

Olfaction in William Faulkner's Fiction:
Exploring Gender and Race through the Sense of Smell

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ABSTRACT

Faulkner's literature, set in the American South, imagines a rich olfactory environment. The ways in which characters employ their sense of smell provide information regarding the gender and racial stereotypes portrayed and maintained within Faulkner's fictional communities. In my texts of focus, these communities are often characterized by misogyny, conservatism, and Christian piety. Within these narrow minded communities, an exploration of Faulkner's olfactory landscape is important in order to examine how olfactory stimuli are interpreted and applied to the marginalized female and racially coded body. In Faulkner's literature, smells appear to trigger male anxieties concerning the female body, anxieties related to sexuality and racial misrecognition, and scent is largely correlated to the objectification of female characters in a manner comparable to the male gaze. Exploring the central role of scent in Faulkner's work, this thesis uses Faulkner criticism and scholarship on sensory studies to examine three Faulkner novels: *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), *As I Lay Dying* (1930), and *Sanctuary* (1931).

To be more specific, this thesis examines olfaction as a mode of experience through which men interact and perceive women as either adhering to or deviating from old Southern categories of femininity, sexuality, motherhood, and race. Rather than exploring the ways in which male characters assess the female body through the visual senses, this thesis examines how olfactory stimuli are converted from a physical experience of the body and into an evaluation used to legitimize and reinforce a particular perception of womanhood. By examining how Faulkner's characters interpret smell as a reflection of a body's status, I seek to understand the role olfaction plays in Faulkner's literary representation of the confinement of women to rigid social categories and stereotypes.

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Introduction

“It is nearly impossible to keep bad smells out of the moral domain. The language of sin and wickedness is the language of olfaction gone bad. Vision and hearing, the higher senses, do not play this role in the articulation of our moral sensibility.”

- William Ian Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, 78.

William Faulkner’s fiction contains a rich sensory environment that is often overlooked by scholars many of whom have ignored the special importance of olfaction as a descriptive device. Smells are pervasive and invisible, and by way of the nasal orifice, smells can be detected from diffuse sources. Unlike touch, sight, hearing and taste, which depend on the subject’s location to the object of sensory detection, the nose can receive odours existing beyond the line of physical proximity and visibility. The ability to touch, hear and taste depends on our proximity to the source of sensory output. For example, we can only feel another body when it is in physical contact with our own; we can only hear birdsong when we are within the vocal range of the animal, and we can only taste food when it is placed directly on our tongue. Our ability to see also requires “distance to operate properly. Get too close and things blur out or darken [...] get too far back and vision fails” (Miller 79); smell, on the other hand, does not rely upon the subject’s proximity to the object in order to be perceived, or to act as a tool in racial and gendered objectification. Thus, exploring the ways in which smell is used in the objectification of specific characters in Faulkner’s literature, in ways typically associated with vision, is particularly interesting.

Although Faulkner’s fiction contains a wide range of sensory experiences, Faulkner scholarship has paid little attention to the senses, among which, olfaction has received the least amount of discussion. Faulkner critic Paul Carmignani claims that the reason for this omission is the association between smell and “animality,” a characteristic inherent to all human nature yet

rejected for its connection to the primitive (Carmignani 305). In Western society, “smell ends up associated with the dark, the dank, the primitive and bestial” (Miller 75). Despite this association between smell and aspects of society or the self we desire to suppress, our reliance on olfaction as a mode of social exchange cannot be ignored, especially its role in the recognition of gender and race. In particular, this thesis seeks to investigate the ways in which gender and racial stereotypes are exposed in Faulkner’s fiction through the perception of olfactory stimuli. It is important to note that the power of olfaction resides not in its biological processes – smell is both real and imagined – but as a mode of experience; each of Faulkner’s characters experiences smell differently depending on perceptions of the self, relations to others, and the social codes that structure their community.

Keeping in mind stereotypes and social structures, with this thesis, I examine olfaction as a mode of experience through which men interact and perceive Caucasian and African American women as either adhering to or deviating from old Southern categories of femininity, sexuality, motherhood, and race. More specifically, this thesis examines the ways in which male characters interpret and experience olfaction in relation to Caucasian, African American and racially ambiguous women through a close analysis of three of Faulkner’s novels: *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), *As I Lay Dying* (1930), and *Sanctuary* (1931). Though Faulkner’s larger body of work encompasses various degrees and kinds of sensory impressions, I have chosen these three novels as my texts of focus based on several factors, including their evident use of olfaction as a mode of perception and their interest in non-verbal and non-physical communication.

Although *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying* and *Sanctuary* have been explored in conjunction with theories pertaining to the body, these theories have not done justice to an olfactory framework. There are very few published books and articles that discuss the

interconnection between gender, race and the non-visual senses in Faulkner's literature. There are insightful investigations of the body in Faulkner's fiction as a site of corporeal experience and material existence; however, there is less by way of an attempt to connect these explorations to discussions of olfaction, the representation of women or sensory experience. Although Paul Carmignani's article "Olfaction in Faulkner's Fiction" (1990) and Maryanne M. Gobble's article "The Significance of Verbena in William Faulkner's *An Odour of Verbena*" (2000) discuss the prevalence of olfaction in Faulkner's fiction, they do not connect scent to issues concerning their relationship to the female body or to Southern stereotypes and codes of femininity.

Much of the scholarship pertaining to Faulkner and the senses focuses on his short story "An Odour of Verbena" – the very title an allusion to olfaction – from his work *The Unvanquished* (1934). Despite verbena being an odourless flower, it is nevertheless ascribed various meanings throughout the story, and it is the flower's shifting symbolic value that is the focus of Gobble's exploration. As Gobble observes, in "An Odour of Verbena," the flower signifies courage, battlefield endurance, femininity and peace:

As the odour of verbena builds and diffuses, it refuses to take on a single, coherent symbolic value. The symbology of verbena is, finally, as mutable and elusive as its scent. [...] Faulkner's choice of verbena in such a central role is more than a little bewildering; it is after all, a small, old-fashioned flower with little intrinsic symbolic value. Even the literal sense of the title is a puzzle; verbena is scentless. (Gobble 218)

Gobble's discussion of verbena in Faulkner's short story is insightful, particularly in her treatment of the flower as symbolic. In Faulkner's story, verbena is infused with several values, and Gobble is correct to outline the scent's various meanings. However, although Gobble discusses the flower in symbolic terms, she does not appear to account for the significance of

Faulkner's choice of the odourless verbena in conveying its differing values. By using a scentless flower to express various meanings, Faulkner is making an overt decision to show his readers that scent in his fiction is entirely interpretative and dependent on who is doing the smelling and in what raced or gendered context; this is something I have considered in my discussion of scent in *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying* and *Sanctuary*.

Unlike Gobble's work, Paul Carmignani's article "Olfaction in Faulkner's Fiction" investigates scent in several of Faulkner's texts. His emphasis on childhood scents and desire is particularly interesting. He states:

A carnal sense, enmeshed with instinctual and affective life, smell plays a prominent role in texts dealing with desire and sex, and Benjy, the idiot [from *The Sound and the Fury*], is the archetype of the character dwelling in the fragrant aura emanating from feminine presence. [... Benjy] is particularly sensitive to the scent of his sister, Caddy, who smells 'like trees' and 'like leaves.' This sweet virginal scent is a sort of *axis mundi* supporting the tranquility and stability of Benjy's existence; were it to disappear, Benjy's universe would collapse. (Carmignani 308)

Carmignani's analysis of scent in relation to male and female interactions in *The Sound and the Fury* is useful. However, he does not contextualize these relationships within a broader understanding of gender performances within Southern norms and traditions. Though Carmignani describes Benjy as the novel's "idiot," implying his failure to adhere to social practices, Benjy, like his brothers Quentin and Jason, is nevertheless aware, however subconsciously, of the Southern codes governing gender roles. The relationship between Benjy and his sister Caddy is stabilized by the perception of her sexual purity, a characteristic of the Southern belle, a stereotype which promotes the existence of women in a perpetual childlike

state. This perception of purity is transmitted to Benjy through Caddy's olfactory odour of "trees" and "leaves," scents he objectively associates with Caddy as a virgin and as a child. Benjy is fixated on old Southern constructions of femininity, and Caddy's adherence to and deviations from these constructions are revealed to him via his senses, and in particular, through his sense of smell.

In order to further explore the relationship between gender and olfaction in Faulkner's fiction, it is important to briefly contextualize old Southern mythologies of gender roles. According to Kathryn Lee Seidel in her work *The Southern Belle in the American Novel* (1985), the Southern belle reoccurs as the dominate fixture of conflict in Faulkner's fiction, as her fall from feminine gender expectations suggests the degeneration of the South as a whole (Seidel 97). Seidel describes an old Southern system in which women, to uphold the perception of honour, must be chaste, refined, fragile, and must be sheltered and protected by men (112). These characteristics are overturned by Caddy, the female Quentin and Addie Bundren, women who fail to conform to old Southern conceptions of femininity; as conceived by a patriarchal system, they are perceived as immoral and sexually deviant, and as such, symbolize the ruination of the mythology of the old South and its gender ideals. Faulkner's continuous description of scent throughout his fiction helps to convey these ideas of the virginal and fallen woman in the post-Civil War South.

Although the old South era lasted only about twenty-five years, from the 1830s until the commencement of the Civil War in 1861, old Southern ideals prevail in Faulkner's fictional landscapes. When Faulkner published the first of his novels in the 1920s, the northern Mississippi landscape, a major influence on his writing, encompassed elements of the old South; here, fossils of plantation society and slavery suggested a time that seemed more refined,

prosperous and noble (Aiken 19). Not only do these old Southern aesthetics project a romantic and largely superficial nostalgia for masculine power onto the new South – depicted in Faulkner’s narratives – but they also express codes of behaviour allocated to gender and race relations that are also apparent in Faulkner’s fiction. In his book *Southern Masculinity: Perspectives on Manhood in the South Since Reconstruction* (2009), Craig Thompson Friend explores various constructions of masculinity from Reconstruction to the present. He states:

The long shadow of the Civil War stretches across the South, shaping Southern men and masculinity. [...] The war simultaneously destabilized white Southern manliness, creating a ‘crisis in gender.’ [...] Honour and mastery had been the dominant idealized masculine traits among antebellum Southern whites, but gone with the wind was the world of plantations, slaves, and the exclusivity of the gentlemanly class. [...] Honour and mastery transformed into new structures of masculinity, evidenced by the diverse men who populated the South between Reconstruction and the turn of the twenty-first century. [...] There was] severe stressed [placed] on those who idealized a masculine past [and] American masculinity confronted new threats in feminism. (Friend vii-ix)

Conceptions of the old South and its idealization of a “masculine past,” as Friend suggests, are entrenched within literary reflections of the South and very much present in Faulkner’s literature. Faulkner’s fictional Yoknapatawpha County evokes a post-Civil War landscape where society is patriarchal, honour-bound and conservative. These residual values of white masculinity are embodied by *The Sound and the Fury’s* Quentin Compson, who feels deeply entrenched within old Southern conventions and gender ideals; Quentin’s performance of Southern masculinity is depicted through his interactions with Caddy, his sister, whom he perceives as being protected by his control of her sexuality. As Friend notes, the Southern gentlemen confronted a new type of

woman; unlike the traditional Southern belle, Faulkner's women deviate from traditional constructions of femininity, and are often perceived as promiscuous and immoral. For instance, Caddy repudiates her brother's protection – a trait of Southern machismo Quentin attempts to embody – and she becomes pregnant outside of marriage. In this thesis, I attempt to connect these very stringent roles of masculinity and femininity to the perceptions of smell assigned to changing female bodies within a misogynist society.

As Faulkner's female characters reject Southern conventions of womanhood, their deviations from societal gender norms are frequently noticed by men who perceive their misconduct through the interpretative act of smelling; for example, Quentin associates the smell of honeysuckle with Caddy's loss of virginity and perceives the scent as penetrating her very body, acting as proof of her illicit sexuality (Faulkner 151). By perceiving breaches in gender roles through olfaction, Faulkner's male characters fail to recognize women as existing beyond their bodies and narrowly defined Southern stereotypes.

Though Anse Bundren from *As I Lay Dying* is not a Southern gentleman, he is nonetheless a practitioner of old Southern constructions of male conduct. Anse's fulfillment of his promise to Addie – she had requested her body be buried in Jefferson – and his desire to protect the reputation of his “womenfolk” (105), however misguided in execution it appears, demonstrates the extension of old Southern values beyond a Southern aristocracy. Contrary to her husband's conformity to Southern masculinity, Addie Bundren confronts the domestic Southern ideals of wife and mother, and her body's unpleasant olfactory emissions reinforce the perception that she is not only a bad wife and mother but is also spiritually ill as well as physically contagious. Traditionally, nauseating smells, such as those of Addie's bodily emanations, “bore the burden of carrying disease, while good smells were curative. [...] The

aseptic must have a smell that accords with our beliefs” (Miller 66). Befitting the misogynist society in which *As I Lay Dying* is set, Addie’s repulsive odour is not a coincidence; her smell is a reflection of her transgressive female role in the novel and accords with the social alienation to which she is subject by her community. Scent becomes a means through which male characters recognize and address female transgressions from Southern gender mythologies that are deeply entrenched.

Aside from gender hierarchies and stereotypes, discussions of Faulkner’s fiction frequently explore the complicated racial dynamics of the American South. Interestingly, *Sanctuary* is one of Faulkner’s few novels largely devoid of explicit racial difference; despite this fact, the narrative still negotiates race even when it appears absent. Given that racial visibility is undetectable in Faulkner’s work, it becomes important to examine the contingency of racial identity upon the other senses. Miller proposes that smell exists “in a kind of moral war with vision, with vision representing the forces of light and smell the forces of darkness” (76). This can account for the relationship between scent and African American characters in Faulkner’s texts. Miss Reba Rivers and Ruby Lamar, the racially coded matriarchs from *Sanctuary*, subvert stereotypes allotted to Southern Caucasian women through their figurative performances of “blackness.” In Faulkner’s work, Caucasian characters who perform figurative blackness – thus failing to exercise their racial superiority – are sensorially condemned. They are associated with the smells of unwholesome foods and alcohol. Despite the perception that Miss Reba and Ruby are Caucasian, (though the novel makes little concrete reference to their race), they are portrayed as hybrid stereotypes of the mammy and jezebel figure, stereotypes that were just as restrictive to African American women as the Southern belle construction was to Caucasian women. By asserting racial stereotypes and aligning the smells associated with

cultural blackness with Caucasian bodies, Faulkner imagines the non-visual and often racist recognitions of African American bodies.

This thesis draws not only on existing scholarship on Faulkner and olfactory experience but also on a larger body of humanities research on perceptions of race, femininity and the senses. This thesis predominately investigates the perception of Southern white and racially coded women in relation to smell. It is therefore important to contextualize these explorations within a broader history of racial power politics. In his book *The Body Social: Symbolism, Self and Society* (1993), Anthony Synnott discusses issues of scent as the “justification” for segregation and racial oppression. Synnott claims that in the United States, it was believed that African Americans had a smell that was extremely disagreeable to racist whites, who anticipated a “clear union of exterior and interior, outer and inner purity, odour and morality. Foul smells were not just unpleasant, they symbolized an inner rotteness [...] Odours, therefore, both real and imagined [...] served] to legitimize inequalities of both class and race” (Synnott 197). As Synnott suggests, scent was imposed on any population as a means of justifying a particular evaluation or point of difference. To be regarded as socially acceptable, it was not enough for a specific population, for instance, African Americans, to look a certain way, but their acceptance was also contingent on their perceived scent. Just as Synnott argues that the dominant Caucasian racial groups in the United States used smell as a means of evaluating and oppressing African Americans, we can also explore instances where white American men used olfactory codes to judge women, both Caucasian and African American – two marginalized groups – in Faulkner’s fiction.

Comparable to Synnott’s discussion of olfaction and racial oppression, influential French philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty also agrees that there is an association between perceptions

of the body and social judgments. In his work *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), Merleau-Ponty states:

Perception becomes an ‘interpretation’ of the signs that sensibility provides in accordance with bodily stimuli, it becomes an ‘hypothesis’ made by the mind in order to explain to itself its own impressions. [...] Judgment [...] itself becomes a ‘mere’ ‘factor’ of perception charged with the task of providing what is not provided by the body. [...] While judgment loses its constituting function and becomes an explanatory principle the words ‘seeing,’ ‘hearing,’ and ‘sensing,’ lose all signification, since the slightest glance goes beyond the pure impression and thereby falls under the general rubric of ‘judgment.’ (Merleau-Ponty 29-35)

Though Faulkner instills his male characters with a high degree of sensory perception, this is not to suggest that these impressions do not also serve to justify an already construed judgment of a female character; as Merleau-Ponty suggests, perception is an extension of the mind, and therefore inseparable from pre-conceived notions of the body being perceived. Merleau-Ponty’s discussion of judgment can also be used to illuminate Synnott’s exploration of racially-charged olfactory evaluations, as both writers regard perception, including olfactory interpretation, as contingent on pre-existing beliefs. Both Synnott’s and Merleau-Ponty’s discussions provide extremely useful models for interpreting the ways male characters experience olfactory stimuli in relation to female bodies and the judgments imposed on these bodies based on the interpretation of their smell.

Although the vast majority of this thesis focuses on Faulkner’s own writing, I also use secondary texts to support this concept of olfaction within a broader framework. In order to investigate the stereotypes of gender and race apparent in Faulkner’s fiction and the olfactory

coding used to reinforce male perceptions of female sexuality and motherhood, this thesis explores *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying* in separate chapters with a third chapter focused on olfaction as a coded mode of communication, that examines moments of racial categorization and figurative “blackness” in *Sanctuary*. Each chapter includes an analysis of significant moments in Faulkner’s texts where olfaction is experienced and subverted by the male characters’ interpretive use of their sense of smell.

There is not a significant difference between the treatment of smell in Faulkner’s texts and visual observation; characters rely on smell to determine gender and race to the extent typically associated with vision. In each novel, olfactory emanations, both hallucinatory and real, ascribe value to the female body based on a female character’s adherence to or deviation from Southern gender and racial constructions and stereotypes. As Faulkner’s women fail to adhere to the rigid guidelines of their imposed gender roles, noses, most often male, immediately sense a fault in their performances. The abundance of scent in Faulkner’s fiction, and its association with masculine power (the male body is doing the smelling) have the effect of objectifying the female body that is consequently confined to the codes of her society.

Chapter One: Olfaction and Female Sexuality in *The Sound and the Fury*

“Her face looked at the sky it was 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 any air at all out of that thick gray honeysuckle.”

- William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury*, 151.

In order to navigate social conventions, Faulkner’s male characters appear to rely less on their visual senses and more on their sense of smell as they address societal breaches and transgressive behaviour. Smells are more than symbolic, for they can tell us about the ways in which Faulkner’s male character (the ones doing the smelling) interpret such power struggles in terms of gender and race. Smells associated with the female body appear just as objectifying and socially condemning as the male gaze in *The Sound and the Fury*. According to sensory studies scholar Sarah J. Gervais, “the objectifying gaze triggers a category-based mode of person perception, in which women are not regarded as individuals but are instead regarded as a collection of their sexual body parts for the use of the perceiver. [... The objectifying gaze] has been linked to objectified social perceptions of women, including dehumanization” (Gervais 567). Several instances in the novel depict the female body objectified through the perception of odour, which is inextricably connected to sexuality; just as vision relegates women to their gender and sexual body parts, olfaction in *The Sound and the Fury* similarly confines women to the male conceptions of the sexualized female body. Female promiscuity appears as the central and most destabilizing deviation in the novel’s Southern community, and it is recognized as a transgression that only male noses seem equipped to notice.

It is extremely rare for a female character in any one of the three texts of my study to engage with or to be actively involved in the act of smelling to an advantageous degree. There

are a few instances in *As I Lay Dying* and *Sanctuary* where the female nose perceives smell; however, these moments are problematic and I will suggest reasons for this in Chapters Two and Three. In contrast, *The Sound and the Fury's* male characters experience a powerful recognition of smell; for example, Quentin can predict the weather: "it smelled of rain and all flower scents the damp warm air released" (Faulkner 149). Benjy cannot only predict when it will rain but he can also smell sickness and death: "Benjy knew it when Demuddy died. He cried. *He smell hit. He smell hit*" (90). Like other males in the novel, Jason also demonstrates an acute perception of his olfactory landscape: "then I knew what I had been smelling. Clove stems" (Faulkner 197). The Compson brothers' ability to perceive their environment, the weather and even death, without any visual cues, emphasizes the power of male olfactory sensitivity in *The Sound and the Fury*, a mode through which they also perceive and interpret women. Through the masculine wielding of olfactory power, the female body is positioned as a passive subject to be smelled and evaluated by the male nose. This masculine olfactory power is especially significant when analyzing the relationship between male and female bodies; through scent, Faulkner's women are often depicted as the racist projections of the African American woman, the prostitute, and the "Southern" Eve from the Eden myth.

In a 1956 interview for *The Paris Review* William Faulkner describes his initial concept of *The Sound and the Fury*. He states:

It began with a mental picture. I didn't realize at the time it was symbolical. The picture was of a muddy seat of a little girl's drawers in a pear tree, where she could see through a window where her grandmother's funeral was taking place and report what was happening to her brothers on the ground below [...] And then I realized the symbolism of the soiled pants, and that image was replaced by the one of the fearless and motherless

girl climbing down the drainpipe to escape from the only home she had, where she had never been offered love or affection or understanding. (Faulkner 7)

The symbol of the “muddy seat of a little girl’s drawers in a pear tree” is not only evocative of Benjy’s olfactory perception of Caddy (Caddy smells like trees) but also signifies her eventual fall from the Southern pedestal of values, suggesting the Southern Eve myth. Caddy’s loss of virginity is the focus of the novel, and despite *The Sound and the Fury’s* multiple narratives, each section fixates on her in various ways and more particularly, on her developing sexuality which is interpreted through smell.

Critical explorations of female sexuality in Faulkner’s fiction are extremely prevalent, but they often omit the involvement of olfaction in interpreting and evaluating behaviour. In his discussion of the female body in *The Ink of Melancholy: Faulkner’s Novels from The Sound and the Fury to Light in August* (1990), Andre Bleikasten discusses the importance of sexual purity as it relates to a masculine perception of women. He states that purity is “an impossible desire for an impossible object. [...] Nothing is therefore more disturbing to Faulkner’s squeamish idealists than the gross organs and gross appetites of living flesh, and the supreme threats to purity are the carnal presence of woman with her enveloping sexuality” (Bleikasten 302). Female sexuality, as Bleikasten suggests, is the principal subject of obsession for Faulkner’s Southern male idealists. In *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner’s male characters are unable to dissociate women from the highly superficial and constructed understanding of what it means to be a Southern woman, which posits that she must be “chaste, refined, [and] fragile,” (Seidel 112); this chapter explores the ways in which scent is implicit to a masculine interpretation of female sexuality.

Male characters consistently ascribe particular smells to female bodies based on their adherence to or deviation from old Southern gender norms and stereotypes. According to the old

Southern model, a model in which Faulkner's males are deeply entrenched, women must be "essentially passionless and asexual. [... They must] preserve [their] body, on which [their] sense of self is based, from the changes that might be wrought by sex and pregnancy" (Seidel 98), and certainly the innocent smells of "trees" and "leaves" signify Caddy's pre-pubescent girl body. Interrogating sensory and gender-saturated theories are important when considering how social boundaries are both monitored and destabilized by female bodies in *The Sound and the Fury*.

Feminist scholar Gillian Howie approaches her discussion of female gender constructions in a similar fashion to Anthony Synnott and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. While Synnott and Merleau-Ponty explain that one's perception of a subject is contingent on pre-existing beliefs, in her book *Between Feminism and Materialism: A Question of Method* (2010), Howie explains that invented social values, patterns and stereotypes define gender roles. Howie's exploration of social values illuminates old Southern classifications of femininity – the old Southern system claims that women should be "passionless" and "asexual" – at work in Faulkner's fiction. Howie's investigation makes clear how we can see that social values, patterns and stereotypes are ascribed onto bodies based exclusively on gender. Howie states that "each [woman] lives out her unique body in a sociohistorical context of the behaviour and expectations of others. [...] Stereotypes operate with and through social roles, institutions, and practises, they contour discourses and social practises" (Howie 172). By exploring instances in *The Sound and the Fury* that use smell as a powerful tool in racial and gender identification, a new dialogue emerges from this exploration depicting the use of scent to reinforce the adherence of female bodies to the gender categories prefixed by history.

In *The Sound and the Fury*, though smells found in nature are typically associated with innocence, childhood and femininity, certain floral odours, including the ones found in perfume, are conversely linked to perceptions of female sexuality. For instance, Caddy ceases to smell like “leaves” or like “trees” immediately after her first sexual encounter with Dalton Ames. It appears that Caddy’s private sexual liaisons can be revealed through her corporeal odour. When Caddy loses her virginity, Benjy immediately recognizes that she has experienced a change in her identity based on her body’s olfactory transformation; the scent of perfume comes to signify her transition from child to woman. This scent disrupts Benjy’s sense of equilibrium; he cries until she washes the perfume away, thus recovering the innocent scent of “leaves” and “trees,” scents Benjy objectively associates with childhood, conventional performances of Southern femininity, and Caddy’s sexual purity:

‘Why, Benjy. What is it.’ She said. ‘You mustn’t cry. Caddy’s not going away. See here.’ She said. She took up the bottle and took the stopper out and held it to my nose. ‘Sweet.Smell.Good.’ I went away and I didn’t hush, and she held the bottle in her hand, looking at me. ‘Oh.’ She said. She put the bottle down and came and put her arms around me. ‘So that was it. And you were trying to tell Caddy and you couldn’t tell her. You wanted to, but you couldn’t, could you. Of course Caddy wont. Of course Caddy wont. Just wait till I dress.’ (Faulkner 42-3)

Though Benjy’s sense of smell is recognized by other characters as a mode of communication – “he smellin hit. Dat’s whut hit is” (288) – it is also important to note that Benjy’s olfactory powers are a means of articulating his disapproval of Caddy’s sexuality. By repeating “Caddy wont, Caddy wont” to Benjy, Caddy reveals her anxiety over having disrupted the gender codes stabilizing Benjy’s sense of familiarity. Perfume is “that vivid dead smell [...] Benjy hated so,”

(176) “that vivid dead smell of perfume” (176) that sends Benjy into fits of anxiety as he perceives changes in Caddy’s body.

After Caddy’s second sexual encounter with a neighbourhood boy named Charlie, she is forced, through Benjy’s persistent cries, to wash the scent of perfume from her body, thus restoring the smells of “trees” and “leaves.” “‘I wont.’ She said. ‘I wont anymore, ever. Benjy Benjy.’ [...] Caddy got up and we went into the kitchen and turned the light on and Caddy took to the kitchen soap and washed her mouth at the sink, hard. Caddy smelled like trees” (43). Faulkner tells us that Benjy bellows – his natural response to the discovery of Caddy’s sexual liaisons with boys – until Caddy is forced to wash her mouth with soap, thus recovering her innocent childhood odour but failing to reverse the changes that have taken place within her body.

Aside from signalling her departure from virginity, Caddy’s use of perfume also aligns her with the racist representations of African American bodies. In their introduction to *Haunted Bodies: Gender and Southern Texts* (1997), Anne Goodwyn Jones and Susan V. Donaldson write that “even in modern fictional or nonfictional Southern texts, references to manhood or womanhood shift surprisingly often to issues of slavery and race; conversely, language on race and slavery slips unexpectedly into discourse on gender” (Jones 3). Exploring how Faulkner’s male characters navigate gender norms through the interpretive act of smelling exposes the interconnected dialogue existing between the female body and issues of “blackness.” In *The Essential and Mysterious Powers of Smell* (1992), Annick Le Guéer states:

In their attempts to overcome the discrimination to which they are subjected, persons of modest means tend to buy cheap perfume products that are generally considered ‘vulgar’ by the upper classes. [...] To counter racist notions about themselves American blacks

developed a tendency to wear exaggerated amounts of perfume, thereby only reinforcing white prejudices: if the blacks must wear so much perfume, it's because they really do stink. (Le Guéner 34)

The negative olfactory coding of African Americans and their use of perfume, regarded by racist whites as an attempt to hide their smell, is implicated in Caddy's olfactory transformation. The belief that the African Americans "stunk" had much to do with their relationship to slavery, labour and the lower classes; scent was a means of pointing out their differences from white bodies and justifying their segregation. Anthony Synnott points out that it was believed that "Negroes [had] a smell extremely disagreeable to white people. [...] It was one of many defensive measures adopted by racist whites: a crushing final proof of the impossibility of close associations between the races" (Synnott 196). Negative olfactory coding was also ascribed onto African American bodies in literature; the line "the feral smell of two hundred negro bodies" from Ian Fleming's *James Bond* series (Synnott 197) had the effect of depicting African Americans as animalistic, filthy and sexually unrestrained. Caddy's use of perfume – used, according to racist doctrine, to disguise these innate foul characteristics – suggests her attempts to mask the discriminatory scents of figurative "blackness" or black behaviour.

In her attempt to pacify Benjy, Caddy gives Dilsey, the Compson's African American domestic servant, the bottle of perfume: "Caddy dressed and took up the bottle again and we went down to the kitchen. 'Dilsey.' Caddy said. 'Benjy's got a present for you.' She stooped down and put the bottle in my hand. 'Hold it out to Dilsey, now.' Caddy held my hand out and Dilsey took the bottle" (Faulkner 43). By giving Dilsey the perfume, and saying "we don't like perfume ourselves," (43) racist attitudes and social discourses ascribing and allocating "stench" to African American, labouring, and thus lower class bodies, are perpetuated.

In Southern fiction, African Americans “served the role of the primitive [...and] the primitive also reveals what, in Freudian terms, needs to be repressed in civilized society, most notably, sexual license” (Duvall 24). The relationship between scent, sexuality and portrayals of blackness culminate in negative evaluations of the female body. Caddy’s brothers associate her with the undisciplined sexuality associated with performances of blackness, thus, her actions and the perception of her body serve to unhinge her from the pedestal of white Southern values. African American women, to whom Caddy is compared, were viewed as “promiscuous (thus available to white men) and black men were seen as sexually obsessed [... and because of these perceptions it] is a small wonder that a racially inflected blackness should come to serve Faulkner as a figure for delineating fissures in sexual identities” (24). The figurative misrecognition of Caddy’s race – her promiscuity is the deployment of her “blackness” – has Quentin asking, “*Why wont you bring him to the house, Caddy? Why must you do like nigger women do in the pasture the ditches the dark woods hot hidden furious in the dark woods*” (Faulkner 92). The assertion that Caddy is meeting with men in the woods – a space associated with unlicensed black behaviour – reveals her position outside of the white patriarchal home and therefore conventional behaviour of white femininity; yet, despite her distance from the realm of patriarchal vision, Caddy’s brothers still manage to “sniff out” her sexual and racial transgressions. Olfaction certainly plays a role in Southern racial and gender anxieties over racial misrecognition, power dynamics, and the intense concerns surrounding bodies and smells in *The Sound and the Fury*.

In addition to the perception of unlicensed sexual behaviour, perfume also plays an essential role in the perceptions of immoral female seduction. Throughout history and mythology, perfumes have been linked to sexuality and desire. Le Guérier states that “when Circe

sets out to seduce Ulysses, she employs powerful aromatic [filters.] When the Queen of Sheba travels to Jerusalem, she seeks help in her campaign to win Solomon's heart from the precious gums and spices of Araby she brings with her in her great caravan" (Le Gu er 15). Thus, the unique attributes of scent are associated with "amorous conquest" (15) and, as Le Gu er's discussion suggests, the female seduction of the masculine body.

The utilization of scent in female seduction is connected to the perceptions of female promiscuity and sexual accessibility in *The Sound and the Fury*. On contemplating his own virginity, Quentin states: "I 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, but if it was that simple to do it wouldn't be anything" (Faulkner 147). Here, Quentin deems the use of perfume as a tool in seduction and female body accessibility. Spode's asking of Quentin "did you ever drink perfume" and their shared response of "no [...] neither did I" (148) becomes the displaced metaphor for sexual consumption and their own virginity. Quentin perceives perfume as the fragrant and artificial scent worn by the sexually uninhibited women who linger "in the shadowy places –" akin to Caddy's sexual liaisons in the dark woods – waiting to lure him into sex. Quentin's use of the pronoun "them" in reference to these perfumed female bodies acts as a misogynist recognition of women, implying that because they wear perfume they must all be promiscuous and emotionally detached – "but if it was that simple to do it wouldn't be anything" (147). To Quentin's senses, most women in the North are the embodiment of transgressive femininity and appear no better than prostitutes in a fragrant guise. Their smell upsets and inverts old Southern gender values that claim that women must smell pure, natural and clean.

Decisive male attitudes towards the perfumed body as the olfactory marker of seduction and promiscuity are also connected to the perceptions of the female Quentin. Despite having no first-hand knowledge of her impropriety, Jason deems female Quentin as sexually deviant; her use of perfume and “cheap,” fragrant cosmetics acts as proof of her sexual misconduct, much in the same way her mother’s use of perfume affiliated her with sexually unlicensed “*nigger women*” (92). An overview of the female Quentin’s room discloses her use of cosmetics and perfume as evidence of her promiscuity and figurative “blackness:”

It was not a girl’s room. It was not anybody’s room, and the faint scent of cheap cosmetics and the few feminine objects and the other evidences of crude and hopeless efforts to feminise it but added to its anonymity, giving it that dead and stereotyped transience of rooms in assignation houses [...] scent bottles, a box of powder, a chewed pencil, a pair of scissors with one broken blade lying upon a darned scarf dusted with powder and stained with rouge. (283)

Again, fragrant perfume and cosmetics are seen to be emblems of “crude” female behaviour and even death: “giving it that dead and stereotyped transience of rooms in assignation houses.” Quentin’s anonymity – “it was not anybody’s room” (283) – acts to conflate her body with those of prostitutes living in “assignation houses;” her room appears more as a place of exchange, where “scent bottles, a box of powder, a chewed pencil, [and] a pair of scissors” recast the space as a boudoir concealing miscellaneous objects and the articles used in female seduction, namely scent and makeup. Several instances in the novel depict Jason referring to Quentin as a “nigger wench” (189) and a “damn little slut” (185) exposing the connection between scent, Southern racism and perceptions of female promiscuity.

Returning to the image of Caddy's "muddy drawers" – the image setting the foundation of Faulkner's novel – as a reoccurring symbol of female promiscuity, the foul smell of mud and dirt caked female clothing also represents both the male aversion to and fascination with female sexuality. Faulkner uses the smell of dirt and mud to trigger masculine anxieties associated with enveloping female sexuality. The recollection of Caddy's muddy drawers is conflated with the image of Natalie, a childhood friend of Quentin's, with whom he plays in the family barn and later calls a "dirty girl" (134). When Quentin notices Caddy watching he and Natalie "dancing sitting down," (136) and fearing that Caddy may perceive this game as his sexual interest in Natalie, Quentin immediately rejects her, calling her a "cowface" (136) before jumping into the "stinking hogwallow," thus condemning himself to the foul and stagnant waters associated with female sexuality in the novel (134). When Caddy accuses Quentin of kissing Natalie, he replies, "I didn't kiss a dirty girl like Natalie anyway" (134). It becomes clear that Quentin associates female sexuality, and his own misconduct – imagined here as sexually motivated – with the unpleasant smell of filth:

Mud was warmer than the rain it smelled awful [... Caddy] had her back turned I went around in front of her. You know what I was doing? She turned her back I went around in front of her the rain creeping into the mud flattening her bodice through her dress it smelled horrible. I was hugging her that's what I was doing. She turned her back I went around in front of her. I was hugging her I tell you. I dont give a damn what you were doing [...] She hit my hands away I smeared mud on her with the other hand I couldnt feel the wet smacking of her hand I wiped mud from my legs smeared it on her wet hard tuning body. (137)

Quentin and Caddy have a mud fight in which Quentin thrusts mud from the “stinking hogwallow” (typically associated with filth and disease) onto Caddy’s body, therefore marking it as sexually impure. After their mud fight, Quentin says, “we sure do stink we better try to wash it off in the branch” (138). Their suggestively sexually deviant bodies necessitate the cleansing and removal of the smell of sin – the scent of the hogwallow mud is expressive of sexual transgression.

Quentin’s relationship to Caddy is deeply conflicted. He perceives all women as the displaced double of his sister whom he upholds as the illusion of feminine virtue, but who also signifies the foul nature of female sexuality. When Quentin calls the Italian girl in Cambridge Massachusetts “sister,” he reimagines her as the inversion of Caddy; though Caddy and the Italian girl are separated by geography and social class, they are alike in Quentin’s olfactory renderings of their bodies. For instance, the Italian girl’s smell of moist dirt – “she extended her fist. It uncurled upon a nickel, moist and dirty, moist dirt ridged into her flesh. The coin was damp and warm. I could smell it, faintly metallic” (126) – and Caddy’s hogwallow muddied body both collide and yield to the other in Quentin’s imagination. In his essay “William Faulkner” from *A Companion to The Literature and Culture of The American South* (2004), Richard Godden states that Caddy and the Italian girl’s likeness in Quentin’s imagination rests on their differences. He states:

Their incompatibilities of class, race, time, and odour [Godden excludes the scent of mud from Quentin’s recollection of Caddy, choosing to mention only the scent of honeysuckle] will not lapse into resemblance (before passing from resemblance to repetition). Rather, the ‘sister’ is a disturbing hybrid that creates for Quentin a conceptual need to challenge earlier versions of what sisters are and do. [...] On looking at the

unnamed immigrant child, [Quentin] does not see Caddy, he sees the collapse of what Caddy meant to him. Whereas, in the South, the very idea of incest involves a form of cultural heroism – raising the standard of the virgin – in the North, Quentin’s return to that idea is deemed child-molestation. (Godden 446)

Though Godden only recognizes the odour of honeysuckle in relation to Quentin’s recollection of Caddy, his suggestion that the Italian girl is the personified collapse of Southern values is important. The Italian girl is the embodiment of Quentin’s fear of female sexuality, and in particular, Caddy’s sexuality. In this way, as Godden suggests, we can perceive the Italian girl as Caddy recast as a soiled, dirty immigrant child. The Italian girl’s scent and visible filth, “her filthy little dress” (Faulkner 133), nonetheless parallel Caddy’s muddy drawers – “I could smell her damp clothes feeling her there” (153) – depicting Quentin’s mental organization of female bodies based on his interpretation of their smell; in his olfactory imagination, dirty and soiled female bodies are synonymous with sin and the collapse of Southern gender values. Not only does the smell of mud suggest the distortion of Southern femininity, but it also reflects Quentin’s own fragile ideals surrounding sexuality and incest:

She [the Italian girl] just looked at me with her black, secret, friendly gaze, the half-naked loaf clutched to her breast. ‘It’s wet. I thought we jumped back in time.’ I took my handkerchief and tried to wipe the loaf, but the crust began to come off, so I stopped [...]. It looked kind of like rats had been eating it now. *and the water building and building up the squatting back the sloughed mud stinking surfaceward pocking the pattering surface like grease on a hot stove. I told you I’d make you I don’t give a damn.* (138-9)

The rain falling on their bodies and the damp loaf of bread clutched by the Italian girl “to her breast” evokes the olfactory image of Caddy’s wet bodice and muddy drawers: “then she didn’t

have on anything but her bodice and drawers, and Quentin slapped her and she slipped and fell down in the water [...] Caddy was all wet and muddy behind” (18-9). The likeness of these two episodes – “I thought we jumped back in time” (138) – is triggered by Quentin’s olfactory sensitivity. His perception of women as rain soaked and muddy – earthy scents – suggests, to the male senses, uninhibited female sexuality and transgression, while Quentin’s description of the “half naked” loaf of bread acts as the displaced evaluation of the “little dirty” (146) Italian girl, who like Caddy as a child climbing trees, is filthy, skimpily dressed, and nearly naked. These images arouse Quentin’s fascination and fear of female sexuality. His conflicted desire to believe in Southern values – he is afflicted by his own sexual longings – is depicted by the rats eating away holes through the loaf of bread (the consumable stand-in for the female body), which Quentin craves yet fears access to.

The perception of filth and dirt in relation to the female body signifies female promiscuity and the subversion of Southern gender values; however, these smells also suggest the perversion of Quentin’s own relationship to women. As Godden suggests, Quentin is mistaken for a child molester, – “he was trying to kidnap that little girl” (146) – suggesting his inability to detach his own childhood recollections from female sexuality and sin.

The image of the sexually deviant and sinful woman is reinforced by the recasting of Caddy as the biblical Eve within the Southern garden. Caddy’s olfactory coding – she is continuously associated with scents found in nature – conjures the image of the fragrant and fertile Eden; while, like Eve, Caddy’s enveloping sexuality and fall bring ruination to the entrenched system of values. According to Kathryn Lee Seidel, it was very common for American writers to “establish the Southern woman as the American Eve [...] on the physical surface of things the land [gendered female] was green and fresh, fertile and new [...]but] the

corruption of the Garden [came from...] the wrong sort of woman, a Dark Lady, a beautiful seductress” (Seidel 120-1). In *The Sound and the Fury*, Caddy exemplifies such a ‘Dark Lady’ who corrupts the land.

Onto the Southern belle, according to Seidel, “are projected qualities that betray the profound anxiety of the Southern gentleman who [...] witnessed the demise of the old order [...] the fantasy of Eve and the Garden of Eden [...] became the [...] symbol of lost honor” (127). Caddy is at once perceived by male characters as the idealized Southern female and its opposite – the promiscuous and olfactory foul seductress. The projection of floral odours onto her body – “*her knees her face looking at the sky the smell of honeysuckle upon her face and throat*” (Faulkner 147) – positions her at the center of female duality, where she embodies the double fiction of asexuality, sex and death. Even Quentin, the “ideal” Southern gentleman, desires to commit incest with Caddy and die in the hopes of joining “the fallen virgin in the filthy waters of sin” (Bleikasten 80). The image of Caddy climbing the pear tree to spy on her grandmother’s funeral represents the forbidden apple and her desire for knowledge; Caddy, as Seidel explains, desires the forbidden knowledge of death, and as her brothers stare up at her muddy underpants – the foreshadowing and olfactory redolent image of her sexual transgressions – they appear to discover similarly forbidden knowledge of female sexuality (Seidel 133). Caddy’s scent, most often associated with earth and flowers, exemplifies the sensually seductive qualities associated with nature and the various enticing scents permeating from the Southern garden. Even the scent of perfume, as discussed earlier, represents a type of hyper distilled and bottled Eden, upsetting and seducing the male senses with its torturous reminder of Caddy’s sexuality and “unfeminine” thirst for knowledge.

The Southern garden represents the duality of purity (leaves and trees) and blossoming sexuality (honeysuckle), two characteristics ascribed to Caddy's body through scent. The exotic odour of honeysuckle permeates through Quentin's paranoid daydream of Dalton Ames and Caddy together in the woods:

The darkness smelled of rain of damp grass and leaves the grey light drizzling like rain the honeysuckle coming up in damp waves I could see her face a blur against his shoulder he held her in one arm like she was no bigger than a child [...] in the woods the tree frogs were going smelling rain in the air they sounded like toy music boxes that were hard to turn and the honeysuckle. (Faulkner 154-55)

The duality between innocence – Quentin imagines Dalton Ames cradling Caddy like a child – and sexuality – the blossoming rain soaked honeysuckle – collide in Quentin's contemplation of Caddy and her beau.

Quentin uses the intoxicating scent of roses to communicate his longing for Caddy, the bride-to-be, on her wedding day: “the month of brides, the voice that breathed *She ran right out of the mirror, out of the banked scent. Roses. Roses. Mr and Mrs Jason Richmond Compson announce the marriage of. Roses*” (77): “*the smells roses roses the voice that breathed o'er Eden.*” (81) Rather than summoning her image, Quentin replaces Caddy's persona entirely with roses, exposing her presence as the “*voice that breathed o'er Eden*” and the embodiment of female sexuality and desire. As soon as Caddy marries Herbert Head, she ceases to smell like “trees” and like “leaves” in Benjy's olfactory imagination. He projects the memory of Caddy onto jimson weed, a flower which according to Paul Carmignani is “associated with lunacy and death” (Carmignani 308). Benjy places a withered stalk of the flower in an “empty bottle of blue glass that once contained poison” (315) which Dilsey calls “his graveyard” (55) and squats

“before it moaning, a slow, inarticulate sound” (315). The image of the withered jimson stalk inside the empty poison bottle constructs Caddy as the symbol of the lost garden of the South, and as Carmignani suggests, even its death. The once lush Southern garden of Eden, the home of the fragrant trees and leaves Benjy associated with Caddy’s childhood innocence, are replaced by the withered and weed-like Jimson stock signifying the death of Caddy’s childhood and his lost sister; Benjy’s Southern garden grows sparse once it is devoid of its female keeper.

Jason’s olfactory perception of Caddy provides an interesting contrast with Benjy and Quentin’s sensory coding of their sister. Benjy and Quentin interpret Caddy’s smell as evocative of the earthy and fragrant Garden of Eden, emphasizing the duality of purity and sexuality they associate with the female body. If Eden is the fragrant paradise harbouring the fantasy of Southern honour and gender values, then Jason’s olfactory conflation of the female body with gasoline signifies the ruination of the Southern garden and thus Caddy’s entry into the world of time and progress; it is significant that Caddy and Herbert leave town – with the fantastical Southern garden in disarray behind them – in an automobile: “*It’s her car aren’t you proud of your little sister owns first auto in town Herbert his present*” (93). Caddy’s association with progress – she owns the first auto in town – initiates an angst for Jason, whom Christopher Breu states “represents the anxiety-ridden attempt at the reconstruction of white male privilege in the future-oriented liberal ideology of the New South” (Breu 110). The smell of gasoline embodies Jason’s resentment towards Caddy, for she has shattered the illusion of his Southern male privilege.

It is interesting to note that Quentin uses gasoline to clean the blood stain from his shirt after his fight with the womanizing Gerald: “I found the gasoline in Shreve’s room and spread the vest on the table, where it would be flat, and opened the gasoline [...] I turned out the light

and went into my bedroom, out of the gasoline but I could still smell it” (Faulkner 172). Quentin’s blood, spilled in his defense of women – he became furious hearing Gerald recount his sexual conquests – is washed from his shirt with gasoline. This sense of cleansing associated with gasoline coincides with his suicide – he cleans his shirt before drowning himself in the river – where he will “Rise [...] floating up” (80). However, gasoline also has a haunting quality as it permeates the air even after Quentin leaves the room: “but I could still smell it” (172). Therefore, the odour of gasoline also suggests Quentin’s fixation and inability to detach this smell from his recollection of Caddy and Herbert Head; it is because of their marriage that Quentin sees Caddy as lost to him forever, while it is the literal gasoline fuelled automobile that takes her away. Contrary to these properties of loss, death and rebirth ascribed to gasoline in Quentin’s narrative, it is interpreted by Jason’s nose as the olfactory marker of female progress and therefore transgression and emasculation.

Even from an early age, Jason recognizes Caddy as the symbol of Southern female progress and curiosity; she climbs trees in her quest for knowledge as her brothers watch from below. As a child Jason says to her “you think you’re grown up, don’t you. You think you’re better than anybody else, dont you” (41) thereby insinuating his entrenched misogynist attitude and his fear of female superiority and advancement.

Herbert Head, Caddy’s then husband and owner of the automobile, had also promised Jason a job at the bank when he came of age; however, this social advancement is withdrawn after the revelation of Caddy’s illegitimate pregnancy. Jason blames Caddy’s promiscuity – a trait he attributes to all women: “once a bitch always a bitch” (180) – for his exclusion from the professional connections and advancements often allotted to Southern white men. Caddy’s association with the automobile – “*the first car in town a girl Girl that’s what Jason couldn’t*

bear smell of gasoline making him sick then got madder than ever because a girl” (172) – and Jason’s olfactory experience of gasoline, of which he cannot bear the smell, perpetuate themselves in psychological and physical agony. Jason suffers from painful headaches whenever he inhales the scent of gasoline, because in Jason’s olfactory subconscious, these odours are hostile reminders of his deteriorating white male privilege, female progress and Caddy’s promiscuity, because of which he was not able to secure the job. In her article “Thinking Multisensory Culture” (2008), Laura U. Marks states:

There is an aspect of smell experience that is learned but not communicable: namely, those olfactory events that are important in an individual’s life. [...] Smell populates the imaginary, for it has intense personal associations that are difficult to communicate. [...] Emotionally intense experiences [...] are likely to cement an association between the emotion and the odour associated with the event. (Marks 126)

As Marks suggests, the recollection of experiences is often associated with odour, and Jason’s failure to adhere to the gender norms expected of a man in his position, because of a “woman,” is a painful reminder of his emasculation by Caddy, which he attaches to the scent of gasoline.

Although they possess many differences, Jason, Quentin and Benjy’s olfactory interpretations in William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* depict the connections between masculine perceptions and female bodies. In their own way, each brother categorizes the female body through smell based on her deviations from or adherence to Southern gender constructions, while simultaneously exposing their fixation on female sexuality, progress and loss. As Paul Carmignani suggests in his translation of B. Mercade’s “Odor di Fermina” from *Autrement*, “the scent of one’s beloved brings for a short lapse of time the illusion of her presence [...] But a scent [...] is a mere lure. One can feast on it, wallow in it, plunge into it, but one can never

possess it. In that sense, a scent is the hallmark of the other's irreducibility" (Carmignani 309). Caddy is ultimately a figure of loss, she fails to remain upon the pedestal of Southern femininity, and only exists in the novel through her brothers' subconscious and the narrative appropriation of her voice. Caddy's development from childhood to woman, her loss of virginity and finally the absence of her body, are experienced in the novel through smell, the very olfactory recollections that her brothers are left to feast, wallow, and plunge into, but always fail to possess completely. The interplay between bodily boundaries and olfaction become, ultimately, a method by which Benjy, Quentin and Jason work through their own inconsistent understanding of gender, race, and sexuality. I will continue to explore how these conflicting relations to the female body function through a close examination of the role of motherhood and scent in Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*.

Chapter Two: Olfaction and Motherhood in *As I Lay Dying*

“The ladies all scattering up and down the street with handkerchiefs to their noses, and a crowd of hard-nosed men and boys standing around the wagon.”

- William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*, 203.

As discussed in Chapter One, Faulkner’s depiction of Southern society is rife with representations of societal codes outlining “proper” gender performance. Proper performances of femininity, including that of the roles of wife and mother, are dependent not only on personal conduct, but also on exuding the ‘correct’ bodily smell. In *As I Lay Dying*, the corpse of Addie Bundren is a site of extensive examination; her body’s odour – though she literally does stink – becomes a means of reinforcing the social stigma attached to non-normative performances of womanhood. In *As I Lay Dying*, Addie Bundren disrupts cultural gender norms; her body’s olfactory emissions emphasize the perception that she was not only a bad wife and mother, but is also physically contagious as well as spiritually ill. As Hewson has argued, “Addie’s positive identity as a mother to and role model for her children is denied” (Hewson 551) and vilified by indignities made against her body, her corrupted odour and her physical alienation.

In her essay “Extremities of the Body: The Anoptic Corporeality of *As I Lay Dying* (2009),” Erin E. Edwards states that an examination of the corpse “completes the process by which the entirety of the body, and consequently the subject, are made available to view, surpassing with a penetrating gaze the limits of the bodily surface and making both the internal and external operations of the body subject to analysis and categorization” (Edwards 742). The repellant olfactory emanations of Addie’s corpse signify her internal corruption, a marker of female transgressions that remain wholly undetected through vision alone. Where vision, as Edwards states, is limited to the speculation of the surface body, the nose gains insight into the state of Addie’s insides, her soul, which is a subject of social concern throughout the novel.

Edwards also points out that the body acts as a container harboring “bodily viscera” (742), the most revealing substances comprising the body’s insides. In Addie’s case, when this “bodily viscera” is expelled from her corpse, it has the effect of also divulging her internal corruption that is decoded, thus her internal self becomes subject, along with the physical body, to examination and judgement (742). In *As I Lay Dying*, it is this “bodily viscera” that seeps through Addie’s pores in the form of smell that attests to her secret immorality, while also propelling the fear that her body is a foul site of sickness and contagion. In her discussion of anxiety surrounding the status of the body in twentieth-century fiction, Edwards also states that “the corpse in *As I Lay Dying* is radically uncertain; it is known not through visual inspection” (Edwards 743). Addie’s corpse is hidden in a coffin and thus also from visibility; rather, the immaterial proof of her sinful life and perverse femininity seems to ooze from the inside of her body out, even surpassing her containment within the coffin, in the form of odours which are perceived and evaluated by the male nose. The judgement of Addie’s body through the non-visual sense of smell takes on particular relevance when exploring the relationship between scent, motherhood and sanctity.

Before I move forward, it is important to note that it is extremely rare that Faulkner provides a female character with the olfactory power to smell and interpret odours. Instead, Faulkner’s women are positioned as passive subjects to be smelled; however, there are rare instances in *As I Lay Dying* that portray women in the act of smelling. Such observations of female sensory power in *As I Lay Dying* are also insightfully addressed by Faulkner scholar Laura R. Davis. Davis notes that at one point in the novel, Addie Bundren is provided with the olfactory awareness of her surroundings (Davis 102). Addie tells the reader that as a teacher, a

profession she distained, she would wait for school to be over for the day so that she could escape to the spring and be in silence. She says:

In the afternoon when school was out and the last one had left with his little dirty snuffling nose, instead of going home I would go down to the hill to the spring where I could be quiet and hate them. It would be quiet there then, with the water bubbling up and away and the sun slanting quiet in the trees and the quiet smelling of damp and rotting leaves and new earth; especially in the spring, for it was worse then. (Faulkner 169)

Though Addie is gifted with the olfactory sensitivity to smell her environment (typically reserved by Faulkner for the male nose alone), her sensual interpretation appears problematic. The smells of “damp and rotting leaves” are contrary to the smells usually associated with domesticity (food, comfort), and suggest her overall orientation towards negativity, thus revealing not only her disdain for motherhood but also exposing her non-normative female behaviour; as Addie states, she would rather go down to the water “instead of going home.” That Addie is aroused by the scents of “damp and rotting leaves” also discloses her position within the novel. She spends the majority of *As I Lay Dying* as a corpse; thus, these smells emphasize Addie’s relationship to decay and death.

Likewise, Addie’s daughter Dewey Dell is given the opportunity to smell the “medicine” given to her by MacGowan, the pharmacy worker whom she seeks out to provide an abortion. Dewey Dell sniffs the concoction he hands to her saying “hit smells like turpentine” (247) before swallowing it. This female perception of smell is once again problematic; firstly, Dewey Dell’s olfactory interpretation is not uniquely perceptive, in fact, MacGowan had made the same remark as Dewey Dell after he smells the concoction. MacGowan tells the reader that he “took a

graduated glass and kind of turned my back to her and picked out a bottle that looked all right, because a man that would keep poison setting around in a unlabelled bottle ought to be in jail, anyway. It smelled like turpentine. I poured some into a glass and give it to her. She smelled it, looking at me across the glass” (247). Davis explains that though Dewey Dell does exercise her sense of smell, her conclusion that the “medicine” smells like turpentine is initially stated in the novel by MacGowan; secondly, against her better judgement – turpentine is toxic – Dewey Dell drinks it (Davis 102).

Furthermore, it is important to note that it is not only men, but women who smell the stench emanating from Addie’s rotting corpse (102). For instance, ladies are depicted as “scattering up and down the street with handkerchiefs to their noses, [while...] a crowd of hard-nosed men and boys [stood] around the wagon” (Faulkner 203). Though Faulkner depicts women as capable of smelling, he still maintains a clear distinction between gender roles. Where the women appear overpowered by the smell and hold “handkerchiefs to their noses,” – their senses are too delicate to withstand such an invasive smell – the men are “hard-nosed” and immune to Addie’s olfactory effusions; through their ability to withstand such strong odours, men assert their Southern masculinity, dominance and control over their environment while women are oppressed by it. Furthermore, Samson and his wife Rachel argue over Anse’s treatment of Addie’s corpse, exposing the opposing gender views regarding the treatment of the female body. Samson thinks to himself “so I left them squatting there. I reckon after four days they was used to it. But Rachel wasn’t” (117). Rachel, Samson’s wife, says “it’s a outrage, [...] I just wish that you and him and all the men in the world that torture us alive and dead, dragging us up and down the country –” (117). Similarly, while Addie’s corpse is kept the night in Armstid’s barn, Armstid’s wife privately complains to him, stating “it’s a outrage [...] he should be lawed for

treating her so” (187). Through the statements made by both Rachel and Lula (Armstid’s wife) – “it’s a outrage,” – it becomes clear that Faulkner’s women appear more distressed over the treatment of Addie’s body – “all the men in the world that torture us alive and dead” – than by her actual smell. In her article “Getting Ready to Stay Dead: Rites of Passage in William Faulkner’s Novels (2012),” Irene Visser discusses Southern social practices as they relate to community trauma. Visser writes:

The community’s prescribed public responses to a funeral rite are respect and social support, expressed in the Bundrens’ case by the concrete instances of material aid offered by their neighbours as well as the respectful acquiescence accorded Anse Bundren’s ‘outrageous’ undertaking. It is, at the same time, quite clear from the novel’s many interior monologues that people’s private emotional responses to the Bundren’s mortuary journey [...] are completely at variance with the prescribed public responses. As the novel progresses, this rural community’s respectful acquiescence in the Bundrens’ rite is increasingly under pressure. It is evidence of its strong social cohesion that this resistance is expressed only in private [...] and] by women in the privacy of their homes. (Visser 472)

Southern gender codes are tested and put under pressure by the stench of Addie’s decomposing body; however, the men in the novel, for example Samson and Tull, express a sense of understanding to which Faulkner’s female characters cannot relate. Some male characters also privately express reservations over Anse’s undertaking; Houston asks “what’s Anse so itching to take her to Jefferson for, anyway?” (Faulkner 89) and Tull answers “he promised her” (89). However, Faulkner’s men also appear much more entrenched with ideas governing societal obligation, masculine duty and matrimonial responsibility than women. These sentiments are echoed in Anse’s fulfilment of Addie’s request; Anse had promised Addie that he would bring

her body back to Jefferson for burial when she died, an obligation most men in their community appear to understand. Conversely, to female noses, Addie's smell communicates female oppression and the "torture" of the female body rather than the demonstration of Southern masculinity at the undertaking of such a challenging task; rather than perceiving Anse's actions as honorable, female characters deem his behaviour "an outrage." To Faulkner's women, there is no justifiable cause for Anse's allowing Addie's body to be so publicly and grotesquely exposed. Conversely, the anger of these female characters over Addie's physical exploitation may actually depict their own entrenchment within Southern conventions of femininity; these women may fear the un-feminized unraveling and indecent public display of the female body and perhaps, one day, of their own bodies by their husbands. Though Faulkner depicts both men, and to a lesser extent, women, as capable of smelling, rather than creating a sense of gender equality through the portrayal of both male and female olfactory power, this olfactory awareness adds to the novel's ambiguous, and Faulkner's own indeterminate portrayal of gender equality.

Throughout *As I Lay Dying*, Addie Bundren's decaying corpse is likened to rancid and pungent-smelling foods such as old cheese and fish. This links her not only to domesticity – a requirement of the Southern wife and mother – but also to the subversion of it. For instance, throughout the novel Addie's youngest son Vardaman frequently conflates Addie with a fish that he has caught (a food distinguished by its strong smell.) After his mother dies, Vardaman consistently reimagines his mother as this particular fish throughout the entirety of the novel: "if I jump off the porch I will be where the fish was, and it all cut up into not-fish now. I can hear the bed and her face" (53): "I chopped it up. It's lying in the kitchen in the bleeding pan, waiting to be cooked and et [...] And tomorrow it will be cooked and et and she will be him and pa and Cash and Dewey Dell and there wont be anything in the box" (67). Vardaman's confusing Addie

for a fish not only connects her to the animal world – he also says that “Jewel’s mother is a horse (101)” – but it also positions her as a food to be consumed. Vardaman visualizes the fish that he has caught and “chopped” being cooked in the “bleeding pan” as his mother; as a result, Addie’s coffin is empty, – “there wont be anything in the box” (67) – because she will be consumed, as the fish will be, by his father and siblings.

Through male interactions with animals in the novel, and Addie’s conflation with Vardaman’s fish, it becomes clear that women are dominated by male power and rendered olfactorily subversive; Addie’s disposition towards the smells of death and decay do not accord with the smells typically associated with maternal comfort. Vardaman mimics performances of masculinity; after catching the fish, he “slings it to the ground and grunts [...] and spits over his shoulder like a man [...] he cusses it like a grown man, standing a-straddle of it” (30-1) and says to Tull “I aim to show it to ma” (31). Vardaman is content to overpower the fish and wield his child masculinity and impress the most important woman in his life, his mother, by oppressing a fish that is “durn nigh long as he is” (30). It is only when Anse instructs him to clean the fish – the stench of it absorbs into his hands – that he becomes upset and asks “why cant Dewey Dell clean it?” (31). The odour of the fish, which he still smells on his hands even after Addie dies, comes to signify his displaced guilt – Anse repeatedly tells Vardaman to “go wash them hands” (38) – over the death of his mother whom he equates with his own murder, and masculine suppression, of the fish. The dead fish lying lifeless “in the dust” (53) is paralleled with Addie’s body. Upon learning that his mother has died, Vardamn exclaims “you kilt her” (54). Though Vardamn uses the pronoun “you,” this statement acts as the detached reflection of his own anxiety and culpability over the dead fish, his mother, which he has gutted.

Vardamn's fish and Addie's body share an unpleasant odour; Vardamn says "my mother is not in the box. My mother does not smell like that" (196). Addie's smell signifies not only the subversion of her human odour – the smell of her corpse is foul and unfamiliar – but also comes to evoke the olfactory reminder of the lost mother. In her essay "Significant Absences: Faulkner's Rhetoric of Loss" (1981) Gail L. Mortimer writes:

The sprig of verbena in "An Odour of Verbena" and the strand of hair in "A Rose for Emily" are remnants of passions that no longer exist. The recurrent smell of honeysuckle or wisteria, the vast number of footprints or other traces of fugitives – these types of artifacts appear repeatedly. There is scarcely a Faulkner novel that does not contain a haunting story. [...] Presences that signify absences – traces – pervade Faulkner's writing and prevent the reader's (or character's) consciousness from ever being able to extricate itself from an awareness of loss, since what each object signifies is so much more important than what it simply is. (Mortimer 249)

Addie's smell, as perverted as it has become – her corpse has been decomposing for days in the sun – is a presence (everyone can smell her body) that also signifies, as Mortimer's discussion of Faulkner's work suggests, an absence (the lost mother). Her body's odour recalls the stinking odour of the fish that is as "full of blood and guts as a hog" (Faulkner 38), the very object unto which Vardaman has transferred the memory of his mother: "my mother is a fish" (84). The perversion of Addie's living odour and her conflation with the body of the fish – they share the same smell – become a means of containing and grappling with loss within Vardaman's narrative. Though it is important to identify the association of smell with recollection and memory, as Mortimer suggests in her article, it is also crucial to investigate how smells, specifically the grotesque odours of Addie's corpse, reinforce her portrayal as an oppressed and

consumable female body, as well as emphasizing her role as the personification of maternal and domestic transgression and spiritual corruption.

In *As I Lay Dying*, Addie is also described as smelling like a rotting piece of cheese: “it had been dead eight days [...] they came from some place out in Yoknapatawpha county, trying to get to Jefferson with it. It must have been like a piece of rotten cheese coming into an ant-hill, in that ramshackle wagon that [...] folks were scared would fall all to piece before they could get it out of town” (Faulkner 203). The pronoun “it” comes to replace Addie as the subject in question. Her smell, so unhuman like that it resembles the stench of “rotten cheese,” dehumanizes her; Addie is no longer depicted as a woman – she is stripped of her gender and identity. Rather, her body and its olfactory emanations portray Addie as food which has gone bad. Subsequently, Faulkner’s male characters are portrayed as animals, here as ants, coming to dine on Addie’s decaying olfactory cheese-like corpse; at other moments, men appear as the buzzards and vultures that encircle her stinking body in their attempts to get near enough to consume it. In one scene, one of the buzzards is mistaken for a person:

But it was still like I could smell it. And so I decided then that it wasn’t smelling it, but it was just knowing it was there, like you will get fooled now and then. But when I went to the barn I knew different. When I walked into the hallway I saw something. It kind of hunkered up when I come in and I thought at first it was one of them got left, then I saw what it was. It was a buzzard. It looked around and saw me and went on down the hall, spraddle-legged, with its wings kind of hunkered out, watching me first over one shoulder and then over the other, like a old baldheaded man. (118-9)

Samson’s initial recognition of the buzzard as a “spraddle-legged” Bundren who “got left” behind and even as an “old baldheaded man” salvaging for food is compatible with Faulkner’s

rendering of women as food and men as hungry predators. Likewise, Faulkner's portrayal of Samson's hyper olfactory sensitivity – he declares that he can smell Addie even though she is not there (“but it was still like I could smell it”) – inscribes Samson with the olfactory awareness of an animal sniffing out its prey. Several instances in *As I Lay Dying* depict men as extremely cognisant of smell however distant the object of olfaction is from sight. As in *The Sound and the Fury*, the male characters in *As I Lay Dying* have the ability to predict the weather through their sense of smell; for example, Darl says “in the nose sulphurous, smelling of lightening” (40). Vardaman can smell the spirit of the fish he has killed on his hands: “I can smell the life running up from under my hands, up my arms” (54). Armstid can smell Addie's body even when she is beyond his line of vision: “it was like I could smell it in the field a mile away” (187); Moseley states: “when I went to supper it still seemed like I could smell it. And the next day I met the marshal and I began to sniff and said ‘smell anything,’” (205) while Cash refers to his fascination with Addie's dead body as “animal magnetism,” (83) suggesting heightened animal attraction via the senses. Both Faulkner's male and female characters are imbued with non-human characteristics; however, whereas Faulkner's women are often depicted as dominated animals or rotting and grotesque foods, – “smell of scorching meat” (222) – Faulkner's men are privileged with an animal-like olfactory acuteness, which enables them to navigate their surroundings outside of vision. Through the conflation of men as animals and women as olfactory pungent foods, the female body is positioned as consumable, as edible and thus as subjugated by the male body.

The image of Addie as food (fish, cheese) that is not only consumable but also stinking or rotten is perpetuated by the Bundrens' neighbour, Tull. Tull perceives his wife as a jar of milk

that will eventually sour and become dangerous to consume, signifying maternal and domestic corruption. On contemplating his wife Cora, he thinks:

It would take a tight house for Cora, to hold Cora like a jar of milk in the spring; you've got to have a tight jar or you'll need a powerful spring, so if you have a big spring, why then you have the incentive to have tight, wellmade jars, because it is your milk, sour or not, because you would rather have milk that will sour than to have milk that wont, because you are a man. (139)

Here, again one of Faulkner's men appears to conceive of woman as spoiled food, which is pungent and "soured" – Tull requires a "tight jar" to prevent the stinking liquid from spilling out and escaping to the outside space. Regardless of the dangerous and reeking foods associated with the female body, Tull argues that a man must want a wife, for the sole reasoning "because [he is] a man." Thus, his association of Cora to a jar of milk that will eventually turn into smelly sour milk is a misogynist casting of the female body as not only consumable, but as increasingly less desirable, "sour," as time passes and her insides slowly decay. Yet, as Tull declares, it is still better to have a wife who smells like "sour milk" than to have no wife at all, because marriage within Faulkner's Southern community is a means of asserting masculinity and ownership: "because it is your milk" (139).

In his book *Embodied: Victorian Literature and the Senses* (2009), William A. Cohen discusses the metaphoric use of architecture to express aspects of bodily interiority and exteriority. Cohen's argument is helpful in addressing the ways in which Faulkner's women are not only alienated by their female bodies but also how these bodies are interpreted as the harbourers of vile and foul matter. In *As I Lay Dying*, this vile matter, which, as it exits the body

through the skins pores, is converted into smell and diffused into the surrounding spaces. In his discussion of the body's interiority and its surrounding physical space, Cohen writes:

A metaphoric object – frequently an architectural element – conveys the experience of a self enclosed in a physical container. As a figure for that which contains, protects, and makes accessible the self within, such a metaphoric object (a house, for instance, or a room or a piece of furniture) itself stands in for the body, that porous, material container of inner human entities. (Cohen 27)

The comparison of Cora to a glass of milk with the potential to turn sour, and the literal placement of Addie's body within the self-contained space of a coffin – “they put her into it and nailed it down” (Faulkner 73) – both represent a structuring of embodiment that aligns with Cohen's explanation of the body and space. The idea that the physical female body is the encasement of “inner human entities,” also parallels the novel's fixation on scent and sanctity as being contained within bodily interiority; for instance, the glass jar and coffin reflect this sense of containment, as Cohen suggests, to which the female body is subjected.

The concepts of sin and penance raise interesting questions concerning the division between perceptions of the soul and bodily scent in the novel. In Addie's only section of *As I Lay Dying*, she often refers to her attempts to absolve herself of sin as “cleaning up the house” (176). The sin which Addie most frequently contemplates is her extramarital affair with Reverend Whitfield. Addie conflates the body with the soul; here, we see that Addie perceives her own body as a house – a marker of her resignation to domesticity – which has become “dirty” through her sexually transgressive behaviour. Addie's waiting for Whitfield “in the woods” where she would think of their “sin as garments which [they] would remove” (175) echoes Caddy's meetings with boyfriends, also in the woods. The woods are beyond vision, outside of the

patriarchal home, and associated with the view of African American behaviour as promiscuous. Like Caddy who also attempts to pass off the child of one man as the legitimate offspring of another, Addie conceals the knowledge of her secret affair and the subsequent illegitimacy of Jewel from Anse. In order to redeem her soul – “the wild blood boiled away and the sound of it ceased” (176) – Addie uses her body to produce legitimate children for Anse to “negative Jewel,” (176) who is not his biological son. Addie says, “I gave Anse Dewey Dell [...] then I gave him Vardaman to replace the child I had robbed him of. And now he has three children that are his and not mine. And then I could get ready to die” (176). Addie “outwardly accepts her enforced role as breeder” (Henninger 26) while harboring her un-feminine protests against Southern gender convention internally. Addie’s “house” is not only the displaced metaphor of her body but also the physical container harbouring all of her secret sins. She must “clean her house” by giving Anse more children, thereby fulfilling her duties as wife in order to “get ready to die,” eased of sin.

Addie’s body, which is the container of her sins and transgressive soul, is also conflated with Gillespie’s barn, which as Addie’s corpse rests inside (an attempt to isolate her from outside prey and diffuse her odour), bursts into flame. Addie’s body manages to resist burning; rather, Jewel, who Addie eerily anticipates as her saviour – “he will save me from the water and from the fire” (168) – manages to salvage her body from the barn. The description of Gillespie’s barn is particularly interesting through its physical rendering of not only a human body but the formation of Addie’s own deviant insides: “the whole loft of the barn takes fire at once, as though it had been stuffed with powder. The front, the conical façade with the square orifice of doorway broken only by the square squat shape of the coffin on the sawhorses like a cubistic bug, comes into relief [...] the flames sound like thunder” (218-19). If we interpret the barn’s

“orifice” as the passageway into Addie’s own body – through its opening we can see and smell the insides of her corpse – it becomes a site revealing her tumultuously flawed and demonic interiority, which does in fact endanger the lives of several of the novel’s characters. Aside from emitting the stench of “scorching meat” (222) into the air, Jewel almost dies when he saves her, the “widening crimson-edged holes that bloom like flowers in his undershirt” (222) attest to his personal sacrifice, again, depicting Faulkner’s bias to Southern male power and masculine obligation.

The notion that “sin is associated with stench” (Le Gu  rer 30) is articulated by William Ian Miller in his book *The Anatomy of Disgust* (1997). Miller’s scholarship foregrounds the fear of contamination prompted by the relationship between the body and its production of olfactory emissions. He writes that “smell [...] exists in a kind of moral war with vision, with vision representing the forces of light and smell the forces of darkness [...] the language of sin and wickedness is the language of olfaction gone bad [...] smell] is frequently used in the public language of moral condemnation” (Miller 76-8). Though Miller references the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as eras in Western history where smell has been used as evidence of sin and transgressive behaviour, there are several instances in *As I Lay Dying* where a connection is made between Addie’s smell and the perception of her flawed sanctity. There are numerous examples from the novel depicting Addie as a bad wife and mother – the primary roles allotted to a woman in the twentieth century. Neighbours condemn Addie for wanting to be buried in Jefferson, saying “a woman’s place is with her husband and children, alive or dead” (Faulkner 23). Addie is described as having a tumultuous spirit: “she had never been pure religious, not even after that summer at the camp meeting when Brother Whitfield wrestled with her spirit,” (166). She is perceived as “not a true mother” (173) and an adulteress; Whitfield says, “she had

sworn” (178) that she would not reveal the affair to Anse, thus Addie may easily be perceived as “sinful” and spiritually deviant. Upon arriving at her bedside after Addie has died, Whitfield recalls that he “entered the house of bereavement, the lowly dwelling where another erring mortal lay while her soul faced the awful and irrevocable judgment [... and Whitfield says] peace to her ashes” (179). By stating “peace to her ashes,” (179) rather than peace to her soul (Baldanzi 44), Whitfield acknowledges Addie’s body as the physical vessel of sin – he hypocritically places the sin of the affair on her – and thus as irredeemable. Whitfield deems her soul incapable of peacefulness; only her ashes, the physical edifice of her sins, may find peace, but only through their destruction.

The connection between sanctity and olfaction can be contextualized in Miller’s discussion of “bad smells;” he explains that “when our inside is understood as soul the orifices of the body become highly vulnerable areas that risk admitting the defiling from the outside. But when our inside is understood as vile jelly, viscous ooze, or a storage area for excrement the orifices become dangerous points of emission of polluting matter [...] dangerous to others (Miller 89). Likewise, Cohen explains that “once the body’s visceral depths are revealed – its sexual cravings, its odours and filth [...] – it too exhibits an interiority [...] and] this inside is no less material than the outside, only more horrifying” (Cohen 84). A misogynistic reading of Addie’s body (a reading suitable to the society in which she exists) would therefore regard her olfactory secretions as a reflection of her secret spiritual corruption and failure to conform to domestic Southern ideals associated with the roles of wife and mother.

As Miller notes, “vision [represents] the forces of light and smell the forces of darkness” (Miller 76) thus making Addie’s resignation to a dark coffin, where her body is enclosed in darkness, particularly interesting. Faulkner does not provide the reader with any descriptive

rendering of Addie's corpse other than its non-visible olfactory emissions, which communicate her rapid decay. Addie Bundren's decomposing corpse and its olfactory likeness to rancid and pungent foods – coding her as “rotten” and “spoilt” – leads to the assumption (male public officials deem her presence unacceptable) that she is primitive, contaminating, and even contagious; the female body becomes a site of disease and also a threat to public health. When passing through Mottson, the city's marshal expresses concern about the smell coming from Addie's coffin. This smell becomes a source of anxiety to the people who “backed off with handkerchiefs to their faces” (Faulkner 205). The marshal tells Anse to “get this thing buried soon as you can. Don't you know you're liable to jail for endangering the public health” (204). Once again, the use of the pronoun “it” strips Addie of her humanity while addressing the fear that her smell is harmful and contagious “jelly or ooze,” as Miller calls it, that is threatening the public's safety. In Jefferson, the Bundrens pass three men who “turn suddenly with that expression of shock and instinctive outrage” (229) and one of the men says “great God [...] what they got in that wagon” (229), again questioning Addie's humanity based on her smell. The man's cry of “great God” also signifies the sustained intermingling of bad smells with the idea of religious retribution. In her book, Le Guérer dedicates an entire chapter to bodily stench and religious belief as it relates to sickness and disease. In particular, she discusses several plagues, regarded as punishments from God, throughout history and the symptomatic stench of sickness emanating from those who fell ill. Thus, the scent of Addie's corpse, though expected of a decaying body, may also be interpreted as the communication of and punishment for her transgressive and sinful life. Addie says, “I know my own sin. I know that I deserve my punishment” (Faulkner 167). In her discussion of various plagues, Le Guérer states:

There was something unnatural and nonhuman about the unbearable nature of this death-dealing fetor that caused it to be regarded as a kind of demonic emanation that rose from the underworld to spread over the surface of the earth. A supernatural disease wrought by the wrath of God, the plague had an odour unlike any other: It offered a glimpse of supreme punishment to unheeding and rebellious mankind. It was likened to being borne off to hell. (Le Gu erer 60)

The smell of Addie's rotting corpse and the odour emanating from plague victims share a similar olfactory threat: both scents are associated with the non-human, "rebellious" and sinful individual. *As I Lay Dying* depicts a preoccupation with religion, transgression and punishment. There are several instances in which characters pronounce the importance of God within their community and personhood, addressing Addie's communal and spiritual alienation: "it is the Lord's part to judge [...] He alone can see into the heart [...] God is a jealous God. It is His to judge and to mete" [...] (Faulkner 167-8). Addie's opposition to religion and moral sanctity drives the perception that the devil resides in her heart: "[Cora] begged [Addie] to kneel and open her heart and cast from it the devil of vanity and cast herself upon the mercy of the Lord. But [Addie] wouldn't" (168). These perceptions that Addie is spiritually deviant parallel her bodily stench when she dies (bad smells are associated with elements of the demonic).

The smell of sanctity attests to the condition of the soul; a good smell emanating from a corpse was believed to signify the subject's spiritual morality, while foul smells acted as proof of corruption (Le Gu erer 123). According to Le Gu erer, "some saints or mystics – either during their lives or after their deaths – are said to have emitted delicious aromas, often regarded as a tangible manifestation of their supernatural virtues [...] the corpse of a saint cannot emit an unpleasant smell unless the devil himself interferes" (121). Thus, the concepts of sinner and saint

and their juxtaposing bodily odours raise interesting concerns regarding interiority and judgment. As Le Gu er points out, this demonic interference of the body (accounting for the body's unpleasant smell) becomes increasingly significant when examining the treatment of Addie's corpse and the centrality of Christian values in her Southern society.

If we are to understand olfactory experience in *As I Lay Dying* as having the potential to break down boundaries between interiority and exteriority, subject and object (individuals fear the contagious elements of Addie's body), then we may also interpret these theories as extending to concepts of spirit and matter. If we connect Addie's foul body odour, the perceptions that she is sinful – she is deemed a bad wife and mother – and the novel's societal dependence on religion, then we may also see her burial as a means of hiding and repressing what is perceived as a danger to society and its Southern morality. William Ian Miller explains that dangerous matter, such as waste and foul debris, has always been subject to burial as a means of stifling its smell and obscuring it from view; he states that “underground sewers were not an emblem of the repressed but the repressed itself, a burying of dangerousness. The sewers became the new Hell” (Miller 78). Addie Bundren's body, her stench emblematic of her physical and spiritual sickness, is publically ostracized and objectified during her transportation to Jefferson where she is finally confined to the ground – her burial ensuring a kind of silencing of her body and its dangerous olfactory messages. In relation to Miller's discussion of sewers as the confining space for waste and other contaminating matter, Addie's body is likewise the container for the foul stench of not only her physical, but also spiritual corruption. Her body's smell is at once pervasive, penetrating and contaminating, impelling various individuals to let out a “great God” (Faulkner 229), as if to suggest that her coffin contains a foul threat that must be “buried soon” (204), below the ground before it becomes corruptive.

In general, burial practices, “whether by cremation or interment, seem to have the sense of a cover-up: the evidence is either buried or burned” (Baldanzi 42); before Addie is buried her body’s smell is a threat to societal stability. In her article “The Two Addies: Maternity and Language in William Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying* and Alice Munro’s *Lives of Girls and Women*” (2006) Cinda Gault discusses the power that Addie only gains as a corpse. She writes:

Faulkner’s text addresses motherhood from outside the bounds of personal identification. Although the multiple viewpoints in the text refer back to Addie and include her perspective, the circling back to her is motivated by her frightening maternal power as a corpse. [...] Despite her being dead, Addie seems powerful. Her silence belies other kinds of power that haunt family members from beyond the grave. Her legacy is greater than expected because of the trouble she manages to cause to the living. A formidable corpse narrator, she uses her extraordinary fury to dominate not just the telling of the story but the story itself. (Gault 442)

The role of Addie Bundren is extremely perplexing in the novel. Addie does manage to create a spectacle and exercise, as Gault suggests, her “frightening maternal power as a corpse” (442), while her family moves her decaying body from their rural community to Jefferson. This power is most evident through the olfactory spectacle that Addie’s corpse produces; her smell and the negative public attention that her scent brings to her family, and Anse specifically, is a revenge that Anse cannot comprehend: “my revenge would be that he would never know I was taking revenge” (Faulkner 173). The stench of Addie’s decaying corpse is Faulkner’s physically grotesque figuration of what it means to be a woman in Southern rural society. A woman’s duty, despite her reluctance, is to produce children to be used as labour on the farm, evident when Anse tells her: “you and me aint nigh done chapping yet, with just two” (Faulkner 173).

Conversely, it is important to note that Addie's olfactory messages are also eventually silenced – they are buried along with her corpse; once this occurs, her husband's ulterior motives for going to the city are also revealed (he immediately gains a new wife and new set of teeth), thereby complicating a strictly positive feminist reading of the novel.

Alternatively, scholar Heather E. Holcombe discusses how Faulkner's negative rendering of Addie's body as stinking and decaying may have in fact been his attempt to prevent the silencing of his depiction of motherhood by misogynist critics. This negative portrayal of the female body simultaneously enabled Faulkner to unassumingly articulate female oppression in the South. Although Addie is grotesquely rendered, she also exposes the exploitation of female bodies by their husbands for solely reproductive purposes. Holcombe writes:

The diffusion of [Addie's] corporeality throughout the novel marks the bodily integrity denied her as a wife and mother. Yet Faulkner undermines her here, too. On her arrival in Jefferson, Addie's body merely serves as a means of entry into commerce for the Bundrens who survive her. [...] Having portrayed Addie's violation and thwarted insurrection, however, Faulkner also obscures the object lesson he presents by disguising her message; her idiosyncratic and posthumous stream of consciousness, emanating weirdly from her casket, is described within the novel as 'little trickling bursts of secret and murmurous bubbling.' [...] Her body may speak of trauma and rebellion, but Faulkner challenges Addie's credibility as a voice within the novel by making it an impossible and an opaque one, thereby formally creating a space in which he can articulate her plight without drawing the attention of those censors who silenced the work of writers. (Holcombe 218)

Through smell, Addie's body communicates her anger at being an oppressed body; her corpse portrays her trauma as a woman and her rebellion as a wife and mother. However, these olfactory messages, Holcombe suggests, cannot replace language which, for Addie, is limited to "bursts of secret [...] bubbling" and contained within a single chapter. Despite Faulkner's attempts to draw attention to the limited role for women to fulfill in Southern society – Anse sees her as a reproductive and replaceable body – Faulkner's portrayal of Addie as decomposing and stinking cannot be ignored.

Through interactions between stench and female bodies, the role of wife and mother in Southern society is subject to severe scrutiny. Though Faulkner does expose the limitations and stereotypes ascribed to the female gender, the novel is also a commentary on transgressive women who fail to meet the traditional expectations of Southern womanhood. The woman who is socially deviant will be forced to wear the scent of her sins on her body. Keeping in mind the novel's portrayal of non-secular society, Addie's smell can be interpreted as a judgment and punishment from God for her transgressive feminine behaviour and subversive maternal conduct, consisting of her extra-material affair and disdain for motherhood and domesticity. In the novel, Faulkner similarly explores the relationship between scent and the fear of physical contagion; if we are to perceive Addie's smell as the emanations of her sins, as opposed to the odour of her decaying body exclusively, then the male desire to bury and rid the Southern landscape of her corpse communicates the misogynist fear of female sexuality and non-conventional female behaviour. Addie's delayed burial – Anse must fulfill his promise to bury Addie in Jefferson – also communicates the adherence to southern masculine honor. The female body that is sinful, and indeed secretly sinful, like Addie's, is reviled and "othered" to the point where it morphs

from human not only into animal but also into consumable food – Addie is conflated with fish, cheese and meat – their smells reinforcing the dehumanization of the sinful female body.

The novel also portrays women as highly expendable: as one wife dies Anse seeks and secures a second. It is interesting to note that in Jefferson, before reappearing to his children with his new wife and thus his children's new mother, Anse is perceived as smelling like perfume, an artificial odour, as discussed in Chapter One, signifying sexuality. The novel also makes an earlier reference to perfume, calling it "nigger toilet water" (199), creating an association with unlicensed sexuality and negative depictions of African Americans. Cash remarks that Anse told the family that "he had some business to tend to [...] with his hair combed wet and slick and smelling sweet with perfume" (259). Anse's perfume is immediately at odds with Addie's bodily stench and decayed sexuality; Anse's scented body and his new teeth – "he got them teeth" (260) – account for the novel's depiction of male power and the female body as consumable. By engaging with the female body as not only the physical edifice in which she is oppressed by her misogynist society, but as the very space harboring her secret female transgressions, and spiritual corruption, Faulkner complicates the perception of femininity in the novel. I will continue my exploration of Faulkner's female bodies and smell in Chapter Three through an examination of African American performativity, scent and mammy figures in Faulkner's *Sanctuary*.

Chapter Three: Olfaction, Racial Coding and Mammy in *Sanctuary*

“[Reba Rivers] leaned against the wall in a thin aroma of beer, her hand to her breast, her mouth open, her eyes fixed in a glare of sad terror of all breathing as she besought breath, the tankard a squat soft gleam like dull silver lifted in the gloom.”

- William Faulkner, *Sanctuary*, 144.

As with discussions of gender, critical explorations of race in William Faulkner’s texts are also prevalent. This chapter will draw connections between depictions of racially coded female bodies and Faulkner’s utilization of scent in emphasizing racial and gender oppression and status inferiority. Though Faulkner’s *Sanctuary* appears as a Yoknapatawpha novel largely devoid of explicit significations of race, recent scholarship has argued that the novel’s portrayal of bootleggers and prostitutes functions as the substitute for a nearly invisible black community and is emblematic of the racial division that historically characterizes Faulkner’s South (Duvall 38). Where racial difference is absent, it becomes especially important to investigate differing modes of classification, such as smell, that create the stereotypes and social divisions that exist in a community. In what follows, I examine Faulkner’s use of olfaction as a mode of communication that insinuates racial and gender stereotypes and hierarchies even when race is ambiguous or invisible. In *Sanctuary*, where race is absent at the level of visual description, it is reinserted at the level of connotation; in the novel, olfaction is one way in which Caucasian characters are coded as African American. It is important to notice that a thorough critique of the body, especially in terms of race and gender, is made not only through the use of visual cues but also through olfactory ones, which are equally as objectifying to the body as the visual gaze.

According to Sarah J. Gervais, sexual objectification occurs when people “separate women’s sexual body parts or functions from the entire person, reducing women to the status of mere instruments and regarding their bodies as capable of representing them. [...] The most ubiquitous indicator of sexual objectification [...] is the objectifying gaze” (Gervais 557).

Though Gervais is correct to recognize female objectification occurring on a visual level, her work reveals an existing bias towards a visually saturated analysis of the body; it is crucial to investigate the body as something that is not only seen but also smelt.

Connections in Faulkner's work between figurative performances of blackness and scent are founded upon the cultural and racist perception that African American bodies emanate a smell signifying their inferiority and unlicensed sexuality. Two racially coded female characters in *Sanctuary*, Miss Reba Rivers and Ruby Lamar, are often associated with the smells of foods and other consumable goods. This sensorial coding reinforces their figurative blackness; African American bodies were often recognized as animal, and then by the nose, transformed into something that animals often become: edible commodities. Miss Reba's and Ruby Lamar's connection to the smells of food reflects their status in the novel; they inhabit the dual roles attached to the African American female body: mammy and jezebel. In Faulkner's South, men who shared memories of mammy also shared a nostalgia for African American women's bodies:

The supposedly sexually undesirable mammy figure formed one side of a [...] dual image of black women's nature. On the other side was the voraciously sexual 'jezebel.'

Whereas the mammy was promoted in popular white representations as embodying maternal affective relationships, the 'jezebel' explained the undeniable fact that sex had indeed occurred across the colour line. (McElya 45-6)

In Faulkner's *Sanctuary*, stereotypes are connoted non-visually. Faulkner appoints specific women to enact the roles of mammy and jezebel by associating their body's with odours suggesting oppression, consumability, and domination.

In order to foreground *Sanctuary's* use of smell in connection to female racial oppression and patriarchal power, I will first outline significant moments in the novel depicting women in

the act of smelling, and how their ability to perceive odours acts as a vehicle for female subjugation rather than power. As in *As I Lay Dying*, *Sanctuary* occasionally depicts women who have olfactory awareness; however, once again, the female ability to smell is problematic. Though the body that can sense via smell is often ascribed with power in Faulkner's texts (it demonstrates a sense of omnipotence and heightened awareness), conversely, in *Sanctuary*, the masculine body is most powerful as the purveyor of odour, especially when his smell is detected by the female nose. As Ruby Lamar attempts to help Temple Drake escape from the Old Frenchman place where she is captive – the women must navigate the space in darkness – their sense of smell appears to extend beyond their line of vision (the women cannot see in the dark, yet their olfactory facilities remain intact). However, rather than becoming liberated by their ability to detect male bodies through smell, their olfactory awareness of their nearness to Popeye only heightens their helplessness: “[Ruby] without having heard, felt, the door open, she began to smell something: the brilliantine which Popeye used on his hair. She did not see Popeye at all when he entered and passed her [...] then she smelled the brilliantine again” (80); “And I have walked around that house so much at night, with those men there [...] until I could tell any of them by the way they breathed, and I could tell Popeye by the smell of that stuff on his hair” (163). Popeye, though his body is concealed from vision, still manages to be an invasive presence; his lingering smell of brilliantine and the penetration of his breath through the darkness are eerie; the strength of his scent indicates that he is the embodiment of masculine power even as his body is hidden from sight.

Similarly, the scent of cigarette smoke triggers Temple's anxiety and fear about white male power. Temple associates the smell of cigarette smoke with Popeye and the sexual abuse of her body: “often in the night she would wake to smell tobacco” (225). Darkness accounts not

only for the novel's association between blackness and fear, but acts also as the space of heightened olfactory awareness – Temple wakes up in the night smelling the scent of cigarettes. Despite the fact that Temple cannot see Popeye's physical body in the room with her – the darkness hinders her vision – she is able to detect his aggressive presence, or rather, the traumatic memory of his body, through the recollection of his scent (he may not be physically in the room with her). Though women in *Sanctuary* are presented in the act of smelling, these smells are closely linked to the masculine domination of the female body and the infringement of women's safety. Faulkner's female characters are terrorized by a misogynist and oppressive whiteness; often, these smells associated with masculine power in the novel – brilliantine, tobacco smoke – evoke the anxiety of physical entrapment, domination and servitude. Therefore, olfactory consciousness is not a tool of female power in *Sanctuary* as Faulkner's women remain helpless despite their sensory awareness of danger. It is also important to note that masculine odour is non-corporeal, whereas the depiction of female scent in the novel is largely attached to the body.

This synthesis of *Sanctuary*'s portrayal of patriarchal power, female oppression and smell is connected to the novel's depiction of race, which further perpetuates power relations in the novel. In *Race and White Identity in Southern Fiction: From Faulkner to Morrison* (2008), John N. Duvall explains that Faulkner uses behaviour as a means of mapping out white performances of “blackness,” where depictions of inferiority, oppression, promiscuity, violence and instability characterize figurative representations of African Americans. In *Sanctuary*, it becomes apparent that Faulkner detaches “blackness” from a biological and visible notion of race. Instead, he utilizes stereotypes entrenched within societal perceptions of African American women that insinuate blackness through various non-visual modes of communication. In other words,

“Caucasians, as well as Negroes, can perform blackness” (Duvall 21), an argument echoed by Quentin Compson in Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*. Quentin states: “a nigger is not a person so much as a form of behaviour” (Faulkner 86). This suggestion that performances of “blackness” are contingent on character behaviour is particularly important when investigating race in *Sanctuary* where white bodies demonstrate the stereotypical qualities – constructed by racist whites – associated with African Americans in the 1930s. It is crucial to examine olfactory language in Faulkner’s texts in order to expose these racial constructions, particularly as they relate to women.

Building on Micki McElya’s discussions of African American female stereotypes from her book *Clinging to Mammy: The Faithful Slave in Twentieth-Century America* (2007), it becomes apparent that Faulkner’s depictions of Ruby Lamar and Miss Reba Rivers accord with McElya’s descriptions of erotized mammy figures in the South. Though Miss Reba and *The Sound and the Fury*’s African American mammy, Dilsey, are both portrayed as surrogate mothers within their respected texts, Miss Reba is the antithesis of Dilsey in several ways: she is sexually licentious, violent, and unstable, stereotypes often associated with portrayals of “blackness.” Miss Reba openly flaunts her sexuality and encourages the young women in her brothel, to whom she acts as surrogate mother, to engage in sexual activity with various white men in power. In connection to the eroticization of African American female bodies in Faulkner’s South, Micki McElya discusses the shifting dualism represented by the African American mammy in the Southern United States and its contingency on patriarchal authority. McElya writes:

The supposedly sexually undesirable mammy figure formed one side of a white-authored,

mutually reinforcing dual image of black women's nature. On the other side was the voraciously sexual 'jezebel.' Whereas the mammy was promoted in popular white representations as embodying maternal affective relationships, the 'jezebel' explained the undeniable fact that sex had indeed occurred across the colour line between black women and white men and continued to do so. The stereotypical 'jezebel' lusted after, lured, and cajoled white men, and thus bore the responsibility for interracial sexual encounters. [...]

Southerners were able to embrace both images of black women simultaneously and to switch from one to the other depending on the context of their thought. (McElya 46)

McElya's discussion of the Southern woman's double identity – mammy is half of a double figure – emerges in Faulkner's characterization of female bodies in *Sanctuary*. Faulkner depicts Ruby Lamar and Miss Reba Rivers as the embodiment of these seemingly opposing characteristics which depended, as McElya suggests, on the desires of the white patriarchy.

Unlike the African American characters in *The Sound and the Fury*, who according to Benjy smell good (Faulkner 44), Miss Reba's negative scents, she is constantly emitting the scent of stale and "defunctive" alcohol, are contrasted with the smells wafting from Dilsey's kitchen. For instance, Benjy describes the appetizing steam arising from his dinner in a particularly playful manner, saying, "I leaned my face over where the supper was. It steamed up to my face [...] the steam tickled into my mouth" (24-5). The passage emphasizes Benjy's comfort and the idealized depiction of mammy as a nurturing caregiver to the patriarchy's Caucasian offspring. By contrast, Miss Reba's inversion of typical portrayals of mammy, in which she is in both a position of domesticity and eroticization, exposes the deeply opposing categories assigned to African American women.

According to Mary Titus, there was a societal tendency to perceive the power dynamic apparent between slave and slave owner as socially and sexually debased, overlapping into the sphere of domesticity. Titus states that “abolitionists, who often perceived the power of slave owners over slaves as a sexualized relation [...] thus imagined the South as a locus of unrestrained licentiousness, [and] saw the elevated culture and civilization that dinnertime rituals should confirm as corrupted by the presence of slaves waiting on the table” (Titus 247). This pairing of servitude and sexuality associated with the mammy is projected onto *Sanctuary*'s Ruby Lamar and Miss Reba Rivers. Though Ruby Lamar and Miss Reba are not visibly African American nor are they enslaved, Faulkner nonetheless depicts them in various forms of white patriarchal servitude mimicking – though to a much lesser extent – the domination, subjugation and eroticization of the enslaved African American female body. Scent is a marker of Ruby and Miss Reba's social inferiority and figurative blackness; to be black in *Sanctuary* is not only to fulfill African American cultural stereotypes and social roles, but also to emanate smells associated with the African American body.

Despite Ruby's and Miss Reba's social connection to the stereotypes of jezebel and mammy, recent Faulkner scholarship has focused on racial coding in association with male bodies only – female characters are absent from these discussions. With regards to Faulkner's *Sanctuary*, Duvall examines the behaviour of several of the novel's male bootleggers as examples of characters who are coded as African American. He explains that:

At the center of *Sanctuary*'s figurative blackness is the gangster Popeye, who, although Caucasian, activates a Southern hysteria over black male criminality and sexuality. [...] Popeye, who rapes the Ole Miss co-ed Temple Drake with a corncob [...] is the

embodiment of blackness. [... Students are often] certain that Popeye is African American. (Duvall 38)

As Duvall suggests, *Sanctuary* depicts the ambiguity and complex race relations associated with Caucasian male bodies – signifying that race cannot necessarily be detected via ones’ visual gaze alone. For example, the olfactory odour associated with Popeye not only suggests his power as a white body, but conflictingly proposes his blackness and lack of power at other moments, signifying that smell is completely interpretive.

The racist perception that African American bodies smell different from white bodies is addressed in the first chapter of *Sanctuary*. During his initial encounter with Popeye, Horace thinks “he smells black” (7). Popeye’s olfactory blackness – “he smells like that black stuff that ran out of Bovary’s mouth” (7) – emerges throughout the novel and is associated with the animal-like rendering of his body. Horace refers to him as “that gorilla” (128). Duvall states that Popeye’s figurative blackness, reinforced by his odour, portrays him as “primitive [...] unevolved and subhuman [...] an implication that is consistent with white racist attitudes toward African Americans” (Duvall 39). These qualities, assigned to the African American masculine odour – to smell black is to be equated with primitivism – yet ascribed to the Caucasian Popeye, reinforce the ambiguity and inconsistency Faulkner assigns to his characters, both Caucasian and African American. Thus, Popeye’s racial identity cannot be visibly identified because it is unhinged from any biological marker of race; rather, Faulkner deploys race in *Sanctuary* as contingent on social behavior and performativity – ways of existing that accord with a character’s olfactory emissions – rather than skin colour.

Whereas smell and racial coding collide in depictions of Faulkner’s male bodies, it is also important to investigate how smell plays a part in the portrayal of female bodies and stereotypes

of African American behaviour, specifically as it relates to the role of mammy or surrogate mother. Initially, Ruby Lamar's figurative blackness can be interpreted through the social role she fulfills in the novel. The only woman living at the Old Frenchman place, Ruby is responsible for cooking for and attending to its male residents. Though Ruby is not African American, her lifestyle is often juxtaposed with cultural depictions of African American women. For instance, in order to pay for a lawyer when Lee Goodwin – her lover – is in prison, Ruby becomes a prostitute, a profession she refers to using the slang term “jazzing” (59), synonymous with African American music, thus contributing to the link between sexual promiscuity and African American culture. Not only is Ruby's body treated as a sexual commodity, but her social function in the novel is likened to slavery. With reference to Goodwin, Ruby states that she “slaved for that man” (61), while Benbow describes her duties at the Old Frenchman place as “nigger's work” (109). Ruby's African American racial coding is also underscored by the language that associates her with sexual promiscuity and violence: she is referred to as a “street-walker, a murderer's woman” (117). As Paradiso notes, like a “black woman [who] is kept psychologically and financially dependent upon the white family” (Paradiso 26), Ruby is also continually reminded of her reliance on her “white family” who threaten to discard her. Popeye says to Ruby “you can quit [...] you can go to hustling again [...] you're getting fat here” (Faulkner 9), signaling both the instability of her existence at the Old Frenchman place and the male control of her body. Duvall refers to this representation of blackness by white bodies as playing the “artificial Negro” (Duvall 7). Through Faulkner's racially ambiguous portrayal of Ruby, we can see that race is something that exists beyond visibility; Duvall's book is particularly significant because of its interpretation of race as something that exceeds skin colour. He writes:

When I speak of ‘artificial Negros,’ I mean Caucasian characters who have ‘blackened up,’ not in any physical sense, but rather in ways that are not immediately obvious, either to their white communities or to other characters [...] The reason these racial crossings are opaque is because they are never as simple as the external transformation from white or black occasioned by blackface minstrelsy. In other words, there is no visible sign of their blackness. [...] Their blackness, then, is not precisely race, but what came to be the twentieth century’s substitute for race – culture. Southern fiction is full of characters that are racially white, but culturally black. (Duvall 7)

Ruby Lamar is a Faulkner character who performs “cultural blackness” rather than appearing as visibly African American.

Comparable to Popeye’s association with scents that conflictingly align him with both white patriarchal power and blackness, depending on which character is doing the smelling, Ruby is continually linked to the smells of frying meat, signifying her position as a racially coded commodity and consumable sexual object. Like Addie Bundren from *As I Lay Dying*, who is associated with the smells of rancid and olfactory pungent foods, indicating her role as reluctant and sinful mother, Ruby’s connection to meat also suggests a perversion of traditional womanhood and white Southern domesticity. Conventional portrayals of Southern women were highly dependent on the illusions of Southern domestic hospitality. As Titus notes,

[The] groaning table of Southern cuisine, heavily laden with baked, stewed, creamed, and beaten burdens, attests [...] to the hospitality of the Southern home. It is the triumphant image [...] of the Southern home. [...] These] accounts are [...] shaped by the dominate concerns of a period in which food preparation was intimately associated with a woman’s social status and by the debate over the effects of slavery on domestic life. (Titus 243)

In contrast to this image of the “groaning table of Southern cuisine,” Ruby’s association with food, rather than being evocative of Southern hospitality, reflects the discomfoting sexualization of her body and emphasizes the eroticization of domestic servitude.

The depiction of Ruby’s body shaped by African American stereotypes and 1930s low culture is approached through the intermingling of the female body with the smell and consumption of frying meat, which are both treated in *Sanctuary* as pleasure-inducing commodities. African American women “have explored every facet of the twin myths of hypersexuality and easy accessibility that emerged in the New World as part and parcel of black women’s initiation into what it meant to be chattel” (Sharpley-Whiting 63-4). The masculine perception of Ruby, in which she is rendered edible, correlates to the historical economic and sexual exchange – during slavery, black bodies were equivalent to chattel – of African American female bodies. Similar to Faulkner’s representation of femininity in *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying* as contingent on perceptions of virginity and motherhood, the characterization of Ruby in *Sanctuary* is likewise connected to her sexuality and physicality. *Sanctuary* parodies the idealized mammy figure, such as Dilsey from *The Sound and the Fury*, by first making Ruby a figure of African American domesticity, and then by inverting the traditional nurturing qualities associated with mammy by focusing on her sexuality and objectified body. The narrator observes Ruby in the kitchen by the stove and tells us that “she wore a faded calico dress. About her naked ankles a worn pair of man’s brogans, unlaced, flapped when she moved. She looked back at Popeye, then to the stove again, where a pan of meat hissed” (Faulkner 8). Later, the narrator describes how Ruby “entered the dining-room, carrying a platter of meat” (11). Temple asks “and you have to cook for all of them every night. All those men eating here, the house full of them at night, in the dark [...]” (55). Faulkner’s portrayal of Ruby as mammy – she is

responsible for feeding the white male bodies at the Old Frenchman place, a dilapidated cotton plantation built prior to the Civil War (8) – addresses her likeness to African American servitude and the underlying anxiety surrounding the treatment of African American female bodies.

If we are to interpret Ruby as likened to the meat ingested by Faulkner's Caucasian male characters, then her body – representing eroticized blackness – is likewise subject to consumption. The character of Pap, an elderly and feeble man residing at the Old Frenchman place, who is described as both “blind and deaf” (46), and also presumably impotent, seeks pleasure through his sense of smell and taste of food. Despite Pap's loss of sight and hearing, his remaining senses are strengthened. This is in keeping with William A. Cohen's observation that “[the] deprivation of one sense is thus less a debility than an opportunity for cultivating alternative means of intellection” (Cohen 96). Likewise, Faulkner depicts Pap's ingestion of meat – the metaphoric rendering of Ruby as dominated and consumable – in a specifically sexually heightened manner. Conversely, Pap's ability to smell and taste, though inducing a great deal of pleasure, also infantilizes him (Ruby must cut up his food before he can consume it). Not only does Pap's limited sensory power represent a return to infancy but it also insinuates that his few remaining senses are the only vehicles through which he experiences physical pleasure. Though Pap is rendered child-like through his limited physical and sensory strength and his dependency on Ruby, his ingestion of food is also grotesquely sexual. If we are to equate meat with female sexuality, then, for Pap, the scent of meat connects him with the sensory consumption of Ruby. Not only is Pap eating the meat but he is also absorbing the pleasures of its scent via his nostrils:

Benbow watched Goodwin seat the old man in a chair, where he sat obediently with that tentative and abject eagerness of a man who has but one pleasure left and whom the

world can reach only through one sense, for he was both blind and deaf. [...] The woman served his plate from the dish. The others were already eating, silently and steadily, but the old man sat there, his head bent over his plate, his beard working faintly. He fumbled at the plate with a diffident, shaking hand and found a small piece of meat and began to suck at it until the woman returned and rapped his knuckles. He put the meat back on the plate then and Benbow watched her cut up the food on the plate, meat, bread and all, and then pour sorghum over it. (12)

The image of Pap's "head bent over his plate" before sucking at the piece of meat – he cannot chew his own food – suggests his sniffing out of not only consumable foods but also desired foods before ingesting them into his body. Through his rendering of Pap, Faulkner portrays a subject who attains a certain fulfillment from sensory experience, specifically through smell and taste. Faulkner's representation of masculine consumption through the character of Pap adheres to a model of masochistic pleasure that Cohen discusses in his approach to the works of Charles Dickens. He writes:

In Dickens generally, and especially in his depiction of children, the soul or the heart is often reached through the mouth, so that perception is rendered as ingestion. Through the many grotesque, deformed, exaggerated, and diminished characters who inhabit his work, Dickens frequently exploits the body as the site at which external world and internal self partake of each other. (Cohen 29)

Similar to Dickens' portrayal of grotesque characters in his fiction, Faulkner's depiction of Pap, who also creepily exhibits an infantile demeanor, is likewise characterized by the unique utilization of his senses. Pap experiences the pleasures associated with the physical world through his olfactory ingestion of meat. By juxtaposing the subject positions of woman and meat,

Faulkner expresses the correlation in the novel between maternity – signified by Ruby’s role as mammy – and erotized consumption.

Faulkner’s portrayal of racial ambiguity and erotized domesticity via his characterization of Ruby Lamar frames the racial uncertainty surrounding Miss Reba Rivers in the second half of the novel. As the madam of a Memphis brothel, Miss Reba is responsible for providing services to the various white men who visit her brothel. If we are to perceive her behavior – she is sexually licentious and involved with criminals – as the reinforcement of her non-visual African American coding, we can also view her body’s scent emissions as not only an allusion to her blackness but also her consumability. Her body’s olfactory secretions suggest the smells of consumable products, chiefly alcohol; these smells reinforce her lower social position within society while also defining her body as an object of male consumption and maternal subversion. Rather than being associated with the smells of wholesome foods, – see the fictitious mammy Aunt Jemima and her famous pancakes – Miss Reba is largely portrayed as a bawdy alcoholic; not only does Miss Reba emanate the odour of drunkenness, but she also plies her “girls” (the prostitutes in her brothel) with liquor.

Faulkner introduces Miss Reba in a specifically anti-Southern belle landscape, that is, in a dilapidated Memphis brothel – its uneven foundation is described as “niggard reaches” (144) – where alcoholism, unlicensed sexuality, and criminality are prevalent. It is important to note that the neighborhood surrounding Miss Reba’s brothel is largely African American, emphasizing the very ambiguity surrounding her race: “[...] for three or four blocks [...] Fonzo and Virgil, two Caucasian men] crossed a street of Negro stores and theaters” (198). By situating Miss Reba within an African American community, comprising “Negro stores and theaters,” Faulkner builds to a sense of racial and social misrecognition. While Faulkner presents Miss Reba as a

racially ambiguous character working within the literal bounds of an African American community, he also uses smell to code her body as consumable, and emphasizes her position of servitude. When two white men, Fonzo and Virgil, visit Miss Reba's brothel, one remarks "I can smell ham," (192) again emphasizing Faulkner's portrayal of racially coded female bodies as consumable. In a similar way, powerfully repellent olfactory odours surround Miss Reba's body: Miss Reba's "thin aroma of beer" (144) and the "defunctive odour of irregular food, vaguely alcoholic [...] surrounded by a ghostly promiscuity of intimate garments [...] and [...] flesh" (144) signifies Miss Reba's startling foreignness as it pervades the sensitive nose of the Southern belle Temple Drake who is put under her care. In contrast to the visual reminders of the brothel as a site of unlicensed promiscuity, – "intimate garments [...] whispers of flesh" – which identifies it as a site of unrestrained sexuality, the alcoholic odours emanating from Miss Reba and lingering throughout her brothel have the effect of accentuating her otherness in a specifically nonvisible way.

In addition to Faulkner's olfactory description of Miss Reba, in which she is portrayed as the antithesis of the nourishing good mother, her metaphorical blackness and bodily effusions embody the threat of contagion, comparable to the fear of contamination represented by Addie's decaying body in *As I Lay Dying*. Many characters have difficulty breathing in *Sanctuary*; for instance, "Temple's [...] breathlessness] [...] and] the short whistling gasps of Ruby's baby and Miss Reba's deep-throated wheezying, emphasized at her every appearance" (Bleikasten 244) seem to suggest contamination and sickness. The white Southerners claim for racial superiority, and the novel's allusion to racial transference – here, blackness appears as an ingestible illness – indicates a level of racial degeneracy taking place in the bodies of Faulkner's white characters. Temple appears to contract blackness from Miss Reba's fits of penetrative open-mouthed

exhalations: “Temple watched the door until it opened and Miss Reba stood in it, the tankard in her hand [...] she entered. [...] Her open mouth, studded with gold-fillings, gaped upon the harsh labor of her breathing [...] she roared in a harsh, choking voice” (Faulkner 156-7). As this quotation suggests, the nearness of Miss Reba’s body to Temple’s body allows for the transference of contagions. Here, sickness, represented by the repetition of Miss Reba’s asthmatic breathing, is an allegory for blackness as a disease, depicting the underlying racist anxiety of racial mixing.

Through her time at Miss Reba’s Memphis brothel, Temple Drake appears to undergo a figurative racial transformation under Miss Reba’s influence, which suggests that blackness is catching in *Sanctuary*. Temple’s red hair becomes a “black sprawl [...] her face, throat and arms outside the covers were grey” (150) while her stare is punctuated by a “black antagonism” (214); like Miss Reba, Temple becomes a fervent alcoholic: “she lifted the glass and gulped it empty (156). “I want another drink” (214) demands Temple; “you already had three since supper” (214) replies Miss Reba. Temple’s racially coded transformation, contracted from Miss Reba, made visible by her wild black sprawling hair and unrestrained behaviour, suggests her descent into the stereotypical sense of primitivism associated with blackness. This idea of contagious blackness is connected to the novel’s depiction of scent and breath which can be interpreted as a sort of miasma transferring culturally black behaviour onto white bodies. By equating blackness with the contaminating pollutions that reach inside white bodies and disturb the equilibrium of racial purity, the underlying anxiety of miscegenation is made explicit. Temple’s “grey” (150) body – her colour existing somewhere between black and white – becomes the metaphoric shade expressing the fear of African American and Caucasian racial mixing apparent in Faulkner’s

South. In reference to Faulkner's deployment of miscegenation and figurative black characters, Duvall states:

Such characters consistently avow a liminal space of difference that the author's Southern community can never acknowledge in its urge to make absolute all racial and sexual difference. In this regard, these characters serve as yet another way to expose the historical contradictions of a culture that believes in racial purity but in which the races in fact have already been mixed. (Duvall 59)

Racial miscegenation, a fact, Duvall explains, that Southerners would prefer to ignore, especially during the time Faulkner was writing, is also portrayed in *The Sound and the Fury* as an African American anxiety. Dilsey expresses fear over the racial mixing of Luster and Benjy Compson who are sleeping in the same bed. Dilsey places a piece of wood between their bodies in an attempt to prevent their touching: "Dilsey took a long piece of wood and laid it between Luster and [Benjy]" (32) and she says to Benjy "stay on your side now" (32). Luster's African American body and Benjy's Caucasian body, and the threat of their comingling, signifies the deep entrenched anxiety existing not only of miscegenation but also of the societal fear of blurred racial power boundaries.

Extending beyond this anxiety of racial transference through the visible intermingling of African American and Caucasian bodies, smell also acts as a tool in the segregation of African Americans and Caucasians. However, it becomes clear that smell is a construction wholly dependent on who is doing the smelling and in what social context. For example, Benjy does not perceive Dilsey's smell as the olfactory reminder of her blackness; rather, Benjy declares – in reference to the smell of her home – that he "liked it" (29). Benjy has not learned to place value or worth upon people based on their race, which, unlike gender, is far too complex a construction

for Benjy to establish distinctions, suggesting that smell is entirely interpretative and dependent on a social awareness of value systems.

Unlike Benjy, whom Faulkner depicts as innocent of racial bounds, the adult characters use constructions of sensory coding, including olfaction, to reinforce cultural blackness and cement racial difference. Returning to *Sanctuary*'s Miss Reba, Faulkner's depiction of her African American neighbourhood serves to represent her lower class, her poverty and her primitivism; the landscape surrounding her Memphis brothel reflects the same sense of wild uncivilized dilapidation associated with Faulkner's characterization of inflected blackness. The houses are "set a little back in grassless plots, with now and then a forlorn and hardy tree of some shabby spices – gaunt lop-branched magnolias, a stunted elm or a locust in grayish, cadaverous bloom – interspersed by rear ends of garages; a scrap-heap, [...] a metal coffee-urn [...]" (142). The Southern garden, often the metaphor of freshness and womanhood in Faulkner's texts, is a symbol here of blackness and degenerative sexuality – the flowers are not only "gaunt," "stunted," "greyish" and "cadaverous" but are also scentless. This overtly degenerate image of Reba's Southern neighborhood compares strongly with the landscape encircling the African American church that Dilsey attends in *The Sound and the Fury*:

A street turned off at right angles, descending, and became a dirt road. On either hand the land dropped more sharply; a broad flat dotted with small cabins whose weathered roofs were on level with the crown of the road. They were set in small grassless plots littered with broken things. [...] What growth there was consisted of rank weeds and the trees were mulberries and locusts and sycamores – trees that partook also of the foul desiccation which surrounded the houses; trees whose very burgeoning seemed to be the

sad and stubborn remnant of September, as if even spring had passed them by, leaving them to feed upon the rich and unmistakable smell of negroes in which they grew. (291)

Through his portrayal of the dilapidated landscapes surrounding African American neighborhoods, Faulkner emphasizes the connection between the physical landscape and the body, reflecting their racial and social inferiority. Faulkner utilizes the images of “grassless plots” and littered miscellaneous scraps in both *The Sound and the Fury* and *Sanctuary* to allude to the stereotypes that ground the female African American body within poverty; this sense of racial inferiority is especially clear when juxtaposed against a prominent Caucasian neighborhood. In Temple’s recollection of her sprawling Southern estate, she states, “it had been a lavender spring [... the] lilac and wisteria, had never been finer, fulgent, with a burning scent” (138), emphasizing her racial and class privilege. The only odour mentioned in the description of Diley’s church garden is of the “rich and unmistakable smell of negroes” which the trees are proposed to feed upon; this image conjures a grotesque eroticism associated with the garden’s growth in which African American bodies are continually in a state of labour – even the smell of their bodies is utilized as a form of exchange in which to feed the surrounding landscape. Dilsey and Miss Reba’s failure to enact the scripts of white Southern feminine identity – their perverse womanhood is independently reflected by their scentless or olfactory grotesque Southern gardens – leads to their negative racial assessment. By comparing depictions of race in both *The Sound and the Fury* (where race is visible) and *Sanctuary* (where race is figurative), we can see how Faulkner casts race by drawing on specific stereotypes, behaviours, social roles and smells that allude to race and racial identity.

Through the deconstruction of the African American race and its re-appropriation by Caucasian bodies in *Sanctuary*, Faulkner depicts blackness through non-visible modes of

sensorial communication. Faulkner complicates the recognition of race and racial thinking by insinuating that blackness is not a race so much as it is a system of values and stereotypes ascribed onto bodies. Popular Southern categories assigned to African American women, specifically that of the mammy and jezebel, are projected onto Ruby Lamar and Miss Reba Rivers, resulting in their racial ambiguity and figurative blackness in *Sanctuary*. These women conform to the harmful stereotypes that depict African American women as socially and economically inferior, consumable, promiscuous and unrestrained, while simultaneously cementing their confinement within domesticity and sexual exchanges. Though *Sanctuary*'s suggestion of blackness is insinuated through language, – what characters say about themselves and about others – race is revealed in a much subtler way when visibility is absent. For instance, the novel's use of scent serves to reinforce or emphasize a character's figurative blackness depending on who is doing the smelling. As noted above, Popeye's smell of cigarettes and brilliantine hair gel is associated with his patriarchal white power, but when inhaled by another Caucasian male, signifies his cultural blackness. Correspondingly, the smells associated with Ruby's body, specifically the scent of frying meat, and Miss Reba's olfactory emanations of alcohol, render their bodies consumable, unrestrained and eroticized – stereotypes implicated in the negative perception of African American women.

By establishing smell as a marker of racial oppression, Faulkner draws upon institutionalized stereotypes typically associated with African American female bodies and the racist belief that inferiority is exposed via their body's odour. By using racist propaganda to connote blackness, Faulkner is able to exaggerate the effect of narrow thinking upon the reader, while at the time offering a critique of social perceptions of race (Paradiso 25). Faulkner's perpetuation of racial stereotypes via the body's non-visual senses “means that Faulkner's

fiction is never merely personal but always open out to larger social and historical issues of the inevitably raced and gendered body” (Duvall 60). Faulkner’s fiction, populated by white characters playing black characters, whose blackness is recognized and reinforced through means of non-visible modes of communication, such as smell, speaks to the societal and cultural imagination and its ability to detect the contingency of racial identity through various modes of interpretation.

Final Remarks and Conclusions

“You said they were black [...] you never said they were tan. How do you expect me to know anything when you don’t tell me right?”

- Flannery O’Connor, “The Artificial Nigger,” 255.

While it is important to examine the ways in which characters in modern fiction relate and communicate with one another via their visual gaze, it is also crucial to investigate the use of the other senses in this interaction. This thesis has focused on olfaction, specifically, as a tool in identifying stereotypes and constructions of gender and race in Faulkner’s literature. In reference to the visual interpretations of bodies, Sara J. Gervais writes that “during person perception, people quickly and effortlessly gain a wealth of information about others. Face perception is crucial to initial person perception because it quickly provides important information regarding identity, social categories, emotions, behavioural intentions, and health” (Gervais 558). Where vision exposes identity and social categories, as Gervais states, smell, in Faulkner’s literature, functions in comparable ways. As the nose recognizes odours, judgements and evaluations are immediately presumed regarding the subject of smell; however, as Faulkner’s literature has shown, in its evaluations of the body, olfaction appears more sensorially powerful than vision. For instance, information inferred through a particular odour is not contingent on having first witnessed the subject in the very act that made them smell. There are several moments in Faulkner’s fiction where smell appears to linger in the air, remain behind, or, based on pre-conceived social beliefs, is altogether imagined. Where sight relies upon proximity for its operations, smell, on the other hand, extends the body beyond its own boundaries; the nose can smell scents despite its distance from the source of a smell, thus building a complex relationship between perception and olfactory interpretation. As Anthony Synnott states “we are all constantly emitting and perceiving odours, smelling and being smelled; and these odours play

important roles in virtually every area of social interaction” (Synnott 182). Although smell can be the olfactory marker of a character’s health and cleanliness, smell is also linked to ideas regarding the performances of race and gender, and olfactory interpretation is highly dependent upon who perceives the smell and in what context. The experimentation with an olfactory perspective in Faulkner’s literature provides a much deeper insight into systematic constructed values than vision alone and emphasizes social and historical issues attached to the raced and gendered body.

In my reading of William Faulkner’s texts, I observed a great number of sensory allusions. Olfactory sensations in Faulkner’s works are not only experienced in relation to objects typically associated with smell, such as foods and flowers, but are also connected to the recognition of gendered and raced bodies. As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, critics who have explored the use of olfaction in Faulkner’s texts, including Maryanne M. Gobble, have tended to think of smell as symbolic, in which scents are interpreted largely in isolation from the social milieu to which they are attached. While this interpretation of scent is extremely insightful, it is also important to recognize smell as a reflection of the stereotypes, values and identity constructions revered by the society. Often, when smell is characterized as unnatural, distorted or unpleasant in Faulkner’s fiction, the text insinuates that the subject of smell has undergone a social transformation, usually transgressive in nature.

I opened this thesis with a discussion of stereotypical gender categories, notably the Southern bell, Southern gentleman and mammy figure, as a means of exploring some of the social roles attached to the perceptions of both male and female bodies in Faulkner’s works. As Faulkner’s female characters reject the imposed Southern norms of femininity, their transgressions are habitually perceived by men who identify their deviations via the

interpretative act of smelling. For example, during a fit of olfactory delirium in *The Sound and the Fury*, Quentin, recurrently recognises the smell of honeysuckle in the air, which conjures reminders of Caddy's sexuality. Caddy's perceived promiscuity, a deviation that is detected via the perceived change in her body's olfactory odours and their meanings, marks her transgressive attitude towards the Southern belle stereotype and its preoccupation with perceptions of female asexuality. Caddy's daughter Quentin is also accused of promiscuity. The female Quentin's use of fragrant cosmetics aligns her with the unlicensed sexuality of African American women and with prostitution; as a result of this degenerative white female behaviour, she is threatened with constant surveillance and physical punishment.

In *As I Lay Dying*, Addie Bundren's body, her stench emblematic of her physical and spiritual sickness, is publically ostracized and objectified during her transportation to Jefferson where she is finally confined to the ground – her burial ensuring a kind of silencing of her body and its olfactory messages. Though the scent of Addie's decaying corpse is a marker of her physical deterioration, it also acts as a misogynist commentary on her failure to adhere to Southern ideals of domesticity. The textual backdrop of religion and portrayals of agrarian masculinity in the novel, juxtaposed aside Addie's extramarital affair and disdain for motherhood, accentuates Faulkner's non-normative characterization of Addie. Thus, Addie's unbearable olfactory emissions reinforce the perception that she is not only morally corrupt but also at odds with her community's gender expectations; Addie's olfactory effusions signify her social alienation.

In *Sanctuary*, Faulkner approaches the restricting societal perception of race – understood typically via racial visibility – by using smell as a mode of non-visual detection. Faulkner uses olfaction in *Sanctuary* to both adhere to and subtly confront racist stereotypes associated with the

African American body by reconstructing Caucasian characters as sensorially black and having their olfactory emissions reflect their marginalized positions. *Sanctuary's* racially coded Ruby Lamar and Miss Reba Rivers fail to conform to old Southern conceptions of white femininity. Their sexual deviance and connection to the underworld of criminality suggests their metaphoric blackness, and it is this metaphoric blackness that Faulkner uses as a trope for unstable Southern gender identity (Duvall 63). Through these two women, Faulkner takes the otherness and presumed relationship with primitivism and unlicensed sexuality and maps it onto non-normative femininity. Ruby Lamar's and Miss Reba's olfactory relations conform them to the primeval smells associated with the African American body. Through their olfactory coding, Miss Reba Rivers and Ruby Lamar are rendered the antithesis of white Southern femininity.

Faulkner's texts are saturated with a variety of sensory coding. It would be interesting to study instances of sensory experience, not only olfaction, occurring in Faulkner's fiction and throughout various Southern works. By investigating moments of touch, sight, sound, taste and smell involved in the communication and interaction of characters, we may trace the racial and gender concerns common not only to Faulkner's texts, but also to the Southern society about which he wrote. In order to assert that sensory experience, as it informs Southern gender and racial interpretations, is not isolated to Faulkner's literature, I would like to offer a brief example of sensory coding at work in Flannery O'Connor's short story "The Artificial Nigger" (1955). O'Connor's story is particularly interesting for her exploration of racial taboos; similar to Faulkner's depiction of race in *Sanctuary*, O'Connor's portrayal of whiteness is precarious and constantly threatened by misrecognition. I will illustrate how visibility, a sense used in our perception of bodies, is highly ambivalent, specifically within a context where perceptions of race and gender are shaped by preconceived stereotypes related to social status.

Although O'Connor uses sensorial stereotypes to connote race – her depiction of the mammy is highly typical – O'Connor, like Faulkner, also ascribes traits of cultural blackness onto white bodies as a means of subtly questioning these racial constructions; both Caucasian and African American bodies can connote metaphoric blackness. It is useful to explore O'Connor's work in contrast with Faulkner's texts in order to expose the commonalities between subject matter and sensory communication, especially within their shared Southern backdrops.

Here, I will extend my focus on olfaction into the realm of the other senses as a means of discussing O'Connor's portrayal of blackness in relation to Faulkner's. For example, in "The Artificial Nigger," Mr. Head believes that racial difference is restricted to the body's surface; he relies predominately on visibility to detect Southern social hierarchies, while being ignorant of his own metaphoric blackness. Faulkner's portrayals of problematized whiteness – Caddy and her daughter are linked to racial otherness, Ruby and Miss Reba project metaphoric blackness – are similarly represented by O'Connor's racially coded Caucasian protagonists, Mr. Head and his grandson Nelson. Despite their own metaphoric blackness, of which they are unaware, Mr. Head and Nelson still rely on their visible whiteness to advocate their social superiority. While in Faulkner's work where I explore metaphoric and visible blackness signalled through smell, O'Connor often relies on touch, olfaction and taste to signal comparable narrative otherness.

Through "The Artificial Nigger's" two protagonists, Mr. Head and Nelson, O'Connor respectively explores racial coding and sensory interpretation. Mr. Head and Nelson exist within the poverty and marginalization typically reserved for African Americans, who in the story, appear more financially and socially stable by comparison. While Nelson relies on Mr. Head to navigate the urban cityscape of Atlanta, they become stranded in a predominately African American neighbourhood. First, O'Connor reveals and appears to disparage how African

American identity hinges upon the social and institutional construction of visibility. For instance, during their train ride to Atlanta from their Southern rural community, Mr. Head attempts to teach his grandson Nelson about white Southern masculinity in relation to the African American body. As a seemingly well-off African American man passes Nelson on the train, Nelson is unsuccessful in rendering the man as his racial inferior, saying to his grandfather “you said they were black, [...] you never said they were tan. How do you expect me to know anything when you don’t tell me right” (O’Connor 255). Limited to vision alone, Nelson fails to assert a white masculinity that is grounded on a certain social knowledge of blackness.

It is only after Nelson encounters an African American woman in Atlanta that he is able to recognize his own white masculinity. O’Connor writes that Nelson “wanted her to reach down and pick him up and draw him against her and then he wanted to feel her breath on his face [...] while she held him tighter and tighter” (262). Though the woman is visibly African American, O’Connor makes use of sensorial stereotypes to connote her blackness; as Nelson’s fixation on the African American woman unfolds, it becomes clear that his desire for mammy is expressed not simply through sight but also through touch, articulating the power relations between Caucasian men and African American women in the South. Nelson wishes for physical contact with and the tangibility of the woman’s body, echoing Faulkner’s portrayal of Miss Reba Rivers in *Sanctuary*, who is likewise described as shapely, tangible, and inseparable from her body: “[her] hand [...] lost among the lush billows of her breast [...] she moved heavily from big thigh to thigh” (Faulkner 143-4). These portrayals of blackness – O’Connor’s mammy is African American and Faulkner’s Miss Reba is not – reveal that both authors are aware of the social recognition of blackness as it extends beyond vision alone, especially in relation to the African American female body and the portrayal of the mammy.

Nelson's racial infraction – he feels a sense of fondness and longing for physical proximity to the African American woman – reflects O'Connor's blurring of racial boundaries in the story. Nelson's fantasized, physical version of his exchange with the woman is also connected with smell and taste in O'Connor's story, suggesting that the perception of a body comprises the use of more than one sense. Similar to Faulkner's rendering of Ruby Lamar and Miss Reba Rivers as consumable, racially coded women in *Sanctuary*, the African American woman in "The Artificial Nigger" is also connected to the masculine consumption of meat. If whiteness privileges mind (as the name "Head" suggests), then blackness is the body. The frying meat at the beginning of the story – Nelson "was awakened at three-thirty by the smell of fatback frying" (251) – is not merely food, but the human body more generally. By merging the social, the physical body, and edible food, the "tremendous bosom" (262) on the African American woman and the "fatback frying" in preparation for consumption, insinuates that the African American woman's body is consumed by white masculinity. Nelson desires a sense of fulfillment that he perceives only the African American woman – as an ingestible commodity – capable of providing to the white male body.

On the way home from Atlanta, Nelson and Mr. Head come across a plaster figure "of a Negro sitting bent over a yellow brick fence [...] at an unsteady angle" (268). The figure's position adjacent to the fence suggests the imposed division between African Americans and Caucasians in the Southern United States; yet, the figure's structural instability also signifies the precariousness of racial identity. Racial certainty predicated on vision alone is also reflected by the "entirely white" (268) eye of the plaster figure connoting human blindness (as it relates to the detection of race) and the altogether racial ambivalence in connection to the body. Although O'Connor depicts visible blackness through racist sensorial stereotypes – the mammy is edible

and wholly limited to her body – O’Connor also appears to subtly confront these racist recognitions of blackness by attaching these perceptions to her narrow minded and disenfranchised protagonists. Additionally, O’Connor’s use of vision – primarily its unreliability – echoes Faulkner’s problematizing of vision in its recognition of race, where blackness extends beyond skin into social class, culture, and behaviour, and is exemplified by the non-visual senses. The commonality between Flannery O’Connor’s “The Artificial Nigger,” and Faulkner’s texts, is evident through O’Connor’s use of sensory signals to both dispel and connote racial blackness onto bodies. O’Connor’s story informs Faulkner’s work, as her text, set against a comparable backdrop, exposes the rigid racial stereotypes and social concerns encoded within their shared Southern cultures.

Returning to Faulkner’s use of the senses in his fiction, specifically olfaction, I would like to conclude this thesis with a discussion of smell as it is perceived in our own culture. As Faulkner’s texts suggest, olfaction has a simultaneously powerful and deprecated link to the body: to sexuality, uncleanliness, racist perceptions of blackness and the baser qualities that normative society desires to repress. The repression of smells is especially evident with regard to bodily odours. Annick Le Guérer states:

The increase in odor phobias [...] is probably the most remarkable expression of this uneasiness about bringing the subject of odour out into the open. Today’s ideal is the realization of bodies and spaces which, if not totally without odour, are at least odour neutralized by perfumes that mask their natural smells. In any event, today’s sensitivity is basically negative; it is not counterbalanced by a culture rooted in and enjoying [of] a rich diverse olfactory environment that is conducive to sustaining, developing, and educating the sense. (Le Guérer 215)

As Le Gu rer proposes, as a result of our society's fixation on smells, there is an obsession to censor or completely eliminate odours that, despite their being natural to the human body and the home, reflect qualities in ourselves we fear to expose. The fragrance industry is a lucrative business which encourages consumers to purchase deodorants, air fresheners, perfumes and oils for the purpose of masking specific socially unacceptable smells in our body and the environment. As for the repression of smells in our society, this is something that Faulkner discusses in his literature, specifically in relation to the female body. To the sensitive nose, the scent of human decay and the smell of perfume serve to highlight the connection between the body and the environment. The body and its environment are in constant reciprocal contact; our skin absorbs environmental outputs regardless of its toxins. The intermingling of olfactory experience with the body in Faulkner's texts emerges as a threat to conventional social values, and this leads the community to respond with acts of suppression: Caddy is forced to wash the scent of her perfume away because it conversely reveals her sexually transgressive behaviour rather than masking it; Addie's body must be buried in the ground in order to conceal the societal aversion to bodily decay and death.

In *As I Lay Dying*, the scent of Addie Bundren's corpse impels cries of "you get this thing buried soon as you can" (204), suggesting the connection between smell, the body and disease. Though Addie's corpse smells extremely unpleasant, it nonetheless exposes society's fear of the cultural practices surrounding the body and physical decay; despite the universality of death, sensorial markers of sickness or bodily subversion, including its scent, must be hidden and remain socially undetectable.

While Faulkner emphasizes public fear over the smell and natural processes associated with bodily decomposition in *As I Lay Dying*, in *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner posits

continuity between the artificial representations of scent, perfume, and its effects on human interiority and olfactory repression. Benjy's perception of Caddy's perfume is accompanied by a feeling of pain, thus revealing the connection between olfaction, mental processes and the physical body. In our culture, the scent of perfume may be extremely invasive to the sensitive nose and its detectable smell appears as a primary cause of distress for Benjy. It is through his sensitivity to smell that Benjy reacts not only to Caddy's implicit sexual development, but also to the exchange of her body's natural odour for an artificial one. Benjy articulates his resistance to Caddy's sexually transgressive behaviour, perceived through smell, by crying until she washes the perfume away, thus removing the unnatural scent of bottled fragrance. Despite the connection between Caddy's sexuality and her use of perfume, it should not be ignored that given Benjy's hyper olfactory sensitivity, the smell of Caddy's perfume is also likely too overwhelming to his senses, reflecting the link between our own cultural usage of synthetic deodorizers and sprays that trigger allergic responses in humans.

Where smell is connected with social repression, olfactory control and human distress, it is also important to explore how olfaction is linked to our opinion of other people. From my exploration of Faulkner's texts, I have realized that vision, though it is our most culturally valued sense, does not appear as the most reliable or informative sense in Faulkner's literature. His characters communicate through a wide range of sensory modes, including smell, to divulge information regarding race and gendered behaviour where visibility is reduced to sensorial ambiguity. Faulkner's use of olfaction and his wider use of the senses are reflected in other Southern texts of his time period, including Flannery O'Connor's short story "The Artificial Nigger," as a means of exposing social stereotypes regarding race and gender predicated on the senses. In the texts discussed in this thesis, the process of navigating social values and perceiving

and interpreting other characters via the senses is an exercise practised, yet often ignored, in our own culture. Where gender and racial prejudices in Faulkner's literature are experienced via olfactory stimuli, it is important to see how sensory communication is used in our own society in the perception of others based on their adherence to normative codes of behaviour in society. We frequently draw a variety of conclusions regarding not only how people look, what they like to eat, touch and listen to, but we also judge individuals and groups of people based on how they smell. If my study of olfaction in relation to Faulkner's raced and gendered bodies in *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying* and *Sanctuary* has brought anything into attention, it is, I hope, that each act of sensorial interpretation needs conscious examination, since to fail to do so is to interpret Southern fiction, and by extension, our own society, through an often misogynist and racist lens.

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