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SENSORY CODING IN WILLIAM FAULKNER'S NOVELS: INVESTIGATING CLASS, GENDER, QUEERNESS, AND RACE THROUGH A NON-VISUAL PARADIGM

by

LAURA R. DAVIS

Under the Direction of Dr. Pearl McHaney

ABSTRACT

Although the title of William Faulkner's famous novel *The Sound and the Fury* overtly references the senses, most critics have focused on the fury rather than on the sound. However, Faulkner's stories, vividly and descriptively set in the U.S. South, contain not only characters and plot, but also depict a rich sensory world. To neglect the way Faulkner's characters employ their senses is to miss subtle but important clues regarding societal codes that structure hierarchies of class, gender, queerness, and race in his novels. Thus, a more complete examination of the sensory world in Faulkner's fiction across multiple texts seems necessary to explore how Faulkner's characters interpret

the sensory stimuli in their fictional landscape and how their actions in this regard reveal the larger social constructs functioning in the novels. In particular, this dissertation seeks to borrow the theoretical approach known in fields such as history, anthropology, and sociology as sensory studies to examine nine Faulkner novels: *Absalom, Absalom!, As I Lay Dying, Go Down, Moses, The Hamlet, If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem (The Wild Palms), Light in August, The Sound and the Fury, The Town,* and *The Unvanquished.*

Such an approach requires moving away from examining sensory stimuli as symbols that are read the same way by everyone; instead, the way Faulkner's characters use the senses is examined as a biased *act*, an act that is committed and interpreted differently depending on who is doing the sensing. Using this type of sensory studies framework can transform close readings of Faulkner's texts, particularly since such an approach helps us understand the way the senses are constantly interwoven with characters' attempts to define (and sometimes confine) the other characters. In fact, exploring the way characters actively use their senses to categorize others can reveal a hidden discourse, one where the language of the senses illuminates belief-systems in ways that are not otherwise obvious.

INDEX WORDS: William Faulkner, Sensory studies, Smell, Sound, Taste, Touch, U.S. Southern literature, Race, Class, Gender, Sexuality, Queerness

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1. INTRODUCTION

"[…] maybe smell is one of my sharper senses, maybe it's sharper than sight. [Smell] to me is as noticeable as the ear which hears the turns of speech […]."

~ William Faulkner, *Faulkner in the University* 253

Although the title of William Faulkner's famous novel *The Sound and the Fury* overtly references the senses, most critics have focused on the fury rather than on the sound. This is understandable --- it is easy to be engrossed by the furious, complex natures of such compelling characters and the intricate events of their fictional lives. However, Faulkner's stories, vividly and descriptively set in the U.S. South, contain not only characters and plot, but also depict a rich sensory world. To neglect the way Faulkner's characters employ their senses is to miss subtle but important clues regarding societal codes that structure hierarchies of class, gender, race, and sexuality in his novels. Thus, a more complete examination of the sensory world in Faulkner's fiction across multiple texts seems necessary to explore how Faulkner's characters interpret the sensory stimuli in their fictional landscape and how their actions in this regard reveals the larger social constructs functioning in the novels. In particular, this dissertation seeks to borrow the theoretical approach known in fields such as history, anthropology, and sociology as "Sensory Studies" to examine nine Faulkner novels: *Absalom, Absalom!, As I Lay Dying, Go Down, Moses, The Hamlet, If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem (The Wild Palms), Light in August, The Sound and the Fury, The Town, The Unvanquished.*

A few critics have noted already the way that Faulkner weaves the senses into his writing. Much of this criticism focuses on another Faulkner work that also alludes to

the senses in its title, a short story in *The Unvanquished* titled “An Odor of Verbena.” For example, critic Robert Witt links the pervasive smell of verbena with courage; subsequently, Maryanne M. Gobble takes up a similar task, interpreting the smell of verbena as a symbol not only of courage but also, more importantly, of peace and a new era in the U.S. South. Although all of this work is valuable and adds to our understanding of Faulkner’s texts, most of this criticism, which attempts to connect an isolated sense (such as the sense of smell) with a certain symbolic meaning, focuses on individual texts. And, the senses, in these examples, are treated in a utilitarian way. In other words, critics have tended to assert that if we can find a repeated mention of a certain scent, such as the smell of verbena, and identify what it symbolizes, we can give it meaning.

Very few Faulkner critics seek to go beyond this strategy to examine multiple senses across multiple texts or to treat the use of the senses as an action, something characters *do*, rather than as just a passive symbol. Paul Carmignani makes one attempt to examine the sense of smell across multiple Faulkner texts in his “Olfaction in Faulkner’s Fiction” (1990); Terri Ruckel Smith’s as yet unpublished doctoral dissertation, “The Scent of the New World Novel: Translating the Olfactory Language of Faulkner and Garcia Marquez” (2006), is another example in this direction. However, in order to discover whether larger patterns or connections are present, an examination of the sensory world in Faulkner’s fiction across multiple texts that asks how Faulkner’s characters themselves actively use and interpret the smells in their fictional landscape is needed.

Such a study can take its lead from recent developments in sensory history, a growing and respected sub-genre, which is also applicable in the fields of sociology and

anthropology. Rather than examining a particular use of the senses as a symbol that is read the same way by everyone, interdisciplinary sensory scholars focus more on the senses as a biased *act*, an act that is committed and interpreted differently depending on who is doing the sensing. Such an approach could potentially change the way the senses are studied in literature as well. Sensory historian Mark Smith provides an essential distinction:

> [B]reezy, implicit reference to the senses can amount to an unwitting surrender to the power structures of the past and comes perilously near to repeating them. Historians who quote a nineteenth-century observer's characterization of immigrant homes as reeking ---"The filth and smell are intolerable" ---leave the impression that the description was objectively and universally "true." What we really need to know is whose nose was doing the smelling, how the definition of "smell" changed over time and according to constituency (did the people living in the "filth" agree?) and how the characterization was used to justify actions by middle class reformers. Absent such explicit commentary, we present the past on the terms set by the reformer's nose and all of the prejudices and values that inhered in that nose. ("Producing" 843)

Using this critical framework of sensory history and the work of sociologists of the senses can transform close readings of Faulkner's texts, particularly since such an approach helps us understand the way the senses are constantly interwoven with characters' attempts to define (and sometimes confine) the other characters. In fact, exploring the way characters actively use the senses to categorize others can reveal a hidden

discourse, one where the language of the senses illuminates belief-systems in ways that are not otherwise obvious. Before proceeding to such a close reading of the texts and characters, however, it seems useful to lay the groundwork in two ways: first, a more thorough overview of current Faulkner criticism focused on the senses is needed; and second, a brief description of the field of sensory studies and some of the work published using this methodology is a useful interdisciplinary basis for better understanding the senses in literature.

I. Current Literary Criticism on Faulkner and the Senses

As mentioned, a significant proportion of criticism on Faulkner and the senses focuses on "An Odor of Verbena." Though it is now more than ten years old, Robert Witt's "On Faulkner and Verbena" is a good example of typical critical strategies that have been used to examine the sense of smell in Faulkner's work. Witt begins by discussing the anomaly that has puzzled others over the years, namely that, despite Faulkner's title, flowering verbena is an odorless plant. Witt urges readers to believe that Faulkner chose verbena precisely because it does *not* have an odor, that this is an overt choice on Faulkner's part lest his readers get confused and interpret the scent of verbena as literal rather than symbolic. As Witt writes, "The reader, thus, is forced to realize that the odor is symbolic rather than literal. If Faulkner had used, say, a rose or a gardenia he would have risked the possibility of readers taking all the references to the odor as literal and hence failing to understand the story" (74).

Published six years later, Maryanne Gobble's "The Significance of Verbena in William Faulkner's 'An Odor of Verbena,'" takes issue with some of Witt's claims and

seeks to broaden the symbolic meaning of the scent of verbena that pervades the story. Though her analysis is useful and is indeed more encompassing than Witt's, for the most part Gobble also follows the convention of examining scent as symbolic rather than considering smelling as an interpretive action by individual characters. She writes:

> [V]erbena [is] the symbolic center of the story, the image around which events unfold and meanings coalesce. The center is constantly shifting, though; as the odor of verbena builds and diffuses, it refuses to take on a single, coherent symbolic value. The symbology of verbena is, finally, as mutable and elusive as its scent. (569)

Thus, even though Gobble views the symbolic nature of verbena as being changeable, it is still a symbolic noun (a smell). She does very little to analyze smelling as an action that is committed and interpreted differently by Bayard, Drusilla, and the other characters, nor does she explore in depth how the ways that the various characters interpret certain scents might also tell us something about the story, the community, or the nature of the characters themselves. Gobble's interpretation, then, that verbena takes on various symbolic meanings beyond courage (such as peace), while very thorough, still follows similar conventions in examining a particular scent as a symbolic noun. Another example is Patricia Beam's, "Beached on the Sands of Creativity: The Bad Smell of *The Wild Palms*," in which she argues that Faulkner "keys the word 'smell' to unsanctity and disaster, and then gives focus by making Charlotte's 'Bad Smell' symbolic of her own failed art and her obsession with romantic love" (45). Likewise, Lorie Watkins Fulton points out that while the smell of wisteria was traditionally a symbol for romantic love,

Faulkner inverts its symbolic meaning in *Absalom, Absalom!* by making it a symbol for sorrow and tragedy.

It must be noted, of course, that there is certainly nothing wrong with examining a particular sense like smell as a noun with symbolic meaning and exploring how the symbol functions within the narrative strategy of a text, and in fact, a great deal of the above-mentioned criticism is thought-provoking and quite helpful in reading Faulkner's work. However, this type of reading need not be the only way of examining the senses in Faulkner's writing. Indeed, a handful of critics are attempting to broaden our understanding of the complexity of sensory references in Faulkner.

For example, Paul Carmignani's "Olfaction in Faulkner's Fiction" is similar to Gobble's work in its treatment of "An Odor of Verbena," but Carmignani more overtly connects the way Bayard interprets certain smells with his (Bayard's) own shifting value-systems. Additionally, while much of this article does follow the convention of linking a specific smell with a specific symbol, Carmignani also begins to track the consistency of olfaction across multiple texts by Faulkner, an important step to examining the use of the senses more broadly. Karl F. Zender takes a similar approach in his "Faulkner and the Power of Sound," which is remarkable for its thoroughness, its ability to approach sound as more than a symbol but as a complex and dynamic presence in the life of Quentin Compson, and, most importantly, for being one of the few existing studies of aural issues in Faulkner.

A similar attempt is made by Terri Smith Ruckel in her dissertation, "The Scent of a New World Novel: Translating the Olfactory Language of Faulkner and Garcia Marquez" (2006) that examines both *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Light in August.* What is most

interesting and engaging about Ruckel's work, however, is not simply her focus on the sense of smell across multiple texts. Ruckel expands our understanding of the senses by showing how Faulkner's repeated incorporation of smells in his texts reveals his resistance to Enlightenment thinking that privileged vision (which represented reason) above all the "lower senses" (which were thought to represent more primal, emotive human responses). Ruckel then asserts that Faulkner's use of smell means that Yoknapatawpha has more in common with the sensory ideals of the "New World" and the Caribbean than with Anglo-European rationalism. This allows her to make compelling connections between Faulkner's texts and the magical realism of Garcia-Marquez and the landscape of Macondo moving us away from scent as a mere symbol toward a larger, pervasive framework that can link an author's work to other literary trends and traditions.

Even more importantly, Ruckel's sixth chapter, entitled "An Ethics of Smell: Revelations of the Other in Faulkner's *Light in August* and Garcia Marquez's *Love in the Time of Cholera*," truly extends beyond the scent-as-noun-as-symbol construction of earlier critics. In her chapter, Ruckel attempts to construct an "ethics of smell," arguing that olfactory encounters help human beings judge other people in terms of similarity and difference and help us interpret who is "Other." Thus, Ruckel's approach demonstrates a crucial distinction between examining smells as passive nouns with symbolic meaning and exploring the active encounter that happens when one human being smells another. She writes, "Sometimes that response [of one character to another character's smell] is individual, about 'I' and 'thou'; though often, it is based on a community's discrimination about 'us' and 'them,' and so locates members inside or Others out-

side of a self-contained community" (131). Therefore, smell is no longer only a thing or a symbol; in Ruckel's description, it becomes a "moral phenomenon" and "ultimately becomes an act of judgment" (132).

While Ruckel's chapter lays persuasive groundwork for exploring the senses in a new and more dynamic way, a great deal of room remains for examining multiple senses and how characters use these codes to determine moral values regarding class, gender, race, and sexuality. Ruckel focuses primarily on three men and on the sense of smell alone. Such an approach prevents her from exploring what *all* of the non-visual senses can tell us about the complicated relationships between and among both male and female characters. In contrast, this dissertation seeks to examine the spectrum of senses to discern how they are used by characters to facilitate the construction and maintenance of a variety of identity categories, in particular the complicated intersections of race, gender, class, and sexuality. While Ruckel takes pains to describe *Light in August* as being a book about race, and while she goes to great lengths to explain that the sense of smell can help dominant groups "sniff out" racial differences, she spends a significant portion of her chapter discussing the way that (the white) Byron Bunch can smell (the white) Gail Hightower rather than revealing how smell relates to racism. Ruckel's critical reading of this relationship and the way that Hightower's otherness is discernable to Bunch's senses is compelling (and, if she pushed a bit further could even open interesting connections between the sense of smell and the emerging queer readings of Hightower, such as the work done by Alfred Lopez). On the other hand, while whiteness is certainly a race, this is still a reading of the sensory relationship between two members of the same (and dominant) racial group rather than an exploration of how

smell and other senses were used to divide and identify the races and/or to unify members of the same or differing races.

When Ruckel shifts the discussion to the character of Joe Christmas, one logically assumes that she might examine the way that the sense of smell intersects with the ever-present struggle and dichotomy between blackness and whiteness in the U.S. South. However, in her exploration of the way smells can make someone into an "Other," Ruckel focuses not on issues of race but on lost identity and on exploring which characters confidently know themselves and which characters do not. In other words, in Ruckel's reading, Joe Christmas does not smell badly or have extraordinary senses of smell (two traits that sensory historians suggest were a common belief about black people at the time) just because he may have black blood. Instead, in Ruckel's argument, Joe's issues with the sense of smell have to do with the fact that he does not know who he is. One almost gets the message from Ruckel's work that if Joe had been either *all* black or *all* white and had been privy to this knowledge, he would not have been a worthy character to be studied via the senses (144-6). This is, as Mark Smith and other historians and sociologists have pointed out, not true. It was not only uncertain identity that flared the nostrils of the community; those who were black were thought to smell (and have senses of smell) different from those who were white and vice versa, and these sensory cues were instrumental in the ways that the races established hierarchies of power and privilege and divided themselves.

Thus, even though Ruckel's work is essential and quite intriguing in its successful attempt to explore the senses in literature in a new way, she fails to encompass the myriad connections between the senses and multiple categories of class, gender, race,

and sexuality that sensory historians and sociologists of the senses examine. Such an assertion is especially true if one considers that it is extremely uncertain whether Joe Christmas has any black blood; he could arguably be seen as another white character alongside Hightower and Bunch, which would leave Ruckel examining a trio of white men. Even though such an examination is not a weakness per se and does nothing to detract from her excellent analysis, this potentially all-white character selection limits the scope within which she can fully examine the complete spectrum of issues surrounding identity and the senses. Thus, in order to examine more thoroughly how the senses help characters make complex and active moral judgments, the goal of this dissertation is to study the senses across multiple texts and to explore the impact sensory cues have on multiple identity categories. First, however, is crucial to lay important groundwork from the fields of history and sociology as a helpful theoretical approach to studying the senses in literature.

II. A Rationale for Using Sensory Studies as a Theoretical Approach

Sensory historian Mark Smith mentions the importance of the written word when he explores the "perils and prospects" of sensory history in a recent article entitled "Producing Sense, Consuming Sense, Making Sense: Perils and Prospects for Sensory History." In fact, he overtly states that, ironically, some of the most important sources for sensory historians to explore are print sources. Although Smith is referencing historical print documents such as court records and letters, his argument can apply to fiction as well. Though other forms of media might seem more important for exploring the senses (such as recordings of slave songs) -- Smith points out that there is an important differ-

ence between producing something for the senses and consuming something for the senses. While it may be true that we can reproduce sound in the same form it was "heard" seventy years ago, we cannot consume it (hear it) with our modern ears the same way because the social context has changed. As Smith writes, the consumption of the sound is "hostage to the context in which it was produced" (841). Thus, in order to truly understand what people originally heard (or smelled for that matter), we are still reliant on their descriptions rather than our own senses, and in order to understand how the senses functioned in a social context, we need to read the words of those who were actually living at the time.

This point is crucial to consider when questioning whether sensory studies can be a useful methodological approach to studying literature. By Smith's own argument, examining fictional writing can be a rich source to add to our understanding of the social meanings attached to various senses in the past. Faulkner did indeed imbue his characters with senses. However, as Smith warns, though the senses can be crucial for showing how people "understood their worlds and why," we must always be "very careful not to assume that the senses are some sort of "natural" endowment, unchangeable and constant" ("Producing" 842). One way to overcome this difficulty, at least partially, is to study how people defined and sensed categories such as gender or race differently in the past by listening to our colleagues in history and sociology who are recovering some of this knowledge. A few key points in Smith's text, *How Race is Made: Slavery, Segregation, and the Senses*, seem especially cogent to understanding the language of the senses in Faulkner's writing. Though Smith is focusing on intersections between the senses and race alone with few mentions of the categories class or gender, his work

still provides an extremely useful model for interpreting the ways various characters react to sensory stimuli in Faulkner's texts.

For example, in his book, Smith describes the prevailing belief in the U.S. South that some black senses were more acute than those of whites; because blacks were believed by whites to be more animal than human, in the white imagination, they were imbued with extraordinary senses of smell and hearing, such as dogs were observed to have (46). Additionally, Smith explores the longstanding conviction held by whites that black people smelled differently than whites and that this smell was horrible and innate (not emanating just from their poverty, diet, or living and working conditions). He states that this belief was so entrenched among whites of all classes that it was taken as un-questioned fact to an extreme that can hardly be believed by people today unless one notes the pervasiveness of the references to black smell in the variety of historical doc-uments that Smith examines (26). He offers an example [discussed in further detail in a later chapter of this dissertation] of a woman who "knew" her house had been robbed because she "smelled nigger" when she walked in (1).

Comprehending the intensity of the white belief that black smell could cause nausea, intense discomfort, and disease is foreign to many people now, but Smith's work is an important reminder that sometimes being socially acceptable means not just being *seen* a certain way, but also being *smelled*, *heard, touched,* and perhaps even *tasted* a certain way, especially if one wants to be coded as a member of the dominant or acceptable group. Overall, the fact that Smith unearths as many references to the ways whites thought blacks smelled, sounded, touched, and tasted in the historical record of the 1550s through the 1950s lends credence to his assertion that sensory ste-

reotypes have indeed been a pervasive, crucial, and under-examined piece of history in the U.S. South and in the entire U.S. for hundreds of years. He concludes that although we most often think of race as an identity category that is ascertained through our eyes, southern whites' reactions to the ways black people impacted their sense of smell is nothing short of a "visceral fury" (139).

Knowing Smith's work on race and smell in the U.S. South is important when querying how characters use and interpret their senses in Faulkner. For example, if, as Smith and other historians have argued, the dominant white racial group used codes of smell in order to judge, repress, and distinguish themselves from the dominated black race, can we find instances where the dominant race, gender, or class did the same thing in Faulkner's fiction? Do Faulkner's male and female characters read gender power structures in part by sniffing them out? Does Faulkner consistently assign particular smells, sounds, and tastes (and the power to smell, sound, and taste) to certain characters based on their race? On their sexual choices? What are the meanings various characters give to the touches they feel from the skins of others who may be different from them? More importantly, if these behavioral codes of the senses do exist in Faulkner's fiction, how and when do we recognize disruptions to this code as various characters attempt to use it subversively? Are there other fields that can help us answer these questions?

History is not the only discipline which has been concerned with the study of the senses in recent years. Anthropologists, naturalists, sociologists and others have also been working to develop an understanding of the senses in their own disciplines, and it is useful to provide a brief overview of several other significant sensory theorists from a

variety of fields to aid in understanding the diverse approaches that encompass sensory studies. For example, Diane Ackerman's *A Natural History of the Senses* brought the intricacies of the sensory experiences to wider public attention when her book became a bestseller in 1990. While a great deal of Ackerman's text deals with the physical functioning of our bodily senses (how noses actually work, how many odors the human nose can detect (1), etc.), she also writes about the social impact of the senses, querying, like Smith, how the senses shape our feelings and beliefs. As a case in point, she writes, "Smells are our dearest kin, but we cannot remember their names. Instead we tend to describe how they make us feel. Something smells 'disgusting,' 'intoxicating,' 'sickening,' 'pleasurable,' 'delightful,' 'pulse-revving,' 'hypnotic,' or 'revolting'" (7). Ackerman also delves into the historical record to examine the ways people treat intersections between the senses and sexual and social interactions among humans. She relates that "In a famous letter, Napoleon told Josephine 'not the bathe' during the two weeks that would pass before they met, so that he could enjoy all her natural aromas" (9), and includes a section examining how the tastes of certain foods have been linked to gender identities and sexual appetites (145-6). Additionally, Ackerman even overtly acknowledges that fiction writers are often "gloriously attuned to smells," and gives a detailed list of authors who have enjoyed depicting the senses in their works.

Unfortunately, however, Ackerman's early foray into sensory studies also shows evidence of the type of generalizing that Smith points out can happen when people study the senses uncritically. For example, in her chapter on smell, Ackerman writes, "One scientist reports that dark-skinned men have darker olfactory regions and should therefore have more sensitive noses," and then moves on with little explanation (11),

which seems dangerously close to replicating the racist beliefs about black people having super-sensory powers that Smith explicates in his work. This is especially problematic since Ackerman seems to believe that such a statement is so obvious that she fails to cite which scientist she is writing about or give any details about the parameters or reliability of this study. Additionally, Ackerman seems to perpetuate the belief that the sense of smell is not open to interpretation, but is an unquestioned experience that is the same for everyone. She posits, “Unlike the other senses, smell needs no interpreter. The effect is immediate and undiluted by language, thought, or translation” (11). In this passage, then, the sense of smell and the meanings of smell are presented as universal and uniformly the same, which, as Smith points out, is problematic, especially when this idea of certain smells being absolute and always “true” can then be used to discriminate against or categorize groups of people.

Since the publication of Ackerman’s text in the early 1990s, however, several other texts have attempted to extend and deepen our understandings of the senses and to further theorize the field of sensory studies. In 1994, Constance Classen, David Howes, and Anthony Synnott published *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell*. Respectively, the three authors hold doctoral degrees in religious studies, anthropology, and sociology, and the resulting text is a truly interdisciplinary examination of smell and its impact on a variety of social structures. In particular, the authors cover the changing interpretations of smells from antiquity through the Middle Ages and into to the present day, successfully refuting the premise that the ways humans interpret smells stays constant over time or cultures. Additionally, the text is powerful in its examination of how smell affects social and anthropological rites and rituals as well as even shaping political

beliefs. Sensory studies texts like this one, that insist upon examining beliefs about the senses in terms of social and political power structures can be very useful for literary critics searching for similar hierarchical structures in literature. As the authors of *Aroma* write, "[S]mell is hardly ever considered as a political vehicle or a medium for the expression of class allegiances and struggles. None the less, olfaction does indeed enter into the construction of relations of power in our society, on both popular and institutional levels" (161).

Howes examines these issues more broadly across all of the senses (not just smell) in his 2003 text, *Sensual Relations: Engaging the Senses in Culture and Social Theory*, and, more recently, Classen authored *The Book of Touch* (2005). Both texts continue to examine how beliefs about the senses impact a number of social and political structures and practices. Another text of note for those interested in an overview of the many voices engaging in sensory theory from a variety of fields is *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader* (2005), which contains pieces by twenty-two different scholars. Significantly, only one of these chapters is devoted to a study of the senses in literature: Victor Carl Friesen's essay "A Tonic of Wildness: Sensuousness in Henry David Thoreau." This lack of literary analysis in a text that is otherwise thoroughly interdisciplinary, is echoed in its bibliographical appendix, which is entitled "Fifty Ways to Come to Your Senses," and is a list of books that the editor describes as "a cross-section of current sensory research in the humanities, social sciences, and the arts" (404). Unfortunately, however, only three of the fifty entries appear to be focused on literature or literary analysis. Thus, investigating how literary scholars can begin to contribute more to the growing interdisciplinary field of sensory studies, a field which is clearly

concerned with many of the humanities' based issues that also frequently engage literary scholars, is a timely and needed inquiry.

In addition to these more recent texts of the senses, I would like to close this overview of sensory studies with one last selection that, while not as current, has special significance for more thoroughly understanding the hierarchical codes of the senses in Faulkner: "The Sociology of Odors," written by Gale Peter Largey and David Rodney Watson in 1972. Although it is obviously dated, I choose to examine it here because the authors are writing about the senses within ten years of Faulkner's death. As such, their insights provide a useful glimpse of how smells were being interpreted and examined in years closer to Faulkner's lifetime than to our own and will be helpful in an analysis of ideas of the senses in Faulkner's work.

First, the authors make a useful and credible argument that smell is almost always connected to morality in human societies. For example, Largey and Watson point out that many insults to someone's moral character involve allusions to smell, such as being a "stinker" or a "stinkpot" (1022). As the authors write, "[P]articular odors, whether real or alleged, are sometimes used as indicants of the moral purity of particular individuals and groups within the social order, *the consequences of which are indeed real*" (1022, emphasis mine). In terms of race, the authors foreshadow Smith's work by pointing out that some black people took pills to attempt to banish the odor they believed they would otherwise carry due to their race (1028), and the authors also trace the way that Jewish people were systematically discriminated against due to their perceived bad odor (1025). Additionally, there is a useful analysis of class distinction and odor, including a section on the perceived odors and prejudices that are linked to being from an ur-

ban or rural environment (1026). Overall, this article provides convincing evidence that in Faulkner's lifetime "smelly" anxieties surrounding racial, ethnic, gender, religious, and class identity abounded and that perhaps anxieties regarding ideas about being touched by people "different" from one's self or anxieties around how the sounds various people make might be found as well. Other examples, while sometimes quite humorous (such as the decision of certain U.S. cities to buy "scentometers" in order to prove that their communities were healthy and pleasant places) are also helpful to understand just how closely humans link moral judgment, emotional happiness, and social bonds to information they are processing through their non-visual senses (1030). In fact, the authors' discussion of how common smells build community, as well as how smells are used to exclude others from the community (1031-32), is compelling and can provide a useful framework for looking at the ways that non-visual senses can sustain a variety of hierarchies and identity categories in Faulkner's fiction.

Overall, as Smith, Largey, and Watson have pointed out, identity categories of class, gender, race, and sexuality are not something that humans process through vision alone; the other senses are also used as a coded language of behavior, power, identity, community, and knowledge. Thus, it is unsurprising that novelists whose work attempts to explore the human condition and experience might also, whether knowingly or subconsciously, represent these same sensory codes and beliefs in their writing. Examining this language of the senses through a close reading of the work of Faulkner's texts is important in order to explore the non-visual judgments and hierarchical enforcement that might otherwise go unnoted. Though such an approach could also be applied to a variety of other writers, Faulkner's writing is an intriguing place to begin

since his fiction is noted for focusing on identity categories such as race and gender, among others, and since his work is set in the U.S. South, a region historically noted for its strict and often violent policing of racial and other boundaries.

III. Overview and Rationale of Chapter Order and Content

This dissertation will examine the ways Faulkner's characters interpret and categorize their relationships with others via non-visual senses[1] through a close reading of nine of Faulkner's novels: *Absalom, Absalom!, As I Lay Dying, Go Down, Moses, The Hamlet, If I Forget Thee Jerusalem (The Wild Palms), Light in August, The Sound and the Fury, The Town, and The Unvanquished.* An analysis of Faulkner's entire canon for these sensory patterns also would be a valuable exercise; unfortunately, the sheer volume of Faulkner's work makes that attempt prohibitive in an initial exploration of this length, though such a venture would be an interesting project for the future. For now, however, these nine novels are chosen based on several key factors. First, many of these texts are considered Faulkner's most important and influential works and thus seem an advantageous starting point. In addition, these texts are selected because each has characters or plot features that explore one or more of the four identity categories that this dissertation seeks to examine: class, gender, queerness, and race. Moreover, these particular texts are useful choices because moments in each represent a

[1] This dissertation seeks to examine the non-visual senses of smell, sound, taste, and touch since Faulkner evokes these senses so much in his writing and also because these senses have tended to be neglected more than the study of vision. As Mark Smith notes, "The historiography of vision is much deeper than that of the other senses combined" (*Sensing* 19). However, vision is also an important sense, and many sensory scholars are now arguing that vision should be queried along with the other senses since our senses almost always work in concert in an interwoven ecology of sensations. Smith explains this perspective by commenting that "Sensory history, in short, stresses the role of the senses – including *explicit* treatments of sight and vision" and asserts that at the present moment, "sensory history generally is less inclined to reject vision in favor of the other senses" (*Sensing* 4-5). Thus, while overt use of the visual sense by Faulkner's characters lies outside of the scope of this study, exploring vision in Faulkner from a sensory studies perspective is also a worthy and important future project.

wide variety of the non-visual senses that focus on smell, sound, taste, or touch (and sometimes a combination of two or more of these senses working in concert).

Because the topic of this study involves querying four identity categories and how they are constructed and enforced in Faulkner's fiction, the chapters are organized accordingly, with four chapters, each focused on class, gender, queerness or race. Each chapter will include an analysis of key moments in Faulkner's fiction where that particular identity category is both maintained and sometimes subverted by the characters' interpretive use of their non-visual senses. In some chapters, these discussions will be compared and contrasted with divergent ways previous critics have interpreted these scenes without a consideration of the senses in order to examine how a consideration of the senses might open up new interpretations of the text. Furthermore, although the vast majority of this work will focus on Faulkner's writing alone, there may be key moments in these chapters where it is illuminating to provide a brief comparison or contrast with ways other writers of the U.S. South have used the senses to either construct or deconstruct the same identity category being analyzed in Faulkner. Additionally, in order to set the stage for the four identity chapters, there is an opening chapter that explores the way visual metaphors currently pervade many theoretical approaches to literary study. This chapter is included because before using any critical approach to query how the non-visual senses are an understudied phenomenon in literature, it is crucial to first examine how a variety of theorists themselves are also implicated in perpetuating the primacy of vision as well.

2. OPTICAL ALLUSIONS: INTERROGATING VISUALLY-SATURATED THEORY

"He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibilities for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection."

~ Michel Foucault*, Discipline and Punish,* 203

As an exploration focused on identity categories like gender, race, class, and sexuality, this dissertation borrows heavily from and is heavily influenced by theoretical approaches like feminist theory, critical race theory, cultural studies, and queer theory, among others. Although interrogating a wide variety of theorists from each of these perspectives in order to query how the senses function in their own work is prohibitive in a study this length (and indeed could probably be a dissertation in its own right), it also seems negligent not to explore a few especially influential theorists (including some who write particularly about the U.S. South) before moving to an analysis of Faulkner's fiction. Doing so will help reveal how a bias towards the visual exists within some theoretical approaches themselves before they are even applied to the study of literature. Exposing this trend towards the visual interrogates whether one of the reasons *why* readers and critics of Faulkner's fiction have neglected the non-visual senses in his texts is

because the critical frameworks of literary theory we are used to employing are also overly saturated with the visual too.

The first theorist explored in this chapter is Michel Foucault because his work is not only influential across so many of the theoretical approaches named above but also because his work is arguably the most visually saturated of any important theorist being used in the field of literary studies to date. Secondly, this chapter will include a discussion of critical race theorist Joy James because she writes in opposition to Foucault and also because she does so by exploring racial issues in the U.S. South, a topic especially cogent to a later chapter in this dissertation. Finally, this chapter will include a discussion of queer theorist Michael P. Bibler, whose work, like James' is focused on the U.S. South, and, in particular, on southern literature that emerged between 1936 and 1968, an obviously cogent period for a study of Faulkner.

The first major clue that Foucault's work is strongly oriented towards the visual sense is how frequently the words "panoptic" and "Panopticon" arise in discussions of his work. This is expected since one of the main sections in Foucault's seminal text, *Discipline and Punish,* is entitled "Panopticism," and therein he explores the theoretical implications of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon prison design. However, not only does Foucault's work explore the panoptic, it could also be argued that his work itself is panoptic, in that it continually focuses on the sense of vision and on exploring the ways people participate in power through the interpretation of what they see, what they are not allowed to see, and how they are seen, and thus judged or categorized, by others.

For example, the opening passages of *Discipline and Punish* depict a detailed account of a gruesome execution that Foucault uses to establish his theme of torture as

“public spectacle” (7) an idea and a phrase that are implicitly connected to the sense of vision. Later in the text, Foucault argues that the spectacle of punishment is a power that was “exalted and strengthened by its visible manifestations” (57). As Foucault explains further, vision was a key element (if not *the* key element) to activate punishment as spectacle (a word he continually uses and which is of course also associated with its other visually-oriented meaning, that of eyeglasses that improve sight). He writes, “People were summoned as spectators: they were assembled to observe […]. Not only must people know, they must see with their own eyes […] they must be the witnesses” (58). Even the condemned themselves were compelled to participate in this visual theatre. Foucault describes punishments that specified the entrails be ripped out quickly so that the person being punished “had time to see them, with his own eyes” (12).

Even as the text progresses and Foucault describes a shift where there is a “disappearance of spectacle as a punishment” (8), the focus remains on the visual. Though there is a shift between what was previously seen by the public via the spectacle and what is now hidden from view, the emphasis on seeing and not seeing remain central. Foucault describes the changing laws and ideas with this visually saturated language: “The condemned man was no longer to be seen […]. He must not see, or be seen” (13-14). Furthermore, when Foucault introduces the idea of prisons, structures that will ultimately serve to hide punishment from public view even further, he twice depicts the prisons as “envisaged” by the reformers, again a verb that has its roots in the visual (114), and ironically, even though he goes to great lengths to explain that punishment must now be secreted away from the public gaze, he says that these new systems had

"two aims *in view*," as if even without the public gaze, punishment still inevitably circulates around metaphors of the visual (129, emphasis mine).

By the time Foucault reaches the aforementioned chapter entitled "Panopticism," though he argues that punishments involving visual spectacle are almost entirely obsolete, it is clear that although the public spectacle is reduced in importance, vision itself is still a major part of the new forms of punishment he is describing. In fact, if anything, though the spectacle is gone, the element of vision, through the new process of intensified surveillance (literally meaning to watch over), has become more pronounced. When Foucault depicts the disciplinary structures that arose during times of plague, he writes, "Inspection functions ceaselessly. The gaze is alert everywhere" (195). Every day, guards must "observe" the people, who are required to appear before their eyes, "everyone at his window […] showing himself when asked" (195).

As Foucault goes on to describe Bentham's Panopticon itself, the language becomes even more densely saturated with visual terms and metaphors. The cells, with their "backlighting" are like "so many small theatres" where "each actor is perfectly individualized and constantly visible […]. Full lighting and the eye of a supervisor capture better than darkness, which ultimately protected. Visibility is a trap" (200). Thus, discipline, which was first presented in the text as occurring through public spectacle, remains firmly in the visible realm; the Panopticon lives up to the visual roots of its name, literally becoming a visionary prison. In essence, Foucault explains that "the major effect of the Panoptican" is to produce a "permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (201). And, he writes (seemingly without awareness of his pun), "In *view* of this, Bentham laid down the principle that power should be visible […]" (201, emphasis

mine). This power of vision is clearly not just a power that functions to keep people contained, but is one that allows for experimentation, ranking, ordering, and judging; as Foucault writes, “An inspector arriving unexpectedly at the centre of the Panopticon will be able to judge at a glance […]” (204). Thus, in Foucault’s account, both punishment and disciplinary judgment and categorization are constantly tied up with vision. Or, as he explains in the epigraph above, it is becoming caught in a “field of visibility” that triggers the process of subjection (203). And, indeed, the trap of visibility is something that Faulkner’s characters use to subjectify others. However, crucially, this is not the only way Faulkner’s fictional inhabitants judge and categorize others. Instead, as will be shown in the following chapters, they often rely on their other senses to discipline and define others, sometimes even *despite* what their eyes are telling them. This is a sensory subjectification process that seems completely ignored in Foucault’s theoretical system.

Instead, these numerous examples of Foucault’s preoccupation with the visual make clear that for Foucault the sense of sight is by far the most important sense in the process of subjectivity and in disciplining and dividing practices. Thus, perhaps it is more apt that we usually realize that he has been labeled frequently as a “visionary” thinker, a title that is usually used for praise, but in Foucault’s case is actually quite literal. While the purpose of this dissertation is not to disclaim or resist Foucault’s visually oriented theoretical premises entirely, it does question whether the way he elevates the visual above the other senses is too narrow for exploring the variety of sensory ways humans categorize, discipline, and punish one another, ways that often include smelling, hearing, touching, and even tasting others. Questioning the validity of Foucault’s

reliance on the visual is an attempt to interrupt this visual discourse in order to make more visible (forgive the pun) the ways his work might lull readers into forgetting or discounting the other senses. I would like to query both here and throughout this study whether Foucault's determined reliance on vision as the primary sense used by humans for disciplining, dividing, and subjecting others might predispose other readers (including modern readers of Faulkner) also to pay too much attention to vision alone, especially considering how influential Foucault's work has been to a variety of critical approaches to literature. Instead of this visually saturated approach alone, how might our understanding of Foucault's theories (and our study of literature) expand, shift, and change if we also consider the ways that other senses besides the visual, such as smelling or hearing, participate in the system of disciplining, dividing, or punishing? Reconsidering dividing practices as something that happens through the whole body and all of its senses is a critical way to reconsider how we might apply Foucault's theories to literature differently and thus discover new sensory codes that were previously (ironically) invisible because, like Foucault, we were so focused on the visible alone.

Perhaps now is the moment to revisit once again a sensory studies understanding of human interaction in its multisensory form. For example, in a description of its new journal, *The Senses and Society*, which launched in 2006, Berg Publishers claim, "A heightened interest in the role of the senses in society has been sweeping the social sciences, supplanting older paradigms and challenging conventional theories of representation. […]. Shaped by culture, gender, and class, the senses mediate between mind and the body, idea and object, self and environment" (Berg). In part, this field of inquiry is growing because, though many theorists like Foucault link the visual with rationality

and thus posit the other senses as less rational or more "natural," sensory critics ask us to denaturalize the senses and call attention to the way that smells, sound, and touch are also used to make judgments regarding the world around us. This means that other senses besides the visual are participating in Foucault's processes of discipline, division, and normalization, and this is critical to remember when reading the work of Faulkner.

If it is true, then, that perhaps we could begin to explore Foucault's concepts of the spectacle, discipline, and dividing practices as occurring not just via vision but also through the other senses, what impact might this have on other theorists who have been influenced by him, especially those using his work to write about the U.S. South? One especially interesting piece to consider in pursuing this question is Joy James' "Erasing the Spectacle of Racialized State Violence," which is the opening essay of *Resisting State Violence: Radicalism, Gender, and Race in U.S. Culture*. James argues that with *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault erases the reality of racist violence. She asserts, "[…] Foucault universalizes the body of the white, propertied male. Much of *Discipline and Punish* depicts the body with no specificity tied to racialized or sexualized punishment. [This] elides racist violence against black and brown and red bodies" (25). In her critique that Foucault's analysis fails to engage properly or thoroughly with race, James contrasts the way Foucault describes nonconformity (through his example of a soldier who fails to carry out his tasks properly), with the ways that bodies as well as actions can also succeed or fail to properly conform. She writes, "[…] the departure from the norm shows up not only in behavior but visually in terms of physical characteristics that are racialized. […]. Physical appearance, however, can be considered an expres-

sion of either conformity or rebellion" (25). With this argument, James makes the case that some bodies are already further from the norm and thus more likely to experience violence and punishment than others, no matter how hard they try to "behave correctly," due to "prevailing social and state structures that figuratively and literally rank bodies" based on skin color (27).

Though her work is a compelling and intriguing reassessment of Foucault's theories and calls important attention to the way that racialized violence functions, James also often follows Foucault's lead in privileging the visual as the main sense that helps us "make sense" of racial categorization. For example, in the quotation cited above, James's argument that normalization occurs not just through Foucault's soldier who fails to carry out his tasks but also through the physical appearance of the body, the emphasis is clearly on just that – the visual appearance of that body. As she writes, people are racialized "not only in behavior but *visually* in terms of physical characteristics (25, emphasis mine). Thus, for James, when bodies are "othered" racially, this judgment primarily happens through the ways these bodies *look*. She explains this idea further, saying "some bodies appear more docile than others because of their conformity in appearance to idealized models of class, color, and sex," where the doubling of the word "appear/appearance" again makes reference to specifically visual markers of difference (26). James continues with these optical metaphors when she takes Foucault to task, saying that to examine exclusionary practices as he does "without considering the role of race in the formation of that disciplined society and pure community is to *see the United States through blinders"* (26, emphasis mine).

However, the work of sensory theorists, as described previously, calls into question this visual strategy used by James. Though James critiques Foucault for leaving racialized bodies out of his analysis of disciplinary processes, perhaps she too leaves out some of the other ways that raced bodies are also disciplined and excluded through the use of other senses. Contrastingly, in *How Race is Made,* Mark Smith questions how racial boundaries were also policed through the non-visual senses. Smith writes that there is "a good deal of nonsense" in any critical approach that asserts white southerners sensed "blackness" only through their eyes and argues that failing to interrogate racist beliefs about the non-visual senses is to miss a huge part of what made up race and racism in the southern world (5). His sensory approach is thus quite different from James and her reliance on visuality alone because he insists upon examining the ways that southerners (white and black) also judged race through smell, sound, taste, and touch.

For example, as mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, Smith, who is British, opens his text with a personal anecdote of attending a wedding in South Carolina. A family friend, Frank, drew him aside and told him a story about his grandmother arriving home from a day of shopping in the 1920's. Though the woman didn't see anything amiss when she walked into her house, she told her family members that she knew right away that a break-in had occurred. When questioned how this could be, she told others later, "I smelled Nigger" (1). After hearing this story, Smith began his archival search to determine if these types of attitudes were common. Overwhelmingly, he concluded, "The historical record confirmed what I had just heard [from Frank]: white southerners believed they did not need their eyes alone to authenticate racial identity, pre-

sumed inferiority, and, in this instance, criminality. By this point in my research I had read enough letters, journals, and newspaper accounts to know that what Frank had just told me […] was common fare" (1-2). To back up this assertion in great detail, Smith painstakingly quotes from a variety of historical documents (some public, some private) that discuss what whites perceived to be the particular smell of black skin and black bodies, revealing just how deeply this stereotype was entrenched.

In addition to smell, Smith explores sound, taste, and touch. He traces stereotypes about the thickness of black skin to the ways whites justified their harsh treatment of enslaved bodies. Because whites perpetuated and believed the idea that black skin was less sensitive to pain, they drew the conclusion that black slaves should be whipped harder and could work longer than those with more delicate white senses (46). Additionally, whites believed that the "inferior" foods that black people ate (though ironically, they were often eating these foods because whites allowed them nothing else) meant that black palates were less developed and less sensitive to taste (44). And, as Smith makes clear time and again, all of these belief systems about the ways people of different races used their senses and how they were perceived through the senses of others, were continually used to divide, categorize, punish, and marginalize in ways that all have Foucauldian echoes.

In fact, applying Smith's sensory readings of race to James' racial critique of Foucault could offer new possibilities for her study of the ways bodies are raced and expand her argument about the ways Foucault ignores aspects of various marginalized bodies. For example, James writes of Foucault that, "His text illustrates how easy it is to erase the specificity of the body and violence while centering discourse on them" (25).

However, though her argument that “black and brown and red” bodies are elided by Foucault’s focus on the universal white European male body is a strong one, through her own reliance on visual markers, James presents race as something that is identified (and used to marginalized or punish people) by vision alone, ignoring other aspects of bodily presence. As such, she too could be said to (in her own words) “erase the specificity of the body and violence while centering discourse on them” (25). Because, as Smith’s work clearly shows, people’s bodies, at least in the U.S. South, certainly were being raced in profound ways via a plethora of other non-visual senses. When James writes that “prevailing social and state structures [in the U.S. South] literally and figuratively rank bodies” (27), she is right, but the work of Smith and other sensory historians, makes clear that “rank bodies” has a whole second meaning besides the one James intended, as how one smelled to others was also crucial for normalization and punishment practices.

Thus, it is productive to ask how theories of the senses might have been used to broaden and strengthen James’ critique specifically. The most obvious point is perhaps that if James wanted to thoroughly critique Foucault’s elision of the body by bringing the body itself to the forefront, it would have helped to truly focus on the body as a whole, with all of its senses intact, rather than presenting it as something that only gives off visual cues of identity. If James had presented the body as something that was not only seen but also smelled, tasted, touched, and heard, this would have made it even more obvious just how much Foucault himself had erased the body from his visually-focused analysis thereby supporting her main argument. Thus, James could have critiqued Foucault’s reliance on the visual as part of her overall thesis that Foucault fails to adequate-

ly account for the ways some bodies are punished differently and more intensely than others based on the way they not only look but are thought to smell or sound in ways that transgressed the norm. The same could be said of readers who have only discussed the racially "othered" of Faulkner's characters through the ways they look.

We can examine an even more specific moment in James' text where sensory studies might have informed her argument differently (and might also change the way we read characters in fiction such as Faulkner's), by studying her discussion of lynching. In this part of her chapter, James critiques Foucault's argument that the tortured body displayed for the masses as public spectacle had largely disappeared by the beginning of the nineteenth century. One of the examples James gives to refute this claim is the "ritual barbarism of lynching" that arose in the southern United States through the middle of the twentieth century (29). As James describes this phenomenon, she once again relies on visual descriptors: lynching is a "specter" (a word that shares its roots with spectacle and the visual); the mobs and sheriffs "oversaw" these rituals, etc. (29). James concludes that Foucault's analysis of public punishment and torture disappearing so that at the last minute such punishment would not turn the victim into an object of pity does not hold true for black lynching victims in the U.S South, who, as she writes, "were rarely transformed into objects of pity or admiration in the dominant society" and were left to be "mourned and eulogized" only by anti-lynching advocates (29). Though she makes this point well, James never gives an alternative theory; for example, if these people were not turned into objects of pity as Foucault predicted, why not? And if not, what were they turned into and why? These questions are all useful when thinking about what happens to black victims of violence in Faulkner's fiction.

One answer might come from Smith's analysis, presented above, of the long-cherished white view that black people smelled like animals, could smell the world around them with a capacity that was akin to that of animals, and had skin that did not feel touch or pain the way that other human skin could. Thus, James could possibly have made the point that while crowds who watched another human being tortured and punished might eventually feel some sort of human solidarity and pity as Foucault predicted, perhaps the importance white southerners placed on their interpretations of blackness through smells and touch had overridden their visual fields. Perhaps they could no longer *see* a human in front of them if their ideas about smell and touch had already categorized all black bodies as animal. Multiple lynchings where the bodies were burned and gave off a resulting smell seem to support this, as members of the lynch mob were known to call the events "barbeques," adding to the animal imagery (*Digital*), so that rather than being turned into objects of pity, through white beliefs about the senses, black bodies were turned first into animals and then through the nose turned into something that animals often turn into: the commodity of food. Framed this way, James could have argued that there would be no Foucauldian reason for the punishment/torture spectacle to disappear; the rules of the senses as explained by Smith had already erased the danger Foucault predicted, that these victims could ever be pitied or admired as fellow human beings. Through white ideas and beliefs about the non-visual senses like touch and smell, these black bodies had already been categorized as not human at all. Such a perspective could have added to James' critique that Foucault had failed to encompass the fact of the racialized body, a body that was trapped in a

field of sensory belief systems (*not* just trapped in a field of vision), when he formulated his theories about punishment spectacles disappearing.

James could also further extrapolate the act of lynching itself with sensory theory when she describes it as “a terrorist campaign to control an ethnic people subjugated as an inferior race” (30). Perhaps it is natural to speak of the terror of lynching in primarily visual terms, as most modern readers’ only access to these events has been through viewing two-dimensional photographs. We only know how lynching *looks*. However, though James talks about the way white people took in the visual spectacle of lynching and torture as enjoyment (29), there were certainly elements of lynching that occurred alongside the visual for those who were actually there, elements such as smells and sounds that do not come through in photographs but were present in the moment. This is important to consider when presenting lynching as a visual tool for terror and discipline as James does. In Foucault’s description of spectacle, the audience participated by seeing someone like them tortured and killed; this may not hold true in James’ analysis of lynch mobs because she fails to account for the fact that photographs of lynch mobs show them to be primarily (if not entirely) made up of white people. Black people, who were supposed to be controlled, disciplined, and terrorized by this spectacle were (for many good reasons) probably not there to see it. Thus, by considering the other senses, James might have productively asked how black people experienced the terror of lynching if not through direct visualization of it?

While frequently African Americans may have experienced the aftermath of lynching through their eyes (seeing mutilated bodies after the fact, seeing photographs of the event or the bodies afterwards), if James wanted to argue for lynching as a terror-

ist campaign to control and discipline, she should also have accounted for ways that black people were made to experience lynching through their other senses. Was the terror and its resulting power to control and discipline carried through the ears, as people recounted the events one to another in hushed and horrified tones? Was it through the ears as screams or cries of the victims and the mobs carried through the air to impact people who were not there to see? In Lillian Smith's *Strange Fruit*, a fictional novel that depicts a lynching in Georgia, even the people (white and black) who do not want to participate in the lynching are forced to do so through their noses as the smell of the burnt body is described as permeating their town for days (348). Thus, in both literature and in theoretical approaches like James', the power of lynching (and all racialized violence) must be interrogated as a *multisensory event* not just a visual spectacle.

An accounting of lynching as something experienced differently by black and white people, some who were allowed by their positions in the mob to take in the event through the visual in addition to their other senses, versus people who experienced the event primarily through their ears or noses, is an important difference in considering how discipline and punishment worked during lynching, a difference James might have productively explored through sensory theory. Thinking about who actually saw the spectacle of lynching and who did not fundamentally impacts her argument that Foucault was wrong about how spectacle functions. Thus, while James gives a powerful rebuttal to Foucault's theory that punishment became "the most hidden part of the penal process" (Foucault 9) since for white people, lynchings were clearly very visible events, perhaps she has not explored the entire sensory story of how it worked for black audiences. Arguably, for many of them the actual moment of lynching *was* sometimes hid-

den (from view at least), but these events were also oppressively omnipresent in a different sensory way through smells and sounds that could hang in the air and invade the ears and nose sometimes for far longer than the visual spectacle alone lasted. If James is interested, as she writes, in examining how lynching became a site of terror, discipline, and control, it seems important to explore how such racialized terror in both literature and in history was distributed through all of the bodily senses, not just vision. As Foucault demonstrates in his depiction of the Panoptican, sometimes being denied the power to see something (such as the prisoner who can never tell if she is being watched by the hidden guardian), is even more terrifying and powerful than seeing; did lynching, which happened in the visual field of a white audience but not always a black one, function in this way? It would be interesting to discover how a more thorough consideration of sensory questions like these (who was allowed or forced to see, smell, hear, or touch and who was not and how these sensory rules were enforced along racial lines) could have powerfully nuanced James' argument that Foucault fails to consider all dimensions of the way punishment continued to function for racialized bodies well into the twentieth century in the U.S. South. This is the type of gap that this dissertation seeks to address by examining the non-visual norming processes that are described in Faulkner's texts.

Finally, in addition to Foucault and James, it is critical to examine a theorist who is writing specifically about literature of the U.S. South to examine whether there is evidence of visually-saturated theory occurring in this field as well. Despite being a truly groundbreaking and thought-provoking text overall, Michael P. Bibler's *Cotton's Queer Relations: Same Sex Intimacy and the Literature of the Southern Plantation, 1936-1968,* is another good example of criticism that is (consciously or unconsciously) enmeshed in

visual metaphors.[2] Bibler frequently uses vision as the only sensory paradigm occurring in the U.S. South during the literary time period he explores.

For instance, when he writes about whites who feared the results of race mixing, he says, “To them, the products of interracialism would become *visible* across the South in a new breed of people produced by racial ‘amalgamation’” (12, emphasis mine). As we will explore below, Faulkner gives a much more nuanced depiction of these fears, a depiction that will include all of the bodily senses, not just vision. Bibler continues this visual metaphor when he discusses lesbian relationships between white and black women during the plantation era of the U.S. South. He posits, “[T]here is more to their same-sex bond than meets the *eye*, something underneath the façade of racial difference that we should be careful not to rule out even if we can’t *see* it directly” (19, emphases mine). However, as explored in my chapter on queerness and the senses, applying a broader sensory studies approach to same-sex relationships in Faulkner reveals that there is actually more to these relationships that also meets the ear and the nose. Later, in a section Bibler tellingly entitles, “Politics and Visibility,” he writes that his work is an attempt to bring a “clearer picture” (also a metaphor of vision) of “previously unrecognized members of the mythic plantation household who linger not quite *out of sight* in the kitchens and the verandas” (22, emphasis mine).

Furthermore, when Bibler addresses critics who might question whether overtly queer characters in U.S. southern literature of this time period even exist, he again supports his argument for their presence by relying on vision:

[2] Bibler defines plantation novels as texts that, no matter when they were written, are narratives concerned in whole or in part with plantations in the U.S. South (2).

> Indeed, queerness may even seem absent from these texts where the representations of sameness appear to define a merely homosocial relationship in which homoeroticism is negligible, at best. But *invisibility* of recognizable sexual identities does not mean the absence of alternative sexualities – only that what we *see in front of us* may be something different from what we are used to *seeing*. (22, emphases mine)

Bibler goes on to describe these queer relationships as having a "flickering (in)visibility" and says that one effect interracial lesbian relationships have on characters is that they "begin to *visibly* nonconform to their plantation surroundings" (23, emphasis mine). As sensory scholars have continually argued, however, social conformity is established and policed through a variety of interpretive sensory systems not just sight. Thus, with an awareness of a broader sensory paradigm, Bibler could also have explored the ways that queer relationships interrupt conformity in terms of smells, sounds, touches, and tastes as well, which would strengthen and deepen his analysis. While these examples of visual metaphors employed by Bibler may seem insignificant, I would like to use one of his own statements to argue for why moving away from an over-reliance on visual theory is critical for literary theorists of the U.S. South, especially in a project like Bibler's. He writes, "Putting a face to the kinds of queer relations that I see in these works requires close attention to the layers of ambiguity, innuendo, and other textual subtleties that sometimes only intimate the structural peculiarities of same-sex intimacy within the context of the meta-plantation" (23). Given this search for deeply buried cultural interactions, for subtle, hidden relationships that nonetheless breach taboos, it seems as if critics like Bibler would especially benefit from employing a broader sensory

understanding of the ways that social boundaries and identity categories are upheld and policed through all of the senses in order to help clarify the very ambiguities, innuendos, and subtleties that Bibler mentions.

Overall, Foucault, James, and Bibler offer complicated, profound, and important insights regarding the nature of discipline, punishment, power, and normalization practices. However, it is important to acknowledge the centrality of vision for all three of these authors' theoretical explorations and thus to question how much we as modern readers also have also been predisposed to rely on the visual alone when we are reading and analyzing literature such as Faulkner's. As the work of sensory theorists demonstrate, such a limited framework can have important consequences regarding identity categories such as race, gender, class, and sexuality since the way bodies are turned into disciplined subjects involves beliefs about other sensory markers in addition to vision such as touch, taste, sound, and smell. As more critics like James analyze and engage with Foucault's theories via intersections with critical race theory or postcolonial theory, this dissertation will argue that sensory theory is a framework that might be helpful for exploring such identity-oriented discourses of discipline and power in literature, enabling us to "see" (and hear, taste, touch, and smell) these issues in a new and different way.

3. RACE AND THE SENSES

"Without changing the inflection of his voice and apparently without effort or even design Lucas became not Negro but nigger, not secret so much as impenetrable, not servile and not effacing, but enveloping himself in an aura of timeless and stupid impassivity almost like a smell."

~ William Faulkner*, Go Down, Moses,* 58

Discussions of the U.S. South frequently turn to the issue of race, particularly the historical and current racial tensions between black and white.[3] Unsurprisingly, a great deal of critical attention has been paid to the often complicated and shifting black/white dynamics in Faulkner's novels and to Faulkner's own complex beliefs about race. Walter Taylor writes of this complexity that Faulkner's "more reactionary statements suggest that [his] feelings toward blacks were never more than ambivalent" (3), and Noel Polk also explores Faulkner's ambiguous beliefs about race in his aptly titled essay "Man in the Middle." Likewise, Sharon Desmond Paradiso notes that any understanding of Faulkner's racial beliefs must both acknowledge his racism while also taking into account the cultural milieu in which he wrote. She explains that Faulkner was "from a twenty-first-century perspective, deeply, inherently, actively racist" (24) but goes on to note that while "many of his opinions and statements concerning race were outrageously reactionary […] he was, in his day, excoriated by his fellow Mississippians [as a race traitor] for the mere suggestion that African Americans had a right at least to quality

[3] Recent southern literary works such as Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* are helping to demonstrate that other racial tensions, such as those between white settlers and Native Americans, also exist in the U.S. South. This multidimensional racial and ethnic context is important to acknowledge, particularly as the racial and ethnic demographics of the region continue to shift and change; however, since much of Faulkner's fiction involves black/white racial dichotomies that will be the main exploration of this chapter.

education and to the opportunity to better their situation in the South" (24). Some critics approach race in Faulkner by exploring the consequences of racist practices on black characters and how these racist incidents in Faulkner's fiction reflect actual social and legal practices. In her 2003 book, *Games of Property: Law, Race, Gender, and Faulkner's Go Down, Moses*, Thadious Davis writes that *Go Down, Moses* provides a "micro-environment for studying the relationships among property, race, gender, and law," especially "racial power and domination in property rights and with legal interpretations over time" (3). Others, such as Walter Taylor, argue that most or all of Faulkner's portrayals of black characters are severely hampered by his own racist beliefs and his identity as a white man in a racist society. Taylor describes these black characters of Faulkner's as so problematically rendered that he calls Faulkner's depiction of Rider in "Pantaloon in Black," (a depiction Taylor thinks finally moves closer to a more human and honest portrayal of a black person) an "anomaly" and writes that it is "an approach Faulkner never attempted elsewhere" (5).

Other critics approach the issue of race in Faulkner's fiction by examining the construction of whiteness and/or the anxieties white characters hold towards black characters or others who are coded as racial others due to their foreign origins. In "Terrorizing Whiteness in Yoknapatawpha County," Paradiso explores how white characters react and often lash back with terror tactics when they believe that their status as the superior race is threatened by mixed-race characters (23-24). Hosam Aboul-Ela's "The Political Economy of Southern Race" is a postcolonial reading of white anxieties about other countries and cultures in *Go Down, Moses*. Barbara Ladd provides another reading of white beliefs and racism towards international "others" in her article "'The Direc-

tion of the Howling': Nationalism and the Color Line in *Absalom, Absalom!*"; she also writes about colonialism and racial beliefs in a book-length comparison of Cable, Twain, and Faulkner and in "Race as Fact and Fiction in William Faulkner." Finally, John N. Duvall discusses black performance and the blackface tradition but also explores the performativity of whiteness through the tradition of old European whiteface (106). Duvall's article is notable in particular because of its depiction of race as something that is primarily understood through the sense of sight. He writes, "Faulkner particularly *makes visible* an opening between racial and cultural identity through certain reflections on the racist construct 'nigger'" (106, emphasis mine). Additionally he states, "More importantly it [Faulkner's use of figurative blackness through white performativity] allows Faulkner's readers *to see* that, whatever the residual racism of William Faulkner, his narratives negotiate racial struggle even when race seems *absent from their field of vision*" (108, emphases mine). In this depiction, Duvall asserts that when race disappears from the eye, it must be ascertained through other *non-sensory* ways as if ascertaining race through any sense besides vision is rare or impossible.[4]

In contrast, the following analysis of Faulkner's literature will depend heavily on the methodological approach of sensory studies in order to reopen some moments of racial import in his texts by thinking about racial identity as a full-body discourse, a multi-sensory discourse being used by Faulkner and his characters, discourse that far exceeds vision alone. As Smith, Largey, and Watson have pointed out, the idea of race was not something that was processed through vision alone; the other senses were

[4] The scholarly works described here are in no way meant to be an exhaustive list of critics who explore race in Faulkner's fiction; rather, this is only a brief sampling provided to depict *some* approaches that have been taken. An excellent and wider-ranging overview of scholars currently working with this subject matter can be found in *Faulkner and Race*, an edited collection that features thirteen diverse essays on this topic.

used as a coded language of behavior, identity, community, and racial knowledge. It is important to examine this language of the senses in the work of William Faulkner in order to sense racial conversations and judgments that might otherwise go unnoted. In this close-reading of several Faulkner texts, three trends will be examined: how race is identified through the non-visual senses, how black senses are stereotyped as animalistic, and how fears of black/white comingling and contagion are policed by the non-visual senses.

I. Sensing Race

In ways that are often quite similar to the historical beliefs described by sensory theorists, Faulkner's characters frequently use their non-visual senses to ascertain race and/or to police racial boundaries. Just as Largey and Watson relate in their story of pills sold to black people to help them get rid of a supposedly innate "black odor" (1028), in *Go Down, Moses*, Isaac McCaslin describes advertisements for "salves and potions manufactured and sold by white men to bleach the pigment and straighten the hair of negroes" (244). That these items existed to remove markers of blackness from the eye begs the question of whether blackness is thought to impact the other senses as well, and indeed this seems to be the case in more than one of Faulkner's novels.

For example, *Go Down, Moses* includes multiple instances when blackness is referred to as smell. In some cases, white people express their belief that this bodily smell is so strong that it even permeates dwellings where black people live. When Isaac travels west to find 'Fonsiba and her new husband, he describes their house as being "negro-stale negro-rank" (267). Additionally, there are two moments when a white male

character describes the character and charity of white women by their willingness to deliver food to black houses that are "stinking" (273). As a child, Roth Edmonds is said to have preferred Mollie and Lucas's house with its "strong warm negro smell" (107).

This smell is clearly not isolated to living spaces, however, but is also depicted as emanating from and clinging to black bodies and the items that belong to them. When Isaac is a child, he sits under the blanket with Sam Fathers while listening to Sam telling stories, and the narrator describes this scene as "the two of them wrapped in the damp, warm, negro-rank quilt" (*GDM* 187).[5] Later, when Isaac is old and frail, a young woman he thinks is white comes to see him in the tent where he has gone hunting with the young descendants of his old hunting friends. Eventually, Isaac realizes he should have known that the young woman was black because Isham sent a young black servant into the tent to show her in rather than doing her the higher honor of showing her in himself, as he would have done for a white woman (340). Rather than comprehend the situation through social etiquette, however, it is Isaac's nose that first depicts the blackness. When she enters, he says she brought "something else, something intangible, an effluvium which he knew he would recognise in a moment" (340). Later, when he realizes that the girl is of mixed race, we are told:

> Now he understood what it was she had brought into the tent with her, what old Isham had already told him by sending the youth to bring her in to him – the pale lips, the skin pallid and dead-looking yet not ill, the dark and tragic and foreknowing eyes […]. He cried, not loud, in a voice of amazement, pity, and outrage: "You're a nigger!" (344)

[5] Throughout this dissertation, all abbreviations of Faulkner's titles follow the abbreviation guide set forth in *The Faulkner Journal*.

While Isaac's description of the young woman's skin and eyes are of course visual, he makes it clear that it is the "effluvium" of blackness that he recognizes first. The word effluvium is of course even stronger than the word smell and carries a negative connotation not just of a fragrance but of an explicitly offensive odor.

Similar situations abound in *Light in August*. When Joe Christmas and his young friends arrange to have sex with a black woman, Joe says he walked in "smelling the woman smelling the negro all at once" (156). Likewise, when Joe walks around the town and moves between streets where black people live and where white people live, he is able to smell both whiteness and blackness. When he passes through the black section, the narrator overtly says that "[Joe] could smell negro" (117) and that he is "surrounded by the summer smell and the summer voices of invisible negroes (114), in a statement that posits blackness as not just a smell but also a sound since Joe seems to know that the voices are black ones despite the people themselves being invisible. When he reaches the white section, Joe says he realizes where he is because the "air now was the cold hard air of white people," and "the negro smell, the negro voices were behind and below him now" (115). Though the "air" of white people is not overtly a smell, given the many olfactory cues in this passage and the fact that Joe senses this change in air by breathing it in through his nose and mouth does imply that whiteness too has some sort of air or tangible quality that can be sensed; this is made more clear by his description of it as "cold." Clearly, whiteness is something that can be felt on the skin through the sense of touch. Since this is a summer night in the South where the air itself is obviously not cold, this coldness Joe feels means that there is something else present, a lingering touch of race that literally pervades the atmosphere and can be felt.

Joe is also aware of racial smell when he is fleeing from the law after the murder. When he passes near black people, he says again that he "smelled negro" (*LA* 334). Furthermore, in order to evade the dogs who are tracking him through smell, he trades his shoes with those of a black woman. Joe says that her shoes are "smelling of negro" and then successfully eludes capture because the smell of the shoes covers his trail (331). This point is notable because though it is presented in the text as a matter-of-fact and obvious strategy for evading the bloodhounds, the fact that it works is quite odd considering that Joe neither showers nor trades the rest of his clothes with anyone else. Given the intense heat and the fact that Joe has been living outdoors without bathing for days, the fact that we are asked to believe that simply switching shoes with a black person is enough to completely overwhelm his own odors is very telling. Clearly, readers are expected to perceive blackness as such a strong smell, a strong taint, that it can literally overwhelm all other bodily odors. This idea is confirmed and supported the longer Joe wears the shoes, as both the odor and the visibility of blackness seem to crawl up his legs in a menacing way. Faulkner writes, "[T]he black shoes smelling of negro: that mark on his ankles the gauge definite and ineradicable of the black tide creeping up his legs, moving from his feet upward as death moves" (339). Joe's ability to use "black-smelling" shoes to mask his scent is problematic and even more intriguing, however, when we remember that the people chasing him have already decided that he is not entirely white. Does this mean that Joe's smell before he puts on the shoes is "white," since we are asked to believe that the "black" smell covers up the way he smelled before he put them on? Thus, considering the sense of smell in this scene further complicates Joe's already racially ambiguous identity.

Taken together, these racially charged instances of odor from two Faulkner texts send interesting (and mixed) messages to readers that may escape notice unless one is approaching these texts from a sensory studies perspective. First, Largey and Watson's assertion that smells are often akin to insults and that odor is a way to marginalize groups of people (1022) is certainly true here. Despite the fact that most of the bodies in these texts (white and black) are often depicted outdoors, sometimes engaging in manual labor, sometimes in poverty with limited opportunities to wash and/or change their clothing, and frequently in the midst of hot, humid weather (all conditions that would most certainly lead most humans to sweat and/or smell), most of the time only the black people are depicted as odorous. This is clearly an entrenched sensory system that helps maintain white beliefs about racial purity and superiority – only those at the bottom of the racial ladder have bodies that stink. Additionally, as evidenced by Sam Fathers, who is curiously coded as smelling black (*GDM* 187) even though that is only one third of his racial make-up (i.e. why does his blanket not also smell like "Native American" or "white" for example?) and by Joe's ability to mask the rest of his (white?) bodily smells from the dogs by putting on shoes that "smell negro," we learn that this belief in the existence of a pervasive and inescapable black smell is an incredibly powerful trope in both of these texts and is consistent with ideas about smells uncovered in the historical record by Largey and Watson, Smith, and others.

Furthermore, when white men *do* have a smell, even their smelliness is carefully connected to their power and privilege. For example, in *The Town*, Colonel Sartoris, who is an upper-class white male, is said to have been buried in the "odor of unimpugnable rectitude" (266), showing that even when a white male body is dead (a situation

that most people associate with rot, decay, and of course, bad smells), the sensory social code expects people to believe that this privileged body still has nothing but the odor of propriety, purity, and moral virtue. Likewise, in contrast to the belief that black people had supernatural, animalistic senses of smell, there are occasionally moments where white people seem to have mysteriously acute senses of smell too (as will be explored further in my chapter on gender), and these moments are often connected with the whites' ability to enforce the law and current hegemonic order. One such instance occurs in *The Town* when Mr. Hampton, an elected official charged with upholding the law, describes his ability to smell crime. He explains, "After all, I've been having to snuff out moonshine whiskey in this county ever since I first got elected. And since 1919, I have been so in practice that now I don't even need to smell: I just kind of feel it the moment I get where some of it aint supposed to be" (172-3). Thus, Hampton's nose for crime is so acute that it has morphed into a gut feeling; his nose just knows. Once again, then, smell and whiteness are connected to power, morality, and upholding the legal code; in contrast, moments of smell and blackness are relentlessly negative and offensive.

At times, however, smelliness also reveals underlying cracks in the racial hierarchy. For example, though adults in the text uniformly assert that black people smell and that these smells "stink" and are disgusting "effluvium," some white children in the text clearly interpret the smell of blackness differently, such as Roth Edmond's recollection in *Go Down, Moses* that he preferred the "strong warm negro smell" of Henry's house to his own and sensed the smell as positive, even comforting (107). Likewise, Isaac clearly likes nothing better than to be near Sam Fathers and appears entirely

nonplussed by Sam's "negro-rank" quilt (187). Thus, Faulkner's nuanced depictions of race and smell in these texts coincide well with the claims of many sensory historians who argue that smell is always relative and interpretive and will always depend on who is doing the smelling and in what cultural context. These children's noses, noses that do not think blackness smells bad at all, reveal the subjective and constructed nature of the sensory "truths" expressed by the adults.

II. Animalism and Black Characters: A Substantiation or Subversion of Power?

Another important element of studying the senses in Faulkner is the way that the white characters use sensory cues in order to define blacks as animals. The belief that black people's senses were more animal than human is noticeable a number of times in Faulkner's fiction. In *The Sound and the Fury*, Quentin reflects on the supernatural sensory powers of the elderly black man, Louis Hatcher, whose voice can impact others' hearing strangely, carrying over longer distances than seem humanly impossible. This example is particularly noteworthy because Quentin takes pains to mention both animals and the word "nigger" right before he talks about Louis' sensory powers, thus drawing a perfect triangle of the three interwoven beliefs that sensory historians argue are often linked: race, animalism, and the senses. Quentin muses, "A dog's voice carries further than a train, in the darkness anyway. And some people's. Niggers. Louis Hatcher never even used his horn" (114). Thus, Quentin believes that Louis impacts his white sense of hearing differently than another white person would and that Louis is able to do this both because of his race and because of his race's supposed similarity to animals. Quentin goes on to explain that Louis can function in the dark so well that he

never has to clean his dirty lantern as he stalks other animals through the countryside like a nocturnal creature. Since he disdains the light of his lantern, he clearly hunts the way an animal would, through the "primal" senses of smell and hearing versus the supposedly "rational" sense of vision. Versh confirms this, saying, "Unc' Louis wouldn't ketch nothing wid a light he could see by." Before the scene ends, Quentin again comments on Louis' strange sensory powers and his nocturnal, dark nature, remembering, "[Louis] never raised [his voice], yet on a still night we have heard it from our front porch […] as though his voice were part of darkness […] coiling out of it, coiling into it again (115). Louis's sensory impact on white people is linked again to darkness (and its association with black skin) and with animals through the repeated use of the word "coiling" and its associations with serpentine creatures.

This sort of depiction is common according to sensory historians. As Smith points out, "The construction of sensory inferiority enabled elite whites to depict black slaves as both human and animalistic" (*How Race* 11). Whites maintained that blacks, like certain elite hunting dogs, had almost supernatural powers of sensing. Black people's optic nerves were described as being over large, leading to their ability to see at incredible distances, and their hearing was reputed to be amazingly acute (16). Smith quotes Charles White, an English surgeon who wrote about black sensory powers in 1799, as carefully noting that black nostrils were typically larger and more flared than white nostrils, and who argued that therefore black people possessed a much greater sense of smell than whites. Thus, as Smith writes, "They [blacks] sensed different and sensed differently—in both instances, like animals" (16), and this plays out repeatedly in Faulkner.

In *Absalom, Absalom!*, the black slaves Henry Sutpen brings to Mississippi are portrayed in a similar way as is Louis. As if it were the most natural thing in the world, the narrator calmly explains that Sutpen's slaves had a better sense of smell than dogs. In a sentence that would almost be humorous if its underlying meaning was not so startling in its racism, Sutpen decides he does not want to hurt the other men's feelings by upstaging their dogs with his slaves, so he brings in a pack of dogs to maintain the social niceties. "Not that he would have needed dogs," we are told, not "with his niggers to trail" (178). Indeed, when the men are tracking the hapless architect who has run away, it is the black men who actually find the trail; the dogs, with their inferior senses of smell, are fooled, but one of the "wild niggers" is not (193). Making an even more direct link between the black men and the way that animals sound, Quentin's grandfather says that when they found the architect, the "niggers bayed" with the dogs, making even more "racket" to white ears than did the dogs. He even believes that the black men, now that they had found their prey, expected, like dogs or wild animals, to be allowed to eat it (206), echoing Smith's assertion that whites believed blacks had inferior senses of taste and would eat almost anything. In other passages that link to the sense of taste and how black palates were considered different that whites', one of these men is described as a wild negro performing tiger (16), whose constantly glinting teeth scare churchgoers as they ponder his appetites (16-17).

As noted above, Smith also argues that whites portrayed black sensory powers as animalistic by believing that black skin was deficient in the sense of touch, that whites believed black skin was more like tough animal hides and could not feel pain, and we also find this belief expressed by a character in Faulkner's novels. In *Absalom,*

Absalom!, the young Sutpen visualizes his father and a group of friends beating a black man, one of "Pettibone's niggers" (187). He says to himself that this was "no actual nigger, living creature, living flesh to feel pain and writhe and cry out," proving that he actually believes black skin feels touch differently than white (187). Instead, Sutpen distances himself from the humanity of the black man by describing him as having a "balloon face" and even *being* a "balloon" (187). In today's world of brightly colored latex balloons, this may be confusing; however, if we stop to consider that earlier balloons were made of pig bladders, the image is suddenly complete. The black victim is not a man who can feel pain; he is tough and non-sensing animal flesh filled with hot air.

A similar example happens in Faulkner's later work, *The Town*, when Chick Mallison's father has a conversation with Mr. Connors. Connors has just brought Jabbo, who is a brilliant black mechanic, out to fix a car. While Jabbo is working, Mr. Mallison tells Connors that Jabbo would be more useful if Connors could just take him around with him instead of having to go and get him whenever a car breaks down. The disturbing conversation proceeds as follows: "'Why don't you,' Father said, 'if you could just kind of embalm Jabbo a little – you know: so he wouldn't get cold or hungry – tie him to the back of the car like he was an extra wheel or engine, then every time you had a puncture or it wouldn't start, all you'd have to do would be to untie Jabbo and stand him up and unbalm him –is that the word? Unbalm?'" (69). Here, the Father (notably called Father as if he is a stand in for all white patriarchy) once again makes explicit the white desire to believe that black skin could not feel and that black palates were different than whites'. In Mr. Mallison's fantasy, Jabbo would be better if he were properly embalmed and thus unable to feel or taste. Additionally, all of this is said in Jabbo's presence al-

most like he was not there, so it is as if Mr. Mallison assumes that Jabbo cannot hear either. Though in this scene Jabbo is not positioned in animalistic terms but rather is mechanized (he is to be tied to the car like “an extra wheel or engine”), the end result is the same. Father clearly wishes to cast Jabbo as something other than a human and does so by desiring to remove Jabbo’s human sensory abilities.

Another example of white belief that black senses were different occurs later in *The Town* when Gavin Stevens visits a small store run by Mr. Garraway. Gavin reflects that Mr. Garraway is a kind person because he has often noted him “selling to a Negro for half-price or often less (oh yes, at times even giving it to him) the tainted meat or rancid lard or weevilled flour or meal he would not have permitted a white man – a Protestant gentile white man of course – to eat at all out of his store” (315). Thus, Gavin tells us that food that would be insulting for a white person to eat is a kindness for a black person to have; once again, the situation is animalistic in the way that it evokes the idea of a dog being thrown leftover table scraps not fit for human consumption and the idea that black people have a less refined sense of taste than whites and will eat anything.

In one final example from *The Town*, a member of the Snopes clan has moved to Mexico and produced children who are said to be half Snopes (assumed white) and half Native American (and thus racially othered as both non-white and foreign) are frequently depicted as behaving like animals and exhibiting super-sensory powers that “fully” white people do not have. The narrator relates: “[Y]ou couldn’t hear them; you didn’t even know they were in the house or not, when they had entered it or left it; for all you knew, they might be right there in your bedroom in the dark, looking at you” (365). This depiction implies that the children can see better in the dark than white people can and

also that they can control the way they *sound* in white ears, fooling the whites with their uncanny silence. Later, in a passage that explicitly connects the children to animals, another Snopes relative tries to train them to hunt with their noses like a pack of dogs "because sooner or later dogs always quit and went home, while it didn't matter to them [the children] where they was" (368).

Likewise, in *Light in August*, Joe Christmas, an extremely complex character (who may or may not have black blood) is also similarly coded as an animal during his childhood. When he eats the food his stepmother Mrs. McEachern brings him, he is described as "above the outraged food kneeling, with his hands [he] ate, like a savage, like a dog" (155). Later, as an adult, he is again associated with animal senses when it comes to his sense of taste and food: "[L]ike the cat, he also seemed to see in the darkness as he moved as unerringly toward the food which he wanted as if he knew where it would be (230). When Byron Bunch thinks about Joe, he is also drawn to animal imagery. In a passage filled with sensory material, Byron reflects on how humans can turn sounds into meaning and as a cue to determine identity categories. He ponders:

> And that was the first time Byron remembered that he had ever thought how a man's name, which is supposed to be just the *sound* for who he is, can be somehow an augur of what he will do, if other men can only read the meaning in time. It seemed to him that *none of them had looked* especially at the stranger [Joe Christmas] until they *heard* his name. But as soon as they *heard* it, it was as though there was something in the sound of it that was trying to tell them what to expect; that he carried with him his own inescapable warning, like a flower its scent or a rattlesnake its rattle.

> Only none of them had sense enough to recognise it." (33, emphasis mine)

In this scenario, Byron overtly acknowledges the failure of vision to capture the identity of someone like Joe; none of the men looked at Joe closely until his name came to them through the sense of sound. Perceived through the men's non-visual senses, Joe is suddenly categorized once again as an animal, a snake; he has a dangerous sound and an identifiable smell.

Additionally, Joe is frequently depicted as having supersensory powers similar to those of other bestialized black characters mentioned above. When he takes a walk in the dark and comes upon a group of people, we are told, "His way was sure, despite the trees, the darkness. He never once lost his path which he could not even see" (*LA* 116). Apparently these acute, supersensory powers constantly plague Joe throughout his life. The narrator describes Joe's auditory experience as such:

> Then it seemed to [Joe], sitting on the cot in the dark room, that he was hearing a myriad sounds of no greater volume – voices, murmurs, whispers: of trees, darkness, earth; people: his own voice; other voices evocative of names and times and places – which he had been conscious of all his life without knowing it, which were his life" (105).

In this depiction, Joe is positioned as a sort of "all-hearing" mystic who through his non-visual senses is overtly related to darkness (and by connection perhaps blackness), to other people, and even to the earth itself. Additionally, we learn that he had this ability even as a child; while laying in bed at the McEachern's house "from beyond the window

he could smell, feel, darkness, spring, the earth" (155). This repeated non-visual sensory connection to the earth and nature once again conjures up images of animals.

In many ways, the racially ambiguous Joe is coded sensorially as black. He conforms to the white beliefs discussed by Smith and others that insisted upon black people having non-human senses, senses that were animal-like in their ability to perceive the world. Joe has these supersensory, earthy, bestial powers and is several times overtly described as an animal. However, in keeping with the other fleeting and contradictory clues and hints in the novel that constantly obscure Joe's "true" racial identity, his sensory behaviors are equally as ambiguous. Even in depicting the ways that Joe utilizes all of his non-visual senses, Faulkner stays consistent in his commitment to Joe as a blended character who literally embodies both black and white.

For example, though Joe exhibits similar sensory attributes to other black characters, he also defies these sensory stereotypes as well. Multiple times we learn that Joe does not conform to the white belief that black people had underdeveloped, unrefined senses of taste; in fact, there are at least two instances in the narrative when Joe has powerful and strong emotional and physical reactions to taste. The first occurs when he is in the orphanage and indulges and delights in the odd flavor of the dietician's toothpaste: "By taste and *not seeing* he contemplated the cool invisible worm as it coiled onto his finger and smeared sharp, automatonlike and sweet, into his mouth" (*LA* 121, emphasis mine). Notably, Faulkner includes the phrase "not seeing" into the sentence, as if calling extra attention to the fact that Joe is having an experiential moment through his delightfully sharp sense of taste; thus, not only do Joe's taste buds work just fine, he can even "contemplate" through his tongue rather than through his eyes.

The second important scene occurs when Joe breaks into the Burden house for the first time and eats in the dark. Once again, Faulkner seems to insist that his readers pay attention to the lack of vision in the scene thereby highlighting the sense of taste as the predominant and most important sensory action happening at this narrative moment. He writes, "[Joe] ate something from an *invisible* dish, with *invisible* fingers: *invisible* food" (*LA* 230, emphasis mine). Thus, not once, not twice, but three times we are reminded that vision is not in play and that taste is. The significance of the scene continues when Joe first puts the peas into his mouth and is stunned out of the numbness of his adult years spent on the road and into a childhood memory: "his jaw stopped suddenly in midchewing and thinking fled for twentyfive years back down the street, past all the imperceptible corners of bitter defeats and more bitter victories […]. 'It's peas,' he said, aloud. 'For sweet Jesus. Field peas cooked with molasses'" (230). Thus, in both of these examples, not only can Joe taste and enjoy flavors vividly, but his sense of taste is also powerful enough that it engages his cognition and his memory. Once again, Joe is thinking through his tongue rather than his eyes.

Joe's sense of touch is equally sensitive, which also contradicts white beliefs about black skins and thus, according to racially-charged codes of the senses, aligns him more with whiteness. For example, rather than having numb, thick, or tough skin that is immune to sensation, Joe's sense of touch is very sensual, almost erotic in its intensity. When walking outside, we are told:

> [H]e touched himself with his flat hands, hard, drawing his hands hard up his abdomen and chest […]. The dark air breathed upon him, breathed smoothly as the garment slipped down his legs, the cool mouth of dark-

> ness, the soft cool tongue. Moving again, he could feel the dark air like water; he could feel the dew under his feet as he had never felt dew before. (*LA*107)

Likewise, at a later point in the novel, Joe has a similar experience of sensual touch: "Through his shirt and trousers it felt a little chill, close, faintly dank […]. He could feel the neversunned earth strike, slow and receptive, against him through his clothes: groin, hip, belly, breast, forearms […] in his nostrils the damp rich odor of the dark and fecund earth" (228-9).

These two passages are even more interesting and complex when one considers that while Joe is having an intense experience through his obviously sensitive sense of touch (which racially codes him as white), both situations are steeped with nature imagery and thus read like the experiences of a animal who sleeps outside (which realigns him with sensory codes of blackness), a situation that is reinforced with the repetition of the racially-charged words "darkness" and "dark." Joe then, is racially a sensory tangle; approaching him from the perspective of sensory studies allows us to examine him as a person who literally embodies sensory stereotypes of both races all at once. Joe's sensory signals are therefore as murky, complex, and overlapping as his history and further complicate and enrich our understanding of him as a racially liminal character.

Two other characters serve as an important contrast to Joe's sensory presentation -- Sam Fathers and Lucas Beauchamp from *Go Down, Moses*. Unlike Joe, who is sensorially coded sometimes as black and sometimes as white, both of these mixed race characters are coded as entirely black via the way they sense the world and are sensed by others. This seems to hold true even though they have some white blood.

For example, Sam Fathers, who is black, white, and Native American, is consistently shrouded in animal imagery in the way his non-visual senses interact with the environment. When the young Isaac tries to understand Sam Fathers, his cousin McCaslin explains Sam Fathers in an extended passage that is redolent of animals, race, and the sense of smell:

> He was born in the cage and has been in it all his life; he knows nothing else. Then he smells something. It might be anything, any breeze blowing past anything and then into his nostrils. But there for a second was the hot sand or the cane-brake that he never even saw himself, might not even know if he did see it and probably does know he couldn't hold his own with it if he got back to it. But that's not what he smells then. It was the cage he smelled. He hadn't smelled the cage until that minute. Then the hot sand or the brake blew into his nostrils and blew away, and all he could smell was the cage. (161)

Clearly, McCaslin thinks of Sam as an exotic animal in a cage who can mysteriously smell both his own captivity and freedom. Likewise, Isaac further depicts Sam's animal-identity later when he says, "[T]here was something running in Sam Fathers' veins which ran in the veins of the buck too," which gives even more resonance to Sam calling the buck "grandfather" (334). Finally, when Sam senses something in the woods or in life that others cannot, we are told that his "nostrils flare," which also sounds more like the sensory attributes of a horse or dog than a human (208).

Lucas Beauchamp, who also has mixed blood, is depicted with supersensory animal-like senses as well. When he is in the woods dismantling his still, we are told that

he is able to do so by touch alone without needing any light (*GDM* 34). Later in the scene, when Lucas realizes someone has been spying on him, he immediately knows who the person is by looking at footprints on the ground. We are told he knew "that print as he would have known those of his mare or his dog" (41). Here, Lucas can mysteriously move through the night without needing light and also can track his own daughter as if she too were an animal. Both of these characters serve as interesting foils to Joe Christmas and make his sensory signature even more complex. Clearly, Joe's mixed sensory signals are not simply because he has mixed blood. After all, Lucas and Sam *do* have mixed blood, but unlike Joe, their sensory interactions with the world are much more firmly coded as black. Thus, Joe's sensory depiction is quite carefully and cleverly accomplished by Faulkner in a way that once again teases readers and the other characters in the novel with conflicting information and indeterminate racial markers.

Overall, this white insistence on using the senses to equate blacks with animals is of course disempowering and humiliating, a deliberate and overt step of the majority race to further cement notions of inequality and inhumanity. As is often the case with Faulkner, though, there are tales within tales, and there are always myriad stories conflicting with one another. Faulkner's play upon sensory stereotypes reveals that he was well-versed in the cultural language of racial smells, sounds, tastes, and touches.

There are moments, however, when Faulkner seems to employ these stereotypes and beliefs in a sardonic way, (such as the absurdity of Sutpen calling in the dogs he supposedly does not need), and perhaps his writing reveals that there are ways to interpret the code of the senses so that it also subverts white power as well as maintain-

ing it. For example, as argued by Harry Thomas in “Hunting Stories & Stories Told about Hunting: What Isaac McCaslin Thinks He Learns in The Big Woods,” Faulkner frequently depicts hunting as an honorable and manly pursuit, sometimes even a rite of passage into manhood itself. Therefore, though it is demeaning for black men to be described as having the tracking skills of a dog, the ability to track and hunt prey is also linked to ideals of southern manhood, and Sam Fathers (who is coded as black) clearly serves as a source of wisdom and as a mentor to the young white Isaac. Thus, white southern manhood is subtly undermined by the fact that people who were black or of mixed race supposedly have superior senses of smell and hearing. Though the black men in these examples are dehumanized by the whites’ insistence that the black men have the senses of animals, by the very fact that these black characters *can* track like animals, ironically, it is also arguable that this trait makes them become not only human but also manly, manlier even than the white men according to traditional definitions of manhood, of man as the hunter.

Additionally, there are times when the black or mixed-race characters seem to use the “rules” of sensory stereotypes to their own advantage; this is arguably the case in the quotation used as the epigraph for this chapter. The narrator of *Go Down, Moses* says Lucas Beauchamp could intentionally become “not Negro but nigger, not secret so much as impenetrable, not servile and not effacing, but enveloping himself in an aura of timeless and stupid impassivity almost like a smell” (58). Here, the phrase of “stupid impassivity” once again conjures up animal imagery, such as how oxen or cattle might be described. The key difference is that Lucas is enacting this stereotype purposefully for his own ends; he is an active manipulator of a stereotype versus a passive recipient of

it. Lucas literally knows how to put on and take off the "smell" of blackness and to use white beliefs about smelly blackness against whites in order to protect himself and to resist white authority. Lucas knows how to subvert stereotypes of black people having acute animal-like hearing as well as stereotypes about smell. When Edmonds gives him advice on how to plant the fields, we are shown Lucas "ignoring not only the advice *but the very voice which gave it*, as though the other had not spoken even (36, emphasis mine). Lucas asserts control over his own ears.

Furthermore, in the "Pantaloon in Black," section of *Go Down, Moses*, we learn that the black community is also capable of setting up its own rules and taboos of the non-visual senses that they control, and these systems are powerful enough to remain inscrutable to whites. In the graveyard, Rider notes "shards of pottery and broken bottles and old brick and other objects *insignificant to sight* but actually of a profound meaning and *fatal to touch*, which no white man could have read (132, emphases mine).[6] Even more importantly, there are moments where the constructed and even arbitrary nature of the racist sensory systems enforced and believed in by the whites is revealed. For example, though white and black hearing is supposed to be different, before the dance in *The Town*, we are told that there are "Negro and white boys too, hanging around the door to hear the music after the band started to play" (72), so clearly, despite the accepted belief system that white people and black people have different senses of hearing, there are times when white and black ears can take similar pleasure in a common sound. Most tellingly, there is a small but explosive statement in *Go Down, Moses* that reveals these systems are not timeless and not universal but have been

[6] For an excellent discussion and photos of symbolic objects and artwork used on African American graves, see *No Space Hidden: The Spirit of African American Yard Work*, particularly pp. 15-18.

changed, built up, and reified over time. The narrator states that the era when Buck and Buddy were alive was a time when "men black and white were men" (37), a statement that flatly contradicts the image of black people as animals with bestial senses of smell, taste, touch, and hearing. All of these subtle sensory destabilizations of the power structure and the anxiety these inconsistencies provoke among whites will have important implications in the next section.

III. "Catching It": Black Contagion and Racial "Slippage"

It is crucial to understand that Faulkner himself was born and worked in the shadow of what has been called "the great age of passing," approximately defined as the years 1880-1925 (Smith, *How Race* 39). Due to the large numbers of white men producing children with black women, the black population was growing noticeably whiter, and this trend peaked during these forty-five years. However, even in the years before and after this period, blacks who looked white (and who sometimes passed themselves off as such) were a constant threat to ideas of race and white superiority. Smith explains, "Numbers tell part of the story: between 1850 and 1860, while black slavery increased by about 20 percent, mulatto slavery increased by almost 70 percent, from 247,000 individuals to 412,000" (39), and, "…even in the 1940s between 2,500 and 2,750 people passed every year, 'with some 110,000 living on the white side of the line at that time'" (*How Race* 69). Given this social context, it is little wonder that Faulkner's work abounds with characters who are of mixed racial heritage (or who are at least suspected of such): Lucas Beauchamp, Joe Christmas, Charles Bon, Bon's mother, Clytie, the octoroon, Charles Etienne de Saint Valery Bon, and many others make up this long

list. And, as pointed out by Ruckel, we do indeed see these characters using their own senses and the senses of those around them to help them determine their racial identity.

However, I present this backdrop of blacks passing as white not because I want to study it alone, but because I am also interested in the *opposite* phenomenon, one that has not been given nearly as much critical attention in Faulkner studies: using the language of the senses to examine white characters who metaphorically turn into blacks. At first, this may seem like an odd proposition; however, critic Judith Bryant Wittenberg suggests a useful framework for this matter. She writes that Faulkner explores race as "a conceptual and behavioral issue as much as (or more rather than) a biological one" (146). Thus, examining blackness and whiteness does not require a biological racial change; rather, by knowing (via the research of sensory historians, sociologists, and anthropologists discussed above) which sensory behaviors were culturally attributed to whites and which were culturally attributed to blacks, we can discover a different type of racial "passing," which I will refer to as racial "slippage." I choose this word in the same vein as one might say a "Freudian slip" because it refers to moments when the white mask of superiority and purity slips and reveals ways that white bodies, sounds, smells, and actions can be coded as black, moments where the eye (which might *see* whiteness) becomes over-ruled by other senses, which are sensing and interpreting socially constructed attributes of blackness.

White characters in Faulkner (and in the historical record of the U.S. South) seem to have a very real fear that this type of metamorphosis could happen, that blackness could be contagious. Smith cites an interview he conducted with a white South Ca-

rolinian who remembered the first time she was touched by a black person. After she fell as a child in the 1950's, a black person tried to help her up, and she recollects, "I screamed and screamed' because 'he was black and I was afraid it would come off on me'" (*How Race* 84). The message is clear: to be black (or to be sensed as such) was bad, and, if you were not careful, you could catch it through the sense of touch. Just as in the story Smith depicts, several of Faulkner's characters seem to harbor anxieties about this fact.

Almost always in Faulkner's work when black skin touches white skin, there is an immediate and emotive reaction, whether from the person who has been touched or from a bystander who saw the contact. Probably the most famous of these scenes is when Clytie "monstrously" touches Rosa in *Absalom, Absalom!,* eliciting Rosa's oft-quoted shriek, "Take your hand off me, nigger!" (112). Rosa's explanation of her visceral and violent reaction reveals that she has learned the southern sensory lessons of contagion and knows she must take immediate precautions lest racial lines become destabilized and her very identity and her whiteness be taken over by blackness due to this forbidden touch. She tells Quentin, "[…] touch and touch of that which is the citadel of the central I-Am's private own: not spirit, soul; the liquorish and ungirdled mind is anyone's to take in any darkened hallway of this earthly tenement. But let flesh touch with flesh, and watch the fall of all the eggshell shibboleth of caste and color too." Though this mention of touch is a very well-known scene that has garnered plenty of critical attention, a closer examination reveals that, rather than being *the* definitive scene of Rosa's beliefs about touch and race, this is only *one* scene of many where Rosa discusses her lifelong fear of touch and the resulting racial havoc it could cause. For instance, she

reveals to Quentin that even as a child, she knew better than to make Judith's mistake of sleeping beside Clytie and touching Clytie's toys (*AA* 112).

As such, Rosa becomes an exemplar of how to avoid the contagion of a white person catching blackness through the sense of touch. Her message is that vision, Foucault's privileged sense, is not the most dangerous sense at all when it comes to the racialized landscape of the U.S. South. Instead, she asserts that one must always be vigilant by avoiding all contact with black skin, or, at the very least breaking such contact immediately and violently if it should occur. Even Rosa's last name (Coldfield) is indicative of her success in this matter: she has retained the "cold" pure "feel" of her white and inviolate skin. And yet, the contagion of black touch was believed to be so strong and powerful that Faulkner describes Clytie's one brief touch as irrevocably changing Rosa, not killing her or wholly converting her to blackness, but giving her the type of supersensory powers Mark Smith equates with social ideas about the black race. Perhaps the sensory "umbilical cord" (*AA* 112) that Rosa says springs up between the two women at the moment of touch is the conduit that will allow Rosa to display traditionally "black" supernatural senses years later when she mysteriously intuits the presence of Henry, whose return she should not know about but somehow senses. Through one brief touch, Rosa is suddenly coded black by her supersensory powers, much like the old man Louis and his own mysterious sensory powers.

Judith, on the other hand, who frequently touches Clytie and sleeps with her as a child, breaks racial sensory taboos to a much greater extent than Rosa and does not escape nearly as lightly. This contact seems to linger with Judith throughout the text, as she certainly does not grow into typical white womanhood but remains othered in mul-

tiple ways: taking on labor more traditionally aligned with black women of the time, she works the fields with Clytie; additionally, she eventually adopts a mixed-race child and is censured for encouraging her father's animalist "tiger" slave to drive the carriage wildly. The fact that she has "caught" some sort of black racial attributes from her contact with black skin could even be used to explain her lack of emotion when she sees Bon's portrait of the octoroon mistress; the indication seems to be that because she has allowed herself to "catch it," she perceives no meaningful racial difference between herself and the other mixed-race woman. Most importantly, understanding the code of the senses and applying a multisensory critical approach gives new resonance to the fact that Judith eventually dies of a contagious disease that is brought into her home by a person of mixed race, the disease no less of "yellow fever." And yellow, of course, was a word sometimes used to describe black or interracial skin tones; for example, in *The Town*, when Faulkner's narrator describes Uncle Noon as "big and yellow" (65). Perhaps this is a symbolic as well as an ordinary fever since this confluence seems too great to be coincidental. Is Rosa's punishment for breaking sensory taboos of race and touch dying of blackness/yellowness? By breaking codes of a non-visual sense (that of touch), Judith, like Rosa, becomes increasingly coded as black rather than white by the sensory rules that Faulkner seems to employ, rules that match up in uncanny ways with the historical sensory rules and beliefs depicted by sensory scholars.

Likewise, if Rosa and Judith represent a continuum of white people turning (in Wittenberg's terms, conceptually and behaviorally) into black people, Thomas Sutpen is another character in *Absalom, Absalom!* who goes even further down this path. Sutpen, who lives alone with a large group of black slaves, continually breaks racial taboos of

the senses. As mentioned previously, these slaves are described through the imagery of dangerous animals: in addition to the tiger metaphor, they are constructed as smelling like a wolf den, are a pack of hounds, and are sleeping alligators (27). Yet, Sutpen seems oblivious to these social, sensory, and linguistic danger signs; not only does he work beside black skin, he does so naked to the waist (28). And, lest we as readers miss the social sensory danger that he is incurring, we are shown his wife's terrified response when she sees him, a grown man wrestling with (read: touching!) a black man (21). Even though before this incident Sutpen is described as having a face "exactly like the negro's save for the teeth," (16), this description changes as Ellen watches him in the wrestling ring: appropriately, since Sutpen has been wrestling with slaves that are variously depicted as "wolves," "tigers," and "alligators" (27), with "glinting" (17) fangs, he too begins to sport very visible teeth as he becomes coded black through the animalistic language of the senses (21). Additionally, as the town begins to find Sutpen suspect and becomes disturbed by the sensory taboos of touch he is breaking, rather than call him the thief they think he is, they discuss his flaws by muttering that "there was a nigger in the woodpile somewhere" (56), again linking Sutpen to blackness. Due to the frequency and magnitude of the sensory laws he breaks, it becomes quite obvious that, in this system, Sutpen "catches" blackness even more than does his daughter Judith. It seems quite predictable that the heir to Sutpen's Hundred, Jim bond, is black; according to the social construct of the senses, not only has Sutpen himself turned black, he came so close to black touch, sound, taste, and smell that he turned his progeny black for the ages.

Finally, racial slippage and sensory coding are crucial in examining the figure of Benjy Compson in *The Sound and the Fury*. Richard Godden has pointed out that Benjy is usually described by critics in two ways – they either "sentimentalize him as a moral touchstone or mechanize him, reducing him to a camera with a tape recorder attached" (qtd in Ruckel 17). However, understanding the historical sensory coding of what it means to be black and what it means to be white in ways that move beyond vision alone can open up another reading of Benjy, of a Benjy who is conceptually and behaviorally black. Indeed, by applying the historical codes of the senses described by sensory scholars to a study of Benjy, evidence for this type of reading suddenly abounds. Due to his mental inability to function in the outside world, Benjy is most often in the care of black servants who bathe him, feed him, and monitor him, surrounding him with black touch. Additionally, one of the first depictions the reader is given of Benjy is quite animalistic as he and Luster crawl on their hands and knees under a fence in a field (3). Benjy also conforms to white beliefs that black people have supernatural powers of smell; he repeatedly asserts that he can smell his grandmother's death (34), which aligns him with Frony, who overtly dismisses the "white" and rational sense of sight, saying of the death, "I already knows. I don't need to see" it, rather than the white children who are mostly oblivious to what has happened (36). The black characters themselves connect Benjy's foreknowledge of death with animals that can smell it, saying, "He know lot more than folks thinks. He knowed they time was coming, like that pointer done. He could tell you when hisn coming, if he could talk. Or yours. Or mine" (31-2). Thus, in contrast to critics who want to focus on what Benjy *sees* (the mechanized video camera approach), what the other characters tell us is important to know about Benjy is

actually what he *smells*. Like Sutpen's black men, who are used as trackers, Benjy too is coded as a dog through his supersensory powers of smell thereby linking him to both blackness and bestiality.

Benjy also, of course, makes numerous references to Caddy and smell, charting her progress from virgin to married woman all through his supersensory nose, a nose, which by the community's sensory belief system, was far too acute to be white. There is even a subtle racialized joke about Benjy's genealogy when Mr. Compson slurs Maury, the uncle for whom Benjy was originally named. Mr. Compson makes fun of the white but hapless Maury by saying, "I admire Maury. He is invaluable to my own sense of racial superiority. I wouldn't swap Maury for a matched team" (*SF* 43), thereby linking Maury to blackness, to animals, and, by default, linking both of these categories to Maury's namesake, Benjy. Benjy's loudness also connects him to sensory stereotypes of blackness. As Smith points out, white people often described black voices as loud or unpleasant, and Benjy is continually hushed by his family, his voice frequently described as making a "racket" (9) and "moaning" (9, 54). Finally, the family's ultimate decision to change Benjy's name follows the Biblical tradition of a name change being symbolic of a change in his state of being. Importantly, the black characters say that with his change of name, he becomes a bluegum, which can be a frightening monster, but also can be a derogatory word for a black person (69), meaning that once again, the black characters are recognizing that, through his sensory powers, Benjy is being coded as black, not white.

Exploring the way that Benjy is racially coded black by his own senses and by the senses of those around him opens up new readings of his relationships with other

characters too. Many critics have noted that Caddy plays a maternal role to both Benjy and Quentin since their white mother is mostly absent. If this mothering is part of Quentin's sexual and incestuous lure to Caddy, seeing Benjy as a racial other can also add a sexualized component to his relationship with Caddy too. When the senses cause Benjy to be conceptually coded as black, then he and Caddy seem to play out a racially inverted version of the southern relationship between black Mammy and child. Like the white man who remembers his black Mammy as a source of warmth and comfort and even as his first contact with the female body and then goes looking for a black female body in adulthood, Benjy is furious when Caddy, his white mammy, marries and abandons him, and he stands at the gate seeking futilely for some sort of substitution for his love and devotion to her. Perhaps there is no sadder or compelling evidence of Benjy's connection with what it meant to be a black man during this time period than what happens to him when, in his grief over losing his maternal figure, he runs after and touches a white girl. Though white on white touching should *not* have been taboo, when Benjy attempts it, he suffers the typical fate of a black man who dared to touch a white woman: he is castrated (*SF* 73).

In addition to these examples from *Absalom, Absalom!* and *The Sound and the Fury,* issues of touch and racial contagion are evident elsewhere in Faulkner's works. For example, Isaac McCaslin in *Go Down, Moses* breaks racial taboos of the senses and who also arguably becomes coded as black from sensorial standpoint. Isaac not only grows up in a house that was once used as slave quarters for the black people who lived on the plantation that belonged to his father and uncle, but he overtly takes a man known as a negro, Sam Fathers, as a father figure. Isaac breaks more than taboos of

touch, however; his first crossing of racial lines comes through his hearing. We are told that as a boy he likes to hear Sam and his friend Jobaker speak in their Native American language; as he is "squatting there listening," Isaac begins to learn this non-white language himself. (Arguably, learning "a tongue" also conjures up the sense of taste). As mentioned above, Isaac also touches and is touched by Sam Fathers quite frequently; they sit together under Sam's quilt, and it is Sam who, with his hands, anoints the boy in blood after his first kill (171). Predictably, like many of the characters from *Absalom* discussed above, Isaac's senses begin to change in ways that are more reminiscent of black sensory stereotypes than white.

In the woods Isaac begins to develop special sensory powers that are more acute than the other white men; he seems to know what he is hearing even when he hasn't heard it before: "he knew what it was [Old Ben] although he had never before heard that many dogs running at once" (*GDM* 188). Later, Isaac's sense of smell is overtly connected with an animal when the narrator describes him as "an experienced bloodhound" when he tracks 'Fonsiba (264). Isaac's olfactory powers are so extraordinary by the time he reaches his destination that he can even smell delusion on 'Fonsiba's husband. He notes that "over all, permeant, clinging to the man's very clothing and exuding from his skin itself, that rank stink of baseless and imbecile delusion" (266). His sense of smell also gives Isaac an animal quality when he smells the snake he almost steps on in the forest. He realizes, "he could smell it now: the thin sick smell of rotting cucumbers and something else which had no name, evocative of all knowledge and an old weariness and of pariah-hood and of death" (314). In a way that even further associates him as a sensory animal and with the "black" Sam Fathers as his true lineage,

Isaac calls the snake “Grandfather” (314). Furthermore, like Benjy and several black characters in *Absalom*, Isaac also has the unique power to intuitively smell death. When his Uncle Hubert is on his death bed and Isaac enters the room, there is a “smell of medicine which was familiar by now in that room and the smell of something else which he had not smelled before and knew at once and would never forget” (292). Thus, though Isaac’s ultimate renunciation of his birthright primarily refers to his family farm and inheritance, his breaking of sensory taboos and his resulting metamorphosis into a man no longer quite white in the way he uses his senses could also be interpreted as a repudiation and renunciation of his connection with the entire white race.

Other characters who seem to “catch” a sort of racial otherness through touch include Joanna Burden in *Light in August* and Ab Snopes in *The Hamlet*. Though Joe Christmas may not have any black blood at all, if he does, we might expect Joanna to experience some type of shift once she touches him and becomes his lover. Indeed, like Isaac, Joanna begins morphing from fully human into an animal with animal senses during her time with Joe. She is described as having “eyes in the dark glowing like the eyes of cats” (259) and that she had “wild hair, each strand of which would seem to come alive like octopus tentacles” (260). The octopus simile also shares imagery with Medusa, which thereby invokes the animal image of snakes. Finally, in perhaps the most overt statement, we learn that during her time touching Joe, “her plump body was more richly and softly animal than ever (266).

Ab Snopes also has an encounter with the “contagion” of blackness through the sense of touch as well. In *The Hamlet*, the horse trader Pat Stamper works in extremely close contact with his black helper. The description of the relationship between these

men clearly contradicts racial codes of touch. Not only is Stamper unafraid of touching black skin, he comes to inhabit almost a shared body with a black person. The narrator describes them as, “Stamper and the negro, working in a kind of outrageous rapport like a single intelligence possessing the terrific advantage over common mortals of being able to be in two places at once and directing two separate sets of hands and fingers at the same time (33). This is quite an extraordinary depiction of two men who have completely destroyed Rosa Coldfield’s citadel and shibboleth of strict boundaries between black and white bodies. Here, these two bodies are depicted as permeable, merged, and blended. Not only is the black man able to touch what the white man touches, he is even directing what the white man touches too. Considering the extreme to which these men break taboos, it is little wonder that their “contagion” becomes very powerful. Later, when Ab touches a horse that Stamper owned, even though he never even knew it was owned by Stamper, this touch is cast in terms of sickness. The text says that Ab “done caught the Pat Stamper sickness just from touching it” (35). Granted, the overt meaning of this “sickness” is Ab’s addiction to horse-trading. However, an undertone of this passage is the way that contagion (possibly even racial contagion) can spread through objects that people touch.

In addition to these fears of black/white touch as contagion, however, *Go Down, Moses* also has some interesting alternative beliefs about interracial touching, beliefs that run counter to the typical hegemonic discourse of white racial superiority. For example, some of the characters who have abolitionist leanings choose to express these sentiments through abstaining from certain types of touch. Buddy and Buck are scrupulous about avoiding the touch of slave labor when they build their new home; they

refuse “to allow any slave to touch any timber of it other than the actual raising into place the logs which two men alone could not handle” (251). While the twins are clearly afraid of some sort of “taint” and want to protect their new home from it, at least in this instance this fear is driven not by a fear of blackness itself but rather of the evils inherent in the institution of slavery. A similar stance is taken by Hightower’s father in *Light in August*. He will “neither eat food grown and cooked by, nor sleep in a bed prepared by, a negro slave” (467). Here, we see a man who chooses to use the sense of touch (his skin’s literal contact with the sheets on his bed) and the sense of taste (refusing food that has been touched by slavery) to make a personal and political statement regarding his opposition to slavery.

Finally, one last significant moment of subversive interracial touch that seems to shift from a trope of fearful contagion to one of potential community occurs in Isaac’s old age in *Go Down, Moses.* When the young black woman in Isaac’s tent reveals that she is his relative, they touch hands, and the way the scene is depicted seems to indicate that through this touch Isaac recognizes his kinship with his “negro” father, Sam Fathers, and with the line of his family that includes the black descendents. Tellingly, the touch involved requires both Isaac and the young woman to move from their established positions in the tent (and perhaps their larger, symbolic social positions as well): “[H]e could not complete the reach until she moved her hand, the single hand which held the money, until he touched it. He didn’t grasp it, he merely touched it – the gnarled, bloodless, bone-light bone-dry old man’s fingers touching for a second the smooth young flesh where the strong old blood ran after its long lost journey back home” (345). Though this is not a full-fledged “grasp” of racial unity, there is a brief touch, significantly

a touch that produces an image not of sickness, of inhuman animal skin, of contagion, but one of homecoming.

IV. Conclusions and Common Threads

Overall, the remarkable commonality between these three sensory trends (the idea that blackness has a particular smell, that black people are similar to animals with supersensory powers, and the idea that blackness could be contagious and "rub off" on whites through the sense of touch) is the strong overtone of fear, an indicator of the power these characters attribute to their non-visual senses. As Mr. Compson sits on his horse contemplating the black men catching the white architect and baying him up a tree, he shrugs off his unease by saying he is worried about cannibalism (*AA* 206). However, it is also easy to read his fear as coming from watching a supposedly "inferior" race demonstrate superior sensory skills and physical prowess to the point that they had a fellow white male cornered and defeated. Surely this was more than slightly disconcerting to a white man in power like Mr. Compson. Additionally, while it is easy to dismiss the palpable fear that some characters show of touching blackness (and perhaps catching it) as ridiculous superstition in both Faulkner's literature and in the similar fears Smith exposes in the historical record, examining this sensory fear leads us back to a far more real one. Namely, if race is so transferable that it can enter in through the senses, and if black can then seem like white and white can seem like black, then maybe race is not as clear cut as was believed…in fact, maybe race does not exist at all.

Thus, it is interesting to note that many of the white characters featured here who become coded as black are women or men from the lower rungs of society. This begs

the question of whether it is easier for an author of Faulkner's time period to depict a blending of the races (whether biological or conceptual) if the white character featured is already weaker and thus more easily dismissed? Perhaps such a move plays less on white fears by asserting that power lines and racial boundaries could only blur if the white person was already flawed (by being foreign and diminutive like the architect, female like Rosa and Judith, of lower economic origins like Sutpen, or disabled like Benjy). Whatever the case, in Faulkner's fiction the non-visual senses certainly play a part in an ongoing and ever-evolving racial dialogue, a dialogue that causes a variety of racial blending, fluctuating power dynamics, and intense anxiety that cannot be ignored when reading his work. By refusing paradigms of literary theory and criticism that rely on the supposedly "rational" sense of sight as the only important tool of racial identification, discipline, and power, suddenly, new readings of race emerge, readings that connect Faulkner's depiction of race and the senses directly with the historical record described by sensory scholars. The examples explored here show that there is much more critical work to do in recovering the buried codes of the non-visual senses in this literature, and it is clear that the work of sensory historians and sociologists can be invaluable in helping us recreate cultural contexts in order to better understand the racial dialogue of the senses that is occurring between characters. Through an understanding of cultural beliefs about race and the non-visual senses, we are provided the opportunity to move beyond the framework of earlier Faulkner criticism that positioned things like smells and sounds as nothing more than metaphoric symbols; instead we can study the senses as actions committed by and interpreted by characters. This is a valuable exercise because these interactions have much to tell us about underlying racial beliefs and atti-

tudes in both Faulkner's time and the various time periods in which he sets his fiction (and perhaps even in a present-day context as well).

It is also crucial to note that race is certainly not the only social construct or power struggle occurring in Faulkner's work. Certainly, human beings use the full range of their senses in order to identify those who step outside of accepted gender and class parameters and who embrace a wide range of sexualities that may not be accepted by the dominant culture. Thus, the following chapters seek to discover what the non-visual codes of the senses also have to tell us about gender, queerness, and class in Faulkner's fiction.

4. GENDER AND THE SENSES

"She's just like a dog! Soon as she passes anything in long pants she begins to give off something. You can smell it! You can smell it ten feet away!"

~Jody Varner, speaking of his sister Eula *(The Hamlet* 110*)*

As demonstrated by the preceding chapters, querying visually-saturated theoretical approaches and becoming familiar with the work on race and the non-visual senses that has been published by sensory scholars who study Faulkner's time period and region are important for reconsidering how racial boundaries were both policed and also sometimes destabilized in Faulkner's fiction. A logical question to ask after studying how race and the senses function then becomes this: if the dominant white racial group used accepted social codes of the senses in order to judge, repress, and distinguish themselves from the dominated black race, can we find instances where the dominant gender did the same thing? As with the concept of race, critical explorations of gender in Faulkner's fiction are quite prevalent and extensive. In their introduction to *Haunted Bodies: Gender and Southern Texts*, Susan V. Donaldson and Anne Goodwyn Jones write that "southern sexuality has long been haunted by stories designating hierarchical relationships among race, class, and gender" (1). Donaldson and Jones also assert that there is an "assumption of a special clarity and permanence about *southern* gender evident in time-honored stories of white cavaliers and belles, of black Jezebels and rapacious Nat Turners" and that "such stories may have appeared all the more reassuring in a region where manhood and womanhood seemed so difficult to control" (6). Jones ex-

plores issues of gender in Faulkner's fiction in several other articles, including "A Loving Gentleman and the Corncob Man: Faulkner, Gender, Sexuality, and *The Reivers*" and "Gender and the Great War: The Case of Faulkner and Porter." In the latter, Jones states that one important aspect of Faulkner's work is that he "interrogated the southern gentleman" (137) and that Faulkner's war fiction can "show us the struggle over gender, as it was triggered by this war [WWI]" (136). Jones also explores Faulkner's construction of femininity in this article as well, writing that "Faulkner's imagination played over the meaning not just of masculinity but of traditional female gender roles as well" (140).

Minrose Gwin is perhaps one of the other best-known critical voices exploring gender in Faulkner's fiction. Along with multiple articles, Gwin devotes two book-length projects to this subject, first with *Black and White Women of the Old South: The Peculiar Sisterhood in American Literature* (1985) and later with *The Feminine and Faulkner: Reading (Beyond) Sexual Difference* (1990). Another significant source of criticism centering on gender in Faulkner's work is in *William Faulkner: Six Decades of Criticism*, edited by Linda Wagner-Martin. Wagner-Martin's text contains an entire section entitled "Feminist, Woman-Centered, and Sexualized Approaches," and the authors featured in this collection cover such broad gender-related topics as myths about maternity, sexual innocence and taboo-breaking, and incest. In particular, Gwin's article in this anthology, "(Re) Reading Faulkner as Father and Daughter of His Own Text," draws on a variety of feminist critics to explore some of Faulkner's women characters. In her analysis, Gwin includes Caddy Compson, Rosa Coldfield, and Charlotte Rittenmeyer, and concludes that we can "think of the process of the feminine as the space of disruption […] and within the synergy between feminist reader and male text, we may find Faulkner in the

unexpected 'in-between' as he becomes both father and daughter of his own text" (166). Another gender-centered article of note in this collection is Christina Jarvis's exploration of the relationship between Faulkner's women characters and food, though unfortunately, while this article gives an otherwise thorough description of gender and eating, it fails to reference the sense of taste.[7]

Jarvis is not alone in omitting the non-visual senses from her gender analysis of Faulkner's work; to date, there seems to be very few published texts or articles that engage with gender and the non-visual senses, querying how both women and men navigate gender norms by interpretive actions of smelling, sounding, hearing, touching, and tasting. As with racial norms, it is important to ask whether Faulkner's male and female characters interpret gender power structures in part through their non-visual senses. Does Faulkner consistently assign particular smells or sounds, tastes or touches (and the power to sniff out, hear, taste, or touch differences in others) to certain characters based on not just their race but also on their gender? More importantly, if these gendered codes of the senses do exist, how and when do we find disruptions to this code as various characters attempt to use it subversively? To answer these questions, it is necessary to trace instances of sensory gendering through a close reading of the work of Faulkner's texts in order to explore gendered conversations and judgments that might otherwise go unnoted. First, this chapter examines typical social and moral boundaries relating to gender in Faulkner's work and then notes how his characters often police

[7] As with the overview of criticism provided in my chapter on race, this brief survey of gender criticism is not comprehensive. Rather, I simply seek to establish that there has been a significant scholarly conversation regarding gender and the works of Faulkner for many years and that while some of the most recent criticism comes tantalizingly close to querying gender and the non-visual senses (such as Jarvis's work), a more thorough consideration of gender and the non-visual senses is needed and would enrich and contribute to the existing critical conversation. For those interested in other voices exploring gender and Faulkner's work, another good starting point is *Faulkner and Gender*, edited by Donald M. Kartiganer. Additionally, Diane Roberts' *Faulkner and Southern Womanhood* is helpful in understanding the various "types" of women in Faulkner's texts.[7].

these boundaries via their non-visual senses, in particular via the sense of smell. Secondly, this chapter is concerned with the divisions between socially acceptable masculine and feminine behavior and studying how these gender-identities are coded through the use of smell. Finally, it is important to note that, as with any socially-constructed boundary, the gendered order in this fictional landscape is rife with fissures, disruptions, and boundary crossers who subvert gender roles, sometimes using their non-visual senses to do so.

I. Smelly Gender Boundaries and Sexual Taboo Breakers

In any society, a variety of both written and unspoken rules maintain the social order, and Faulkner's depiction of the U.S. South is no different. His characters navigate a veritable minefield of taboos and traditions. Such rules, of course, must be enforceable in order to have power. We might expect that in order for trespassers of law and custom to be punished that they must be caught in the act by someone who sees them commit the transgression. However, Faulkner's fictional society goes further than this. It is not enough to *see* someone doing something wrong; on the contrary, in this world, transgressions of the moral code are so severe that they get inscribed onto bodies themselves --- immorality apparently oozes from pores in the form of odors that other people's noses seem naturally equipped to detect. Thus, eyewitnesses are not necessary to condemn characters that break the moral code. In Faulkner's landscape, the nose just knows.

One transgression Faulkner frequently explores is the breaking of sexual morals.[8] Accordingly, he often writes that members of the community who come across characters who transgress against the accepted rules of heterosexual behavior seem able to smell sexual deviance even when they have no first-hand knowledge that any sexual impropriety has happened. The idea that one's deepest sexual secrets can be loudly and easily betrayed by one's body to complete strangers has the effect of making these boundaries seem reified, severe, and unassailable and helps to explain the way Faulkner's characters sometimes approach public interaction with terror and dread. For example, when Caddy Compson loses her virginity, her brother Benjy knows immediately that she has experienced a profound shift in identity. Caddy, he wails, no longer smells like trees as she usually had in the past (*SF* 25). This is a very odd statement considering that Caddy has just emerged from the outdoors and ostensibly meets her lover in the woods among the trees. And yet, her body still betrays her to another person's nose. Other characters who eventually become pregnant out of wedlock or break other social taboos of sexual propriety seem to exude so much scent that their very environments have a smell (occasionally even before they break the taboos!). For example, in *Absalom, Absalom!,* the Octoroon, whose relationship with Charles is deemed as sexually taboo by many of the other characters, has a house that is "cloying" and "scented" and, most importantly, her room itself is described as "impregnated" with smell (158-9). Wilbourne and Charlotte experience a similar exposure in *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem*. When Wilbourne first approaches the home of Charlotte (who will lat-

[8] For the purpose of this chapter, the sexual impropriety I am discussing concerns rules of heterosexual behavior that are being broken as men and women navigate gender roles while in sexual relationships with one another. The breaking of homosexual taboos is wide enough in scope in its own right that it will be treated separately in its own chapter.

er become pregnant in their adulterous relationship), he immediately notices that the air outside of her dwelling is also “impregnated” with smell (31). Likewise, the dietician who works in the orphanage where Joe Christmas lives as a child sleeps with a doctor out of wedlock in *Light in August;* later, Hines describes the couple as having “the reek of pollution on them” (384) and says that the dietician’s “lustful” bed is “still astink with sin and fear” (385).

In addition to the loss of virginity or pregnancy outside of marriage, people who break their marriage vows are also plagued with clouds of odor. In the opening scenes of *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem*, Wilbourne and Charlotte arrive in a small coastal town and present themselves as man and wife. The first person they meet, a real estate agent who knows nothing about them and who has never seen them before, immediately declares that they are not married at all. Surprisingly, the man claims that he knows this because he can smell it. “Because I can smell a husband,” he says. “Show me a woman I never saw before on the streets of Mobile or New Orleans either and I can smell whether ---’’ (7). When the real estate agent conveys this knowledge and his olfactory “proof” to his friend, the doctor who rents a cabin to Wilbourne and Charlotte, the doctor, despite being a highly educated man, one whose education is focused on the study of the human body no less, seems to accept this “marriage sniffing” as completely unremarkable and absolutely reliable (10). Thus, clearly the ability to smell impropriety is accepted as an unremarkable community belief.

Likewise, when Wilbourne and Charlotte first ran away from her husband and boarded the train where they ultimately have extramarital sex for the first time, Wilbourne looked around the train and said he knew that the strangers aboard could al-

ready smell his and Charlotte's "unsanctity and disaster" even before they had consummated their affair (*JER* 51). Mr. Hines makes similar comments about his daughter (who is also sleeping with a man who is not her husband), asserting that he knew about her sexual sinfulness even before he had "proof" because she was "already stinking in God's sight" (*LA* 374). Gavin Stevens also ties adultery to a smell when he cautions Eula Snopes about her adulterous affair, warning that if Eula runs away with her lover, Eula's daughter Linda will be left "here in all the stink" that will arise from the scandal (*T* 330). Finally, when Hightower's wife continually visits Memphis to commit adultery in *Light in August*, we are told that though the town never puts into words the sinful things she was doing, it did not forget either because the good women in the town have "plenty of time to smell out sin" like the sin being committed by Mrs. Hightower (66).

The commonality of all of these examples is that Faulkner's characters consistently express the belief that the nose is more reliable than the eye when it comes to identifying and then condemning those who break sexual taboos of promiscuity and infidelity. Just as with norms of racial acceptability, gender norming becomes a whole-body affair, where the non-visual sense of smell is crucial for understanding the moral customs and values of the society and how offenders are both caught and punished. Thus, once again, Faulkner's fiction is consistent with the predictions of many sensory scholars who warn that *all* of the senses, including the sense of smell, are powerful tools for a society to maintain community rules and boundaries of conduct.

II. Smelly Men/Smelly Women

In addition to sexual taboo breaking, Faulkner's depiction of his society and region is also rife with gender laws as well. There are strict codes of behavior for both men and women, and this acceptable masculinity and femininity become inscribed onto bodies through the bodily production of smells. Performance of proper masculinity and femininity in Faulkner's novels consists of exuding not just the right behavior but also the right odors. And, as with the examples above, when slips are made in this gender performativity, other noses can immediately sense the flaw and impose judgment and attempt to reassert the proper order. What smells then are associated with masculinity and femininity in Faulkner? More importantly, what do these smells tell us about people's places in the gendered hierarchy of power?

One of the blatant indications that gender has a distinct odor in Faulkner's landscape occurs in *Light in August*. When the young Joe Christmas is carried out of the orphanage in the middle of the night, Faulkner writes that Joe knew "by smell that the person who carried him was a man" (135). Interestingly, this one simple line carries no further explanation or proof; it is as if the trio of Faulkner, his readers, and his characters are all supposed to accept this claim of "smell-able" gender as obvious and unremarkable even when it is done by a young child. The message seems to be that even unschooled children can understand innate bodily markers of gender identity through the sense of smell. Not only do male bodies carry this "man-smell," but dwellings that are primarily male domains also become encoded with man-smell in a similar fashion to the ways that white characters frequently attribute a "black smell" to black homes. For example, in *The Hamlet*, the store where the men spend their time together day after day

has a stove that “radiated a strong good heat which had an actual smell, masculine, almost monastic – a winter’s concentration of unwomaned and deliberate tobacco-spittle” (137). Apparently, just like “man,” “woman” is a smell that can be identified as well. For instance, in *Light in August*, when the child Joe hides in the dietician’s closet, the closet is described as “womansmelling” (121) and later as “rife, pinkwomansmelling” (122). The janitor makes a similar comment about the woman’s room saying that it was “warm, littered, womanpinksmelling” (132). Furthermore, when Joe gets older, he is instructed by his teenage friends on the topic of sex and of women’s bodies. Faulkner asserts that if the boy talking about women’s bodies had only described women’s bodies and cycles as a “mental state, something which he only believed” that the other boys would not have believed him. But, when the boy draws a picture of women’s bodies as physical and actual “to be discerned by the sense of smell” (185), the other boys accept his story as truth. Finally, near the end of *Go Down, Moses*, when Gavin Stevens goes to visit Miss Worsham, an older, unmarried woman who lives with her black employees, we are told that the bedroom smells to Stevens like the “unmistakable faint odor of old maidens” (361). Thus, women’s gender, just like the male who carries Joe out of the orphanage, is also fixed by smell --- gendered smell that can be consumed and identified as unquestionable truth by others.

Importantly, the way white male characters in Faulkner smell to one another (and the smells they are able to discern on others), often reassert elements of masculinity that maintain male power, dominance, violence, and virility. For instance, we are told six times in *Absalom, Absalom!* that Quentin’s father smells like cigars, a product that was a particularly masculine domain, often consumed away from the company of women

(23, 71, 141, 148, 168, 301). Likewise, Thomas Sutpen's father is said to smell like strong alcohol, another product more aligned with the freedoms that were given to men but which were not as acceptable for women (187). Men also frequently smell like the all-male environs that they inhabit even when they are away from these habitats. For example, despite the fact that he meets them in a restaurant, Joe says that the group of men who hang around in the little diner where his lover works all have the "odor of barbershops" (*LA*178).

Additionally, smells that are associated with violence, toughness, and virility almost always linger around male characters rather than female, which sends a message that only men possess these qualities of power and dominance. Bayard notes the smell of war on his father in the opening pages of *The Unvanquished* (10), and when Bayard discovers that Granny has been shot by a man, this scene of uncontrolled male violence (which Granny had asserted could be controlled through her gender, i.e., the fact she was a white woman), smells overwhelmingly like gunpowder to the young boy. And, lest we note this as a "factual" smell alone, something that Bayard encounters simply because a gun has been discharged nearby, men's affinity for smelling violence seems to be much more complicated than this in other sections of Faulkner's texts. For example, Quentin and Shreve say they can smell the powder and violence of the Civil War even from their perspective a generation into the future (*AA* 280). That this is a distinctly male scent mingled with violence is clear when Bayard faces down the man who killed Granny. Right before Bayard murders Grumby, he says he smells sweat; however, this is not just human sweat, which would smell the same coming off of anyone's body. Bayard tells us he can distinctly tell from the sweat that the villain is male (*U* 183), and then he

shoots him. Thus, once again, even a very young boy is given the power to detect both criminality and gender identity from a smell and then enacts punishment on the man who broke a gender-taboo by killing a woman. Forget due process or a court of law; apparently a nose is enough.

Several other examples of this trend include Mr. Hines, who we are told has "that quality of outworn violence like a scent, an odor" even after he is old and fairly feeble (*LA* 343), and likewise, Mr. McEachern, another man who frequently displays violence, is said to smell like "an odor of clean hard virile living," (*LA*149), a description where masculinity is thus again connected with virility, toughness, and even "clean" morality. This idea of male sexual conquest being coded through smell also holds true in *The Town* where the three young men who are suspected of fathering Eula Varner's baby are described as the ones who "ran from the smell of Will Varner's shotgun" (7). Disturbingly, in this sensory system apparently young boys, who have not committed violence themselves, can also smell violence even before they know what it is. When Linda Snopes' boyfriend beats her up for having dinner with Gavin at the Mallison house, Chick Mallison sees her shortly thereafter. Though he does not see the violence occur and should have no idea that it has happened, he says of the scene, "[I]t was like I had smelled something, caught a whiff of something for a second that even if I located it again I still wouldn't know whether I had ever smelled it before or not" (*T* 184). Therefore, even though Chick is not yet old enough (man enough?) to identify the smell as violence, he still detects it.

Not only can Faulkner's men smell each other and the violence that they sometimes commit, they are often given the power to smell women too (a power, as we will

see below, that women rarely get in return). Importantly, once again the scenes of men smelling women also have to do with the "appropriately" masculine values of toughness, violence, or virility. In *As I Lay Dying*, when the Bundren family finally makes it to town with their mother's corpse days after she has died, Faulkner tells us that while the women nearby were "scattering up and down the street with handkerchiefs to their noses" that "a crowd of hard-nosed men and boys" remain and are tough enough to stand around the reeking wagon (203). Likewise, when Joe Christmas is about to sleep with a woman, he says that he can "smell her" and "smell her waiting" for him to be the sexual or physical aggressor. He also asserts that he can smell that she is either waiting for him to initiate their sexual liaison or waiting for him to hit her (*LA* 187). In another scene, Faulkner tells us that Joe can smell the "damp," "dark," and "fecund" earth as if he can even smell out the feminine in the physical world around him (229). And, even when men do *not* want to smell women, they can use their nose as an escape. Joe, who is confused by his relationship with Joanna Burden, wanders instinctively towards the barn one night when he wants to flee from his thoughts of her. We are told, "He was thinking now, aloud now, 'Why in hell do I want to smell horses?' Then he said, fumbling, 'It's because they are not women. Even a mare horse is a kind of man'" (109).

In addition to the ability to smell women and to smell violence, male noses (particularly *white* male noses) demonstrate their supremacy and control through the power of smelly judgment over other social institutions, systems, and morals. As mentioned above, in *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem*, it is a man who says he can smell the adultery between Charlotte and Wilbourne (7, 10) and who first censures them for their behavior, so his nose is clearly one of authority and rules. In the same novel, the doctor who rents

his home to the couple also claims that he can smell even time (4-5). In the Faulknerian landscape, where characters often experience a great deal of confusion and anxiety over the ability to understand and control time, such acute knowledge of time is a real power indeed. Likewise, as mentioned in an earlier chapter, Benjy Compson even has the power to smell death almost the moment that it happens (*SF* 21-22). Bayard, as a male of the dominant race, is able to smell black people and thus identify them as black without seeing them (*U* 83, 96, 102-3), and we have explored how Joe Christmas, who is at least partially if not wholly white, can do the same thing (*LA*, 331). Bayard also says that the Yankee men, once they are the dominant power in the region at the end of the war, have the ability to smell members of the subjugated Sartoris family and by doing so, to cause them disaster (*U* 104). Furthermore, both Benjy and Wilbourne are said to have the gift of smelling changes in the weather (*SF* 4; *JER* 99). Clearly, from these examples there is gendered power in having the right (male) nose, in having the ability to smell and interpret laws of time, the natural world, death, and morality and to then be able to reassert control over others who do not seem to have the same masculine olfactory powers.

That men's hegemony and strength is intimately tied to their sense of smell (both their ability to smell others and their ability to smell a certain way themselves) is especially notable when studying male characters in Faulkner who have broken or have failed to fully live up to the code of masculinity in some way. These "failed" men seem to lose not just respect but to lose the power of smell as well. Bayard remarks on this in *The Unvanquished* when he goes to confront Redmond, the man who has killed his father. Tellingly, when Bayard walks into Redmond's office to face a duel, his first though-

ts center on the lack of smell. He says he is intensely puzzled that he cannot even smell tobacco though he knew that Redmond was a smoker (248). This moment is especially important when we note that previously, Bayard's father had taunted Redmond's lack of courage, violence, and virility by saying that he was a failure at warfare and had "never smelled powder" (225). Thus, Redmond, portrayed as a southern man who had failed at the "manly" pursuits of running a business, fighting in a war, and successfully defending himself in a duel both loses his own ability to smell (he wasn't able to partake in smelling the powder of war with other men) and his own personal scent (even the manly smell of tobacco smoke in a small room refuses to cling to him or his surroundings).

A similar situation happens to Gavin Stevens in *The Town*. Throughout the novel, Gavin fails at traditional southern manhood in several ways. First, he fails at violence because he gets beaten up twice by other men (76,190). Secondly, he fails at virility because although he yearns sexually for Eula Snopes and later her daughter Linda, he never consummates either relationship though he has the opportunity to do so with both women. Finally, Gavin also fails at courage; when he turns down Eula's offer of her body, she says to him, "Why are you afraid?" (95). Interestingly, Eula is also the person who eventually notes that something is wrong with Gavin's ability to smell like a man. Though as explored above, tobacco is usually a smell associated with men, when Gavin walks into his office and finds her waiting, it is *Eula* who smells like it as she sits smoking in his office, not Gavin. He says, "And I know now that I already smelled tobacco smoke even before I put my hand on what I thought was an unlocked door […], smelling the tobacco while I still tried to turn the knob" (319). Not only does Eula appropriate this masculine smell, she then pointedly remarks on the fact that Gavin does not smell like

tobacco and perhaps does not even use it despite his insistence on carrying a pipe: "'There's your cob pipe,' she said. They were in the brass bowl beside the tobacco jar. 'You've got three of them. I've never seen you smoke one. When do you smoke them?'" (320). Given the fact that Gavin not only fails to smell like a man, but also fails to perform like one sexually, perhaps Eula is using the pipe as a symbol for penis, something else that Gavin carries around but never seems to use. Tellingly, Gavin refuses to answer Eula's question.

Masculine scents continue to fade from Gavin even after Eula's death. Ratliff goes into Gavin's office and opens the drawer where Gavin usually keeps liquor (another male-smelling, male-coded product). Puzzlingly, even though Ratliff knows that there was just liquor in the drawer and always has been, he says it suddenly "never even smelled like he used to keep whiskey in it" (353). Not only will the smell of liquor and tobacco not cling to Gavin even in places where he used to store these items, now that Eula has emasculated him by pointing out his failure with "the pipe," he won't touch or taste the liquor that Ratliff pours him (357). In the same scene, Ratliff notices that Gavin once again tries to smoke his (man-smelly) pipe; he even lights the match, but then blows it out carefully without putting it to the pipe and then sets the pipe down unused (358).

Other male characters in Faulkner also encounter analogous disruptive issues with smell and manhood when they fail in their masculinity by becoming too aligned with the feminine and/or the domestic sphere. For example, in *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem*, when Wilbourne decides to write romantic fiction and does so by pretending to be a female author voicing female concerns, he notices that smells starts to bother him so

much that he can no longer sleep. He has to stay up and rid himself of the smell of the pulp by smoking (again, the smell of which we have seen previously in Faulkner as coded masculine) before he can go to bed (103, 107). Apparently, it is only a male smell like tobacco smoke that can rid Wilbourne of the anxiety and insomnia that comes from doing something so dangerous to his masculinity as pretending to be a woman. Additionally, during this same time period, Wilbourne becomes acutely bothered by smells of domesticity, such as the smell of children, children's food, and diapers that he imagines he can smell coming from the park below his window while he writes. In these smells of womanly domesticity, he worries that he is beginning to smell "the dead corpse of love" (113). In becoming too womanly, Wilbourne, like Redmond, risks losing his masculinity, and his first warning sign of this seems to come to him through his nose. Another similar moment where a man begins to smell oddly due to becoming too womanly occurs when Ratliff barges in on a member of the Snopes family (a man who is a teacher, a job that is perhaps a bit gender disruptive since in Faulkner's works it is sometimes an occupation held by women too[9]) and catches the man unawares. Ratliff says of the room, "[T]he odor of it was not a bachelor-uncle smell but was curiously enough that of a closet in which a middleaged widow kept her clothes" (*H* 221). Thus, once again, we encounter situations in Faulkner where dividing practices and identity categories such as gender function not through the visual alone, as Foucault would have it, but through the use of the sense of smell. Characters who are experiencing "gender trouble" in their ability to perform maleness are revealed through the way the smell (or fail to smell) to others.

[9] See for example Addie Bundren in *As I Lay Dying* or Miss Vaiden Wyott in *The Town*.

And what of Faulkner's smelling and smelly women? It is very rare for a female character in Faulkner's texts to be portrayed as actively smelling anything at all. She is thus situated not as an actor (someone who can sniff and interpret smells) but rather as someone who is a subject to be smelled and interpreted by others. One instance where this becomes clear is around the subject of food. Over the course of the novels examined for this study, men occasionally express their physical hunger, and their ability to smell food is unchanging no matter their position in the social hierarchy. Apparently, to be powerful enough to smell food, it is enough to be male, no matter what one's race, situation, or status. For example, a brief list of men who are relatively high on the social register who can smell food include Roth Edmonds, who can smell chicken that Mollie is cooking (*GDM* 110); the doctor in *Light in August,* who smells gumbo (5); Ratliff, who can "smell food cooking in the kitchen behind him" in *The Hamlet* (92); the townsmen in *The Hamlet*, who twice walk "through the hot vivid smell of ham from Mrs. Littlejohn's kitchen (328, 321); and Isaac McCaslin, who can smell "frying meat" (*GDM* 218) and cheese and salt meat (*GDM* 244). However, men who are lower on the social scale have enough olfactory agency to take in the smell of food as well. For example, the prisoners smell food in *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem* (58) and so does Mink Snopes when he is in jail in *The Hamlet* (285). The young boy Bayard smells food in *The Unvanquished* (129), and Eck Snopes can smell food when he cooks in the restaurant in *The Town* (33). Even black men are occasionally allowed the power of smell when it comes to food. When the mixed-race character Lucas Beauchamp returns home after going to the courthouse, the narrator says, "Now he could smell the cooking meat," (*GDM* 66),

and later, he smells “molasses and cheese” when he goes to visit Edmonds (*GDM* 93). Lucas’ son Henry is also depicted as smelling chicken (*GDM* 110).

In contrast, women characters, despite frequently being in the kitchen, are much less likely to be allowed even this basic olfactory power of smelling food. By studying this phenomenon from a sensory studies perspective, women’s subordinated position as commodities in a patriarchal social system is striking. For example, when it comes to smell, Faulkner’s male characters often portray women not as active beings who *need* food but as consumable products who smell *like* food. For example, the first time that Wilbourne visits Charlotte’s home, as he turns to her house and stands on the threshold, he says that from behind the door he is assailed with the strong scent of sugar, bananas, jasmine, and hemp, which are all products that have been used as sources of food (31). Additionally, sugar, bananas, and jasmine are interesting scents for Charlotte to be encoded by since they speak (reek?) of the foreign and the exotic, something mysterious or alluring. Hemp, on the other hand, in addition to being used as food, has also been used as a drug or to make rope. Thus, Charlotte, coded as food, smells like something to be eaten by Wilbourne, a food that is different, enticing, but that can also be dangerously intoxicating or something that might cause Wilbourne to be tied down or bound.

Later, after he has slept with her, Wilbourne also says that Charlotte smells like bacon (90), which is reminiscent of the way that black characters were coded as animals via the senses. By describing Charlotte as scented like exotic food and spices from subjugated colonized regions or scented like a domesticated animal, Wilbourne, despite professing to love Charlotte’s independence and daring, liberated attitude, is still

grouping her with the colonized and subjected other. His nose seems to insist on identifying her as something quite different than what he professes to value about her. In fact, Wilbourne seems to associate Charlotte so strongly with these subjectifying smells, that after she dies and he is in prison, anytime he smells the nearby fluidity of the ocean (which, as Minrose Gwin points out in *The Feminine and Faulkner* is symbolic of the feminine), he also begins smelling jasmine (something from the colonies, feminine, and used in food) and hemp (symbolically binding him just like the prison he is in) over and over again as he thinks about Charlotte (248, 251, 254, 255, 257, 258, 259, 266, 272). Thus, even after her death, Wilbourne consumes the memory of Charlotte like scented food.

In *Light in August*, there are three other notable instances where men consume women as food either through the sense of taste or the sense of smell. First, even when Joe is very young, he intuitively associates the dietician at the orphanage as something for him to eat. We are told, “The dietician was nothing to him yet, save a mechanical adjunct to eating, food, the diningroom […] except as something of pleasing association […] making his mouth think of something sweet and sticky to eat” (120). Second, when the unpopular Joanna Burden’s house burns, the narrator says that in the past people thought her house should be burned “with a little human fat meat to start it good” (49). Here Joanna is something to be used up, eaten up by the fire just like meat. Third, when Joe and his stepfather argue, Joe blames Mrs. McEachern for making his punishment worse: “both the man and the boy accepting it [punishment] as a natural and inescapable fact until she, getting in the way, must give it an odor, an attenuation, an aftertaste” (167). In this instance, Mrs. McEachern is positioned as both a bad smell and a bad

taste when she interferes in what Joe and Mr. McEachern perceive as the business of men.

Likewise, in both *The Hamlet* and in *The Town*, Eula Snopes is frequently positioned as a food that men want to taste and eat. Her eyes are “like cloudy hothouse grapes” (*H* 11), and “[H]er entire appearance suggested some symbology out of the old Dionysic times – honey in sunlight and bursting grapes, the writhen bleeding of the crushed fecundated vine beneath the hard rapacious trampling goat-hoof” (*H* 105). The narrator also states that Eula is “female meat” (*H* 111) and that she brings a “moist blast of spring’s liquorish corruption” into the school room (*H* 126). Even more overtly, Eula’s suitors are described around her “swarmed like wasps about the ripe peach which her full damp mouth resembled” (*H* 141). Thus, even Eula’s mouth, which should be an apparatus through which *she* can taste food, instead becomes tasty, desirable food for the palates of the men around her. Later, Ratliff also thinks of Eula as “just meat, just gal-meat” (*H* 166), and Gavin says that Eula is like a “blinding whiff” of “liquor” (*T* 322). Even Eula’s virginity is situated in terms of eating and taste. When we are told that Eula already seems to know the time when she will lose her virginity, she is described as waiting for that moment as if she is waiting “for the eating to start” (*H* 143). Thus, the first man who has sex with her will literally be feasting upon her and tasting her as food for his consumption.

Women are also portrayed as smelling not just like regular food but also as dangerous, rotting, or rancid food in ways that frequently position them as animals. In *As I Lay Dying*, for example, Addie’s son Vardaman constantly confuses her with a fish he has caught, a food known for its strong odor and one that links her to the animal world,

and Peabody complains when Dewey Dell doesn't fix him the mother/fish to eat, saying that vegetables alone are "mighty spindly eating" for a man (60). Later, Addie is also described as smelling like rotten cheese (203). This image of women as desirable food for men but also food that is stinking or that that will spoil and go bad is perpetuated by the Bundren's neighbor, Tull. In an extended passage, he reflects that his wife Cora is a jar of milk that he knows will eventually turn into smelly soured milk as she goes bad. But, he ponders, at least it is "your milk, sour or not, because you would rather have milk that will sour than to have milk that wont, *because you are a man* (139, emphasis mine). Thus, again there is a linkage of women to smelly food, contradictory food that men must consume in order to maintain their masculinity but food that can also be dangerously spoiled and reeking. As such, the men in the texts are portrayed as eerily similar to the vultures that constantly circle Addie's odorous corpse trying to eat it throughout the narrative of *As I Lay Dying*; in fact, at one point, one of the vultures is even described as "an old baldheaded man" (119). The convict in *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem* seems to echo this trend when he describes his girlfriend in terms more indicative of a farm animal raised for consumption than a woman, saying she smelled sweaty like "soft, young, female flesh, slightly pneumatic," a word that refers to the smell of a woman's chest and breasts almost as if she were a chicken he wants to eat (286). Furthermore, in *The Town*, when the women in the Cotillion Club wear corsages, Chick Mallison tells us that their smell was like "mist in a swamp on a cold morning" (73), an odd image for a perfumed and floral scene since swamps are typically smelly, rotting places that are potentially dangerous.

This scented coding of women as spoiled or dangerous to men is also expressed through the linkage of odor with feminine sickness and death. For example, in *As I Lay Dying,* the smell of Addie's corpse is literally declared a danger to public health. For example, the elderly and desiccated Miss Rosa in *Absalom, Absalom!* is often coded through smell, as either Rosa and/or her environs are depicted as smelling dead, smelling like a coffin, or smelling like camphor, which was of course used to treat illness and also for embalming (4, 143, 290). Judith, in the same text, is also said to smell like camphor (19). Additionally, in *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem*, Wilbourne says that Charlotte smells like balsam (90), which could be used as anointing oil in sacraments of illness and dying. Aunt Louisa of *The Unvanquished* is depicted as overwhelming her environs with the smell of dead roses (201). In *The Town*, Gavin also thinks of Eula as if she is deadly, like drowning. He describes her as "just standing there facing me so that what I smelled was not even just woman but that terrible, that drowning envelopment" (95).

Thus, in Faulkner's world of gender and the senses, the non-visual sense of smell is clearly something used to marginalize women and also to police proper manly behavior. By the smelly rules of this social order, men get to smell each other, and they get to smell women. Furthermore, when they smell women, they interpret these odors in contradictory terms of both tempting food and also of spoilage or even death. Clearly, women are situated through the noses of men as edible and desirable yet also rotten and dangerous, a smelly depiction that continually positions them as commodities for (careful) consumption versus fully actualized people. As such, women rarely if ever get to make judgments about how men smell; in fact, they rarely ever even get to smell food itself. Considering the power smell is given in this system, the fact that woman have

very little olfactory agency severely limits their ability to be active beings and turns them into passive objects instead.

III. Smelly Disruptions?

Despite the fact that the hierarchy of olfactory agency in Faulkner's novel reveals rigid gender codes, values, identities, and behaviors, smell can also be used not just as a confining force but also as a disruptive one. In this way Faulkner, or at the very least his characters, seems to be playing with the constructed nature of gendered smells. In *Absalom, Absalom!* Faulkner writes that pigmentation (race) has no more "moral value" than scent (161). Such a statement implies that there might be moments when race, gender, and the smells that code them and give them moral and social value can be exposed as arbitrary and constructed and thus be disrupted or deconstructed. Unfortunately, sometimes even when these subversive moments of gender occur, the subversion gets conflated and entangled with other forms of repression such as racism or socioeconomic class barriers. And yet, these are still important passages to at least mention and inspect.

First, there are a few rare moments in Faulkner's fiction where women themselves are able to smell things rather than to be smelled by others. Readers unfamiliar with sensory studies and unfamiliar with how rigidly these sensory rules were enacted may fail to realize the importance of brief scenes in Faulkner's texts in which women smell things, dismissing such fleeting moments as unimportant to the plot or Faulkner's craft. However, when a sensory studies approach is applied to Faulkner's fiction, such instances resound with a great deal more meaning. Indeed, they can become small op-

portunities of (admittedly limited) liberation and disruption in a society that is otherwise strictly policed in ways that repress subjugated groups like women and non-whites. Once again, this is where replacing visually-saturated literary theory with the frame of sensory studies can open up new meaning to passages of Faulkner's fiction and helps us see his society and characters in new ways.

Addie Bundren, for example, who is perhaps the smelliest woman in all of Faulkner's novels, at one point gets to express her own sensory desires. As a young woman, she would often run away from her job as a school teacher and escape to a place where she tells the reader that she especially enjoyed the smell of damp and rotting leaves (*AILD* 169). Admittedly, it is pitiable that a female character who will spend virtually an entire novel being dead and smelling dead gravitates to the smell of dampness, rot, and decay; however, there is some autonomy here --- at least in this one instance Addie herself is doing the smelling, smelling for pleasure, no less, rather than being smelled. In the same novel, Addie's daughter Dewey Dell sniffs a bottle of medicine proffered to her by an unscrupulous pharmacy worker. On the positive side, Dewey Dell interprets the smell correctly: "Hit smells like turpentine," she says, which is the conclusion that the young man has reached as well. Considering that camphor (which as mentioned previously is a scent of sickness and death) and turpentine are related compounds, the reader is given a brief moment of hope that Dewey Dell, whose nose has just proven itself to be as sharp and as knowing as that of her male counterpart, will see through his ruse and escape unscathed. Unfortunately, although her sense of smell has interpreted the scene and the young man's motives correctly, she still becomes a victim of his sexual trickery and assault. Nevertheless, for one small moment, Dewey Dell was given

the power to smell and interpret. Additionally, in *Absalom, Absalom!* we find the Octoroon being handed a bottle of perfume to smell for her pleasure and comfort (158). This would seem especially important as she is a minority and thus lower on the system of power; however, unfortunately it is another black person, a servant designated as a "negress," who hands her the perfume, so even though this is somewhat liberating, there are clearly class and racial systems of power inherent in this sensory moment as well. Lastly, in *The Town*, Aleck Sander says that his mother could "see and hear through a wall" and that when he got bigger, she could even "smell his breath over the telephone" (63). This ability for a woman to monitor a male via her senses is important; however, it too is somewhat circumscribed by the fact that Aleck and Gowan attribute these powers to Guster being a mother, saying these sensory tricks were something that perhaps all mothers (but not all women) could do.

Furthermore, it must be noted that women as well as men smell Addie Bundren's corpse throughout the text of *As I Lay Dying*. This instance in particular brings up the point of whether being smelled by another person is always an act of consumption and containment or whether it can also be an act of assertion and power. Clearly, as explored above, when the smeller is in charge of defining moral and social standing in society by judging and interpreting other people's bodies, this is confinement and discipline for the person being smelled. However, giving off smell is also an action, an action that can have an impact on others; in this way, being odorous can also be a statement that is controlled by the person giving off the smell. For example, it is interesting that throughout the text of *As I Lay Dying*, women have a very unified reaction to Addie's smell. Though men note the smell and discuss it, several women in the community call

Addie's smell "an outrage" (117, 187). This is a compelling word considering that for most of her life, Addie has internalized her anger and unhappiness. With the stench of her body as a weapon, her rage literally turns out --- "out raging" into the community. Addie's body, through its odor, literally moves other bodies out of its way throughout the text, a power Addie did not seem to have in life. Commenting on the situation, one of Addie's neighbors says, "a woman that's been dead in a box four days, the best way to respect her is to get her into the ground as quick as you can" (116). On the flip side, a body that remains above ground like Addie's fails to respect the community and begins to violate and uproot its religious, social, moral, and legal sensibilities. In this way, Addie's smell becomes a powerful outward/outrage-ous force of challenge and assertion rather than a way in which she can be contained.

In this aspect, Addie is somewhat like another of Faulkner's characters who dies, Charlotte Rittenmeyer of *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem,* who also seems to be more in control of smell than might typically be expected of a female. It is Charlotte, after all, as an artist engaged in active creation who makes an effigy of starvation and deprivation entitled "The Bad Smell," a statue she uses to make powerful forces like hunger (or possibly even masculinity?) more diminutive when she crafts the idea of bad smells into the body of a little old man she can easily contain within her hands (81, 89, 91, 155). Like Addie, Charlotte reveals that she is using smell for her own power when she demonstrates the ability to bestow the Bad Smell onto others, such as the man who visits her and Wilbourne, saying flippantly to him, "Take it. You must need it much worse than we do;" and, importantly, he does as she says and takes it (92). In this way, Charlotte shows that she is not just food, bacon, or colonized other to be consumed; rather she is

capable of bestowing the smell of hunger and deprivation onto a male through her own will as a female artist. Unfortunately, given the fact that Charlotte dies a terrible death in part due to the way others have "sniffed out" and judged her infidelity ultimately re-contains this budding artistic/feminine/sensory power.

Finally, in terms of the sense of taste, there are also a few moments when women do get to taste food, or, at the very least, when they are able to control the tastes of men. Lena Grove is one such character. When she is pregnant and on the road searching for the father of her child, there is a scene where she gets to taste food with great sensory relish: "She eats slowly, steadily, sucking the rich sardine oil from her fingers with slow and complete relish" (*LA* 29). Of course right in the middle of Lena's feast, her child moves and causes her pain, and we are told that she is "stilled in midchewing" and her "face has drained of color, of its full, hearty blood" (29). Thus, in a way, this scene depicts that a male can interrupt a woman's ability to taste and enjoy food even before he is born. Another instance where a woman tastes food is Eula Varner's mother. The narrator describes her by saying that, "Her conviction was that the proper comingling of food ingredients lay not on any printed page but in the taste of the stirring spoon" (*H* 108). Unfortunately, the passage goes on to talk about Mrs. Varner's illiteracy and her belief that women should not be educated, so this instance is perhaps more about Mrs. Varner's inability to read recipes than it is about any liberating ability to taste.

Moments where women interrupt men's ability to taste and/or moments where *men* are positioned as food for women are also rare but important disruptions to the gendered hegemony in these fictional landscapes. For example, we are told that Eula Varner has such an impact on the schoolteacher Labove that he would "eat the food

which he would not even taste" *(H* 131), so in this instance, Eula is in some ways dictating a man's palate. Likewise, when Chick Mallison's father realizes that Uncle Gavin's problem is that he's in love with Eula Varner, he says, "So that's what's been eating you for the past two weeks" (*T* 46-7). This is an instance where through a turn of speech, for once, a woman is eating a man, and a man is thus positioned as food for her to taste. Eula's daughter Linda is described as having a similar moment with Gavin. As will be explored further in the next chapter on queerness, ice cream becomes a sexual metaphor when Gavin chooses to court Linda by buying her treats at the local ice cream parlor. Not only does Linda get to enjoy food in these scenes, but Mr. Mallison even says, "Maybe someday she'll even look at him [Gavin] like she was looking at that banana split or whatever it was when Skeets McGowan set it down in front of her" (180). In other words, through the sense of taste, Mr. Mallison acknowledges that women also have hungers, even sexual ones, and that men might also be desirable food for *them* to consume.

IV. Conclusions

In *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell,* Classen, Howes, and Synnott explore the complex relationship between odor and femininity, describing the tricky dance women must learn: how to be perfumed enough to attract men, but at the same time not too odorous or putrid, as they veer between the opposite poles of innocent virgin and seductive *femmes fatales* or even prostitutes (162). Both female and male characters in Faulkner's fiction must perform similarly intricate and complex dances of the non-visual senses when it comes to gender and also to the strict rules of sexual conduct that ex-

isted for men and women in heterosexual relationships. In order to assert and keep their masculinity and to police “proper” masculinity in others, males must continually be aware of the smells they both exude and take in. Additionally, they are able to assert their roles as consumers by having the agency to smell and taste food and to even construct women as food through their senses as well. Female characters, on the other hand, are equally enmeshed in this sensory system of judgment and power. Due to the fact that they are rarely described as being able to sense the world in the same ways that men can (seldom able to smell or taste food, for example), women are positioned as somewhat less than human, as objects rather than people. In many ways, these sensory patterns of gender inequality become fully clear only when a sensory studies approach is applied across multiple texts in order to explore the commonalities in the sensory experiences of a wide number of male and female characters. As such a project shows, these patterns are indeed real and, importantly, are again consistent with the findings of other sensory scholars who examine the social and historical time periods in which Faulkner’s novels are set.

5. QUEERNESS AND THE SENSES

"Queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant."

~ David Halperin (62)

"When one considers [Faulkner's] gay friends, the gay artists he admired, the gay culture Faulkner was exposed to in his early life, and the obvious gender trouble so prevalent in his stories, it should be […] astonishing that anyone can continue to argue that there is no gay sensibility, no queerness, to Faulkner's 1930's works."

~D. Matthew Ramsey (63)

In the preceding chapter on gender and the senses in Faulkner, there are multiple examples of ways that Faulkner's characters use their non-visual senses to explore and enforce norms regarding gender and sexual conduct between men and women. What happens when we extend this analysis to ask if Faulkner's characters are capable of the same sensory policing when it comes to queerness? In the roughly two decades that queer theory has been coalescing and emerging as a critical frame and discourse, from the early 1990's through the present day, many theorists have argued a variety of meanings for the word queer. Although there is merit to a great many of these definitions, for the sake of this inquiry, I use the concept of queerness according to the model set forth by Michael P. Bibler in his 2009 text, *Cotton's Queer Relations: Same Sex Intimacy and the Literature of the Southern Plantation, 1936-1968*. Although as pointed out in chapter one of this dissertation, one weakness of Bibler's work is that it is overly

reliant on the visual; however, there are many other strengths to his text that make using his model of queer literary theory a wise choice. First, the recent publication date of Bibler's work provides currency to his methodology and has allowed him to distill and combine many of the most significant queer theory approaches that have materialized over the past twenty or more years, including some of the more recent theoretical positions. Secondly, because his study is focused primarily on U.S. southern literature from the 1930's through the 1960's, Bibler's approach to a queer reading is already narrowed upon Faulkner and his contemporaries, and so his model is in many ways perfectly customized to accommodate the same regional and temporal specificities that are inherent in my own study of queerness in Faulkner's novels.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, Bibler's approach to queerness in the literature of this era and region admirably walks a nuanced line between its openness to exploring queer moments in southern literature and the balanced restraint Bibler uses in his care to respect cultural differences between our current understanding of homosexuality and queerness and the way it may have been understood differently in the past. Such considerations are especially critical when examining a concept such as queerness, since even the meanings of the very words queer and gay have shifted fairly radically and quickly between Faulkner's time and ours, and the identities and behaviors attached to these words have arguably shifted at a significant conceptual level as well. Thus, when searching for instances of homosexuality in texts from eras that are decades removed from the current moment, there is perhaps a danger of mistakenly imposing current cultural understandings of homosexuality onto the past in ways that ignore the very real differences at hand, an issue wisely raised by Bibler and other critics.

For example, in "'He Liked Men': Homer, Homosexuality, and the Culture of Manhood in Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily,'" Thomas Fick and Eva Gold explore this potential pitfall, writing in 2007 about students' reactions to the line in this famous short story that says Homer "liked men":

> When discussing texts like Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily' in the classroom, we are arguing teachers must be particularly attentive to historical contexts. To read Homer as homosexual is to ignore that heterosexuality and homosexuality, like masculinity and femininity, are designated by shifting constellations of historically and culturally determined signs […]. Today, we believe we know what it means when we hear that a man likes men, just as we believe that we know what it means when we hear that someone is gay or queer. But our beliefs might not have done us much good fifty or a hundred years ago. David Leverenz recounts a case in point: a student once interrupted his skittish discussion of homoeroticism in *Moby-Dick* by asserting that Queequeg must be homosexual "Because he'd been out selling head in the streets" (Leverenz, "Class Conflicts" 92-93). Such misinterpretations are not isolated phenomena. (100)

On the other hand, in their vigorous rebuttal of Fick and Gold's argument, Hal Blythe and Charlie Sweet remind us that these dangers of overlaying our own cultural understandings of homosexuality onto earlier texts, while valid, should not entirely dissuade us from pursuing a variety of readings of non-contemporary works, including queer readings. While Fick and Gold are worried about students "misreading" texts like

Faulkner's, Blythe and Sweet are worried about any approach to teaching or studying literature that assumes there is a "correct" reading and an "incorrect one." They state:

> Several times Fick and Gold provide an admonition against "misreading." To us, a major misreading would be assuming only one "correct" interpretation exists. Certainly, a teacher is on solid ground to "correct" a student for such blatant errors in the meaning/use of language as Fick and Gold point out with the reference to "head" […], but to label all "readings" but one as erroneous is to tread on dangerous ground. What separates the student of literature from the student of sciences […] is the possibility of alternative, but valid interpretations. (109)

Ultimately, Blythe and Sweet remind us that it does not really matter whether Homer "is" or "isn't" homosexual; they argue that what matters is whether we are willing to open the text up to include a queer hypothesis as one valid approach (among many) so that interesting new readings of both Homer and other characters become possible, which, they say, has always been the beauty of literature (111).

Bibler's approach strikes a balance between these two perspectives, once again making it a useful choice when searching for sensory queerness in the work of Faulkner. In his introduction, Bibler takes pains to acknowledge that the historical record on homosexuality on southern plantations is thin and thus examining it in literature of the same period can come as an unwelcome surprise or endeavor to some. As he explains:

> If it seems surprising that writers of this period would make homo relations integral to their imaginings of the southern plantation, this is probably because the historical scholarship on this topic is severely lacking. We simp-

> ly do not know how many homoerotic or homosexual relationships might have flourished between men or women living and working on a plantation before or after the Civil War. Unfortunately, studies of same-sex relations in southern literature are similarly scarce, with only a few articles devoted to homoeroticism in works of plantation literature. (2)

Yet, while he acknowledges this paucity in the historical record, like Blythe and Sweet, Bibler sees this lack as an opportunity for further inquiry rather than a complete prohibition or insurmountable barrier. He does, however, argue that critics should proceed by thinking more broadly about queerness in this literature than just overt homosexual relationships as we may be used to conceptualizing those relationships today. Taking his cue from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and others, he places multiple homo relationships under the umbrella of queerness, writing, "[W]hen I talk about the queer relations present in these texts, I focus specifically on representations of same-sex relations, whether they are explicitly homosexual, suggestively homoerotic, or superficially homosocial" (5). This allows him to examine a multitude of relationships between characters who are not overtly homosexual per se but whose homoerotic or intensely homosocial interactions still make them queerly different from the traditionally heterosexual and patriarchal world of the U.S. South under the plantation system.

Such an approach has the effect of opening up new characters for queer analysis by eschewing a narrow definition of homosexuality that would require the sex act itself. Instead, Bibler is interested in ways that these relationships of "homo-ness" (a term he borrows from Leo Bersani) can subvert the traditional hierarchies of power present in southern plantation life. Homo-ness, explains Bibler, "refers to the effect produced when

sexual sameness supersedes all other factors of identity to establish, however provisionally, an egalitarian social bond between individuals" (7). Thus, performing a queer reading of older southern texts is not simply a contemporary reader's attempt at revisionist history for the purpose of suddenly repopulating these novels with characters who must now be read as homosexuals. Instead, Bibler is interested in examining how characters who share intense same-sex bonds (be they homosexual, homoerotic, or homosocial) might disrupt typical systems of hegemony. Bibler writes about this concept in an extended passage I include here because of its significance to the way I want to approach queerness and the use of the non-visual senses later in this chapter:

> In some instances the queerness of these queer relations is not overt. Indeed, queerness may even seem absent from these texts where the representations of sameness appear to define a merely homosocial relationship in which homoeroticism is negligible, at best. But invisibility of recognizable sexual identities does not mean the absence of alternative sexualities – only that what we see in front of us may be something different from what we are used to seeing. [S]ome relationships in these texts may appear to be asexually homosocial. But because they are diametrically opposed to the hierarchical distribution of power that the meta-plantation defines in heterosexual terms, because they share with homosexuality a clear resistance to the heterosexualized regimes of the normal, these egalitarian homosocial bonds always signify something more than what homosociality alone can account for. We must always be careful to distinguish between homosociality and homosexuality, making sure that we do

> not read a homosocial relation as "really" homosexual. Yet we must also be careful to acknowledge and address their mutual imbrication whenever that imbrication helps reveal the larger networks of meaning and power in which they appear. (22-23).

Bibler goes on to encourage readers of southern literature who are interested in queer readings to leave their contemporary preconceptions of words like "gay" or "homosexual" at the door in order to open up space to examine other queer forms of homo relationships that, while sometimes sexual and sometimes not, still function as a disruptive and fascinating and oft-present force in literature that depicts the landscape of southern culture both before and after the Civil War. In a passage amusing for its imagery but nonetheless also compelling in its argument, Bibler asserts:

> If we studied only the most familiar and obvious images of homo*sexuality*, ignoring its structural connection to less erotic forms of homo*sociality*, we would risk misconstruing homosexuality as something foreign to the power structures of the plantation. We'd spend our time waiting for Dykes on Bikes to pass through the gates of Tara like queer versions of the planter's northern bride – outsiders existing in a supposedly closed and isolated regional space that didn't create them and that doesn't really change to accommodate their presence. We would miss the possibilities for understanding how the plantation itself helps produce and shape all kinds of desires and identities. But by recognizing the continuity between homosociality and homosexuality, we can go beyond making a narrow reading of essentialized homosexual beings discretely situated within plantation set-

> tings and better understand the complex web of queer relations that are complicit with the plantation's –and, I would add, the South's – heterosexualized hierarchies of paternalism and patriarchy. (24)

Taking Bibler's lead in casting a wide net that encompasses a variety of same-sex pairings, this chapter seeks to examine queer relationships and "homo-ness" between characters in several Faulkner novels, relationships that exist on a continuum that ranges across the homosocial, the homoerotic, and the homosexual. Though not all of these novels are situated on plantations the way that Bibler's examples are, these are nonetheless characters and stories that take place within a landscape that is inarguably steeped in legacies of the plantation economy, lending them related and similar systems of hierarchy and power. In keeping with the queries raised by the rest of this study, this chapter will examine these relationships not just for the purpose of identifying the queerness of particular characters but for the purpose of understanding how *other* characters go about identifying and policing the queerness in their midst through the use of their non-visual senses.

In recent years, a number of Faulkner scholars have published queer readings of his texts, yet so far, most of these pieces are concerned with the queerness of the characters themselves rather than the reactions of other presumably non-queer characters that come in contact with them. As with concepts of race and gender, perhaps approaching these queer characters and relationships in Faulkner's work via a sensory studies paradigm, particularly one that examines how characters use non-visual cues to police the normativity of those around them, will augment or even shift some of these previous queer readings. After all, if, as Bibler would have it, queer homo-ness disrupts

or challenges certain aspects of southern hierarchies, it can only do so if other characters recognize the queerness, the oddity in their midst. How characters go about identifying queerness in others is thus perhaps equally important as the presence of the queerness itself.

Before conducting a close reading of three Faulkner texts for these queer sensory cues, however, it is critical to survey some of the significant publications on queerness and Faulkner that have emerged. If a sensory studies approach aims to intersect with the claims made by other theorists who examine queerness in Faulkner, these pieces need to be reviewed first. While this overview does not aim to be all-inclusive, it does attempt to provide a range of queer-oriented criticism that focuses on a variety of Faulkner's works.

I. An Overview of Queer Readings of Faulkner

The Faulkner novel that has received perhaps the most scholarly attention from a queer reading standpoint is *Absalom, Absalom!* Several critics have engaged with the homoerotic nature of the two pairs of male college students featured in the text: Henry and Charles and Quentin and Shreve. In 1989, Karen Ramsay Johnson published a piece entitled "Gender, Sexuality, and the Artist in Faulkner's Novels" that pays substantial attention to queerness in *Absalom*. She states, "In *Absalom, Absalom!* Faulkner uses his four narrators to explore […] forms of androgyny [and] homosexuality" (10). Discussing the verbal exchange Quentin and Shreve conduct alone in their dorm room while telling stories of the past, Johnson argues that the intensity of the moment "is expressed in muted sexual terms," and quotes the passage from the text where the narra-

tor describes the two young men as looking at one another searchingly like a youth and a young girl (11). Johnson also takes pains to remind readers that Faulkner describes Quentin and Shreve's verbal exchange as "not one of incest but of marriage," showing that once again Quentin and Shreve's relationship is overtly depicted in terms that hint at its homoerotic nature (i.e. through the metaphors of courtship and marriage that Faulkner overtly references) (12).

Likewise, in 2004, two other articles significantly extended and deepened Johnson's queer analysis of *Absalom*. In his "Coming Out through History's Hidden Love Letters in *Absalom, Absalom!,"* Norman W. Jones argues that one reason people have remained fascinated with this text for so many years is due to its queerness. He writes that the text "haunts" us "partly because we're still trying to avoid the question at the heart of its narrative, which is figured in the symbolic threat of interracial gay romance" (339), and concludes, "the shadowy specter of an interracial gay romance seems to be the greatest danger to history the novel can imagine" (361). Jones states that he wants to join the "small but growing body of [queer] criticism" focusing on Faulkner's work and declares that the main argument of his article is "that Shreve's final question in the novel, 'Why do you hate the South?' pushes Quentin to acknowledge his homoerotic desire – which is why Quentin responds with such a panicked and panting denial" (341). Like Bibler, who wants to recover queer stories from the plantation past of the U.S. South but who at the same time wants to be careful not to overlay the current cultural moment onto the past, Jones writes:

> *Absalom* posits a lesbian and gay history that extends far back in time. Yet it also avoids the claim that such a history is fully recoverable. Faulkner

> undermines any expectation that the present can illuminate the negative spaces of ignorance that have been systemically created by Western history's long tradition of sexism, heterosexism, and racism. [W]ith this tactic, Faulkner embraces the erotics of the gap, of history's lacunae, and thus comes to develop a kind of coming-out historiography. [This erotic energy of possibility is] symbolized most explicitly in the orgasmic eroticism of Shreve's and Quentin's commingled storytelling. (342-43).

In studying the scenes between Quentin and Shreve more closely, Jones also points out that when Quentin shakes in orgasmic-like violence in the bed, the narrator informs the reader that Shreve feels the convulsions, "implying a tactile closeness" that begs the question of whether the boys are in bed together (345). Additionally, Jones examines Shreve's various states of nakedness during the evening of storytelling, arguing that the display of Shreve's body continually adds to the homoerotic overtones of the boys' interactions (345). Likewise, Jones raises the intriguing question of why Rosa picks Quentin to meet Henry. Though there are several reasons given by narrators in the text, Jones encourages readers to think closely about the identification of Henry (whom Mr. Compson argues loved Charles) and Quentin. Reminding readers that Rosa indentifies herself as "love's androgynous advocate" (*AA* 117), he queries whether Rosa "identifies Quentin as a kind of spiritual descendant of Henry, because of [Quentin and Henry's] shared gay desire [and their] deeply conflicted reaction to heterosexism" (349-50).

Another important aspect of Jones' article is his argument that Faulkner consciously and knowingly embeds this queer subtext into his novel to bring light onto rela-

tionships that have been repressed by patriarchal culture. He writes, "[I]n this battle, Faulkner seems to ally himself with Rosa's mission of being 'love's androgynous advocate'" (Jones 352). He contrasts Faulkner to Mr. Compson, writing that while Mr. Compson reacts to the homosexual nature of Henry's relationship with Charles by "warn[ing] that it should remain in the dimmest shadows of history," Faulkner, on the other hand "suggests that a bonfire – even with its dangers – is the right amount of light" to shed on these stories rather than "endorsing the erasure" like Mr. Compson wants to do (351). Jones concludes that *"Absalom* anticipates the gay coming-out genre in Quentin's dawning recognition of this illicit desire and his thoughts about how to act upon it" (356). In fact, he says, "The way the novel embraces the pleasures of its own narrative, primarily by eroticizing the back-and-forth rhythmic union Quentin and Shreve achieve through their history telling, seems to recommend a kind of coming-out historiography—one that valorizes the disruptive potential of illicit pleasures that have been denied by the official histories" (361).

Christopher Peterson's "The Haunted House of Kinship: Miscegenation, Homosexuality, and Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!"* (2004 also) is in close accordance with Jones' assessment of the relationships of Henry and Charles and Shreve and Quentin as homoerotically charged. For example, Peterson agrees with Jones that Shreve's ability to feel Quentin shaking is indicative of the two characters being in bed together, and he also explores many of the same passages that are tinged with homoeroticism due to Shreve's nakedness (247-48). Also like Jones (perhaps even more so), Peterson focuses on the shared threat of queerness and miscegenation that arises when Quentin and Shreve arrive at their conclusion that Charles may be of mixed race. He writes that "the

threat of miscegenation transforms into another imagined contamination – namely, the contaminating threat of same-sex desire" (Peterson 246). Peterson also points out that the power of the novel in part arises from the inseparable threads of both racism *and* homophobia, one reason that he argues it is important for critics to recognize and engage with the queerness of the novel. In other words, he posits, neither issue should be viewed as entirely separate from the other. He points out that it is probably no coincidence that the words homosexual and miscegenation were both "invented" and came into popular use within the latter half of the nineteenth century, indicating that people began to be preoccupied with a fear of regulating and policing these behaviors that might threaten "the normal" at roughly the same historical moment (252). He further explains the connections between fears of miscegenation and homosexuality by writing:

> Homosexuality emerges as both bastard offspring and genitor of a paternal will that essays to transmit its seed in a nonaberrant form. As both parent and child to miscegenation, same-sex desire can neither be granted priority over, nor can it be understood as the deformed progeny of, the racial endogamy that would appear, on the surface at least, to be the novel's chief preoccupation. (247)

Peterson thus asserts that one reason Shreve and Quentin become obsessed with the miscegenation is that it becomes a way for them to both avoid and also to explore a linked fear (that of queerness) since they can bear to name the miscegenation out loud but not the queerness. He asks, "How might the text employ miscegenation – *not* exclusively, but in part—as a means to name what it cannot name?" (255). He clarifies this query with the following assertion:

> This is not to suggest that miscegenation merely screens homosexuality (in both senses of concealing *and* revealing it), only to note that the novel's apparent silence on the latter is inversely related to its obsessive speaking of the former. If miscegenation gives voice to Quentin and Shreve's 'marriage of speaking and hearing,' it does so by remaining in excess of homosexuality as its 'proper' referent. (255)

Betina Entzminger agrees with Peterson's reading of the way racism is sometimes used to veil homophobia and queer panic in her "Passing as Miscegenation: Whiteness and Homoeroticism in Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!"* For example, she asserts:

> Blackness is offered as the final answer for which the narrators and readers search to explain why Henry kills Charles. The novel shows race to be a simplifier and […] the safe(r) zone that permits evasion and/or erasure of homosexuality. However, repressed desires and homosexual panic lead to hysteria and self-destruction in both Quentin and Henry. (90)

Additionally, she says, "By discovering the secret of miscegenation as the 'truth' in *Absalom, Absalom!* Quentin and Shreve attempt to locate the Otherness of Charles and Henry in the antebellum past, thereby containing it" (103). She reminds readers that Faulkner's characters are in step with historical trends in southern culture when they link fears of race with fears of queerness, pointing out that even now "[T]he dominant culture continues to link its fears of homosexuality with its fears of blackness. Closer to Faulkner's time and culture, the motto of the KKK was 'Don't be half a man, join the Klan'" (92). Such a statement accords well with the links between queerness and heterosexual

identity explored by both Jones and Peterson. Entzminger also explores Claude Levi-Strauss's theory that women are used to solidify partnerships between men when she explores the ways that Henry and Charles use Judith as a decoy for their homosexual desires for one another (94). Overall, Entzminger concludes that queerness is the "third prong" of the triple threats of miscegenation, incest, and homosexuality that so often arise in Faulkner's fiction (96) and also asserts that these conflations ultimately hint at relationships that "destabilize the powerful culture of whiteness" (103).

Two other thought-provoking approaches to *Absalom* and queerness worth mentioning are "Strange Blood: Hemophobia and the Unexplored Boundaries of Queer Nation," by Michael Davidson, and "Almost Feminine, Almost Brother, Almost Southern: The Transnational Queer Figure of Charles Bon in Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom*!" by Elizabeth Steeby. In the former, Davidson explores connections between the ways homosexual men and hemophiliacs (whether straight or gay) were treated by the public during the early days of the AIDS epidemic. He devotes a significant portion of this piece to an analysis of Charles Bon as a queer interracial figure who represents the fear of both gayness and blood that he saw re-enacted in the public sphere during the AIDS crisis. Though his subject matter is different from that which the authors above explicate above, Davidson's topic again links fears of racial impurity, bloodlines, and queerness along with these other critics. Steeby also takes a slightly different perspective, linking the way characters fear Charles Bon's queerness with fears of foreigners and global incursions or "infections" onto U.S. soil. She writes, "Through Haiti and Bon, Faulkner constructs narratives of desire that work to queer the relationship between the local and the foreign(er). Like the novel's narrators, I will return to Bon throughout as the cosmo-

politan queer who continually evades an easy reading and who explodes this sutured body of stories" (151). Steeby thus situates Bon's queerness as a metaphor for the U.S. South and its relationship with the Caribbean, comparing his descriptions in the novel as similar to descriptions that were made of Haiti itself through "constant re-imaginings and reformulations of Haiti as a child, as a threat, as a seducer" (160). For Steeby too, then, queerness becomes a starting point to examine ideas about other power relations and hierarchies.

Critics who want to approach Faulkner's fiction from a queer theory standpoint have also focused their energies on several other texts in addition to *Absalom*. In "*Mosquitoes'* Missing Bite: The Four Deletions," Minrose Gwin provides four passages containing explicitly queer content and that were deleted by Faulkner's editor over his protests. Gwin's piece is especially interesting for multiple reasons. First, it contains an analysis of an overtly lesbian scene, which is in contrast to the mostly male sexuality explored by other critics who have conducted queer readings of Faulkner's texts. Secondly, Gwin posits that this early experience of censorship may have had a profound impact on the way Faulkner chose to write about homosexuality in his future works. She argues:

> "[T]he four excised passages contain either overtones or overt depictions of homoeroticism, male homoeroticism as well as the more obvious lesbian sexual encounters, and thus the deletions may be seen as abjected textual spaces inhabited by "queer" bodies and activities. [I] suggest that the passages' homoerotic content, implied or explicit, and its challenge to heterosexuality was, more likely than not, why they were censored; and

> that Faulkner, as a young man familiar and perhaps even comfortable with the gay and lesbian ambiances of both New Orleans and Paris of the twenties, learned certain hard lessons from having his explorations of same-sex eroticism in *Mosquitoes* at least party expurgated. (33)

She makes this point again at the conclusion of her piece, asserting, "[I] hope to suggest that *Mosquitoes* may be a more important text in and of itself than previously realized and that its textual history of censorship may have had significant repercussions for the directions Faulkner's inquiries into sexuality took, and did not take, in his later work" (40). Gwin follows up this first queer reading of *Mosquitoes* with a more extended treatment in "Does Ernest Like Gordon?: Faulkner's *Mosquitoes* and the Bite of 'Gender Trouble.'"

Michelle Ann Abate also discusses Faulkner's knowledge of gay culture in "Reading Red: The Man with the (Gay) Red Tie in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*." Abate focuses on the queer coding given to the circus man that Miss Quentin runs away with in the novel. She uncovers significant historical evidence that one signal used by gay men to announce their homosexuality to other gay men was through the wearing of a red tie (293). Like Gwin, she gives a biographical overview of Faulkner's many friends and acquaintances who were known homosexuals (301-03), asserting that since he "inhabited such 'queer' circles one may infer that he became acquainted with their culture and symbols" (302). Also in line with Bibler's arguments about the importance of queer explorations into Faulkner's works, Abate asserts that the importance of performing a queer reading of the man with the red tie is not just to identify his queerness but to shape and extend our readings of other characters, particularly Miss Quentin. Abate ar-

gues that if the man with the red tie is indeed homosexual, this transforms the negative and sexually illicit reading of Miss Quentin's flight from her family: if the man with the red tie is gay, then Miss Quentin is not just running away to be with a lover. Instead, she is leaving with a comrade who represents a different sort of life than that of her oppressive family and its strict heterosexual and gender norms. As Abate writes, "If the man with whom Miss Quentin escapes is gay, then negative readings of this young woman and her flight are called into question" (311). Additionally, Abate links the young man's gayness to a sense of carnival and of freedom from the traditional heterosexual and patriarchal structures that Miss Quentin had always known (311). Thus, once again, Abate's impetus is not just to shed light on a historical trend that may or may not "prove" a character is homosexual (even though her historical information about red ties is fascinating and persuasive), but also, like many of these other critics have done, to question how the insertion of queerness changes and destabilizes other systems of power in the novel thereby changing our reading in important ways.

Another article that attempts to situate Faulkner as an author who has been well exposed to queer culture is "'Turnabout' Is Fair(y) Play: Faulkner's Queer War Story," by D. Matthew Ramsey. Ramsey's exploration is notable in that it focuses on a lesser known story that was written with a popular audience in mind. Ramsey argues that though critics (and Faulkner himself) have positioned these types of stories as "hack work" that Faulkner threw together when he was desperate for money, there is more to be gained from an analysis of "Turnabout" than critics suppose (62). Ramsey connects the genesis of this story with an evening that Faulkner spent with one of his homosexual friends and attempts to show that the story's queerness is carefully and subtly coded to

keep it acceptable for the popular audience of *The Saturday Evening Post* where it was published and that the text reveals Faulkner's knowledge of gay subculture (64). Moreover, he argues, many of Faulkner's biographers have tried to suppress this element of Faulkner's life and knowledge, which has had an impact on people's assumption that Faulkner's works will contain little or no queerness. He writes:

> Following Malcolm Cowley's lead, [Joseph] Blotner has created Faulkner the Famous American Modern Author, and in the process has unqueered him. When one considers [Faulkner's] gay friends, the gay artists he admired, the gay culture Faulkner was exposed to in his early life, and the obvious gender trouble so prevalent in his stories, it should be – but is not, given the present climate of Faulkner studies and a more general queer theory backlash – astonishing that anyone can continue to argue that there is no gay sensibility, no queerness, to Faulkner's 1930s works. (65)

Thus, Ramsey argues forcefully for a reconsideration of the queerness in both Faulkner's biography and in the works that he produced.

Some other Faulkner texts that have been analyzed from a queer studies perspective include *Go Down, Moses, The Hamlet,* and *Light in August*. For example, Richard Godden and Noel Polk explore Isaac McCaslin's reaction to the ledgers he reads in *Go Down, Moses*, and highlight Isaac's insistence on engaging only with the records that show incest and miscegenation in his family while choosing to ignore the ledger's equally feasible story of a gay interracial relationship. They argue that Isaac's father possibly had a sexual relationship with the slave Percival Brownlee based on the "evidence" the ledgers give to Isaac and posit that Isaac's refusal to engage with this topic

(and with other critics' similar lack of engagement with the Brownlee episode) says a great deal about fears of homosexual difference and desires. Similar to the readings given of Shreve and Quentin above by other critics, once again, Godden and Polk assert that sometimes Faulkner's characters choose to use a fear of miscegenation as a cover or refusal to also engage with a fear of homosexuality (especially if that homosexuality was also interracial). Neil Watson offers an additional queer reading of *Go Down, Moses* in his "The 'Incredibly Loud…Miss-fire': A Sexual Reading of *Go Down, Moses*." Watson examines the bedroom scene between Lucas and Zack (where the miss-fire occurs) and scenes of the male hunting parties to explore the homosocial and sometimes homoerotic nature of both.

Noel Polk also provides a queer reading of *The Hamlet* in "Around, Behind, Above, and Below Men: Ratliff's Buggies and the Homosocial in Yoknapatawpha." In this piece, Polk follows a similar path as Watson by exploring the ways that male homosocial relationships function in Frenchman's Bend. Of the male characters in *The Hamlet* he writes:

> Men's deepest needs for self- and gender-identity lead them away from the feminine and toward each other, into the homosocial and, one might assume, easily into the overtly homosexual. But since the culture actively demands heterosexuality, it necessarily produces in homosocial men an intense and relentless homophobia that is at least as strong as the fear of the feminine. [T]he culture will not approve the next step, into homosexuality, but clearly that step is a logical extension of the range of possibilities

> that the homosocial allows and even encourages, but does not permit. (349)

Polk follows this logic by positing a homosexual relationship between Will and Flem in the novel (354), arguing that this liaison is perhaps the power that Flem holds over Will that enables him to use Will economically in order to move up the social ladder (355). He explains further by writing:

> In a novel so completely 'about' compromised male sexuality in a homosocial world, a novel in which Flem regularly exploits the idealized masculinity of so many of Frenchman's Bend men, it should not be surprising to find homosexuality a significant part of the whole, as it is in many other of Faulkner's novels, or to find it a point upon which the novel's most overtly successful and 'masculine' character [Will] should be so vulnerable. (355)

Finally, Alfred J. Lopez undertakes a queer reading of *Light in August* by offering a close examination of the character Gail Hightower in "Queering Whiteness, Queering Faulkner: Hightower's 'Wild Bulges.'" Lopez structures his analysis around the idea that any form of difference from the white heteronormative power structure can also provide limited resistance to it, and that desire for something (or someone) forbidden can provoke a contradiction of "the official dictates and unofficial norms of both racial purity and heteronormativity" (74). As he writes, "[H]ightower himself comes to a limited, incomplete reckoning with his long-suppressed sexuality, a reckoning that offers as intimate a portrait as one may find in U.S. southern literature of the divided, repressed psyche of closeted gay whiteness in the Jim Crow South" (74). Ultimately, however, writes Lopez,

despite the latent possibility of Hightower's queerness having a subversive pressure on the existing power structure, the failed minister shrinks back from this aspect of himself. Though Hightower tries to save Christmas by outing himself (Lopez postulates that Hightower does this because he might feel some solidarity with Joe Christmas due to his own queered otherness), when confronted with the law officers who chase Joe into his home, Hightower's resistance is futile. He ultimately "relents to both Christmas's death and his own queerness, and forfeits his now-failed attempt to forge that bond in the face of such naked white aggression and power" (89).

Though this is not an exhaustive list of critics who examine queerness in Faulkner's fiction, these examples do unite multiple threads of inquiry, and it is worth pausing to examine the similarities they share before moving onward towards a non-visual sensory queer analysis of some of these same texts. First, many of these authors conform to Bibler's assertion that queerness can be analyzed whether the relationships being discussed are judged by the critic as being homosocial, homoerotic, or overtly homosexual. Additionally, they echo Halperin's definition of queerness in that these critics examine ways that queerness challenges, disrupts, or at least runs counter to dominant tropes of whiteness, heterosexuality, and patriarchy in the southern cultural milieu as it is described in Faulkner's novels. Finally, several of these critics discuss the ways that racism and fears of miscegenation intersect with characters' fears and discomfort with homosexuality.

Clearly, there is substantial evidence and argument for locating queerness in multiple characters across multiple works of Faulkner's fiction. Thus, the question becomes whether an understanding of sensory studies can further illuminate some of the

characters and interactions examined by the above critics. Do Faulkner's queer characters and/or the other characters around them navigate this taboo in part by employing their non-visual senses the way they do when policing taboos of race and gender? This answer is perhaps not as easy as with instances of race and gender discussed in the preceding two chapters. Since, as Bibler postulates, queer relationships were a minority (albeit a critical and even potentially transformative minority), examples of sensory interactions around this topic are not nearly as abundant either. However, this is also the reason teasing out sensory cues about queerness is important. These sensory codes of difference become one more tool we can use to illuminate discourses and relationships that are subtle and sometimes difficult to recognize.

II. Gail Hightower and Light in August

I would like to begin a sensory analysis of queerness in Faulkner with Gail Hightower because I agree with Alfred Lopez that Hightower is one of the more overtly homosexual characters in the Faulkner canon. In fact, as pointed out above, Lopez posits Gail Hightower as the most "intimate a portrait as one may find in U.S. southern literature of the divided, repressed psyche of closeted gay whiteness in the Jim Crow South" (74). What Lopez fails to mention, but that is nonetheless also true, is that Hightower is additionally one of the most sensory saturated characters in all of Faulkner's fiction as well. Throughout the novel, Hightower's queerness gives him problems in multiple sensory arenas -- in how he exudes smells, sounds, and touch.

First, what are the clues or indications that Hightower either is a homosexual man or is at least perceived as such by others? There are multiple passages that estab-

lish this case. We are told about Hightower that people frequently said, “[H]e couldn’t or wouldn’t satisfy [his wife] himself” (*LA* 59). Furthermore, we are told that the town whispers “about how he had made his wife go bad and commit suicide because he was not a natural husband, a natural man (71). Additionally, while at first the town is angry when Hightower lives alone with a black woman to cook for him, since this is taboo for a heterosexual man to do, we get another indication of Hightower’s perceived queerness (and the town’s intense fear of it) when he replaces the woman with a black man. While two men living together presumably should not have occasioned a moral uproar or even notice (for example, no one seems to care when Joe Christmas and Lucas Burch share a cabin in the same novel, and no one throws aspersions of queerness at them for doing so), for Hightower, the reaction is different. In a scene eerily prescient of modern-day gay killings such as the death of Matthew Shepherd, Hightower is dragged out of his house, beaten unconscious, and left tied to a tree in the woods (72). Clearly the town has already ferreted out that something is different and “dangerous” about Hightower’s sexuality since they apply rules of morality and punishment so differently in his case than they do with the other two men who live together in this text.

Even Byron Bunch, despite being described as rather innocent, naïve, and sheltered at multiple points in the text, recognizes Hightower’s perceived queerness and knows that his nightly visits with Hightower must be kept secret or they would most certainly be construed as punishable queer offenses by the town. He says of his fellow townspeople: “And they don’t even know that I know [what the inside of Hightower’s house looks like], or they’d take us both out and whip us again” (*LA* 73). Byron reveals his knowledge of Hightower’s perceived queerness once more when he shares his plan

for getting Joe Christmas out of prison, which includes asking Hightower to say that Joe was at his house the night of the murder. With this proposal, Byron makes it very clear to Hightower that this alibi is not focused on convincing the town that Joe and Hightower were having an innocuous, non-sexual visit. When Hightower wants to know what Byron's plan is for getting the charges dropped against Joe, he asks if Byron wants him (Hightower) to confess to the murder instead, and Byron responds, "It's next to that, I reckon" (390), which shows that he is cognizant that his plan depends on the town believing the two men were involved in a homosexual relationship (which is so awful that it is apparently akin to murder). Finally, in the shocking moment when Joe flees from the armed men into Hightower's home, Hightower attempts to enact Byron's plan, and does indeed claim that Joe was with him the night Joanna Burden was murdered. Interestingly, though there is nothing overtly queer about the "confession" Hightower makes (all he says, after all, is "He was here that night. He was with me the night of the murder," which is certainly not an overtly sexual statement and could have been taken entirely innocently), his statement is immediately taken as evidence of homosexual behavior just as Byron knew it would be. For example, Grimm responds immediately and explosively with outrage by saying, "Jesus Christ! Has every preacher and old maid in Jefferson taken their pants down to the yellowbellied son of a bitch?" (464).

Given the town's clear perception of Hightower as queer, then, we might expect that they also perceive his non-visual sensory cues as aberrant or queer as well just as other Faulkner characters reacted to sensory breaches of racial and gender behavior as illustrated in the preceding chapters. Indeed, this is the case. First, I posit that the auditory interactions Hightower has with the world are queer in the broader sense that Bibler

posits – meaning aspects of the homosexual Hightower and his interactions with the world that, while not necessarily sexual in and of themselves, still characterize him through the senses as aberrant, different, and oppositional to the dominant norms of white heteronormativity and the town's shared cultural values. The fact that he is sensorially coded by others as "queer" frequently plays out in the ways that Hightower seems to hear the world differently from those around him and also how the sounds he makes are frequently misinterpreted by others as well. For example, when Hightower arrives in the town, he thinks that the enthusiastic and loud speeches he makes about Jefferson will fall on ears that share and support his passion; however, this is not the case. Even before he and his wife arrive, when he is speaking about Jefferson on the train, when he thinks that he is talking in "a bright, happy voice" (482), his wife and the people on the train clearly do not agree. The narrator says that his voice in this situation was "high" and "childlike," and that his "wife was clutching his arm" and shushing him, admonishing him repeatedly that, "People are looking at you!" and saying again and again, "Hush! They are looking at us!" (485). Hightower seems completely oblivious that he is breaking social boundaries of auditory behavior in this moment; he even seems incapable of hearing anyone who tries to correct him, to save him from public censure, like his wife, about whom we are told, "But he did not seem to hear her at all" (485).

Once he arrives in the town itself and continues his audibly odd speeches, Hightower seems to believe that the town will hear him and interpret him correctly and share his true joy at being there. Unfortunately, once again, he is only interpreted as queer or odd; the townspeople construe his sounds completely differently than he does: "To the people of the town it sounded like a horsetrader's glee over an advantageous trade.

Perhaps that is how it sounded to the elders. Because they listened to him with something cold and astonished and dubious" (*LA* 61). Once he actually takes to the pulpit, things quickly become worse. In another section of *Light in August*, we are told that southern preachers usually sound thunderous (472), and this depiction meshes well with the description of southern preachers given by one of Faulkner's contemporaries, Lillian Smith. In her novel, *Strange Fruit*, she writes of a traveling minister, Brother Dunwoodie, "who is built in a manly fashion as if he should have been a football player (81), and who attracts young men to the church by his displays of masculine prowess like climbing the tent pole during the middle of a revival sermon (82). In contrast to these stereotypes of southern ministers who are booming, manly, and respected, even Hightower's voice seems queer, even feminine, and decidedly non-ministerial to the town's ears; it is described as "light, trivial, like a thistle bloom falling into silence without a sound, without any weight" (89).

The way that Hightower himself hears the world might also be interpreted as an aspect of his queerness. For instance, like Isaac and Benjy, Hightower is different from other white children because he can sense the coming of death. Unlike these other two young boys, who can *smell* death, however, Hightower senses death through his ears; he thinks of his mother's approaching death as "a sound, like a cry" that he can hear coming (475). That the queer Hightower hears things slightly counter to the ways that other people do continues to be evident throughout his life. For example, though Lopez's article makes much of Hightower's *visual* encounter with the handsome dead soldiers he sees riding through the streets each night at dusk and posits that the wild bugles Hightower "hears" them play are simply a Freudian symbol for Hightower's ac-

tual preoccupation with these handsome, young men's "wild bulges," I think the bugles themselves as musical instruments are more important than that. With the inclusion of the bugles in the story, we are being told that once again Hightower is mysteriously able to hear death and even war, and that he hears it approach every night. In fact, we are told that his hearing is the *first* sense that knows the men and horses are coming and the *last* sense through which he can sense them as the vision fades: "When he was younger […] he would sometimes trick himself and believe that he heard them before he knew it was time" (486), he relates, and the narrator states, "He hears above his heart the thunder increase, myriad and drumming" as they approach (492), and once the soldiers are gone, "it seems to him that he still hears them: the wild bugles and the clashing sabres and the dying thunder of hooves" (493). This ability to perceive death through senses other than vision continually aligns the queerness of Hightower with characters who can smell death and who have also been "othered" because of their racial or gender differences.

Additionally, although Byron wonders if Hightower even hears the music of the church anymore (81), he clearly does, but he hears unusual things in the music. First, he hears death again because we are told he thinks hears Miss Carruthers playing the organ though she "has been dead almost twenty-five years" (366). Secondly, though the songs are about praising God, Hightower says that he "seems to hear within [the music] the apotheosis of his own history, his own land, his own environed blood," and he hears "pleasure," "ecstasy," and "violence" in it too (368). After Joe has been captured, Hightower once again hears death and violence in the hymns. He says he can actually hear in the music the sound of people making up their minds to crucify Joe. The narrator ex-

plains, “It seems to him that he can hear within the music the declaration and dedication of that which they know that on the morrow they will have to do” (367, 368). Hightower’s hearing also positions him as a “race” that is queerly opposite from heterosexual people and behaviors. We are told that when Byron describes to him the heterosexual scandals of Lena and Lucas and Joe and Joanna, “It is as though [Hightower] were listening to the doings of people of a different race” (81).

Additionally, other people use the sense of sound to determine exactly what is “wrong” with Hightower, his sexuality, and his marriage. First, despite Hightower’s wife being a “small, quietlooking girl,” one of the first indicators to the town that there is trouble with Hightower’s ability to function as a “normal” heterosexual husband is that “the neighbors would hear her weeping in the parsonage in the afternoons or late at night” (62). Later, the ladies of the church use the sense of hearing as a way to determine whether the wife is at home or to confirm their fears that she has run away from her queer husband to visit her lover in Memphis yet again: “and they would not hear a sound anywhere in the house, sitting there in their Sunday dresses, looking at one another and about the room, listening and not hearing a sound” (63). Finally, when the church finds out that Hightower’s wife has died in a sexual scandal that they attribute to his failed heterosexuality, they seem not just worried about the “sinfulness” itself but of how the event will sound to outsiders. We are told that the church is upset about “having strangers come here and hear about it” (59).

In addition to hearing the world differently (and being heard and interpreted by it differently) due to his perceived queerness, there are also indicators of Hightower’s queerness that function through smell. Since Hightower is white, male, educated, up-

perclass, and even a former clergyman, the codes of sensory stereotyping described by Smith, Largey, Watson, and other sensory scholars would predict that Hightower would be perceived by others as either having have no smell at all, or that he would smell like something positive, moral, or holy. However, this is clearly not the case since Hightower is relentlessly and repetitively described as smelling awful, and this unexpected smelliness in a white, upper-class male lends credence to his depiction as a homosexual because, as we have explored in previous chapters, people usually do not have a foul odor unless something is "wrong" with them on the social scale of power, privilege, and morality. Like the dwellings of the black characters, Hightower's house is depicted as stinking terribly: "[T]he house unpainted, small, obscure, poorly lighted, mansmelling, manstale" (48). This passage is intriguing because maleness is typically associated with something very positive in the hierarchy of the U.S. South, and yet here, to be "mansmelling" is positioned as bad. I would argue that this is because though stereotypes of homosexual men as feminine abound, male homosexuality can also be posited as a form of hypermasculinity in that it is the desire of men who desire other men only. Thus, Hightower's house smells bad in the moral register not because he is a man, but because sexually, he is a man who only wants the company of other men, thus the overwhelming "mansmell." Several other times, this linkage of overwhelming maleness with overwhelming bad odor is depicted: we are told he has "the rank manodor of his sedentary and unwashed flesh" (308) and once again that he has a stale, "mankept" house (299), which is an even more interesting term in that it sounds like the phrase, "a kept man" or a "kept woman," which has a sexual overtone. Interestingly enough, though these odors seem repulsive to the rest of the town, Byron Bunch once again gives cre-

dence to the assertion of sensory historians that all smells are open to interpretation. Though Hightower's smell overpowers Byron, he ultimately decides that the problem with the bad odor lies within him, Byron, rather than with Hightower. "It is the odor of goodness," he reflects. "Of course it would smell bad to us that are bad and sinful" (299). Thus, in a way that odorously cements the possibility of Byron and Hightower's relationship as being homoerotic, Byron inserts himself into the production of Hightower's queer, bad smell.

Finally, Hightower's smell also connects him to another homoerotic pairing, Quentin and Shreve from *Absalom, Absalom!* since several of the critics whose work was described at the opening of this chapter point out that Quentin and Shreve's room, where their happy marriage of telling and hearing takes place, is described as a "tomb" (275). We are even given an image of Hightower leaning out of a window with the smell of a tomb behind him, much like Shreve: "And Hightower leans there in the window, in the August heat, oblivious of the odor in which he lives – that smell of people who no longer live in life: that odor of overplump desiccation and stale linen as though a precursor of the tomb" (318). And indeed, bad smells in Faulkner and in the historical record of this time period usually do indicate people who are "outside of life," outside of the strictly policed power structures: black people, people caught in adultery or other heterosexual taboos, and here, someone who is positioned as odorously and audibly detectable as queer.

III. V.K. Ratliff in The Town

As a final example in this chapter, I would like to draw on a specific theory regarding male homosociality and homosexuality offered by Bibler to explore the arguable queerness of the character Ratliff in *The Town*. In his chapter on Faulkner and Tennessee Williams, Bibler posits that homosexuality between upper-class white men on the plantation is not really a threat to the existing social order and thus may have been deemed nominally accepted (or at least somewhat tolerated) in this system. He bases this argument on the fact that "the plantation's dominant forms of white masculinity and male homosociality" already exist (64), so sexual relationships between these men (who are all equals at the top of the social food chain anyway) are simply horizontal connections at the top that do not threaten the vertical hierarchy of power at all. However, as Bibler points out, there is a catch: "Southern culture can tolerate these queer relations between [elite] white men […], but only as long as the South's traditional social hierarchies continue to shore up white male supremacy" because the "homoness between white men depends on the persistent *in*equality of blacks, poor whites, and women" (63). Bibler uses the term "loophole" to categorize these moments in time where the social system is willing to accommodate *some* homosexual relationships (64). As he writes:

> *Absalom* reveals that there are always conditions whereby some forms of erotic or sexual contact that would otherwise be illicit are easily sanctioned. And by recognizing and understanding these loopholes, we can thus understand how a homoerotic relationship between elite white men

> surprisingly fits with the larger social structures of the southern plantation as Faulkner imagines it. (64)

However, writes Bibler, this “loophole” allowing homosexuality between elite white males on the plantation closes as soon as the stability of the white male position begins to erode. He asserts:

> Whereas the objectification of black slaves before the Civil War cleared a space for homo-ness between white men, Faulkner’s novel suggests that the change in power relations between white and black men after the Civil War makes any homo-ness between white men impossible because the new social order also effects a change in the structure of white masculinity. (65)

In short, argues Bibler, once the unquestioned power and authority of white manhood came under attack, its boundaries had to be policed more strictly, and homosexuality among men could no longer be tolerated since it might continue the erosion of white male superiority and power that began with the freeing of slaves. Once the social demarcation between people who were “men” and people who were “slaves” ended, there lurked the uneasy possibility that a man could accidentally sleep with another man who had mixed blood, and this possibility of queer miscegenation had to be avoided at all costs, thus necessitating a reinstatement of the taboo on all homosexuality (93). Bibler uses this idea of queer loopholes to postulate that the reason Quentin and Shreve are so obsessed with Henry and Bon is that during Henry and Bon’s time period, the “loophole” allowing homosexuality among men of their social class still existed to some extent whereas in Quentin and Shreve’s time it did not. By recreating the story of Henry

and Bon and merging themselves into it, Quentin and Shreve are searching for a way to re-open the possibility of homosexuality between two white men of their class and to thus validate their own homosexual desire for one another:

> Quentin and Shreve turn to the legend of Sutpen's enigmatic sons for an earlier model of the homoerotic relationship they share with each other, just as they imagine Henry turns to the legend of the French duke to get around the problem of incest. In this light, their obsession with the plantation past has to be read as an attempt to create in the postbellum present a new kind of sociality in which their homoeroticism would no longer be a problem. (73)

Ultimately, however, Bibler states that Quentin and Shreve are bound to fail in this project because as soon as Bon's racial identity is called into question, queer miscegenation enters the realm of possibility, white manhood becomes threatened, and the loophole closes (85, 93).

I present this overview of Bibler's analysis on queer loopholes that have existed at various historical time periods in the U.S. South because I believe it is a useful framework for understanding the arguably queer actions of Ratliff in *The Town.* Populated with many of the same characters as the first novel in the Snopes' trilogy, *The Hamlet*, *The Town* shares much of the same homosocial structures among men that are depicted by Noel Polk in his queer reading of the earlier text. To summarize again briefly, Polk's argument is that the male characters in *The Hamlet* are so deeply afraid of women and the feminine that they gravitate to one another. However, these homosocial bounds are fraught with peril because this connection between a group of men could

lead to the next step of homosexuality, which the men are as afraid of as they are of females (349). Overall, writes Polk, "For all of Eula Varner's overwhelming female presence, *The Hamlet* is preeminently a novel about relations among men" (346), and the same could arguably be said about *The Town*. In particular, I would like to look at the character Ratliff, who several times exhibits homosocial and even homoerotic actions or desires via the non-visual sense of taste in this novel.

The first of these instances occurs between Ratliff and Gowan. In a move that echoes the way Uncle Gavin courts the young Linda Snopes by continually buying her ice cream at the town's ice cream parlor, Ratliff appears to woo Gowan (who is also considerably younger than he is and is thus an odd companion for him) through his taste buds as well. Chick Mallison describes the scene like this:

> Ratliff said:
>
> 'How old are you?'
>
> 'Seventeen,' Gowan said.
>
> 'Then of course your aunt lets you drink coffee,' Ratliff said. 'What do you say – '
>
> 'She's not my aunt, she's my cousin,' Gowan said. 'Sure. I drink coffee. I don't specially like it. Why?'
>
> 'I like a occasional ice-cream cone myself,' Ratliff said.
>
> 'What's wrong with that?' Gowan said.
>
> 'What say me and you step in the drugstore here and have a ice-cream cone?' Ratliff said. So they did. (*T* 106)

The homosocial nature of the conversation is revealed in the way both men refer to Mrs. Mallison. By asking Gowan's age and querying whether he is still under his "aunt's" authority (i.e. Ratliff wonders aloud if she "lets" him drink coffee), Ratliff seems to be querying whether Gowan is ready to leave the maternal/feminine space of boyhood and enter the world of all-male companionship that Polk describes so well in *The Hamlet*. Gowan responds to this challenge by immediately distancing himself from the feminine by interrupting Ratliff to insist emphatically that Mrs. Mallison is *not* his aunt but his cousin. Such a distinction might seem minor except that "aunt" is sometimes a word used in the South to indicate a female who mothers a child (i.e. the way that the adult Roth still calls Mollie Beauchamp, the woman who raised him, "Aunt Molly" in *GDM* 116-17); whereas the word cousin, on the other hand, is gender-neutral and does not carry this cultural baggage of maternity and mothering. Additionally, Gowan is careful to begin his reply by assuring Ratliff that drinking coffee is his own decision (in other words by saying "I drink coffee" rather than answering Ratliff's question by saying, "Yes, my cousin allows me to drink coffee), which once again asserts his masculine identity and readiness to enter the homosocial world of men. Furthermore, with his declaration of "I don't particularly like [coffee]," Gowan uses the sense of taste to show that he is independent from women and has his own sensory preferences apart from what his cousin/aunt/mother figure may impose upon his tastebuds.

As Chick continues to describe Gowan and Ratliff's weekly ice cream "dates," the diction and imagery become increasingly queer, phallic, and even verging on stereotypes of gay men as predators:

Gowan said Ratliff always had strawberry when they had it, and that he could expect Ratliff almost any afternoon now and now Gowan said *he was in for it*, *he would have to eat the cone whether he wanted it or not*, he and Ratliff now standing treat about, until finally Ratliff said, *already holding the pink-topped cone in his brown hand*:

> ‘This here is jest about as pleasant a invention as any I know about. It’s so pleasant a feller jest dont dare risk getting burnt-out on it. I cant imagine no tragedy worse than being burnt-out on strawberry ice cream. So what you say we jest make this a once-a-week habit and the rest of the time jest swapping news? (105-6, emphases mine)

The language of “being in for it” and of Gowan feeling that he cannot say no to “eating the cone” whether he wants to or not, combined with the phallic imagery of the “pink-topped cone” in Ratliff’s hand is clearly tinged with the possibility of queer sexuality and even of an older gay male acting in a coercive or perhaps predatory way towards a younger male. And, the scene is of course awash in non-visual sensation in the way that Ratliff’s brown hands grip the cone in what seems to be an erotically charged touch, and in the tasting of the sweet and decadent dessert itself. Later, Gowan goes on to describe these moments as the times that Ratliff “saw, caught him” and that “he didn’t always listen to all Ratliff would be saying at those times, so that afterward he couldn’t even say just how it was or when that Ratliff put it into his mind” (106), which again plays on stereotypes of gay men or lesbian women “turning” young people into homosexuals through brainwashing, and interestingly, in this scene, the “indoctrination”

seems to happen through Gowan's ears even when he thinks he is not listening, a fact that once again bringing the senses into play.

This trope of queer tasting and listening continues when Ratliff begins asking another male member of the Mallison family, Chick, to eat ice cream with him. Chick relates this scene to us as well:

> Ratliff says, "'Sometimes fellers named Charles gets called Chick when they gets to school.' Then he said to me: 'Do you like strawberry ice-cream cones?' and I said, 'I like any kind of ice-cream cones,' […] so after that it was me and Ratliff instead of Gowan and Ratliff […]. And I don't know how Ratliff did it and of course I can't remember when because I wasn't even five yet. But he had put it into my mind too, just like into Gowan's. (112)

This scene, like the earlier one with Gowan, is queered by the fact that Ratliff once again mysteriously "puts something into" Chick's mind along with the taste of the ice cream and also in the way that Ratliff renames Chick, since the nickname he picks is quite feminized. Later, the sense of listening becomes important again when Chick tells us, "Ratliff's voice said, 'Come here,'" and Chick gets in the car and "we drove slow along the back streets around the edge of town" (113). As with Gowan, Ratliff asks again "How old did you say you was?" When Chick responds that he is five years old, Ratliff simply says, "Well, we cant help that, can we?' […] so all we got to do now is jest take a short ride." Once again, the details of the young boy and the man in the car driving slowly around the back parts of town give the scene a sexualized and even furtive connotation, especially when we realize that Ratliff's purpose of this drive is that he be-

lieves it is crucial for the five-year-old Chick to listen to the story of how Montgomery Ward Snopes set up a seedy prostitution ring during the war in Europe, which hardly seems appropriate for Chick's hearing (113).

Though all of these ice cream scenes of potentially queer tasting and listening can be read as not simply homosocial but also as possibly tinged with pedophilia, I would like to return to Bibler's theory of loopholes for a slightly less sinister explanation. In particular, I would like to argue that the homosocial nature of the relationships the men in *The Town* and *The Hamlet* have long enjoyed, the comforting world of men that is described by so well by Polk, is threatened by the rise of a lower class of men, symbolized by the various members of the Snopes' family. In this way, the influx of the Snopes family acts to curtail homosociality in a similar fashion to the way Bibler posits that the specter of freed black men put an end to homosexuality among elite white men on the plantation. In other words, once the non-Snopes men see their positions being threatened by the Snopes' invasion, the entire homosocial structure is threatened and must be more strictly policed. Ratliff and the other men described by Polk are clearly afraid of the Snopeses (perhaps none more so than Ratliff), and they are arguably haunted by the idea of the lower-class Snopes becoming equals among them (becoming men like them) and destabilizing their homosocial bonds. If we push the correlation between Bibler's theory even further, we may posit that there is perhaps even an underlying fear of a non-Snopes man accidentally sleeping with a Snopes-man just like Bibler describes the fear of a white man sleeping with a black man. Indeed, this is what Polk's article argues actually happens between Will Varner and Flem Snopes (354). If we consider that one of Polk's arguments for a queer sexual relationship between Will and

Flem is the way that Will lets Flem ride around the county sitting side-by-side and touching in the buggy they share, we are back once again to the sensory theme of touch and contagion. Applying Bibler's theory lets us take Polk's assertion a step further; not only might Flem and Will be lovers, but considering Bibler's idea that an influx of a new group of people destabilizes homosocial and homosexual bonds among men, Will's tale becomes moral fable that cautions other men in a way that is very echoic of racial tensions. Racial fears of contagion, after all, frequently relied on the fear that if black men were allowed to touch what white men could touch that they [the black men] would steal their daughters and their wealth and power, leading to the downfall of society. Indeed, this is exactly what happens to Will; he touches a Snopes (possibly sexually) and then Flem ends up with his daughter and his property.

This fear of the Snopeses as men who could destabilize the existing homosocial order is made clear by Ratliff when we learn that he is only afraid of the *male* Snopeses, not the females. He ponders:

> So this was not the first time I ever thought how apparently all Snopeses are male, as if the mere and simple incident of woman's divinity precluded Snopesishness and made it paradox. No: it was rather as if *Snopes* were some profound and incontrovertible hermaphroditic principle for the furtherance of a race, a species, the principle vested always physically in the male, any anonymous conceptive or gestative organ drawn into that radius to conceive and spawn, repeating that male principle and then vanishing; the Snopes female incapable of producing a Snopes and hence harmless like the malaria-bearing mosquito of whom only the female is armed and

> potent, turned upside down and backward. Or even more than a mere natural principle: a divine one: the unsleeping hand of God Himself, unflagging and constant, else before now they would have owned the whole earth, let alone just Jefferson, Mississippi. (*T* 136)

In this passage, we hear Ratliff's fear of male encroachment upon established male homosocial territory and his connected fears that these new males would take over the city and possibly even the whole world. Given Ratliff's paranoia and Bibler's theories, we can read his queer interactions with Gowan and Chick in a new way. It is almost as if Ratliff knows that he must indoctrinate Gowan and Chick into the homosocial (possibly even homoerotic) world of non-Snopes men as soon as possible. He is in effect recruiting them as quickly as he can in order to balance his numbers with the ever-rising tide of Snopeses, and the boys' young ages, rather than being a pedophilic impetus for him is simply something that "cannot be helped" given the direness of the Snopes situation. Interestingly, especially for the purposes of this study, Ratliff chooses to cement his homosocial bonds with these non-Snopes boys by using the sense of taste and emphasizing the way he and the boys have a similar palate. Through the sense of taste, Ratliff explores the idea of "homo-ness" and the homosocial as depicted by Bibler and Polk, the idea of like cleaving to like. By emphasizing that he and the boys have a similar taste, a similar palate, (and possibly on a homoerotic level that they even have or will eventually have similar desires) he seems to be shoring up the idea that *we* (the non-Snopes men) are alike and have the same tastes and hungers, and *they* (the Snopeses) are different, thereby preserving his homosocial world by the use of both queer and sensory strategies.

IV. Conclusions

In his article, "'With a Special Emphasis': The Dynamics of (Re)claiming a Queer Southern Renaissance," Gary Richards points out that when Eve Sedgwick writes about queer influences on a variety of renaissances, she omits the Southern Renaissance, and Richards argues that is a mistake. He states that he wants to make this claim because Southern Renaissance[10] texts are:

> [R]eplete with a dazzling and complex array of representations in which sexuality in general and same-sex desire in particular are central. Indeed, this literary production includes among its authors an impressively extensive number of persons preoccupied with homoeroticism in their writing, in their lived experiences, or in both. (209)

Through the many examples given here by a wide variety of critics, critics who have examined queerness across multiple Faulkner novels, Richards' assertion certainly seems to hold true for the Faulkner canon. As Bibler, Blythe and Sweet, Polk, and others all discuss, a careful study of queerness in Faulkner's work, one that is respectful of historical and social differences, can indeed open up new and interesting readings of these texts and characters. Furthermore, as the sensory exploration in this chapter aims to stress, understanding that characters often interpret others through a wide variety of their senses, not just vision, can be useful for queer theorists who want to understand how queerness functions in the social world of these novels. As with race and gender, queerness serves as an important identity category to consider, one that is also recog-

[10] In both this article and in his longer book-length study of the same topic, *Lovers and Beloveds*, Richards uses the dates of 1936-1961 for the Southern Renaissance.

nized and policed by Faulkner's characters in the ways they sound and smell to one another and in the ways they interpret one another's tastes and touches.

6. SOCIOECONOMIC CLASS AND THE SENSES

"Faulkner did represent and engage the politics of his broad social milieu. More specifically, his work exposes the operation of ideology under the conditions of capitalism and celebrates the human spirit that resists the dehumanizing and exploitative nature of America's dominant economic system."

~ Caroline Miles (326)

In their introduction to *The Oxford Book of the American South: Testimony, Memory, and Fiction*, editors Edward Ayers and Bradley Mittendorf present a list of southern "passions," qualities that they assert define both the region and its literature. One of the items listed is "the distances that separate the rich from the poor" (ix), an indication that socioeconomic class has a significant impact in the U.S. South, and, by extension, that issues of socioeconomic class arise for the characters in Faulkner's fiction as well. Indeed, critic Caroline Miles takes issue with Faulkner scholars who argue that his work is "disinterested in the political and social conditions of his time" (325). Additionally, she says that she also disagrees with "scholars of labor and working-class studies [who] have consistently accused Faulkner of bolstering stereotypes of poor folk rather than contributing anything significant to our understanding of labor relations" (325-6). In contrast, in her 2008 essay "William Faulkner's Critique of Capitalism," Miles presents Faulkner as an author who was very much in tune with the class struggle of his time and region. As she argues:

> Faulkner did represent and engage the politics of his broad social milieu. More specifically, his work exposes the operation of ideology under the

> conditions of capitalism and celebrates the human spirit that resists the dehumanizing and exploitative nature of America's dominant economic system. (326)

In another recent article that focuses on class issues in Faulkner, Louis Palmer's "Bourgeois Blues: Class, Whiteness, and Southern Gothic in Early Faulkner and Caldwell," we find another critic attempting to raise awareness and understanding of the way Faulkner explored class issues in his work. In particular, Palmer argues that Faulkner was very aware of the ways that an un-interrogated notion of whiteness as always superior and always privileged obscures the vast differences between whites at the top of the socioeconomic system and whites at the bottom (120).

Miles' and Palmer's engagement with the topic of Faulkner and class reminds readers of the crucial importance of considering the very real pressures of social and economic boundaries and barriers that Faulkner's characters encounter in their fictional landscape. In a study like this one that attempts to understand the ways that Faulkner's characters ferret out difference and enforce a variety of socially and racially constructed borders through the non-visual senses, socioeconomic class is a key element to explore. Admittedly, examples of moments when characters use a variety of their senses to identify members of other socioeconomic classes may not be as prevalent in these nine Faulkner texts as are the examples regarding gender or race; however the few moments when such occurrences do take place are overt and important and have much to tell us about the way socioeconomic systems function in this literary economy. Interestingly, for the most part, these sensory moments of class distinction most frequently happen through the sense of sound, so the majority of this chapter will focus on auditory

exchanges and telling noises, noises that reflect both beliefs and anxieties about the shifting nature of class.

In contrast to the way that Faulkner uses noise as an indicator of the socioeconomic relationships between characters, I would like to begin with a brief overview of the way that Sherwood Anderson uses sound very differently. Anderson was, of course, a strong influence on Faulkner early in his career, and it is useful to explore how Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* demonstrates the conflicting ways that these two modernists use sound as both a way to connect characters across socioeconomic gaps and also to maintain separation between the classes. If, as Foucault writes, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries "visibility is a trap," a trap that heavily influences subjectivity (200-203), we might query how both Anderson and Faulkner use sound as a way to destabilize vision, especially in terms of socio-economic class.

Anderson's characters (those of a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds) continually wrestle with their own subjectivity by an obsessive and driving need to tell their own stories, to narrate themselves into understandable subjects in the tales of their own lives. Importantly, the characters in *Winesburg* frequently seem unable to do so whenever light renders them visible; it seems there is a tacit understanding that vision lessens their participation in their own subjectivity, traps or fixes them in some Foucauldian way, so that when they tell their stories or attempt some sort of action to (re)define themselves, they must do so in total or partial darkness. As David Stouck points out in his piece, "Anderson's Expressionist Art," "In seventeen of the twenty-two stories, the crisis scene takes place in the evening. […]. Most of the tales end with the characters going off into total darkness" (225). Stouck himself seems to connect this darkness with

a lack of communication, writing, “There is a venerable literary tradition of eyes being expressive and central to communication […]; thus, when a character’s eyes are clouded […], interpersonal communication is threatened” (224).

While this may be true in some ways, considering Foucault’s theories alongside sensory studies might provoke an oppositional reading to Stouck’s interpretation (of Anderson and, later, of Faulkner). Since the vast majority of revelational moments in Anderson’s text do occur in darkness, moments when one character attempts to open up and reveal him- or herself to another human being (many times across the lines of social classes), perhaps it is also true that it is only when the “trap” of vision is *removed* and the ascendance that non-visual senses take on in the dark that interpersonal communication can actually occur. In these instances, it may be that it is darkness that was protective, that enabled communication between people of various classes whereas light (and thus vision) is prescriptive and prevents these revelatory moments of connection.

Another facet to consider is that while some of the characters in *Winesburg* participate in these “crisis moments” of subjectivity alone, many of them participate in their own self-creation through narrating their stories to the young newspaperman, the middle-class George Willard, and do so by asking him to meet in the dark. In *Winesburg*, repeatedly it is as if Anderson’s characters avoid the trap of vision by acknowledging that they must take away George’s ability to fix or trap them with his own eyes, eyes that often judge them in terms of their socioeconomic class and standing in the town and force him instead to encounter them through another sense, that of hearing. As Stouck also points out, vision, is after all, in *Winesburg* something that has gone terribly

wrong; as he writes, “The eyes of the *Winesburg* characters are also described in a way that reveals something twisted and obsessive in their nature,” and then continues by mentioning the “soiled” and “bloodshot” whites of eyes, the “alien” nature of eyes, and the way eyelids constantly “twitch” (224). By insisting that George meet them in the dark, perhaps some of Winesburg’s inhabitants are asserting, “If you cannot *see* me, perhaps you will finally really hear me, regardless of the difference between my social class and yours.” In painting the portraits of who they are, (portraits that sometimes conflict with the way they have been identified and labeled along socioeconomic and other lines and thus disciplined or divided by society), the characters seek to move beyond what is seen by society’s panoptic gaze, and create a subjectivity that can only be revealed in the dark through other senses like hearing. As Enoch the painter says when he wants to chastise art critics who rely on the visual to understand the essence of a subject, “You don’t get the point. The picture you see doesn’t consist of the things you see […]. *There is something else, something you don’t see at all, something you aren’t intended to see*” (93, emphasis mine). By presenting his tales in this way, Anderson seems to strive to open up small liberating spaces between those in different socioeconomic classes, where by avoiding the fixing panoptic gaze, characters can participate in their own subjectivity for limited, fleeting moments in the dark by emphasizing that which is *heard* through the ears versus that which is *sensed and fixed by the eye.*

In contrast, Faulkner seems to craft a very different message about the sense of hearing and socioeconomic class across a variety of his novels. Unlike in Anderson’s text, Faulkner’s characters seem to use their other senses in ways that are *not* about being liberated from powerful and subjugating gazes. Instead, much as sensory critics

might predict, Faulkner's characters use their non-visual senses in order to discipline, punish, and identify those who do not fit dominant socioeconomic norms. In other words, in Faulkner's texts, Anderson's strategy of placing characters in the dark so that they avoid visual judgment based on their social standing and can be heard without bias will not work because Faulkner's characters already use their ears to judge people equally with their eyes.

I. Class Distinctions Based on Regional or National Origin

One social class distinction drawn by many Faulkner characters is the distinction of regional and national difference. Where a person is from has much to do with where a person ends up on the ladder of social class, and, tellingly Faulkner's characters can usually pick up these differences through the ways people sound. Though it is a small scene in *The Sound and the Fury*, this type of class judgment through hearing is perfectly illustrated when Quentin visits a bakery shortly before his suicide and encounters fascinating class implications. Since they arrive at the shop at the same time, Quentin enters the store with a little girl who is deemed a "foreigner" by others. Though we are never told directly what the girl's ethnic heritage is or what makes her "foreign," the girl's "otherness" is irrevocably established by her inability to make the "right" sound, the sound of making a bell ring when she comes into the bakery. Quentin himself remarks on the orderly nature of this bell, which is hanging on the bakery door. It was, he says, "as though it were gauged and tempered to make that single clear small sound so as not to wear the bell out nor to require the expenditure of too much silence in restoring it when the door opened" (125). As the scene proceeds, it becomes clear that, strangely,

the bell is not only an indicator of the doorway into the bakery, but for entrance into the correct social class and the stability of the social order itself.

In fact, the owner of the bakery seems incensed out of all proportion that the little foreign girl did not make the correct sound upon entry. “Why didn’t the bell ring, then?” she asks. And again, “How’d she get in without the bell ringing?” and yet again, “I got to have that bell fixed” (126-7). Even as she waves the door back and forth, and the bell rings, she illogically insists that the bell must be broken (127). Finally, “staring up into the obscurity where the bell tinkled,” she says “Them foreigners […]. Take my advice and stay clear of them, young man” (127). Clearly, in Faulkner’s text, making the right sound makes one decipherable to others in the processing of social norms in the novel. The little girl’s inability to make the correct sound upon entry, which by a more logical explanation is probably just due to her size as a child or the fact that she entered with Quentin, is instead explained by the shop proprietress as a social breach that indicates foreign-ness and a lower social class.

In opening scene of *The Hamlet*, we find an equally perplexing and complicated notion of how sounds render a person foreign or of a different class. When describing how the people in the area have mostly forgotten why the decaying mansion in their hamlet is known as the Old Frenchman place, the narrator briefly discusses the “Fren-chman” himself. Oddly, instead of stating that people knew this early inhabitant was French because he spoke with a French accent, the narrator insists that the way people get identified into the social order does not just depend on how they sound but also on the ideas and social class of the people who are listening to them. We are told that this man was only “possibly” a foreigner and “not necessarily” even French (4). Instead, de-

spite whatever his nationality or linguistic background might have been, the people simply label him as French because he does not *sound* exactly like them. The passage reads as follows: "[A]nyone speaking the tongue with a foreign flavor […] would have been a Frenchman regardless of what nationality he might affirm" (4). This is of course a bit strange considering that it means that no matter what a person said about himself, or how exactly he sounded, others had the power to use their ears in order to change his sounds and his words to make their own "positive" identification of his heritage, no matter how erroneous. The situation becomes even more complex when the narrator asserts that if this very same "Frenchman" had settled just a few miles away in Jefferson, the "city people" there would have insisted that his accent meant he was a Dutchman (4). Thus, the way this man sounded was interpreted differently by different ears depending on the social class of not just the speaker but the hearers -- whether they were townspeople or people from in the country. This once again reaffirms the sensory studies position that the non-visual senses do not give information that is uniformly true, but rather, people use these senses to make a variety of social judgments that are highly variable depending on their own social class and context.

Two other brief examples of situations where characters judge and class others based on the ways they sound occur in *The Town* and in *Light in August*. In *The Town*, we learn that Ratliff, who as a successful salesman and well-liked figure in both the hamlet community and the town community, is usually a confident figure, has definite insecurities about the way his sounds are perceived differently in these two different social contexts. In the rural region of the hamlet, Ratliff's country accent serves him well; however, when he comes to Jefferson, the young boy Chick corrects his grammar sev-

eral times. Ratliff expresses both frustration and embarrassment that a child hears flaws in how he sounds, and he is clearly aware that sounds lead to judgment because he asserts that he has worked hard to shift the way he talks. He says, “For ten years now […] I been listening […] trying to learn – teach myself to say words right. And, jest when I call myself about to learn and I begin to feel a little good over it, here you come, of all people, correcting me back to what I been trying for ten years to forget” (*T* 260). That Ratliff has spent a decade of embarrassment over his speech, and has put forth obvious effort in correcting the way he sounds indicates that he knows there are social and class privileges to being heard the “right” way. Likewise, in *Light in August*, Joe Christmas realizes after becoming Joanna Burden’s lover and listening to her talk that the way she sounds has much to do with why the town cannot forget her social class status as an outsider even though she has lived among them her entire life. He says, “[W]hen she spoke even now, after forty years, among the slurred consonants and the flat vowels of the land where her life had been cast, New England talked as plainly as it did in the speech of her kin who had never left New Hampshire” (240-1). Once again in this example, a character’s ranking in the socioeconomic order depends on how she sounds to others; while Joanna’s birth would properly have coded her as a true “Southerner” and an insider, her accent still meant she was classed as an outsider.

While the little girl in the bakery, Ratliff, and Joanna Burden all express or experience class discomfort, exclusion, or prejudice because of how they sound to their peers, some other characters are able to knowingly exploit the ways that sounds make them seem to others. These characters can shift how they impact the ears of others and do so for their own social or economic gain. For example, in *Light in August*, we learn

that one of the reasons Gavin Stevens has been successful in leadership positions is that he can audibly shift his speaking depending on who he is engaging. Despite the fact that Gavin is a city man, we are told that, “He has an easy quiet way with country people […] talking to them in their own idiom” (444). Likewise, in *Go Down, Moses*, Mollie’s grandson moves north and then purposefully tries to rid himself of his racial and regional sounds to enhance his social standing in his new environment. As he sits in jail talking to a young worker who is trying to ascertain his identity, we are told that he has “a voice which was anything under the sun but a southern voice or even a negro voice” (351). This young man has successfully rid himself of the cultural baggage of region and race in the way that he sounds. Therefore, while sounds can be used to classify people and then trap them in certain socioeconomic class identities, characters who understand these auditory codes can manipulate them for their own ends.

II. Sounds of Modernity and Shifting Class Connotations

In addition to auditory judgments based on a person’s regional or national origins, issues of sounds and socioeconomic class in Faulkner also arise around changing societal conditions due to advancing modernity. As the plantation economy crumbled, other industries arose; for example, in texts like *Light in August* and *Go Down, Moses*, Faulkner describes the mill culture where men like Lucas Burch, Byron Bunch, and Rider make a living. The sounds of these environments are sharply different from the sounds of the plantation and have different implications for the socioeconomic statuses of the men involved. At least two times in *Go Down, Moses*, we are exposed to the sounds that ran plantations. The first one is noted by Lucas Beauchamp, who notices

when the "plantation bell rang for noon, the flat, musical, deliberate clangs" (47). The second sound happens at "Warwick," the name Sophonsiba insists on calling the plantation home she shares with her brother Hubert, and is that of a young black child blowing a horn at the gates (9). Importantly, both of these sounds have to do with legacies of black slave labor. The plantation bell orders when black men and women must work, must eat, and are allowed to rest; it is literally the sound of white power and control.[11] The second sound is made by a child who is a slave being used by the white mistress of the plantation to raise her own social status by giving an air of pomp and circumstance to her home via the heraldic nature of the horn the child blows.

In contrast to these sounds, both of which are implicated in white power and control, the sounds of "modernity" in the later industries have very different implications. The best example of this resides in the white character Byron Bunch. As noted above, Byron is a sawmill employee, and as such, his life is regulated by the noise of the whistle that keeps time for the men as they work (44, 48). Through the sound of this whistle (which can be interpreted as representing the impersonal and implacable nature of modern industrialization and factory-type life), Byron and his fellow white workers are mechanized and controlled. Thus, it is no longer black slaves on plantations whose lives and labor are ordered and controlled by bells; now white men are also reduced to cogs in a machine that uses their labor for someone else's profit, and this is revealed by the fact that they too must obey the whistle in their ears. In fact, Byron has become so entrenched in this system that he even keeps "his own time to the final second of an imaginary whistle" on Saturdays, hearing the all-powerful whistle in his mind even when he

[11] For a more detailed description of the ways that bells were used for control in the process of colonization and slavery, read Mark Smith's overview in *Sensing the Past* (56).

does not have to do so (47-8). Thus, the way the modern workplace sounds versus the plantation sounds described by Faulkner during earlier times says a great deal about the shifts in economic class experienced by white men.

The upward mobility of lower classes into previously upper-class arenas of business is also discussed in *The Town* when Flem Snopes infiltrates the banking system, a clear symbol of shifting economic power and social class. At one point, we learn through an interaction between Mr. Garraway, a white store owner, and Gavin Stevens that there are clearly some anxieties inherent in this infiltration and destabilization of the top echelon of businessmen in Jefferson. Though as white, upper-class men, Gavin and Garraway should have been allowed to speak freely, loudly, and confidently when they are with the group of black men in the store, they ultimately have to lower the sounds they make and have a whispered conversation when discussing the scandal between de Spain, Eula, and Flem. Gavin explains that this shift in sound is because they could not dare to be overheard as "two white men discussing in a store full of Negroes a white woman's adultery. *More: adultery in the very top stratum of a white man's town and bank*" (314, emphasis mine). Although this is a small example, it is a telling one. Clearly there are issues of race anxiety present in the allusion to hiding a white woman's sexuality from black men; however, Gavin is also explicit in his declaration that he and Garraway feel great anxiety over such a lower-class scandal happening in the heart of upper-class economic Jefferson society. Such an event seems to threaten their position of white, upper-class superiority, and this anxiety is realized in the ways that their voices must suddenly become silenced and quiet.

These sounds of modernity and the class distinctions they make between groups of people also arise in *The Town* when Jefferson begins to shift from a horse-based transportation community to one that is reliant on the new invention, the automobile. The narrator tells us that the first home-made car that is driven in Jefferson is “stinky” and “noisy” and represents “a promise of destiny which would belong to the United States” (12). Thus, the car becomes a symbol of wealth and status (i.e. the “promise of destiny”) but also something marginalized as smelly and loud (and thus perhaps a bit low class). Mr. Mallison clearly has difficulty navigating the confusing class symbols associated with cars, and more than once, he expresses his conflicting feelings through ideas of noise and smell. On the one hand, Mallison and his brother-in-law Gavin suffer a bit of humiliation from the men in the town who have cars and who tellingly use the sounds of their cars to mock other men. Twice Gavin and Mallison sit inside the house and are forced to listen to other males purposefully making noise with automobiles to mock Gavin’s love life: the first when Mr. de Spain does it to discourage Gavin from pursuing Eula (58-67), and the second when Matt Levitt does it in anger over Gavin’s courtship of Linda (185-7). The example of Matt Levitt is particularly cogent because he is clearly younger and of a lower social class than the older and more-established and respected Gavin, and this illustrates how upper middle-class men like Gavin and Mallison are caught in a bind. They clearly cannot compete with the flashy and loud younger men who can use their new cars as (noisy) status symbols. On the other hand, they also cannot risk alienating other members of their class by purchasing an invention that was still perceived as a low-class nuisance to the ears and nose. Mallison expresses this conundrum perfectly (and by referencing the senses) when he refutes his wife’s as-

sertion that he secretly desires a car himself. He exclaims, “Me own one of those stinking noisy things? I wouldn’t dare. Too many of my customers use horses and mules for a living” (63). Thus, the sound and the smell of cars are also important indicators of the changing and destabilizing nature of a class system that is being shifted by modernity.

III. Class: It’s All a Matter of Taste

Another sensory clue to the nature of socioeconomic class systems in Faulkner’s fiction centers on the sense of taste. Multiple times, we encounter characters who insist that palates are an indicator of one’s place in the social order, and food frequently gets classed by the same terms as people do. Readers are told matter-of-factly that there is “negro food,” “country food,” and “fancy food” (*LA* 334-35,143). For example, in explaining to the woman who runs the orphanage what type of life he plans to give Joe, Mr. McEachern connects the tastes of certain foods with the type of idleness and debauchery one might expect of a child being raised in an upper-class home. In contrast, McEachern says that he wants to raise Joe away from “fancy food,” and indeed, the first meal he feeds him is “country food cooked three days ago” (*Light* 143).

That social order is encoded in the taste of food becomes clear at two other points in *Light in August* as well. The first concerns Gail Hightower, who, as noted in the last chapter, has fallen from a fairly upper-class position (he is well-educated and was a minister) to a lower class status due to his perceived queerness. Apparently, the town decides that this change in status also means that Hightower’s sense of taste, his very taste buds, must be treated accordingly as well. When they finally determine that he is not going to leave the town and begin to send him food after the scandal of his wife’s

death, we are told “[T]hey were the sort of dishes which they would have sent to a poor mill family” (73). Hightower’s sense of taste must lower itself to fit with his new station in the socioeconomic system; though he is an upper-class white male, he must now limit his sense of taste to that of a poor mill worker. The second instance also concerns a white family that has fallen so low on the social register that they begin to endanger the town’s ideas of white racial superiority. Mr. Hines and his wife become so poor that they are literally starving until black families begin to bring them food. This is difficult for the white people in the town to cope with because people who give charity to others are clearly in a better economic position than those they are helping. By accepting the “black” food, Hines and his wife place themselves lower on the socioeconomic ladder than black people and shatter cherished ideas that black and white people taste food differently and that white palates are more refined that black ones. Clearly, the Hines’ are grateful for the food and do not mind eating it no matter what its source. The narrator says that the only way the town can cope with such an egregious anomaly of sensory norms and this threat to their social system is by ignoring it “since it is a happy faculty of the mind to slough that which conscience refuses to assimilate” (341).

IV. Conclusions

As discussed in the beginning of this chapter, one major difference between Faulkner’s work and that of Anderson in *Winesburg, Ohio* is that while Anderson seems to assert that class differences melt away as long as people cannot see one another, Faulkner’s fiction is much more aligned with the sensory studies assertion that class differences can also be determined and enacted through the non-visual senses too. In

Faulkner's fiction, class distinctions that occur along regional and cultural differences, or via the influx of modernity, or even through a fall from social grace like Hightower's are all interpreted and indicated by a variety of smells, sounds, and even the way food tastes. These sensory cues have much to tell readers of Faulkner about the insecurities, contradictions, and shifts occurring in the socioeconomic belief systems of his characters.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

My interest in sensory studies began in quite an arbitrary fashion several years ago when I happened to hear Mark M. Smith speak on smells and sensory history at a lecture and was intrigued enough to purchase a copy of his book, *How Race is Made*. At the time, I failed to connect my interest in the historical stories Smith related with my professional identity as a scholar of literature; this was a text from a historian after all, something I was reading simply for pleasure in my spare time. However, as I began to encounter the work of more sensory scholars, I realized that I found myself noticing sensory paradigms everywhere I turned: in conversations with friends, in dialogue on television, and, most importantly, in the literature I read and studied. Perhaps the idea that most remained with me from Smith's lecture (similar to a phrase from his text that I quote earlier in this dissertation) is the idea that there are prejudices that inhere within noses, ears, tongues and skin. This is the idea that I continually noticed in the world around me; truly people frequently (and usually quite unconsciously) make a wide variety of judgments regarding how others sound and smell, what they like to taste and eat, and who they want to touch, and these assumptions and prejudices are usually not challenged. Because they come from "the body" rather than the brain, it is as if we assume these judgments must be natural, authentic, and real, which is quite odd really considering that our minds and our eyes are parts of our bodies as well. No matter how we take in information, whether through our eyes or our other senses, we process and then form judgments according to a wide variety of social beliefs, structures, and values. There is nothing especially more "natural" or "true" about the way we form judgments

that come to us through our noses, ears, or skin than the information that we receive through our eyes.

After becoming interested in the works of sensory scholars, not only did I notice sensory trends in the world around me, but when I began re-reading several Faulkner texts that I had not encountered in many years, I was shocked at the plethora of sensory allusions and the ways that his characters continually and relentlessly positioned others in social hierarchies. Persistently, these judgments happened via the manner that characters interpreted the ways other characters smelled or sounded or by their judgments about the things they thought other characters enjoyed eating or touching. I literally could not believe how easily I had skipped over these details during past readings; however, I think doing so is relatively common. Perhaps even in literature, we are so used to the senses being "naturalized" that we never stop to think that the ways characters use their noses, ears, tongues, and skin to judge others needs to be closely analyzed from a critical perspective. As mentioned in the introduction, most Faulkner critics who have noticed his use of the senses tend to neglect a sensory studies approach, choosing instead to think of smells or sounds in a strictly symbolic way, querying for example what abstract idea a certain smell is supposed to represent. Rarely did I find critics who recognized that while a certain *smell* might be a noun, sniffing, tasting, hearing, and touching are verbs, actions committed by characters as they navigated the social hierarchies in these texts.

This in turn led me to wonder what would happen if a sensory studies analysis was conducted over a wide number of Faulkner's texts. Would a close reading of the sensory actions committed by these characters reveal sensory patterns of judgment, of

Foucauldian dividing practices, of racial, gender, sexual, or socioeconomic codes? As I hope the preceding chapters have made clear, I believe the answer to this question is a resounding and undeniable yes. Faulkner's characters consistently judge others through the non-visual senses and frequently identify the people they want to either align themselves with or divide themselves from by using their noses, ears, tongues, and skin. Moreover, after conducting this research, I am more convinced than ever that literary critics and scholars should be a part of the quickly growing interdisciplinary field of sensory studies. Like our colleagues in history, anthropology, and sociology, we have much to contribute when it comes to analyzing sensory cultural patterns embedded in literature, and this work needs to expand outward beyond Faulkner alone.

Though the Faulkner canon is in many ways a perfect vehicle for sensory studies analysis (his prolific writing career allows us to study these patterns over a wide variety of texts, and his work is saturated with cultural studies topics of race, class, gender, and sexuality), as I have worked on this project, I have also been compiling the numerous instances of sensory judgments I have found occurring in other texts of U.S. southern literature. This process has assured me that the overwhelming number of examples I found in Faulkner where characters rely on their non-visual senses to enforce taboos and community values are also present in many, many other southern texts. I have realized that Faulkner is certainly not an isolated case, and it is exciting and intriguing to ponder what new readings and discoveries might be found in other southern novels if we apply a sensory studies approach to them as well.

To support my assertion that sensory moments abound in the works of other southern authors, I would like to conclude this dissertation by offering here four brief ex-

amples of other texts that make this point. By providing these overviews, I hope to suggest directions where further sensory studies work in southern literature might take place. First, I illustrate the ways that queerness and touch are depicted in two of Faulkner's contemporaries, Sherwood Anderson[12] and Lillian Smith, and secondly, I discuss queerness in a recent young adult novel by Julia Watts. Finally, I offer a racial, gendered, and classed reading of a contemporary text, Kathryn Stockett's *The Help*, which is a current bestseller. Though these may seem like rather arbitrary selections, they are not. First, I think it is important to contrast Faulkner's work with two authors who were writing close to the same time period to show how his contemporaries were also very adept at using the senses to explore similar social taboos. Secondly, by examining two southern texts that are more current, we can explore how belief-systems and interpretations regarding the senses have both sometimes shifted and sometimes remained consistent between Faulkner's time period and the current cultural moment of Stockett and Watts.

I. Queer Touch in Winesburg, Ohio *and* Strange Fruit

Characters in both *Winesburg, Ohio* and in *Strange Fruit,* by fellow American modernists Sherwood Anderson and Lillian Smith, respectively both explore the desires and consequences of queerness. Notably, while in Faulkner's work, taboos are frequently explored via smelliness, both Anderson and Smith instead rely most heavily on the sense of touch. In *Winesburg,* the topic of queerness arises quickly in the very first story, "Hands," a quite appropriate title considering that in the story, touch rather than

[12] Ohio native Sherwood Anderson is of course not known as a southern writer; however, I include him here due to the influence he had on William Faulkner and thus, subsequently, on southern literature.

vision is the primary sense characters use to identify queerness in themselves and in others. Wing, the main character in the story, is associated with queerness in several ways. First, he tells the young reporter George about a "dream," a time when "clean-limbed young men" came in "crowds" to "gather about the feet of an old man who sat beneath a tree […] and talked to them," all images that quickly invoke ancient Greek with its acceptance of love between men and between men and boys. Later, the narrator informs readers that Wing has previously been accused of sexually touching boys, and though this accusation may not be true, Wing's very reason for being remains associated with love of boys, even years later after he reaches Winesburg. The narrator says of him, "[…] he still hungered for the presence of the boy, who was the medium through which he expressed his love of man" (13). As Wing's story unfolds, it becomes clear that once again, Foucauldian dividing and disciplining practices are occurring through senses other than the visual; instead, queerness is both expressed and punished through the sense of touch. No one ever "sees" Wing do anything. Instead, when the young boys are questioned, Wing's queerness is established through how he has touched: "he put his arms around me," says one boy, and "his fingers were always playing in my hair," says another (12). Wing himself, not entirely understanding his difference from others, concludes that his "hands must be to blame" (13). Ironically, these queer infractions of touch must then be disciplined by touch as well: "hard knuckles" and "fists" deliver Wing's punishment (12).

When George realizes there is something different about Wing, he too locates this difference as not being in Wing's whole body, a body that sees, hears, and smells, but only in Wing's hands, the primary bodily location connected to the sense of touch. In

the scene where they speak intimately together, Wing noticeably shuts down the other senses of both himself and of George thereby highlighting the importance of touch and touch alone. During the scene, Wing's own eyes become compromised because they "glow" and fill with tears, and he passionately urges George to "shut his ears" (12). It is after both sight and hearing are challenged in this way that Wing "forgets himself" and allows his hands to reach out and touch George (12). Looking back on the incident, George once again locates Wing's queerness and its unspeakable nature not with vision, sound, or smell, but by touch, thinking to himself after he shivers with dread, "I'll not ask him about his hands […]. There's something wrong [with them], but I don't want to know what it is" (12).

Queerness and its association with touch also occurs in Lillian Smith's *Strange Fruit* via the character of Laura Deen, who may be developing a lesbian relationship with her friend Jane. Laura's mother, Alma Deen, worries about the closeness between the two friends, asking Laura, "Do you think it's wise – to go around with older women so much? After all, Jane Hardy is so much older than you. Why do you like – that type of woman?" (242). Later she tells her daughter, "There're ---women, Laura, who aren't safe for young girls to be with," and "There're women who are --- unnatural. They're like vultures ---women like [Jane]" (243). When Alma goes through her daughter's letters and things, she realizes that Laura and Jane have been talking about naked bodies, and she finds a small naked female torso that Laura has made out of clay and learns it is Jane who posed nude for the figurine (67). Once again queerness and its resulting disciplinary regulation and punishment remain unseen, off-stage and out of the realm of

vision, and instead, both the transgression and the disciplining of queerness function through the sense of touch and hands.

For example, Laura, rather than speaking of her feelings for Jane, symbolically touches Jane's naked body through the tactile formation of the clay with her hands. Additionally, when Laura's mother, Alma, laments her daughter's transgression across sexual norms, rather than overtly acknowledge what she has *seen* (the naked statue representing Jane's body), she says of Laura's actions and feelings, "After all, it is a matter of idle *hands*," (71, emphasis mine). As in *Winesburg,* (where in order for the "Greek dream" to be discussed, Wing's eyes are compromised and George's ears are shut), Alma too loses one of her senses (vision) when she is forced to confront Laura's queerness. We are told that the room suddenly "turns black, and for a moment, she could see nothing" (70). In this period of blindness, Alma too chooses to discipline the "touch" of queerness she has just discovered in her daughter by literally "taking the figure more securely in her plump white hands, she kneaded and pressed and pounded it with slow deliberateness until it was reduced to a shapeless wad" (72-73). As she does so, the sun comes into her eyes, and the reader is told she is "blinded by the glare" (72). This episode in Smith's text thus has interesting overtones with Anderson's "Hands," since in both, queerness, which could not be seen and which as "the love that dare not speak its name" could not be heard, is instead expressed through the sense of touch. However, unlike some of the small liberating spaces opened up in *Winesburg* when characters escape Foucault's "trap" of the visual by creating their own subjectivity through story-telling in the dark, in terms of queerness, such a space does not seem possible in either *Winesburg* or *Strange Fruit.* Instead, the sense of touch, while allow-

ing queerness to arise and be discussed in these novels, is also the very sense that is used in both texts to crush and punish its possibilities (the hands that beat Wing, and the hands of Alma crushing Laura's statue of Jane). Both of these modernist examples from Faulkner's contemporaries reveal that authors besides Faulkner were using the senses as a way to explore social taboos and boundary crossings.

A more recent text that also explores queerness and the senses in the southern U.S. landscape is *Finding H.F.,* a young adult novel by Julia Watts (2001). The closeted lesbian narrator of *Finding H.F*., Heavenly Faith (H.F.), relates her impression of what it is like to grow up both southern and queer. Her best friend Bo, a young gay male who attends high school with her in a small Kentucky town, constantly gets called a faggot and beaten up by other boys, usually with the tacit approval of nearby teachers and coaches. Bo himself has never come out as a homosexual (he even refuses to talk about his sexual orientation with H.F. for most of the novel); however, most of the town seems able to confidently identify that he is gay and that H.F. is lesbian. Early in the novel, H.F. explains this ability of teenagers in little southern communities to recognize queerness by saying, "Like lions on nature shows that sniff out which gazelle is ripest for the picking, those people can sniff out [our] difference – and it's a smell they hate" (8). Shortly thereafter, she extends this ability to the adults as well, noting, "But most teachers pretend not to notice [that Bo is repeatedly being beaten by gangs of other boys] because they're just older versions of the boys who are kicking the crap out of the 'faggot.' They also smell that Bo's different, and they think he deserves a good butt whipping because of it" (8-9).

Most of the action in *Finding H.F*. takes place on a road trip the two teenage characters take through Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama. Other than this mutual fascination with depicting life in the southern region of the United States, Watts' novel shares relatively little with the novels William Faulkner wrote around a half-century earlier. Published in 2001, *Finding H.F.* is crafted for a young audience, is set in the present day, and won the Lambda Literary Award for overtly engaging with the topic of high school homosexuality as its primary theme. However, despite these dissimilarities with the work of Anderson, Faulkner, or Lillian Smith, it is striking to note that when H.F., a contemporary character of present-day society, wants to explain how people in the South identify difference, once again we are told that such identification practices are not happening primarily through vision; instead, people rely on their other senses, in this case an ability to smell whether those around them are gay or lesbian. This policing through olfaction is an important link between the southern cultures described by the these earlier authors and the southern cultures described by Watts in hers: although these are vastly different novelists writing in very different eras, apparently the belief that characters have the ability to identify (and then violently punish) those who break social taboos like that of queerness through their non-visual senses remains disturbingly intact at least fifty years beyond the work of Faulkner and Smith and over eighty years beyond the publication of *Winesburg, Ohio.*

II. The Help

Another recent text that is an intriguing comparison to the ways Faulkner uses non-visual senses in his texts is Kathryn Stockett's 2009 bestseller *The Help*. Though a

comparison of Stockett's work with Faulkner's might seem odd at first given some of the more obvious disparities between these authors, on the other hand, both novelists focus on how race functions between white and black people who are thrown into intimate settings in their homes and small communities and who must then navigate a variety of spoken and unspoken intricate racial rules. Both texts query class and gender roles as well. As the following analysis seeks to show, while some of this societal navigation certainly takes place through vision and cognition, it is also navigated by the other often-less-examined senses such as touching or smelling.

Interestingly, though Stockett's *The Help* was published nearly seventy-five years after *Absalom, Absalom!* and though its setting also occurs years later in time (the 1960's), the southern prohibitions of touch and the fear of contagion that were explored above in my chapter on race are also alive and well in *The Help* too. In this fictional world, clearly racial lines are still being understood through the skin and not just through the eyes or the mind. For example, white people in *The Help* continually and anxiously police touch and disease between the races (and sometimes even the classes). One of the lessons Aibileen points out to Skeeter is how a maid is instructed to always hand a white person something, a fact Skeeter notices when her own maid hands her a drink: "She sets my coffee down in front of me. She doesn't hand it to me. Aibileen told me that's not how it's done, because then your hands might touch (245). When Miss Hilly and Miss Leefolt sit and grimly speculate on what it would be like if integration happened, it is the specter of touch that Hilly employs, warning, "Do you want Nigra people living right here in this neighborhood? Touching your bottom when you pass on the street?" (290). A major plotline in the novel centers around Miss Hilly's determination

that black women and white women should have separate bathrooms so that they do not have to touch the same surfaces in intimate ways and thereby get diseases. Miss Leefolt exhibits the kind of "visceral" fear and fury of interracial touching that Mark Smith argues exists in southern culture and that is expressed by Rosa Coldfield when she (Miss Leefolt) catches her daughter using the maid's toilet. She hisses, "This is dirty out here, Mae Mobley. You'll catch diseases! No no no!" (95). She also corrects her daughter's indiscretion through violent touches of her own. Aibileen says, "I hear her pop [Mae Mobley] again and again on her bare legs" (95). That this fear of disease is driven by race in *The Help* just as it is in *Absalom, Absalom!* is perfectly clear to Aibileen, who says, "I want to yell so loud that Baby Girl can hear me that dirty ain't a color, disease ain't the Negro side a town" (96). Additionally, just as in *Absalom, Absalom!,* an unwanted touch initiated by a black person is immediately and harshly corrected by the white person. When Minny reaches out and touches a white doctor on the arm without his permission, she says that "he looks at me like I'm a nigger" and then "shuts the door in my face" (237), one of the few times in Stockett's text that this racial slur is even used and certainly echoic of Rosa's use of it towards Clytie.

However, in Stockett's text, touch and its power to communicate and even subvert boundaries is even more complicated than in Faulkner's. White people are not just afraid of black touch but also of touching those of other classes. Skeeter's mother is fine with her feeding the homeless, but admonishes her "to make sure I wash my hands thoroughly with soap afterward" (*Help* 152) and also forbids her to live with common girls in an apartment because they will have "strange cooking smells" there that might rub off on Skeeter (56). Skeeter herself experiences this type of sensory snubbing when she

visits Stuart's family, a family higher on the social ladder than is her own. Without saying a word, Stuart's mother uses touch to make her opinion of Skeeter perfectly clear. Skeeter says, "She smiles and slides her hand down my arm. I gasp as a prong of her ring scratches my skin" (262). And, lest this be interpreted as an accident, it shortly becomes clear that Mrs. Whitworth is very aware of touch and how it could be used not just to put Skeeter in her place, but that she may believe that Skeeter's touch is actually contagious or soiled due to her social standing. When Skeeter touches Stuart in front of his mother, she turns to "see his mother smiling like I just snatched her best guest towel and wiped my dirty hands all over it" (265).

Even more importantly, though, despite these reminders of the fear, racism, and classism exhibited in the southern social codes of touch, in Stockett's text, touch is also encoded with the possibilities for change and true connections between women that simply are not possible in the setting Faulkner depicts. The night of the Medgar Evers' shooting when Aibileen and Minny are sitting together in grief, Aibileen says, "I turn off the radio, take Minny's hand in mine" (196). Although this is just one small line in a lengthy novel, knowing the sensory history of the South makes it resonate with importance. Black skin, typically coded as thick, unfeeling, or contagious, is suddenly capable of giving warmth, comfort, friendship, and humanity. Likewise, it is interracial touch that first opens Skeeter's mind to an alternate reality from the cultural norms she was taught as a southern child. She says that Constantine (who is black) "pressed her thumb hard in the palm of my hand, something we both knew meant *Listen. Listen to me*" (62). Skeeter remembers, "But with Constantine's thumb pressed in my hand, I realized I actually had a choice in what I could believe" (63). Once again, then, it is goodness and wisdom that

is coming from black touch, something vastly different from Miss Rosa's perspective, and the fact that Skeeter can recognize the true meaning of this touch is an early indicator of her later ability to rebel against racial hierarchies.

White on black touch also becomes a positive way of breaking boundaries in this text. Miss Celia (a white woman), who gets Minny (a black woman) thinking about whether "lines" really exist in the world, first begins breaking through Minny's protective façade when "she grabs hold" of Minny's arm and then, says Minny, "she hugs me tight around the neck until I kind of pat her on the back and peel her off" (134). Celia not only gives Minny tactile comfort in this scene, but the moment also upends the power dynamic since it is Minny, the black woman, who enforces her own space and who decides when she will end the skin-to-skin contact with a white person rather than vice versa. Minny demonstrates this same ability when she finally acknowledges Skeeter as a fellow human being after months of refusing to touch her or make eye contact with her. When Skeeter gets the news that she is being ostracized by her white friends, "[Minny] give Miss Skeeter a touch on the shoulder, real quick, keep her eyes straight like she ain't done it," a tremendous leap of faith (and touch) for someone such as Minny who has experienced the violently racist white women (292). As a sign of their deepening friendship and growing equality, Aibileen also initiates hugs with Skeeter more than once in the text (385 and 435).

Thus, the sense of touch is both a constant and a profound difference between the works of Faulkner and Stockett. The fact that the fear of black contagion remains constant in two texts written so far apart supports sensory historians' assertions that this is a deeply-rooted and long-lasting social construct. However, (and more hopefully)

some of the first hints of the progressive social changes that Stockett's novel explores are also depicted through the sense of touch. Overall, while it is easy to dismiss these details of touch as insignificant or to ridicule the palpable fear that some characters show of touching blackness as useless superstition, examining this sensory fear leads us back to a far more real one underneath the surface of these novels and their characters. Namely, if race is so transferable that it can enter in through the senses, if the same diseases can jump from a black body to a white one and vice versa, if white and black women's bodies can embrace, then black can start to seem very close to white and white can seem close to black, and then maybe race is not as clear cut as was believed. From her perspective, Rosa Coldfield is right to fear touch the way she does, understanding perfectly that it could lead to the conclusion that in fact maybe racial difference does not matter or even exist at all.

In addition to considering the sense of touch and how it could be a social action with important racial consequences in both *Absalom, Absalom!* and *The Help*, a sensory comparison of Faulkner and Stockett also reveals issues of the senses and agency, particularly in regard to female characters. Notably, women created by both authors are both confined and defined by the way they sound and smell; however, when considering the ways that women are allowed to use their own senses to navigate the world, an important contrast emerges between Stockett and Faulkner. Namely, as will be illustrated below, in Stockett's work, women are given considerably more latitude to subvert social power systems by the way they use their senses than women are in Faulkner.

Though we often think of gender as something that can be ascertained most readily through vision, more often than not, performance of proper masculinity and feminini-

ty (an ability stressed by many societies and one that has certainly been extremely important in the U.S. South) also consists of exuding not just the right look but the right smells and sounds too. For example, the visual features of many of Faulkner's most famous protagonists are barely described at all (who knows what Caddy Compson *looks* like? Faulkner never really tells us); yet, he describes their odors repeatedly when questions of gendered behavior arise (after all, even a first-time reader of *The Sound and the Fury* can easily tell you what Caddy *smells* like).

In contrast to Faulkner, where multiple texts have to be searched to find even a few instances of women being allowed to smell anything, Skeeter and several of the other women characters in *The Help* demonstrate a very different amount of agency through the use of their senses. For example, some of the things Skeeter is described as actively smelling (and sometimes thereby using to actively judge other people) are: chemicals being used to treat the cotton (70), fertilizer (120), the "Lysoled vomit" in the library (172), Freon and Cadillac leather (240), liquor and cigars (270), an overly ripe Christmas tree (349), fresh air (373), typing ink (357), and cigarette smoke (349). Not only is the volume of items Skeeter is allowed to smell important and very different from the number of things Faulkner's women are allowed to smell, but it is also interesting to note that the things Skeeter as a female character is allowed to smell are not things typically associated with a white southern woman. These are smells associated with unprotected males – the outdoors, farming, drinking, smoking, cars, newspaper ink, and the very unladylike vomit.

As another contrast to Faulkner's women, though one time Skeeter's boyfriend Stuart does look at her as if he wants to "eat her up" (240), for the most part Skeeter is

an active smeller of food rather than being a smelly commodity herself; for example, she smells cinnamon cookies, tea, and lemons when she is in Aibileen's home (144; 149). This is also a significant sensory moment in terms of race since to Skeeter's white nose, Aibileen's home does not smell "black," the way that black dwellings are described in Faulkner. Additionally, in a move that further positions her as a new generation of woman from Faulkner's characters, Skeeter is even allowed the power to smell and judge men. Several times, she comments both positively and negatively on Stuart's smell (171, 240, 354) as well as his father's (270) and her brother's (373). That this ability to smell the world around her is supposed to indicate that Skeeter's generation is different from earlier white women who had less agency is clear when Stockett twice tells readers that Skeeter's mother, one of the lone white women of the older generation present in the book, mysteriously "had almost zero sense of smell" and eventually "lost her power of smell completely" a trait that connects this older-generation character to many of Faulkner's women (374).

Not only is it significant what Skeeter is allowed to smell others, but it is also important to note what Skeeter smells *like*. As noted above, Smith argues (with ample evidence) that for years white people in the South have believed that black people smell innately terrible; thus, white people thought of themselves as smelling good in comparison. Interestingly, Stockett seems to subvert these ideas of white smell in very strategic ways to position Skeeter as someone who is different from other white women. Rather than smelling of perfume or flowers like a beautiful and clean southern white woman should, throughout the text, Skeeter quite literally smells like shit. When she goes out on her date with Stuart, she drives her father's old farm truck, leading a drunken Stuart to

say, "'Your coat smells like' – he leans down and sniffs it, grimacing, 'Fertilizer'" (119), something Skeeter calls attention to again later in the novel (169). Even earlier in the text, Skeeter's mother "squeezes a noisy, farty tube of goo" on her head, once again linking her with flatulence, a negative smell allusion (109). Additionally, right before her date, Skeeter has to wash her armpits with a wet rag (116), an action that connects her with bodily odors and separates her further from the cool, marbled images of the white southern woman on the pedestal. Instead, she is thus linked by smell with someone like the black character Minny, who talks about underarm smell, sweat pads, and says, "I've spent half my life trying not to sweat so much" (130) and who literally gives her shit to a white woman to eat.

The fact that Skeeter smells like an actual human being rather than Faulkner's women, who often smell like tempting food, is an important indicator that Miss Rosa's "eggshell shibboleth" of racial and gender boundaries is indeed going to fall in this novel. This impression is strengthened by what happens with the olfactory powers of the black women in the novel who, importantly, like Skeeter, are given the power to judge others (even white women) through their own senses of smell. Aibileen, confusing (perhaps on purpose?) the word for ammonia, says that Miss Leefolt "smell like pneumonia" after she got a permanent done on her hair thereby turning the tables and indicating that it is actually a white woman who smells like a disease rather than a black one (94). Aibileen is able to execute a similar sensory power shift regarding Miss Hilly's toilet initiative when she teaches Mae Mobley to say that it is the white Miss Hilly who "smell like tee-tee" (94). Additionally, she and Minny judge a fellow black woman when they make fun of Kiki Brown's overwhelming lemon smell in the church (126). At one point, she also

says, “I don’t see, hear, or smell Miss Hilly for two days,” overtly referencing that she can perceive and monitor white women through all of her senses (191).

Aibileen also compares the book she and Miss Skeeter are trying to pitch to the other women as “something big and stinky” that she is nonetheless proud of selling (207-10), embracing pungency as something that is powerful and able to move the world much in the same way Addie is ultimately able to do with her decaying body in *As I Lay Dying.* Minnie is also able to exercise her power to smell and judge white women several times in the text. She notes that Miss Celia is starting to smell “like dirty people” once she stops getting out of bed (336). She hates the way the white women’s perfume lingers at the Robert E. Lee Hotel (222) and is disgusted and sickened by the blood she smells when Miss Celia miscarries (232-4). She is also able to use her sense of smell as a protective mechanism by smelling when her husband is drunk and may be violent (412). These olfactory abilities are all signifiers that both white and black women are starting to exercise more power, judgment, and autonomy in the fictional world they are moving through in contrast to being objectified and judged by others who are always smelling and thus categorizing them. Importantly, they are also a sign that the strict boundaries between white and black women’s physical bodies are collapsing. As Aibileen’s son notices when she puts on white women’s clothes and says she “smell white” (187) the supposed physical differences between white woman and black women are starting to narrow as they begin to smell human to one another rather than to smell just raced.

Of course, the racial and gender sensory stereotypes and boundaries so intricately depicted by Faulkner are not completely gone in *The Help*. As described above,

there is certainly a lingering fear of racial contagion through the sense of touch, and white women, for example, continually express their disapproval of black women by "wrinkling" or "flaring" their noses and/or sniffing at them, both actions that are connected to olfactory racial judgment (186, 330, 363, 408, 428). Hilly in particular does this with her nose when she disdainfully emphasizes to Aibileen that white people and black people are "so *different*" (186). However, in the majority of ways they smell each other, smell themselves, and smell and judge the world around them, the women of *The Help* are allowed a far greater sensory autonomy and racial boundary crossing than are their female counterparts in Faulkner's fiction, something Stockett seems to be doing intentionally to further the overall themes of her text. This of course is not indicative of a "better" text than Faulkner's, simply a contrasting one, one that is reflective of a different time. As these many examples show, though, it is important to note that a strong commonality of the novels of both of these authors is that race, gender, class, power, and personal autonomy are not constructed through vision or the intellect alone. In both Faulkner and in Stockett, intricate sensory signals are being sent and interpreted by a variety of characters (and perhaps even between the authors and the reader), signals that order these fictional worlds and both limit and empower the behaviors of the characters who inhabit them.

III. Final Thoughts

For Faulkner scholars, for scholars of U.S. southern literature, and for scholars of a wide variety of other literature as well, the field of sensory studies can be a useful and enlightening theoretical approach to studying texts and authors from multiple time pe-

riods, revealing sensory patterns of behavior and cultural norms that might otherwise go unnoticed. For the characters of the authors discussed here, the process of building subjectivity, of being subjected by others, and of navigating a variety of norms by using their non-visual senses is a constant exercise and one that readers and critics should note more attentively. In thinking about the future applications of sensory studies to English Studies, it should be noted that not only can a sensory studies approach be a useful and productive theoretical paradigm for literary scholars but is an interesting place where literary studies might possibly blend productively with the field of rhetoric and composition as well, particularly in the arena of visual rhetoric. Though this dissertation focused primarily on the non-visual senses, it is highly useful for literary scholars who are interested in a sensory studies approach to remember that our colleagues in rhetoric have already built a well-theorized system of examining the world through the sense of vision, querying the ways we see and then interpret the world and the people around us. This work can serve as a model for how literary theorists might begin theorizing a sensory approach to literature as well since in a way, with its focus on interpretive vision, visual rhetoric is already a form of sensory studies that exists in the discipline of English. Interestingly, intersecting with the work of historians, anthropologists, and sociologists who are touting the importance of utilizing a multisensory approach, some visual rhetoricians are already widening their scope of inquiry to include studies on the rhetoric of sound, such as the recent article “Voice in the Cultural Soundscape: Sonic Literacy in Composition Studies” by Comstock and Hocks. This type of multisensory scholarship in the field of rhetoric has potentially useful similarities to how a multisensory approach in the field literature might be pursued as well.

Overall, whether one is a historian, a literary scholar, a scholar of rhetoric and composition, or an anthropologist, examining culturally constructed identity categories like gender, race, queerness, or class through all of the senses available is a compelling approach, one that gives us a much more thorough understanding of literature and culture than theoretical constructs that are myopically reliant on vision alone. Applying the theories of sensory studies to Faulkner and other authors through *all* of the senses is an important encouragement to go beyond "seeing" these authors' fictional worlds and invites us to smell, touch, hear, and taste them too, and to remember that in human interaction, whether in fiction or life, there is always more than meets the eye alone.

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