

THE NOTION OF THE UNRELIABLE
NARRATOR IN NOVELS BY
IAN MCEWAN AND
WILLIAM FAULKNER

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Master of Arts
in
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by
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To my family

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AUTHOR DECLARATIONS

1. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

2. The advanced study in the English Language and Literature graduate program of which this thesis is part has consisted of:

i) Research Methods courses both in the undergraduate and graduate programs.

ii) English literature as well as American literature including novel, poetry, and drama studies, a comparative approach to world literatures, and examination of several literary theories as well as critical approaches, which have contributed to this thesis in an effective way.

3. This thesis is composed of the main sources including several books by the major authors discussed in comparison; and the secondary sources including scholarly articles from academic journals as well as newspaper articles, and theoretical books on the history and improvement of the notion of unreliable narrator in literature and narratology. I have followed the thesis style guides of Turkish universities and international universities as well as many relevant books published by university presses on this subject.

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ABSTRACT

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THE NOTION OF THE UNRELIABLE NARRATOR IN NOVELS BY IAN MCEWAN AND WILLIAM FAULKNER

The aim of this thesis is to discuss the notion of the unreliable narrator in the novels *Atonement* by Ian McEwan and *The Sound and the Fury* by William Faulkner. The notion of the unreliable narrator deserves study because it differs from an average narrator who tells the events by adhering to truth, while the unreliable narrator plays on the narrative in order to confuse the reader. He does not conform to the norms of the work and creates deviation in the narrative. He is described as the narrator whose norms do not correspond with those of the implied author. The unreliable narrator has many reasons to distort the narration, and his unreliability affects the narrative negatively, nearly changing the story line completely.

Ian McEwan and William Faulkner, although they belong to different literary trends, use unreliable narrators in their books. They show how an unreliable narrator distorts events by creating misunderstanding, fallacy, misinterpretation, lying, and hiding or delaying the truth in his narration. They represent different types of unreliability through their narrators.

Key words:

Unreliable narrator, Unreliability, Ian McEwan, William Faulkner, Narrative Theory, American Fiction, British Fiction, Modernism, Postmodernism

KISA ÖZET

Özge DAĞLI

Haziran 2011

IAN MCEWAN VE WILLIAM FAULKNER'IN ROMANLARINDA GÜVENİLMEMEYEN ANLATICI KAVRAMI

Bu çalışmanın amacı Ian McEwan'ın *Kefaret* ve William Faulkner'ın *Ses ve Öfke* romanlarında güvenilmeyen anlatıcı kavramını incelemektir. Güvenilmeyen anlatıcı okuyucuları üzerinde düşünmeye zorlamadan olayları geleneksel bir şekilde anlatan sıradan anlatıcıdan farklı olduğu için çalışılmaya değerdir. Güvenilmeyen anlatıcı okuyucunun kafasını karıştırmak için anlatım üzerinde oyunlar yapar. Eserin kurallarına uymaz ve anlatımda sapmalar yaratır. Güvenilmeyen anlatıcının hikayeyi saptırmak için birçok nedeni vardır ve onun güvenilmezliği anlatının neredeyse bütün olay akışını değiştirecek şekilde kötü etkileyebilir.

Farklı edebi dönemlere ait olmalarına rağmen, Ian McEwan ve William Faulkner kitaplarında güvenilmeyen anlatıcı kavramını işlerler. Güvenilmeyen anlatıcının nasıl yanlış anlama, mantık hatası, yanlış yorumlama ve yalan söyleme, anlatımdaki gerçeği gizleme ve erteleme gibi şeylerle nasıl anlatıyı saptırdığını gösterirler. Daha sonra anlatıcılarıyla, farklı türlerde ki güvenilmezliği işlerler.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Güvenilmeyen anlatıcı, Güvenilmezlik, Ian McEwan, William Faulkner, Anlatım Teorisi, Amerikan Kurgusu, İngiliz Kurgusu, Modernizm, Postmodernizm.

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INTRODUCTION

Narrators are of the key concepts in the analysis of a text since the nineteenth century, when they were first differentiated from the author's own voice. They narrate stories and present to the reader a fictional world. Their duty is usually to represent events as accurately as possible in their narration. However, some narrators in literature who distort the truth and fall into the category of unreliable narrators. These are the narrators whose norms and values do not conform to the reader's or who lie, mislead, or deceive the reader. There are some reasons narrator's distortions of narration and their reasons vary from psychological and sociological factors to ontological and economical factors. Also, the effects of a narrator's unreliability change from one work to another. In this thesis, I will focus on Ian McEwan's novel *Atonement* and William Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury*, in order to differentiate notion of the unreliable narrator in the two novels. They represent families of the early-mid twentieth century who are wealthy but have declining households with the corruption and loss of morals and values. These novels are exciting because they belong to different periods, yet use the unreliable narrators. They also belong to different cultures and represent the characteristics of different trends, yet are similar in the unreliability of their narrators. I will show how McEwan and Faulkner create different kinds of unreliable narrators. Apart from their narrators' unreliability, these novels are tied by some common aspects and "zeroed events." Both of the novels present the life of wealthy families by bringing out the issue of unreliability and class because the narrator tries to stimulate the reader's prejudices. Zeroed events are occluded scenes of sex. In *Atonement*, the rape scene is the

zeroed events while *The Sound and the Fury* is constantly questioning of the father of Caddy's daughter.

In the first chapter of the thesis, I focus on narrative theory. I analyse types of narrators according to some of the important critics' definitions, in order to differentiate between them in the novels under study. After outlining types of narrators, I focus on the issue of the unreliable narrator. The difficulty of identifying the unreliable narrator results in the term's slipperiness. I apply the theories of Wayne C. Booth, Ansgar Nünning, James Phelan, and Tamar Yacobi, in order to gauge the unreliability in a text. The two approaches of cognitive and rhetorical theories are outlined in order to show their characteristics. Then, the notion of the unreliable narrator is analysed considering Nünning's cognitive theory. The analysis of the unreliable narrator is subjective in cognitive theory; anything that a narrator does and says, affects the story and its interpretation. Apart from depending on conceptual frameworks, the reader should work on the structural aspects of a text in order to gauge the unreliability.

The second chapter includes a literature review of unreliable narrators in British and American literature. It shows the history of unreliable narrators beginning with the first unreliable narrator in English literature and its development through time. Then, it goes on with Ian McEwan's postmodernism that affects the unreliability of his text with its themes and techniques. Since McEwan uses unreliable narrators in his other works, some of his works are analysed in order to show that they share the same characteristic regarding the notion of unreliable narrator. After that, William Faulkner is analysed as a

modernist writer. The themes and techniques of modernism allow him to create unreliable narrators. His other works use unreliable narrator are analysed briefly.

In the third chapter, I study Ian McEwan's novel *Atonement*. It begins with the postmodernity of *Atonement* that lends it many aspects for the narrator's unreliability. I study the narrator or narrators in the novel in order to find their type. Their personalities are analysed in order to reveal the causes of their unreliability. Then the concept of the unreliable narrator is analysed by studying different aspects. Firstly, I show how the unreliable narrator distorts the story and confuses the reader. *Atonement* presents a complicated picture of a narrator with the novel's complex structure that turns out to be a metanarrative. Secondly, I explore the possible reasons for their unreliability. There are different factors that may cause a narrator to distort narration. Lastly, I discuss the effects of unreliability and how much it affects the story line, other characters, the protagonist, and even the reader.

In the last chapter, William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* is analysed regarding the notion of the unreliable narrator. This section begins with an analysis of *The Sound and the Fury* as a modernist novel. Modernism contributes to the notion of unreliability with its techniques and themes. Stream-of-consciousness, interior monologue, and free association all help Faulkner create unreliable narrators by delaying the truth. The novel has four narrators and I analyse all of them are analysed in order to see their personalities and traits clearly. Then, the representation of the unreliable narrator is studied in the novel, starting with Benjy and continuing with Quentin and

Jason. Then I analyse the reasons for their unreliability depending on the knowledge that is been given about the narrators previously.

In the conclusion, I summarize how Ian McEwan and William Faulkner use unreliable narrators. I represent the two novels comparatively with regard to their narrators. The novels are different when we analyse them considering the type of narrators, their personalities, their reasons for distorting their stories and how they change and affect the story.

CHAPTER I

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1. Narrative Theory in General

Narrative theory is one of the oldest theories as it dates back Aristotle with his famous *Poetics*. He sets up the rules by framing the narrative theory into drama and its basic components. However, through time narrative theory has undergone changes. Michael Titzmann claims this point as “To construct a poetics that, in contrast to the familiar poetics of Aristotelian tradition, was not normative but descriptive; a poetics, then, that was able to distinguish and categorize different ways in which texts can be constructed without engaging in subjective speculation about what classes of text are superior to others” (177). As it is clear, the classification of texts do not merely depend on some strict rules today.

Narrative theory turned into a science when some of the well-known theorists framed the concepts of the theory. The theory is closely related with 1960's Structuralism. With Structuralism the theory flourishes and then in 1969 French philosopher Tzvetan Todorov coins the term narratology in his book *Grammaire du Décaméron* by naming “NARRATOLOGIE, la science de récit” (Todorov, 10). Todorov names narratology as the science of narrative and he becomes a father figure in narratology. It has undergone changes since its beginning till today; yet there are still contradictions considering the boundaries of science. There are questions such as “What is narrative?, Is there any specific core that considers narratology is a science?. Or Is there any difference between narratological analysis and interpretation?”

Regarding the questions stated above many critics tried to find answers depending on their own views about narratology. The first step begins with the definition of narratology and then it goes on with the definition of its basic components. According to Mieke Bal, an important critic in this field, narratology is the theory of narratives, narrative texts, images, spectacles, events and cultural artifacts that ‘tell a story’ (3). It is compulsory to define the meaning of narrative when talking about narratology. Both narratology and narrative are complex concepts to define. Gerald Prince defines a narrative as “the representation of at least two real or fictive events in a time sequence, neither of which presupposes or entails the other” (Prince, 4). It is accepted that the narrative should include a representation and it should be in a certain chronological order. Narrative is a broad term since its text-based corpus varies greatly from novels, novellas, short stories, newspapers and articles. According to Titzmann “Narration occurs in a most diverse range of genres: in the novel, the story, the novella, the drama, the ballad and other lyric forms, the fairy tale, the saga, the anecdote, and so on. Narration can be found in a most diverse range of semiotic systems and media: in cycles of paintings, comic strips, theatre, opera, film and advertising” (179). While Titzmann accepts comic strips, some of the critics do not accept it as a narrative since they do not have text that constitutes a narrative. On the other hand, a text does not have to be expressed in language: non-linguistic signs can be used to convey the story.

Obviously, for a text to be narrative, it should basically tell a story by an agent of language, sound, or imagery. Bal describes clearly what a narrative text is by emphasising every aspect of it:

A narrative text is a text in which an agent relates ('tells') a story in a particular medium, such as language, imagery, sound, buildings, or a combination thereof. A story is a fabula that is presented in a certain manner. A fabula is a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors. An event is the transition from one state to another state. Actors are the agents that perform actions. To act is defined here as to cause or to experience an event. (5)

With this description, Bal summarizes the basic components of narrative. Text is a structure composed of some signs as stated above. Second component is the story. The story should include a fable that is a series of events presented in a logical order. The story should have actors to experience the events in the story. All of these elements come together in a certain way and constitute a text "to produce the effect desired, be this convincing, moving, disgusting, or aesthetic" (Bal, 7).

Apart from these elements, a story is composed of some aspects such as characters, events, narrator, time, place and reader as an outside agent. Characters are crucial for a story since the story cannot exist without the presence of them. As Bal states before, they are the actors of story. They perform, and act and the reader sees how the story resolves. The number of the characters changes from text to text and their inclusion in the story is varied. For example, the main characters are usually dominant throughout the story. Protagonists are the main characters of the story, whereas minor characters appear a few times. Events are what constitute a story so the story cannot be constructed without them. They are the kinetic factors of a story without events; the story remains

static without them and becomes transformed into a situation. Time and place generally go together in a story. Although not stated directly in some texts, the reader is aware of the concept of time and space. The narrator is one of the most important parts of a story since a story cannot be told without a medium. It should have a narrator whether inside of the story or from outside. He is the one who informs the reader with his ranging knowledge. Lastly, the reader should be thought of as essential part because a story means nothing without a reader. The reader analyses, interprets, and makes a conclusion. The reader is in close interaction with the narrator since the narrator tells him the story and gives the details of it.

1.2. Types of Narrators in Narrative Texts

The narrator is the most basic concept in the analysis of narrative texts. The whole of the story is narrated by him regardless of the type. Narrators differ according to their relationship with the text and narrative level. Bal states this feature of narrator: “the identity of the narrator, the degree to which and the manner in which that identity is indicated in the text, and the choices that are implied lend the text its specific character” (19). These characteristics the narrator is said to have a major function in the narrative text. While author of the novel is normally one, the story may have two or more narrators by bringing diversity of voices to the text. There are two basic relations of the narrator to the story: heterodiegetic and homodiegetic. Gerald Prince describes heterodiegetic narrator in his *Dictionary of Narratology* as a kind of narrator who is not a character in the situations and events that s/he narrates (1983). The heterodiegetic narrator is an external narrator or extradiegetic as he is not included in the story. He is

absent from the story or diegesis, yet the reader knows and feels his presence through narration. Heterodiegetic narration is generally apparent in contemporary works since it gives the author more freedom in representing characters' traits and consciousness explicitly since he is excluded from the narrative and has more power over characters and events. The homodiegetic narrator is a character in the situations and events s/he recounts (Prince, 1984). The homodiegetic narrator is sometimes called as internal or intradiegetic narrator because of his presence in the story. The narrator can be the protagonist or he can be a minor character in the story which affects the amount of information that he reflects since a minor character cannot represent every detail about the other characters. Therefore, his knowledge is limited and they are prone to unreliability. Gregory Currie suggests that "they are more commonly the source of narrative unreliability" (20).

In addition, narrators are divided into three groups according to voice. First-person, second-person, and third person narrator are three types of narrators who affect the story's narration. A first-person narrator is like the intradiegetic narrator because he is a character in the story and narrates the story according to his own point-of-view. Generally, a first-person or "I" narrator is the protagonist of the story and expresses his inner thoughts, feelings, and emotions. First-person narrators are common in the realist tradition. It allows the reader to see the deepest feelings and thoughts of the character although it offers a more limited knowledge about the consciousness of other characters. Although, the first-person narrator is used in every type of novel and in different literary movements, it is best suited to the eighteenth century individualist novel that depends

generally on the protagonist and his inner life. Personal experiences are abundant in first-person narratives. The reader has to trust the character's point-of-view rather than reading multiple perspectives.

Second-person narration is not used so much in literary texts. Although there are some well-known books that have a second-person narrator, it is frequently used in quasi or non-fictional literary genres. In second-person narrative the protagonist or other main characters are addressed with the second-person pronoun. For example, the narrator is addressed as 'you'. The narrative mode is generally used for non-fictional genres such as guide books, or game books that instruct the reader to do what is required.

The third-person narrator is usually an extradiegetic narrator who is not included in the story as a character. The story is narrated by an uninvolved agent. He narrates the events by using the pronouns 'he' or 'she', etc. rather than 'we' or 'I' which connotes involvement. Third-person narrators may be limited or omniscient depending on the knowledge that they know about the characters. In limited point-of-view, the narrator basically focuses on just one character and does not know every detail about the other characters and events that take place. However, in omniscient point-of-view, the narrator is in a God-like position and knows everything about the characters and every detail of the story such as people, time, events, and places. Wayne C. Booth names them as "reflectors" and "camera eyes" and sees them as mirrors that reflect the inner life (153). He knows every feeling and thought of the characters. Third-person narrators also vary according to its subjectivity and objectivity. A subjective third-person narrator represents feelings and thoughts of other characters and may include misleading

statements. However, objective third-person narrators recount events as they are without adding any personal comment or interpretation. They are like a projector that shows everything on the surface.

In addition to these well-known narrators, there is an alternating point-of-view that is apparent in the novels that I will analyse in this study. In an alternating point-of-view the narrator changes from time to time. Sometimes we encounter a first-person narrator with a limited knowledge and then an omniscient third-person narrator. This shift may occur on the same page or in different chapters. In *Atonement* and *The Sound and the Fury*, narrator changes at different chapters. In *Atonement*, at the beginning the narrator is third-person, but after three chapters, the narrator changes to the first-person narrator with denouement. *The Sound and the Fury* has three first-person narrators in the first three chapters and, in the last chapter it shifts to third-person narrator.

Narrators also differ according to their voice, including stream-of-consciousness, epistolary technique and unreliability. Stream-of-consciousness is a technique that modernist and other writers used to express the most secret feelings, desires, and thoughts of their characters. It is often narrated in the third-person and enables the reader to clearly see the consciousness of the character. Stream-of-consciousness includes interior monologues, or inner and fragmented thoughts. Many of William Faulkner's novels are narrated with this voice. *The Sound and the Fury* is a distinguished example of this kind.

Epistolary voice includes the use of letters in its narration. The narrator recounts his story by presenting the letters that he or other characters send to each other. This

technique can convey multiple perspectives by opening up new perspectives. An unreliable narrator does not tell true accounts of events and is untrustworthy. Unreliable narrators are often first-person narrators. The reader can detect his unreliability more easily since he is involved in the story and therefore is open to characterisation. However, there are third-person unreliable narrators who give subjective accounts. Unreliable voice is apparent in both of novels that I will analyse in this study.

1.3. The Notion of Unreliable Narrator

1.3.a. Definition and Typology of the Unreliable Narrator

The notion of the unreliable narrator has been much discussed, yet the critics have not reached a stable and fixed definition of it. Gunther Martens states, “The study of unreliable narration has resulted in a very rich number of definitional and descriptive criteria, but continues to operate without a well-defined notion and definition of its counterpart, namely narrative *reliability*” (77). The notion of the unreliable narrator is described by Wayne C. Booth in his renowned work *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961): “For lack of better terms, I have called a narrator reliable when he speaks or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say, the implied author’s norm), unreliable when he does not” (158-59). Booth’s definition of unreliable narrator depends on an implied author: “Even the novel in which no narrator is dramatised creates an implicit picture of an author who stands behind the scenes... This implied author is always distinct from the “real man” [whatever we may take him to be] who creates a superior version of himself, a “second self”, as he creates his work” (151). Booth states that the importance in unreliable narration is the distance between the norms of the

author and implied author. To define the implied author Prince borrows from Booth: “the author’s second-self, mask, or persona as reconstructed from the text; the implicit image of an author in the text, taken to be standing behind the scenes and to be responsible for its design and for the values and cultural norms it adheres to” (1983). Hence, the implied author is not the real author in the text. The reader creates an image of an implied author in his mind based on the norms, values, and morals given in the text. Not only the real author but also the narrator is different from the implied author. In the continuation of his definition, Prince claims that the implied author and narrator should be distinguished from each other because the implied author does not recount the events or tell the story as narrator, but he can be taken to be accountable for the selection, distribution, and combination of events. (1984) Therefore, it is clear that the narrator and implied author are two different concepts who fulfil different tasks in the narrative text.

Although Booth defined unreliable narrator in relation to implied author, many narrative theorists such as Tamar Yacobi, Kathleen Wall, and James Phelan oppose this definition because of the “ill-defined” concept of implied author. Ansgar Nünning claims that the term is opaque and it is hard to establish implied author’s norms as so that the term is very dispensable (34). Michael J. Toolan who is cited in Nünning, also supports that “what is at stake is not a question of moral norms but of the veracity of the account a narrator gives” (36). Hence, definitions of implied author and unreliable narrator are inadequate and consistently cause debates. These critics try to reconceptualise the notion of the unreliable narrator by appealing to rhetorical and

cognitive theories. There are different types of unreliability and kinds of unreliable narrators in literature.

For the unreliable narrator not only the definition but also the typology is a problem. There are different groups of critics who defended their own system of thinking because of the ambiguity of the term. Two different approaches to the notion of unreliable narrator are cognitive and rhetorical. In the cognitive approach, the term is reconceptualised in the context of frame theory, which suggests that the reader tries to solve ambiguities and inconsistencies by attributing them to the narrator's 'unreliability' (Nünning, 32). Cognitive narratologists suggest that unreliability is a textual phenomena based on the reader's assumptions. In a model-oriented, cognitive approach to the unreliable narrator, critics oppose the inadequate analysis of unreliability since it ignores the analysis of the structural and semantic aspects of the text. However, cognitive theorists defend that it is not enough to analyse the structural aspects and we should work on "conceptual frameworks" that require the reader's participation in the process (Nünning, 39).

In contrast to the cognitive approach, James Phelan's rhetorical approach "focuses on the interplay between authorial agency, text-centred phenomena or signals and reader-centred elements in the reading process" (Nünning, 51). It analyses all factors in the detection of the unreliable narrator by focusing on the text carefully, paying attention to the signals and clues of the implied author. In this approach the implied author conveys textual signals such as conflicts "between the story and discourse" (54).

Readers have a crucial role in drawing inferences from the narrator's statements. Phelan categorizes these text-centred indications in Nünning:

There are pragmatic indications that include frequent occurrences of speaker-oriented and addressee-oriented expressions. There are also syntactic indications of unreliability such as incomplete sentences, exclamations, interjections, hesitations, and unmotivated repetition. There are lexical indications in gauging unreliability such as evaluative modifiers, expressive intensifiers and adjectives that expresses the narrator's attitude. (55-56)

It is clear that Phelan's theory depends more on the deduction of signals and textual clues such as figures of speech that a narrator uses to distort his narration, for example; irony, anachronism, prolepsis, etc.

Both of the theories are right in their own terms, but cognitive theory is more extended regarding its boundaries. Phelan's model does not emphasize the reader's role as the most important factor in gauging unreliability in a narrative. For this reason, in order to find the reasons of unreliability, the reader's role in gauging unreliability, and how the narrator affects the narration and other aspects considering the notion of unreliable narrator will be analysed in the light of Nünning's cognitive, reader-oriented model.

Cognitive theory is a reader-based theory and all of its assumptions are based on the reader's analysis and deduction of the text. The analysis of unreliability is subjective and depends on the reader's interpretations and judgements. In a text, unreliability

results from varied sources. Critics suggest that authors create unreliability for several reasons, including a change in story line or the narrator's varied interpretations. As cited in Greta Olson, Monika Fludernik's analysis proposes that "narrators can be unreliable because of their "factual inaccuracy," their "lack of objectivity" as first-person narrators, or their "ideological unreliability" (100). Olson extends Fludernik's classification:

In the first case the narrator may lie consciously or may not have access to accurate information; in the second case, the narrator is subject to the "epistemological restrictions" typical of homodiegetic narration or may be morally unreliable (for instance, racist). In the third case the narrator's actions and evaluations may be consistent to herself but discordant with the "world view" of the reading audience. (100)

Considering Fludernik's statement, it is good to begin with her first claim "factual inaccuracy". The narrator refrains from giving an accurate version of events by hiding the truth and he lies to the reader. Even Booth warns us about lying: "[...] unreliability ordinarily is a matter of lying, although deliberately deceptive narrators have been a major source of some modern novelists" (159). Lying is an important factor in the two novels that is analysed in this thesis. The narrators of both novels, *Atonement* and *The Sound and the Fury*, are known for their unreliability because of their lying. There are different reasons for their lies, but their lying distorts the narrative.

Some narrators' accounts lack objectivity and create unreliable narrative. The narrator cannot keep his distance from some of the characters and becomes unreliable. He does not represent events as they are because his statements are subjective. In

Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, the third-person narrator is subjective in his interpretations. Despite all accusations against the protagonist, Hester, he seems to be on Hester's side. Narrators not only narrate the story but also add their commentary to it, and this commentary is constantly subjective. The amount and kind of commentary affect the story greatly. A narrator who adds his own interpretation or comment on events may turn out to be unreliable. It is important since it is accepted as a qualification of the unreliable narrator. Apart from it, the issue of objectivity depends on the type of narrator. As stated above, narrators fall into two categories according to their inclusion in the story: homodiegetic or heterodiegetic. Some critics claim the tendency of unreliability in homodiegetic narrators while others claim the opposite. Generally, the notion of an unreliable narrator is more common with a homodiegetic narrator who is a character in the story. It is more common to experience and detect a homodiegetic narrator's unreliability since the reader observes this character closely and perceives easily any inconsistency, deviations, or deficiency in his narration. Gunther Martens states that "First, the classical understanding of unreliable narration which ties unreliability to the homodiegetic regime of character narration is based on the assumption that unreliability is inferred out of an *embodied* speaker as a *character* with a very specific habitus, with traumas, experiences, social backgrounds and other ontological properties" (78).

It is easier to gauge the unreliability of a narrator if he is a character in the narrative; but for a heterodiegetic narrator it is more difficult to gauge reliability; therefore, as opposed to the traditional view, they tend to be more unreliable. The reader is at a

certain distance with an unknown narrator; he is not acquainted with him. Dorrit Cohn declares that “heterodiegetic novels [do not allow for] factual unreliability: the fictional events presented in a novel of this type, unlike those presented by an embodied narrator in first-person novels, cannot be understood as falsified or distorted by the narrator, since the belief in their accuracy enables for the reader the existence of the imagined world.” (307) The heterodiegetic narrator is freer to narrate, as he likes. He can distort the narration without making the reader feel the inaccuracy. According to Ryan who is cited in Martens: “The heterodiegetic narrator enjoys total verbal freedom. He can say whatever he wants, without breaking any appropriateness conditions and without losing his credibility. He may also choose to limit his knowledge or to hide some of the facts” (82).

Ideological unreliability is closely related to the readers, since it opens up the interpretation. Narrative is an act of communicating, so it requires a communication between readers and narrators. In their communication, they share some values and norms that affect the credibility of the narrative. Unreliability is closely related to the values and norms of the reader and text since the text designates its own values and the reader’s norms affect the way he interprets the story. Principally, the narrator’s mind should be analysed to gauge unreliability, since as Kathleen Wall argues, narration “refocuses the reader’s attention on the narrator’s mental processes” (23). Although, certain facts signal unreliability in a text, it is mainly subjective with its dependence on the reader’s judgement. Therefore, anyone can claim that the values and norms are changeable from one to another. The text helps us by defining its own norms and

values. “Critics concerned with the unreliable narrators recuperate textual inconsistencies by relating them to the accepted cultural models” (Nünning, 40). Every person has his own norms and values, but in society, every person has to live with the accepted norms to avoid problems. It is clear that some norms are universal and they receive the same reaction from everyone. Booth declares that “After all, there is a measure of agreement among us about the relative value of generosity, say, as opposed to meanness, or kindness as opposed to brutality” (183). Considering these facts, unreliability is not the distance between the narrators’ and implied author’s values; but the distance between the reader’s and the narrator’s values and norms. Nünning defines the frameworks of unreliability that is based on norms:

One of these sets of norms includes all those notions that are usually referred to as ‘common sense’. Another set encompasses those standards that a given culture holds to be constitutive of normal psychological behaviour. Third, the habit of discussing the stylistic peculiarities of unreliable narrators show that linguistic norms also play a role in determining how far a given narrator deviates from some implied default. Finally, many critics seem to think that there are agreed-upon moral and ethical standards that are often used as frames of reference when the question of the possible unreliability of narrator is raised. (43)

The reader is required to perform some activities in order to gauge unreliability in the narrative and decide how the narrator distorts the story. The reader has the most important part in analysing the narrative and deciding its trustworthiness since although the narrator gives some clues to show his unreliability. The reader has to read between

the lines, evaluate each chapter and narrator carefully, and grasp the truth. Stanley Fish's observations on the tasks that active readers perform while reading include: "making and revising of assumptions, the rendering and regretting of judgments, the coming to and abandoning of conclusions, the giving and withdrawing of approval, the specifying of cause, the asking of questions, the supplying of answers, the solving of puzzles" (158-159). The reader should use his critical intelligence and his emotions in his analysis. Booth states that "The reader should be alert to find out all of the clues that text gives to him. He has to push his imagination and ethical sensibility to the most degree" (304).

Some literary characters have more tendencies to distort the narration. Unreliability is related to specific character traits, so that narrators with certain characteristics are potentially unreliable narrators. Martens states:

Consequently, it has proven very intuitive to link unreliability with character traits (and thus: character narrators) so as to discuss madmen, picaros, naifs, clowns, "mad monologists" as unreliable narrators *by disposition* because of the deranged or perverted value system subtending their actions and the selective framing and representation of these actions.

(79)

These characters are suspicious in their accounts, so the reader should be cautious when he encounters such a narrator. The reader should not rely on a madman since his value system is abnormal, or a mad monologist because his subjective reports come from his deranged value system.

The narrator may misrepresent the story and deviate from the truth in the textual narrative and there may be some reasons to not tell the truth. For example, in some genres such as science fiction, the detective story, and subgenres such as dramatic monologue and memory play, unreliability is inevitable. In these genres, truth may be distorted because of subjectivity, ambiguities, vagueness, and secrets. Dramatic monologue is a subgenre that is used in poetry. The only speaker of this kind is the poet himself. However, this term is not restricted to poetry; it is used in many narrative texts, too. Although there are some other characters, the reader learns everything from this narrator, and his perception is the source of information. His reliability is suspect because he is the only voice in the narration. Since he is alone and narrates the whole story on his own, he tends to deviate from truth more easily so that the reader has only one untrustworthy source to depend on. Some critics claim that, “Dramatic monologue can be judged unreliable because of its often highly dialogic and argumentative nature tends to anticipate the reaction of imagined interlocutors” (Fludernik, 90). Apart from the text’s unreliability, the text’s type affects how it is perceived. For some genres, the issue of unreliability is not a matter of concern since their genre requires it. Booth claims that these genres as: “Objectivity, subjectivity, sincerity, insincerity, inspiration—these can be looked for and praised or blamed whether an author is writing comedy, tragedy, epic, satire or lyric (36).

There are other reasons besides those stated above. One of them is the multiplicity of narrators or perspectives. Sometimes the discrepancies result from multiple perspectives of the same events. In some works, the number of narrators differs, so the number of

accounts increases with them. Although they tell the same event, their narration differs since every person has a different way of speaking or writing. The reader generates different meanings from their accounts. However, some narrators in multi-perspectival works give different versions of the same events. Faulkner abundantly uses this technique in his novels. There are many narrators in Faulkner's novels who narrate from their own perspective. They distort events, or hide the truth till the end of the narration.

Consequently, the notion of unreliable narrator depends on many assumptions ranging from the reasons of unreliability, its relationship to the reader, its relationship with genres and some stereotypes. It is apparent that the notion of unreliable narrator has developed since Booth defined it. Although this chapter focuses mainly on the assumptions of the unreliable narrator in cognitive theory, it will not be the only factor to gauge unreliability in the novels that I will analyse in this study. Occasionally, I will also use rhetorical theory to make a complete analysis of the novels.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Unreliable Narrators in British and American Literature

History of unreliable narration does not begin with modern fiction; it dates back to the 18th century with some of the important novels. However, the notion of unreliable narrator is not apparent on the notable works of the major writers of the 18th century. Although Defoe, Richardson and Fielding's narrators raise doubts at some points, they are not accepted as totally unreliable fiction. Samuel Richardson's novels that are written in epistolary technique reveal the totally subjective perspective of his narrators. In a way, the reader is suspicious of the narrator's interpretations and comments because of the usage of "I" in the narrator's statements. Yet, it is wrong to accept his works completely unreliable. Nünning states that although the novel is full of subjective statements, "the general effect is quite different from what is known as unreliable narration". (57) Unreliable narrator in its full sense is seen in the novel of Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* that was published in 1800. The narrator of the novel is a servant named Thady Quirk and he recounts the story of Rackrent family that he works for. He gives inconsistent utterances about the family and events that concern them. With this aspect, Nünning sees the novel as the "cornerstone in the history of unreliable narration" (58). In Victorian times, the notion of unreliable narrator did not flourish too much. There are few works that have unreliability in their narration.

Victorians based their works on realism and their works resembled reality, so they refrained from distorting reality and truth. Nünning points out to the Victorian novelists

as: Victorian novelists proceeded from the assumption that an objective view of the world, of others, and of oneself can be attained” (58). However, there are some important examples of unreliable narrators. Probably, the most important one is Emily Brontë’s gothic novel *Wuthering Heights* (1847). The novel has two narrators, one of them is Mr. Lockwood who is the protagonist of the story and the other one is the housekeeper Nelly Dean. Their accounts are different from each other, and their unreliability results from varied reasons. The subjectivity of the narrators causes unreliability in narration.

Unreliability completes its transition with the modern age. The late 19th century and 20th century brought out many unreliable narrators with their highly individualised narrator, generally in first-person. The most notable person the notion of unreliability is Henry James. Many of his works include unreliable narration that result from many reasons. Two of his novels, *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) and *The Aspern Papers* (1888) are the representation of unreliability. In addition to James, Ford Madox Ford and Joseph Conrad created unreliable narrators in their fiction. Ford’s *The Good Soldier* (1915) and Conrad’s *Lord Jim* (1899) and *The Heart of Darkness* (1902) are thought to be the significant narrators of their time.

The notion of unreliable narrator gained popularity when the authors preferred to use it rather than average narrator who are stick to truth in their narrative. Generally, unreliability was associated with the first-person narrator at that time. Many noteworthy novels and short stories were written by Graham Swift, Jeannette Winterson, William Boyd, etc. Later, John Fowles, Nigel Williams were added to the tradition of unreliable

narrator. Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* (1989) has been an important source for critics as a representative of unreliable narrator. The works of that particular time leads the reader to question the notions of reality, truth and objectivity that are presented by the narrator.

2.2. Ian McEwan's Unreliable Narrators

2.2.a. Ian McEwan as a Postmodern Writer

Ian McEwan is one of the most popular writers of the contemporary British literary canon. He is regarded as a postmodern writer. Markéta Michlová states that "Ian McEwan ranks among contemporary British authors who have been writing and publishing their works in the era designated as postmodernism" (7). Ian McEwan was born on 21 June 1948 in Aldershot, England. He received his BA degree in University of Sussex at English Literature in 1970. Then he received his MA in University of East Anglia at English Literature again. His works are appreciated worldwide and brought him fame by winning prizes. He has written two collections of stories, *First Love, Last Rites* (1975) and *In Between the Sheets* (1978), and ten novels that are *Cement Garden* (1978), *The Comfort of Strangers* (1981), *The Innocent* (1990), *Black Dogs* (1992), *The Day Dreamer* (1994), *Enduring Love* (1997), *Amsterdam* (1998), *Atonement* (2001), *Saturday* (2005) and *Solar* (2010). Apart from these books, he has written some books that have not been so famous and he has also written screenplays. His novels won many prizes worldwide. He has been shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize for Fiction numerous times, and he won the award for *Amsterdam* in 1998. However, he owes his

fame to *Atonement*, which affected many people both as a book and as a film. He still lives in London and carries on his life as full-time writer.

Ian McEwan is a postmodern writer with his usage of postmodern techniques and themes in his novels. In order to make his position clear in this trend, a closer look to the aspects of postmodernism is necessary. The concept of postmodernism is a very broad term since it includes many incomplete explanations. The term covers two specific periods of time, 1945-1950 post-war period and 1960s until present. First part is a time of crisis for novel and it is generally of the crisis of the world, loss of self and existential plight. Its nature is to reject all other previous traditions. Postmodern writers rejected all the previous forms; yet they began to use them by combining these earlier traditions. Also, they created a new trend by adding experimental techniques and themes to previous forms. Therefore, they brought diversity to the literary field by adding various forms.

Postmodernism bore many different techniques and themes. For example, the writers, especially in the post-war period turned to use irony, satire and black humour in order to criticise the absurdity of war. Metafiction is another term that was coined with postmodernism, the reader is aware of that he is reading a fiction. The term is generally identified with the statement 'fiction about fiction or fiction in fiction'. Pastiche is a postmodern playwriting technique that fuses a variety of styles and genres create a new form. For example, writers use old genres in order to parody them, or they combine various genres by combining earlier forms and new ones. Intertextuality is another element is postmodern trend. There are many references to other texts. Sometimes, it

may just refer to some part of the text, while some of them adopt earlier texts into their own work. Margaret Atwood adopts Penelope's story into her own novel *Penelopiad*. Historiographic metafiction fictionalises the historical events by adding details to its narrative. Poionema is a Greek term that refers to the production of fiction in fiction; but it implies a process of creation unlike metafiction. Apart from these techniques, the writers created a new form that is magical realism. The genre includes the mingling of realism and fantasy. In this kind of work, the reality is represented by fantastic features. Postmodern tradition has fragmented expression and non-linear narratives just like modernism. So, there is not a certain setting and time in many works. The question of reality is dominant and it converses with illusion. The reader is always in suspect since there are many interpretations of events and the narrators do not tend to give accurate version of events since the notion of truth is a problem. When we look at these aspects of modernism we can identify McEwan as a postmodern writer. In his work *Atonement*, he uses metafiction and poionema since the end of novel shows that the book is actually a draft of protagonist's novel. The reader follows the development of her story from beginning till the end. He mingles various styles in his *Cement Garden* that he combines domestic drama with realism. Historical fiction is apparent in *Atonement* is that represents Britain at war, the soldiers' leaving Dunkirk and the experiences of nurses who serve at that time. In his works, McEwan refers to the other writers or narratives. In *Atonement*, there are many references to modern writers especially to Woolf, whereas *Enduring Love* makes references to Romantic poets, especially Keats.

Apart from these aspects Bentley suggests some categories as cited Michlová as there are “four central thematic categories in British postmodern fiction: millennial anxieties, identity at the fin de siècle, historical fictions and narrative geographies” (8). Bentley carries on his suggestion by defining millennial anxieties as involving issues of identity, multiculturalism suppressed by global consumerism, the consequences of historical events, trends in scientific theories, interest in biology and genetics” (9). Especially, this aspect of postmodernism is dominant in Ian McEwan’s novel *Enduring Love*. The novel is full of scientific theories and there is interest in some science branches. Bentley’s “narrative geographies” is related with the effect of the environment on human psychology. Ian McEwan does not have a common theme or structure for his works although he often presents a narrator whose reliability is doubtful.

2.2.b. Analysis of Unreliable Narrators in Ian McEwan’s Novels

Ian McEwan as a postmodern writer generally uses narrators who are not trustworthy in their accounts. Their reasons of unreliability change at every story. He uses the techniques and themes that postmodernism offers and thus he achieves his aim to distort narration. Many of his novels have the characteristic of unreliability. Three of Ian McEwan’s works that have unreliable narrator will be analysed in this chapter. McEwan’s short story *Dead as They Come* that belongs to the collection of *In Between the Sheets*, his novels *Cement Garden* and *Enduring Love* will be analysed considering the notion of unreliable narrator.

Ian McEwan’s short stories share some common features regarding their theme and voice. Richard Pedot explains it as “Ian McEwan’s short stories are notable for their use

of solipsistic, and usually morally disreputable, first person narrators, and also for the discrepancy between the squalor or obscenity of the themes and a seemingly detached, unemotional narration” (2). Ian McEwan’s short story *Dead as They Come* (1978) is another work of his that includes an unreliable narrator. The type of text is dramatic monologue and the protagonist is a mad monologist. As the type of the work suggests, he recounts the events in first-person narrator, having total control of the story, by giving no voice to anyone. He directs the events as he likes. His first-person narration reveals some of the important facts that give the reader clues about his trustworthiness. Firstly, the narrator describes himself at the very beginning of the story as an old, rich and egoistic man who does not like women so much. He has made unsuccessful marriages and at the end, he falls in love with a dummy that he names her Helen. First reason of suspect in the case of unreliability results from his egocentricism. The narrator is nameless; he does not want to interfere with the reader. He just gives some basic facts about himself that mislead the reader by directing them to his specific characteristics. However, what he says and he does contradict each other:

I do not care for posturing women. But she struck me. I had to stop and look at her. The legs were fell apart, the right foot boldly advanced, the left trailing with studied casualness. She held her right hand before her, almost touching the window [...] Head well back, a faint smile, eyes half closed with boredom or pleasure. I could not tell. Very artificial the whole thing, but then I am not a simple man. (McEwan, 75)

He says he does not care about posturing women; but what he does is exactly the opposite. He consistently describes himself such as “I am a man in hurry” or “I am wealthy”. In addition to that, the narrator’s value system does not correspond with the reader’s values since for many people it is not a normal thing to fall in love with a dummy, to own her as his wife and rape and kill her. There is dramatic irony in the text because the narrator’s deranged value system does not confirm to the reader’s values and norms. The reader sees psychological state of the narrator that is not a normal case for many. He has inconsistencies between his words and behaviours, his perverted value system contradicts with the beverage readers. As stated above the reader interprets the story two contexts. He interprets the events as it is in the narrative and he interprets them according to his own values and the narrator is unaware of the fact that he reveals himself to the reader by giving indirect information. In this process, for rhetorical theorists, the implied author works by endowing the story with signs and signals that help the reader to make inferences in between the lines. By these inferences about the narrator, the reader grasps the truth about him by reading his indirect information. Nünning explains the reader’s inferences about nameless protagonist as “complete egoist, misogynist, and monologist who has no respect for others, who, as the decreasing lengths of his marriages indicates, has apparently become increasingly intolerable, and who is interested in satisfying his own needs, interests and carnal pleasures” (54). One of the main contradictions of the narrator is that he says he likes a conversation that both participants share their thoughts; but he says that he likes “silent women who take their

pleasure with apparent indifference” (78). The narrator reveals his contradiction by saying:

My ideal conversation is one which allows both participants to develop their thoughts to their fullest extent, uninhibitedly, without endlessly defining and refining premises and defending conclusions. [...] With Helen I could converse ideally, I could *talk* to her. She sat quite still [...] Helen and I lived in perfect harmony, which nothing could disturb. I made money, I made love, I talked, Helen listened. (McEwan, 79)

In addition to that, the narrator has too many subjective comments, generalisations and evaluations about the characters and events. Subjective narrators tend to narrate everything according to their own perspective. They generally start their accounts with “I”. There are stylistic features that signal unreliability. Nünning states “There are also syntactic indications of unreliability such as incomplete sentences, exclamations, interjections, hesitations, and unmotivated repetition” (55).

The Cement Garden (1978) was written in first-person narration. Jack, the protagonist, tells the story of himself and his family from his point of view. He narrates the events that take place respectively after the death of his father and mother. His relationship with his sister Julie and the other children in the house constitutes the essential part of the novel. Jack is a young man; he matures and undergoes significant changes regarding his mind, psychology and body. Being away from family love, he strays from culturally accepted values and becomes a disgusting boy as his sister, Julie claims. He is totally away from personal hygiene; he does not care about his dress and

behaves in complete ignorance towards events around him except for Julie's boyfriend. His numb and detached statements cause the reader to suspect his reliability. His perverted value system creates suspect. The way he pries into his sister when she is sunbathing, and the idea of incest shows his abnormal value system. He uses plain language and detached point-of-view. Marc Delrez states that "the seeming disaffection with society's traditional values exhibited by his protagonist Jack in *The Cement Garden*" (16).

The narrator has a detached point-of-view; he uses simple sentences without presenting his feelings and emotions in the narration. He is in an automatic state with his constant recounting that includes nearly no emotion. At some points he cannot make a logical order of events as he claims "[...] now I had no clear memory of events" (McEwan, 88). He feels something; but the way he tells them is so mechanically that the reader cannot get the feeling of reality from them. He is so cool at every situation ranging from burying his father under cement or keeping his mother at their roof to having his basic pleasure, masturbation. "There are shocking and bizarre subjects of secret burial, incest and masturbation" (Michlová, 12). His lack of emotion in representing events may result from his undeveloped personality since he is fully mature yet. "Although the novel appears to be a very personal narration, the reader cannot resist a feeling of distance between the narrator and the events in the book" (Michlová, 16). There is a suspicion of incest between Jack and Julie, so the reader should follow some implications and signs in order to understand what is going on between brother and sister. Malcolm states that for Jack's strange behaviour "His evasions are not always

clearly marked, but, already indicated in the strangely detached focus of the narration, they are emphasised in one passage where Jack is confronted with another view of events, that of his sister Sue” (48).

Enduring Love (1997), meanwhile, tells the story of Joe Rose who experiences a balloon accident when he goes to a picnic with his long-term lover Clarissa. Some of the men and Joe run to save people during this accident; but the accident’s result is the death of John Logan. At this accident, Joe meets Jed Parry who has Clerambault syndrome and is deeply in love with him. After that event, Joe’s life is ruined by Jed Parry’s obsessions. Jed Parry follows him constantly; but after time Joe is obsessed with the idea of Jed Parry, he becomes an obsessive and manic person, too. His lover, Clarissa states, "You say he’s outside, but when I go out there’s no one. No one, Joe” (148). The story is narrated by alternating narrators; it changes from first person to third-person. Joe Rose is the protagonist of the story. With Parry’s chase of him, Joe becomes paranoiac and suspects of everything, he begins to create something on his mind and he claims that they are true. The narrator’s expressions create suspicion for the reader as we see that his mental state is deteriorated. The trustworthiness diminishes as his delirium and obsession increases.

The reader gets irritated with hidden facts. There is something, which happened on the accident day, Jed Parry implies it; but it cannot be explained. One becomes aware that this irritation is largely caused by the author’s narrative technique of avoidance or delaying the information and reverting repeatedly to what has been previously said or done. The reader’s suspense increases as his lover’s suspense increases at the same time.

This lends the narrative a kind of concentric pattern and is certainly instrumental in creating suspense. The narrator withdraws the necessary information from the reader that will help us to solve the puzzle. The narrator delays the truth and holds him in suspense through the end of the novel. In the balloon accident the narrator refrains from giving an accurate and complete version of event, the reader feels a kind of gap in the story. Through the end of novel, Joe confesses his: "The impossible idea was that Logan had died for nothing. The boy, Harry Gadd, turned to be unharmed. I had let go of the rope. I had helped kill John Logan. But even as I felt the nausea of guilt return, I was trying to convince myself I was right to let go" (McEwan, 32).

The novel questions the moral dilemma of selfishness that caused a man's death. If Joe does not let go of the rope, John Logan may be saved. The reader analyses the value system of the narrator by gauging the reactions of the narrator's to events. The selfishness of Joe shows that he is an egocentric person; he just cares of himself, so he may recount the story according to his perspective. Joe's egocentricism is clear in his statement; after witnessing Logan's fall, Joe finds himself somehow relieved: "I looked across the fields and the thought scrolled across: that man is dead. I felt a warmth spreading through me, a kind of self-love, and my folded arms hugged me tight. The corollary seemed to be: and I am alive" (McEwan, 19).

Joe nearly goes insane about this obsession. His statements about shooting event makes people think of his mental state; but he cannot understand how the reality changes for everyone and he reflects his thoughts on this issue by warning the reader about the reliability of narrator:

No one could agree on anything. We lived in a mist of half-shared unreliable perception, and our sense data came warped by a prism of desire and belief, which tilted our memories too. We saw and remembered in our own favour and we persuaded ourselves along the way. Pitiless objectivity, especially about ourselves, was always a doomed social strategy. We're descended from the indignant, passionate tellers of half truths who in order to convince others, simultaneously convinced themselves. Over generations success had winnowed us out, and with success came our defect, carved deep in the genes like ruts in a cart track – when it didn't suit us we couldn't agree on what was in front of us. Believing is seeing. (McEwan, 180-181)

Consequently, Ian McEwan abundantly presents unreliable narrators in his works. Their character traits and personalities vary in every work. The reasons of unreliability differ in every work ranging from psychological to biological factors. For example, in Jack's case his adolescence, having high secretum of hormone, affects narration while the unnamed protagonist of *Dead as They Come* shows the peculiarity of a mad monologist. Although their effects on narrative vary, unreliable narrators are important feature of Ian McEwan's works.

2.3. William Faulkner's Unreliable Narrators

2.3.a. William Faulkner as a Modernist Writer

William (Cuthbert) Faulkner was born in 1897, New Albany, Mississippi. He was a part of honoured Southern family. He joined Canadian and then British Royal Air Force during World War I. However, he could not join the war since when he was

getting trained, the war was over. He joined the University of Mississippi in 1919. After one year, he left his study and went to New York working there in a bookstore. In 1924, he published his first book that is a collection of his poems. His first novel *Soldier's Pay* was published after a year in 1925. He published many works ranging from poetry and, scripts to novels. Michael Golay states that "Faulkner is one of the most important figures literary figures in American literature and is recognised worldwide as a stylistic innovator, but his work can also be bewildering at times because of his complex sometimes convoluted, prose style and narrative techniques" (ix). He won the Nobel Prize of literature in 1954 for the contribution he made to the modern American novel, and he also won a Pulitzer Prize for *The Sound and the Fury*. In order to show his own story as he comes from the South, he depicted the South in his works by showing the history and its decadence. Faulkner portrays characters that show status of the South's lost glory. These characters, in all of his works constitute the drama of the South in his fictional Yoknapatawpha County. This decadence is basically shown by two families Compsons and Sartoris and with Snopeses that represents newcomers. Main themes of his novels include the fall of family, values and norms, decay of South and its honour, racial issues. Imagination and emotions are crucial for Faulkner that he requires his participation in his texts. He uses techniques of modernism in order to reveal the most secret part of human consciousness such as stream-of-consciousness, inner monologue and free association. He has many novels, but some of them are highly appreciated and famous. His most famous novel *The Sound and the Fury* is published in 1929, and it followed as: *As I Lay Dying* (1930), *Sanctuary* (1931), *Light in August* (1932), *Absalom, Absalom!*

(1936), *The Wild Palms* (1939) and *Intruder in the Dust* (1948). Faulkner died of heart attack in 1962.

William Faulkner is accepted as one of the most important representatives of modernism both with his techniques and themes. Debrah Raschke claims that “Faulkner is considered among the twentieth century prominent modernists is no surprise: the studies of modernist influence is many” (99). In order to clarify it, a closer look to modernism is necessary. Modernism is “a term that identifies the general characteristics of a movement in arts that began in the late 19th century as a reaction against traditional art forms and became prominent in the first part of the 20th century” (Golay, 419). These trends, movements and innovations represent different dimensions of modernism. Modernism is the result of new developments in art and science, but especially philosophy and psychology that provided the intellectual basis for the modernism. Some philosophers and scientist affected the era with their ideas. Sigmund Freud is one of those who brought a new perspective to psychology. His research showed that the human being is composed of uncontrolled, unknown, obscure instincts and desires coming from the ‘id’. Edmund Husserl, Bertrand Russell provided new ideas about logic and mind-phenomena. Albert Einstein’s the theory of relativity forced people to question the relativity of truth that is expressed in many works of modernism. Modernism is analysed on two axes: human condition and search for new means of artistic expression. Human condition is frustration to the outside, alienation inside. Faulkner represents his characters’ frustration in different ways in his works and nearly all of his characters are alienated. They are not in too much contact with outside; they

are enclosed to their own world. In *As I Lay Dying*, every character is full of deep feelings; yet they do not express them to the other characters. There is a concern with individual psychological experience. New means of human experience is the thematic treatment of the sub-conscious. That is to say, the modernists' concern was the theme of psychological experience of the individual expressed in the form of interior monologue by the stream-of-consciousness technique. The characters of modernist novels do not have a fully integrated personality, their thoughts and feelings are uncertain and their responses are unpredictable. Faulkner's characters show this uncertainty since they are not clearly represented. Their presentation is fragmented so the reader cannot predict their actions. The themes are not restricted to specific things; they differ according to writer and Faulkner emphasizes the drama of family and the South's losing of its values. Stream-of-consciousness technique presents reality not objectively; but it requires perceiving reality subjectively through conscious that is the reader learns reality through the consciousness of characters. Faulkner abundantly uses this technique especially in his earlier novels in *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*. The characters expose their feelings and thoughts through their consciousness, they are not articulated thoughts. The theme of free-association that means the power of one thing to suggest another is seen in Vardaman, the character of *As I Lay Dying*. He associates his mother with fish and when he sees a fish or thinks about it automatically, he remembers his mother. The feelings of characters are revealed in the form of interior monologue which renders the psychological context and processes of character including the abstract manifestations of mind as they exist on the consciousness. Therefore, self-expression of character is a

primary focus. Faulkner represents characters' consciousness to his reader by showing it explicitly. The reader can learn his secret feelings, thoughts, wishes, memories by seeing his mind. There is not a certain developing plot, it is static, the stories are open-ended and there is no conclusion it finishes as it begins. In *The Sound and the Fury*, three different days are recounted; yet the action is just based on one event so the story does not move on. There is not a linear narration, the events and time is fragmented. In *Absalom, Absalom!*, the story is recounted by turning back, it does not have linear events. It begins 1909 with Quentin Compson's narration and shifts to 1833 to Thomas Sutpen's arrival of Jefferson and the story continuously shifts between times. As the truth is relative now, the writers tried to show it in their works. Faulkner does it by representing truth by different perspectives. The truth is not easy to reach; the novels should be studied closely in order to construct reality. Faulkner creates his stories on ambiguity, characters narrate story according to themselves. It is apparent in his novels *The Sound and the Fury*, *Absalom, Absalom!* and *As I Lay Dying*.

Consequently, it is clear that William Faulkner is among the embracer of modernism with its techniques and themes, although the representation of it differs from his early novels to later novels in extent. He is one of the most important representatives of modernism in American literature. The way he represents his characters is important in this study. The relativity of truth brings the question of reliability to these characters. As Faulkner is a representative of this movement, the notion of unreliability will be analysed in his works *Absalom, Absalom!* and *As I Lay Dying* and in deeper in *The Sound and the Fury*.

2.3.b. Analysis of Unreliable Narrator's in William Faulkner's Novels

Modernism offers William Faulkner to use the techniques that portray the human being explicitly and present characters whose reliability can be questioned. He generally does not give the truth openly and objectively. Every character their own reality and they either do not tell the truth or tell it according to their perception. Apart from, *The Sound and the Fury* that will be analysed in deeper sense, *As I Lay Dying* and *Absalom, Absalom!* shows the characteristics of unreliable narrator.

As I Lay Dying (1929), is one of the most complex of Faulkner's novels since it has too many narrators and therefore shifting perspectives. It has fifteen narrators and fifty-nine chapters including the shortest chapter ever "My mother is a fish" (76) by Vardaman. All of these narrators represent their own thoughts about Bundren family and their strange aim of burying Addie Bundren to her hometown, Jefferson. Stephen M. Ross states that

The fifty-nine sections of Faulkner's polyphonic novel, each headed by the name of one of the fifteen first-person narrators, exhibit a striking variance in tone: we "hear" the dialect of poor white Mississippi farmers, talk by smalltown shopkeepers, tense and fast-paced narrative, richly metaphoric digression, and philosophically charged speculation burdened by Latinate diction and convoluted syntax. (300)

The novel tells the dramatic story of Bundren family who sets off with their wagon after the death of matriarch of house in order to fulfil her last wish. There are four boys and a girl in the family. All of them participate to this journey. The novel tells

the story of family that they experience when they are going to Jefferson. Every character represents their thoughts about the death event. Although they try to fulfil their mother's wish, all of them have different things to do on their mind and it is not revealed until the moment they do it. They misguide the reader by lying. For example, Anse is accused of not taking Addie to doctor in time, he finds excuses of the accusations that he did not take her to doctor because of money. He says, "Hit ain't begrudgin' the money" (Faulkner, 39), by trying to deceive the reader.

The structure and voice of novel is also confusing for the reader. It consistently shifts from one narrator to other with its alternating point-of-view that makes it hard to follow the plot. There are fragmented thoughts so that the reader cannot fully understand the real reason of events. In addition, the language they use is confusing for especially a foreign reader whose mother tongue is not English. Addie, wife of Anse is a dead narrator in the novel; but we see her narration, too. At the beginning, the reader thinks that Jewel is the son of Anse and Addie; but the truth is delayed, as she does not give clear information about the father of Jewel. Darl tries to distort reality by lying to his family about the fire on barn the reader learns it from Cash's account as "Darl set fire to it" (219). The reality is constructed by the participation of other characters. At the end of the novel, the reality is constructed in some ways; yet the reader is still in suspect whether Darl is insane or not.

Faulkner's the other novel of, *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) is termed as a Southern Gothic novel that represents the fall of another family in the South. The novel is about Thomas Sutpen who comes to Jefferson, Mississippi in order to found his dynasty by

buying a hundred square miles from an Indian tribe. He marries the daughter of a local farmer and has two children named Henry and Judith. Since he is not a good man and his past is full of mysteries, he is ruined by his past. He has a son from a half-negro woman whose name is Charles Bon. Bon meets Henry and they become friends after a little time Judith and Charles is engaged. Sutpen tells his son that Charles is his brother; yet Henry leaves home with Charles by refusing his father. During the Civil War, Sutpen finds his son and tells him that Charles has negro blood, after that he shoots Charles at the gate of their house that is the climax of the novel and the beginning of fall of Sutpen dynasty. The family is scattered by Sutpen's desire for return to his glory.

Absalom, Absalom! has a few narrators whose account is not trustworthy at all. Miss Rosa, the sister of Ellen who is the wife of Thomas tells her part in the story; but she does not recount events objectively. She is too angry with Sutpen because of his immoral offer and she describes Sutpen as an animal. Her rage prevents her to reflect the correct version of events. Her expressions are too subjective. Since Sutpen offered her to mate like animals for the sake of having a child, she is furious him and she accuses him for everything that happened to them. Apart from Miss Rosa, Mr. Compson, Quentin Compson and Shreve, a friend of Compson from Harvard narrates the story. The narrator changes from chapter to chapter and their accounts are hard to follow. All of them tell the story of Thomas Sutpen as far as they know the character personally or hearing him from other people; yet the interpretation of his personality is slippery because of the subjectivity of narrators who know him or Quentin and Shreve's lacking the necessary information. Tamar Yacobi claims that in *Absalom, Absalom!* "We make sense of the

manifold contradiction in relation to the fact that a central character is refracted through a number of variously fallible and subjective perspectives [...]” (118). General Compson was a friend of Sutpen and his son Jason tells events subjectively. General Compson does not tell the real reason why Henry killed Bon, he says it is because of a crossbreed woman rather than Bon’s mother has negro blood. Jason and Quentin delay this crucial information in the narration and distort reader. The story is revealed by different perspectives, and even at the end Shreve narrates it who does not know neither family nor South that brings a free interpretation of events by diverging the reality too much. He and Quentin even imagine Henry as wounded in the war. Jo Alyson Parker states that for the novel’s scattered whole “when we consider how the story comes to us—chronologically disordered and filtered through multiple, often unreliable, perspectives—we are invited to focus on how the text self-reflexively comments on the process that presumably brings it into being” (112).

Another important detail in *Absalom, Absalom!* is the presence of Quentin Compson who is one of the main characters in *The Sound and the Fury*. Faulkner includes him to his other novel, but Quentin is a livelier in this novel than in *The Sound and the Fury*. There is a connection between two novels. Stacy Burton states that “In *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), Quentin Compson and his father Jason reappear in Yoknapatawpha several months prior to Quentin's suicide on a June 1910 day which had been narrated in detail in *The Sound and the Fury*” (605).

Consequently, Faulkner as a modernist writer uses the notion of unreliable narrator in his novels. He uses the themes and techniques of modernism in order to reflect

subjective perspectives, relativity of truth for every person and reality constructed by whole. He generally presents family tragedies in the South and how family members are affected by the changing values of the South. Therefore, although the reasons of unreliability in Faulkner's novels are different, they do not differ too much. Material desires, losing morality, lying are among major factors that affects the narration's unreliability. However, both of the characteristics of modernism and representation of Southern values' decay are most dominant in *The Sound and the Fury* and it will be analysed deeply in Chapter IV.

Chapter III

ATONEMENT

3.1. Evaluation of *Atonement* as a Postmodern Novel

Atonement, published in 2001, is one of the well-known books of Ian McEwan. The novel should not be accepted as Bildungsroman, which shows the development of a character spiritually, psychologically and morally, but it should be accepted as Künstlerroman, which presents the growth of an artist into maturity. “*Atonement* has been greeted by most book critics as a masterpiece that unexpectedly stayed at the top of the best seller lists of the *New York Times* for many weeks” (Finney, 69). Although he had his prize for *Amsterdam*, *Atonement* brought him fame. Markéta Michlová suggests, “*Atonement* is the most appreciated one of Ian McEwan’s novels that its fame surpasses his prize winner novel *Amsterdam*” (59). The plot of novel impressed film makers and *Atonement* was filmed by Joe Wright in 2007 with a famous cast. The film also earned reputation worldwide.

Atonement tells the story of a young girl who has caused great trouble for her sister and her sister’s lover by accusing him of the rape of her cousin. The novel is divided into three sections and a denouement from the author. Part one covers one day story that takes place in Tallis house in 1935, London. The youngest member of Tallis house, Briony Tallis writes a drama for her brother Leon, and she rehearses her play with her cousins whose family is about to divorce and they stay at Tallis estate. When the rehearsals pause, Briony sees her sister Cecilia and cleaning lady’s son Robbie by the

fountain. Briony misunderstands the interaction between two people and thinks it as a threat for her sister.

After this event, Robbie writes a letter to Cecilia to apologise to her and she gives it to Briony. Robbie realizes that he made a mistake and gave the wrong letter to Briony that includes his sexual desires for Cecilia. Later Briony reads that letter and sees how Robbie is a sex-craved “maniac”. After that event, Briony sees Cecilia and Robbie making love in the library that causes Briony to see Robbie as a real threat to her sister. When the family has their meals at the dinner, the twin cousins of Briony leaves a letter saying that they run away from home. All of the guests participate in finding team, including Robbie. Everybody searches for twins; but Briony finds her cousin Lola in a secluded place as her rapist runs away. As Robbie is a sex-craved maniac for her, although she cannot see clearly who he is, Briony accuses him of being the rapist of her cousin and makes everybody believe her even the officers. With this false testimony she sends Robbie to jail.

The second part of the novel takes place five years later and tells the story of Robbie who retreats from France. The reader learns what happens in three years time when he was in prison. Robbie’s feelings and thoughts are represented clearly about love, jail, war, etc. The surroundings, hardships of the war is described in detail as Robbie and his two corporal friends march through the shore for the evacuation of Dunkirk. Robbie is wounded; but he always thinks about Cecilia and his return to his lover.

The third part represents the story of Briony who is eighteen years old now and works as a nurse in a hospital in order to penance her guilt. She works the whole daylong in order to help the wounded soldiers who return from Dunkirk. Meanwhile, she writes stories and sends them to journals. At the end of third part, Briony meets with her sister and sees that she lives with Robbie. Briony is happy to see that Robbie is alive and they are together. Now Briony knows that Paul Marshall is the rapist of Lola. Robbie and Cecilia want Briony to promise to declare Robbie's innocence. All of them leave house together and the reader sees Robbie and Cecilia together on a tube platform.

The final section is in 1999, London. The reader learns that Briony is the narrator of the other chapters. She writes the chapters depending on the museum archives and pen-pal friends who experienced war with Robbie. We learn that she never meets with Robbie and Cecilia and they both die in the war. Briony has vascular dementia, and she dies gradually losing her memory. She informs that reader that her attempt for atonement is in the pages of her book that unites Robbie and Cecilia.

Atonement is complex book with its varying literary trends from realism to modernism and postmodernism. Michlová states, "Most literary theorists who are seriously engaged in exploring contemporary British writing avoid using any labels in defining McEwan's work" (5). The novel starts differently with Briony's drama and then changes through the end of it. Kathleen D'Angelo claims, "Throughout *Atonement*, Briony transitions from a girl overpowered by her romantic imagination to a novelist who uses modernist technique to fulfill her elegiac impulse" (90) *Atonement* alludes to many important works of modernism especially to the works of Virginia Woolf as

Richard Robinson claims: “The most conspicuous strain of modernism in *Atonement* is Woolfian” (477). Since the novel is metafiction, and the reader knows that what he is reading is actually the novel written by the protagonist herself, we can accept the comments that are made for the book in the novel. For example, Cyril Connolly, the editor of *Horizon*, states that Briony’s work owes much to the works of famous modernist writers. She explains that there are many modernist techniques that are used in her draft *Two Figures by a Fountain* that soon revealed that it is Briony’s novel. The narrator states Briony’s thoughts about her fiction as “What excited her about her achievement was its design, the pure geometry and the defining uncertainty which reflected, she thought, a modern sensibility” (281). The narrator continues by adding other aspects of modernism as “The very concept of character was founded on errors that modern psychology had exposed. [...] It was thought, perception, sensations that interested her, the conscious mind as a river through time, and how to represent its onward roll, as well as all the tributaries that would swell it, and the obstacles that would divert it” (281-282). Uncertainty is apparent throughout the novel. The narrator constructs her story upon uncertainty. There are three perspectives although it is narrated by third-person omniscient narrator. The characters’ thoughts and feelings are represented clearly that leads them to characterization. Especially, at some parts of the novel consciousness of characters’ are presented as a flow of river, which is explained by the technique of stream-of-consciousness as Bergson suggested.

In addition, the novel is thought to be historical fiction by representing Britain in wartime. Maria Margaronis expresses that *Atonement* “engages deeply with the purposes

and processes of writing historical fiction” (140). The second part of the novel is totally the creation of the narrator, Briony Tallis. She tells the events that Robbie Turner might have lived when he goes to war. The narrator clearly depicts the events that she thinks have taken place in Dunkirk. She presents a section from wartime depending on the documents that she takes from Imperial War Museum and some soldiers that joined that war. Because of depending subjective statements and unknown facts, historical fiction includes deviations that are called as anachronisms. Margaronis claims, “Like the orange bricks of the Tallis manse, historical novels necessarily contain anachronisms, of feeling and manner and attitude if not of fact” (143). At the end of novel, Briony shows her faults in writing about historical facts. Mr Nettle who experienced war writes letters to Briony to inform her about the details that she expressed wrongly. Briony states her love for detail as “I love these little things, this pointillist approach to verisimilitude, the correction of detail that cumulatively gives such satisfaction” (359). In addition to war details, *Atonement* displays social state of its time. The gap between classes is stressed by the crucial event of story that is raping. Michlová declares, “*Atonement* clearly deals with several historical issues such as Puritanism of the 1930s’ society in Britain which stands in contrast to the depiction of the society where class is placed above ability and moral behaviour” (61).

Apart from these traditions, *Atonement* is accepted as a postmodern work with its combination of many narrative techniques and surprising ending although the themes and style of the novel does not resemble postmodernist writers. It is understood that the variety of narrative techniques results from its postmodern identity. Chalupsky is cited in

Michlová about the content of McEwan's novel, "He emphasizes the complexity of the novel and analyzes the author's ability to combine a variety of themes and narrative techniques" (59). The novel's ending that brings out the technique of metafiction is completely an aspect of postmodernism. Metafiction means a fiction within a fiction that is the reader is aware of the work is piece of fiction. Brian Finney declares that Ian McEwan uses metanarrative technique "to undermine the naturalization of social and economic inequalities that especially characterized British society in the 1930s" (76). Postmodernism has interest in relativity. The truth is a relative concept according to postmodernism and *Atonement* explains it well by representing three different perspectives to show the relativity of truth for every person. Another aspect of modernism is the conflict between reality and illusion that is explored in *Atonement*, too. Pilar Hidalgo states, "In his exploration of the gap between what is real and what is imagined, McEwan deploys a variety of stylistic devices and narrative techniques that give the novel its multilayered texture" (83).

Consequently, *Atonement* cannot be categorised under one literary trend, although Ian McEwan is a postmodern writer. Every critic defends his own idea about the novel's literary genre, but they generally agree on the novel's multiperspectival nature. For example, Peter Childs claims that for *Atonement* in Robinson:

places itself in a realist tradition of deep, rich characterization and social breadth, but displays a modernist concern with consciousness and perspective. Ultimately though it emerges as at least in part a postmodernist novel, because it questions its own fictive status, exposing itself as a construct; yet, it also

stretches beyond this by foregrounding questions of morality that belong to a pre-postmodern humanism. (491)

While Childs claims his idea in this way, Richardson states, “Richard Robinson states that “Atonement seems to ventriloquize modernism and then to silence it” (474).

3.2. Exploration of Narrator or Narrators in *Atonement*

Atonement is narrated through a third-person narrator, but the complex structure of the novel reveals that the narrator is the protagonist of the story, Briony Tallis. The issue of narrator is should be analysed deeply because of its presence and detachment from the story. With third-person narrator, it is external in the first chapter; but at the end of the novel, the narrator is included in the narration and it becomes internal narrator. The knowledge of narrator in *Atonement* is another complex issue. Michlová explains, “The reader suddenly realizes that all the points of view are probably figments of Briony’s imagination and this inkling is confirmed in the last part of the book which serves as an epilogue or postscript where Briony informs the reader of her lifelong struggle to face up to the consequences of her crime” (62).

At first, the narrator seems third-person omniscient in that she reflects what every character thinks and feels. However, as it is concluded at the last chapter of novel, Briony is the narrator; the type of narrator changes to first-person narrator with limited knowledge since she cannot know everything about the characters and she cannot interpret the events accurately therefore results unreliability in her account. The issue of metafiction should be considered in that context. With the revelation of truth at the last chapter, type of the narrator changes from third-person to first-person since Briony is a

character in the narrative. Richardson states that there are two Brionys in the novel. Briony as a character with limited point-of-view and Briony as a narrator. (484)

However, if it is a fiction within fiction and we know that it is an artificial work of art, how is this type of narrator named? The answer lies in the content of the novel. Briony is the narrator and she is a diegetic character. Briony is a diegetic child narrator; but she is also an adult extradiegetic narrator. Although these are two different narratological entities, the reader blurs these different entities and accepts Briony as the narrator of story. Literally, she is not the narrator of first three sections, but the reader accepts her as the narrator of the novel. Since the reader learns that what he reads is a fiction, it is the real story that Briony experienced in her childhood and the most crucial events that changes the life of main characters and what happens after these events are from real life. Apart from Briony, Cecilia's and Robbie's viewpoints shift frequently in the novel. As Chalupsky states in Michlová, the author achieved "the effect of a dissolved totality" and a sense of detachment through conveying different characters' points of view" (61).

In the first part of novel, the narrator is third person; yet it shifts from Briony to Cecilia, Robbie and Emily Tallis. The fountain scene, for example, is presented thrice, the narrator narrates the event as he is in the centre of the scene for every character; yet the same scene is represented by three different point-of-views. Briony, Robbie and Cecilia's perspectives reveal how they feel and what they think about the event. Apart from Robbie and Cecilia who experience event, Briony interprets it according to her imagination. McEwan uses this different style in order to express the feeling and thoughts of his characters to show the events from all perspectives. David Lodge

mentions this aspect in Pilar Hidalgo, “McEwan, who has tended to favour first-person narration in his previous novels and stories, seems to be telling his story in a rather old-fashioned way, entering into the consciousness of several different characters and rendering their experience in third-person discourse that makes extensive use of free indirect style” (85). In addition to the fountain scene, Cecilia and Robbie’s lovemaking in the library is represented twice; firstly by the narrator and then by Briony. Briony’s point of view is presented in the library scene:

The scene was so entirely a realisation of her worst fears that she sensed that her over-anxious imagination had projected the figures onto the packed spines of books. Briony stared past Robbie’s shoulder into the terrified eyes of her sister [...] His left hand was behind her neck, gripping her hair, and with his right he held her forearm which was raised in protest, or self-defence. (McEwan, 123)

However, the same scene is different for Robbie and Cecilia. Their perspective reflects their emotions clearly as:

Nothing as singular or as important had happened since the day of his birth. She returned his gaze, struck by the sense of her own transformation, and overwhelmed by the beauty in a face which a lifetime’s habit had taught her to ignore. [...] Finally he spoke the three simple words that no amount of bad art of bad faith can ever quite cheapen. She repeated them, with exactly the same slight emphasis on the second word, as though she were the one to say them first...She was calling to him, inviting him, murmuring in his ear. Exactly so. (137)

As it is clear from the passage, the voice of Ian McEwan's novel is polyphonic, including many voices in narrative. The many voices in the narrative express their perspectives, yet at the end the unifying voice appears and concludes the narrative by purifying it from ambiguities although some of the details are not accurate at all.

Apart from the complex narrator issue, Briony should be analysed according to her personality. Briony Tallis is a thirteen years old girl who has a vast imagination. She confuses reality with the fictional world. She supposes that the real life is like the life that is told in fairy tales or dramas of her children books. With her ability to create as a writer, she creates a story on her mind and makes everybody believe her. She has the control over events although she is not aware of the reality. (484). Finney states, "She ruthlessly subordinates everything the world throws at her to her need to make it serve the demands of her own world of fiction" (69). When Briony experiences a scene, she immediately begins to associate it with story world. At any moment that Briony's consciousness is revealed, the reader feels like she is writing a new story on her mind. "Briony was lost to her writing fantasies—what had seemed a passing fad was now an enveloping obsession" (McEwan, 21). She is lost in her fictional world, so she cannot read the codes of adult world. With her adaptation to the real life, Briony misreads the codes and interprets events falsely that causes unreliability in her narration.

3.3. The Concept of Unreliable Narrator in *Atonement*

3.3.a. The Representation of Unreliability in *Atonement*

The notion of unreliable narrator is complicated in *Atonement* since the novel is metanarrative. The novel should be analysed according the type of narrator that includes

first-person and third-person. The first part of the novel will be analysed according to the third-person narrator because what Briony has really taken place although the perspectives are different for every character. However, the use of third-person narrator is suitable for representing multiperspectives. I will analyse the second and third part of the novel according to the first-person narrator because the reader knows that Briony is the writer of these chapters and they are purely invention of hers. The narrator misinterprets events and misguides the reader by telling lies and keeping secrets in the narrative. In order to gauge unreliability in *Atonement*, I will apply both cognitive and rhetorical approaches since it requires deeper analysis.

Briony Tallis is an ordered child; she wants everything to be in a perfect order. Her love for order is expressed at many times in the text. “Her wish for a harmonious, organized world denied her the reckless possibilities of wrongdoing. Mayhem and destruction were too chaotic for her tastes, and she did not have it in her to be cruel” (McEwan, 5). At this statement, there is juxtaposition with the ending of the novel since Briony causes destruction for Tallis family and especially for the love of Cecilia and Robbie. Maybe she wants to own a good secret with the accusation to Robbie. The narrator tries to distort the reader’s mind by emphasizing the tranquility of Briony’s life. Later in the novel, the narrator states that “Something irreducibly human, or male, threatened the order of their household, and Briony knew that unless she helped her sister, they would all suffer” (114). By reading the codes wrong, Briony is mistaken with the codes of adult world. The narrator shows Robbie’s presence as a bringer of destruction to the house; yet the reader is misguided with Briony’s imagination.

The narrator wants to persuade the reader that Briony is a good child and she cannot do bad things for anyone. The narrator expresses her opinion by Emily Tallis, Briony's mother perspective: "Poor darling Briony, the softest little thing, doing her all to entertain her hard-bitten wiry cousins with the play she had written from her heart" (65). The narrator directs us by her voice that Briony is an innocent girl who just wants to entertain people and make them happy.

When there are sparkles of relationship between Robbie and Cecilia, the narrator does not openly tell everything about them. The narrator keeps his distance with the reader, the reader feels a possibility of relationship between Cecilia and Robbie, but the reality about them is delayed. Later in the story, the reader learns that they feel something for each other. The narrator tries to distort reader by presenting Cecilia's point-of-view because Cecilia thinks that she interprets the events too much. Our perception of their relationship is firstly based on Cecilia's consciousness, and then Robbie's feelings and thoughts are revealed by adding dimension to the story. The reader begins to think about the possibilities of love between Cecilia and Robbie. The narrator says for Cecilia "She was the one who was overinterpreting, and jittery in his presence, and she was annoyed with herself" (McEwan, 26). With this statement, the reader suspects that Cecilia may be misinterpreting the occurrences, as we do not know Robbie's account yet. The narrator who reveals Cecilia's thoughts about Robbie tells the reader with flashbacks that Robbie behaves weirdly that causes the reader suspect from him for the raping event. Cecilia presents the events like that; but Robbie's interpretation

is not revealed immediately and the reader wonders Robbie's interpretation for a complete meaning.

The section when Robbie is narrated is different from the other chapters since it resembles a modernist work with its flashbacks, free association and indulgence into wishful thinking. Robbie is too emotional, he imagines Cecilia all the time. Robbie interprets Cecilia's behaviours differently as Cecilia does his. While Cecilia sees Robbie's grapping the vase as an act of challenge, Robbie interprets it as humiliation: "There it stood, the undeniable fact. Humiliation. She wanted it for him" (80).

The narrator represents Robbie as a young man whose mind is full of fantasies. His complex feelings are revealed in his scattered thoughts. Free associations bring the work closer to a modernist trend. When he sees a photograph in frame, he remembers his father who left them in his childhood without leaving a note. He daydreams Cecilia's body with every detail on it. He is so full of fantasies that he writes, "In my dreams I kiss your cunt, your sweet wet cunt. In my thoughts I make love to you all day long" (86) in his apology letter for Cecilia. By representing the most secret part of Robbie's consciousness, the narrator tries to convince the reader that Robbie is the suspect in the raping event with his depicted sexual indulgences. Robbie is shown as a young, free spirit with his newly gained scholarship of medical college. As stated in the text, "freedom" is his state of personality. There is a signal that a free spirit is ready to do everything. "He thought of himself in 1962, at fifty, when he would be old, but not quite old enough to be useless, and of the weathered, knowing doctor he would be by then, with the secret stories, the tragedies and successes stacked behind him" (92). At some

point later, the narrator forces the reader to think Robbie's future as he is a successful schoolmaster or doctor who loves literature. The narrator misleads us as there will not be a future like that for Robbie because the unexpected events will ruin his life. The narrator carries on his plans on the future of his characters. This time Robbie thinks what will happen between him and Cecilia after they confessed their love to each other. The narrator articulates Robbie's thoughts of future: "And this was no fantasy, this was real, this was his near future, both desirable and unavoidable" (131).

As in the section of Robbie, the narrator constructs a future for Cecilia. She dreams of leaving Tallis house, living in the places she likes that she will have space to "breathe". The narrator states that for Cecilia's feelings: "It was excitement she felt, not restlessness, and she would not allow this evening to frustrate her. There would be other evenings like this, and to enjoy them she would have to be elsewhere" (103). However, it is just like Robbie's section, the narrator plants the seeds of hope in the reader's mind and the reader waits for a different and better future for the characters. By doing so, the reader does not expect the death of both character and is shocked with the couples' death.

At some points, the narrator holds the reader in suspense by delaying the truth or not explaining events in details. The reader wonders about the note that Robbie gave to Briony to fetch it to Cecilia. Briony goes into the house; but there is not any mention of note in Cecilia's section. The reader is curious about what she will do with that note. Will she read the note or fetch to Cecilia? Will she bring the note to Cecilia without looking inside of the envelope? For a few chapters, the narrator leaves the reader in

suspect, and wonder so the reader writes his version of story on his mind. After that, Briony appears to give the note to Cecilia and she leaves it to Cecilia's hand and says nothing. After reading the obscene note, Cecilia wonders if Briony read it and she asks "Briony? Briony, did you read this?" (111). The chapter ends with Paul Marshall intrusion to the scene and Cecilia's unanswered question. Once again, the narrator holds the suspect in the air and the reader's curiosity carries on.

In some parts of the first chapter, the reader feels Briony's intervention to the narrative. The reader sees Briony's position as the narrator of the novel that is a lately learned fact at the end of the story. She is the narrator of the novel and she is in a god-like position with her omniscient point-of-view, so she has a right to know everything and does whatever she wants to achieve it. "It was wrong to open people's letters, but it was right, it was essential, for her to know everything" (113). She opens the letter that Robbie gives her to deliver it Cecilia; but her craving to know everything pushes her to open it. She as being the actual narrator distorts the mind of the reader, she sees her sister in danger. "With the letter, something elemental, brutal, perhaps even criminal had been introduced, some principle of darkness, and even in her excitement over the possibilities, she did not doubt that her sister was in some way threatened and would need her help" (113-114).

Apart from her reading the note, Briony tells her cousin Lola about Robbie and his letter to Cecilia. By learning Cecilia's note, her suspects gain strength and she wants to express them to the other people. It starts with one person and continues until everybody learns about it. Briony tells Lola about the note that Robbie wrote for Cecilia. As

impressed by the note Lola says to Briony “How appalling for you. The man’s a maniac” (119). After Briony thinks of some moments shared with Robbie, she tries to find a frame fitted to the word maniac for him. The narrator enforces the possibility of Robbie as rapist with Lola’s expression: “Maniacs can attack anyone” (120). The narrator gives a generalisation from Briony’s perspective that confuses the reader’s mind about the reality of this statement.

As the novel process, the narrator shows that Briony’s fear is right since she sees Robbie attacking on her sister in the library. The narrator intrudes the story with her misinterpretations. The narrator describes how Briony interprets their situation:

Though they were immobile, her immediate understanding was that she had interrupted an attack, a hand-to-hand fight. The scene was so entirely a realization of her worst fears that she sensed that her overanxious imagination had projected the figures onto the packed spines of books. This illusion, or hope of one, was dispelled as her eyes adjusted to the gloom. No one moved. Briony stared past Robbie’s shoulder into the terrified eyes of her sister. He had turned to look back at the intruder, but he did not let Cecilia go. He had pushed his body against hers, pushing her dress right up above her knee and had trapped her where the shelves met at right angles. His left hand was behind her neck, gripping her hair, and with his right he held her forearm which was raised in protest, or self defence. (123)

However, the narrator totally distorts the reader’s mind by projecting the scene from Briony’s mind, which is full of negative thoughts for Robbie. Although the reader

knows that there is a possibility of a love relationship between the couple, he is not sure whether this scene is a pleasurable moment for the lovers, or Robbie whose mind full of fantasies of Cecilia, is attacking Cecilia. The reader is willingly driven to think that Robbie is a “maniac”.

In addition to Briony’s so-called suspicions, Emily Tallis suspects Robbie’s behaviour at the dinner. Mrs. Tallis’s focalization also makes the reader suspect Robbie. She feels distressed with his tension not knowing the real reason of it. The narrator still follows his path by taking the reader with him. The narrator expresses Mrs. Tallis anxiety, “She thought of Robbie at dinner when there had been something manic and glazed in his look. Might he be smoking the reefers she had read about in a magazine, these cigarettes that drove young men of bohemian inclination across the borders of insanity?” (151). She will help the reader to suspect Robbie at the crucial moment with her preconceptions. They do not understand Robbie’s feelings, after an unexpected flow of love between him and Cecilia. He looks weird that night because he is excited after an intercourse with Cecilia.

In the climax of the novel, which is Lola’s rape by someone, the most important distortion of reality occurs. The narrator explains the moment when Briony sees the rapist, “The vertical mass was a figure, a person who was now backing away from her and beginning to fade into the darker background of the trees. The remaining darker patch on the ground was also a person, changing shape again as it sat up and called her name” (164). The narrator does not describe the figure that leaves Lola. It is open to interpretation and the reader has options in his mind about the owner of this figure. After

Briony sees Lola there in pain, she immediately personifies this figure by naming him Robbie. She watches the figure going in the night among bushes; but all she sees is a black silhouette. However, Briony claims that it was Robbie and she says confidently, “She had no doubt. She could describe him. There was nothing she could not describe” (165). Although she cannot see him, she asserts that whom she saw was Robbie. At this point, Briony constructs her reality. The narrator distorts the reader’s mind by not giving a certain description of the figure and then he leaves the reader with the mind of a little girl. For an average reader, to make a conclusion of the event is difficult. Robbie, as the maniac, weird attacker of Cecilia is the fitting person for the label of rapist.

After this revelation of “truth”, the reader is deceived one more time by the narrator with the confirmation of Lola. Although Briony believes that she saw Robbie there with Lola, she wants to hear it firsthand, but she does not ask as who was it that Lola saw rather she asks, “It was him, wasn’t it?” (165). She does not think any other person for this label and many times she asks to Lola about it stressing Robbie’s presence in the event. Lola answers “Yes. It was him” (165), but there is ambiguity in this statement. The reader wonders about the identity of the rapist. There are three men in the household, who are not Briony’s relatives: Paul Marshall, Robbie Turner, and the son of housekeeper. They were also alone when they were searching for the twins. The narrator leaves a gap that a careful reader should fill. Lola does not name him. However, Briony, begins writing her story on her mind, constructs the reality. She repetitively asks Lola about the identity of attacker by stressing on Robbie and lastly Lola says: “You saw

him” (168). Briony is so confident and says, “Of course I did. Plain as day. It was him” (167).

The narrator still tries to direct the reader’s mind as Lola’s confusion carries on. There is a suspicion that he was not Robbie; but Lola is not sure about it so she has to accept the truth that her cousin created for her. Therefore, making Lola silent is a way of confusing the reader. The narrator enforces the assertions by Briony’s view about Robbie. “She blamed herself for her childish assumption that Robbie would limit his attentions to Cecilia. What was she thinking of? He was a maniac after all” (168). Then, the reader begins to believe Briony’s accusation, since Robbie was dreaming of Cecilia’s body whole the night and the relationship that they can have outside of the house. Maybe Robbie could not control his desire to make love and attacked Lola. Briony’s strong desire to defend her cousin and reveal the truth makes the reader feel that Briony has to tell the truth otherwise she cannot feel relaxed.

The narrator turns repeatedly to the perspective of Briony in order to make the point clear for the reader, but what he does is confusion. Briony thinks about the figure as she thinks about two Figures by a fountain; she repeats her own truth in order to make the reader believe. She does not clearly see her; but she knows him and what he did on that day, so Robbie must be guilty of that night. “The truth was in the symmetry, which was to say, it was founded in common sense. The truth instructed her eyes” (169). Briony does not change her mind despite Lola’s doubts about the identity of attacker. She says when Lola tells her the possibility of another man: “You wouldn’t be saying that if you’d been with me in the library” (171).

There is confusion with the narrator. Although he complicates the reader with insistence on Robbie's involvement to the event, he turns to Briony's perception and says, "However, she would have preferred to qualify, or complicate, her use of the word "saw." Less like seeing, more like knowing" (170). The point is important, because the reader relies on the assumption of a little child who accuses someone for not seeing the person, but knowing him. The narrator may be mistaken and she wants to mislead his reader.

The narrator adds Mrs. Tallis's view to the narration after she reads the letter that Robbie wrote to Cecilia. Mrs. Tallis, Leon, and the inspectors read the letter and the suspicions fit to its owner, Robbie with the expression of Mrs. Tallis: "If you had done the right thing, young lady, with all your education, and come to me with this, then something could have been done in time and your cousin would have been spared her nightmare" (179). The narrator forces the reader to believe his account as he forces the other characters to believe with him. Simultaneously, the narrator brings together his reader and the characters on the same level of conviction.

The narrator by presenting Cecilia's perspective on this event directs the attention to another boy, Danny Hardman since Cecilia believes that Robbie is not guilty. However, he goes on with Briony's view that "It was understandable, though poor form, that this young woman should be covering for her friend by casting suspicion on an innocent boy" (181). The narrator wisely gives his/her reader a logical reason for Cecilia's defending Robbie and accusing another boy that does not put an end to the suspicions about Robbie. In addition, although Robbie finds and brings the twins to the

house, he is blamed by Briony as she stresses his crime over and over again to make the reader accept her truth, “Did he believe he could conceal his crime behind an apparent kindness, behind this show of being the good shepherd? This was surely a cynical attempt to win forgiveness for what could never be forgiven” (183).

There is something wrong with Paul Marshall. He has a different interaction with Lola. He seems flirtatious in his behaviours, but the narrator is cautious of depicting him. The narrator refrains from characterisation of Marshall. After the household recognises Lola’s bruises and scratches, Paul Marshall clears his throat and says,

I saw it myself—had to break it up and pull them off her. I have to say, I was surprised, little fellows like that. They went for her all right. Emily had left her chair. She came to Lola’s side and lifted her hands in hers. Look at your arms! It’s not just chafing. You’re bruised up to your elbows. How on earth did they do that? I don’t know, Aunt Emily. (141)

The reader feels a kind of uneasiness, but he cannot name what it is because the narrator conceals the truth. The reader does not know whether something happened between them or the twins actually did these things to Lola.

In addition, after the rape the narrator refrains from giving any kind of special information to the reader. Paul Marshall returns from his search of twins in a natural way, as he has not done anything.

Paul Marshall came in from searching and learned the news from the inspectors. He walked up and down the terrace with them, one on each side, and on the turn offered them cigarettes from a gold case. When their conversation was over, he

patted the senior man on the shoulder and seemed to send them on their way.

(175)

Marshall is represented so normally that the reader does not suspect him rather the reader has one person to blame who has not yet arrived to the house from search, Robbie. The narrator willingly keeps the truth from the reader by showing Marshall to do ordinary things after the event.

The first part of the novel ends with ambiguity. The reader has to carry on his reading carefully to find the truth about the night that 'twins were lost'. Although the reader has suspicions about the identity of the attacker, he is left at the end of the part with an undeclared reality. In addition to that, Robbie and Cecilia are silent in their parting scene that is open to interpretation. What the narrator does is delaying the truth as many critics suggest as one of the aspects of unreliable narrators. It is evident at the end of the novel, Briony postpones the reality to an unknown time for the reader and that night ends with the interpretation of her who watches what takes place in Robbie's arrestment scene between Robbie and Cecilia.

The second part of the novel begins completely different than the reader expects. The reader thinks that the next part will carry on with Robbie's arrestment and his prison days; yet he is presented in the war that broke out after Robbie's getting out of prison. The narrator surprises his reader with an unexpected beginning.

When Robbie and his two corporal friends are walking in Dunkirk, they are thirsty and hungry and they go to a country house in order to find some water and food. They meet with a French lady there. At first, the narrator makes a statement for the French

lady's sons. The woman says her sons will kill Robbie and two corporals, if they stay at her barn. With this information, the reader expects a shotgun in the hands of her sons when they come to the door of barn, there occurs a tension; but it resolves when the reader acknowledges that they were holding baguettes. Lines later in the novel, the actual reason of French lady's fear is explained "she's always hated soldiers" (200). Therefore, it is obvious that the narrator delays the truth once again in story. After whole night feasting, Robbie promises to French man that "We'll be back to throw them out" (201), but it does not seem like a strong promise considering the status of war. The reader puts this detail on his mind and carries on reading and thinking that if it will happen as the narrator suggests.

Apart from war details and memories, the novel still carries on its obscurity about the rape. Robbie and Cecilia send letters to each other; but they do not talk about the guilt. In addition to that, the narrator adds a detail that cannot escape the notice of the reader. "He had been diagnosed, with clinical precision, as morbidly oversexed, and in need of help as well as correction" (204). Since the reader has diagnosis of a doctor as a proof, he suspects about the guilt of Robbie. However, there is a missing point, either that is his illness just includes the person whom he loves. It does not prove that Robbie will attack any girl he encounters since he is "morbidly oversexed".

As the novel progress, the narrator explains by Cecilia's point-of-view that there may be a mistake in Tallises' accusations on Robbie. Cecilia knows her sister well how spoiled her sister is and how she likes to draw attention and she trusts Robbie because she knows he loves her and will not do such a bad thing to her cousin.

They turned on you, all of them, even my father. When they wrecked your life they wrecked mine. They chose to believe the evidence of a silly, hysterical little girl. In fact, they encouraged her by giving her no room to turn back. She was a young thirteen, I know, but I never want to speak to her again. As for the rest of them, I can never forgive what they did. (209)

The reader begins to question the narrator's reliability when he is subject to a different point-of-view. Although the reader is not sure, he thinks other possibilities about that night. The narrator adds more clarity to the reader's thoughts about Robbie's situation. Cecilia's expression is: "Yes, and by the way, she also said she's had a piece of writing turned down by Cyril Connolly at Horizon. So at least someone can see through her wretched fantasies" (212). The reader gets a step closer to the reality with Cecilia's accusation on her sister.

The narrator absorbs his characters into existential questions though he reveals the fact that Briony is guilty of her wrong testimony. The narrator leads Robbie to question the real values:

The intricacies were lost to him, the urgency had died. Briony would change her evidence, she would rewrite the past so that the guilty became the innocent. But what was guilt these days? It was cheap. Everyone was guilty, and no one was. No one would be redeemed by a change of evidence, for there weren't enough people, enough paper and pens, enough patience and peace, to take down the statements of all the witnesses and gather in the facts. (261)

The reader learns this explanation in a very complex moment of being. With the effect of the war, Robbie questions the values of humanity and cannot find the real guilty person. The narrator emphasizes the character's psychology through this section; but he does not rush to reveal whole truth about that night.

At the end of chapter two, the narrator brings to light the speech between Robbie and Cecilia when he was arrested that was presented by Briony's perspective before. The reader learns what has taken place there in front of the house where the officers arrest Robbie. The narrator expresses Cecilia's feelings:

She would not let herself cry when she was telling him that she believed him, she trusted him, she loved him. He said to her simply that he would not forget this, by which he meant to tell her how grateful he was, especially then, especially now. Then she put a finger on the handcuffs and said she wasn't ashamed, there was nothing to be ashamed of. She took a corner of his lapel and gave it a little shake and this was when she said, "I'll wait for you. Come back. (265)

With this revelation, the reader owns one more piece to take him the truth. The first doubt about Cecilia's reaction to Robbie before he leaves for prison is brought out with narrator's delayed information.

The third part of novel is told by the perception of Briony although it is narrated in third-person omniscient narrative. At that part, Briony's adult life is explored by showing her nursing career at the time of war. She has undergone many changes in her life. She has left her house and does not want to keep in touch with them. The reader

learns it; but the narrator does not tell why she does it so. Apart from telling it, the narrator even intensifies the reader's curiosity by asking, "Why could Briony not visit, even for a day, when everyone would adore to see her and was desperate for her stories about her new life? And why did she write so infrequently? It was difficult to give a straight answer. For now it was necessary to stay away" (279).

Briony gets a message from her father in her hospital days that bring a new dimension to the story. Paul Marshall and Lola Quincey were to be married a week Saturday in the Church of the Holy Trinity, Clapham Common" (284). The narrator who hides the intercourse between Paul Marshall and Lola reveals it now. The narrator brings a possibility of wrong testimony that night. Although the narrator says about Briony's father that he, "gave no reason why he supposed she would want to know, and made no comment on the matter himself" (284), she leaves it open to the interpretation of the reader. The narrator completes the lacking information, but he is careful at not revealing the truth immediately, the truth of what actually happened that night. With Briony herself, the reader begins to make sums about this 'strange couple'.

After keeping the reality such a long time, the narrator reveals it by giving a long statement. The narrator explains it as Briony's epiphany after so many years and pains for the three people, Briony, Cecilia and Robbie.

She felt the memories, the needling details, like a rash, like dirt on her skin:
Lola coming to her room in tears, her chafed and bruised wrists, and the scratches on Lola's shoulder and down Marshall's face; Lola's silence in the darkness at the lakeside as she let her earnest, ridiculous, oh so prim younger

cousin, who couldn't tell real life from the stories in her head, deliver the attacker into safety. Poor vain and vulnerable Lola with the pearl-studded choker and the rosewater scent, who longed to throw off the last restraints of childhood, who saved herself from humiliation by falling in love, or persuading herself she had, and who could not believe her luck when Briony insisted on doing the talking and blaming. And what luck that was for Lola—barely more than a child, prized open and taken—to marry her rapist. (324)

Mrs Tallis foreshadows this event by expressing “How like Hermione Lola was, to remain guiltless while others destroyed themselves at her prompting” (147). Lola is the luckiest one among the characters, because she uses her opportunity utmost, while others are ruined with her destructive event.

When Briony goes to Cecilia's home to see her, she encounters Robbie there and the narrator expresses her feeling as: “Briony wanted to tell her how wonderful it was that Robbie had come back safely” (338). This statement is very misleading since there has not been a time that they meet, Cecilia and Briony. The end of the novel brings out the fact that this part has not happened before, it was just Briony's story that she wrote for her wish for atonement. The narrator lies to the reader in this way by telling something that has not happened before. In addition to the statement, Cecilia speaks to Briony later that reveals another lie of the narrator: “There isn't much time. Robbie has to report for duty at six tonight and he's got a train to catch. So sit down. There are some things you're going to do for us” (344).

Lastly, when Cecilia and Robbie meet at a cafe, they talk about a cottage in Wiltshire that they will go in the appropriate time. When Briony goes to see them, Cecilia tells Robbie about her lost ration book, "I'm sure it's in Wiltshire, in the cottage" (347). Soon the reader discovers that they never went to Wiltshire since Robbie died of septicaemia at Bray Dunes and Cecilia was killed by a bomb at Balham station at the same year. The narrator lies to the reader in an attempt to atone for her guilt; yet there is not such a life Robbie and Cecilia lived. The reader is misguided; he is thinking that they reached a happy end with two lovers together. However, Briony acknowledges to the reader at the end of the novel, as the highest form, only novel can do it by reuniting them, although we know that it is fiction.

These conclusions are made by the usage of cognitive theory that is based on inferences from the reader and text. The conclusions are the result of our inferences and interpretations. As the cognitive theory suggests, events and characters are interpreted by the reader's value system. Apart from readerly inferences, the text includes rhetorical devices that stress the unreliability of narrator. These are the devices, which the critics of rhetorical approach apply to gauge unreliability. Although there are not so much of them, *Atonement* represents some of them.

Sometimes, unreliable narrators tend to use irony in their narratives as it is suggested in other chapter before. The reader will be guided by the irony in the text and he will get closer to reality. In *Atonement*, the irony results from Briony's lunatic insistence on Robbie's guiltiness by just relying on a dark figure whom she could not see; yet the narrator claims: Even so, before they reached the driveway, before he had

the chance to set Lola down, Briony was beginning to tell him what had happened, exactly as she had seen it”(172). The statement ‘as she had seen it’ is ironic here since she does not see anything clear that will reveal a truth. Another irony stems from Briony’s world of imagination that praises idealised marriage with her aunt’s divorce. “It was a mundane unravelling that could not be reversed, and therefore offered no opportunities to the storyteller: it belonged in the realm of disorder” (8–9). The reality of divorce contradicts with the fairy tale marriage of Briony’s story *The Trials of Arabella*. (Richardson, 487). Another irony is related again with Briony’s world of imagination. She confuses world of fiction and reality,

Briony had her first, weak intimation that for her now it could no longer be fairy-tale castles and princesses, but the strangeness of the here and now, of what passed between people, the ordinary people that she knew, and what power one could have over the other, and how easy it was to get everything wrong, completely wrong. (39)

Also, there are important symbols in the narration. The symbols play an important role in detecting discrepancies and inconsistencies in the narrative. However, the reader should really read between the lines to see their relevancy to the story and deduct how they give clues for future events. For example, Briony’s first attempt of fiction *The Trials of Arabella* tells the story Arabella who has made a bad choice in her life and doomed:

At some moments chilling, at others desperately sad, the play told a tale of the heart whose message, conveyed in a rhyming prologue, was that love

which did not build a foundation on good sense was doomed. The reckless passion of the heroine, Arabella, for a wicked foreign count is punished by ill fortune when she contracts cholera during an impetuous dash towards a seaside town with her intended. (3)

It signifies Briony's desire for order, in that case moral order. Briony shares her point-of-view for an inconvenient love and then when the rape event happens, Briony readily puts the blame on Robbie, since she judges him as a son of cleaning woman. He is from upper class, he is not appropriate for her 'beloved' sister, Cecilia, and then they must be punished as Arabella. Another important symbol is Uncle Clam's vase that was broken at the crucial moment of the novel. Its break symbolises the disintegration of family after these events.

The reader should detect every possible clue that signals unreliability in the text. As the rhetorical approach requires, the reader should find some textual elements that indicates unreliability. The usage of prolepsis, a figure of speech, meaning to anticipate something that will happen in the future, is apparent to the careful readers. It is told in the novel for Briony will do something bad by giving the reader some clues as "Within the half hour Briony would commit her crime" (156).

3.3.b. The Reasons for Narrator's Unreliability

There are many reasons for the unreliability of a narrator as the critics suggested in the earlier chapters. In *Atonement*, some basic factors affect the trustworthiness of narrator, although they are understood considering the real identity of narrator. For *Atonement*, the vast imagination, childhood, egoism, class distinction, and betrayal are

the reasons of unreliability. Many of them depend on the personality and psychology of narrator, but there are social factors for it.

Firstly, Briony's imagination is the most important source of unreliability. She writes a story regarding the events that she experienced in a day length. She does not represent events as she sees; she changes them according to her imagination. Although Briony does recount the events as they are, she lacks credibility in the interpretation of events that misleads the reader. The reader should not to trust Briony's insight, her imagination. "The truth had become as ghostly as invention" (41). The truth will be an invention by the mind. It clearly shows that Briony will write a story about her sister and Robbie. Although the reader does not know the content of the story, he feels that it will include the moment of event and what happens next. She does not have time to write at that moment, but she plans. "The writing could wait until she was free" (42). That night Briony begins to write her story on her mind, tells it to everyone and it is written as a testimony in police records.

Childhood or voyage from childhood to maturity is another reason of unreliability in *Atonement*. Briony Tallis is thirteen years old and she is unable to understand the adult world. She is lost in the world of children's fiction. Some codes and norms mean nothing for her or mean too differently for her. The crucial scene of the novel, when Briony sees Cecilia and Robbie by the fountain causes the reader to think the reliability of the former scene that is the same scene with the interpretation of Cecilia. However, the reader is closer to truth with Cecilia's interpretation since she is the one that experiences event. Briony just interprets it according to her limited perception as she

claims for the genre of story. Briony interprets the incident between Cecilia and Robbie as a marriage proposal because she is not acquainted with the codes of adult world. She totally misinterprets occurrences as Robbie's forcing Cecilia to marry him. Her interpretation fits to the stories that she writes. Maria Margaronis states that "the thirteen-year-old Briony Tallis, unable to make sense of an exchange she watches through a window between her sister, Cecilia, and Robbie, Cecilia's future lover, begins to understand that experience is subjective, and that her task as a writer will be to enter other minds" (141).

Briony's egotism is another reason of unreliability. In the fountain scene, Briony watches Cecilia and Robbie by fountain; yet she cannot name completely what she saw. She goes to the window and looks again to the place where they were standing a few minutes ago. She sees no drops of water after Cecilia's wetness as the water evaporates on that hot summer day. She does not want to believe that Robbie makes a marriage proposal to Cecilia; but her egoistic nature dominates and she wants to accept that something happened between Robbie and Cecilia. "However, she could not betray herself completely; there could be no doubt that some kind of revelation occurred" (41). Briony sets herself upon the others since she has the ability to write stories with a 'brilliant' imagination. She is an egoistic person "Briony was surrounded by machines, intelligent and pleasant enough on the outside, but lacking the bright and private *inside* feeling she had" (36). Because of her self-trust, she does not want to accept that her testimony may be fault. She trusts herself and do not want to lose attention that has always been on her.

Betrayal is another issue that should be analysed. In the second part of the novel, a crucial truth is revealed by Robbie's consciousness. The narrator hides an important piece of the puzzle. For the reader, there is a new opportunity to interpret the story differently. Briony confesses her love to Robbie on a hot summer day when they go for a swimming lesson. She stresses that she loves Robbie and thanks him for saving her. At this moment, her feelings are revealed to Robbie. She confesses her love for Robbie that annoys him. It is an important detail because it may change the perception of the events. Although Briony is a little child, she declares her love for Robbie and the fact that Robbie has a relationship with her sister Cecilia puts Briony into a fit of jealousy since Robbie said to her openly "But that doesn't mean I love you" (232). However, the narrator does not express the actual reason of her testimony against Robbie. It may be because of her unreturned love for Robbie, the instinct to protect her sister from a maniac or it was a revenge for Robbie's betrayal of her love. One or all of these reasons affect the testimony of Briony that is also under the evil imagination of her. That is Robbie's theory, although he is not sure about the certainty of it.

Lastly, class distinction will be analysed in the distortion of narrator. Class distinction affects the narrative in two ways. Some of the characters are accused because of the social class that they belong while others do not. Secondly, the character misinterprets the behaviour of another character depending on his social class. Mrs. Tallis is a prejudiced person; she is obsessed by the class system. The reader should not trust her so much. She just thinks that her children should have a proper status in the society. The status means that Leon will have a good income and marry a proper girl;

her daughter will marry a rich man like Paul Marshall. So, she does not suspect Paul Marshall in the raping event since he has a name and cannot do such a thing. She distorts the reader's mind by stressing on Paul Marshall's good aspects; Marshall is presented as a good fellow. "This wealthy young entrepreneur might not be such a bad sort, if he was prepared to pass the time of day entertaining children" (69).

At chapter three, Briony reveals the truth that the narrator keeps through the book. The reader suspects two people as rapist: Robbie Turner and Danny Hardman. Two of them are the from lower classes. Robbie is the son of cleaning lady; Danny is the son of housekeeper. They do not suspect Paul Marshall who is responsible of this crime. After many years Briony says "Old Hardman was probably telling the truth. Danny was with him all that night" (346). Paul Marshall does not fit to the rapist's picture in their mind, since he is rich, he has fame and name. They do not think that Marshall can do such a thing to dishonour himself. Briony's "class-conscious" mother Emily supports her sister at the night of interrogation although she does not have any kind of evidence.

Another conflict with class system occurs between Robbie and Cecilia. When Robbie comes to Cecilia's house, he takes off his boots and socks without knowing the actual reason of his behaviour. However, Cecilia gets angry with him; because she thinks that he takes of his boots as an act of exaggerated respect and expresses her anger as "He was playacting the cleaning lady's son come to the big house on an errand" (27).

Consequently, there are different factors that affect the notion of unreliability in *Atonement*. They differ from a child's imagination to class system. Apart from personal factors, social issues are efficient in distorting the reader's mind. Class distinction makes

the reader suspect the son of cleaning lady. The narrator reflects her point-of-view and the reader is directed by her thoughts and interpretations in the analysis and interpretation of narrative. In addition to Briony's imagination, and feelings for Robbie, the prejudices of Tallis family affect the narrative. With their misdirection, the reader follows the wrong path in the exploration of truth.

3.3.c. The Effects of Unreliability in the Novel

Every unreliable narrator affects differently the narrative line or the characters of its creation. S/he may change the story line completely by lying to the reader at the beginning of the narration or distort some events that cause minor changes in the narrative. *Atonement* includes a narrator who is destructive for her and the people around her. However, it is important to note that the narrator's character's testimony creates doubt for the reader. The reader sees that Briony as a character is responsible for the confusion and misfortune. Briony Tallis insists on her testimony and causes Robbie's going to jail. She suffers greatly for her false testimony that causes destruction of the Tallis family. When Robbie goes to jail, Cecilia leaves her home and settles in London for a new life. She serves as a nurse in wartime. She does not want to contact her family and see any of them. She is too furious with them because they believed in a little child with demonic imagination. She is away from her lover and cannot live the life that she wants to live with Robbie because of the duties of war.

Robbie is the most damaged one in this destruction. He is sent to jail by the false testimony of a little child. He spends five years in jail by thinking his lover all the time and he lost her chance of medical education that he longed to get so much. Because he

was in jail, he is sent to war as private and lost his life there because of sapremia. He could not have the life he was dreaming at the dinner night when he was preparing for the night.

Apart from the other characters and her family, Briony brings her own destruction in the narration. She leaves her home, too. She begins serving as nurse in the wartime in order to penance her guilt. She works the whole daylong in order to forget her sin. She does not want to get in touch with her family. She suffers constantly for the misunderstanding she caused. The truth that she cannot find Robbie and Cecilia and ask for atonement from them makes her suffer more. In her lifetime, she seeks for the atonement of her guilt and finds it in the world of fiction by granting them 'fictionalised happiness ever-after'.

It is clear that the effects of unreliability –diegetic or extradiegetic- are crucial for *Atonement*. The narration is affected greatly by Briony's fallacious testimony and whole course of events change for the characters. Although how Tallis family and Robbie are affected by the rape event is great, it mostly depends the unreliability of Briony as a character. As a diegetic narrator, she tells a lie that holds the reader in suspect, then as extradiegetic narrator, she confuses the reader by creating a fictional reality for Robbie and Cecilia.

Chapter IV

THE SOUND AND THE FURY

4.1. Evaluation of *The Sound and the Fury* as a Modernist Novel

The Sound and the Fury, published in 1929, is one of the works of William Faulkner that has been appreciated as a modernist novel. The novel represents a family drama by showing the reasons for its decadence, as do many of Faulkner's novels. Thomas L. McHaney states, "*The Sound and the Fury* is modernist variation upon the family chronicle novel [...]" (149). Faulkner first published *The Sound and the Fury* and then his other novels came as a succession of recurrent themes. The novel is about the one central event that affects Compson family negatively.

The narration begins with Benjy on 7 April, 1928. Benjy is the mentally disabled son of the Compson family. Luster, the son of the housekeeper who looks after him, and Benjy are watching men play golf. He begins to moan when he hears them say "caddie!" because it reminds him of his sister Caddy. Then when he climbs through a fence, he is caught on the fence and he remembers Caddy again. He remembers when he and Caddy brought their uncle's love letter to their neighbour. He remembers the day his grandmother, Damuddy died and all of the children in family went to play in the branches and wet themselves. He remembers how he got drunk accidentally at Caddy's wedding. Then he remembers how he attacked a girl returning from school, Jason and Miss Quentin's quarrel, and Caddy's love for him. When his consciousness puts forward these thoughts, he returns to present with Luster, who gets angry with him because of his moaning.

Quentin Compson wakes up in his room, at Harvard on 2 June, 1910. He just looks at the watch that his father gave him. He is obsessed with time. He always checks it. When he remembers his sister's marriage announcement, he was interrupted to get up and hurry to class by his roommate Shreve; but Quentin does not go with him. He stays in his room and remembers telling his father that he has committed incest. His father does not worry about it so much, which makes Quentin bitter. He breaks the face of his watch's glass when he is packing his belongings. He leaves two mails: one for Shreve and the other one to mail. He takes his watch to a proprietor but he does not get it fixed, he does not want to keep time. He boards a train and goes out of town. During this trip, he thinks about the events that trouble him especially about Caddy's husband and wedding day. Quentin meets a little Italian girl in a bakery who follows him and the girl's brother accuses him of kidnapping her. He is arrested and pays a seven dollar fine, and they leave him. He returns to his room after a fight with his friend, Gerald. He cleans the bloodstains on his vest, brushes his teeth, and leaves the room.

After Quentin's section, Jason narrates the story. It begins on 6 April, 1928. The chapter starts with Jason and his niece's quarrel and then the narration shifts to his memories about losing the job that Caddy's ex-husband offered him and he lost it because of Caddy's illegitimate child. Jason, in his mid-thirties works at a farm-supply store and plays on the cotton market with the money that Caddy sends for her daughter's upbringing. He quarrels all the time with his niece and Dilsey, and his mother saves Miss Quentin from a beating. Miss Quentin is a promiscuous girl like her mother; she skips school and meets boys. Jason plays a scheme on his niece by deceiving her that her

mother sent a ten-dollar money order and she has to sign. She does what he asks without looking at the amount. On the same day, Jason sees his niece with a man who has a red tie, they go in to the woods, and he chases after them. He finds them after a long search; but they manage to escape by making a fool of him. When Jason returns home, he does not directly say that he saw Miss Quentin with a man; but he alludes to the fact, which makes her angry. She accuses her uncle, saying that he is bad to her. She leaves the dinner; Jason suspects that she will leave the house.

Lastly, the narration turns to third-person narration; yet the narrator is Dilsey, Compsons' housekeeper. The date is 8 April, 1928 and it is Easter day. This section begins with Compson's breakfast that is interrupted by Miss Quentin's escape. Dilsey, Luster and Benjy go to church for Easter service. Jason realizes that Miss Quentin broke into his room and stole the money that he takes from her mother. He is enraged and goes to the sheriff to report the theft, but the sheriff does not search for Miss Quentin since there is no proof that she stole the money. Jason leaves and goes to another town to find Miss Quentin and her lover who works at a show. He goes but cannot find her and he engages in a fight. When he returns, Jason hits the coach that Luster drives while Benjy is sitting inside of it.

William Faulkner uses modern psychology to expose the consciousness of his characters in *The Sound and the Fury*. Especially in Quentin's section, the reader learns uncontrolled, unknown, obscure instincts and desires coming from his 'id' about his sister Caddy. Caddy has a different effect on each child, which shows the relativity of truth since they are not affected by the same events. For example, when Quentin thinks

about Caddy's promiscuity as dishonouring his family's name, Jason just thinks about the job offer he lost because of his sister's behaviour. Olga W. Wickery claims,

The fact that Benjy is dumb is symbolic of the closed nature of these worlds; communication is impossible when Caddy who is central to all three means something different to each. For Benjy she is the smell of trees; for Quentin, honour; and for Jason, money or at least the means of obtaining it. (1018)

Faulkner presents the human condition by emphasizing different aspects of personality. While Quentin symbolizes alienation from society, Jason shows frustration against society by signifying "fury" in the title of novel.

The main characters in *The Sound and the Fury* do not have fully integrated personalities, their world is too complex and they are lost in their thoughts. How they will behave is unpredictable. For example, Jason hits a man without any specific reason, and Quentin fights with his friend when they are talking about sisters and it makes his friends surprise. The idea of free association occurs in the novel. Benjy, who is mentally disabled associates people with something. For example, gate means Caddy for him because when they were children, he waits for Caddy's return from school and hugging him. When he sees a gate, he remembers Caddy. Groden states that "Faulkner strips one aspect of the interior monologue to its radical essentials by using the association method in a mind that can only associate mechanically, that can make no conclusions or deduction" (275). The story is constructed by four different perspectives, each representing the events, which their family underwent. Faulkner does not give the events as a whole: the characters' thoughts and feelings are fragmented. Thus, the reality is

fragmented. The reader should follow these fragments carefully in order to construct the truth. Fragmentation is especially apparent in Benjy since his observations come so abruptly that it is difficult to read the story.

William Faulkner uses mostly stream-of-consciousness technique in Quentin's section since he is the one who is absorbed in abstract thinking. His thoughts run like a river and his consciousness is bare on the reader without punctuation, which makes it hard to follow. Every memory interrupts his consciousness:

Country people poor things they never saw an auto before lots of them honk the horn Candace so *She wouldn't look at me* they'll get out of the way *wouldn't look at me* your father wouldn't like it if you were to injure one of them I'll declare your father will simply have to get an auto now I'm almost sorry you brought it down Herbert I've enjoyed it so much of course there's the carriage but so often when I'd like to go out Mr Compson has the darkies doing something it would be worth my head to interrupt he insists that Roskus is at my call all the time [...] you can thank me for that he takes after my people the others are all Compson *Jason furnished the flour. They made kites on the back porch and sold them for a nickel a piece, he and the Patterson boy. Jason was treasurer.* (78-79)

This technique is best used to express characters' thoughts. Groden claims that: "For both Joyce and Faulkner this technique serves to reveal repressed fears bursting in upon the characters' more voluntary thoughts" (271).

Another aspect of modernism is that interior monologue is used to express characters' thoughts and feelings as they appear in consciousness. Quentin is one of the most important portrayals of this form in his memories: "*it is because there is nothing else I believe there is something else but there may not be and then I You will find that even injustice is scarcely worthy of what you believe yourself to be* He paid me no attention, his jaw set in profile, his face turned a little away beneath his broken hat" (103). It's seen from the statement that when his consciousness is shown in italics it shifts back to reality.

Frequently, modernist novels do not have a linear structure and they do not have too much action. I mean they do not follow the story line through the narration, and although there are many actions that are projected by the consciousness of a character, it does not make the story move. James Joyce's *Ulysses* tells the story of Leopold Bloom and his friends' twenty-four hours that nearly lasts for eight hundred pages. Bloom leaves his house in order to buy kidney from the butcher, a simple act, but it is told in many pages. The actual story line is interrupted by many associations, so it is not easy to events that come one after another. It is the same with *The Sound and the Fury*. It covers four days that are narrated by four different narrators. During these four days, there is not much action, the characters are absorbed into their memories and the story does not move because of the use of flashbacks. Modernist writers do not focus much on the events but prefer to present the characters' mind. Groden states that "[...] devices such as associationism, recurrent motifs, idiosyncratic phrases and rhythms, unexplained mental images or ideas, and the basic stream-of-consciousness goal of rendering the contents of

a mind all force the novelist away from the direction of storytelling and into the depths of character” (276).

Consequently, Faulkner uses modernist themes and techniques in *The Sound and the Fury*. He is affected by contemporary philosophers such as Freud and Bergson, and he uses their innovative ideas and techniques in his works. Themes are based on the thoughts of those thinkers and the techniques are the result of those ideas. The themes and techniques are interconnected. *The Sound and the Fury* is accepted as Faulkner’s most modernist novel since he uses these techniques less often in his later novels.

4.2. Exploration of Narrator or Narrators in *The Sound and the Fury*

The Sound and the Fury has four narrators; three of them are first-person narrators while the last one is third-person in omniscient voice. Each of the narrators represents some events that affected them in the past. Every chapter focuses on different aspects of the same events and person, and Caddy, the daughter of the Compson family, is the centre of events although she does not appear as a narrator in the story. Every character is unique in personality and point-of-view.

The first of the narrator is Benjy, and he is the objective voice of the novel because he describes events without commentary. Anyway, he does not narrate the story as other narrators do, since we just read his mind through the first section of book. The reader can understand the world through Benjy’s perception. He just depends on his perceptions to understand the world around him. Benjy, our first narrator has no concept of time, perhaps for reasons of unreliability. Life is a string of experiences for him. Benjy is an incomprehensible and challenging narrator because we have to understand the story

through his eyes. He is like a projection machine that shows us what happened in the Compson house. Benjy, a mentally disabled man, has no concept of time, which creates a hardship for the narration. He can just perceive the world through his senses. The world is images, sounds, and smells for him. He is unable to interpret the feelings of others that prevail in the story. Therefore, there may be some missing points in the interpretation of events that cause unreliability for the text. In addition, the lack of a time concept may cause confusion because we are unaware when the actual event takes place. Flashbacks can give us a shattered reality. There is not certain piece of truth that could be taken from Benjy's narration. The information that Benjy gives is not deep, so the reader can get the basic truths about the other characters. He just makes us interpret Jason as a brother who constantly has a quarrel with Caddy and Miss Quentin. The events that Benjy narrates have a symbolic importance for the story. Although he just narrates what he sees, the moments that he caught foreshadows many important events. For example; Caddy's muddying her underwear in the stream is a foreshadowing for her later promiscuity. Benjy realises that Caddy wears perfume and he begins to cry, thinking that she is losing her purity.

The second section of the book has a different narrator, the second son of Compson the family. Quentin is the second son of the house and he is a student at Harvard. He symbolizes a different social community in his campus. However, he does not get involved in the activities of his classmates. He continuously thinks about Caddy and the events that occurred in the past. He is less objective than Benjy. He is sensitive and introverted boy. Quentin's sentences are long and complex in contrast to Benjy's simple

sentences. He describes daily life in detail around him, but his wishful and abstract thinking confuses the reader. His feelings are paramount, so he is a subjective narrator; he has a subjective voice in narrating the events that took place during Caddy's childhood. Quentin constantly engages in abstract thinking and this affects the reliability of the narrative. Like Benjy, Quentin's narrative is interrupted by instant memories and flashbacks. These memories are shaped by Quentin's fantasies so the reader cannot trust his narration. He deviates from objectivity and injects his fantasies into the narrative. For example, he misinforms us when he claims that he has committed incest with Caddy. His fantasies are more dominant in this section. Rather than narrating the story as it is, he frequently expresses his thoughts and fantasies about Caddy. As the story goes on, it is difficult to separate what is real or truth, and fantasy. The reader cannot figure out whether it is the real event that occurred or just Quentin's abstract and wishful thinking. By engaging in wishful thinking, he thinks he will get rid of negative feelings about his family. Since Quentin's family honour is the most important thing in the world, having a dirty spot on his name ruins his mental state. He makes up lies in order to clear his family name; oddly, he lies by saying that he and Caddy had incest. He is even unaware of the absurdity of his suggestion for clearing his family name. Quentin disgraces his sister more when he lies about the incest. He does not approve of his father's thoughts about virginity and the changing social norms of society. Therefore, he has many psychological problems considering his past. He is obsessed with the past, so he consistently checks the time by listening to the chimes and watching his shadow for information about time. He tries to deceive his father by making up the story of incest.

He is drowned in abstract thinking and fantasies; he does not act in order to change anything. Also, there might be an emotional interaction between Quentin and Caddy. Although they seem uninterested in each other, Caddy and Quentin are jealous of each other at time.

The third narrator in the story is Jason, who is irascible. He cannot get along well even with his sister and brothers. He tells what they do immediately to his family and therefore he is not loved by anyone. Although his narration seems like the purest of all because of his more linear story line, Jason is a cunning and untrustworthy character. Jason is deprived of love after his grandmother, Demuddy, dies. After her death, he cries because she used to sleep with him. This lack of love in his childhood makes him a man who does not care about love. He is totally a materialistic man. Even in his childhood, when they return from the bank he falls down because “He had his hands in his pockets” (18) which refers to his materiality. He has also racist attitudes. He always complains about their housekeeper and her children: “I feed a whole dam kitchen full of niggers to follow around after him, but if I want an automobile tire changed, I have to do it myself” (158). Unlike Quentin, Jason does not look for reality in the past, but lives in the present and as presents him: “From the first he had distrusted everything which he could not himself control. Unlike Quentin for whom reality lay in ethical concepts, Jason had learned to believe in whatever he could hold in his hands or keep in his pocket” (Wickery, 1032-33). Jason is constantly jealous of Quentin’s going to Harvard although he hides his jealousy. He is proud and prejudiced and sees himself as the head of house since Mr. Compson died of alcoholism. Jason has prejudices against “niggers” as he

calls them, Jews, Caddy and his niece Miss Quentin whom he does not even know, yet he accuses her. Jason is fixated on the job chance that was promised him. He lost because of Caddy, when her husband learns that her child does not belong to her. Because of that event, he seeks revenge against Caddy, Herbert, Compson, and Miss Quentin, and even the house servants.

The last section of the novel is third-person narration, although Dilsey is the one who narrates. This part is accepted as the most reliable narrator. Kartiganer states that “Dilsey has been pointed to as the one source of value in the novel” (636). The narration is linear and the events are told as they happen without prejudice. The section lacks aspects of a modernist novel since it does not include interior monologues or free association. Kartiganer also declares, “Not in Benjy, Quentin, or Jason has Faulkner discovered a vision which is both trustworthy and adequate to what we know of life” (634). Critics reveal that Dilsey’s part is the most trustworthy one, because she is a religious, moral, and compassionate old woman who accepts everybody and loves them. When Jason is ashamed of Benjy’s limitations, she takes Benjy to the church and does not care about what others say. She protects Miss Quentin from Jason so he cannot hurt or beat her. She is loyal to her household, and prevents her daughter’s gossiping about them. Therefore, the reader trusts Dilsey. After analysing the characteristics of each narrator in *The Sound and the Fury*, I will now examine how they distort reality and provide the reader with an unreliable source of information. Therefore, the next chapter is about how the unreliable narrators of *The Sound and the Fury* affects the narration.

4.3. The Concept of Unreliable Narrator in *The Sound and the Fury*

4.3.a. The Representation of Unreliability in *The Sound and the Fury*

The Sound and the Fury displays all of the characteristics of a modernist novel. The novel is complicated because of different perspectives on the same events, and the use of modernist techniques that show the characters' consciousness interrupting the narrative line. The title of the novel explains something about its content, as Booth suggests "Titles and epigraphs of *The Sound and the Fury*. "They are only the explicit commentary the reader is given" (198). The title comes from Shakespeare's famous play *Macbeth*. It is Macbeth's soliloquy of after his wife dies:

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. (Shakespeare, 77)

Faulkner uses many of the important themes in the soliloquy: Time, death, shadow, hour, idiot, sound, and fury. Time, death, hour, shadow are key words to describe Quentin. Quentin's obsessions are represented in Macbeth's speech. Quentin constantly looks at his watch, checks his shadow, and at the end he commits suicide which is signified by "Out, out, brief candle!" (69). The story begins by being narrated by the

idiot Benjy which signifies “nothing” (69). The sound is represented by Benjy’s moaning and cry while Jason represents the fury.

The novel is complicated in style and theme. Especially, the first and second chapters leave the reader with many questions. Stacy Burton cites Wolfgang Iser, an important figure of reader-oriented theory:

modernist novels (with their multiple narratives and time lines) exaggerate the usual process of reading by leaving many questions open-ended for the reader, whose answers will always be provisional, subject to change as other readers reach different interpretations. *The Sound and the Fury* provokes this dialogic participation from its first pages, for as soon as a reader recognizes the severe limits of Benjy's perceptions he or she attempts to supplement what that difficult narrator has to say. Statement of modern novel. (625)

In the first chapter, Benjamin narrates the story in an ambiguous manner. Generally, he describes what he sees without names or pronouns so that the reader consistently asks What is it?, Who is he?, What does he describe? This part is composed of free associations. When Benjy sees an object, he associates it with other things so that his consciousness appears to us. When Luster says to him, “Can’t you never crawl through here without snagging on that nail” (2). The word ‘crawl’ triggers a memory of Caddie, an association that abruptly disrupts the narration:

Caddy uncaught me and we crawled through. Uncle Maury said to not let anybody see us, so we better stoop over, Caddy said. Stoop over, Benjy. Like this, see. We stoop over and crossed the garden, where the flowers rasped and

rattled against us. The ground was hard. We climbed the fence, where the pigs were grunting and snuffing. I expect they're sorry because one of them got killed today, Caddy said. The ground was hard, churned and knotted. Keep your hands in your pockets, Caddy said. Or they'll get froze. You don't want your hands froze on Christmas, do you. (Faulkner, 2)

He also waits near the gate that reminds him of Caddy because he used to wait for Caddy there when she returns from school. For him, the gate means Caddy's returning home. He even catches one of girls who return from school after Caddy leaves the house.

His narration skips from one scene to another and is hard to follow. Donald M. Kartineger claims that for Benjy, "reality as a succession of objects, is never content to allow it to exist in that state, but must render it immediately, in the very act of vision, into schematic form" (621). Benjy's world is based on sensory perceptions: sight, smell, sound, touch. The reader cannot trust a narrator who fails to understand the world around him completely. Although some of the critics claim that it is the most objective part, Benjy's limited perception contrasts with this idea. "I could hear him rattling in the leaves. I could smell the cold" (3) He associates the things he most loves with his perceptions. "Caddy smelled like leaves" (4). The novel begins on 7 April 1928 and ends on 8 April 1928, but Benjy's mind is not fixed on that day: his memories of Caddy are entwined with the present. The reader thinks that they are in the past since they do not know that the date refers his today. When they are returning from a golf course, he skips to the memory of Caddy's returning from school when she hugs him. Benjy has no

conception of time which misleads the reader about the sequence of events since his thoughts are so scattered. Generally, Faulkner uses italics to denote interior monologue, but at some points, abrupt changes confuse the reader. Benjy narrates what happens without emotions. Events are given without logic in that part of the novel. When Luster and Benjy return from golf course, Benjy begins to cry and the reason is not revealed: "He dont know what he want to do" Luster said. "He think he want to go up yonder where they knocking that hall. You sit down here and play with your jimson weed. Look at them chillen playing in the branch, if you got to look at something" (10). The reader must work hard to associate it with Caddy: the men in the pasture call for a golf caddie which makes him remember Caddy and therefore he loves to go there. Later the reader learns that to speak Caddy's name is forbidden in the house, so he only hears it at the golf course. At another time he begins crying without giving any reason: "Dilsey was singing in the kitchen and I began to cry" (22).

Faulkner uses modernist techniques in his novel to the utmost. He uses shifts in his novel that shows inner monologues of characters. For example, Benjy's thoughts do not seem like interior monologue since we see his consciousness, feelings and thoughts, but including events. Faulkner frequently shifts to interior monologue in the middle of the sentence: "I hushed and got in the water *and Roskus came and said to come to supper and Caddy said, It's not supper time yet I'm not going. She was wet*" (13). This quick change from past to present is analepsis. Faulkner does not inform the reader about analepsis, the only hint is italics, but sometimes they do not appear, either.

Benjy's sentences are simple; he cannot tell something completely in full detail, which makes the reader question the reliability of his narration. Benjy's sentences are in present simple or past simple tense: "*They moaned at Dilsey's house. Dilsey was moaning. When Dilsey moaned Luster said, Hush, and we hushed, and then I began to cry and Blue howled under the kitchen steps. Then Dilsey stopped and we stopped*" (26). The reader thinks that there may be some other facts that he cannot perceive or is prohibited to learn, because when something bad happens, they take Benjy out somewhere to stop his moaning. Thus, he does not give a complete version of events. His narrative is full of repetitions that show he is stuck on some specific event with his limited knowledge and cannot 'feel' anything: the reader does not know his thoughts since he is just represented as a dumb man who cannot feel anything.

Although he cannot narrate events completely, his section gives the reader one of the crucial facts of their childhood. The day when all of the children go to play in the river is seen through the eyes of Benjy without any comment. It refers to Caddy's promiscuity with her muddying and wetting her drawers. When the children return from playing in the river, their father welcomes them, but warns them not to come inside of the house. He leaves them to stay at Dilsey's cabin. No reason is given directly. The children begin to guess what they are doing there. Benjy just narrates the possibilities that are proposed by other children there. The narrator gives two possibilities for the reader the children heard either crying or singing; but Caddy insists it is not crying, they are having a party and the reader cannot get to know fully what they are doing that night. The reader learns that later that night, their grandmother, Damuddy dies.

In the first chapter, they mention Quentin, one or two times. There is no information or sign that Quentin is a girl. There are two Quentins in the story: One is Quentin Compson family and the other is Caddy's illegitimate daughter. Frony, the daughter of their negro maid says, "Miss Cahline want you to put Quentin to bed" (25). Benjy cannot state that this Quentin is Caddy's daughter, which confuses the reader. The reader learns later that they name the daughter "Quentin" after her uncle's death.

The reader is always in suspect in Benjy's section. He cannot explain what he does and how he feels. They are unclear even in his consciousness. In one of Benjy's interior monologues, "*Come on, Luster said, I going to take this here ball down home, where I won't lose it. Naw, sir, you can't have it. If them men sees you with it, they'll say you stole it. Hush up, now. You can't have it. What business you got with it. You can't play no ball*" (26). The reader questions Benjy's actions when Luster says, "*What business you got with it*" (26). Benjy's scattered thoughts do not give the reader the necessary facts, which make him unreliable. He is just like a camera-eye showing what others do.

Benjy remembers a speech between father and Quentin, but the reason for Quentin's question is not explained.

Shoot who, Father. Quentin said. What's Uncle Maury going to shoot him for. Because he couldn't take a little joke. Father said. Jason. Mother said. How can you. You'd sit right there and see Maury shot down in ambush, and laugh. Then Maury'd better stay out of ambush. Father said. Shoot who, Father. Quentin said. Who's Uncle Maury going to shoot. Nobody. Father said. I don't own a

pistol. (35)

Although Quentin asks it several times, Benjy does not explain it, leaving the reader to wonder if Uncle Maury did such a thing.

Benjy experiences a scene with Luster, but the reader learns at the end of the novel, that they saw a crucial act. Again, Benjy shows how he sees without comment. It is the scene with Miss Quentin, whose gender is obvious now, with her lover with a red tie:

“Luster came back. Wait, he said. Here. Dont go over there. Miss Quentin and her beau in the swing yonder. You come on this way. Come back here, Benjy” (38). This scene is actually the last part of the novel. Luster and Benjy see that Miss Quentin and her lover are together and they will leave together; but Benjy cannot express any time so the reader learns this detail at the end of novel. All the people and events are merged in Benjy’s mind. He shifts from one person to another and from one event to another:

Ah, let him stay." he said. He had a red tie. The sun was red on it. "Look here, Jack." He struck a match and put it in his mouth. Then he took the match out of his mouth. It was still burning. "Want to try it." he said. I went over there. "Open your mouth." he said. I opened my mouth. Quentin hit the match with her hand and it went away. "Goddam you." Quentin said. "Do you want to get him started. Don't you know he'll beller all day. I'm going to tell Dilsey on you." She went away running. "Here, kid." he said. "Hey. Come on back. I ain't going to fool with him. (40)

In this statement, Faulkner does not warn the reader by writing it in italics: Benjy’s inner thoughts leap into the narration and the reader gets lost in them. It is like the

narrator throws some moments from his life into the story and the reader has to guess what actually happens. Michael Groden states that “In the italicized section, the patterns of association become involuntary, as several thoughts rush into his mind at once” (270).

Caddy cries over Benjy’s lap; but the reason is not given, she just says something that means nothing to the reader.

I could hear the clock, and I could hear Caddy standing behind me, and I could hear the roof. It's still raining, Caddy said. I hate rain. I hate everything. And then her head came into my lap and she was crying, holding me, and I began to cry. Then I looked at the fire again and the bright, smooth shapes went again. I could hear the clock and the roof and Caddy. (47)

Benjy’s mother, Mrs Compson, states that “Nicknames are vulgar. Only common people use them” (52). The statement is ironic since the reader learns that Caddy or Candace, her real name, commits adultery, which is opposed to their Southern values and nobility and makes her inferior to the common people even.

Another difficulty about family members concerns with Jason. He cuts Benjy’s dolls and Caddy is angry with him. She claims that he has done it on purpose: “He did it just for meanness. I didn't. Jason said. He was sitting up, crying. "I didn't know they were his. I just thought they were some old papers” (53). The reader does not know the real cause; although Caddy’s answer is slightly ironical: “You couldn't help but know.” Caddy said. "You did it just” (54). There is a possibility that Jason lies and when the reader learns more about Jason in his chapter, he will probably think that he is lying.

Benjy remembers about Quentin's fighting, but his account is misleading. It will be completed in Quentin's section when he narrates what happened to him:

Hello, he said. Who won. "Nobody." Quentin said. "They stopped us. Teachers." "Who was it." Father said. "Will you tell." "It was all right." Quentin said. "He was" as big as me." "That's good." Father said. "Can you tell what it was about." "It wasn't anything." Quentin said. "He said he would put a frog in her desk and she wouldn't dare to whip him." "Oh." Father said. "She. And then what." "Yes, sir." Quentin said. "And then I kind of hit him." [...] "Where was he going to get a frog in November." Father said. "I don't know, sir." Quentin said. (55-56)

Benjy consistently shifts between the past and present, and the reader has difficulty in following the story line with the interruptions of his consciousness. "*Yes he will, Quentin said. You all send him out to spy on me. I hate this house. I'm going to run away*" (58). Since the reader does not have any background about the story and confuses who this Quentin is that they address, this statement is unclear. It may be Miss Quentin or Quentin, as revealed in the following chapters.

Benjy says, "Jason threw into the fire. It hissed, uncurled, turning black. Then it was gray. Then it was gone" (59). This statement is meaningless since it occurs when he is remembering many other things. The reader wonders what Jason threw into fire. In Jason's part, when Jason has his own voice, he reveals that Jason throws passes the show, which will be held at that night in order to make Luster worry about since he craves for it.

Consequently, Benjy is an unreliable source of truth as Wickery states,

With Benjy we are restricted entirely to sensation which cannot be communicated; quite appropriately therefore Benjy is unable to speak. The closed world which he builds for himself out of various sensations becomes at once the least and the most distorted account of experience. He merely presents snatches of dialogue, bits of scenes exactly as they took place. Such reproduction is not necessarily synonymous with the truth. Benjy, however, makes it his truth and his ethics, for it is in terms of sensation that he imposes a very definite order on his experience. (1019)

Unlike Benjy, Quentin is a clever young man who studies at Harvard. However, he lacks the necessary qualifications to be a reliable narrator. He is obsessed with the time and his past. His obsession with past makes him subjective, because he confuses the past with reality, so the reader cannot decide whether Quentin tells reality or memories. Beverly Gross claims, "Past and present are so complexly interfused and because it is initially so difficult to penetrate the subjectivity of its narration, the novel creates suspense" (440). Quentin engages into abstract thinking a great deal. Michael Groden explains Quentin's status, "As narrator, he attempts to describe objectively the environment and the events around him, even though this objectivity is nullified from the start by his mind's distortions" (270). He is like Benjy since when he shifts to past and memories of especially his sister Caddy.

At the beginning of his chapter, Quentin says to his father that he has committed incest, which makes the reader think about it throughout the novel although Mr.

Compson does not believe him. There is no proof of this event, he just tells his father. “*I have committed incest I said Father it was I it was not Dalton Ames*” (66). After this memory, Quentin does not give any clue about its reality. Quentin just tries to make his father believe that he slept with Caddy. There are implications of incest:

Caddy Don't touch me just promise If you're sick you can't Yes I can after that it'll be all right it won't matter don't let them send him to Jackson promise I promise Caddy Caddy Don't touch me don't touch me What does it look like Caddy What That that grins at you that thing through them (94).

Caddy's expression “Don't touch me”, creates suspicion in the reader. It suggests a rape although we are not sure. Later in the novel, the scene becomes clearer. Apart from Quentin's implications of incest, Caddy is jealous of his kissing a girl, and Quentin says, “*I didn't kiss a dirty girl like Natalie anyway*” (112). Then he remembers Caddy is jealous of him and Natalie, and she slaps his face, which brings to mind if Caddy loves him and is jealous of him. “since she opened her eyes has she given me one unselfish thought at times I look at her I wonder if she can be my child except” (86). Through the end of his section, he says to his father again: “*I don't know too many there was something terrible in me terrible in me Father I have committed Have you ever done that We didn't we didn't do that did we do that*” (125). He says, “we didn't”, but then he says “we do that” and since there is no voice for Caddy in the novel, the reader cannot fully be sure. Stephen Ross and Noel Polk note that in Burton, “Faulkner said that Quentin only imagined that he confessed incest ... though there is no internal evidence in the novel to determine whether Quentin is remembering or imagining” (620).

After that memory, Quentin remembers that “And when he put Dalton Ames. Dalton Ames. Dalton Ames. When he put the pistol in my hand I didn't. That's why I didn't. He would be there and she would and I would. Dalton Ames. Dalton Ames. Dalton Ames. If we could have just done something so dreadful” (66). It makes the reader wonder who put the pistol and why he should shoot Dalton Ames and who Dalton Ames is. Quentin is so lost in his past that his present is blocked by his memories and then his past stops and he returns to reality. “I carried the books into the sitting-room and stacked them on the table, the ones I had brought from home and the ones *Father said it used to be a gentleman was known by his books; nowadays he is known by the ones he has not returned* and locked the trunk and addressed it. The quarter hour sounded” (67). This statement clearly shows that Quentin is stuck between his past and the present.

Quentin is seen in his room, packing his belongings and writing two notes for Shreve and an unknown person that we later learn was his family. The reader sees his preparation; but he cannot figure out what he has been up to. When Deacon asks Quentin “You been sick?” he replies “No. I've been all right. Working, I reckon” (82). He lies to Deacon because the reader learns then that he is getting ready to committing suicide, so means if he is not physically ill, he is psychologically ill. He lies to other people to explain his strange behaviour. There is a possibility that he says through his narration is a lie. Then he asks Deacon to give a note to Shreve after tomorrow, but he does not tell the reason although he warns him not to give it before. He says: “He'll have something for you” (83) which makes the reader not think about the possibility of suicide. The reader thinks he is entrusting something to his friend.

Quentin talks about death in one of his memories, but he does not give enough information again, and there is uncertainty about the identity of the death person: “she will forget him then all the talk will die away *found not death at the salt licks* maybe I could find a husband for her *not death at the salt licks*” (85). His last sentence makes us think that Caddy dies, but we cannot trust him since his reality and fantasy is mixed.

Since the reader does not know anything about Herbert, who is Caddy’s husband, he has to believe in what Quentin tells him. Twice on the same page he says: “*Dalton Ames oh asbestos Quentin has shot*” and “*Quentin has shot Herbert he shot his voice through the floor of Caddy's room*” (88). It is obvious that Quentin has a gun with him; but it is not clear what he did. Did Quentin shoot his voice by making him silence by not letting him to speak or by shooting him?

As in Benjy’s section, Quentin has repetitions: “*You're sick how are you sick I'm just sick. I can't ask. Shot his voice through the*” (93). In addition, there is no hint who is sick, he just repeats it. Quentin lies again in order to dissuade Caddy from marrying Herbert, which misguides the reader, “*that blackguard Caddy Were you trying to pick a fight with him were you A liar and a scoundrel Caddy was dropped from his club for cheating at cards got sent to Coventry caught cheating at midterm exams and expelled Well what about it I'm not going to play cards with*” (103). He wants to make Caddy believe that the man that she will marry is a fraud but it is uncertain if he is telling the truth.

Quentin does not talk about Caddy’s sickness; he just says ‘sick’. He then says “*Seen the doctor yet have you seen Caddy I don't have to I can't ask now afterward it*

will be all right it won't matter" (108). When this statement is read at first, it may seem like Caddy will die, but she is pregnant. However, this statement raises the question of Caddy's death, which an average reader can easily misunderstand. Another confusion arises from the ambiguity of the person who utters this sentence. "yes I hate him I would die for him I've already died for him I die for him over and over again everytime this goes" (127). The statement is from an unknown source, and the reader does not know who is hated. There is no information about the speaker or the object. The statement is all mystery.

The narration also includes Quentin's lies, which distort the events the reader's mind. He lies to Caddy when they are lying together on the floor. Since he is too sentimental about Caddy, he lies to her to make her jealous again even though he is a virgin: "you've never done that have you what done what that what I have what I did yes yes lots of times with lots of girls" (128). Quentin's lie is revealed through the end of his section. He tells his father that he fought with a boy; but he goes to fight with the man that Caddy sleeps and he beats him. He admits it in his memory as "I knew that he hadn't hit me that he had lied about that for her sake too and that I had just passed out like a girl but even that didn't matter anymore" (137).

In his other memories someone shows that Quentin is lying: "you are not lying now either but you are still blind to what is in yourself to that part of general truth the sequence of natural events and their causes which shadows every mans brow even benjys" (150). Although he says, "you are not lying now", he indicates that he lied and he cannot accept the truth about himself so that he finds many excuses and lies to the

others around him. This statement cautions the reader about Quentin's objectivity because he even lies to himself.

At the end of Quentin's section, he leaves his room after he does all his preparations. Since he goes to commit suicide and he is the narrator of this chapter, the reader does not directly learn that he will commit suicide and drown himself. The end of the chapter is ambiguous when Quentin leaves of the room. However, the third chapter helps the reader to solve the mystery.

Jason's section is easier for the reader, because time is more linear and it does not include fragments and other techniques. However, the reader has to be careful with since Jason is also prone to lying, as he even schemes against his niece. Wickery states, "The third section shows a greater degree of clarity though not of objectivity" (1020). At first, he deceives the reader by trying to make us believe he does not get Caddy's money. He says, "Ask your grandmother," I says. "Ask her what became of those checks. You saw her burn one of them, as I remember" (159).

Jason's actions contradict his words. For example, he says for Jews:

Let him make a big crop and it won't be worth picking; let him make a small crop and he won't have enough to gin. And what for? so a bunch of dam eastern jews I'm not talking about men of the jewish religion," I says. I've known some jews that were fine citizens. You might be one yourself," I says. [...] I give every man his due, regardless of religion or anything else. I have nothing against jews as an individual," I says. "It's just the race. You'll admit that they produce nothing. (162)

Jason is not aware that he creates suspicion on the reader with the contradictions between what he says and does. He implies that he does not love Jews; but says nothing individual. He forgets that their race is the combination of individuals. The issue of money also shows contradiction. Jason says about money: "After all, like I say money has no value; it's just the way you spend it. It don't belong to anybody, so why try to hoard it" (165). His contradictions turn into hypocrisy when the reader sees what he can do for money when he saves seven thousand dollars in his box.

Jason cheats his sister when he promises he will bring Caddy's daughter who is brought up in the Compson house away from her mother. Jason shows the baby to her mother for a minute and takes the money from Caddie. When Jason returns with baby in his hand, he just shows it to Caddy inside the car and goes which makes Caddy insane. Jason's unreliability results from his contradictions, which create irony in the text. And for many critics irony is one of the best clues of unreliability. Jason says, "That's the trouble with nigger servants, when they've been with you for a long time they get so full of self importance that they're not worth a dam. Think they run the whole family" (176). In that statement, there is even dramatic irony since Jason is not aware of the fact that their house is run by African-American house servants. The housekeeper cooks for them, cleans house and does all house chores, her son takes care of Benjy like a babysitter, and Luster takes care of wagons and cars, and still he can say this although all he does is bringing money home.

His niece is aware of what Jason does: "You're lying," she says. "Thief!" she says. "Thief!" (181). This statement makes the reader suspect Jason as a liar. He tells lies, and

steals money from his niece's account for revenge. Jason really has a bad personality. He deceives his mother by making fool of her. The woman trusts him loves him very much; but he totally deceives her. Mrs. Compson does not want to accept the cheque that Caddy sends and she thinks that they do not get her money. She says to her son: "Let me never see the day when my children will have to accept that, the wages of sin," she says. I'd rather see even you dead in your coffin first" (187). The reader ironically laughs at this statement because if it happens so, Jason should be in a coffin. Jason knows what he does to his mother; but he is neither ashamed nor sorry yet he confesses to himself that "If there's one thing gets under my skin, it's a dam hypocrite" (194).

Another contradiction occurs when Jason chases his niece: "I says if I've got to spend half my time being a dam detective, at least I'll go where I can get paid for it" (203). He says he will not chase after her anymore; but then he chases Miss Quentin and the man with the red tie. In the woods, he talks to himself and says, "Like I say, let her lay out all day and all night with everything in town that wears pants, what do I care" (205), but after a few minutes, he says, "I'll make him think that damn red tie is the latch string to hell, if he thinks he can run the woods with my niece" (205). Those thoughts show that Jason is an unpredictable person, he decides to do something and a few seconds later, he changes his mind and surprises the reader. Hence, the reader cannot trust his statements. He despises his niece, Miss Quentin, for her lack of morals; yet he does not act morally. Through the end of his section, he is blind with rage and utters senseless words to reader. Miss Quentin expresses her feelings about her uncle that makes the reader question Jason's morals. She declares, "Whatever I do, it's your fault,"

she says. "If I'm bad, it's because I had to be. You made me. I wish I was dead. I wish we were all dead" (221). Miss Quentin blames Jason for behaving like that and doing such bad things. Jason oppressed her because since he is prejudiced. Jason says she will be like her mother, and Miss Quentin did what he said just to make him angry. Because of his prejudices, the reader suspects his reliability. He may lie because of his prejudiced value system.

Consequently, *The Sound and the Fury* is narrated by three unreliable narrators each having different reasons to distort narration or just simply create suspicion on the reader's part. Benjy's distortion results from his limited perception of events, while Quentin's distortion results from his subjective statements and obsessions. Jason's unreliability stems from his deranged value system, prejudices and contradictions between what he says and does. The narrators represent the same event but from different perspectives. Each of them emphasizes different aspects of the same truth; yet their truth is not adequate. Vickery declares:

As related to the central focus, each of the first three sections presents a version of the same facts which is at once the truth and a complete distortion of the truth. It would appear, then, that the theme of *The Sound and the Fury*, as revealed by the structure, is the relation between the act and man's apprehension of the act, between the event and the interpretation. (1018)

Since it is a complex novel, the reader must follow it carefully and read between the lines in order to reach the truth, especially, the first two sections and Jason's section. Margaret Blanchard states, "As several critics have noted, the first three sections force

the reader to participate in the novel, to become in a way the narrator” (562). Faulkner does not put the truth before our eyes, he makes it like a puzzle, with every narrator, the reader completes the pieces and finds answers to some extent. Wickery says: “By fixing the structure while leaving the central situation ambiguous, Faulkner forces the reader to reconstruct the story and to apprehend its significance for himself” (1018).

4.3.b. The Reasons and Effects of Narratorial Unreliability in *The Sound and the Fury*

The narrators in *The Sound and the Fury* have reasons for their unreliability according to their personalities. Beginning with Benjamin, who is a mentally disabled man, it is inevitable for him to be unreliable. His mind is limited; he just observes what is happening around him and reflects to the reader. His thoughts are fragmented although his perceptions seem accurate, he cannot define exactly what he feels so it gives limits his knowledge. He just shows some glimpses of truth by signifying nothing to the reader. He does not have any conception of time so it creates analepses in the narration. The reader just sees what his mind projects. His narration starts with the present, but shifts to the past when he recalls some memoirs of Caddy.

Quentin is subjective because of his obsession with Caddy. He is stuck in the past and cannot distinguish between reality and memory. He is absorbed in wishful and abstract thinking. There are many interior monologues in his narration. Faulkner uses stream-of-consciousness technique a great deal in this section, and he cannot select the necessary information for reaching truth since too many unnecessary knowledge flows through his consciousness. The reader cannot trust the perceptions of such a man who is

caught between the world of reality and illusion. He cannot decide when he is in reality or he is in the past.

Jason is immoral and prejudiced. He even dishonours his mother her for the sake of money. He is prejudiced against everyone, and loves none only money. He contradicts himself, which makes him a hypocrite. He hates African-Americans, Jews, Miss Quentin, and Caddy. Throughout the narrative, the reader witnesses Jason's lies, immorality, and hatred for the sake of money. The reader hesitates to trust such a man who even lies to his mother although she loves and trusts him. The narration gives the reader a clue not to trust him.

Every narrator is distinctive with his own reasons for unreliability. Benjy blurs the narration with his mental limitations while Quentin distorts it with his subjective statements about Caddy's behaviours and lies. Unlike Benjy, Jason lies in his narration in order to confuse the reader. In this respect, Quentin and Jason resemble each other. They both use lying as an instrument to confuse the reader. Although every narrator is unreliable to some extent in the novel, in *The Sound and the Fury*, the narrator's unreliability does not have an impact on the characters. Quentin lies to his father that he committed incest; but since his father is an ignorant man, he does not care. Jason lies to his mother and niece, which has little impact except to make Miss Quentin angry with him and to cause him to lose seventy thousand dollars at the end. However, the reader does not know if Mrs. Compson learns that Jason lied to her about the cheques. Benjy cannot even change anything with his continuous moaning.

Consequently, in *The Sound and the Fury*, it is clear that every narrator is suspect and the reader should be cautious about trusting him or her. The narrators affect the reader's perception of events and characters, but despite their unreliability, we can understand the overall narrative. While Quentin insists on Caddy's promiscuity and narrates the events subjectively, Jason narrates this part of the story accurately by telling what happened to Caddy. The story is completed by the four narrators' interpretations of the same events. Apart from some changes and distortions in the narration, the storyline does not change appreciably, nor does the truth that the reader constructs the truth at the end shock the reader.

CONCLUSION

McEwan's *Atonement* as a postmodern novel and Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* as a modern novel both use unreliable narrators. The novels also use techniques and themes of postmodernism and modernism respectively, which increases their unreliability. Both novels include different types of narrators ranging from first-person to third-person with changing points-of-view. The narrators distort their stories in many various ways and confuse the reader. The unreliability of the narrators can be gauged according to textual clues and rhetorical devices. The narrator's personality gives many clues for the reader to realise the narrator's untrustworthiness in both novels. The narrators of each book have various aspects that cause unreliable narration. Some of them lie, delay information, distort diegetic reality, create suspicion, and provide incomplete knowledge. Apart from this, there are some sociological, psychological, ontological, and economic motivations, which propel them to distort reality. In addition, every lie, confusion, or suspicion results in different problems for the narration. Unreliability results from different causes in each novel.

Another issue is how the readers decide the unreliability of the narration. Since I prefer cognitive approach to apply to these texts, the reader is very important in the analysis. However, the amount of unreliability depends on various factors and motivations. Nearly all of the factors that cause unreliability in the text are universal and many people react the same to these factors. Although different readers may interpret the same lines differently, both novels do not include factors that can be interpreted in many

ways. Therefore, the majority of the interpretations on the same lines make it as accepted statements.

In *Atonement*, the narration is third-person omniscient at the beginning of novel. It then shifts to first-person in the denouement. However, the narrator is a complex issue since the novel it is a metafiction. At the end, the reader learns that the protagonist, Briony, of novel narrates the first, second, and third chapters of novel since she is the writer of the novel. Because of this, the novel can be analysed on two axes that include first, and third-person narrators. The novel starts with a third-person narrator who confuses the reader by delaying necessary information in the narrative. However, when the reader learns that the narrator is Briony, he accuses her of false testimony regarding Robbie. Briony represents Robbie as a maniac who is over-sexed and can do anything to any woman. She deceives both the other characters in the story and the reader.

When the reasons of her unreliability are analysed, we find that childhood, vast imagination, class conflict, egoism, and betrayal are among them. Briony, as a thirteen-year-old girl at the beginning affects the narration; she cannot read the codes of the adult world. She is a naive child narrator. She is still a part of a child's world with castles, knights, princesses. She cannot realise the difference between the real world and fictional world, so she becomes unreliable when she misinterprets the relationship between Robbie and Cecilia. Her inability to narrate does not just stem from her, she has a vast imagination and she is always making up stories in her mind. This unreliability is a result of her vast imagination. Briony's family has class prejudices, so they immediately accuse Robbie since he is the son of their cleaning woman, rather than

accusing Paul Marshall, a rich entrepreneur. Robbie fits the image she created in her mind because he does not belong to her class. She cannot even imagine that her sister has a romantic relationship with Robbie, she causes the reader to think that Robbie is guilty of rape. Although she cannot conceive of a relationship between Robbie and Cecilia, she feels a kind of platonic love for him so that Briony gets jealous of Robbie when she sees him with her sister Cecilia. Romantic jealousy is another motivation that causes Briony to accuse Robbie of rape. Perhaps she punishes him in this way for rejecting her confession of love.

Every unreliable statement affects the story line to some extent. In *Atonement*, unreliability has many affects on main characters: Robbie, Cecilia, and Briony herself. The Tallis family is scattered after Cecilia leaves home. Robbie is sent to jail and cannot go on his medical education. Briony leaves home and becomes a nurse in order to atone for her misinterpretations of events. The lovers cannot unite since they both die in the ongoing war. In addition, it shocks the reader at the end of the novel that he was reading Briony's novel for her attempt to atone for her misinterpretations.

The Sound and the Fury is different from *Atonement*. It has four narrators ranging from Benjamin, to Quentin, Jason and a third-person narrator who is highly predictable, Dilsey. Although a first-person-narrator tends to be subjective, the reader shapes each narrator's personality and reliability, and then decides whether to trust him or not. Every narrator has different reasons not to be trusted. Benjy is developmentally challenged or disabled and has limited knowledge: his world is limited with to perceptions, so although he is objective in projecting everything around him as he sees,

he also shows small scenes in his memory about events that affect the Compson family. These scenes do not make sense for the reader because they are difficult to understand. Quentin, the second narrator of novel, is too subjective and absorbed in abstract thinking. His world is constructed on the past and the reader cannot distinguish between reality and memory. Use of stream-of-consciousness and his interior monologues confuse the reader since it is difficult to follow, and grasp the truth among these flowing words. Jason is the third narrator of the novel. Although his section is the clearest in structure, he is not a man to be trusted. He is morally low, and he deceives, and lies even those who are close to him. His life is full of contradictions, he says something and then he does just the opposite. The fourth narrator is reliable and objective as the torchbearer in the novel. Unlike Jason, Dilsey presents Miss Quentin without comments: she just tells the events as they are. The narrators' reasons for being unreliable differ from one to another. Benjy's unreliability results from his limited perception and fragmented consciousness. Quentin exists between the real world and his past, and is obsessed with Caddy since he thinks of their Southern honour that is lost with Caddy's promiscuity. His narration is very subjective. Jason is very crabby. He is obsessed with losing his job opportunity because of Caddy's promiscuity. He is also cunning and dishonest. However, their unreliability generally does not affect the future. All of them are irritated, and affected negatively by their past. Just Jason's unreliability causes him to lose seventy thousand dollars when his niece runs away with her lover and the money. The reader is not surprised at the end because he knows the basic facts about their life.

The unreliability in each novel is resolved at the end: Briony Tallis reveals the truth, which was hidden through the narration in denouement part. She does it clearly; by expressing to the reader which part she distorted. However, Dilsey is not as clear as Briony because she does not give the true interpretations of reality from beginning to the end. She just comments on some events and characters that are represented in a misleading way by previous narrators.

Both novels have narrators who are members of the upper middle class except Dilsey who is the house servant. Briony, in *Atonement*, and Jason, in *The Sound and the Fury* are class-conscious narrators. Briony accuses Briony of Lola's rape because Paul Marshall cannot do such an immoral thing since he is a member of the upper class. They do not even think of him as the rapist. Although Jason feels superior to their African-American house servants, his prejudice does not cause unreliability in the text.

Both novels are based on occluded sex scenes. In *Atonement*, the rape is the turning point of the narration while *The Sound and the Fury* presents Caddy's promiscuity results in a child without a father. Another common feature in both novels is the scattered families. The members of Tallis and Compson families are affected by corruption and their families are scattered.

In conclusion, both *Atonement* and *The Sound and the Fury* have unreliable narrators although the type and voice of their narrators differ, and the reasons for their unreliability changes regarding the novel. Although both novels present a family drama, their narrators have different reasons to be unreliable and the effect of their unreliability varies according to character, story line, and reader. How much and how the narrator

affects the narration differs in both novels. Some of the narrators lie, and distort while others misinterpret and confuse the reader. Awareness of the narrator 's unreliability varies in each narration, since some of them distort the narration willingly while others blur or confuse the reader with inadequate narrative skills as in the case of Benjamin. It is surely apparent that these novels have unreliable narrators regardless of the reasons they have for unreliability or how they are represented in the text and how they affect the story line.

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