

The Uncontrollable Body: Sensory Perception of the Three Compson Brothers in William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*

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Introduction

William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) has been interpreted as the story of "the fall of the Old South" and "the downfall of a particular family" (C. Brooks 334) in the early twentieth century. When it comes to the mode of representation, however, it is noteworthy to point out that sensory perception plays a central role in the novel. For example, Benjy's first-person narration in the first section heavily relies on the sense of smell; he smells "cold" (6) and "sickness" (61), which are usually perceived with other sensory faculties. Many sentences in the novel arise not from the narrator's objective and realist perspective but from characters' sensory perception. With the senses as a narrative anchor, Faulkner illustrates the drastic change of a family and society in the post-bellum South.

Faulkner's manner of representation is characterized as the feature of the aesthetics of the literary modernism. The representational method of modernism can be distinguished from the order of realist novel, from which Faulkner differentiated himself. The narrative in the realist novel relies on the privileged sense of sight. The description is based on the gaze with which the subject sees the world. The order of perspective in the modern novel has an affinity with the aesthetics of realism, namely, the principle that the third person narrator grasps the world consistently and comprehensively. Peter Brooks critically emphasizes this supposition: "To know, in realism, is to see and to represent is to describe" (88). In contrast to the sense of sight, other sensory faculties such as smell and sound are not considered to be crucial aspects of narrative or cognition in the scheme of realism.

Writers in the modernist era started to question this realist concept of sight as more objective and reliable than the other sensory faculties. In her study, Sara Danius argues that in the modernist era, the innovation of technology and other shifts in society changed individuals' worldviews as well as the ways

in which they understood their surroundings through their senses. Sight no longer provided individuals with a sense of certainty about their knowledge of the world: “visual perception is increasingly divorced from knowing” (19-20). When the sensory experiences were divided from the act of knowing and telling, the hegemony of sight in representation became deconstructed. Consistent with the modern views of sensory perception, Faulkner tried to represent the drastic change of the southern society through the modernist narrative style, concentrating on the sensory experiences such as smell and sound.

To analyze Faulkner's art of narrative in *The Sound and the Fury*, it is also significant that the representation of the body has always been under the influence of the social and ideological framework. Indeed, as Jay Watson points out, “the human body has throughout the history been one of the principal targets of ideology” (23). Especially in the Southern society, where the social convention is strict, the materiality of the body has been ideologically repressed. As we will see later, the bodily existence of Caddy is repressed in the three Compson brothers' narrative.

While the bodies of the Compson brothers is the medium for navigating the world, their bodies are also the object of repression. The brothers' uses and views of bodies reflect Faulkner's status and background. As a modernist writer, Faulkner relied on the body—its activity such as smelling—in his narration. Yet for him as a Southerner, the body—its sexual, irrational materiality and operation—was an object of repression. While using their sensory perception as an anchor of their cognition and narration, they also attempt to repress their sense and physical activity, though unsuccessfully. Recent critics have started to pay close attention to the materiality of the body in Faulkner's works, such as Paul Carmignani and Laura Davis. They analyze the role of sensory perception, especially olfaction, in Faulkner's fiction including *The Sound and the Fury*. Yet whereas they treat the representation of sense with the analysis of symbol or sensory studies,¹ they do not seem to pay much attention to the failure to comprehend the world through senses, caused by the essentially disruptive materiality of bodies both as the faculty and the object of perception.

This essay focuses on the characteristics of the narratives of the three Compson brothers. In each narrative, the sensory perception plays an important role in portraying the world they perceive, though in different ways. The Compson brothers' uses of their senses—their effort to master or control the operation of their bodies—reveals their preoccupation with the Southern

ideology, though each of the narrative has a different level of immersion in it. Faulkner repeatedly highlights the disruptive nature of the body by illustrating how the bodies they endeavor to control disturb their consciousness and narratives. Demonstrating the narrative disorder caused by the body in the novel, I will ultimately investigate Faulkner's personal attachment and complicated feelings toward the South.

1. Benjy's Pure Perception and Absent Caddy

Benjy might be identified as a pure receptor. His narrative registers external stimuli that he receives through his sensory faculties. The feature of Benjy's perception can be observed at the very beginning of the novel: "Throughout the fence, between the curling flower spaces, I could see them hitting. They were coming toward where the flag was and I went along the fence" (3). He subsequently explains what he sees and how his body moves in a quite simple language, without linking the images and body motion to particular abstract notions. Readers soon recognize Benjy's lack of abstract thinking and reflection as the narrative goes on. For instance, he faces difficulty in identifying golfers. He omits the identification and calls them "they" in confusion. James Guetti underlines this aspect of the character: "The world takes the form of a small number of catchwords, the principal of which is 'Caddy' or, as the men in his pasture-turned-golf-course say, 'caddie'" (150). The above-mentioned features saturate Benjy's narrative with a thorough flatness that is a lack of comprehension of the external world. Benjy is extremely passive and receptive to external stimuli. He faces troubles in perceiving and describing them. In this case, his experience of socialization is based on a certain problem of selflessness. Benjy's selfless narrative clearly differs from the objective descriptions that are inherent in the realist novels.

The most significant sense in Benjy's narrative is the smell. As Dilsey and other black characters repeatedly say, "He smells hit," Benjy's affinity for smell is underscored in the novel. He describes this impression in the line: "Caddy smelled like trees" (6). Benjy creates a positive image of Caddy's through a prism of associations that he perceived with his smell. He frequently repeats: "I could smell the cold" (6). He also states: "I could smell the sickness" (61). His smell-centered perception has the effect of sensory learning that defamiliarizes more common modes of perception, such as the realist perception based on sight. This method has not only a methodological effect but also a thematic

significance. The smell is the main component of his perceptual world.

His lack of linguistic capacities does not predetermine the fact that he experiences reality without filtering external flows of information. To process external stimuli, Benjy associates them with some images or objects. His experience depends on a particular form of symbolization. This rudimentary form of articulation is different from common language. His use of the word “like” explains his somewhat abstract mode of cognition. The fact that for Benjy, “Caddy smells like a tree” does not simply mean that Caddy’s body odor is reminiscent of the smell of a tree. Indeed, the “tree” is associated with a symbolic meaning that Faulkner attempts to underline through Benjy’s sensitivity. This image is associated with a feeling of comfort in Benjy’s mind. Moreover, it is repeatedly emphasized throughout his narrative that those feelings symbolized by Caddy are forever lost to Benjy.

Another notable element in Benjy’s recognition is the “shape,” which appears several times in his narrative. It often comes with the adjective “smooth” or “bright.” Peter Lurie assumes that Benjy’s “shape” is an example of “events punctuated by visual accents” (238). In other words, it is almost the only important visual element in his mechanism of perception. Benjy seems to associate various kinds of perception with “shape.” This supposition is indicated in the study of Stephen M. Ross and Noel Polk: “[light] can be anything from bright lights—especially firelight—to undefined shapes that do not achieve full focus, probably when he is asleep” (15). For Benjy, fire is a “shape”: “I looked at the bright, smooth shapes. I could hear the fire and the roof” (64). In some other sentences, Benjy uses the term “shape” differently, pairing it with verbs like “go” (11), “begin” (12), or “stop” (34). For example, when he is drunk, “the shapes begun” (22), and when he catches the female student, “shapes begun to stop” and “go again” (53). In these cases, the “shapes” are used as impressions of his physical impulse. Therefore, Benjy’s “shape” means some image that he perceives, which does not necessarily correspond to a specific object. With its capacity for representing various objects, “shape” gives consistency to Benjy’s world, which otherwise would dissolve into pieces and become chaotic. In this context, the closing passage of Benjy’s section is interesting:

Caddy held me, and I could hear us all, and the darkness, and something I could smell. And then I could see the windows where the trees are buzzing. Then the dark began to go in smooth, bright shapes, like it

always does, even when Caddy says that I have been asleep.” (75)

His senses of touch, hearing, smell, and sight are expressed delicately. The “shape” appears in the last sentences. The sensory images are juxtaposed with the reality that he perceives in a distorted manner. These sensory images are unified when his perception is stabilized by the visual image of “smooth, bright shapes.” Benjy then gains a sense of order: “like it always does.” Taylor Hagood discusses the art of Benjy’s narrative and states that “Benjy emerges as simultaneously a projected imagining and a real character behind the functioning mask” (103). Benjy seems to have a personalized cognitive system that helps him to filter external stimuli that he receives from his surroundings.

With the knowledge of Benjy’s intellectual disability, some readers might assume that he experiences the world without any agency.² When a subject processes information less by language, the person seems to experience the world more directly, as if he or she accesses its unadulterated existence. Although Benjy among the three brothers might be the closest to direct contact with the world through perception, even in his mind there is a structure and rearrangement of reality by several kinds of associations. The feature of Benjy’s cognitive system reflects Faulkner’s attitude toward language and reality. Whereas he can loosely organize the information he perceives, he cannot control how his body interacts with the world. Faulkner composes Benjy’s world around the absence of Caddy. Benjy fails to organize his perception by filtering and association especially when Caddy is related. Sometimes the outer world violates his sense of order through his bodily faculties. It unsettles his mind and disrupts the narrative.

The most notable nuance that shows the disruption of Benjy’s cognitive system is his frequent moaning. The moaning is evoked often when his stream of consciousness generates memories of Caddy. It is not clear in his narrative when he starts to moan or when he stops. Benjy often recognizes himself crying as he says: “I began to cry” (13, 25, etc.). Benjy’s moaning is explicated by Luster, T. P., and Dilsey, who mention these facts in their speech. They repeatedly say “Hush,” and often complain: “Can’t you get done with that moaning” (19). Benjy’s moaning is not always his conscious and voluntary act. This type of moaning is his irresistible bodily reaction to his surroundings. Sometimes he can hush himself (17), and sometimes he cannot control it. He starts crying, and he can recognize it after a while, informed by someone else of his action. This phenomenon shows that Benjy’s body behaves beyond his

control, and this activity overwhelms his cognition.

The phenomenon which subverts his state of cognition takes place in the realm of touch, for this sense nullifies the distance between subject and object. Touch comes to Benjy accidentally, and he unconsciously digests this feeling. The sense of touch is not easily incorporated into Benjy's cognition composed mainly of smell and sound. The word "touch" appears only once in Benjy's narrative (52) except in the direct quotation of other people's speech. Probably the person he touches (or is touched by) most often is Caddy, who embraces Benjy many times. Benjy narrates his feelings by saying, "She put her arms around me" (40, 42), "I could hear her and feel her chest going," or "We held each other" (47). Benjy can express the impressions about touch passively or with a slight delay. For instance, he "hears" her and then "feels" the movement of her chest. The use of the verb "hold" indicates a certain lapse of time. In the moment of touching, he does not have complete awareness about that act. These expressions suggest that he cannot describe his feeling immediately in the moment of touch. The lack (or delay) of verbalization also appears when he accidentally touches the fire in the hearth. First, he puts his hand "to where the fire had been," and Dilsey's words follow that description. Then, he immediately stresses: "My hand jerked back, and I put it in my mouth" (59). He must be "feeling" the heat of the fire, but that is not narrated. The agent of the action is not Benjy himself but his "hand." As a result, Faulkner provides a notion that it is not his conscious choice of action. Benjy cannot articulate the shock after he touches a hot object. These examples demonstrate that though his narrative seems to convey every sense and movements he physically experiences, the physical phenomenon or reaction accidentally causes blanks in his narrative. Faulkner effectively connects these blanks of Benjy's narrative caused by a physical sensation to the absence of Caddy in the novel.

2. Quentin's Body and the Southern Ideology

Touching is a privileged mode of perception for Quentin because it means the possession of the object of desire. Quentin suffers from the loss of Caddy, after she loses her virginity by the sexual contact with Dalton Ames, not Quentin. He tries to touch Caddy to feel her presence and obtain a sense of possessing her, but she rejects him: "don't touch me" (112, 113, 115). Quentin intends to stop Caddy from getting married. He tries to grasp her as if to make sure that she is no one else's but his possession. In another scene, when

Quentin and Caddy converse by the branch after she loses her virginity, Caddy takes Quentin's hand and holds it to her chest. He "feels" Caddy's heartbeat there (150). She repeats the same action, and each time Quentin feels her heart "thud" or "hammer" (151). In Quentin's mind, touching is the act of reaffirming the presence of Caddy, whom he has loved and who seems to be lost now. He tries to hold her as if seeking her past self, who was still innocent and a virgin.

Richard Godden critically analyzes their relations: Caddy and Quentin "have prompted in one another a physically particular but emotionally difficult sensuality" (126). When Quentin touches Caddy, he feels the pulse or heartbeat thudding under her skin. While Quentin attempts to approach his ideal object, he can only perceive Caddy's bodily presence. He even thinks of killing himself and Caddy with a knife (151), as if thinking that his desire would be fulfilled without their bodies. Quentin's desire to deny their bodies foregrounds his obsession with the rawness of the female body. In the ideological scheme to which Quentin himself belongs as a Southern man, the repressed female body shows its traumatic materiality when it appears as actual presence. So white men attempt to repress the materiality of female body.

In the representation of Caddy, her voice, if not her body, is certainly repressed. Thereby, many critics have treated Caddy as the absent center, whose voice is excluded from the novel. In this regard, critics write about her character: "She becomes what Faulkner wanted her to be: a property made by the masculine and clasped firmly in his hands" (Ma 46). Stephen M. Ross points out: "She is the missing voice, she the character not permitted to speak except through the mouth of others" (183). Though her voice seems to be almost completely repressed, her body is foregrounded in spite of white men's attempt to repress it. Deborah Clark explicitly stresses the notion: "Caddy's voice may never be restored, but the evidence of her physical substance remains" (21). The ideology that represses the female body ironically explains the presence of its traumatic aspect.

The ideology of the novel is observed through a lens of misogynistic remarks of Mr. Compson, Quentin's father. He relativizes the "Southern lady": "it was men invented virginity, not women" (78). This notion might theoretically demystify the Southerners' collective ideal of feminine virtue and virginity.³ Mr. Compson seems to critique Southerners' investment in preserving virginity of their female members and to admit the actual materiality of the female body, which is naturally sexual. But, on the contrary, Mr. Compson's speech contains the implication that the actual female body is never a pure thing. He suggests

that women cannot rationally or intellectually participate in society: "*Women are like that they dont acquire knowledge of people*" (96). Mr. Compson's misogyny is imbued with the patriarchal ideology that characterizes women as irrational and unrealistic. In the use of the words "fertilize" or "crop" (96), he associates women with organic and reproductive images. Ross and Polk state: "Mr. Compson's idea "matches the code of nature/darkness/sex that controls many of Quentin's memories" (74). His attitude towards women demonstrates the dependence on ideology. In this regard, the more the ideology demands the male subjects to repress the materiality of women's bodies, the more they become conscious of the materiality. The force of ideology corresponds with the force of what must be repressed; in short, both reinforce each other.

Caddy shares the same ideological view of the body as the white male characters. Her body appears to her as a matter beyond control. She fears her sexuality: "*there was something terrible in me terrible in me*" (148). Even for Caddy her uncontrolled body could not be described as anything other than "something terrible." Caddy's sexuality overwhelms herself, who is immersed in the Southern ideology; and it does Quentin, who has not completely interiorized the Southern ideology but is strongly attracted to it. The materiality of the female body makes the white male characters fear and reject it.

Not only the female body, however, but the male body has material existence as well. When the female or black body is thought of as an excessively sexual or violent existence, such an idea assumes that the white male body is normative and is controlled. If their own body shows irrational responses, that response can seriously upset white male subject's recognition of order. This mechanism of upset appears in Quentin's narrative.

First, Quentin's sensory perception is invasive. Smell and sound always get into his mind, regardless of his attempt to shut them down. As with Benjy's, Quentin's narrative is filled with various kinds of sensory input. In this case, each sense is connected to certain specific images and symbols. Sanford Pinsker states: "In Quentin's section, the motifs become intellectualized" (117). For example, the most remarkable sense is the smell of honeysuckle, which is closely related to Caddy's presence. Smell confuses Quentin's mind, and he even "had to pant to get any air at all out of that thick gray honeysuckle" (151). Thus, he tries not to be completely overwhelmed by the smell. Similarly, the sound of clock or watch frequently appears to Quentin's ear. The general attitude of Quentin toward time is intertwined with a need either to deny it or to escape from it. The beginning of Quentin's section underscores this theme:

“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). It is noteworthy to underline that, in this passage, time is something to be “heard.” Quentin’s desire to escape from time is mostly represented by his act of breaking the watch (80). Thus, even after the impulsive action, Quentin still hears it “tick[king].” So whereas this scene represents his desire to escape from time, it shows that time appears as the “sound,” which he cannot escape from.

The sense of smell and sound in Quentin’s mind is as significant as it is in Benjy’s, but it functions differently. Quentin’s sense of smell is always associated with Caddy. In addition, his sense of sound is interlinked with time. The sensory perception of Quentin is different from Benjy’s worldview. On the one hand, it is based on the perception of distance between subject and object, but on the other hand, it sometimes trespasses upon the distance and invades into the subject’s mind. Quentin tries to escape from time, but he cannot help but be conscious of the fact that he “hears” time. Karl F. Zender points out that various kinds of sounds make Quentin feel alienated: “Both the sounds of nature and associated forms of human sound are neither independent of his culture nor amenable to his control” (94). Sound that he cannot help but hear, even when it is not associated with time, confuses his order of the world. At the same time, the smell of honeysuckle (and Caddy’s memory which it evokes in his mind) unavoidably intrudes into his nose. According to Paul Carmignani, the smell of honeysuckle is deeply disturbing: “Like an epiphany of the lost object, its smell evokes both presence and absence, and tortures Quentin with the harrowing awareness of Caddy’s existence and inaccessibility as an object of desire” (5). Thus, the sense of smell is for him the medium through which the repressed images return. Quentin encounters the uncontrollable materiality of the body.

In addition to the characteristics of his sensory perception, the uncontrollable aspect of laughter is a nuance that characterizes Quentin’s bodily reaction. He is unable to stop his laughing several times: “After a while, the laughter ran out. But my throat wouldn’t quit trying to laugh, like retching after your stomach is empty” (140). It is important to stress that, in this passage, laughing is compared to “retching.” He perceives it as a kind of physiological phenomenon and gives up on trying to repress it: “I began to laugh again. I could feel it in my throat” (147). Yet he says, “I still couldn’t stop it, and then I knew that if I tried too hard to stop it I’d be crying and I thought about how I’d thought about I could not be a virgin” (147). The author

attempts to highlight a matter of "it." In this case, "it" is the indication of the uncontrollable essence as was in Benjy's drunken reactions. In other words, this materiality of the body similarly undermines the opposition of inside/outside pillars of the sensory narrative. Inside Quentin's body, there appears some object of description, but it is so alien that it refuses to be signified other than by the ambiguity of "it." It increases Quentin's anxiety about his identity as a Southern man.

3. Jason's Materialistic Perspective

The main feature of Jason's narrative is typified by a decrease in sensory perception. In comparison with Benjy's and Quentin's, Jason's world is supported by his firm confidence and his sense of reality that is interlinked with money and women. He identifies himself as a Southern white man in a firmly existing social order. As a child, Jason repeatedly says: "I ain't a nigger" (Collected 297). He continuously identifies and confirms his social status by saying he is not "a nigger," which is the typical word in the discourse of Southern society. Jason does not need to reinforce his sense of reality neither by words nor by the act of touching, which has a great significance for Quentin. Instead he draws a great importance from the possession. He holds both money and women's bodies to achieve self-affirmation. Moreover, he attempts to confirm his status in terms of the particular reality that he creates. He is a purely materialistic type of individual. His dependence on possession leads to a remarkable decrease in bodily senses. In Jason's narrative, "smell" appears only a few times. Including the fourth section, Jason's sense of smell is mentioned only a few times. For instance, "the smell of Maury's clove to cover up the smell of liquor (197), the smell of camphor to relieve headache (235), and the smell of "disaster" (308). The major difference in his sensory perception from Benjy's is that images are rarely mentioned in his narrative. The reality is too meagre and vain for him to contact it through symbol or image.

The logic of possession depends on the act of determining the boundary between Jason and perception of inside and outside. As long as one's body is in one's possession, it has to be controlled, and thereby often repressed lest it acted against one's intention. Jason unconsciously aims to control his body and the way he experiences others. Jason's uncontrollable "feeling" appears in the scene of his father's funeral. While he sees his father being buried, he notices some strange feeling inside him: "I began to feel sort of funny, and so

I decided to walk around a while” (202). He feels “funny” again when he sees Caddy (203). In this reaction, he feels frustrated and is not able to identify his feeling. He barely defines his feeling as “sort of funny” (202) or “kind of mad or something” (203), and he can do nothing but just walk to deal with his vague feeling.

To lose the control of one’s “inside” means uncertainty of one’s identity as a man, or as an autonomous self. The fear of losing control is observed in Jason’s gaze on Caddy’s behavior. He describes Caddy’s habit from childhood: “When we were little when she’d get mad and couldn’t do anything about it, her upper lip would begin to jump” (208). After this sentence, he explains her habit in detail. In quarreling about the money, Caddy begins to laugh and cannot stop: “she begun to laugh and to try to hold it back all at the same time” (209). Jason is annoyed by her laughing, expressing it “making that noise,” and furiously says, “Stop that!” (210). This scene suggests that Jason’s unconscious confidence in controlling his body makes him police Caddy’s physical behavior, which, in his view, signifies the lack of control over her body. Jason’s scheme of possession is connected with the control of his body. According to his ideological beliefs, women are stereotypically considered unable to control their bodily activities. Jason differentiates himself from women and perceives his identity as a matter that is associated with the epitome of a Southern white man. By doing so, he reinforces the confidence in his status.

Tomoyuki Zettsu points out Jason’s obsession with eating and taste (28). Jason’s inclination to control his possessions are emphasized by the acts of feeding and eating. These are the acts of taking the object into one’s body by one’s own choice; in this relationship with an object, one does not risk one’s agency but fortifies it. Thus Jason repels his boss Earl when Earl criticizes him for being late to get back to work (229). The time for “dinner” is the symbol of his possession of the right to decide the time to eat. His self-identification as the head of his family is demonstrated by his ability to feed the members of his house, the ability “to support a kitchen full of niggers” (239). In this regard, this phrase is used to emphasize his capacity for controlling and maintaining his household. He always underscores his control and claims his possession when something tries to violate it. By his attempt to control his surroundings, he constantly affirms his identity in the society.

The scene of chasing Miss Quentin involves several significant points to understand Jason’s obsession with the control over his possessions. This scene highlights his eagerness to possess money and women. Miss Quentin

and Lorraine are the objects whose relationships with Jason are determined by money. In addition, this scene also reveals the uncontrollable aspect of the body, which is, Jason's headache. In the novel's fourth section, when chasing Miss Quentin and his stolen money, he thinks about Lorraine first and then about the stolen money (307). His sense of reality is constructed in terms of the contact with women and the money he possesses. When chasing Miss Quentin, the headache comes to him. This feeling appears as "the prolonged blow of wind sinking through his skull" (306). The third-person narrator depicts his struggle to relieve the headache: "He was trying to breathe shallowly so that the blood would not beat so in his skull" (308). The very moment that he is about to lose his possession, namely money, his body also runs out of his control. Jason controls himself much better than the other two Compsons, but the strictness of his regime ironically conditions the uncontrollability of certain bodily phenomena.

The third-person narrative in the fourth section suggests that the sensory faculties which Jason suppresses force him to experience the world differently than the way in Jason's first-person narrative in the third section. Some abstract images appear: "it seemed to him that each of them was a picket post where the rear guards of Circumstance peeped fleetingly back at him" (306). These images are transferred to the words "Omnipotence" or "destiny" (307). When these abstract ideas appear in Jason's experience, they occur through his sensory perception: "the fact that he must depend on that red tie seemed to be the sum of the impending disaster; he could almost smell it, feel it above the throbbing of his head" (308). In this case, Faulkner suggests that he "smells" and "feels" the "disaster." Moreover, this association suggests that the sensory experience of Jason can be something alien and subversive, through which those unreal images emerge. Jason's thorough control of his body foregrounds another aspect of the body as uncontrollable noise. His egotist view of the world based on the Southern ideology is threatened by the very body which he is supposed to possess.

Conclusion

In this essay, I have argued that each of the three Compson family members interact with the world through their bodies. Their perception of reality is structured by words, association, or social discourse. Each perspective, to some extent, depends on the repression of the other's body and their own body. As

a result, the body which they repress returns to them as an uncontrollable physical activity such as headache, moaning, and laughing. It is doubtful, however, that Faulkner himself fully recognized the disruptive nature of the body. Faulkner associated his experience of writing *The Sound and the Fury* with the physical interaction with an object:

One day I seemed to shut the door between me and all publishers' addresses and book lists. I said to myself, Now I can write. Now I can make myself a vase like that which the old Roman kept at his bedside and wore the rim slowly away with kissing it. ("Introduction" 710)

He desired an object that he could wear "the rim slowly away with kissing it." He expected to interact with the object physically but safely, without being upset by the disturbing materiality of the body. We have seen, however, in *The Sound and the Fury* the body shows its materiality and disorders white characters' views of the world and themselves, that is, ideas/ideals which are cultivated by the Southern conservative norms. Faulkner unintentionally introduces the uncontrollable nature of body, which exemplifies his perplexity about the drastic change of the Southern society. In his later novels, Faulkner tends to directly tackle the problematics of the southern society, such as gender, race, and class. Faulkner intuited the disfunction of the Southern ideology and left its trace in the representation of the body.

Notes

¹ As to the critical overview of sensory studies and its application to literary studies, see Davis, 55-58.

² In her study of the representation of disability, Maria Truchan-Tataryn points out "the failure of Faulknerian scholarship to query the particular socio-political investments served by the assumption that this configured mentality reflects a lived experience of people with developmental disabilities" (165).

³ John T. Irwin says that Mr. Compson's "denial of virginity" drives Quentin into the exploration of "virgin space in which one can be first, in which one can have authority through originality" (112-13). Irwin deems that this exploration leads to Quentin's attempt to control Sutpen's story in *Absalom, Absalom!*. The idea of his incest with Caddy does not satisfy Quentin in *The Sound and the Fury*, as it is just a fiction constructed by his words. So he pursues a similar type of Southern romance

again in *Absalom, Absalom!*, though this is only another fiction.

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