



Original article

A Shelter for the Disabled: Relational Asylum for the Mentally Disabled Characters in William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* and John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores how a modern asylum is portrayed in the novels *The Sound and the Fury* by William Faulkner and *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck, depicting characters who are marginalised due to mental disabilities. Through the analysis of the characters' experiences and the settings in which they find refuge, this paper highlights the role of the "relational asylums", presenting a form of shelter that is rooted in interpersonal guardianship not institutional confinement. Drawing on ideas from disability studies and the works of Michel Foucault on madness, and by placing the Foucauldian confinement in mid of dialogue alongside disability studies' critique of normativity, this paper demonstrates how the novels replace the institutional exclusion with fragile care of relatives. Faulkner and Steinbeck, hence, critique the formal institutions' failure, while offering a substitute for care, which is based on the human connection.

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مأوى للمعاقين: قراءة في الملاذات العلائقية لذوي الإعاقة الذهنية في روايتي "الصخب والعنف" لوليام فوكنر و"فئران ورجال" لجون شتاينبك

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المستخلص

تبحث هذه الدراسة في الكيفية التي يتجلى بها الملاذ الحديث في روايتي "الصخب والعنف" للأديب وليام فوكنر و"فئران ورجال" للأديب جون شتاينبك، حيث تصوّر كلتا الروائيتين شخصيات تتعرض للتهميش بسبب إعاقاتها الجسدية والعقلية، مما ينتج عنه مواجهة سوء الفهم والقسوة. ومن خلال تحليل تجربة المعاناة لهذه الشخصيات والفضاءات التي تأوي إليها، يسلط هذا البحث الضوء على مفهوم "الملاذات القائمة على العلاقات الإنسانية". واستناداً إلى مقولات دراسات الإعاقة وأعمال ميشيل فوكو حول الجنون، ترى الورقة أن هذه الملاذات، على الرغم من قصورها لكونها لا تُمنح بواسطة مؤسسة بل بواسطة فرد يتخذ دور الحامي والوصي، إلا أنها تمنح الشخصيات المعاقة إحساساً بالانتماء والأمان. وهكذا، ينقد فوكنر وشتاينبك إخفاق المؤسسات الرسمية في تقديم الرعاية، ويقترحان بديلاً قائماً على الصلة الإنسانية، غير أنهما يتفقان على حقيقة موجهة: حتى أكثر الأوصياء إخلاصاً لا يستطيعون حماية ذوي الإعاقة بشكل كامل من مجتمع يرفض كل من يختلف عنه.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ملاذ، دراسات الإعاقة، وصاية، جون شتاينبك، إعاقة ذهنية في الأدب، وليام فوكنر

1. Introduction

In William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* (1937), two mentally disabled characters are found to be facing a world that cannot accommodate to their differences. Faulkner's Benjy Compson is a thirty-three-year-old man who has the mind of a child, who is castrated by his own brother. Steinbeck's Lennie Small is presented as a gentle giant who loves soft things, who is shot in the finale by his best friend. These devastating outcomes raise some pressing questions about society and the protection it might offer to. This paper argues that the selected novels carry a critique to the institutions' failure while presenting some alternative form of shelter: "relational asylum," which is protection provided, not by the institutions, but by some individual guardians who accept these disabled characters as they are. Drawing on disability studies and Michel Foucault's analysis of madness, this paper examines how the novelists were able to portray the potentials and boundaries of such form of care.

In her *Yardstick: Retard Characters and Their Roles in Fiction*, Patricia M. Puccinelli (1995) mentions that the mentally disabled characters are the ones who frequently appear in fiction, yet they get little attention as to their function and characterisation in the novels. Such characters, which are "other than normal, whether [through] physical deformity, mental instability, disease, or mental retardation" (Puccinelli, 1995, p. 4), are often used to serve a certain function when used in a novel or merely to develop a metaphorical meaning. However, such stereotypical treatment changed, as the "traditional fool" was to disappear due to the rise of certain social sciences following the nineteenth century that aimed to treat such abnormality as a kind of disorder. Hence, a new treatment of such characters was to develop re-emerging such characters in the form of the retard and the disabled, and

providing a suitable means of showing the characterization of each as well the mental representation of each (Puccinelli, 1995, p. 4).

Such characters, when viewed from a modern perspective, need a modern way of treatment, a special environment of their own, rather a special asylum of their own. This can be given by the ones who keep a watch on such characters, their guardians and their caring relatives. In as much as such characters are mistreated, they are as well misjudged and a shred of uncaptured realisation always seems to be disregarded when such characters are to be mentioned. This is related to the fact that madness and instability of the mind in fact unmasked the truth of the mind and the human condition, and as Michel Foucault (2006) writes that in madness "man was confronted with his moral truth, [where] the laws of human nature and human truth" (p. 27) are to be brought to the surface of everyday life.

The present paper contemplates the possibility of creating a special shelter, an asylum for these disabled individuals alongside their guardians, discovering why such shelter becomes a necessity in a world that provides categories for its people of "insane" and "sane" (Sanchez-Blake & Kanost, 2015, p. 7). It contends that both novelists are replacing the asylum of institutions with a fragile, nevertheless, morally and ethically charged model of relational guardianship, by this means exposing both the need and the restrictions of interpersonal care within a society that is structured by normativity and exclusion. In doing so, the novels do not merely reveal disability; they question the very structures that yield it as problematic.

Constructing the paper around these foundational theories, the term "relational asylum" is introduced in order to designate the alternative shelter that is found in both of the novels. It is a system of care that accepts the disabled as who they are, rather than making an effort to correct or confine them, rooted in an interpersonal form of guardianship rather than the formal institutional confinement. This shelter is not being developed as a physical space but, rather, as a form of "community", in which the "troubled" personalities can discover a "harmony" where the most unacceptable can be tolerated (Abas & Mankhi, 2026, p. 1385). This concept is informed by the view that any social existence, including that of a sanctuary formation, is defined by that continuous process of the making and unmaking of relations (She, 2025, p. 208), suggesting that an asylum does not emerge as a fixed place but through ongoing relational practices.

2. Theoretical Framework

To gain a full grasp of the way Faulkner and Steinbeck delivered their disabled characters and the latter's need for a shelter, this paper considers two interrelated studies, one is linked to disability and the second is linked to the analysis of madness as maintained by Michel Foucault. In his foundational piece, *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body*, Lennard J. Davis (1995, p. 3) argues that a concept like the "normal" is rather a recent invention in the nineteenth century. In "Constructing Normalcy", Davis (1997, p. 3) contends that the "normal" is built as an idyllic compared to the "abnormal", which it is measured against, and found inadequate, creating a binary that pathologises a human disparity. His work helps in explaining why would a character, like Benjy or Lennie, be considered a threat to the society as depicted in the novel. One such reason is that the existence of such individuals is a mere violation of the modern invented standards of normalcy that rule over the modern age.

One other pioneering figure who contributed to the disability studies is Rosemarie Garland Thomson (1997, p. 32), being the one who developed the "normate" concept when discussing the formation of a "normal" human being who is not marked by any difference (i.e., gender, race, disability, or other). Thomson (1997) claims that, on a regular basis, a literary writer would support the privilege of being a "normate" through promoting the disabled as an object of terror, pity or motivation, while at other times a writer would deliver this character with much complexity to assume its agency and stand up to its role. Similarly, Mitchell and Snyder (2000, p. 49), confirm that the "body" of these disabled is a powerful "site" of fictitious asset, as they reject "scripts" that culture has dispensed to them. In both of these selected novels, the authors grant the readers an accessibility to the inner worlds of Benjy and Lennie, thus resisting the simple stereotyping. Tobin Siebers (2008, p. 4) disregards the idea that disability equals loss or lack, but believes that it is a source of creative vitality and beauty that would have been impossible to exist if such disability disappeared.

According to Ato Quayson (2007), who promoted the idea of "aesthetic nervousness", whenever the disabled appear in fiction; the text itself will suffer, not only a disturbance but also a catastrophe of representation, thus exposing the kind of anxiety held regarding normalcy. This framework explains why a character like Benjy or Lennie often provokes a very strong reaction from the other characters as well as the readers, because it is their mere presence that challenges contented expectations regarding what it means to be wholly human (pp. 15, 19).

The second theory that stands as a pillar in the analysis is derived from the writings of the French philosopher Michel Foucault, whose *History of Madness* (2006) traces the exclusion of the disabled back to the classical age, where the mad were kept hidden in confinement not because they were seen as dangerous but because if they were seen they would worry order within society. According to Foucault, this attempted response of the society, in silencing the abnormal (even useless) voices, is constructed in the form of the asylum (Foucault, 2006, pp. 71-72).—Moreover, the Foucauldian framework is helpful to illuminate the reason behind the institutional failure in both of the novels, since he defines the asylum not as that unbiased place providing care but as an apparatus that controls society's abnormalities. This is seen when, for instance, Jason thinks of sending the child-like Benjy away, or when ranch men converse about what to do with the retard Lennie, thus, the sane find themselves to be partaking in a pattern that is actually centuries-old, characterised by exclusion of those who do not belong within the thin characterisation of normalcy within the society.

Altogether, these theoretical frameworks, including both "disability studies" and "Foucauldian analysis", help in providing the tools for examining how the mentally disabled characters and the shelters they find are portrayed. Moreover, they help to see how Benjy and Lennie are made disabled by that society, which cannot accommodate their ways of being. And they help us understand why the relational asylum offered by Dilsey and George, however imperfect, represents a more humane alternative than the formal institutions that would simply make these characters disappear.

3. Analysis

3.1 Benjy's World and Dilsey's Guardianship

In *The Sound and the Fury*, Benjy is a mentally disabled man with thirty-three years of physical age but only three years of mental age. He is unable to utter a comprehensive word, nor is he able to comprehend the world around him. Yet still, his section is as vital as that of his brothers and that of

the omniscient, and as all of them, his section as well narrates events of relation to one of the central characters in the novel, his sister Caddy, who is both a sister and a mother-like figure to the brothers. Benjy's character is quite attached to that of Caddy's to the extent that even hearing a similar word that echoes her name haunts him. The words "here, caddie" are an instance reminder of his sister (Napierkowski, 2010, p. 299).

In fact, the way the consciousness of Benjy operates is different from the normal in the sense that perceived experiences are not organised in a chronological manner but through the trigger to the senses (i.e., sound, smell, or sight). It transports him to the past or brings him to present. This operation is reflected in the narrative as well, where readers need to take the challenge of moving beyond what Thomson (1997) would describe as the normative consciousness. Therefore, it is impossible to maintain some comfortable distance from this character's manner of being, as readers must enter it, have a struggle to decipher it, and finally obtain a recognition of its coherence.

Benjy, whenever he encounters an experience that is similar to one in the past, he immediately engages himself and the reader in a monologue that keeps shifting back and forth between the present and the past. Despite Faulkner's attempt to write the back shifting parts in italics, Benjy's section is as hard to decipher as it is written in a technique that mimics the mind of a mentally disabled person, a difficult technique that shows the stream of his consciousness, which hinders even more the deciphering process than a classical one would do (Napierkowski, 2010, p. 299). The structure of time is also debatable, as each character is argued to have their own concept as they are aware of it, rather ruled by it, as the second narrator experiences. Yet, the one who is not under the mercy of time is Benjy, as he is, not only unaware of it, but develops a special way of sensing it, creating a synesthesia of a special kind that links his time to the mirror. Thus, his characters come and go, running in and out through the same mirror. Such an image shows the complex mind of the seemingly simple handicapped. The mirror is not only a way for him to remember the previous events, but rather it is the doorway to that untouchable world (Polk, 1993, pp. 15, 18).

For Benjy, a world is hence being formulated, and the mirror is one doorway into it, and it is organised by a sensory memory rather than the chronological time. Benjy, as well, gets to be maltreated and molested by those who lack the ability to capture what lies beyond the surface. In one incident, Benjy is maltreated even by his own very mother, who refuses to carry him and prevents her daughter from carrying him as well so that the posture of the girl won't be deformed (Faulkner, 1994, p. 9). The memories Benjy has of Caddy, who "smells like trees," bring a sense of order to his world, offering what this paper terms relational asylum through the connection of siblings (Faulkner, 1994, p. 6).

Benjy's dreams are to start and end with the snap of a finger, be it in his recollected memories or his memory of "a sister", a sister that once was appealing to him, with her smelling of trees, and now she is detaching with the disturbing smell of perfume. He encounters the change of that sister from a source of refuge and security that gets his world formulated to a source of another pain and another cause to moan about and scream, which gets him to a state of mere sound and a state of sheer fury, as the Caddy with "flowers in her hair, and a long veil like shining wind" is no more (Faulkner, 1994, p. 26). However, things get harder on him as his Caddy is no longer to be seen, and the memory of whom only gets him distressed. In fact, Trouard (1993) comments on that metamorphic nature of everything related to the Compson sister, describing her character that "she has been both examined

as the source of Compson ruin and elevated to the status of the beautiful one" (p. 23). In fact, her departure reveals the fragile reality of the relational asylum, for when she changes, Benjy loses his shelter.

One of the most painful incidents, of which the sensation Benjy must recall whenever the end of the day comes, and whenever he is to undress, and whenever he is to look down, making him only to wail and cry as he remembers the day of his castration. At which the figure of his mother engages only when it is too late, and only when discovering his castration. An act that was done by one of the sane in the novel, one of the Compson siblings, Jason himself, who couldn't tolerate the action of the retard, and who believed castration was the best solution for Benjy (Trouard, 1993, p. 28). In the third section narrated by Jason, he recalls the same day of Benjy's castration, being he was the cause of it, he tells of his inability to comprehend why Benjy acted the way he did; simply fooling around the gate and watching school girls going home and running after those girls for something that he might not even remember. He treats Benjy as utterly insane, figuring the best solution is to castrate him so that the latter quits his attempts of simply "fooling around" (Faulkner, 1994, p. 166). However, to Jason, Benjy is as hoarse as an engine, as messy as a tornado and as primitive as the first man; in fact, he even calls Benjy a bear when the latter hangs on the gate, merely watching sunset, as he hangs on the gate (Faulkner, 1994, p. 165). He even fails to understand why Benjy "went to the dark place on the wall where the mirror used to be, rubbing his hands on it" and doing nothing but "slobbering and moaning" (Faulkner, 1994, p. 167).

This violence, of Jason, illustrates Quayson's (2007) concept of the aesthetic nervousness, which justifies the lack of tolerance towards Benjy's difference and an attempt to enforce the norm through the violence. Foucault (2006) describes that when the society's order is a bit disturbed, it would have the tendency to confine whoever is responsible for it. Therefore, part of this lack of understanding gets Jason into having the thought of sending the disabled Benjy into an "asylum", supposedly for the disabled

However, Jason mentions another interesting matter, a matter that keeps Benjy's bubble formulated and floating above him, it is the kind, caring nature of a woman living inside the same Compson house, Dilsey, the family's dark colored maid. Despite her own age and exhaustion, she is gladly preparing food and caring for others. Jason describes arriving home to "no lights in the house", yet when hearing her "jawing away in the kitchen" as she was preparing his meal. "You'd think to hear her that there wasn't but one supper in the world", he observes this and unintentionally acknowledges the unwavering dedication of the maid of the house. This woman, who does everything told without bothering, only with love and sheer sympathy for humanity itself, offers the relational asylum (Faulkner, 1994, p. 165). Roberts (1992, p. 29) described Dilsey as the one who "does not condemn people for the past actions" and "is the only one left who can understand Benjy's needs". Through her presence, Benjy's world finds strength as his diminishing bubble finds a form of reinforcement in the character of Dilsey, providing the relational asylum that Caddy had already once provided, as his new guardian.

By the presence of this character, Benjy's world, which was getting dimmer and dimmer, and his formulated bubble that was becoming thinner and thinner, found strength in this world of this merciful character and, in fact, her world of majestic sermons and crafty ways of treating the disabled. The

section that starts with her working in the Compson house and preparing their needs happens on Easter Sunday.

Near the end of the novel, when Benjy is found in one of the same situations of moaning and crying integrated by Luster's mischievous mentioning of Caddy's name, Dilsey takes the thirty three year old man and start hushing him and holding him, "rocking back and forth, wiping his drooling mouth upon the hem of her skirt" (Faulkner, 1994, p. 206). She hushes him again, speaking reassuring words, that a caring guardian would tell "Hush. Dilsey got you". And indeed, she has him with care and a genuine remembrance of his birthday, she got him to the church, and even when he doesn't stop the crying part and "bellowed slowly, abjectly, without tears; [having] the grave hopeless sound of all [the] voiceless misery under the sun", she got him too, for she knows it is the graveyard that can hush him now, therefore she asked Luster to drive Benjy to (Faulkner, 1994, p. 206). This moment is a clear demonstration of the special order within Benjy's world and being, which is possible to operate due to the keeper, Dilsey, who preserves the aesthetics of his disability (Siebers, 2006, p. 63).

As the end of the novel states, when Luster, with his casual mischief around Benjy and his attempts to change the direction of the carriage, taking it away from the left, this meant changing the order of the road in Benjy's world. Everything should maintain its order if everything is meant to be good. An irony is found here: it is the world of the disabled that is ordered, while the world of the so-called normal is chaos. The novel reverses such an assumption, signifying that Benjy's world, with its sensory triggers and repetitive patterns, holds a unity that is lacking within the Compson family's moral chaos. Such a matter is simply solved at the end of the novel, provided by one of the most beautiful images by Benjy. When the horse gets back to the same route and when "[h]er feet began to clop-clop steadily again, and at once Ben hushed." The patch of twigs and repaired flowers that Luster hastily gathered from the garden is in his hands now. "The broken flower drooped over Ben's fist, and his eyes were empty and blue and serene again as cornice and facade flowed smoothly once more from left to right, post and tree, window and doorway and signboard each in its ordered place" (Faulkner, 1994, p. 209). Similar to Benjy, the character Lennie in Steinbeck's novel finds a shelter in a relationship that offers him a form of stability in an unstable world.

3.2 Lennie's Dream and George's Sacrifice

In John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, where the part of maintaining the stability of a world is on the now mentally retard Lennie, who also finds shelter in a relationship. Similar to Benjy, Lennie suffers a mental disability in a world that does not offer a space for difference. Yet, this latter character has an actual constant guardian, found in George Milton, who travels with him and protects him. Lennie Small, who is ironically not small at all, is described as the large man who walks behind the small man named George, who is the sole companion and the only guardian that Lennie has. He is presented as "tall, powerful man who is mentally handicapped", in contrast to his companion, who is described as *a mouse* in being "small and quick, dark of face, with restless eyes and sharp features... small, strong hands, slender arms, a thin and bony nose" (Steinbeck, 1993, p. 2). They share a committed, loyal friendship, which is unusual among the migrant workers, that represent what is called now a relational asylum. In fact, George has no attempts in curing Lennie or chasing him away, but he feels himself as more responsible for Lennie and his actions as he guides him and tells him stories in

addition to having shared the same dream, a dream of having their own farm, a place they can call theirs (Telgen, 1997, pp. 245-246).

It seems that, however, the thing that gets Lennie's attention and full consent most of the time is his affection for pets, little adorable animals of pups, rabbits and mice. "This is the story of George and Lennie, strange partners in grain-bucking on a California ranch. The story of George ... and Lennie, the hulking giant with a child's mind and a passion for petting a mouse, a rabbit, a piece of velvet, anything soft" (Maugham, 2009, p. 24). This dream, for Lennie, is about safety and belonging, not material success, which is proved by referencing the rabbits as a cause of comfort, where the gentle nature of the giant can appear, therefore, this dream functions as a form of shelter.

This work lays the focus on "the hopeful expectations" of those poor characters that get them to "run up against the realities of the working world" (Bloom, 2006, p. 13). Yet the great expectations of George are highly connected to the presence of Lennie, though the latter is unable to understand the full prerequisites to fulfil that dream, nor does he understand the meaning of that dream fully. The only thing that links Lennie's dream to that of George, is the mere thought of tending the rabbits and the thought of the cream (Steinbeck, 1993, p. 72). Despite the fact that George cares for Lennie but he is not perfect. His weakness is his yelling on Lennie whenever the latter behaves in a manner that is so inappropriate to the time being. George yells at Lennie when he sees a dead mouse in Lennie's hands, when Lennie drinks from the dirty pool, when Lennie seems unable to remember the things that George once said, and even yells more when Lennie misbehaves around creatures of small size (Telgen, 1997, p. 245).

Just as Benjy, he seems to have forgotten the things he goes through, and quickly shifts his attention to the thing that gets him happier, which is the very thought of the farm, especially the part of him tending the rabbits, the white ones, the furry, adorable ones. Lennie's bubble is more transparent than that of Benjy; the ability he has in speech grants the readers a possibility to know what lies in his mind. Yet, being a work by Steinbeck of short descriptive passages and more dramatic encounters, makes readers decipher the world of Lennie only from the words he utters, a matter which also hinders deciphering the disabled mind.

As a matter of fact, the repetition technique is acknowledged by Lennie's guardian as well, on one occasion, George discovers a dead mouse in Lennie's possession, which gets George to be angry and acts as if a father reproaching his son. Yet George later relents and makes a promise to Lennie that he'll find Lennie a puppy, and then he proceeds to talk about the dream of the farm, where there are rabbits to tend, and where they would live from the "fatta" of the land. (Van Kirk, 2001, p. 10). In fact, Lennie knows this story almost by heart, as George's repetition never loses trace from Lennie's ears, and another thing that is acknowledged by the two is the emphasis that their relationship makes them different from the other guys, those who have no one and no place of their own (Van Kirk, 2001, p. 10). The repetition of this dream story shows the structure of the mind, similar to how Benjy's world is being structured by a familiar route for carriages, so Lennie's world sparks whenever George tells stories.

Such method of organizing the experiences that capture meaning and beauty within the limits of the cognition is known as "disability aesthetics", a ritual identified by Siebers (2006, pp. 63-64) that identifies how the disabled have been permanently existing in the domain of art, not as a form of

mistake, but as a crucial fundamental that creates meaning of beauty, and provides emotive influence. Almost the other character who has an understanding to Lennie's condition is Slim, "the superior workman with God-like eyes", who seems to understand the reason for the two travelling together, and who offers pups for Lennie to pet. However, being a rational "heroic man in the novel", Slim understands that people like Lennie are not suitable to this world, rather it is this world that is unsuitable to them. He provides a frame of mind that is able to capture some of the colours that radiate from Lennie's bubble as his speech is not of mere thought but rather of understanding that lies beyond thought (Telgen, 1997, p. 246).

When Curley's wife discovers Lennie's love for soft things, she invites him to touch the soft curls of her hair and feel them on his skin. With his inability to control his strength, being a bear-like man with hands as big as claws, he strikes harder, causing the nameless woman to jerk in anger, which again causes the man to bid a final stroke of death, leading to her accidental death, becoming the event that forces George to act (Bloom, 2006, p. 49).

It has always been inevitable for George that Lennie would get himself into trouble. Also, this is not the first time Lennie's behaviour has been misunderstood, as they were forced to flee a place called Weed due to a similar incident (Bloom, 2006, p. 29). Yet even now, he doesn't quite understand the outcome of his action. Despite that he is aware of the danger of losing his place in the dream of the farm, which is the thing that affects his bubble, gets him to think of a possible solution, to remember something that George had told him before that he is to "hide in the brush till [George] come ... In the brush till he come. Tha's what he said" (Steinbeck, 1993, pp. 113-114). Lennie goes to the riverbank, where he shared a dream with George, expecting the latter to scold him and then tells the story of their dream of the farm once more. Instead, when George comes, he raises the gun and "[t]he crash of the shot rolled up the hills and rolled down again", for George has killed Lennie as he "raised the gun and steadied it, and he brought the muzzle of it close to the back of Lennie's head" (Steinbeck, 1993, p. 132).

The bullet that actually slays Lennie also terminates the brittle world that George had made around their friendship. All that ends with Lennie's death. The fulfilment of the dream is "doomed by insensitive materialists" (Telgen, 1997, p. 245). Thus, George destroys his very own dream as he is no longer his brother's keeper. This final act of George acknowledges the fact that a relational asylum can never survive in a world that is always controlled by violence and exclusion. Moreover, this act proves that the ethics of the relational asylum are so complicated. When a guardian becomes the executioner, the tragic paradox at the heart of interpersonal care is revealed, suggesting that no matter the amount of devotion, the disabled would never be fully shielded from a world controlled by viciousness and exclusion.

Like Benjy, this disabled man, Lennie, maintained his formulated world, keeping it alive within him, so no hand of a man could lay its mischief on his goofy, smiling dreams. In the end, he is left at the place he mostly wished to reach, nature itself, which in a way was expecting him with its trees and "sycamore leaves" (Steinbeck, 1993, p. 123). This image echoes Candy's dog, who was shot, that is, without a quiver, and without pain, leaving all nature thus to receive it and receive Lennie, who was shot and buried with no ceremony. The disabled find their solitude in their world, which is guided by the repetition of beautiful thoughts and incidents.

3.3 The Paradox of Relational Asylum

Despite the comfort provided by relational asylums, there exist limitations to them; one main cause is them being susceptible to outward interference. For instance, in Benjy's case, Dilsey was able to maintain his routines, but she failed in protecting him from the cruelty of Jason, similarly in Lennie's case, George provided guidance and a dream, but he could not stop the chain of disasters that led to the tragedy. These limitations are found within the social construction of normalcy as described by Davis (1995), where the normate defines what boundaries the acceptable individual should fit within, while whatever group fall outside are expected to face violence, exclusion or even death. Therefore, Benjy and Lennie are not inherently problematic; they become problematic because they inhabit a world that cannot accommodate their difference. Foucault's (2006) investigation of asylums illuminates what these novels advocate about the formal institutions. For instance, when a character like Jason ponders on sending Benjy away, or when Lennie's future is discussed by the men on the ranch, they become actual participants in the same logic provided by Foucault, which he identifies as the confinement of anyone who disturbs the social order. The asylum, in this view, becomes not a place of healing but a place of exile.

Regardless, humanity for the disabled is prevalent as both of Faulkner and Steinbeck were successful in letting the reader to seep into the hopes and consciousness of Lennie and Benjy, thus demonstrating what Thomson (1997) refers to as challenging normate privilege, whereby man refuses disability to be reduced to a mere tragedy or just a symbol. In the end, these novels prove that there is a consistent need for a shelter, as Benjy will always need stability in his pattern and Lennie will always need guidance.

According to Foucault (1995), some disciplinary institutions (such as the asylums and prisons) are not seen as places to heal, but as an apparatus of control that culminates in "docile bodies" (pp. 136, 272). In fact, the novels provide an alternate solution in the form of the relational asylum, where Dilsey and George do not attempt to change or cure the disabled characters, but attempt to preserve their rituals and dreams. This challenges the Foucauldian logic, proving that it is the horizontal relationship, founded in love and shared responsibility, that provides such unconditional acceptance that, no matter how fragile it can be, it nevertheless forms the foundation of the relational asylum explored in this study.

Conclusion

This paper has introduced the concept of the relational asylum, presenting it as a way to understand the shelter that Faulkner and Steinbeck create for their disabled characters in the selected novels. Both writers present a world that actually pushes away every individual who do not fit its narrow standards, whether through the brutal acts against Benjy or the ranch men's readiness to hunt Lennie down. Regardless, they offer an alternative that stands against such cruelty, it is individual guardianship, Dilsey's devotion and George's protection over his companion.

The findings of the study can be summarised in three main points, the first, is that both authors provided a fragile replacement of institutional asylums by presenting individual forms of guardianship, namely Dilsey with her devotion and George with his brotherly sense of protection. The second is that the analysis of the main characters, by using Davis's (1997) concept of normalcy, shows how Benjy and Lennie are marginalised not because of their essential deficits but because their

mere existence disrupts and violates the standards of human values that were invented. Thirdly, Foucault's (1995) analysis of confinement demonstrates how societies have an impulse to institutionalise or even disregard those who cause a disturbance to the social order, which is clear in the wishes of Jason, who hopes to commit his brother to a sanctuary, and in the fervent willingness of the ranchmen in hunting Lennie. Through this Foucauldian lens, it reveals that the violence, such characters face, is not just a cruel act by other individuals but an actual structural response directed at all of those who deviate from accepted social norms of normality.

Yet the novels also show how deep the limits of such care go, revealing the tragic fragility of the relational asylum. Dilsey, for instance, in spite of her devotion, proves to be incapable of stopping the maltreatment of Benjy by Jason. Similarly, George cannot prevent the events that lead to Lennie's death. Such relational asylums can only offer comfort and stability, but they cannot offer utter protection, due to the sheer cruelty of the world, on the one hand, and the nature of the guardians, for no matter how faithful, they are only humans, whose relational care, no matter how genuine it can be, it remains susceptible to the forces beyond control.

It is only by letting readers see through Benjy's eyes and hear Lennie's dreams, Faulkner and Steinbeck are able to force a recognition of the humanity inside a society. They, hence, support what Thomson (1997) talked about; rejecting the idea of letting disability become a mere calamity. For Benjy and Lennie, the ordered path and the dream of rabbits were enough, as they let them hold some meaning within a world that was structured to have them entirely excluded. These novels leave readers with a question: is it enough to care for those being excluded, or is it the structure that excludes needs to be dismantled?

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