

THE BLUE OF DISTANCE: A STUDY OF SENSORY IMAGERY

IN WILLIAM FAULKNER'S

THE SOUND AND THE FURY

AND

LIGHT IN AUGUST

THESIS

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CHAPTER I  
Introduction to the Study

One facet of William Faulkner's brilliance is suggested by the titles of two major novels: The Sound and the Fury and Light in August. These titles set the stage in a way unlike his others by preparing the reader for a sensorial journey into the Deep South and Cambridge, Massachusetts. The *sound* in The Sound and the Fury and the *light* in Light in August trip our senses before the pages are ever turned. Whereas cinema is restricted to visual and auditory stimuli, novels have the opportunity to engage all five senses (Faulkner especially engages four: sight, sound, smell, and tactile feeling). Faulkner's use of imagery, particularly in the chapters detailing the lives of Benjy Compson, Quentin Compson, Joe Christmas, and the Reverend Hightower, dramatically increases. This thesis focuses on the effects that the sensory imagery has on the reader's perceptions and on what difference these effects create in the readers' emotional responses to the characters. Specifically, I am going to demonstrate that Faulkner engages the reader's senses of sight, sound, smell, and touch, and because of this we are able to fully experience each of the four characters' sensory perceptions. An example of the imagery that will be explored occurs in Quentin's narration, which reaches each of the four senses: "I was running in the *gray darkness* it *smelled of rain* . . . the *damp warm air* released and *crickets sawing* away." There will also be a strong emphasis on synaesthesia—the overlap and blending of the senses—which Faulkner employs brilliantly, as well as the impact that the neologisms, which create a sense of urgency and are connected mostly with Joe Christmas in Light in August, have on the overall pulse of the novel and that sensorially affect readers' experiences.

The aim of this exploration is to demonstrate how the reader's experience is enriched by Faulkner's creating an awareness of the sights, sounds, smells, and tactile feelings that permeate these four characters respective sections, establishing their influence on the readers' overall perceptions. Images offer us the opportunity to live vicariously through the characters, and they compel us to look beyond the printed word to feel our way through the text with our senses and our emotions. With his striking imagery, Faulkner makes it possible for readers to see the shadows, feel the sun, hear the voices, and smell everything from trees to gasoline.

Arthur F. Kinney asserted that "we cannot escape interacting with our environment nor can we escape dynamic involvement with the books we read . . . . Faulkner not only understood this phenomenon, but he everywhere exploits it" (15). The *exploitation* of sense is the beauty of these two novels. The obvious emphasis on sense imagery in the titles selected then as the focus for my thesis is the importance of sensory perception. "Perception," according to David Abram, author of The Spell of the Sensuous, "involves touching as well, and hearing and smelling and tasting. By the term 'perception' we mean that concerted activity of all the body's senses as they function and flourish together" (59). I have selected to study Benjy and Quentin Compson from The Sound and the Fury, and Joe Christmas and Gail Hightower from Light in August because all of them have individually acute, innate perceptive capabilities. Faulkner details their lives and their living in such a manner that if we abandon intellectual scrutiny and prevent any passing of judgment of each character's integrity and instead attempt to live fully in the moment of each chapter, page, passage, and word, we are transported into the living landscape and the hearts of these four character, and we can

perceive the human facts that are embedded in these two exemplary works of fiction. For, ultimately, it is not “human language that is primary, but rather the sensuous, perceptual life-world, whose wild, participatory logic ramifies and elaborates itself in language” (Abram 84). The objective, therefore, is to discover Faulkner’s words and our “native language not mentally but bodily” (Abram 75). “The enigma that is language,” Abram claims, “constituted as much by silence as by sounds, is not an inert or static structure, but an evolving bodily field. It is like a vast, living fabric continually being woven by those who speak” (83). It is first the “sensuous, perceptual world that is relational and weblike in character, and hence that the organic, interconnected structure of any language is an extension or echo of the deeply interconnected matrix of sensorial reality” (Abram 84).

“Alphabetic reading,” according to Abram, “proceeds by way of a new synaesthetic collaboration between the eye and the ear, between seeing and hearing” (125). Furthermore, as soon as we attend to reading, we “attend to its sensorial texture, [as it] discloses itself as profoundly synaesthetic encounter. Our eyes converge upon a visible mark, or a series of marks, yet what they find there is not a sequence of images but of sounds, something heard; the visible letters . . . trade our eyes for our ears” (Abram 124). Abram also states,

Contemporary neuro-scientists study ‘synaesthesia’—the overlap and blending of the senses—as though it were a rare or pathological experience to which only certain persons are prone (those who report ‘seeing sounds’, ‘hearing colors’, and the like), our primordial, preconceptual experience . . . is inherently synaesthetic.

(60)

In an interview conducted at the University of Virginia, Faulkner asserted that Benjy “didn’t know too much about grammar, he spoke only through his senses” (Gwynn and Blotner 95); this statement seems, too, to be an abbreviated explanation of the synaesthetic effect, and it is probably the most outstanding aspect of the first two chapters of The Sound and the Fury. It is an example of “poetic productivity of expressive speech” that lies at the very heart of Faulkner’s use of language (Abram 84). So, again, this thesis will explore how the reader’s experience is enriched by the awareness Faulkner creates of the sights, sounds, smells, and tactile feelings; it will attempt to establish the influence this imagery has on the readers’ overall perceptions.

*Summary of Critical Analyses:*

Because Faulkner is one the most written about American authors, it is almost impossible to look at every critical analysis; therefore, I have reviewed those analyses that were most helpful in my examination of Faulkner’s use of sensorial imagery. The entire Faulkner bibliography can be found at the following website: [www.mcsr.olemiss.edu](http://www.mcsr.olemiss.edu). I have organized my summary chronologically and by reviewing books, essay collections, and journal articles, respectively.

In his book William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country, published in 1963, Cleanth Brooks discusses nature and the natural scene, stating that it is “everywhere in Faulkner’s work . . . . Much more often than mere background and one can point to a number of functions it performs” (29-30). He quotes Faulkner in saying, “the beauty—spiritual and physical—of the South lies in the fact that God has done so much for it and man so little” (32). This beauty “modulates toward a Wordsworthian lament for what

man has done to man as well as what man has done to nature,” according to Brooks. Taking a line from “The Old People,” he writes that “experience is good, ‘even suffering and grieving is better than nothing’” (35). Brooks continues to explore the romantic vein by paralleling particular elements in Faulkner’s work to those by Wordsworth because they both show a “special concern in [their] poetry for the power of nature to shape and mold human character, and therefore [they tend] to attribute to [their] children and peasants and idiots a special access to its beneficent and gracious influence” (36). And though Brooks states that there are many of Faulkner’s characters who obviously revel in nature, it is those that not only revel but are also aware of its every shade and aspect that my study is concerned with.

“The theme of man strained away from nature . . . is only one of several significant Faulknerian themes to be found in Light in August,” states Brooks; he compares this novel to a “bloody and violent pastoral” (54). It is the carefully documented alienation of Joe Christmas and Gail Hightower that Faulkner has seemingly taken great pains to detail (55). It is not this alienation that is pertinent to my study, rather how the alienation colors these two characters’ (as well as Benjy and Quentin, who are equally alienated), abilities to encounter and integrate the sensorial experiences that result.

Francois Pitavy’s book Faulkner’s Light in August, argues that certain key words are so interconnected with each respective character that they “eventually carry the whole personality, take on the very color of obsessions, rages, or outrages, and evoke the character without his ever being named” (57). In this work, published in 1973, Pitavy compares Faulkner’s characters to Hawthorne’s because of the manner by which a few

specific, often abstract, words “represent them and evoke them” (61). Furthermore, the use of metaphors and analogies translate “invisible realities into visual impressions” (61). For example, Hightower’s *flaccid obesity* is suggestive of a man immobile, weak, and removed from the social spectrum of life. “Faulkner’s characters,” according to Pitavy, “are truly the projection, the expression, of a mental image” (64). Pitavy discusses Faulkner’s use of synaesthesia at length for giving characters a *sense of immediacy*, as from Christmas’ words, “I smelling my mouth and tongue weeping” (66).

Pitavy’s analysis is perhaps one of the more crucial to my examination of sensorial imagery and the effect it has on the reader. His work strengthens my thesis in that he states Faulkner “prevents the reader from setting himself apart from the characters, forcing him to share their sensations rather than judge them” (66). This is precisely what I have set out to accomplish—to demonstrate how Faulkner involves, rather than alienates, the reader. Certain characters are presented in such a way that we cannot encounter them without also experiencing them, as well as understanding their perceptions. Although Pitavy remarks that the characters may come across as two-dimensional, he adds that negatively connotative words “pierce beyond the incidental and the ephemeral by contradicting the first impression, thereby giving [the] characters a depth and an aura of mystery which the words associated with them cannot supply” (61).

Pitavy also addresses the likeness of Faulkner’s word images to paintings and sculptures, which “recapture movement and enclose it in a limited area and volume” (70). In visual art, the illusion of movement is achieved at the very moment that movement stops. While Pitavy concentrates on both Christmas’ and Hightower’s chapters, as his study concerns Light in August, the same effect applies to Quentin Compson’s section in

The Sound and the Fury because it provides an almost endless supply of sensorial snapshots. According to Pitavy, “when movement is suddenly frozen, [it gives] the spectator the impression of greater restrained force” (70). Rather than provide a description of a particular landscape, “the rare and studied colors . . . render impressions and feelings” (88). The rhythmic meter of the prose creates a “hypnotic effect, with balanced repetitions and regularly alternating stressed and unstressed syllables turning prose into poetry: ‘as sight and sense drowsily merge and blend’ [6]” (89). Pitavy’s research proved an invaluable source for my thesis.

In 1978, Arthur F. Kinney published Faulkner’s Narrative Poetics: Style as Vision. Kinney writes that “perception is not simply a matter of what we see, or even what we remember of what we see, or even what we wish to remember of what we see, but of fulfilled anticipations of what we expected to see” (22). He focuses, in part, on how images are perceived and understood by the reader, as well as how an author must construct them to make them effective. Quoting Sartre, he explains that “an image can only enter into consciousness if it is itself a synthesis, not an element—a representative function, not an isolated observation” (24). For example, he asserts that “neither Benjy nor Quentin lives in the world of actuality; to them, the real world is composed of memories and voices wholly subjective and internal” (149). This observation may, in part, explain the abundance of fluid and abstract language found in these two chapters of The Sound and the Fury. What is most interesting about Kinney’s analysis to my approach concerns his examination of the functions and interplay of images, rather than opening the door to each sensory image as it might be experienced by the reader.

Prior to the preface of Donald M. Kartiganer's book, The Fragile Thread, published in 1979, is a statement by Faulkner:

Language [is] that meager and fragile thread . . . by which the little surface and corners and edges of men's secret and solitary lives may be joined for an instant now and then before sinking back into the darkness where the spirit cried for the first time and was not heard and will cry for the last time and will not be heard then either. (xii)

Though Faulkner wrote this abject reflection about language, it seems to describe the lives of the characters he wrote about, rather than the words themselves. In fact, there is very little that I have found that is fragile about his use of language; it is anything but that.

Kartiganer's study provides inspiring and helpful insight in this study of the four characters. He asserts that Benjy's section "represents extreme objectivity, a condition impossible to the ordinary mind and far in excess of even the most naturalistic fiction" (7). He adds that Ben demonstrates "the poverty of pure witness of what is unquestionably there" (11). Kartiganer's view that Benjy is "perception prior to consciousness" further reinforces my own assertions regarding Benjy's lack of object constancy, a concept or stage determined by Piaget.

Kartiganer also examines the mirror imagery in The Sound and the Fury and the "metaphoric relationships that unify the book" (63), and he states that metaphors are prevalent in Quentin's section. For example, he points out that "through metaphor [Quentin] informs his confusion with the clarity of hell: 'The pointing and the horror

walled by the clean flame' [144]" (12). He further asserts what the reader knows to be true—that Quentin is time-possessed and “wants nothing more than to replace life with interpretation” (12). The contrast between Benjy and Quentin (and even Jason) is that the latter two are remarkably subjective, “each imposing a distorted view on experience” whereas Benjy can “abstract no order at all” (7).

Kartiganer's comments on Light in August, which he refers to as the “whole sprawling canvas,” are equally helpful. Of Joe Christmas, he states that this “character . . . ‘remains as he is born, an abstraction.’ Like an art image that has never had the privilege of being human, he is never to be merely ‘believed’” (37). Furthermore, Christmas chooses duality, “an image of disorder” (38), for the “mulatto is the Faulknerian symbol of what is beyond comprehension or art” (39). Not unlike Quentin, Hightower, according to Kartiganer, is “suspended between dream and reality” (52). His story is “presented as a magnificent artifact of color and touch and sound, with the whole circumstance of war” (52). So with part of the focus on color, touch, and sound, on dream realities and abstractions, Kartiganer's work is one of the most helpful resources I used.

Eric J. Sundquist's, Faulkner—The House Divided, discusses, in part, Faulkner's vocabulary and the “haunting chambers of consciousness” (15). He states that “Benjy's section is compelling for the simple reason that it reduces the fictional vocabulary to a spare set of images that project, with kaleidoscope accuracy, the whole ‘action’ of the novel” (14). This kaleidoscope of imagery is precisely what I am trying to fragment so that the images can be looked at individually and independent of the whole action. In Quentin's section, according to Sundquist, the writing is beautiful and haunting, “as

though to enact its own willed destruction, [and] cannot resist drifting off into muddled self-examination” (16). I agree that the writing is hauntingly beautiful and that to some degree the language has a life and will of its own; the words and images come into being because Faulkner allows the reader to encounter experiences through each character’s psychological complexities and limitations. We cannot deny that the images are in essence a part of language; it is the words, pictures, sounds, smells, and tactile sensations that I analyze.

James A. Snead’s analysis, Figures of Division: William Faulkner’s Major Novels, presents remarkable analyses of the characters in both The Sound and the Fury and Light in August. Snead points out that “chaos appears in the first words of The Sound and the Fury,” and so sets the stage for the perplexity of the novel (20). He also remarks that in this same novel “in a manner similar to the operation of the poetic metaphor, substitutions conjure up a wished-for reality as if by magic” (24). The phrase “wished-for reality” certainly describes a characteristic of both Benjy and Quentin. In addition, Snead notes that “indeed, in this novel, the unfulfilled state of being constantly *before*, the state of the *not yet*, intrigues Faulkner” (27).

Of Light in August, Snead comments that there is a “merging and synthesis: masculine and feminine, black and white” (86). Much of his focus is on this synthesis, as well as alienation, shadows, and violence. He states that Byron Bunch and Lucas Burch “mirror each other when they speak, called ‘the one’ and ‘the other’” (86), and that Lucas is “Christmas’ darker double. He looks more like a ‘foreigner’ and ‘nigger’ and ‘murderer’ than Christmas does . . . and yet Christmas is the ‘nigger’ whom the community sacrifices” (92). In fact, he “must become the object of a signifying

violence” (93), because the “black is a shadow, and Joe is another version of what the white mind thinks a dark mystery” (91).

While Lena Groves is a “kind of ‘good anima’ or ‘fertility figure’ or ‘earth mother,’ few have been able to explain her place in a novel with Joe Christmas” (90). Furthermore, in regard to Lena, Snead comments that the “very cyclicity of the enveloping Lena Grove story is striking. The symbolism of her circular road (‘My, my. A body does get around’, she repeats) is an apparently redemptive counterpoint to Joe’s linear, fateful, and ‘tragic’ road to death” (96). Joe’s state of being a social outcast, according to Snead, “typically becomes a sexual alienation from which his difficulties with women may derive” (90). The one statement that Snead makes that seems unfounded is that the readers never find out Joe’s actual age (88), though it is stated in the novel that he is thirty-three in present time.

The Crossing of the Ways, by Karl F. Zender, also helpful to my study, focuses on the effects of Faulkner’s use of sound imagery:

For most of Faulkner’s major characters, sound is a mysterious, almost tangible force. It appears to be ubiquitous and sourceless, even when its source is known. It is animate, and it seems to reside in the air, either in the form of voices . . . or in the form of the ‘vast, abateless hum of physical nature’ [Intruder in the Dust 129].

(3)

Observations such as this have assisted my study of sound immensely, as Faulkner’s use of this auditory imagery often exceeds his use of the other senses. Zender points to the

jail section of Requiem for a Nun, as an example of one of Faulkner's characters trying to "outtalk the world":

The agency of countermovement is the longest sentence—forty-nine pages, twenty-eight paragraphlike sections and over twelve thousand words . . . . It's extraordinary length alone should suggest something of the significance it holds as an expression of Faulkner's desire to outtalk the world. (26)

For Zender, Faulkner's concept of voices descending from the air is "one that Faulkner could have inherited from almost any writer in the Western tradition from Homer to Hesiod on down; but romantic and postromantic uses of the idea appear to have influenced him the most" (4). In addition, silence, for Faulkner, was an "ideal condition, a paradisaical state out of which one falls into the imperfection of language" (30). This statement echoes Kartiganer's quotation from Faulkner regarding language as the "fragile thread." Zender notes that silence is a "relative term, not an absolute one: Like 'left' and 'right' and 'near' and 'far', 'silence' and 'sound define each other" (31). Much of Zender's observations add significantly to my study of sound in Quentin's section, and therefore much of his analysis is integrated into the second chapter of this thesis.

In his book Spare the Child: The Religious Roots of Punishment and Psychological Impact of Physical Abuse, Philip Greven gives a lengthy account of his study, which he claims "could use Joe Christmas as exhibit A":

The past holds a powerful grip upon the future by shaping feelings, actions, and beliefs in the present. The pain and suffering experienced by children who have been physically punished resonate through time, first during the seemingly

endless days and nights of childhood and adolescence, and later through the lives we lead as adults. The feelings generated by the pain caused by adults' assaults against children are mostly repressed, forgotten, and denied, but they actually never disappear. Everything remains recorded in our innermost beings, and the effects of punishment permeate our lives, our thought, our culture, and our world . . . . Or, as Faulkner puts it, 'Memory believes before knowing remembers. Believes longer than recollects, longer than knowing even remembers.' (20)

In my findings, this is probably the clearest and cleanest explanation of the first lines of chapter six in Light in August. Nowhere else have I found such an intelligent interpretation of one of Faulkner's most poetically profound paragraphs. The psychological effects of Christmas' punishments provide insight into why he perceives the world the way he does, and it is important for the readers to understand Faulkner's use and presentation of sensory details in order to allow themselves to be fully moved by what Christmas encounters throughout his life. Greven continues by stating that "while Joe has no access to his inner life, Faulkner lets us eavesdrop on Joe's childhood and adolescence, on those formative moments deeply buried in Joe's psyche that drive his existence" (24). I believe that if we are truly prepared for the experience, Faulkner has provided us the opportunity to do more than eavesdrop—he allows us, as readers, to become a multitude of Joe Christmases; not in actuality of course, rather by means of empathy and vicarious experiences. Like Snead, however, Greven presents a curious determination of Joe's present age, stating that he lived for thirty-six, instead of thirty-three, years (25).

In The Return of the Repressed, author Doreen Fowler also takes a psychological view predominantly of Benjy and Caddy in The Sound and the Fury, and Joe Christmas and Gail Hightower in Light in August. Fowler concentrates on Lacan, using his theories to analyze characters and offering a brief introduction to Lacan's theories:

There are two crucial moments in the development of human subjectivity. One is the mirror phase, and the other is the oedipal complex. In the mirror phase, the next stage of development in Lacan's narrative of the self, the infant, who still exists in the imaginary plane, begins to have an incipient sense of self. The mirror phase, while a function of the imaginary, is a step in the transition from imaginary to the symbolic register of being. While still identifying with the mother, the child begins the process of constructing an 'I'. (7)

Fowler relates this point directly to Benjy, because in his "interior monologue 'there is no central *I* through whose agency his speech might be ordered and made meaningful; in like manner, there is no sense of identity to make his experience his'" (34). Caddy, on the other hand, has filled "the position of mother in relation to her brothers, a position abdicated by Mrs. Compson" (32). Fowler also explains that Caddy's name is,

derived from the latin word 'cadere,' to fall, [therefore] her name may refer not only to her state as a fallen woman but also the original fall from a state of plenitude, the fall into language and loss and the symbolic order. In other words, she evokes the primary repression that constitutes the self. (32)

Although I do not focus on Caddy, there is no doubt that she is an integral part of the mold that shapes her brothers' lives. "Cadere," *to fall*, not only applies to Caddy, but to the effect that she had on Benjy and Quentin. In a sense, both brothers fall in love with her: Benjy as a child and Quentin as pre- and post-adolescent. What Fowler's book

offered my study most was a cleaner version of the psychological makeup of these two male characters, which allowed me to better understand their experience of the world.

David L. Vanderwerken, author of Faulkner's Literary Children: Patterns of Development, provides significant insight into the different psychological stages of maturation for Benjy, Quentin, and Christmas. The following statement reinforces, to some extent, my own observation that Benjy never develops to the point of object constancy: "Young children do not differentiate between appearance and reality, they think in absolutes and 'sharp dichotomies', and they see the world in 'static terms' as a series of still pictures rather than as a cinematic progression" (14-15).

Vanderwerken clearly outlines Piaget's four stages of cognitive development from birth to age fifteen. These stages are "the sensory-motor stage through age two; the pre-operational stage, two to seven; the concrete operational stage, seven to eleven; and the formal operations, eleven to fifteen" (14). As I will discuss in greater length, Benjy does not pass the sensory-motor stage, and that is why experiencing the world as he does is difficult, if not impossible. Vanderwerken states that "each stage . . . can go haywire, leading to identity confusion at the least, suicide at the worst" (15); this description alludes, of course, to Quentin's character. According to Vanderwerken, "part of Quentin's magical reasoning in determining to kill himself is to punish his family as well as to condemn a world not worthy of his allegiance" (16). Joe Christmas, states Vanderwerken, never matures "beyond Piaget's expiatory stage . . . . Younger children [focus] on punishment as punishment, no matter the nature of the offense" (15).

Maslovian theory, also discussed at length in Faulkner's Literary Children, "provides insight into alienated characters: 'Frustration of the basic needs produces pathology; it arrests the individuals' development, alienates him from his real self, and leads him to develop neurotic strategies for making up his deficiencies" (19). Vanderwerken also explains consequences of the failure of the adolescent to be able to relate to the opposite sex, and he shows that Joe Christmas "clearly [failed] to achieve

several developmental tasks, not the least of which is failure to join a community” (17). In sum, “Faulkner’s characters never grow up because there is no world for them to grow up into” (1). Vanderwerken’s study of Piaget in relation to these four characters provides valuable insight.

*Essay Collections:*

Alfred Kazin’s “The Stillness of Light in August,” collected in Robert Penn Warren’s Collection of Critical Essays, compares Joe Christmas to Benjy Compson:

Like Benjy in The Sound and the Fury, [Christmas] is an incarnation of human suffering, unable to speak—except in the tremendous action near the end of the book when he stops running from his pursuers and waits for them, and attains in this first moment of selfhood the martyrdom that ends it. (153)

This is the only comparison I found of these two characters, and though it is thought provoking, Kazin does not examine this human suffering in relation to Quentin and Hightower. It seems to me that each of the four characters is unable to adequately comprehend, and so effectively voice, the suffering he experiences.

Speaking also to the issue of martyrdom, Kazin cites Irving Howe’s assertion that “the arrangement of the book ‘resembles an early Renaissance painting—in the foreground a bleeding martyr, far to the rear a scene of bucolic peacefulness’” (154). Kazin focuses a great deal on the shadow that is Christmas and goes so far as to say that the “triumph of the book is Faulkner’s ability to keep his leading character a shadow, and yet to make us feel all his suffering” (152). Further, he states that Christmas is

never seen full face, but always as a silhouette. a dark shadow haunting others, a shadow upon the road he constantly runs—a foreshadowing of his crucifixion,

which, so terrible and concentrated is his suffering, already haunts the lives of others like a black shadow. (152)

However, through Byron Bunch's eyes, we do see glimpses of Christmas, full face though not in detail: "He wore a tie and a stiffbrim straw hat that was quite new, cocked at an angle arrogant and baleful above his still face . . . his face darkly and contemptuously still . . . without changing his indolent and contemptuous attitude, turned his face and looked once" (31-35). I agree with Kazin's assertion,

We see Joe Christmas from a distance, and this distance is the actual space between him and his fellows. It is also the distance between the name "Joe Christmas," which is clownish, and the actual suffering of someone who has to live up to the non-humanity of his name. (150)

On a final note, Kazin claims that Christmas' symbol is flight: "Flight on the same road, but flight toward himself, which he cannot reach, and away from hatred of himself, which he cannot escape" (151). If I were to add a symbol to what Kazin determined as *the* symbol that belonged to Christmas, it would be *night*. It seems that Faulkner often places a key word that describes the essence of a character within the first few sentences; chapter five, Christmas' first chapter, begins with *it was after midnight*. This image of night evokes the darkness and shadow imagery to which Kazin previously alludes.

Michael F. Cowan collected Twentieth Century Interpretations of *The Sound and the Fury*. In this collection, Evelyn Scott's article, "On William Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury," provides a remarkable assertion: "Quentin is oversensitive, introvert, pathologically devoted to his sister, and his determination to commit suicide is his protest against her disgrace" (27). Her statement is clearly supported by Quentin's section, as it addresses the emotional impetus behind Quentin's suicide.

In this same collection, Cleanth Brooks' "Man, Time, and Eternity" provided more insight into the first two chapters of The Sound and the Fury. Brooks states:

Benjy's section is filled with a kind of primitive poetry, a poetry of the senses, rendered with great immediacy, in which the world—for Benjy a kind of confused, blooming buzz—registers with great sensory impact but with minimal intelligibility. (63)

Obviously, Brooks is one of the few critics who focuses specifically on sensorial imagery and the impact that it has on the reader. The "minimal intelligibility" that he refers to is discussed at length in the first paragraphs of Benjy's chapter in this thesis.

Regarding Quentin, Brooks asserts that his "section is filled with poetry too, though his is essentially decadent: Sensitive but neurotic and hopeless, as it rings sadly through a series of dying falls" (63). I believe that Quentin's section, although it may ring sadly, is filled with the most evocative and easily sensed images of the four characters I will examine in this thesis; it is not only sensitive, it is abundantly sensorial as well.

Also important in Cowan's collection is an essay by Robert Slabey, "Quentin as the Romantic." Slabey notes:

Present occurrences trigger recollections and take on a fixity as [Quentin] relates them to his past. The complex symbolism of shadow, door, bird, slanting, clocks, honeysuckle, flowers, wisteria, water—in short, all the sounds, feelings, smells, and sights associated with what are in his consciousness the significant events of his life. (84)

Slabey's article provides sound insight, especially into the symbol of honeysuckle and the associations to which it is connected.

The final pertinent article in Cowan's collection is Louise Dauner's "Quentin and the Walking Shadow: The Dilemma of Nature and Culture." Dauner focuses on the water as the "dominant motif, with its psychological and mythic implications as the unconscious, or the waters of death and rebirth, into which he escapes in a final ritualistic purification" (75). She also discusses the shadow imagery and concludes that the shadows are "Quentin's own shadow, which thus assumes meaning as the Double, the alter ego, the 'dark brother'" (77). She summarizes the human aspects of this shadow: "It is first the soul, the connoter of immortality. Second, as the immortal part, its injury or loss indicates illness or death" (77). Lastly, Dauner states that "in its essential signification, the word 'shadow' limns for us the illusory, fantasy-ridden world of Quentin Compson" (80). It nearly determines the "totality of Quentin's experience—shadowy, paradoxical, perverse, sterile, unreal" (79). Because of her thorough analysis of the shadow imagery, this article was quite helpful.

Another important work for this topic is collected by Linda L. Wagner in William Faulkner: Four Decades of Criticism. In "William Faulkner's Style," published in 1941, Warren Beck demonstrates that Faulkner's individualistic rhetoric was a "persistent lyrical embroidery and coloring" (143). This "embroidery" is one of the predominant aspects of Faulkner's prose, especially on the weaving of sensorial imagery into the rich tapestry of his language. Beck states that the author's "diction, charged and proliferate though it may be, usually displays a nice precision, and this is especially evident in its direct imagery" (143). Beck emphasizes how Faulkner's sentence structure engenders the "elaborateness of his fancies ramifying in descriptive imagery" (150). He further asserts that the "dreamlike use of stream-of-consciousness . . . in The Sound and the Fury, is not only limited to the first two sections of the book, but it sketches a plot which in the lucid sections that follow gradually emerges clean-cut" (152). Beck focuses on passages from Light in August. "It is just dawn, daylight: that gray and lonely suspension filled with the peaceful and tentative waking of birds," and "the air,

inbreathed, is like spring water” (143). Beck states that it was “no wonder that with such a purpose Faulkner often comes closer than is common in these times to Shakespeare’s imperial and opulent use of words” (149). On a final note, he adds that what is “stylistically most remarkable in his work is the synthesis he has effected between the subtleties of modern narrative techniques and the resources of language employed in the traditionally poetic or interpretive vein” (154).

Phyllis Hirschleifer’s analysis further added to my study of Light in August in her article, “Whirlwinds in the South: An Analysis of Light in August,” which is also a part of Wagner’s collection. Although she illuminates several important contrasts between Christmas and Hightower, it is her insight into Hightower’s character that proved most helpful. In particular, she focuses on the bad smells that are “characteristically used by Faulkner in this biblical sense as the outward sign of moral corruption” (251). She also states that Hightower is a “man of peace, yet when war comes, he takes part as a doctor . . . and is fully heroic as the grandfather” (252). Furthermore, Hightower’s “preoccupation with faces is of considerable symbolic importance . . . as a recurrent image. Hightower sees his congregation, and later the townsmen who mob Christmas, as ‘faces which seem to glare with bodiless suspension as though from haloes’ (247). Hirschleifer examines the final chapter when Hightower’s vision is seen in full. She states that “he is the most reflective figure in the book, and the next-to-last chapter in which his background is finally revealed through his own despairing consciousness is not anti-climactic after Christmas’ death, but the vital philosophical counterpart of it” (252). Her study of this chapter, along with Benson’s, helped my own illumination of this last grand vision. As for Joe, Hirschleifer states that there is a “consistent use of shadow imagery in connection with Christmas and the figures like him. Hightower sees himself as a ‘shadowy figure among shadows’” (LA 255). She brings out the images also of Joe in the orphanage “sober and quiet as a shadow” and as an adolescent sneaking from McEachern’s house with the “shadowlike agility of a cat.” Even Bobby notices that as

Joe runs away from her, he appears as “the shape, the shadow fading down the road” (LA 255). Beyond the concentration of the shadow imagery, one particularly noteworthy observation of Hirschleifer is that “Christmas is, of course, a Christ figure, but he is not so as the Son of God, but as the Son of Man. He is Joe, son of Joe . . . the figure of everyman driven by a violent past into a violent present, burdened by the curse of his ancestry” (247).

Another important insight in Wagner’s collection comes from Lawrance Thompson’s “Mirror Analogues in The Sound and the Fury.” Thompson points out the significance of Shakespeare to Faulkner, stating

Macbeth is represented as refusing to recognize that he has been in any way to blame, or responsible, for what has happened to him. Instead, he also projects his own inner chaos outward, self-justifying, to make a scapegoat of the whole world, even of time, and to view life itself as a walking “shadow.” Now consider the ironies of the situation implicit in the passage which Faulkner’s title suggests as a pertinent mirror of the attitudes not only of Quentin and Jason but also of Mr. and Mrs. Compson. (211)

Thompson’s insight helped me focus on shadow imagery, which I discuss later.

Because I also focus on Benjy’s reaction to and understanding of mirrors, Thompson’s article proved essential to my research. One of his assertions that most assisted my study is the following:

Persistent allusions to mirrors in The Sound and the Fury would seem to invite the reader to notice that Faulkner has adapted an ancient literary mirror device and mirror principle . . . as a means of reflecting various kinds of correspondence, antitheses, parallelisms, analogues. (199)

Thompson also writes, “perhaps the first hint of foreshadowing occurs when the idiot Ben touches a place on the wall where a mirror used to be” (199). It is ironic that, as Thompson states, “repeatedly Ben is represented as having the instinctive and intuitive power to differentiate between objects or actions”; however, his inability to differentiate between reality and mirrored reflection contradicts his intuition. Thompson goes on to say, “Ben serves as a kind of moral mirror” (202). (This critic did make the observation that Quentin’s use of mirrors and Ben’s use of mirrors are sharply contrasted.) Also, regarding Quentin, Thompson addresses shadow imagery. He comments that the shadow is “an image subsequently enriched by Faulkner to represent Quentin’s alter ego, his own reflected image of himself, developed by Quentin as an elaborate mirror analogue” (206).

Carl Benson, also collected by Wagner, wrote an article entitled “Thematic Design in Light in August.” Benson analyzes Christmas and Hightower as “extreme poles of morality between which all the other major and minor characters fall” (266). Although I was aided more by his analysis of Hightower, he states that Joe Christmas “rises out of Faulkner’s tragic vision of man as inescapably dual in nature” (259), and that the “emotion of love or sympathy confuses him” (264). Whereas this is evident in Joe’s character, it also seems true also of Hightower, as well perhaps as Quentin in The Sound and the Fury. Similar to Hirschleifer, Benson brings to light Hightower’s awareness of the nature of his illusion as it appears at the end of the novel as the “penultimate chapter—a chapter which, despite its strategic position and rhetorical splendor, has generally been neglected” (261). He asserts that Faulkner “cunningly withheld the key piece of his ethic jigsaw puzzle until the end so that the reader can contemplate the finished lives of the characters with the Hightower compassion in which the novel was conceived” (261). That he so strongly emphasizes this last chapter greatly assisted my analysis of the imagery in Hightower, as this character’s phantom vision is the most remarkable in his sections. Benson states that the “very imagery . . . compels

the reading”; this insight is, of course, very close to my focus in both The Sound and the Fury and Light in August.

The final selection in Wagner’s collection is particularly helpful in studying sensory imagery. Walter J. Slatoff, In “The Edge of Order: The Pattern of Faulkner’s Rhetoric,” primarily studies Faulkner’s use of oxymoron. He asserts that “like Faulkner’s writing in general, the oxymoron involves sharp polarity, extreme tension, a high degree of conceptual and stylistic antithesis, and the simultaneous suggestion of disparate or opposed elements” (158). The aim and effect, he adds, of Faulkner’s oxymoron “is not to force the reader to grasp a reality or unity beneath an apparent contradiction but to leave him with the tension of the contradiction itself. We are to feel” (159). The phrase “we are to feel,” is what drew my attention to this article, because opening the doors to feeling, seeing, touching, hearing, and smelling, is my primary intent. Wagner also briefly mentions synaesthesia: “Comparable to these mixed metaphors in effect are Faulkner’s frequent synaesthetic images which may be considered psychological oxymoron” (160). Two examples he used to illustrate this are “dark cool breeze” (S&F 149), and “walked out of their talking” (LA 9).

Slatoff pays attention as well to sound and silence. He writes that they are “frequently presented as existing simultaneously. Silence often seems not so much the absence of sound as a container for it, a presence even while the sounds are occurring” (156). Because silence is especially significant in all four of the characters I am studying, his observations of it assisted my own. Finally, Slatoff discusses the following quotation by Faulkner: “I must try to express clumsily in words what pure music would have done better” (174), which also points to the contrasts and comparisons of Faulkner’s work with music and paintings, important elements in my analysis.

A last collection of essays, by David Minter, William Faulkner: The Sound and the Fury, provided an essay by Olga W. Vickery: “The Sound and the Fury: A Study in Perspective.” Vickery examines the significance of shadows and their connection with

water: "The number of times that the shadow images are fused with images of water is Quentin's way of reconciling his two worlds, of merging shadows and reality and tempering their conflict" (305). Vickery also makes the following comment on honeysuckle:

The heavy, choking fragrance of honeysuckle dramatizes the conflict between his order and the blind forces of nature which constantly threaten to destroy it. Honeysuckle is the rife animality of sex, the incomprehensible and hateful world for which Caddy has abandoned his paradise, and hence it is also the symbol of his defeat. Yet honeysuckle is only a sensation . . . it is Quentin who makes of the one a symbol of "night and unrest." (304)

It is evident that the connection between honeysuckle, water, and death, has been made repeatedly by numerous critics. Quentin's reference to the "drizzling" of honeysuckle suggests this connection.

In Philip M. Weinstein's collection, The Cambridge Companion to William Faulkner, published in 1995, Cheryl Lester examines syntax. In her article, "From Place to Place in The Sound and the Fury: The Syntax of Interrogation," Lester explores the interplay of the separate parts, stating it as crucial and representative of "the level of text on which meaning at once emerges and dissolves." Lester believes that the first three chapters cause readers to identify with the consciousness of each subject. She cites Irena Kaluza, who had previously studied the structure of this novel regarding the "linguistic structures in formal categories . . . and whether they form a meaningful artistic system." She offers that the "monologues are not communicated but uttered in the silence of mental soliloquy," and this insight is helpful to my study.

*Journal Articles:*

No specific article was found that studied imagery in relationship to the reader's emotional reactions to Faulkner's use of sensory images. One article, "The Death of Joe Christmas and the Power of Words," by James Lee Spenko, is an interesting study of how Faulkner uses language to convey the darkness surrounding Christmas' life. Spenko does not specifically address imagery, but he focuses instead on the words Faulkner used to relate the "arresting" death of Joe Christmas. Spenko remarks that Faulkner demonstrates "uncanny insight into his characters and his audience," and that his use of language is "hypnotic." He states that it "convey(s) some notion of unconscious mental processes, since no one reading . . . at a steady pace could be more than partially *aware* of what is occurring within it." He also asserts that "trying to discuss the subliminal power of an author's rhetoric is a tricky business and may easily lapse into sheerest conjecture." As readers, Spenko adds, "we are forced to say either that most of them do not affect us or that they affect us more profoundly than we are consciously able to recognize." He concludes the article with the following statement: "If we need to remind ourselves that there are many good reasons why Joe should be feared and hated, then we can marvel all the more at how far Faulkner has extended our sympathies beyond their ordinary limits."

"Reading Faulkner is always an active process; his complex—and convoluted—rhetoric ensures that it will be," is perhaps the most insightful observation that I was able to find in Karen Ramsay Johnson's article, "Gender, Sexuality, and the Artist in Faulkner's Novels." While much of her analysis is unrelated to my study, she makes an interesting point about Faulkner's use of metaphors: "William Faulkner's sexual metaphors take on an even deeper resonance, for his metaphors of sex and art are frequently ones of perverse or deviant sexuality, confused or ambiguous gender" (1). Although this statement excludes Benjy, it certainly applies to Quentin, Christmas, and perhaps even Hightower. One last assertion that Johnson makes, though it is brief, very

much seems to embody Faulkner's work: "The experience of reading is a waking dream" (14).

Paul Carmignani states, in his article "Olfaction in Faulkner's Fiction," that "although Faulkner's work encompasses the whole range of sensory impressions, only such intellectualized, socialized and civilized senses as sight and hearing have so far been thoroughly examined" (305). "The predominance of vision and voice," he says, "should not make us minimize the importance of the more primitive, carnal senses like touch or smell for an author who has rightly or wrongly been labelled 'the first great novelist of the unconscious'" (305). These last two senses, however, are often overlooked. The reason is that there is a

refusal to consider [them] as an instrument of knowledge [that] stems from the rejection of the animality that is inherent in human nature, and from the concomitant overestimation of reason . . . . With its acute sensitivity to secret correspondences, smell is par excellence the sense of reminiscence: 'It shifts from knowing to remembering, from space to time and no doubt from things to beings. (305)

Carmignani's exploration of olfactory sense images proved valuable to my thesis. His is the only study found that concentrated solely on olfaction and Faulkner's novels.

In 1993, an article entitled "The Human Heart in Conflict: Light in August's Schizophrenic Narrator" was published by David Toomey and offers Hightower as sole narrator. He asserts, among other things, that there is a significant difference between the Christmas chapters and the other chapters, and adds that "shifts in voice are common for Faulkner." One of the examples that supports his theory is Faulkner's (and so, Christmas') use of neologisms—Augusttremulous, pinkwomansmelling, thightall—

which, by definition, are words created usually by a psychotic, that are meaningless to the listener. The use of these neologisms, and their emotional effect on the reader will be discussed in the second chapter of this thesis.

This thesis will begin with the sensorial imagery in Benjy Compson's chapter of The Sound and the Fury, which contains some of the most vivid and dizzying images. I will then proceed with Quentin Compson's chapter and will explore his environmental perceptions on the day of his death. Joe Christmas' chapter in Light in August, third in this study, will be examined chronologically as his sensorial awareness develops significantly as he matures. (This is the only chapter in which I will take such an approach.) I will conclude my analysis with Gail Hightower, omitting the tactile perceptions as they are too few in this chapter.

CHAPTER II  
*My hands could see the slipper*  
Benjy Compson

Of the two characters from The Sound and the Fury that will be discussed in this analysis, Benjy is perhaps the most sensorial Compson. His perception of the world, his family, and himself evinces that perceptually he has not developed past early infancy. This chapter is saturated with a “primitive poetry, a poetry of the senses, rendered with great immediacy, in which the world—for Benjy a kind of confused buzz—registers with great sensory impact but with minimal intelligibility” (Brooks 63). He lacks object constancy, the awareness that objects outside the self are permanent even when they are not perceived by the senses. According to developmental psychologist Jean Piaget, in his book The Origins of Intelligence in Children, it is “important to understand . . . the mental representation is essential for the understanding of spatial relationships. The essential insight that the child must acquire is that space is a continuous medium within which all displacements of objects occur” (Baldwin 219). This critical stage of development typically occurs by the child’s age of two. Hence, it can be inferred by Benjy’s lack of both object constancy and awareness of spatial relationships that his cognitive maturation does not exceed infancy. This infantile cognition is evidenced primarily by his visual awareness of his surroundings. One of the clearer examples occurs when Benjy’s brother Quentin leads him toward the barn: “Then the barn wasn’t there and we had to wait until it came back. I didn’t see it come back. It came back behind us and Quentin set me down in the trough where the cows ate. I held onto it. It was going away too, and I held to it” (21). Another example occurs when Benjy sees

(and hears) the “ditch came up out of the buzzing grass” (35). In addition, there are several occasions when an object, or essence, does not simply appear or disappear; rather, it does so with actions usually associated with animate volition, as in “the moonlight *jumped* away” (40), and “the light *fell down* the steps on [Father]” (23) [my italics]. Another point made by Baldwin that should be taken into consideration is that “a child who is mentally unstable to represent invisible displacements, has an incomplete grasp of the nature of space—his space is full of holes” (219).

This lack of perceptive maturity poses a difficult problem, beyond the more obvious difficulty in trying to keep up with Benjy’s thoughts that continually shift from one time and place to another. Though the reader may be able to catch sensorial snapshots of Benjy’s experiences, or frozen pictures, the images come across as very one-dimensional. According to one critic, “the Benjy section represents extreme objectivity, a condition impossible to the ordinary mind and far in excess of even the most naturalistic fiction” (Kartiganer 7). Faulkner makes it imperative that readers’ initial task is to concentrate on simply trying to determine when and where Benjy’s thoughts have taken him at any given point within the text. Even though the mind’s eye catches glimpses of flowers, for example, the images as a whole are perceived briefly and cerebrally. Benjy’s perception is “prior to consciousness, prior to the human need to abstract from events an intelligible order” (Kartiganer 8). To experience the world through Benjy’s faculties vicariously, readers must attempt to abandon the cognitive self, at least in part, to the unpredictability and inconstancy of sensorial vacillation. What renders this section so powerful is that it “reduces the fictional vocabulary to a spare set of images that project, with kaleidoscope accuracy, the whole ‘action’ of the novel”

(Sundquist 14). The one-dimensional snapshots must be viewed as essential elements of a fragmented portrait, and the imagination rather than intellectual reasoning must attempt to encounter them.

The fence around the Compson house is a barrier that not only keeps Benjy within a limited environment, but also acts as an obstacle that metaphorically impedes the reader's comprehension of Benjy's observance and internalization of his physical surroundings. Doreen Fowler observes,

The fence in his monologue functions as a concrete token . . . it separates him from the pasture, emblem of the signified, the physical world, and from the mother-surrogate, from Caddy, whose name he hears repeatedly called from the other side of the fence. (35)

There are thirty-three mentions of the fence, and whether this intentionally corresponds with his age is debatable. On the first page alone, *fence* is mentioned seven times; in fact, it is the third word of the first sentence of the novel: "Through the fence, between the curling flower spaces, I could see them hitting" (3). In the second sentence, the fence is mentioned again: "They were coming toward where the flag was and I went along the fence" (3). The first paragraph contains five mentions of the fence, immediately establishing and calling readers' attention to the physical constraint that parallels an emotional and sensorial obstruction that is an essential component of Benjy.

His perception of and encounters with the fence are most often paired with the words *through* and *along*. For example, he and Luster go "along the fence . . . and [stop] and [Benjy] looked through the fence" (3); they then go through it at "the broken place"

(4). Several times Benjy's connection to the fence is also described in terms of his "holding to" and "running against." Isolating the prepositions *through* and *along*, and the verbs *holding* and *running*, readers can sense the separation between Benjy and reality. The words in and of themselves are not harsh and do not necessarily evoke negative emotional responses; they do, however, allow us to feel his alienation, evoking empathy and creating a connection.

To Benjy reality takes on two standpoints and/or shapes: First, one that is clear and defined, and a second one that is nebulous and unstable. According to Kartiganer, "what he tells us is life, not text" (9). Benjy is corralled (much like an animal) in one reality, while barred from the other, with the disastrous exception when the gate is left unlocked and he "caught her, trying to say, and she screamed" (53). Of course, sometimes a fence is just a fence and may be found any number of places for any number of reasons. However, because Benjy is also restricted from normal interaction with others, and since he is left with only his senses to interpret stimuli, the fence appears to be more than just a physical construct. Ironically, fences are linear, and Benjy's world is not. According to Snead, as "fences separate and enclose a normative space—the ironic reader of the novel might actually question which side of the fence constitutes normality" (27).

Integral with the fence is the gate, which appears to correlate most closely with Caddy. During one of Benjy's flashbacks, or *shifts*, which are determined as "triggered by a nail, a fence, the coldness" (Kartiganer 8), he recalls seeing that she "opened the gate and came in and stooped down" (6). As Caddy is the only person who openly displays affection and interacts with him (without requiring prompts to do so), she is the

only “thing that held him into any sort of reality” (Faulkner/Cowan 21). In a sense, she is his connection with not only his immediate external world, but also the world beyond the fence. She is the one character that truly breaks through the barriers and is able to reach him, and as he is primarily sensory-oriented, her essence permeates his senses to the highest degree. Faulkner’s employment of similes and metaphors particularly in Benjy’s chapter “have the status of fact: ‘Caddy smelled like trees’” (Kartiganer 8).

Benjy’s sense of smell is one of the fundamental means by which he recognizes people, primarily Caddy, and is also one of the more obvious stimuli that cause him to vacillate through time and place. Perhaps the most poetic example is his awareness that Caddy distinctively “smells like trees.” Readers first come across this unique-to-Caddy smell on page six, after she has opened the gate and approaches Benjy, kneeling down to greet him. Though he has watched and heard her, the arresting thought is that she “smelled like leaves” (6). On the same page, as she warms his hands, he again thinks “Caddy smelled like trees and like when she says we were asleep” (6). What is most curious is that he does not process tactile or visual senses to the extent that he does with smell, and although the olfactory imagery is not nearly as ample as the other images involving sight, sound, and touch, it seems to be perhaps the one with the most power and depth, as it is one of the primary causes for him to shift time and place.

Benjy is dramatically affected by Caddy’s smelling like trees, as well as other scents he encounters or has come to recognize as belonging to a particular person or place. An additional instance when Benjy connects the distinct fragrance of trees to Caddy occurs after she has finished dressing him and again kneels down and puts her arms around him. He feels “her cold bright face against [him]. She smelled like trees”

(9). This memory ties three senses together in one instance: the cold feeling of her skin, the brightness of her face, and, again, the pervasive aroma of trees. Immediately following this moment, “*She smelled like trees*” is italicized and indicates a time shift. Benjy is transported to his age of thirteen and is remembering an occasion when Dilsey let Caddy come and stay in his bed with him until he fell asleep. The last thing he notices is that the “room went black” (44), and then, “*Caddy smelled like trees*” (44). He shifts time and place again because of this one association with her, and Faulkner demonstrates how Benjy may have come to make this particular association, as he details a time when Caddy had to be brought down from a tree by Dilsey: “You, Satan . . . Come down from there” (45). On another occasion, Caddy smells “like trees in the rain” (19); rain is a smell that Benjy also associates with his father (64) and with his brother Quentin (66).

Caddy’s imprint of smelling like trees is so deeply embedded that if she is present, but her natural (to him) smell is masked, it is almost as if she is not really there. One of the better examples of this occurs when she is fourteen and comes to him wearing perfume, a dress, and a hat. What makes her not-present, though, is the perfume—her smell, not her appearance. When the perfume is washed off, she returns to that form by which Benjy commonly recognizes her. Another incident precedes a flashback to Caddy’s wedding day. Benjy responds: “Caddy put her arms around me, and her shining veil, and I couldn’t smell the trees anymore and I began to cry” (40). One of the smells that he is sensing is her loss of virginity. He is able to smell Caddy’s guilt as well (Kartiganer 4). Something in Caddy has changed, gone away, and so her smell is altered. After another shift, Benjy remembers Caddy saying, “Benjy. She put her arms around

me again, but I went away” (40). This instance of *went away* has nothing to do with a lack of object constancy. Here it appears that he has the ability to disengage his senses.

The tree imagery reappears, and unites a memory of Caddy and her daughter, Quentin, after Benjy has seen Caddy with Charlie in the swing. When she takes him indoors and begins to wash her mouth with soap, he smells the trees. This causes him to flash-forward to a time when he sees Quentin in the swing with the carnival worker: “his tie was red in the sun, walking” (50).

Perhaps the most complicated and beautiful of all of the treesmellimagery occurs near the end of Benjy’s chapter. In the paragraphs preceding and following his identification of this smell, there is a superb example of Faulkner’s mastery of synaesthesia:

Caddy and Father and Jason were in Mother’s chair. Jason’s eyes were puffed shut and his mouth moved, like tasting. Caddy’s head was on Father’s shoulder. Her hair was like fire, and little points of fire were in her eyes, and I went and Father lifted me into the chair, too, and Caddy held me. She smelled like trees.

*She smelled like trees. In the corner it was dark, but I could see the window, I squatted there, holding the slipper. I couldn’t see it, but my hands saw it, and I could hear it getting night, and my hands saw the slipper but I couldn’t see myself, but my hands could see the slipper, and I squatted there, hearing it getting dark. (72)*

These two paragraphs epitomize Benjy's interpretation of the world in which he lives. And it is within these paragraphs that the "she smelled like trees" can be viewed not only as utterly connected to Caddy, but also in its function as one of the major causes of shifts in Benjy's memories. (The remaining wealth of rich imagery in these paragraphs that does not pertain to his sense of smell, but instead the senses of sight, sound, and touch, will be examined at length as this analysis awakens and anatomizes the other senses that act as guides not only for Benjy, but also for the reader, so that the latter may more easily attempt to enter into and understand this character's sensory experiences.) Paul Carmignani states that when

Caddy ceases once for all to smell like trees, and leaves with her husband, Benjy projects the memory of his beloved sister on to two flowers, jimson weed (associated with lunacy and death) and narcissus (a symbol of death, sleep, rebirth, and idealization) (308-09).

Additional smells that reach and direct Benjy come in two forms; concrete experiences, such as the smell of a house, and those that are more abstract and interplay with one or more senses. In this case, it is imperative that the readers slow down and try to sense each image individually before contemplating them as a whole. It is equally important to recognize which sense is dominant for Benjy because within these distinctions lies the key to his character.

Regarding the more concrete odors and aromas of which Benjy is aware, he seems to have acutely trained himself to identify certain people by their smell. As with Caddy, the people can be there with him and in his range of visibility, and he may even hear and

be able to touch them, but if the smell that he associates with them is not the one he is accustomed to, it almost seems as if they are not entirely present. Benjy relies so heavily on sense impression that if any of his senses singles out some quality that he does not recognize as belonging to a particular person, then that person is only partially perceptible. According to Piaget's theories, "vision, hearing, and touch must be treated as optional channels of information from the same external world" (Baldwin 195). Yet in many cases, Benjy requires that all sensory input be acknowledged concurrently in order to either firmly establish a person's presence or dissipate his ongoing anxieties regarding displacement of persons, places, and things. To cite an example, Benjy is being led outside by Versh, and his thought process is as follows: "Versh *took me up* and opened the door onto the back porch. We went out and Versh closed the door back. I could *smell* Versh and *feel* him . . . . I could feel Versh's head. I could *hear* us" (27) [my italics]. In this instance, he is identifying Versh with four of his senses simultaneously, and so has no doubt regarding who is with him. When they reach the other's house, he thinks "I liked to smell Versh's house" (28). Immediately after having this thought, Benjy shifts to another memory and recalls that there "was a fire in it" (28). But this is the only hint as to what Versh or his house smell like at this point. The readers must imagine any and all aromas that exude from the hearth in this particular house. It is the only clue to be given, with the exception of the bed covers that smelled like T. P.. Later, after a rain has caused Benjy to shift again, "Versh smelled like rain. He smelled like a dog, too" (68). Other concrete images that evoke, but do not solicit, the reader's senses are of the flower tree, smoke, and pigs.

The more abstract, arresting images that Benjy is aware of speak to two or more of the reader's senses. For example, on two occasions near the beginning of the chapter Benjy can "smell the cold," and "the bright cold" (6). The feel of the cold or the brightness of the day would seem the more dominant images. This is an excellent example of where the reader must separate each sensation from the others in order to slip into Benjy's skin. An additional illustration of synaesthesia occurs when he can "smell the clothes flapping, and the smoke was blowing across the branch" (14). Of the more curious smells that Benjy is able to detect are those of sickness and death. Perhaps medicinal odors are easily discerned, but his ability to detect loss is out of the realm of ordinary experience. He smells, or intuits, his father's and mother's sicknesses to such an extent that others are able to ascertain that he can do so. It is only when there are "no known things for him to assimilate—only when odor is deliberately interrupted or dismissed—does he know anxiety and terror; his only fear is a fear of removal, never a fear of encounter" (Kinney 140).

In contrast to olfactory images, Benjy's sense of touch through his hands and body is fairly concrete, although there are times when he lacks self-orientation. The first tactile sensation that readers encounter, and that recurs throughout the chapter, is temperature. In addition to being able to smell the cold, Benjy distinguishes between different types of cold; for instance, "we ran up the steps and out of the bright cold, into the dark cold" (7). Here he is most likely detecting the subtle difference in temperature of the sun as opposed to being inside or in the shade of some object, as well as paying attention to the change in light or brightness. What is interesting is that he is associating the sun with the quality of coldness (6). Caddy attempts to explain to him what *cold* is by

breaking the “top of the water and [holding] a piece of it against [his] face. ‘Ice. That means how cold it is’” (13). He is also aware of the sensation of numbness; as he waits for Caddy, he feels that the “gate was cold” (6), and moments later he “couldn’t feel the gate at all” (6). At the opposite end of the temperature spectrum, Benjy is aware of heat: He feels the hot glass full of sassafras in his stomach and its steam that “tickled into [his] mouth” (22-25), the food steaming up his face, and the hot surface “where the fire had been” (59):

hand My hand jerked back and I put it in my mouth and Dilsey caught me . . . .  
Dilsey make you stop hurting in just a minute. Look at the fire . . . . I looked at  
the fire, but my hand didn’t stop. My hand was trying to go to my mouth, but  
Dilsey held it. (59)

In this last example, Benjy seems to regard his hand as being an autonomous extension of his body, with movement and almost a will of its own.

All together, his various encounters with degrees of temperature paint a child’s portraiture of tactile experience. Each experience seems elementary, and the repetition of the words *cold* and *hot* in his mind demonstrate that, while he is very aware of these sensations, he is unable to process them on a subconscious level. He feels *cold* and thinks *cold*, and then feels *cold* again and thinks *cold*, and so on.

Most of Benjy’s tactile experiences, however, are ordinary. He is as aware of the texture of water as he is of a dry vine. The matter of greater importance is whether or not readers can feel through him. Because they are common sensations, his world should be relatively easy to experience. An example of this takes place when he remembers

crawling through “the broken place” in the fence with Caddy: “We stooped over and crossed the garden where the flowers rasped and rattled against us. The ground was hard . . . the ground was hard, churned and knotted” (4-5).

Benjy is very tactile, always holding to an object or person, but that, in itself, is not unusual considering his limited mental development and lack of object constancy. More important is his desire to hold on to various objects stems from a physical need for security and balance. But there are differences between this more basic type of holding on and the emotional satisfaction/security he derives from being able to touch objects that have great significance to him. For example, in the second of the two paragraphs discussed above, Faulkner demonstrates his uncanny talent for creating interplay of the senses. Near the end of the chapter, when Benjy is sitting in the dark corner holding Caddy’s slipper, he thinks: “I couldn’t see it, but my hands saw it, and I could hear it getting night, and my hands saw the slipper but I couldn’t see myself, but my hands could see the slipper” (72). Again, he appears to regard his hands as being independent, and so touching the slippers is no different from seeing them with his eyes. In fact, it seems that at times touching is the way he sees. Whereas in other cases an object or person may not be fully present to Benjy if one or more of his senses does not detect that presence, with Caddy’s slipper he does not need to be able to embrace the object with all of his senses to know it is there. He embraces it, and so her, with his hands and therefore his eyes. The slipper—the object of “tenderness and love”—is one of three items that bring him immediate comfort; the other two are the cushion and flowers (Faulkner/Cowan p17).

Much like Benjy’s tactile sensations, the sounds he perceives are often ordinary. He is not, as Luster states, “deef and dumb” (49). In fact, he is extremely aware of the

cacophonous family with whom he lives. He hears numerous whispers, moans, screams, laughs, hums, grunts, snuffs, lows, hisses, and howls. The trees and grass buzz, flags flap, and leaves rattle; however, his perceptions of these sounds do not get obscured or twisted in the translation. He simply hears them, is aware of them, and, in part, is guided by them. On numerous occasions he is fully conscious of this clamorous corner of the world. For instance, when Caddy was washing off the perfume that upset him, he “could hear the water,” and “listened to the water” (42). He hears a squinch owl and also a calf bawling. In one of his flashbacks, he is aware of hearing “the clock, and [he] could hear Caddy standing behind [him], and [he] could hear the roof . . . [he] could hear the clock and the roof and Caddy” (57).

Much of what reaches his ears (and so the readers’), comes from his own vocal chords. We need to exert but limited efforts to imagine his bellowing. The stifled and frustrated silence that occurs when he is *trying to say* also resonates powerfully. One of the more disturbing images occurs when he tries to climb into the flower box and

it jumped away and hit [him] on the back of the head and [his] throat made a sound. It made a sound again, and I stopped to get up, and it made the sound again and I began to cry. But my throat kept on making it and I couldn’t tell if I was crying or not (40).

This scene demonstrates that at times he neither has control of his voice, nor comprehends the sounds he is making. The way in which Faulkner describes the range of pitch that results from Benjy’s fears and sorrows makes it appear almost as if an imaginary hand is turning a volume control knob, first one way and then the other. This

is clearly evidenced in examples like the following: “When I stopped to start again I could hear Mother . . . I didn’t stop”; and also, after he burns his hand in the fire, he can hear “the clock between [his] voice . . . [his] voice was going loud every time . . . [his] voice went louder . . . [his] voice went loud” (59). Many times, instead of hearing remarkable sounds through Benjy, we hear Benjy himself.

Like his senses of smell and touch, sound supplies a significant interplay of the senses: “We could hear us. We could hear the dark” (75), and, as discussed earlier, “I could hear it getting night . . . and I squatted there, hearing it getting dark” (72). It is necessary to stop at this point and try to ascertain what *hearing darkness* entails, as it is not just the synaesthesia that is fascinating; rather, it is the individual auditory and visual experiences, and the way they overlap, that Faulkner incorporates as the consummate sounds of *night* that are so engaging. Benjy *knows* darkness, as evidenced in his chapter. It is a going away and a *not-there-ness* to him, a condition that he is visually and auditorially aware of. In this instance he is aware of the room, the slipper, and the corner, as well as his own posture of *squatting*. The night is not a void here; it is supplemental to what he already knows to exist at that moment. The darkness is bringing with it a placid stillness, as night is so often more soundless than day, and this stillness complements his body language that silently bellows for pacification. His primary focus is introspective, and so the sights and sounds that are unavoidably detectable only serve to heighten his meditative state. He hears his corner of the world, and so his inner being—his emotional composition—becoming still and bearable. Quentin notes in the second chapter that Benjy cannot “hear [something] unless he can smell it” (174). Certainly, instances occur where Benjy can isolate one sense from another, and as well when he may smell what

others hear, or vice-versa. But very little is predictable about this highly sensorial character, and as Quentin lacks credibility as a narrator because of his complex confusion and selective memories of the past, his statement carries little weight. Reading Benjy's chapter is similar to walking into a house of mirrors: the images are at times strange, distorted, and even frightening, but they also reflect every detail that is set before them. Where the readers place their focus, and where Benjy places his focus, make all the difference in how reality is abstracted from illusory, ever-shifting images.

Isolating the visual imagery makes this task of discernment somewhat more feasible. Again there are similarities between Benjy's visual focus and Quentin's. One of the more obvious is their acute awareness of their own shadows. The first time a shadow appears in Benjy's chapter is on page four, as Luster and Benjy are walking along the fence: "We went along the fence and came to the garden fence, where our shadows were. My shadow was higher than Luster's on the fence" (4). Some of the shadows that appear and disappear before Benjy are often accompanied by bright, smooth shapes, which most likely are patches of sunlight that are intertwined with patches of shade; for example:

The bright shapes went smooth and steady on both sides, the shadows of them flowing across Queenie's back. They went on like the bright tops of wheels. Then those on one side stopped at the tall white post where the soldier was. But on the other side they went on smooth and steady, but a little slower. (11)

Many times readers can imagine that the bright shapes or shadows are co-mingling, even if not explicitly stated, as in "the shapes flowed on. The ones on the other side began

again, bright and fast and smooth, like when Caddy says we are going to sleep” (12). In this example, because the shapes are bright, it can be inferred that there are dark and shadowy shapes as well, as one would naturally stand out against the other. In other words, by realizing the contrast of opposites, brightness is necessarily defined by that which is not bright. Another subtle hint of his perception of light and dark is in the reference to “like when we are going to sleep,” or nighttime. Since Caddy has “heightened his awareness of all those symmetrical visions of ‘bright, smooth shapes’ which comfort him, it might be said that [she] has become for Ben a kind of mirror of all his positive values, framed in love: Her love for him and his love for her” (Thompson 202).

At times the shapes, bright or not, are very disorienting for Benjy, and perhaps even for the readers, which takes us back to the topsy-turvyness of the funhouse (and I use the term *fun* lightly). In the following example, the shapes are not immediately defined by darkness or lightness, but rather they are moving in a dizzying manner: “It was still going around, and then the shapes began . . . they were going slow . . . they were going faster, almost fast enough . . . they went on, smooth and bright . . . up the bright hill” (22). In this case, we are seeing the shapes through Benjy’s eyes, as well as his mind’s eye. He is falling or rolling, in any case moving erratically, and our vision is that of a weightless and indefinable world of shapes, both of light and shadow. In this second example, Benjy is simply aware of both his brother and shadows cast by a tree: “Quentin was still standing there by the branch. He was chunking into the shadows where the branch was” (22). This is mere reflection of reality; not only does Benjy see what he sees, but sometimes he also knows what he sees.

His shadow helps him separate from, and identify with, other people. Very much in accordance with Quentin's observances of his shadow, Benjy discerns the following: "we went down the steps, where our shadows were" (35). Two additional examples are "our shadows moved, but Dan's shadow didn't move" (34-5), and "we went along the brick wall, with our shadows" (35); and, perhaps even more like his brother's tracking of his shadow, in "I stepped back into the sunlight, finding my shadow again" (82). Benjy also views his shadow, like his hands, as almost a separate entity, with "the grass was buzzing in the moonlight where my shadow walked on the grass" (46). But unlike Quentin's perceptions, where shadows are mindful of isolation, sadness, and even the darker side of the human psyche, the shadows in Benjy's section at times seem to function merely as contrast and complement to bright shapes, and at other times they act as a metaphoric reflection of his *being in the dark* mentally because of his limited cognitive and emotional comprehension.

Especially with the coinciding shapes and shadows, and the adjectives that are used to describe them; i.e., *smooth, bright, fast, whirling*; it is possible for the reader to imagine the instability of his thought processes of his senses. Benjy's awareness of and interpretation of sunlight is on at least one occasion like Quentin's. For the latter, the sun continuously appears as slanting; while in the barn with Luster, Benjy believes that "the roof was falling. The slanting holes were full of spinning yellow" (12). Likewise, he has a few unique takes on moonlight; for instance, "the moonlight jumped away," and then "the cellar stairs ran up the hill in the moonlight and T. P. fell up the hill, into the moonlight" (40). Hence, like his shadow, the sun and moon possess the ability to move about, slowly or apace, independent of natural order. One last visual image that is far too

poetic to overlook occurs during Benjy's recollections of Caddy's wedding: "Then I saw Caddy, with flowers in her hair and a long veil like shining wind" (39). It is only through eyes such as Benjy's that wind can be visualized.

As was discussed earlier in this analysis, fire plays a strong role in Benjy's world. Kartiganer notes that the three triggers that cause Ben to shift are nails, fences, and coldness (Kartiganer 8); however, I believe that we cannot overlook the shift causation of fire and/or heat, and mirrors. While in the library, at a crucial point of the chapter, Benjy "touches a place on the wall where a mirror used to be" (Thompson 199). This is perhaps the moment of foreshadowing because Benjy knows "it was like a door, only it wasn't a door" (79-80). To him it was a closed gateway that once led into an inverted house where everything and everyone existed. In fact, it seems that the mirror and fire imagery reflect the silent fury that fills the Compson house. "Here, look at the fire," Dilsey tells him (59). And so he does, and what he sees and where he sees it is evidence of Faulkner's poetic talent. The following opinion of one critic, I believe, pinpoints the importance of the fire in the mirror as representations of his family life:

As Ben's angle of vision changed, he could no longer see the reflection of fire in the mirror. But the immediate context suggests a symbolic value for that sentence ('the fire went out of the mirror' 61-62); as Ben turns from Caddy to his mother he suffers a sense of loss which may be symbolized by the disappearance of the reflected fire . . . . Ben may have suffered a sense of loss whenever he turned from Caddy to his mother. (Thompson 200)

This point is further illustrated as Benjy sees that the “fire came behind [him] and [he] went to the fire and sat on the floor . . . the fire went higher. It went onto the cushion in Mother’ chair” (61). Step by step, or perhaps flame by flame, the fire grows larger from Benjy’s viewpoint. He notices that “mother’s hand came into the firelight. Her rings jumped on Caddy’s back” (62). He watches his mother as she “held [him] to the fire and [he] looked at the bright, smooth shapes. [He] could hear the fire and the roof” (64).

This juxtaposition of fire and rain creates again an illusion of the war of opposing forces, similar to the war taking place between Caddy and his mother. At this juncture, the fire and the mirror come together, as “Caddy and Jason were fighting in the mirror,” and he could see “Caddy fighting in the mirror and Father put [him] down and went to the mirror and fought too” (64-65). Having lost sight of the fire for only a moment, “[Jason] rolled into the corner, out of the mirror. Father brought Caddy to the fire. They were all out of the mirror. Only the fire was in it. Like the fire was in a door” (65). Benjy shifts forward, recalling a time when “Quentin looked at the fire. The fire was in her eyes and on her mouth” (67). Ironically, after instantaneously re-shifting, Benjy observes that Caddy’s “hair was like fire, and little points of fire were in her eyes” (72). He has made the connection, perhaps without knowing that he has done so, between Caddy and her daughter, recognizing the resemblance. “When he is attracted to mirrors (as he always is, for they increase his perceptual range),” states Kinney, “he does not see himself but Caddy or metonymies of her in a slipper, firelight, or the cushion she would hand him from his mother’s chair; for Benjy, even the mirrors become Caddy’s surrogate” (140).

Because the fire imagery is so profound and ample—because it lives not only in the hearth, but also the mirror, the door, and on his family—it need not be a disagreeable

stimulus, though it may not evoke a sympathetic response. It is a temporary energy, much like Caddy, that is capable of consuming and creating life. The simple beauty of Benjy's perceiving that the fire and his family live *inside* the mirror is mindful of "Alice in Wonderland," by Lewis Carroll, where reality and fantasy are separated by a looking glass. What appears very real to Benjy is easily detected by readers as illusory, although by no means hallucinatory. Indeed, many of his perceptions and memories of his surroundings are very much like Lewis' cheshire cat, in that they may fade or reappear without forewarning. The riddle, in this case, concerns how these shifts affect the readers. Is the erratic imagery compelling or inimical? Faulkner was noted as stating that the "only emotion I can have for Benjy is grief and pity for all mankind. You can't feel anything for Benjy because he doesn't feel anything" (Cowan 17). Yet Benjy *is* feeling, and because of this fact it is difficult to believe that any reader that cannot feel for and because of him.

A parallel to the statements made above regarding his riddled perceptions, which lend insight into the quandary of the half-full/half-empty spirit that is Benjy can be found in Genesis 35:18. This passage concerns the interpretation of the name *Benjamin*. On page 58, Caddy reveals that the name "came out of the bible." In Genesis Rachel dies giving birth to her last son, whom she names "Ben-oni," or "son of my sorrow"; her husband, Jacob, later renames him Benjamin, meaning "son of my right hand." The reader must decide whether he is, as Mrs. Compson believed, a judgment or symbol of sorrow, or whether he acts an invaluable guide through the labyrinth of sensory imagery that evinces brilliance at every turn.

Benjy and Quentin are similar in many ways. Quentin was not born with mental and physical limitations, but his perceptions are like his brother's in many ways, specifically in his awareness of light and shadows. His thought processes are more advanced because of his developed intellect and range of experience; however, his emotional development is also arrested, which is evident in his inability to fully mature beyond the fantasy vs. reality stage of adolescence. His inner struggle to come to terms with reality, so often over-ridden by fantasy, ultimately drives him to suicide. "The variations in style," states Greven, "in prose rhythms, in form and typography come to represent the swirls of emotions in Quentin's soul" (49).

CHAPTER III  
*Trampling My Shadow's Bones*  
Quentin Compson

Quentin's chapter is both curious and perplexing. "Unlike Faulkner's earlier writing," states Zender, "the second section of The Sound and the Fury subjects the dream of a transforming power of voice to ironic scrutiny" (16). It contains beautiful, haunted writing that "as though to enact its own willed destruction, cannot resist drifting off into muddled self-examination" (Sundquist 16). While the reader is cognizant that Benjy's lack of mental development causes him to experience emotional entanglement and Quentin's exaggerated sentiment is both amusing and tragic, ultimately "we are led to see them both as suffering individuals, to feel considerable compassion for them and to take their predicaments very seriously" (Slatoff 168). Of all the images that Faulkner created for readers to embrace throughout Quentin's narration, shadows are among the more prevalent. The structure of Quentin's chapter is "given by several repeated motifs. These include water (61 times), shadow (53), sister (30), honeysuckle (27), and scattered references to time, as carried by Quentin's watch, the Harvard chimes, and various clocks" (Dauner 75). The shadows that steal much of Quentin's attention evoke a sense of depression, isolation, and grief. This image appeals directly to readers' senses of compassion, and, presumably the response will be sympathetic. Quentin's chapter is "filled with poetry too, though his is essentially decadent: sensitive but neurotic and hopeless, as it rings sadly through a series of dying falls" (Brooks 63). If shadows instill in us a sense of emptiness, sadness, stillness, or alienation, then we are a heartbeat closer to Quentin.

Though we know that the title for this novel came from a soliloquy in Shakespeare's Macbeth, Faulkner made the following statement about the shadow imagery in Quentin's section:

That wasn't a deliberate symbolism. I would say that that shadow that stayed on his mind so much was foreknowledge of his own death, that he was—Death is here, shall I step into it, or shall I step away from it a little longer? I won't escape it, but shall I accept it now or shall I put it off until next Friday. I think that if it had any reason that must have been it. (Cowan 18)

Even though Faulkner may not have intended for shadows to carry a great significance, they do weigh heavily throughout this chapter. From the moment Quentin's thoughts begin we are in the presence of shadows, or perhaps the shadow of death. The first sentence of this section reads, "When the shadow of the sash appeared on the curtains it was between seven and eight o'clock and then I was in time again, hearing the watch" (76). Immediately, we are made aware of shadows and time, with both of which Quentin is obsessed. He seeks his shadow as we see here, "the shadow on the stoop was gone. I stepped back into sunlight, finding my shadow again" (82). He displays occasional hostility towards his *own* shadow, as sometimes his thoughts are about "trampling my shadows bones" (96), "tramping my shadow into the dust" (112), and "treading it into the pavement" (100). In these instances, "the shadow is Quentin's own shadow, which assumes meaning as the Double, the alter ego, the 'dark brother'" (Dauner 77). Other times, Quentin simply seems to be keeping track of it: "my shadow pacing me, dragging its head through the wheels that hid the fence" (133). As shadows live somewhere between day and night, Quentin lives between life and death, in his own twilight, "that quality of light as if time really had stopped for a while" (169). Failure to negotiate his dark side is the determining factor of his "psychic immaturity and disunity. Interpreted as Jung's archetypal symbol, the shadow thus reveals much about Quentin's character and his real motives for suicide" (Dauner 78). Also according to Dauner, the Jungian archetype is

Closely related to the aspect of the shadow as the as the opposing self . . . . The shadow is the repressed, excluded, inferior aspect of the psyche . . . . Quentin's desire for Caddy can logically be construed as the real basis for self-punishment and for his eventual suicide. Or again, his basic tension is that he denies his instinctual nature, which Caddy so intensely exemplifies, hence he denies his own shadow. (78)

Consequently, a shadow shaped like an arrow points directly into his anticipated watery grave: "I could not see the bottom, but I could see a long way into the motion of the water before the eye gave out, and then I saw a shadow hanging like a fat arrow stemming into the current" (116). "The above connotations of obsession, psychic disunity, and death," explains Dauner, "seem to be caught up together in another of Quentin's memories of the mutual death pact" (78).

At the end of his chapter, with the last note sounding from the Harvard chimes, the faint smell of gasoline, and the crackle of the letters through the cloth, Quentin devises the ultimate shadow as he turns out the light that is his life by turning out the light in his dorm room. Had Faulkner omitted this detail as Quentin left the dormitory, the foreshadowing of his impending suicide would not carry the impact that it does. But it is an act of Quentin's free will, which causes him to *snap* out the light, which in turn is symbolic of his final resolution to step into the ultimate shadow of death.

Beyond the world of half-light, Quentin's sun, that is, Quentin's perspective of the sun, is more seen than felt. He appears to be on the outside looking in at the life the sun illuminates, often viewing it as slanted or being slanted into. That he persistently views the sun as slanting calls for closer examination. As light, or sunlight in this case, is generally symbolic of truth or cognitive awareness of reality, the fact that Quentin views

such light as slanting reflects his own slanted view of a life haunted by perpetual dreamlike visions. He is a neurotic young man who often disassociates from reality. His vision of the sun as slanting lends support to his ability to grasp what is real, beyond shadows and darkness. Quentin's powers of reason are limited. He has planned his own suicide and continually experiences flashbacks and inner dialogues (shadows) that are tightly interwoven with his external reality (sunlight).

Another example of Quentin's seeing the slanting sun are "our feet as rubber in the thin dust where pencils of sun slanted in the trees" (135). The image of pencils not only illustrates the narrowness of his cognitive vision, but it also alludes to that which is written; a life text of what was and of what will soon be. Quentin also sees "a sparrow slanted across the sunlight" (79). Both of these examples are instances where the light is drawn and sparsely embedded into the land and acts as the backdrop for life in flight. A third example, "broken and infrequent slanting of sunlight" (136), finds the sun at a biased angle. Yet three more, "the sun slanted through the moss" (138); and, "sunlight slanted into it, sparse and eager" (122); and finally, "the sun slanting more and more" (135), find the sun leaning into the earth and illuminating her sparingly, suggesting that Quentin, like Benjy, is in the dark.

Quentin's tendency to disassociate can be seen in the following example: "There was another yellow butterfly like one of the sunflecks had come loose" (140). Not only do our minds' eyes catch sight of the fluttering shifts of reason that give us a sense of Quentin's inability to grasp, or even approach, truth, but it further demonstrates that his already fragmented mental capacity is beginning to cleave even more. Again, he sees the shattered sun as "the last light supine and tranquil . . . like pieces of a broken mirror"

(170). That Faulkner describes the mirror as broken suggests Quentin's distorted and confused mind, which ultimately leads him to a catastrophic end.

Images of sunlight can be found that are more poetic than ominous, such as "with little flecks of sunlight brushing my face like yellow leaves" (162). There is a similarity between this image and a later tactile one: "The curtains moved slow out of the darkness touching my face like someone breathing asleep, breathing slow into the darkness again, leaving the touch" (173). The sun and curtains alike are not only visual, but subtly tactile as well. One of the final examples is that "sunlight slid patchily across his walking shoulders, glinting along the pole like yellow ants" (122). Here Quentin's sun shimmers in slow motion, as does this last day of his life. It seems that, for him, the sunlight is elusive and usually carries the quality of motion: "The sun motionless at last upon his shirt" (123). Hunt notes that "shadow, shade, darkness, greyness, twilight are also somewhat equivalent to sex" (86), which tie back into the darker side of his psyche that reinforces the hellish belief that he has committed incest with Caddy.

Fiery images that are associated with sunlight are of a different nature. For example, when he turns and looks back at the three young fishermen, their poles shine "like balanced threads of yellow fire" (120). We can see a possible, maybe even probable, connection of fire with hell, as Quentin views his life as having been hellish. At an earlier point, he thinks the following about Caddy and himself: "If we could have just done something so dreadful that they would have all fled hell except us" (79). Another time his thoughts are, "If it could just be a hell beyond that: the clean flame the two of us more than dead. Then you will have only me then only me then the two of us amid the pointing and the horror beyond the clean flame" (116). This last statement

draws a clear picture of Quentin's image of hell as represented by fire with the wall of flame. The boys' fishing poles are merely the instruments by which they use to fish for their dreams. What we can imagine Quentin is actually seeing when he looks back and sees fiery poles, is a mockery of his own hell on earth.

The final sight image I wish to explore in Quentin's narration is water, which is by a slim margin the predominant image in this chapter. According to Dauner,

Since the action of the section culminates in Quentin's suicide by drowning, it is appropriate that water should be numerically the dominant motif, with its psychological and mythic implications as the unconsciousness, or the waters of death and rebirth, into which he escapes in a final ritualistic purification. (75)

Quentin all too clearly recalls having walked up on Caddy "lying in the water her head on the sand spit the water flowing about her hips" (149). At first when he sees her, he says, "Get out of that water are you crazy?" (150). Up until this point, there has been no evidence that he has ever considered drowning himself. As they near an impulsive double suicide (in a sense, a part of her—her innocence—is already dead), Quentin is unable to push the knife into her throat. His senses, at this time, are taking in everything around him:

All the smell and sounds of the night seemed to have been crowded down under a slack tent especially the honeysuckle it had got into my breathing it was on her face and throat like paint her blood pounded against my hand I was leaning on my other arm it began to jerk and jump and I had to pant to get any air at all out of that thick gray honeysuckle. (151)

This is a significant turning point for Quentin and indicates how he may have come to associate death with water. All of his senses are awakened near water, as he and Caddy precariously flirt with death. His resulting cognitive association with water demonstrates that “obsession, psychic disunity, and death seem to be caught up together in . . . [his] memories of the mutual death pact” (Dauner 78). From this point on, Quentin seems to take a more fatal view of water. The way that he describes it rolling a float near the bridge, “rocking the float at last with the echo of passage” (90), hints, perhaps even points, at the reverberation of time—like chimes—that speaks of its passing, as well as his own.

Quentin can feel water before he can see it, which brings us back to Faulkner’s use of synaesthesia. Quentin is aware that he “began to feel the water before [he] came to the bridge” (115). When he catches a glint of the water, he reaches in and touches the letters in his pockets—presumably reminded of death—which he describes as “the deep quiet and the sleep,” and “waving slow as the motion of sleep” (116). On the bridge, possibly the bridge that separates life from death, he must come to terms with his shadow. He watches it as it leans, not slants, over the water, and he thinks, “If I only had something to blot it in the water holding it until it was drowned” (90). The number of instances that the “shadow images are fused with images of water indicates that death by water is Quentin’s way of reconciling his two worlds, of merging shadows and reality and tempering their conflict” (Vickery 305). He has been unsuccessful in escaping his thoughts and desires for Caddy, and this plays a large role in his choice to take the ultimate plunge that will at once redeem and relieve him of Caddy, his shadow, and time.

Faulkner attributes qualities to the river—that make it as alive to his audience as it is alive to Quentin—to the extent that "it twinkled and glinted like breathing" (90), and had a "damp steady breath" (170). He senses "water swift and peaceful above secret places," and, in reverse, "the water peaceful and swift not good-bye" (172). He smells and feels the water beyond his timeless twilight in that river "beyond the dusk" (170), where water is "mute and unseen" (136). It is his hope of "making this peace eternal that Quentin surrenders his body to the water where the hard knots of circumstance will be untangled and the roof of wind will stand forever between him and the loud world" (Vickery 305).

From the mute water to "the loud word" (177), sounds in Quentin's narration are thunderous. At one point, he is aware that "even sound seemed to fail in this air, like the air was worn out with carrying sounds so long" (114). In all, there are approximately two hundred and fifty sounds in Quentin's narration alone, and eighty-nine of these are voices. Faulkner allows us to hear with Quentin's ears, and some of the voices heard, those who talk, speak, laugh, and yell, are unremarkable. Then there are voices that bellow, whisper, howl, and throng, and awaken our senses. As Quentin says, "You can be oblivious to sound" (76), but not if you are reading Faulkner.

According to one critic, "Quentin's element is time" (Thompson 208). The first sound in his narration is the sound of his Grandfather's watch: "Then I was in time again, hearing the watch" (76). Quentin says, "I don't suppose anybody ever deliberately listens to a watch or a clock . . . in a second of ticking it can create in the mind unbroken the long diminishing parade of time you didn't hear" (76). He refers to time as "wheels clicking and clicking," (80) as he does Christ: "That Christ was not crucified: he was

worn away by a minute clicking of little wheels” (77). The sounds of time—watches, clocks, and bells—are for the most part sounds in the real world, rather than sounds he recalls in flashbacks. As Quentin is leaning on the rail above the boathouses, he is aware of “hearing [his] watch for some time and I could feel the letters crackle through my coat . . . watching my shadow” (92). This is not the only place in the chapter where Quentin is aware of his watch, his shadow, and the letters (in his pocket) all at once. Shortly after this last instance, he thinks, “trampling my shadow's bones into the concrete with hard heels and then I was hearing the watch and I touched the letters through my coat” (96). In both of these passages, shadows, time, and his own death (the letters) come into focus.

One of the most distinctive sounds to be heard is the bell on the bakery door. The first time Quentin hears it is described in the following:

When you opened the door a bell tinkled, but just once, high and clear and small in the neat obscurity above the door, as though it were gauged and tempered to make that single clear sound so as not to wear the bell out nor to require the expenditure of too much silence. (125)

This description, particularly the “high and clear and small,” and “single clear sound,” seems to describe the sound of the bell superbly. Each time the bakery door opens, which is four all together, he hears, “The little bell tinkled once faint and clear and invisible” (127). This may be one of the clearest and most audible sounds in this section because of its penetrating pitch.

The significance of the little sister he meets in the bakery cannot be ignored. Should Quentin have forgone suicide he might well have eventually become a child molester, preying on young girls who remind him of his obsession for Caddy; this presumption is evidenced in that he “purchased the little girl’s companionship with his

money, [which] poignantly travesties the forbidden intimacy" (Matthews 401). Caddy is mirrored in the young Italian girl, and though he could have found a more suitable escort for her, he leads her through neighborhoods, open fields, and is ultimately accused of *stealing* her. The scene in the courtroom where he must pay for the livid brother's absence from work catapults him into full flashback . . . for a lengthy time he is not in the present, but is instead reliving the past.

Just as the little girl is a lesser representation of Caddy, so the tinkling of the bakery door is a lesser representation of the Harvard chimes. The following describes the Harvard bells as heard by Quentin: "It was a while before the last stroke ceased vibrating. It stayed in the air, more felt than heard, for a long time. Like all the bells that ever rang still ringing in the long dying light-rays" (79). Quentin is acutely aware of the bells and chimes, and throughout the narration, hears four chimes begin, six bells, and nine chimes cease. Near the end, Quentin listens as "the first note sounded, measured and tranquil, serenely peremptory, emptying the unhurried silence for the next one" (176). He then hears, "the last note sounded. At last it stopped vibrating and the darkness was still again" (178). This is the final audible note in Quentin's section.

Rising inflections work like alarms, in that they awaken us to potentially intemperate conditions. However, most of the loud sounds Quentin hears are in his memories. For instance, the number of times he recalls Benjy's bellowing is no small figure; in fact, bellowing appears the way he best remembers Benjy. In the following example, "she ran out of her dress, clutching her bridal, running into the bellowing where T.P. in the dew Whooley Sassprilluh Benjy under the box bellowing" (81), not only are we reminded that *Benjy* is extremely emotionally reactive where Caddy is concerned, but we might also imagine that Quentin feels the way Benjy sounds because his love for her is extremely painful. When we come across the bellowing, we are more likely responding to the feeling it delivers, instead of the sound that it creates.

At times, bellowing turns into hammering, and we can hear the pounding of Quentin's thoughts with these quotations, "he was pulling at her dress and bellowing his voice hammered back and forth between the walls in waves" (124), and "his voice hammering back and forth as though its own momentum would not let it stop as though there were no place for it in silence" (124). Caddy's heart also hammers in her throat: "She moved my hand up against her throat her heart was hammering there" (151). It is interesting that he attributes the same sound quality to both Caddy's pulse and Benjy's bellowing, because both the heartbeat and the bellowing belong to her.

Near the end of his narration and amid the cacophony of his thoughts, Quentin remembers "the bellowing hammering away like no place for it in silence" (173). Although technically silence is the absence of sound, it provides a significant sense image in this section, much like the shadows; silence is Quentin's sound for shadows. He describes Unc' Louis' voice as "though it were a part of darkness" (115), which very profoundly connects Louis' voice with the sound of the world. Another time, Quentin flashes back to when he was a boy in school, trying to count down to the bell, "until all of a sudden I'd realize silence and the unwinking minds, and I'd say 'Ma'am?' . . . then more silence and the cruel unwinking minds and hands jerking into the silence" (88). That hands *jerk* and minds are *cruel and unwinking* suggests that this remembered silence is painful and threatening.

Another uncomfortable silence occurs when Quentin is left standing with one of the young fishermen left behind by his friends: "'Do you like fishing better than swimming?' I said. The sound of the bees diminished, sustained yet as though instead of sinking into silence, silence merely increased between us, as water rises" (122). It seems that to Quentin, silence is more than just a lack of sound. Instead, it has substance like water in that it rises or can fill a room like air and that hands jerk into it. Finally, there is "the voice that breathed o'er Eden" (81), which renders silence as life giving.

Some of Faulkner's best sounds can be found in his descriptions of nature because his metaphors are vivid and powerful. For instance, "In the orchard the bees sounded like a wind getting up, a sound caught by a spell just under crescendo and sustained" (122). This description is very effective because by using *wind*, he attributes a sense of greatness to the smallness of bees. Quentin then hears that "the tree frogs were going smelling rain in the air they sounded like toy music boxes that were hard to turn" (155). The sounds of crickets also resound through part of this narration: "I ran down the hill in that vacuum of crickets like a breath traveling across a mirror" (149). In other examples, "the air seemed to drizzle with honeysuckle and with the rasping of crickets a substance you could feel on the flesh" (150), "the crickets hushing before us" (153), and "I could hear the crickets watching us in a circle" (154). These images not only bring the crickets through the pages with surround sound, but they also provide the readers with an outstanding example of Faulkner's use of synaesthesia.

The curious description of the drizzling of honeysuckle turns the focus from images of sound to those of smell. The honeysuckle, though it is almost audible as *drizzling* is often associated with the sound of rain, is presented by Faulkner as a dominant image that occurs in Quentin's myriad of flashbacks. The "twilightcolored smell of honeysuckle" is by far the most outstanding of all the olfactory images (95). In one of his father's diatribes, women are described as "delicate equilibrium . . . between two moons balanced . . . like drowned things floating like pale rubber flabbily getting the odor of honeysuckle all mixed up" (128). Quentin integrates and echoes his father's words as he walks through the thin dust with the little girl whose "face was like a cup of milk dashed with coffee" (128): "There were vines and creepers where at home would be honeysuckle. Coming and coming especially in the dusk when it rained, getting honeysuckle all mixed up in it as though it were not enough without that, not unbearable enough" (133). Quentin's retrospection of this smell is generally connected to memories of Caddy and it is to him the "saddest odor of all" (169). Whereas Benjy attributes the

smell of trees to her, Quentin recalls the smell of honeysuckle, as in “her face looking at the sky the smell of honeysuckle upon her face and throat” (147). This is again evidenced in “damn honeysuckle trying not to think the swing the cedars the secret surges the breathing locked drinking the wild breath the yes Yes Yes yes” (149). The connection between water and this smell is made with “I stood on the bank I could smell the honeysuckle on the water gap the air seemed to drizzle with honeysuckle and with the rasping of crickets a substance you could feel on the flesh” (149-50). Shadows soon after are connected with the double image of water and honeysuckle: “Then she talked about him clasping her wet knees her face tilted back in the gray light in the gray light the smell of honeysuckle” (150). The following paragraph compounds his obsession with this sense.

Her face looked at the sky it was so low so low that all smells and sounds of night seemed to have been crowded down like under a slack tent especially the honeysuckle it had got into my breathing it was on her face and throat like paint her blood pounded against my hand I was leaning on my other arm it began to jerk and jump and I had to pant to get to any air at all out of that thick gray honeysuckle. (151)

Like shadows, water, and time, Caddy is one of the interwoven factors with which Quentin is obsessed, and with her the odor of honeysuckle is predominant. As Quentin’s thoughts progress, the readers are subjected to a dizzying combination of the senses, and the repetition of honeysuckle begins gradually to take on a sickening sweetness that cannot be eluded by either Quentin or the reader. Two additional examples, nearly back-to-back, are “the honeysuckle drizzled and drizzled I could hear the crickets watching us in a circle she moved back went around me on toward the trees” (154), and “in the woods the tree frogs were going smelling the rain they sounded like toy music boxes that were

hard to turn and the honeysuckle” (154-55). Such is the sound of the night for Quentin. Finally, the penultimate connection between time, water, Caddy, shadows, and honeysuckle is made:

I began to smell *honeysuckle* again I could see the lights on the *courthouse clock* and the glare of town the square on the sky and the *dark willows* along the branch and the light in mothers windows the light still on in Benjys room and I stooped through the fence and went across the pasture running I ran in the *gray grass* among the crickets the *honeysuckle* getting stronger and stronger and *the smell of water* then I could see the water *the color of gray honeysuckle* and I lay down on the bank with my face close to the ground so I couldn't smell the *honeysuckle* I couldn't smell it then and I lay there feeling the earth going through my clothes listening to the water . . . *she came along* the bank and stopped. (155-56) [my italics]

The curious description of honeysuckle as drizzling is mindful of middlerain . . . not a shower or sprinkle, but an ever-present pervasive odor that saturates the senses as water saturates the ground. The drizzling brings the attention back to water again suggests the connection between Caddy and Quentin's suicide, which renders it as symbolic of Caddy's sensuality and his maddening desire for her. All of these inescapable images factor in to what finally drives Quentin to commit suicide. Shadows, water (rain—"the damp steady breath" [170]), and honeysuckle are mixed together and come to symbolize night (170). According to Millgate, "as water is associated with cleansing, redemption, peace, and death, and the honeysuckle with warm Southern nights and Caddy's passionate sexuality, so twilight 'that quality of light as if time really had stopped for a while' (209-10), becomes inextricably confused in Quentin's mind with the scents of water and of honeysuckle until 'the whole thing came to symbolize night and unrest'

[211]" (340). By grouping the images in this way, Faulkner left behind evidence of the murder weapons that psychologically suffocated Quentin; he has given the reader the most significant threads of a tapestry unraveled.

Smells that Quentin is aware of are relatively negative. Described as an odor, the apple tree is mentioned twice as being seen by the nose, another example of synaesthesia. The first of these occurs in memory when Quentin is riding the trolley: "The curtains leaning in on the twilight upon the odor of the apple tree her head against the twilight her arms behind her head kimono-winged the voice that breathed o'er eden clothes upon the bed by the nose seen above the apple" (105-06). Naturally, the image of the *apple* juxtaposed with *eden* and *clothes* brings to mind humankind's mythic fall from grace. It was Eve (and Caddy) who succumbed to sinful temptation, becoming temptress to Adam (and Quentin). There is no mention of another significant woman in Quentin's chapter, save for his mother and Dilsey, and therefore it is Caddy who is the first, the last, and the only woman who has arrested his attention. His delusion and covert fantasy that he has committed incest with her coincides with the sinful nature of humankind and implies guilt to which all people are inherently connected. The images of ambiguous "twilight" and "kimono-winged" seem to place Caddy on an unspecified middle ground where she is part sinner and part angel. Kimono is also mindful of the east, and it was to the east of Eden that our mythic ancestors were discharged after the Fall. This connection is made again, with "the chair-arm flat cool smooth under my forehead shaping the chair the apple tree leaning on my hair above the eden clothes by the nose seen" (113).

Other smells, or rather stench, that extend beyond the pages and are easily detected are those of a lantern, a nickel, *a dark cool breeze smelling of ammonia* (130), warm mud, stale tobacco, damp clothes, the *vivid dead smell of perfume* (176), the "beating of hot blood under wild unsecret flesh" (176), and finally gasoline: "My nose could see gasoline" (173). The only pleasant smell that Quentin detects is that of baking bread.

The tactile sensations demonstrate a similar imbalance between those that are unpleasant and those that are not: The unpleasant ones win out, with the exception of his feelings toward and because of water. However, like hunger, they are normal human sensations. What is unique about these in Quentin's chapter is the way his mind interprets and reasons with them. Hunger is a perfect illustration. As he is riding in the train car, he realizes that it is not stopping often because it is "emptied by eating" (105). His thoughts about hunger and eating seem to be integral with his emotional starvation/deprivation: "Eating the business of eating inside you space too space and time confused Stomach saying noon brain saying eat oclock All right I wonder what time it is what of it" (104-05). Another example, though not reflective of the same state of emotion, occurs when he is told that his "bone would have to be broken again and inside me it began to say ah ah ah and I began to sweat . . . and my jaw-muscles getting numb and my mouth saying Wait Wait just a minute through the sweat ah ah ah behind my teeth and Father damn that horse damn that horse" (113). His interpretation of reality is, at times, not unlike Benjy's in the loss of equilibrium and reason, and feelings and words become enmeshed, making it difficult to determine where one leaves off and the other takes up.

Also very much as in Benjy's chapter, Faulkner uses synaesthesia in Quentin's section. For example, when inside the courtroom, during his fit of laughter, he thinks that he "could not be a virgin, with so many of them walking along in the shadows and whispering with their soft girlvoices lingering in the shadowy places and the words coming out and perfume and eyes you could feel not see" (147). Also, and perhaps even with greater clarity, the following instance parallels Benjy's seeing Caddy's slipper with his hands: Hands can see touching in the mind shaping unseen door Door now nothing hands can see" (173). This passage occurs at the end of his narration and is followed by "yet the eyes unseeing clenched like teeth not disbelieving doubting" (173). Faulkner's

use of synaesthesia in this instance does more than cross the senses; it crosses the emotions as well. It is almost unintelligible in its complexity, but it serves as a clear reflection of Quentin's thought patterns. And, as if building to crescendo, is the following:

Hands can see cooling fingers invisible swan-throat where less than Moses rod the glass touch tentative not to drumming lean cool throat drumming cooling the metal glass full overfull cooling the glass the fingers flushing sleep leaving the taste of dampened sleep in the long silence of the throat. (174)

Within this passage is not only the foreshadowing of his imminent death by drowning (dampened sleep), but also an allusion to Caddy in the "swan-throat," which connects back to a comment made earlier by Shreve: "Leda lurking in the bushes, whimpering and moaning for the swan" (167). This in turn refers to Quentin's flashbacks of being by the water with Caddy, when she "held [his] hand against her throat her heart was hammering there" (151). Later this memory is compounded and echoed by "she took my hand and held it flat against her throat . . . . I felt the first surge of blood there it surged in strong accelerated beats" (163). Therefore, because of the remark made by Shreve that was meant to include all women, Quentin has connected the sexual gravity of his feelings for his sister and the relationship between them that existed only in fantasy. His idea of having committed incest with Caddy is as mythical as the rape of Leda by Zeus in the form of the swan.

Water, therefore, seems symbolic, to some extent, of both death and sexuality for Quentin. This connection is best evidenced and manifested in the following: "She held my head against her damp hard breast I could hear her heart going firm and slow now not hammering and the water gurgling among the willows in the dark and waves of honeysuckle coming up in the air" (152). According to Slabey,

Honeysuckle is probably the most important single image [as it] is associated with water or wetness (rain, drizzle, mist) since the smell of honeysuckle hangs heavily in the wet atmosphere of the crucial hog wallow and suicide compact scenes; it therefore also recalls images of sex and death, of shadow, twilight, greyness, of Benjy's bellowing, of Caddy's marriage, and of time and being. (84)

Taking this further, "shadow, shade, darkness, greyness, twilight are also somewhat equivalent to sex" (Slabey 86). These, too, are apparent in Quentin's relationship with Caddy, or more precisely what he selectively remembers: "I went back she touched my shoulder leaning down her shadow the blur of her face leaning down from his high shadow" (155). However, he is caught in between the impossibility of a sexual relationship with her and his inability to ever move away from her emotionally and have a relationship with another woman. His self-induced entrapment is reflected in his observance of "outside the gray light the shadows of things like dead things in stagnant water" (157). After this thought crosses his mind, Quentin wishes aloud that Caddy were dead. Unfortunately, the only way for him to escape her is through his own death, and the "shadow is an image of the body which he will soon do away with" (Slabey 86). He will indulge symbolically into the water of sexuality, which in his mind is death.

As a diversion from the solemnity of their relationship and the impact it had on him, one of the more comical moments between the two of them occurs after Quentin has fought with Dalton Ames. Quentin is sitting "against the tree with little flecks of sunlight brushing across [his] face like yellow leaves on a twig" (162). Caddy comes riding up and he feels "her hard hands running on [his] face (162)," and then "she held [his] face between her hands bumping [his] head against the tree" (163). In these two instances, Faulkner juxtaposed the feather-like feeling of sunlight on the skin with the jarring movement of Caddy pounding his head into a tree. The reader is moved from one end of the tactile spectrum to the other within a few lines.

Prior to this scene, when Quentin is noting dead things in stagnant water, he is asking Caddy if she loves Dalton. What he hears is “not breathing except slow like far away breathing” (157). Breath and breathing are movements and feelings to which he is very attuned; he experiences these feelings tactilely in wind, curtains, sashes, and water. The first breath that occurs, one that recurs throughout the chapter, is “*the voice that breathed*” (77), and “*the voice that breathed o’er eden*” (105-16). This breath appears to be an ironic thought that, from time to time, interrupts his obsession with the past and selective observations of the present. Here, breath serves to remind the reader of the impending sacrifice of his life and its microscopic reflection of the mythic sacrifice of paradise in Eden.

On other occasions, however, the air and breath are illuminated in more common circumstances. For instance, Quentin remembers that when he was younger “we’d sit in the dry leaves that whispered a little with the slow respiration of our waiting and with the slow breathing of the earth and the windless October . . . the brittle air” (115). Within the small frame of one sentence, the reader can experience five unique tactile feelings, with *whispering*, *slow respiration*, *slow breathing*, *windless*, and *brittle air*. But perhaps the most vivid of all the tactile imagery occurs in his room at Harvard with the imagery of the curtain and sash: “I stood at the window the curtains moved slow out of the darkness touching my face like someone breathing asleep, breathing slow into the darkness again, leaving the touch” (172-73). This image is strengthened later:

I returned up the corridor, waking the lost feet in whispering battalions in the silence, into the gasoline, the watch telling its furious lie on the dark table. Then the curtains breathing out of the dark upon my face, leaving the breath upon my face. A quarter hour yet. And then I’ll not be. (174)

From the beginning of Quentin's narration the reader senses the *i temporary* and the *not be*, as throughout the text are signals that foreshadow and point, like the flat-stemmed arrow, to his death, such as "and I will look down and see my murmuring bones and the deep water like wind, like a roof of wind" (80).

Water imagery is one of the most important and distinctive of all sensory images, because this day and his life will end in the "water swift and peaceful below the path" (140). Regardless of where he is, what he is doing, or what he is thinking, water is never far from his thoughts. As he walks in *thin dust* with the little girl, he can feel water "again running swift and peaceful in the secret shade" (135), and again, "that sense of water swift and peaceful above secret places, felt, not seen, not heard . . . and the sense of water mute and unseen" (136). The adjectives *swift* and *peaceful* are most often attributed to the water, perhaps because it is both the swift death and the peace that follows that he desires most of all. And, as much of the water imagery was discussed in the sight imagery of this chapter, the tactile imagery concludes with the following:

I could smell the curves of the river beyond the dusk and I saw the last light supine and tranquil upon tideflats like pieces of broken mirror, then beyond them lights began in the pale clean air, trembling a little like butterflies hovering a long way off. (170)

Finally, readers become aware that, like the train, throughout his short life Quentin "wound through rushing gaps and along ledges where movement was only a laboring sound of the exhaust and groaning wheels and the eternal mountains stood fading into the thick sky" (88). With his death, several critics have noted his externalization of grief is echoes in Keats' *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. There is a particular correlation between the promise of the lover's kiss as being far more enticing than the kiss itself. Having Caddy to himself is his fantasy; actually having her would be an amoral reality that can never

come to fruition. It is his desire to make “peace eternal that Quentin surrenders his body to the water where the hard knots of circumstance will be untangled and the roof of wind will stand forever between him and the loud world” (Vickery 305). According to Zender,

Even in imagining his condition after death, Quentin finds that he must levy a further demand as the dream of reconciling sound. ‘The deep water’, he says, will be ‘like wind, like a roof of wind’ beneath which will lie his ‘murmuring bones’ (90). No alien sound but the voice of God saying ‘Rise’ will ever penetrate into this self-absorbed murmuring. (17-18)

Ultimately, he “joins the water, the medium always associated with Caddy, as though he were lying down with it, his bodily self falling to meet the enchanted corpse lying always beneath the shadowy surface of the prose” (Snead 18). The reader may expect “a conclusion, a moral, a statement of some kind, for there is no ‘tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow’; April 8, 1928, is the final day” (Snead 35).

According to Kinney, The Sound and the Fury is Benjy’s book: His consciousness begins and closes the novel” (139). Furthermore, “each chapter of the novel circles around and back into itself; each ends in its beginning, like the narrative consciousness in Light in August” (Kinney 160). Benjy “knows fire and darkness, presence and absence, but not hierarchy . . . . [He] sees color as color, not as an index of power and privilege” (Snead 21). In one of his interviews, Faulkner stated that the “only thing that held [Benjy] into any sort of reality, into the world at all, was the trust that he had for his sister, that he knew that she loved him, and these things were flashes that were reflected on her as in a mirror. He didn’t know what they meant . . . . God had stricken

him blind at birth, that is, mindless at birth, there was never anything he could do about it” (Cowan 14, 21).

Neither Benjy nor Quentin live in the “world of actuality; to them, the real world is composed of memories and voices wholly subjective and internal” (Kinney 149). Like Benjy, Quentin “absorbs into his morbid celebrations fundamental concrete images of the past which they share—the pasture, the swing under the cedars, Caddy’s treelike smell, [and] her wedding veil” (Kinney 143). Snead points out further similarities between the two characters: “Benjy ends his chapter by falling asleep, and Quentin wakes up to begin his. Benjy ‘is filled with a kind of primitive poetry’; Quentin’s poetry is ‘essentially decadent’. Benjy is castrated and Quentin wishes to be castrated” (Snead 23-4). But unlike his idiot brother, Quentin has a strong physical distaste for the following:

The ‘rasping of crickets’ (172), his sense that he has been trapped in the ‘smells and sounds of night . . . like under a slack tent’ (173), his reluctant awareness of the power of bells to denote the passing of time, and his fear of the ‘soft girlvoiceslingering in the shadowy places’ (169), he reveals a thoroughgoing sense that the sounds of his world have been co-opted by the alien meanings of his culture. (Zender 15)

Taking this a step further, for Quentin, the “voices of his memory are the internal symbols of his alienation, as the smells and sounds of nature are the external ones. In his unequal struggle with these voices, smells, and sounds, we see his inability to defend himself against the invasive power of his culture” (Zender 16). His responses to the sounds that he hears uncover his impression of nature’s unnaturalness (Zender 14).

Quentin appears to best “amuse himself best by stepping on shadows, cheating time, by gazing into water,” which are “acts of simulated suicide” (Kinney 147). And yet Faulkner stated in an interview that while Quentin is on the bridge with the young boys and their *fiery poles*, and “when he wants the old fish to live, it may represent his unconscious desire for endurance, both for himself and for his people” (Cowan 20). And though Faulkner claimed that shadows were not deliberate symbols, we are reminded of the origin of the title for this novel and can take into consideration Faulkner’s creation of particular moods with his use of language that freely echoes Shakespeare’s soliloquy from Macbeth:

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

CHAPTER IV  
*All I wanted was peace*  
Joe Christmas

Critics have generally recognized and ascribed to Faulkner two disparate styles: “One is sober and accurate, describing with rare felicity light and sounds, outlines and movements, remarkably vivid sensory impressions. The other is rich, expansive, sonorous, imaginative, and interpretative” (Pitavy p119). I am suggesting that of the two characters, Quentin Compson and Joe Christmas, the former is generally regarded with greater sympathy. I assert that this is due, in part, to the kinder images that appear in his narration: bells, watches, water, sunlight, and shadows; as opposed to the harsher ones in the Christmas chapters: razors, whips, endless roads, darkness, and odor. From the plane of softer sensory imagery in The Sound and the Fury, we move to the pungent aromas and the razor-precision in Light in August. Joe Christmas is now the focus, as “the noise and the alarms, the sound and the fury of the hunt, dies away” (331). From chapter six on, as the reader must “[reconstruct] his past and [live] with him through the warping and wounding experiences, he takes on a totally different appearance, and arouses the reader’s sympathy in spite of his acts” (Pitavy 81). Of the characters examined in this study, he is the only character that the reader comes to know from child- to adulthood. To understand the development, I will examine the sensory images chronologically, as opposed to moving from the sense of smell, to tactile, and so on. As noted, “plot in this novel is not the ‘determinate poetic form’ controlling character energy but the unfounded fable that Christmas reinvents and transforms through a continuing act of consciousness” (Kartiganer 42). And so to present the images that appear with extreme lucidity and volume, tactility and odor, the progression of this discussion will be chronological rather than linear.

Before examining his sense development, I wish to examine the debate about his character. A general lack of agreement exists between those readers who see Joe

Christmas as a tragic hero and those who see him as a villain. He is a “character who ‘remains as he was born, an abstraction’. Like an art image that has never had the privilege of being human, he is never to be merely ‘believed’” (Kartiganer 37). Unlike Quentin, Christmas “chooses instead his doubleness” (Kartiganer 38). It is my theory that the difference lies in whether readers decipher the images with their emotions or, instead, override the images and revel in Faulkner's appeal to their intellects. My opinion is that Faulkner himself felt sympathetic toward Joe Christmas. Faulkner saturated the Christmas chapters with a flood of sensory, and often sensual, images; the poetic prose that belongs to Joe is more moving and profound than in the remaining chapters.

In addition to Faulkner's poetry, Christmas' language is filled with neologisms such as *Augusttremulous* and *thightall*. These words do not appear in dictionaries; however, they are packed, not only with meaning, but also with emotion. To begin, the first paragraph of chapter six contains *sootbleakened*, *cinderstrewnpacked*, and *sparrowlike childtrembling* (119). With these words, Faulkner emphasizes urgency and desperation with these words and adds sensory appeal, giving them more impact than if we had only such visual images, as “the orphans are bleak with soot, strewn and packed with cinders, and tremble like sparrows.” By reversing the order and fusing them, Faulkner creates a sensation like a quickened pulse or sudden exhalation of breath, because the natural rhythm of the prose has been interrupted.

These neologisms also take other forms, however, such as antonyms (frictionsmooth), synonyms (odorreek), preceding an action with direction (inyawned), compounding a description (pinkcolored), placing a vivid adjective before its object, (violenthaired), placing an adverbial noun before an adjective (thightall, Augusttremulous), and an adverbial noun before a past or present participle (sunshot, womansmelling). Essentially, there appears to be no set grammatical pattern for these neologisms. I maintain that, like *childtrembling*, these words were created for their

potential to move us beyond the printed word and into our emotions. The compounded and contrasting sensory impact neologisms have on readers is significant.

That these wordsymbols appear almost always within the Christmas chapters tells us something additional about Joe that might further influence our interpretations: A very real sense of urgency and desperation in him is trying to escape "like when he had used to think of toothpaste" (156). There seems an unstoppable surge that began with Joe's upheaval of guilt onto *womansmelling* garments. Of course, the examples given here barely touch upon the plethora of neologisms that palpitate throughout the novel, as they appear almost randomly in Joe's section. Many of the remainder of these, however, I will discuss, or at least mentioned, as my analysis progresses.

The neologisms in the telling of Joe's childhood are not necessarily from his perspective; rather, Faulkner creates for readers a portrait of urgency and despair in order to convey the emotionally and physically antipathetic conditions, as well as the deprivation of nurturing (illustrated best in Joe's glimpse of the "steel fence [that] was like a parade of starved soldiers" [138-39]), to which he is first exposed. From the onset of chapter six, with "memory believes before knowing remembers" (119), Faulkner clearly not only creates for the reader this sense of exigency and hopelessness with his descriptions of the orphanage, but provides foreshadowing images as well, as in the following passage:

A corridor in a big long garbled cold echoing building of dark red brick sootbleakened by more chimneys than its own, set in a grassless cinderstrewnpacked compound surrounded by smoking factory purlieus and enclosed by a ten foot steel-and-wire fence like a penitentiary. (119)

Without doubt Christmas' life begins in a barren environment devoid of joy and freedom. And although we have already been introduced to the adult Joe—who is more insidious

than innocent—Faulkner demonstrates sympathy for Christmas and indicates that he is in part a product of his environment. The long cold corridor that echoes with the tragic conditions of his youth becomes the long and endless road upon which he continuously and inevitably finds himself running in his older age. By recounting and elaborating with poetic language the youth of the antagonist in Light in August, Faulkner provides the reader with a reason, perhaps even a compulsion, to feel compassion instead of condemnation. The word *bleak* is used thrice within this first paragraph, and in combination with the neologisms, as well as the close textual proximity of *rain* with *tears*, the recounting of his grim childhood should soften the blows that Christmas has delivered in the previous pages of the novel.

The smells and odors, sights, sounds, and tactile sensations detected by the young Joe range from the ordinary to the obscure. The physical, concrete world is the only resource that children can depend on to discern and integrate their experiences. In general, they do not try to describe the smell of a feeling or the sound of shadows; Faulkner does, however, and quite successfully, as will be discussed further on. Regarding olfactory orientation, certain tell-tale images begin to appear, no doubt hoping to reach through the pages to the observant reader, initially with Joe's forbidden intrusion into the dietitian's closet to indulge an insatiate curiosity in the *pink warm coil* of the toothpaste: "He squatted among the soft womansmelling garments" (121), and again, "In the rife, pinkwomansmelling obscurity behind the curtain he squatted" (122). "Sober and quiet as a shadow" (120), Joe moved through the hall to the dietitian's chamber. As for the incident in the closet, Greven states,

for Joe, the institutional child, the dietitian is a pleasant 'adjunct to eating, food, the diningroom . . . pleasing in herself to look at—young, a little full-bodied, smooth pink-and-white, making his mind think of the diningroom, making his

mouth think of something sweet and sticky to eat, and also pinkcolored and surreptitious. (25)

By attributing thought to Joe's mouth, Faulkner establishes a pattern of intellectual process that is extraordinary and unique to this one character. And, as with Benjy, Faulkner utilizes synaesthesia, as in "[Joe] saw by feel alone . . . by taste and not seeing . . . by feel he could see the diminishing tube" (121). With the events that followed his being discovered amidst the pinkwomansmelling obscurity and with the misunderstanding that permanently isolated him from the woman who once evoked thoughts of candy, there is the beginning of the tensing and rigidity of his back muscles that were never to relax again, while inside his "whole being coiled in a rich and passionate revulsion" (125). The words *pinkwomansmelling* and *pinkfoamed* "link women and nausea together in Joe's mind, or rather in his body, forever afterwards, and stamp his aversion with an unforgettable color" (Pitavy 134). According to Greven, "the toothpaste episode becomes a kind of parable of Joe's life. The incident establishes an indelible set of consistently negative associations for him: Food, blackness, secrecy, darkness, women, sexuality, nausea" (27).

When the dietitian had laid the boy's crime bare to Mr. Hines, Christmas' grandfather, the latter stole him away from the orphanage. Joe knows where he was "by the smell, the air, of the back stairway . . . he also knew by smell that the person who carried him was a man" (135). His entrance into the outer world (about which he had early idealizations as the realm of the heroic) began with acute sensory identification:

Now he could feel the door. It was quite near now; he knew to the exact number how many more invisible steps remained to which in turn the man who carried him would lower himself with that infinite and silent care. Against his cheek he could feel the man's quiet, fast, warm breathing; beneath him he could feel the

tense and rigid arms, the wadded lump which he knew was his clothing caught up by feel in the dark. (137)

When his grandfather has enveloped him with the *bigger garment*, Joe knows by its smell “that it belonged to the man” (138). The manner by which Faulkner describes the boy’s first real glimpse at the world evokes not only the readers’ senses, but also emotions mingled with an overwhelming shadow of despair that is never to leave him:

The door opened, inyawed. The fresh cold air rushed in, and light from the lamps along the street; he could see the lights and the blank factory and the tall unsmoking chimneys against the stars. Against the street light the steel fence was like a parade of starved soldiers. (138-39)

Later, during the last week of his life Christmas will again notice that in the night sky “overhead the constellations wheeled, the stars of which he had been aware for 30 years and not one of which had any name to him or meant anything at all by shape or brightness or position” (106). The image he sees as a child also foreshadows the “unchanging street [that would remain] a constant prison” for him (Pitavy p86).

His first encounter with Mr. McEachern, the man who would raise him with the *blunt clean hand shut* (141), is the true beginning of the tragedy that is to be Joe’s life. Perched next to the man that is “not so much ungentle as ruthless” (143-44), both his intuitiveness and intune-ness with man and nature dramatically intensify. The *oblivious executor* jolting alongside the rocklike man, Joe ascends up a *frozen and rutted lane* in the *December twilight* (143). With the mention of the winter month comes the anticipation of a life lacking warmth in all respects; furthermore, the dim nightfall foretells of the shadows through which he will always travel and to which he will always be lost. And, as winter and twilight both represent the end of life cycles, it is determinable that at his young age of five hope has prematurely come full circle,

appearing for the final time on the horizon as a “single light which shown in the dusk” (143).

Ironically, with the onset of Christmas’ spiritual death is born a new and utterly acute awareness of the natural world in which he lives. His surroundings leave deeply rooted impressions on him as his senses are elevated to remarkable levels. For example, in the following passage, Joe’s senses of sight, smell, and touch are engaged: “The clean spartan room was redolent of Sunday. In the windows the clean, darned curtains stirred faintly in a breeze smelling of turned earth and crabapple” (146). Unlike Quentin and Benjy, Joe learns to decipher the exterior world and reads each sensation as if it were a book written in a language that infinitely differs from the language that communicates to him his life circumstances. He focuses outwardly because the confusion, anger, and ultimately the pain resulting from his turmoil-ridden childhood are composed of an emotional alphabet that he is unable to comprehend, much less accept. And as his circumstances worsen, so does his external awareness increase.

An example occurs in the stable on the day he later remembers as having *become a man*. Faulkner first has framed Joe’s face in motionless monk-like portrait, as the eight-year old boy seems completely devoid of expression. As McEachern begins to strike him methodically, Joe is aware of the “looming and shadowy crib, the rough planked wall beyond which in the ammoniac and dryscented obscurity beasts stirred now and then with snorts and indolent thuds” (150). It appears, or he wants it to appear, that he has totally disengaged his mind from his body and the pain that is being inflicted upon it. However, his body is not as strong, not as inflexible, as his mind, and so he collapses and this day of punishment concludes. Once he is back in his room and has been made to pray beside his foster-father in the twilight-room, he discerns:

A match scraped, spurted; the flame steadied upon the wick, beneath the globe upon which the man’s hand appeared now as if it had been dipped in blood. The

shadows whirled and steadied: McEachern lifted something from the table beside the lamp. He looked down at the boy: a nose, a cheek jutting, granitelike, bearded to the caverned and spectacled eyesocket. (153)

The experience in the shed echoes his experience as a young orphan in the dietitian's closet (Greven 34). "Dissociation," according to Greven, "is one of the most basic means of survival for many children, who learn early in life to distance themselves, or parts of themselves, from experiences too painful or frightening to bear" (32). Christmas' vision of Mr. McEachern is haunting, even grotesque, particularly in that he sees the other's eyes as cavernous, and so soul-less. This image of eye-nothingness recurs again with the young Negro girl in the shed whose "eyes were like dead stars, dead like everything else connected with sexuality in this novel: Bobbie's eyes too are 'without depth, as if they could not even reflect'" (Pitavy 63).

As the years pass, his denial of his imprisoned inner rage manifests itself to a greater extent in his dependence on the external world for guidance through a muddled and tragic life. Following the incident with the young Negro girl in the barn when he is fourteen, he notices that the evening star "was rich and heavy with jasmine bloom . . . he went on, fading, phantomlike" (158). This star "is Venus, the symbol of Woman" (Pitavy 92). And as Quentin's sexuality drowned in the drizzle of honeysuckle, Joe would come to associate jasmine with the shadow-like, dead-eyed essence of the feminine. As he had learned by the presence and actions of the dietitian and Mrs. McEachern, impersonal fact was contaminated by women with "an odor, an attenuation, and aftertaste" (167). For Joe, Mrs. McEachern "is another version of the dietitian, secretive, collusive, unpredictable" (Greven 33).

On his way home from the barn, where his concealed rage had finally found momentary release, he passes by the pasture and a spring: "A clump of willows in the darkness smelt and heard but not seen. When he approached the fluting of young frogs

ceased like so many strings cut with simultaneous scissors” (158). The silent sharp edge of this image reflects two things: first, it indicates Joe’s aberrant behavior that is gradually isolating him from society; and second, it suggests a foreboding abstraction of thought that ultimately will recur nineteen years later on the day that he cuts Joanna’s *strings* with a razor, as well as similar action that Percy Grimm will commit against him. That the kitchen light in the house seemed to be watching him in a threatening manner further compounds the mindset of a sociopath.

Regardless of circumstance, Joe continues to progress, almost savagely, through the stages of adolescence. He acts and reacts animalistically and on many occasions is described as having attributes other than human, beginning with Mr. McEachern’s observation that Joe sat like an *impassive animal* on the first night he was brought to his new home (161). Other accounts are of Joe’s eating like a dog; having the “shadowlike agility of a cat” (170); climbing down a rope that, in the moonlight, appears “not less frail than a spider skein” (170); crouching, licking blood, panting” after having taken McEachern’s fist on his face (164-65); and, feeling “like an eagle: hard, sufficient, potent, remorseless, strong,” not knowing then that “like the eagle, his own flesh as well as all space was still a cage” (160).

At the age of seventeen, he eventually pursues a young waitress, a prostitute, who also comes across as subhuman with her *too big hands* and constant *downlooking gaze* with eyes that looked like “button eyes on a toy animal” (173). With brilliant use of synaesthesia, Faulkner gives the following account of Joe’s first ‘date’ with Bobbie: “He could smell her, smell the waiting: still, wise, a little weary” (187). To analyze this sensation and determine what the actual smells are behind *waiting*, one needs only examine it within context. Joe had run five miles and waited for an hour to rendezvous with the first woman he has pursued. When she arrives, he finds himself standing with her in uncomfortable silence, not knowing what to do or say. The smells behind waiting, then, can be imagined as Joe’s own perspiration (presumably from running and from

fear), Bobbie, the street corner, the diner, and the night. All of these, compounded with his anxiety and confusion, make up for him the “smell of waiting.”

Prior to this meeting, when he had returned on his own to the diner to see again the tiny waitress with *too big hands*, he experiences a wash of confusion, paranoia, and humiliation. Entering the diner, he “believed that the men had all stopped talking to watch him, because he could hear nothing now save a vicious frying sound” (179). Again, his feelings of detachment are mirrored in this instant. The silence is quite nearly unbearable and seems to produce the same feelings of discomfort and anxiety Quentin once felt primarily in the classroom. Quentin’s remembrance of *cruel unwinking minds* resounds in the antagonistic sound of food cooking in the kitchen. Joe believes, too, that he is being laughed at by some of the men in the back. Then he is aware of the two-overlarge and *bigknuckled* hands. When Bobbie first speaks to him, her “voice sounded downcast, quite empty” (179); then the voice, like the hands, stops moving. With this thought regarding the voice and cessation of action, he is not only concretizing sound by thinking of it in terms of a tangible substance but also exhibiting further evidence of either social retardation or significant perceptual disorders, or possibly both. When Bobbie removes the coffee cup, Benjy is again called to mind as Joe observes only that the “hand and cup vanished” (181). Further in the novel, during the years that Joe spends with Joanna, he “seemed to watch his hand as if from a distance . . . . watched his hand swing and hurl the dish crashing into the wall, the invisible wall” (238). Back in the diner, Joe eventually leaves the *full of listening* room, and with the half dollar feeling as big as a *cartwheel* in his sweating hand, he walks the street in laughter; that is, with the laughter of the men pacing him until it “swept and carried him along the street; then it began to flow past him, dying away, letting him to earth, pavement” (184).

After the poorly timed first late-night meeting with Bobbie, Joe runs off, leaving the sound of his footsteps in the air, although he is no longer visible. He jumps a fence

and reaches the woods, aware that something is growing in the furrows; something, perhaps, like toothpaste that is wretchedly beginning to purge itself clean from his body. Entering the woods he escapes the wormcoiled soft sense of females, finding solace instead in the hard trunked, “branchshadowed quiet, hardfeeling, hardsmelling, invisible” (189) realm of men, leaving women who are the “victims of periodical filth” (185). Significant elucidation can be found in his *notseeing* and “hardknowing as though in a cave he seemed to see a diminishing row of suavely shaped urns in moonlight, blanched . . . Each one was cracked and from each crack there issued something liquid, deathcolored, and foul” (189). With the juxtaposition of notseeing and seeing comes the division between reality and delusion, which unnerves Joe to such a degree that he vomits. “Suavely shaped” would seem most likely to refer to women, and yet they are vessels of emotional death—filled with foul, “deathcolored” liquid like blood—and they are fading, blanched in the light of the moon, the seat of human emotion. Hence, emotion and feeling become still more shade frightening and repelling; the “hardfeeling” earth is his sanctuary. Bobbie then comes lumbering along, like an animal (190), and allows herself to be dragged by him into his cave of a world.

Although their association with one another continues for a short time, it comes to a jarring halt after McEachern has followed Joe to the dance, “his round head and his short, blunt, outraged beard [running] toward the open door and the open windows where the music came from” (203). After McEachern’s verbal attack and Joe’s physical counter-attack, Joe looks to see an outraged Bobbie being held back by two men, “her white face wrung and ugly beneath the splotches of savage paint, her mouth a small jagged hole filled with shrieking” (205). The images of “savage paint” and “jagged hole” further alienate Christmas from the feminine, as the former suggests a tribal war paint and, because “jagged” has connotations of sharpness and flesh-tearing, hints of cannibalism or animalistic (and again savage) behavior come to mind. This image is transferred to Joe after he has ridden home to take the money saved by Mrs. McEachern:

“The she could see his teeth shining in the lamp” (208). Although she may have thought, as her husband has moments earlier, that she was looking at the face of a demon, Joe runs down the stairs, laughing, “into something that was obliterating him like a picture in chalk being erased from the blackboard” (208). Even the light of the *moonglow* that fills the room has a warped aspect. His ephemeral life then becomes more visible to the reader as the years of invisibility begin. This is also foreshadowed at the time that he leaves his father lying on the barn floor: “In the motion the sweet sharp sweat of the horse blew, sulphuric; the invisible wind flew past” (207).

As Joe matures, his sensory perceptions of his environment increase and readers find the images easier to discern. The incredible, seemingly still, picture of Joe and the horse presents the reader with one of the more obvious moments of Faulkner’s attempt to create portraits with words. Initially the horse is “still going through the motion of galloping, [but] it was not moving much faster than a man could walk” (210). Then the terrific slowness of the hollow sound of hooves (210) sounds not only in the empty street but should to some extent also resound in readers’ emotional interpretations, and this is compounded by a clock that is striking one. These are significant sounds at this point because they reflect Christmas’ hollowness and also his isolation. Ironically, just before the horse gives out, it takes on a human quality: “Breathing almost like a human voice” (210). Faulkner has gone to great lengths to portray some of the characters in this novel as behaving like animals; this transference heightens the inhumane and conscienceless attributes that belong to Joe, as well as a few other characters. According to Pitavy,

Painting and sculpture, by their nature, must attempt to recapture movement and enclose it in a limited area and volume. Faulkner’s early interest in drawing is not without significance in this context; he also frequently compares his characters’ movements to those in pictures or sculpture. (70)

An excellent example of Faulkner's expressionistic technique is apparent when Joe's horse nears the point of exhaustion:

Save for the rise and fall of the stick and the groaning respiration of the animal, they might have been an equestrian statue strayed from its pedestal and come to rest in an attitude of ultimate exhaustion in a quiet and empty street splotted and dappled by moonshadows . . . . the spent beast and the youth, facing one another, their heads quite near, as if carved in an attitude of listening or of prayer or of consultation. (210-11)

At the moment when motion stops, "the illusion of movement is achieved, and the sculptural image appears almost as a matter of course" (Pitavy 72). Furthermore, the elements in this word-portrait are held in suspension, rather than being fluid and mobile (Slatoff 158). Joe's beating of the horse, as well as additional occasions when he strikes other characters, resonate the violent punishment executed by McEachern.

Though Joe has not finally realized that he has cast himself out onto an endless road of not-knowing and isolation, the reader catches the initial glimpse of his treadmill-like course through the remainder of his life when the road beneath his feet becomes gravel, and he sees that the "road curved on, moonblanched, bordered at wide intervals by the small, random, new, terrible, little houses" (211). The sound of his feet "loud in the late silence" (211) is one of the more haunting audible images. The silence (that is so silent that it screams) occurs again when he "put his hand on the door [and] became aware of a complete silence behind it, a silence which he at eighteen knew that it would take more than one person to make" (214).

When Joe is finally allowed entrance into the house where Bobbie had lived, he has progressed further away from reality, hearing voices no more significant than cicadas and screaming that seemed "part of a long wind" (217), and he is unaware that "though

[he] had not moved since he entered, he was still running” (215). Within this section that details his final contact, and conflict, with Bobbie and her companions, the sense of motion recurs repeatedly: Bobbie’s hand is motionless; Mame appears almost out of nowhere and is motionless, “still as immobile and completely finished and surfaced as a cast statue” (218); Joe lies peaceful and still on the floor after the stranger strikes him (219); and, Joe’s consciousness is like “two wireends of volition and sentience lying, not touching now, waiting to touch, to knit anew so that he could move” (220). Though he is acutely aware of the activity around him, the inner movement, or transmutation, that Joe is experiencing is the crossing of the metaphoric bridge that spans the final gap between his chance to ever conceive of or live a peaceful life and his fully manifested desolation. It is not until the week of his death that he will find the elusive peace and sense of belonging, or oneness, in the world. Emotion is also ultimately severed from cognition, as illustrated in his “knowing not grieving remembers a thousand savage and lonely streets” (220). As I am examining Joe’s sense impressions, it is imperative that we keep in mind his sensory experiences that lead him “from the dark porch, into the moonlight . . . [entering] the street which was to run for fifteen years” (223).

The road onto which Joe enters runs endlessly, and it is powerfully evocative and disheartening. To this point, we have studied Christmas’ early sensory experiences as a child in the orphanage, a foster child of the McEachern’s, and as an adolescent. His experiences from this point on will manifest and recur—at least in his subconscious—throughout the remainder of his life. The following passages that detail this road, juxtaposed, emphasize the sensorial abyss that is Joe’s life for many years.

Between the savage and spurious board fronts of oil towns . . . . it ran through yellow wheat fields waving beneath the fierce yellow days of labor and hard sleep in haystacks beneath the cold mad moon of September, and the brittle stars . . . . beneath the dark and equivocal and symbolic archways of midnight . . . . the street

ran on: catlike, one place was the same as another to him. But in none of them could he be quiet. But the street ran on its moods and phases, always empty: he might have seen himself as in numberless avatars, in silence, doomed with motion, driven by the courage of flagged and spurred despair. (224-26)

Key words in these passages signal the tone of Joe's journey: savage, spurious, fierce, hard, cold, mad, brittle, dark, equivocal, midnight, catlike, empty, silence, doomed, and despair. The penultimate word here is *doomed*; senses of sight (dark and empty midnight), sound (catlike silence), tactility (hard and brittle cold), and urgency (savage and mad despair/equivocal spuriousness) can group the remainder of the adjectives. But Joe "does not flee in the same street for fifteen years, it flees beneath his feet, which illusion serves to strengthen the feeling of isolation, abandon, and powerlessness" (Pitavy 213). This particular setting, then, is an "extension or projection of [his] essential being. This is true of the streets where Christmas is lost, a shadow among shadows: 'In the wide, empty, shadowbrooded street'" (Pitavy 106).

After so many years of running savage, Joe finally sees before him Joanna's house "[bulking] square and huge from its mass of trees" (228). And though he is aware that he has not eaten in at least twenty-four hours, at this point his psyche has not received nourishment in over twelve years. In the sections of the novel that account for the time he spends with Joanna, Joe is more connected to and aware of the *hardmansmelling* earth than at any earlier point in his life. His first impression (and concurrent sensory awareness) of her house evidences his dependence on his senses to negotiate his passage through the next three years.

The house was dark; he quit watching it then. He lay in the copse, on his belly on the dark earth. In the copse the darkness was impenetrable; through his shirt and trousers it felt a little chill, close, faintly dank, as if the sun never reached the

atmosphere which the copse held. He could feel the neversunned earth strike, slow and receptive against him through his clothes: groin, hip, belly, breast, forearms. His arms were crossed, his forehead rested upon them, in his nostrils the damp rich odor of the dark and fecund earth. (228-29)

All of his senses are attuned at this precise moment, as he lies in waiting for an *attack*. Curiously, Joe feels the *neversunned earth* striking his body. This conception is not all together alien: He has been at the receiving end of many a punitive strike, and he is also at this time preparing for, or at least contemplating, a *strike* of sorts against the woman in the house. What he does not surmise is that he is feeling is his own heightened heartbeat, a rush of adrenaline, so strong that it pulsates throughout his entire body. He is aware, however, that it is a woman that inhabits the house, and so the images of *dark* and *fecund* arise. He attributes these to the earth, that unyielding surface that belongs to the masculine. So in essence, he is anticipating the female—smelling the *rich odor*—while protected by a dark thicket and the hard earth that are similar to the woods into which he retreated after his meeting with Bobbie. With sensorial perception Faulkner is merging the male and the female essences as perceived by Christmas, providing the reader with a powerful foreshadowing of events to follow.

“Catlike,” Joe approaches the house and is aware of a “little island of silence about him like thin yellow shadow of [the crickets’] small voices” (229). Again, Faulkner has used synaesthesia in describing a sound as being visually perceptible. The yellow shadow, not seen but felt and heard, is his own. The color yellow, according to Webster’s Third New International Dictionary, may refer to his mulatto complexion. And even though the “mulatto is the Faulknerian symbol of what is beyond comprehension or art,” this image introduces an artistic impression that demonstrates the extent of Christmas’ internal awareness of his lack of a singular identity, displacing the internal struggle onto the external and physical world (Kartiganer 39). I examined the

importance of Faulkner's shadow imagery above; here the conclusion can be drawn that this thin yellow shadow is simply Joe's emerging desires for both food and the woman inside the house. He enters, seeming to "flow into the dark kitchen: a shadow returning without a sound and without locomotion to the allmother of obscurity and darkness" (230). In this instance, silence, obscurity, and darkness are common threads of a familiar life tapestry. However, the movement (flowing) and lack of thereof (without locomotion) are in obvious contradiction to one another. Together they echo the moment when Joe was at Bobbie's door, still running while standing still. Yet in this case the image is inverted and so presages a relationship with Joanna, which will in many ways contradict his earlier relationship with Bobbie.

Significance can also be found in his extreme state of hunger and the presence of the invisible dish of invisible food that appears to be waiting for him and from which he will receive much-needed nourishment (230). While he is eating, his "jaw stopped suddenly in midchewing and thinking fled for twenty-five years back down the street" (230). A similar synaesthetic olfactory/tactile situation had occurred at the McEachern dinner table. Joe was aware of "smelling [his] mouth and tongue weeping," which illustrates Joe's realization that he is salivating. We soon learn that what he is trying to identify is the smell of peas and molasses. To do this, he has to follow his senses of smell, sight, sound, then sight and sound, and again back to smell. In the novel, this paragraph is italicized, and reads like a thought process:

*I'll know it in a minute. I have eaten it before, somewhere. In a minute I will . . .  
I see I see I more than see hear I hear I see my head bent I hear the monotonous  
dogmatic voice which I believe will never cease going on forever and peeping I  
see the indomitable bullet head the clean blunt beard they too bent and I thinking  
How can he be so nohungry and I smelling my mouth and tongue weeping. (230)*

In short, Joe is remembering his impatience with McEachern's superfluous blessing. This appears to be Joe's inner narration, as he says "smelling *my* mouth," but another question comes to mind: Why does he think to himself in this way? He disguises, intentionally or not, the word salivation behind weeping. Here Faulkner appears to show the complexity of Joe's thoughts and the process by which he processes information intrinsically. If this instance is taken a step beyond *salivation*, then we could imagine that Joe is feeling so hungry that even his mouth is crying, and that it is *salvation* that he hungers for.

Following this quotation through to the end, we read, "I smelling my mouth and tongue weeping the hot salt of waiting my eyes tasting the hot steam from the dish." The latter part of this passage, beginning with the "hot salt," reaches Christmas' sense of tactility. Images, particularly as profound and enigmatic as this, offer readers' to vicariously experience each character's sensorial perceptions and compel us to look beyond the printed words, allowing us to move emotionally closer to the character because the distance between reality and fiction is broached, something Joe is finding harder to accomplish. As evidenced by this illustration, if we have to struggle to understand Christmas' thoughts, then maybe we will better understand his struggle.

Also closer now in proximity to Joe is Joanna, as she has entered into the dark kitchen "with a face quiet, grave, utterly alarmed" (231). In a *voice calm, a little deep, quite cold*, she tells him "if it is just food you want, you will find that" (231). This initial lack of reaction to each other prepares readers for their unpredictable relationship. Ultimately, she surrenders to him with "hard, untearful and unselfpitying and almost manlike yielding" (234), which must, to some extent, mirror to Joe his own rocklike posture toward his physically abusive foster father. She has "mantrained muscles and the mantrained habit of thinking born of heritage and environment," yet she is a woman who, upon first sight, "opened before him, instantaneous as a landscape in a lightening flash, a horizon of physical security and adultery if not pleasure" (235).

As the relationship Joe develops with Joanna is primarily of a sensual and animalistic nature, Faulkner delivers stirring, evocative images. For instance, as Joe is waiting for nightfall to approach the house, he watches through the open door of the cabin “the sun slant and lengthen and turn copper. Then the copper faded into lilac, into the fading lilac of full dusk” (237). The visual intensity of this sky momentarily occludes some of the less striking images. An example that shows some aspect of the land or of nature more as paintings than words in a book appears when Joe takes note that, after six months, “he had worn a private path between the cabin and the mill . . . . It ran almost stringstraight forward, avoiding all houses, entering the woods soon and running straight and with daily increasing definition and precision” (239). A bird’s eye view of this path and others is captured later in the explanation that “the negro women who came to the house from both directions up and down the road, following paths which had been years in the wearing and which radiated from the house like wheelspokes” (257).

As the relationship wears on through what Joe determines to be the first phase, he compares it to the “breaking down of a spiritual skeleton the very sound of whose snapping fibers could be heard aloud almost by the physical ear” (256). Of the second phase, he senses that the “coming of the dark within the old walls was breaking down something and leaving it corrupt with waiting” (257). Even Joe is able to sense the foreboding and premonition of his violent exodus back onto the savage and lonely streets. Joanna’s behavior in this phase is described several times as being a manifestation of a fury, and she begins to take on a more feral aspect, as her eyes glow like those of a cat and strands of her hair “seem to come alive like octopus tentacles” (259-60). Joe is now aware of two Joannas: One from the first phase and one from the second, and he watches as the “two creatures that struggled in one body like two moongleamed shapes struggling drowning in the alternate throes upon the surface of a black thick pool beneath the last moon” (260). It is the end of this quote that is most significant because Faulkner has

determined much earlier that there would be a last moon, and on this last night together Joanna would surface in a thick pool of her own blood.

Well into the third phase, Joe, *backlooking*, is able to determine and clearly distinguish between each of the three stages of their relationship:

During the first phase it had been as though he were outside a house where snow was on the ground, trying to get into the house; during the second phase he was at the bottom of a pit in the hot wild darkness; now he was in the middle of a plain where there was no house, not even snow, not even wind. (269)

Initially he sought warmth and nourishment and found this in Joanna's house that became a type of sanctuary for him. As time passes he began to feel consumed and trapped in a hellish fury. Finally, there is no house, no sanctuary, no hell, no hunger . . . no movement around or in him. There is only the ominous beckoning of the savage street and the subconscious realization that he was on the verge of "doing something."

Months prior to their last moon, Joe enters Joanna's bedroom to find upon her aging body a "head of hair just beginning to gray drawn gauntly back to a knot as savage and ugly as a wart on a diseased bough" (275). If Benjy's "she smelled like trees" hauntingly whispers across the page now, the tone is corrupt and more closely resembles that of the foul stench of black liquid that oozed from smooth urns in a grove of trees. The remaining nights, from May to August, that Joe was to enter into the house, into Joanna's bedroom, were filled with strikes against one another, obscene language that was no longer relished, and imprints of knees on the floor from which he consistently had to jerk his eyes away, "as if it were death that [he] had looked at" (279). And whether either one of them consciously was aware, the imprints were those of death; however, death was no longer kneeling—it was moving toward them at a steady and rapid pace.

In the very beginning, before their first encounter, as Joe had lain in the “tangle of shrubbery” watching the house, he “heard a clock strike nine and then ten” (228). On what was to be their final night, Joe could sense the descent of death:

As he sat in the shadows of the ruined garden on that August night three months later and heard the clock in the courthouse two miles away strike ten and then eleven, he believed with calm paradox that he was the volitionless servant of the fatality in which he believed that he did not believe. (279-80)

The striking of the clock, or rather Joe’s limited awareness of it, seems to have some degree of significance. As was mentioned earlier, he heard the clock strike one as he rode the horse toward Bobbie’s house, having freed himself at last from the McEacherns. Prior to his initial trespass into Joanna’s house, he hears nine and ten, and before the final entrance into her house, he hears ten and eleven. Excluding the one strike (which seems more than anything else to sound the birth of a life of isolation), he is aware of the succession of the clock striking nine, ten, and eleven, and this may mirror the three years and/or three phases of his relationship with Joanna. Before entering the house, he returns to the shadow of the shrubbery, “hearing the last stroke of the far clock cease and die away . . . . Now it was still, quiet, the fecund earth now coolly suspirant. The dark was filled with voices, myriad, out of all time” (281). The final strike of the clock, similar to the final chiming of the bells that Quentin hears at Harvard just prior to his suicide, signals that the time for death is nigh. Joe at once discovers what he always knew was going to happen. Facing Joanna for the final time, Joe finds himself staring into the “cocked hammer monstrous, and viciously poised like the arched head of a snake” (282).

Believing it is the only thing left to do, Joanna pulls the trigger. The gun did not go off, but Joe did.

During what was to be his last week of life, after having silenced the female voice once and for all, Joe finds a new and even more heightened awareness of his physical surroundings. One of Faulkner's more sensual passages that demonstrates this new and evocative awareness occurs when Christmas is standing just outside of Joanna's house after the murder.

The dark air breathed upon him, breathed smoothly as the garment slipped down his legs, the cool mouth of darkness, 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. He passed through the broken gate and stopped beside the road. The August weeds were thightall. (107)

This passage is so saturated by physical sensation that it presumably can move the reader directly into the arena of emotional response. Darkness becomes resistant and thick like water and so has a feeling of substance. That the dew is like "he had never felt before," shows the impact of the experience on Joe, almost ultimate by nature, but possibly merely indicative of his new awareness. The breath of air could represent light wind and is easy for readers to imagine. Another example, though it occurs in the early part of Joe's life and is not experienced by him but rather the dietitian, is that "her body [was] open to sleep as though sleep were a man" (130). In this case, if sleep is her lover, then exhaustion is the seduction. These images are likely the most sensual that Faulkner

created in Light in August, with the possible exceptions of the descriptions of the insatiable sexual appetite of Joanna in the second phase of her coupling with Joe.

As Joanna's lifeline has been terminally severed, Joe finds himself alone in a fourth phase. Still standing outside of the house, a car approaches with lights full upon him, and he watches "his body grow white out of the darkness like a kodak print emerging from the liquid" (108). This "figure of the photographic negative" parallels the emotional inversion that has taken place within his psyche (Sundquist 71). Eventually, he seeks and finds a few hours of sleep among the horses in the stable, *because they are not women* (109). Upon awakening, Christmas sees through the window "the primrose sky and the high pale morning star of full summer" (109). Again, Faulkner has used *God's paintbrush* possibly to detract from Joe's penultimate fall from grace, possibly to merely elucidate Joe's new perception of his natural surroundings. He emerges and walks into the "gray and yellow of dawn, the clean chill, breathing it deep" (109). Christmas is moved to inhale deeply by the feel of the air. While Joe is in this final stage of life, Beck explains that there is a heightened

descriptive style beyond epithet and abstract definition to figurative language. Having written, 'It is just dawn, daylight: that gray and lonely suspension filled with the peaceful and tentative waking of birds'. He goes on in the next sentence to a simile: 'The air, inbreathed, is like spring water. (143)

Mornings hint of beginnings (as opposed to twilight), and bring a sense of peacefulness that Joe is not wholly unaware of, "feeling with each breath himself diffuse in the neutral grayness, becoming one with loneliness and quiet that has never known fury or despair"

(331). However, though mornings may speak of beginnings, what Joe is experiencing is merely the beginning of the end. His sense of becoming one with nature signals to the reader the calm and peace that one finds in death. He is no longer on the savage road, running. He is walking, unhurried, toward that place where no movement, hunger, desperation, entrapment can occur—walking like a dead man born again toward the end of his tortuous life. His lack of haste and detachment echoes in his observation that,

He could see the yellow day opening peacefully on before him, like a corridor, an arras, into a still chiaroscuro without urgency. It seemed to him that as he sat there the yellow day contemplated him drowsily, like a prone and somnolent yellow cat . . . . He would not move, apparently arrested and held immobile by a single word which had perhaps not yet impacted, his whole being suspended by the single trivial combination of letters in quiet and sunny space, so that hanging motionless and without physical weight he seemed to watch the slow flowing of time beneath him, thinking *All I wanted was peace*. (111)

The one single word that embraces what he has endlessly fought to make his reality is *peace*, which can appeal to the readers' senses of sight, sound, smell, and touch. Christmas walks through town, looking more like "a phantom, a spirit, strayed out of its own world, and lost" (114). It is not a lost man that the reader is now confronted by; Joe is at last coming full circle to find again the innocence before memory, before knowing. His sense perceptions are predominantly visual as he notices that the "street lamps marched on, spaced, intermittent with bitten and unstirring branches" (115). This image parallels his childhood vision that "against the street light the steel fence was like a

parade of starved soldiers” (139). In fact, as he looked back at the last thirty years, it seemed as if he had “lived inside an orderly parade of named and numbered days like picket fences” (331). But now he was outside of that parade, and there was no longer the movement of psychic hunger and deprivation. Then this street, which had long been felt to him to be savage, begins to slope; however, this time “it sloped safely” (115). He is aware of the other street, “the one which had almost betrayed him,” and of the town without breath or odor, that may have been the “original quarry, abyss itself” (116).

The *something* that he has been waiting for, that has been tracking him for thirty years “to drown him and into which now and at last he had actually entered,” is now closing in on him in the form of the sheriff and ultimately Percy Grimm. In the dawn, he feels dispersed in the *neutral grayness*, and he learns of “loneliness and quiet that has never known fury or despair” (331). It appears that Christmas receives,

such solace when he returns, as though driven by compulsion, to ‘his native earth’ (LA 295). It is as though he wanted to see it ‘in all its phases for the first or last time’. For a week he lurks and creeps ‘among its secret places’ and thinks ‘that this is what it is—the looking and seeing—which gives him peace and unhaste and quiet. (Brooks 45).

This is all he had ever hoped for, all he had ever desired. The time has finally come for Christmas to run toward rather than run from and to no longer bother about having to eat.

While Benjy is the most sensorial character in The Sound and the Fury, Quentin dwells on shadow imagery with exaggerated sentiment, and Christmas is the embodiment of the *sound and the fury* of sentiment in Light in August, Hightower’s intellect brings

together the intellectual analysis of love and the perplexity of life with which all men struggle. He is most like Christmas in that his tenacious unwillingness to leave Jefferson in spite of blatant rejection by the community parallels, if only by lack of sound mind, Christmas' continuous flight from life and responsibility. Each of the two characters chooses to subject himself to martyrdom in order to avoid precarious risks involved in developing close relationships with other people, though the emotional impetus for each character differs. The events that ultimately drive Christmas toward alienation from humankind become obvious through the treatment he received from others during his maturation. He felt that, like all other men shaped by life, he "had been returned to the lightless hot wet primogenitive Female" (115). Christmas' awareness of sense images begins with the simplicity attributed to children and evolves into an enigmatic, surreal perception of his environment. His life is in bildungsroman form, and for this reason I have studied the development of his sensory awareness chronologically. Hightower's youthful past, on the other hand, is partially obscured by the haunting visions he observes behind his study window, and nearly as difficult for him to recall as they are for the reader to decipher. "The figure of Hightower," according to Kartiganer, "is the clearest version in the novel of the human need to encounter reality through protective fantasies" (51). He perpetually supplies himself "with shapes and sounds with which to guard himself from the truth" (Kartiganer 50).

CHAPTER V  
*I am not in life anymore*  
Gail Hightower

The style with which Hightower's sections are written are "more ornate, more complex, even precious and self-conscious, self-centered as befits the character" (Pitavy 149). Faulkner shows the beginning of Hightower's life as a man born to sit by the window and wait for nightfall; man born not to woman but to the "passive and anonymous whom God had created to be not alone the recipient and receptacle of the seed of his body but by his spirit, too, which is truth or as near truth as he dare approach" (467). Perhaps tactile imagery is weak in his sections because when we are confronted with Hightower, we are confronted by his spirit—one that is manifested outwardly by his appearance and odor and inwardly through his nightly calls to the window to watch and hear the passing phantom cavalry. And since sight, sound, and smell, make up for the predominant imagery, the sense of touch will not be addressed. Also, it is important to note that the crescendos in Hightower's section contain images of sight, sound, and smell, in a manner that renders the dramatic moment incomplete if the senses are extracted from the context and examined separate from the whole. Therefore, several of the passages, such as Hightower's wife's breakdown in the church, will not fall into only one sense category.

Like Benjy's fence, Quentin's shadow, Christmas' street, the window is Hightower's essence, which first appears in chapter three. Though the opening sentence, "from his study window he can see the street," places the reader inside Hightower's house, what we soon realize is that we, as readers, are actually looking in at him rather than looking out through his eyes. There is a pervading sense that here lives a man who is always on the inside looking out; a man who observes but does not participate in life. His lack of involvement with society is mirrored by his house, which is hidden and in the dark:

The house, the brown, unpainted and unobtrusive bungalow is small too and by bushing crepe myrtle and syringa and althea almost hidden save for that gap through which from the study window he watches the street. So hidden it is that the light from the corner street lamp scarcely touches it. (57)

The image and the idea of social alienation is reinforced near the end of the novel:

He seems to watch himself among faces, always among, enclosed and surrounded by, faces, as though he watched himself in his own pulpit, from the rear of the church, or as though he were a fish in a bowl. And more than that: the faces seem to be mirrors in which he watches himself. (488)

As Hightower sits by the window, he reflects on himself: He is the aged outcast minister who provided a sanctuary which would be “inviolable not only to officers and mobs, but also to the very irrevocable past” (448).

Although the sense imagery that may have the strongest impact on the reader is that of Hightower’s odor and the odor of his *mankept* house, sight imagery exceeds those of sound and smell. One of the first, clearest, and most symbolic of the sight images is the sign suspended outside of his nearly hidden house. It is a monument initially erected with careful attention, and the pieces of shattered glass with which it was constructed mirror Hightower’s own fragmentation of soul, heart, and mind. At night the letters glitter “with an effect as of Christmas”; this image foreshadows not only that the paths of both the Hightower and Christmas will eventually cross but also the circumstances under which their lives will become irrevocably intertwined with metaphoric suspension. According to Sundquist, “It is for good reason, then, that in accounting for Christmas’ flight to Hightower’s house Faulkner first raises the possibility of *like to like*” (91). Yet the two men are distinctly different. They provide the novel with “extreme poles of

morality between which all the other major and minor characters fall” (Benson 266). Even in their moral opposition, the profound impression that each character’s life has on the reader is reflected in the faded out and weathered letters of the sign: “It too might have grown up out of the tragic and inescapable earth along with the low spreading maples and the shrubs, without help or hindrance” (60).

As opposed to Christmas’ youth, Hightower’s early years were spent “among phantoms, and side by side with a ghost” (474). He remembers particularly his mother’s ghost and her “last terrible glare of frustration and suffering” (475). Before she died, he could already sense the phantoms—“they were the house: he dwelled within them, within their dark and allembacing and patient aftermath of physical betrayal” (475). He and his mother had lived within the walls of their house “like two small, weak beasts in a den . . . into which now and then the father entered” (475). With this image a connection to Christmas is presented, as he, too, is often described as having dominant animalistic traits.

Hightower found what he thought was love while in the seminary with a woman some three years his senior and who only later, he realized, saw him with eyes that were those of “almost desperate calculation, like those of a harassed gambler” (480). Once they were married, he no longer saw “desperation naked in her face”; it left with all traces of passion. He thought to himself, unemotionally, “I see, that’s the way it is, Marriage—Yes I see it now” (482). Small wonder, then, that the boy becomes father to the man, and the man is captured by the youthful fantasies that sustain the boy: Fantasies and images of “hoofmarks or their shapes in the air,” and the “fine shape of eternal youth and virginal desire which makes heroes” (483).

His wife, who did not take to Jefferson or her husband, presents a strong dose of dramatic imagery on the day that she sprang up in mid-sermon:

[She] began to scream, to shriek something toward the pulpit, shaking her hands toward the pulpit where her husband had ceased talking, leaning forward with his hands raised and stopped . . . . She stood there, in the aisle now, shrieking and shaking her hands at the pulpit where her husband leaned with his hand still raised and his wild face frozen in the shape of the thundering and allegorical period which had had not completed. They did not know if she was shaking her hands at him or at God. (65)

Following the congregation's departure from the church, with Hightower still standing at the pulpit, "leaning a little forward, with the Book open and his hands propped on either side of it and *his head not bowed either*" (68), cameramen awaited his departure, too. One camera caught his face behind the hymnal, hiding, with his lips drawn back as though he were smiling, and his face looking like that of Satan (68-69). According to Doreen Fowler, Faulkner's image of the demonic is

redolent with meaning: it is a way of naming a forbidden desire to represent the repressed. According to Freud, people who appear to be obsessed by demons are actually exhibiting the repetition compulsions: 'in normal persons, [the repetition compulsion] gives the impression of pursuing fate, a demonic trait in their destiny. (Fowler 5)

So what the camera's and the readers' eyes catch is not necessarily a satanic face but a man possessed by nothing more than a repressed drive to pursue what he has deemed to be his fate: To settle among the dust left by his dead grandfather's cavalry and to die on the same ground where his "hero" had died.

He is then captured by the force of time. As he sits at the window where his hands lie on the edge, already he can feel the "two instants about to touch: one in which is the sum of his life which renews itself between each dark and dusk, and the other the

suspended instant out of which the *soon* will presently begin” (486). Having suffered the persecution and violence in which the people of the congregation and town attempt to rid themselves of him,

he suffers without shame with that patient and voluptuous ego of the martyr, the air, the behavior, the How long O Lord?, until inside his house again he lifted the mask with profuse and triumphant glee: Ah! That’s done now. That’s past now. That’s bought and paid for now . . . . After all I have paid I have bought my ghost even though I did pay for it with my life. (490)

By far the most striking and evocative imagery occurs when Faulkner is detailing Hightower’s vision from his study window. Hightower sees color, feels light, and reflects somberly on the beauty and the tentativeness of the world as he sits in the study’s dark window,

Waiting for twilight to cease, for night and the galloping hooves. The copper light has completely gone now, the world hangs in a green suspension in color and texture like light through colored glass. Soon it will be time to begin to say *Soon now* (468).

The visual imagery behind the *soon* contains the most arresting images. The reader catches glimpses of the phantom cavalry throughout the novel; his wait for that “instant when all light has failed out of the sky and it would be night save for that faint light which day granaried leaf and grass blade reluctant surprise” (60). Pitavy observes that “twilight fascinates [Hightower], which explains the rich vocabulary associated with this final and fragile suspension of light” (90). We can see him “at the end of the novel

confronting, one by one, the darkest realities of his lifetime, only to conclude, as always, with the persistent dream that puts realities aside” (Kartiganer 53).

One of the more striking aspects of this vision is its attitude of lack of motion, even though there is a sense of movement in that the “imaginary riders rush by, dividing illusion from the darkness that has strangely inspired it” (Kartiganer 54). The vision appears as a statue that serves as a monument to the Civil War, as well as one to Hightower’s life. Particularly the *forwardleaning, brandished arms, eager lances, and wild heads of horses*, create an illusion of an art form that reaches beyond the printed page:

He hears above his heart the thunder increase, myriad and drumming. Like a long sighing of wind in trees it begins, then they sweep into sight, borne upon now a cloud of phantom dust, they rush past forwardleaning in the saddles with brandished arms, beneath whipping ribbons from slanted and eager lances; with tumult and soundless yelling they sweep past like a tide whose crest is jagged with the wild heads of horses and the brandished arms of men like the crater of the world in explosion. They rush past, are gone; the dust swirls skyward sucking and fades away into the night which has finally come. (492-93)

It is not until the last paragraph of chapter twenty that “the return of the vision is disturbing and forbids any absolute certainty that his confession has really brought about his redemption” (Pitavy 83).

In an interview, Faulkner stated that he preferred “prose over music, [as] ‘music would express better and simpler, but I prefer to use words as I prefer to read rather than listen. That is, the thunder and the music of the prose takes place in silence’” (Zender 23). He used sound imagery “to express, not reciprocity between the self and the other, but rather an invasion of the self by the other” (Zender 6). This is clearly evidenced in

the phantom cavalry's invasion of Hightower's thoughts. Furthermore, sound is an essential quality that belongs to the air; although people can escape it for a time, it is "always there waiting for them when they return, like 'some unavoidable and inexplicable phenomenon of nature'" (Zender 20). In Hightower's case, and especially the case of soundless yelling and thundering of hooves, we hear sounds that are imaginary; they reach us because of Faulkner's ability to project what is imagined into what is real. In essence, what we hear is invaded silence. From the text we know that his house is on a "quiet and remote and unpaved and littleused street" (59). Therefore, silence and, in this case imagined sound, "define each other" (Zender 31).

As much of the sound imagery resounds in phantom cavalries, there are sounds in the real world to which Hightower is attuned. Of these latter images, perhaps the most significant in Hightower's sections is that of the church music. In the August darkness, "from a distance, quite faint though quite clear, he can hear the sonorous waves of massed voices from the church: a sound at once austere and rich abject and proud, swelling and falling in the quiet summer darkness like a harmonic tide" (76). And though in conversation with Byron, he cannot help but hear "the sound of singing from the distant church" (77). Hightower even deliberately turns his listening from Byron's flat, level voice to hear the "faint yet clear, the blended organ and voices come from the distant church, across the still evening" (81). The church is almost a phantom for him, too. It passes through the realm of his hearing and preoccupies his attention, as does the cavalry, though not as often. Both the church and his grandfather's death were the vehicles that brought Hightower to Jefferson, and both keep him imprisoned there out of life.

Other than the striking visual and auditory imagery of the phantom cavalry and the church, the third sense imagery that belongs to Hightower is that of odor. There are numerous examples of the stench of his person and his house, and most are detected and

related to the reader through Byron Bunch's perspective. Perhaps the most powerful evidence of this occurs when the latter enters the Reverend's house:

He feels the corners of his nostrils whiten and tauten with the thick smell of the stale, mankept house. And when Hightower approaches, the smell of plump unwashed flesh and unfresh clothing—that odor of unfastidious sedentation, of static overflesh not often bathed enough. (298-99)

Byron holds the man in such high esteem that he presumes that the overpowering smell is the smell of goodness: “Of course it would smell bad to us that are sinful” (299).

Hightower is not corrupt, although his odor may indicate otherwise. Because of “certain warping influences in childhood, [he] becomes fettered to the past” (Brooks 55). And so this is his crime. His odor and lack of sanitary habits reflect his disassociation with the community and a sedentary life rather than the good or evil qualities of his character.

While he is at the market during one of his semi-weekly trips and hears from the proprietor that Christmas has been caught, he is described as being “gaunt, misshapen, with his gray stubble and his dark spectacleblurred eyes and his blackrimmed hands and the rank manodor of his sedentary and unwashed flesh” (308). There are also occasions when the odor is implied simply by other character's (usually Byron's) observations of him. This is evidenced by descriptions that his “shirt is white, but it is not fresh, his collar is soiled, as is the white lawn cravat carelessly knotted, and he has not shaved in two or three days” (308). Perhaps the most poignant portrayal is one that he is unaware of while he is at the window: “Hightower leans there in the window, in the August heat, oblivious of the odor in which he lives—the smell of people who no longer live in life:

that odor of overplump desiccation and stale linen as though a precursor of the tomb” (317-18).

Thus far the olfactory imagery in Hightower’s sections has been from an objective point of view, from outside the window looking in, metaphorically speaking. He of course, perceives subjective images. They are fewer in number, yet they are as profound and vivid as those found in Benjy’s, Quentin’s, and Christmas’ sections, and they are very much in accordance with Faulkner’s descriptive style. For example, Hightower remembers a time when he was eight years of age and it was raining: “It seems to him that he can still smell the rain, the moist grieving of the October earth, and the musty yawn as the lid of the trunk went back” (468). Memories of smell are perhaps the strongest, as they can easily bring the past back into focus. On this particular day when he was eight years old that he remembers now as an older man, he can see his dead mother’s hands as he unfolds a large patched cloth with the deep blue of the United States, which leaves him feeling *triumphant terror*. Hightower also remembers that his father had “smelled of whiskey and cigars” (471), and that the father had smelled differently than his mother and himself—he was an enemy (475). His ability as a child to *smell the enemy* is much like Benjy’s ability to smell Caddy’s guilt; it is both intuitive and primal.

After having helped Lena give birth to her son, Hightower walks home and seems almost surprised by the feel of the “intermittent sun, the heat, smelling the savage and fecund odor of the earth, the woods, the loud silence” (406). He thinks to himself “I must do this more often” (406). The use of the word *fecund* here is quite appropriate since it is a direct reflection of Lena, the fertile earth mother figure, and the new baby boy. Though

*savage* seems a bit out of place, as it would more likely fit into Christmas' interpretive chapters, Hightower is at last contemplating rejoining the living after having been a recluse for so many years. We are left wondering if he will affirm life or continue to be reaffirmed by his past fantasies.

Hightower's story is presented as a "magnificent artifact of color and touch and sound, with the whole circumstance of war" (Kartiganer 52). He first thinks that his only salvation must be to return to the place to die where his life had ended before it began. His first name, "Gail, which he shares with his grandfather, suggests his theme, incidentally. He enters the church because it is 'like a classic and serene vase, where spirit could be . . . sheltered from the harsh gale of living'" (Hirschleifer 252). He contemplates his vocation as "quietly surrounding and enclosing and guarding his urgent heart, thinking quietly how surely heaven must have something of the color and shape of whatever village or hill or cottage of which the believer says 'this is my own'" (486-87). What he preached, however, is described as having "verged on actual sacrilege" (636). Since it was his grandfather's ghost that drew him to Jefferson, rather than the congregation or the town itself, he would stand "in the pulpit with his hands flying around him and the dogma he was supposed to preach all full of galloping cavalry and defeat and glory" (62-63). After all, there are "some things for which God cannot be accused by man and held responsible" (488).

And so at the end of Hightower's sections, we can see where and what he has been:

Bound by his romantic fixation on his grandfather's death, he has been neither dead nor alive. In this hour of truth he has the vision of the faces, and sees them

for what they are, and hears once again the phantom cavalry, the mystic experience with which he has sustained himself in the past, but this time he hears with a difference ‘the clashing sabres and the dying thunder of hooves’, for he himself has finally dared something and has broken out of his self-centered dream. (Brooks 70)

It seems fitting to end Hightower’s chapter with a quote that Brooks brought to light from Wordsworth’s “Excursion”:

And that unless above himself he can  
Erect himself, how poor a thing is Man!

Light in August, “despite its ‘emphasis on perception,’ is actually about what people fail to perceive” (Snead 85-86). One critic can say that Joe Christmas is “an idea rather than a person, a character who ‘remains almost completely opaque’, while another claims that ‘Christmas seems immediately and indisputably real’” (Snead 89). He is an elusive shadow: “Writing is Faulkner’s metaphor here, and Joe Christmas avidly resists the properties and effects of written imprintation . . . . [He] is the uncertainty that resists being made into writing. He is more an absence than anything else” (Snead 89-90). The town wished to “capture and confine Joe’s meaning more than his actual body” (Snead 89). Eventually led by Percy Grimm, the “posse are chasing a ‘shadow’, but an imperfect one: ‘They could even see the prints of his knees’ [310]” (Snead 90). Those same knee prints are a significant symbol for Christmas: They are first seen side-by-side with McEachern after the cruel punishment for not learning the catechism; in Joanna’s bedroom before her death, Christmas imagines seeing them again beside hers; and, finally they are found by the posse as he is hunted for the murder of Joanna. Then, “after being starved, betrayed, flogged, beaten, pursued by bloodhounds, he is castrated” (Kazin 151).

In nearly the same manner as Joe Christmas, Gail Hightower is the “town’s scapegoat. He is marginal, living in a ‘small, brown, almost concealed house . . . on what used to be the main street” (Snead 74). Additionally, the town has “destroyed Hightower’s life in a way that almost exactly parallels its victimization of Christmas. But his relations were already corrupted by his own misrecognition of his grandfather’s heroism. He ‘grew to manhood among phantoms, side by side with a ghost” (Snead 94). Kazin states

[Joe Christmas’] stillness is also the sickly, after-dark silence of the Reverend Gail Hightower sitting in his study, with his stale clothes and stale thoughts, going over and over the tragedy of his life, his grandfather’s ‘glorious’ death, his wife’s desertion and suicide—and finally and typically summing it all up into a stale round of human illusion and defeat. (154).

According to Snead, Hightower wants “desperately to be ‘sheltered from the harsh gale of living’ [453], but it is too late for him to return to the seminary and too soon for him to die,” and throughout most of the novel, he “deludes himself thoroughly, becoming the victim of his own self-delusion” (94). In the end, we are left wondering whether Hightower has risen above his past circumstances, or whether his escape was only momentary and finds himself again enraptured by the vision of the phantom cavalry.

CHAPTER VI  
*The Blue of Distance*  
Conclusion

Faulkner's Nobel Prize acceptance speech concluded with the following:

It is [the poet's, the writer's] privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past. The poet's voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail. (www.mcsr.olemiss.edu)

With his use of sensory imagery, Faulkner allows us to step into the worlds of his characters (as if through one of Benjy's mirrors) and experience the sights, sounds, smells, and tactile experiences, as encountered by them. His poetry lifts us out of mundane human experience and reminds us of our own poetic sensorial perceptions. This thesis has focused on four characters—Benjy and Quentin Compson, Joe Christmas, and Gail Hightower, because the imagery in their respective sections of the two novels The Sound and the Fury and Light in August is significantly increased. We are more than readers; we are sensorially immersed as each story and chapter unfolds. Because we are granted this rare opportunity, we find ourselves more emotionally involved with the characters than if we had put aside our imaginations and relied solely on intellect. Seeing, hearing, smelling, and touching through them allows us to exist in their worlds, which ultimately changes our perceptions of our environment and the way in which we are affected by sense impressions in our own respective realities.

Benjy is perhaps the easiest of the four characters to relate to in terms of understanding Faulkner's imagery. He is described as living in a kind of confused buzz. The strength of the imagery in the childlike man is demonstrated when he sees and hears the "ditch coming up out of buzzing grass" (35). While the reader catches sensorial

snapshots of Benjy's varied experiences as images, they often appear as almost one-dimensional or as frozen pictures.

One of the primary images in the Benjy story is the fence around the Compson house. It is a barrier that keeps him within a limited environment, but it also acts as an obstacle that metaphorically impedes the readers' comprehension of his perceptions of his physical surroundings. Although it is a source of sensory imagery, the description of the fence and Benjy's encounters with it are so powerful that the readers themselves become fenced in, left with only Benjy's senses to interpret stimuli.

Synaesthesia plays a prevalent role in Benjy's chapter, as he has the uncanny ability to allow his senses to cross over and integrate his perceptions. This is evidenced most clearly at the moment near the end of his section when he is sitting in the corner "hearing it getting dark" and can see "the slipper with his hands." Of all the four characters, in fact, he is the most obviously synaesthetic, though neither Quentin nor Christmas is wanting in this arena of sensations. As was mentioned in the introduction, neuro-scientists claim synaesthesia is merely a merging and overlap of the senses, which is rare and limited to few individuals (Abram 60). So while a case could be argued that indeed Benjy is one of those rare persons and therefore has experiences that are unusual and alien to the rest of us, I believe that Abram makes a better argument by stating that synaesthesia is an inherent human trait and capability.

Specifically regarding the sound images in Benjy's section, William E. H. Meyer states that

Faulkner's primal passion for aurality and vocality—with The Sound and the Fury and Benjy, who functions as the primitive model for all of Faulkner's preachers—Benjy, whose sentorian orations of sheer unadulterated sound can vanquish all by tremendous irresistible and irrational aural volley. (109)

Meyer chooses the following passage to illustrate this point: “Then he bellowed. Bellow on bellow, his voice mounted, with scarce interval for breath. There was more than astonishment in it, it was horror; shock; agony eyeless, tongueless; just sound” (320).

In the second chapter, Quentin relates that “this sonorous and echoing noise-making is precisely Benjy’s own spiritual essence and power” (Meyer 109-110). Meyer asserts that it is not only

Benjy’s terrible bellowing [that] lies at the heart of The Sound and the Fury but that Quentin himself realizes that the very atmosphere he breathes has been saturated with auditions, ‘like the air was worn out with carrying sounds so long [114] and that all must be surrendered to purchase auditory glory, that ‘Harvard is such a fine . . . dead sound’ [174]. (110)

Through powerful sensory imagery, Faulkner makes it clear that both Quentin and Benjy are suffering individuals. The audible images that most haunt Quentin are bells, watches, chimes, and silence. The final sound that is heard in his chapter is the Harvard chimes: “The first note sounded, measured and tranquil, serenely peremptory, emptying the unhurried silence for the next one . . . . The last note sounded. At last it stopped vibrating and the darkness was still again” (SF 176, 178). Quentin’s remembrance of what transpired between Caddy and himself in reality competes with the silent sound of his fantasy-driven thoughts.

Because of his past with Caddy he is also unable to escape certain smells as well as sounds. Like Benjy, Quentin “shares the same obsessive attachment for Caddy, whom he associates with the heady and bewitching smell of honeysuckle” (Carmignani 309). According to Carmignani,

Honeysuckle is endowed with a twofold symbolical meaning: as ‘caprifolium’/ ‘goat’s leaf,’ it is associated with lust, concupiscence, but as witness its second,

rustic name of 'herbe a la vierge' (literally, virgin's weed), honeysuckle evolves into a quasimystical signifier of sisterly virginity. (309)

Quentin is "equally susceptible to [other] olfactory impressions: 'my nose,' he says, 'could see the gasoline, the vest on the table, the door' [173]" (309), and the "vivid dead smell of perfume that Benjy hated so" (SF 176). He smells the "curves of the river beyond dusk" (SF 170), and feels it "beyond the twilight, smell" (SF 168).

The ultimate escape for Quentin is suicide by drowning. Water imagery is one of the dominant visual images; shadows and sunlight are two others, and shadows and water are often concurrent. The adjectives *swift* and *peaceful* are attributed to the water, perhaps because it is both the swift death and the peace that follows that he desires most of all. On the river's bridge, Quentin comes to terms with the shadows that are fused with water, indicating that death by water is his way of reconciling his two worlds, "of merging shadows and reality and tempering their conflict" (Vickery 305).

The shadow as an archetypal symbol "reveals much about his character and his real motives for suicide" (Dauner 78). Dauner explains that this archetype is

closely related to the aspect of the shadow as the opposing self. . . . The shadow is the repressed, excluded, inferior aspect of the psyche . . . . Quentin's desire for Caddy can logically be construed as the real basis for self-punishment and for his eventual suicide. Or again, his basic tension is that he denies his instinctual nature, which Caddy so intensely exemplifies, hence he denies his own shadow. (78)

Carmignani states that "it is but a short step from the haunting effluvium ('odor di femina') to the fluvial waters ('aqua femina') Quentin plunges into" (309).

In contrast to the softer sensory imagery of The Sound and the Fury, in Light in August the images have razor-precision. Joe Christmas is a "character who 'remains as

he was born, an abstraction' . . . an art image that has never had the privilege of being human" (Kartiganer 38). In an interview held at the University of Virginia in 1957, Faulkner stated the following about Christmas:

I think that was his tragedy—he didn't know what he was, and so he was nothing. He deliberately evicted himself from the human race because he didn't know which he was . . . and there was no possible way in life for him to find out. Which to me is the most tragic condition a man could find himself in—not to know what he is and to know that he will never know. (Gwynn & Brooks 72).

Carmignani adds that Christmas' "heart was simply the battleground of too many competing ethnic and aesthetic forces to give him peace—to allow him to find out, in Faulkner's terms, 'who he really was'" (114). When he lives "among the black people, he tried to breathe into himself the dark odor of his ebony-black mate in order to assimilate the spirit or pneuma of the race of Ham" (Carmignani 311). Christmas fails in this attempt and so is left without an identity. His passion "unfolds in an atmosphere suffused with 'the reek of pollution'" (Carmignani 311).

His designation of "odorreek" to women, I assert, is not a reflection of Faulkner as much as it is a result of Christmas' composite of experiences with women that began in the dietitian's closet when he was five years old. Because he becomes a master of dissociation by the age of eight, he cannot respond positively to women without shattering the "bluntcleanhandshut" posture that he inherits from Mr. McEachern. I believe that his fear and hatred of women is a reflection of a deeper hatred of men and mostly of himself.

Throughout his life Joe is cornered—much as when he was in the closet—and he lives with the fears of never knowing who he is and also of being discovered that he is as detestable (as he believes himself to be) by the "other." As he grows older, Christmas'

awareness of sense perception increases in complexity. It is not until the last week of his life, however, that he begins to find peace in his natural environment, as he knows that soon his chaotic life will end. According to Carmignani,

Light in August climaxes with no enlightenment but rather with the ‘scream of the siren mounting toward its unbelievable crescendo . . . but that vision itself is transformed into sound—such that Hightower perceives ‘how that fading copper light would seem almost audible, like a dying yellow fall of trumpets dying into an interval of silence and waiting’ [466]. (110)

Hightower “uses his window for audition, not vision” (Carmignani 111). The sound imagery of the phantom cavalry, that of the heartbeat, thunder, drumming, sighing, tumult, and explosion, seem to capture the entire essence of Light in August with certain key characters most especially connected to single sounds. Lena Groves is the steady heartbeat of the earth; the dietitian’s anger and fear shudders and shatters like thunder; McEachern attempts to steadily drum his doctrine (generally in the form of a beating) into the stubborn mind of the youthful Joe; Hightower is the ubiquitous sigh that fills Jefferson; Christmas’ life is tumultuous, as is his three year relationship with Joanna; and, Percy Grimm causes the final explosion that will resonate through Jefferson for many years to come. In a sense, then, Hightower is not only listening to phantoms ride through town, but he is hearing a metaphoric composite of the activity that is currently taking place or has taken place, all of which makes for a kind of soundless yelling.

Hightower’s crimes are his obsession with the past and consequent withdrawal from living. His odor and lack of sanitary habits reflect his disassociation with the community and a sedentary life, rather than the good or evil qualities of his character. Though he does not rise above his self-prescribed circumstance until the end of the novel (and even that is not a certainty), his ability to reason unites the intellectual analysis of

love and the perplexity of life with which all men and women struggle. Although Hightower's life is one of persecution and one that logically could be expected to have resulted in a violent death, as the husband of the servant woman said: "Dey wouldn't *dare* to kill a Hightower; Dey wouldn't *dare*" (LA 476).

This thesis has examined the effects that sensory imagery has on the readers' perceptions and emotional responses. As I have demonstrated, Faulkner indeed through these two novels carefully engages four of the five human senses: Sight, sound, smell, and tactile sensation. At times our senses are tripped by the vivid evocation of the feeling, and at other times we are left with the emotions that result. Each character in his own way has produced powerful sensory imagery and roused emotional responses. After all, "does not Faulkner's fiction . . . call for a multi-sensory critical approach to not only be able to see and reason but also to smell things, to follow various scents?" (Carmignani 314). We have the opportunity with The Sound and the Fury and Light in August not only to see and smell but also to hear and touch the world and its myriad sensations. While in Cambridge, Quentin notes of the south,

Our country was not like this country. There was something about just walking through it. A kind of still and violent fecundity that satisfied even bread-hunger like. Flowing around you, not brooding and nursing every niggard stone. Like it were put to makeshift for enough green to go around among the trees and even the *blue of distance*. (SF 113) [my italics]

CHAPTERVII  
*The Alphabet of the World*  
Epilogue

Toute création est du secret d'en-haut  
 Une explication flamboyante et superbe.  
 Les mondes sont chacun une strophe du Verbe  
 Et sont autant de cris de Dieu dans l'infini.

Victor Hugo—"Fragments de Poemes"

(All creation is of secret from above  
 A flamboyant and superb explanation  
 The worlds are each a stanza of speech  
 And are as well described by God to infinity.)

"Modern philosophers and psychologists never tire of telling us, as Ribot puts it, 'the logic of images is the prime mover of constructive imagination' (Kinney 18). The readers' "conscious perceiving and understanding, therefore, always superimpose our frames of reference on our observations, laminate act with precept, while experiences can swiftly or with imperceptible slowness change our preconceptions" (Kinney 15). But what if we allow language and nature to merge? If we can perceive language as an embodiment of nature, we can see that it is like one massive book that contains more chapters, sequels, words, and letters than anyone could ever account for. We walk through nature's *pages* everyday. We read her when we look outside to determine whether or not to carry an umbrella or to wear a coat. When we see gentle winds, we can

hear laughter and playgrounds filled with children and screen doors opening and falling shut. And if most of our lives have been spent in the south, we can hear warmth. When we see violent winds, we can hear the ocean one minute and wolves howling the next; we can hear the lonely cries of empty playgrounds and the not-flying of birds. When these winds are accompanied by darkening skies, as they often are, we can (if we use our imaginations) hear Betty Davis saying, “Fasten your seatbelts, its going to be a bumpy night,” and then imagine that nature is in fact saying the very same thing. So why, then, when we are presented with nature within the limited structure of a novel or character, do we not allow it to come to life and allow our senses to be awakened to its every odor, sight, sound, and tactility?

The earth speaks, and so mirrors human nature. We can hear her voice in the voices of her offspring. That voice rejoices in the majesty of mountains and forests. It speaks of hope in its offering of seedlings and budding flowers. It coos at sunrise, and sighs at sunset. It screams and moans when overtaken by flame. Its voice is one of surrender after saturating rains and consequent flooding. It weeps when mistreated, but when nurtured, it expresses thanks. The earth trembles and quakes when excessive pressure and population occur. Its gentle laughter can be heard in babbling brooks, and its hoorahs in cascades of waterfalls. It warns and threatens, calms and caresses. It sustains, acquiesces, cooperates, accepts, rejects, opposes, and joins forces. It is both a protagonist and an antagonist. It breathes and it breeds; and as it lives, so it shall die. The earth is as fragile, perhaps even more so, than its inhabitants. It is a benevolent being, not unlike the human perception of God. It has a heartbeat, and it has heart. And so it is with the nature of language—so it is with Faulkner’s landscape of images.

Full of Sound and Fury

A flash:  
jagged bolt,  
resounding boom,  
then gone.

Every thunderbolt  
Blasting its own course across the sky.  
One beyond bright, overflowing the heavens,  
Another small, slender, barely seen.

Occasionally one initiates a fire,  
Whetherr a single flame or a blazing conflagration,  
This planet is forever reformed.

What legacy leaves this lightning,  
Now seen,  
Now heard,  
Then gone?

—By WolfFang 1997

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## VITA

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