / Spread out in fiery points" in Eliot's poem. Fire and Caddy are, as stated earlier, both things very dear to Benjy, and by alluding to a poem dealing with the symbol of fire in this way (it even has a part named "The Fire Sermon") Faulkner underlines their importance to Benjy. Another possible allusion to the poem, and arguably not a coincidence when taking Faulkner's earlier discussed way of alluding to the same work in many ways and several places, appears when Quentin once again remembers his parents' discussion about sending him to Harvard and thinks "and I may knock my bones together and together" (158). "The Waste Land" approaches bones several times, one example being visible in lines 42-43 where it says "But at my back in a cold blast I hear / The rattle of the bones, and a chuckle spread from ear to ear". Interestingly, Eliot himself here alludes to Marvell's famous way of describing death in "To His Coy

Mistress”; “But at my back I always hear / Times winged Charriot hurrying near”. The passage where Quentin thinks of his short future at Harvard and the two poems are thus united in their reflection upon death.

Faulkner also alludes to “The Waste Land” in several more subtle ways, and most obvious here are the links between three of the symbols Quentin is obsessed with (water, shadow and dust) and Eliot’s poem. Quentin’s obsession with water has already been discussed in this essay, and this obsession is further developed when taking “The Waste Land” into consideration. The poem brings up water in places too many to count, and it is often connected to death and tragedy. The best proof of this is perhaps the fact that the poem’s fourth part even is called “Death by Water”, a phrase strongly connected to the character of Quentin Compson. Eliot’s poem also contains the line “I will show you fear in a handful of dust”, a line which can be found significant in comparison to the many places where Quentin sees and talks about dusty places and paths, and how he often is “tramping [his] shadow into the dust” (104). The symbol of dust is also present both in Macbeth’s speech and “To His Coy Mistress”, which makes these allusions very consistent and thorough. As for time, a matter that frightens Quentin tremendously and which he puts great efforts into not knowing, the allusions to “The Waste Land” bear significance as well. The poem connects the matter of time with the matter of death with lines such as “With a dead sound at the final stroke of nine”, and by alluding to a poem that does that, Faulkner further deepens Quentin’s apprehension of time as something that hunts him.

Ross and Polk suggest an allusion to another famous poem by T.S. Eliot, namely “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”. They claim that the allusion is to be found when Quentin is dreaming about how he wishes that he and Caddy would come to Hell due to the incest Quentin tries to convince everybody they have committed. Quentin would then be able to have his sister for himself forever since they both would end up in Hell because of this sin, and thinks “[i]f it could just be a hell beyond that: the clean flame the two of us more than dead. Then you will have only me then only me then the two of us amid the pointing and the horror beyond the clean flame” (108). According to Ross and Polk, the mentioning of the “clean flame” in this passage has similarities with the epigraph of “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”. This epigraph is taken from Canto XXVII of Dante’s *Inferno*, which tells about how the false counselor Guido is

talking about a tongue of flame. As in many cases before, it is the similarity between Quentin and the character in the work alluded to that is most obvious. J. Alfred Prufrock is depicted as a most careful man: he measures out his life with coffee spoons, postpones his every decision and cogitates over how he will roll the bottom of his trousers when growing old instead of taking action. The connection to Quentin Compson, so indecisive and contemplating that the only thing he does decide is to commit suicide, is striking. The fact that Eliot's poem ends with the words "Till human voices wake us, and we drown" is another connection between the two works, and indicate that the poem is of deep significance to many parts of Faulkner's novel. With an allusion to this particular poem, Faulkner once again creates an opportunity to characterize his characters in a subtle way and provides his readers with the possibility to expand the world of his work.

Conclusion

William Faulkner's use of allusions in *The Sound and the Fury* can first and foremost be said to serve as a means to enhance the portraits of his characters. By alluding to a great number of literary works, Faulkner provides his readers with the possibility to understand the many times complicated minds of his characters on a deeper level. As most of the allusions are to be found in the section Quentin Compson narrates, he is also the character who benefits the most from an analysis of these allusions. Several of the novel's major themes can also be connected to Quentin through important symbols, and by making thorough and coherent allusions connected to these symbols Faulkner makes the themes even more prominent and deeply rooted. To analyze the allusions used in *The Sound and the Fury* is thus important in order to fully understand the personalities of Faulkner's characters and to notice underlying themes significant to either the story or the mind of the characters involved.

Prominent for his allusive technique and well in line with the *Encyclopedia Britannica's* definition of a literary allusion is the irony used. Faulkner's allusions are seldom straightforward or clear-cut, a fact that creates an extra level of complexity in his work. Not only does the reader have to decipher the allusions, he or she also has to

consider how much of it that might serve as a partly ironic comparison. This way of ironic contrasting is often used to highlight personal qualities in the characters by making an allusion to a literary character possessing rather opposite qualities, and thus also serve as to make the personal portraits even more elegant.

Discussed in this essay are only some, as well as some interpretations of, the allusions used in *The Sound and the Fury*. Due to the fact that it ultimately is the reader's task to both recognize and interpret the allusions used and that every reader will deal with this task differently, the analysis of literary allusions can be seen as a never-ending resource question. However discouraging this insight might be to anyone setting out to analyze literary allusions and expecting to find a definite answer, this very fact also shows the endless possibilities of this literary device, and along with that the beautiful grandeur of it.

Works Cited

Primary Sources

Faulkner, William. *The Sound and The Fury*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1964. Print.

Secondary Sources

"allusion". *Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Encyclopædia Britannica Inc. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/16658/allusion>. Web. 17 Nov 2011.

Blotner, Joseph L. *Faulkner: A Biography*. USA: The University Press of Mississippi, 1974. Print.

Collins, Carvel. *Interior Monologues of The Sound and the Fury*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1954. Print

Gwynn, Frederick L. and Joseph L. Blotner. *Faulkner in the University*. Virginia: The University of Virginia Press, 1959. Print.

Kristeva, Julia. <https://www.msu.edu/user/chrenkal/980/INTEXINT.HTM>. Web. 8 Nov 2011.

Matthews, John T. *The Sound and the Fury: Faulkner and the Lost Cause*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991. Print.

M. Thomas Inge. *William Faulkner: The Contemporary Reviews*. USA: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Print.

- North, Richard. "An Examination of William Faulkner's Use of Biblical Symbolism in Three Early Novels: *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying*, and *Light in August*". Master's Thesis from Liberty University.
<http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/masters/65/>. Web. 30 Nov 2011.
- Palumbo, Donald. "The Concept of God in Faulkner's *Light in August*, *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying*, and *Absalom, Absalom!*". *South Central Bulletin*, 39.4 (1979): 142-146. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3188498> Web. 8 Nov 2011.
- Pucci, Joseph. *The Full-Knowing Reader: Allusion and the Power of the Reader in the Western Literary Tradition*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998. Print.
- Ross, Stephen M. and Noel Polk. *Reading Faulkner: The Sound and the Fury*. USA: University Press of Mississippi, 1996. Print.
- Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. London: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2005. Print.
- Stein, Jean. "William Faulkner: An Interview". *William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism*. Ed. Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery. USA: Michigan State University Press, 1960. 67-82. Print.
- "The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Anglicized Edition". Netherlands: Oxford University Press, 1995. Print
- Thompson, Lawrance. "Mirror Analogues in *The Sound and the Fury*". *William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism*. Ed. Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery. USA: Michigan State University Press, 1960. 211-225. Print.
- Wolff, Sally, Marie Nitschke and Robert J. Roberts. "The Voice that Breathed o'er Eden: William Faulkner's Unsung Wedding Hymn".
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb3524/is_34_58/ai_n29240871/?tag=content:coll. Web. 9 Dec 2011.

