

“This World is Not His World”:
Disability and Marginalization in the Novels of William Faulkner

by

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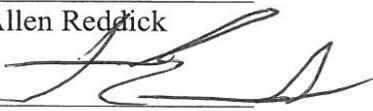
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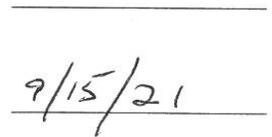
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Abstract

The novels of William Faulkner are populated with physically and mentally exceptional characters, offering diverse portraits of disability. This thesis employs the critical lens of disability studies to examine a distinct cluster of disabled characters in *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), *As I Lay Dying* (1930), and *Sanctuary* (1931). Within this trio of consecutively published novels, disability shapes male characters' physicalities (Cash Bundren and Popeye), cognitions (Benjy Compson and Tommy), and psychologies (Quentin Compson and Darl Bundren), and each manifestation of disability engenders unique social degradations and intersectionalities with other marginalized groups. Because disability disrupts the 'normal' social constructs of white patriarchy in these novels, society marginalizes disabled male characters through stigmatization, forced institutionalization, and displays of violence. Disability is a defining feature of Faulkner's South, and it figures into larger discourses on race, gender, and sexuality.

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Introduction

The amount of literary criticism devoted to the novels of William Faulkner may appear vast and exhaustive, yet emergent fields of criticism have generated new and culturally relevant reevaluations of Faulkner's work. In particular, the field of disability studies is eminently applicable to Faulkner since his novels depict a range of disabled characters, and the marginalizing effects of their disabilities are inextricably tied to the dominant Faulknerian themes of race, gender, and sexuality. Previous generations of critics have reductively credited Faulkner's use of disability (primarily in the case of Benjy Compson) as a narrative trick employed to enhance or complicate his form as a writer, yet the cultural implications of his use of disability have only recently gained traction. In examining the role of disability in literature, David Mitchell and Sharon Synder claim that "reliance upon disability in narrative rarely develops into a means of identifying people with disabilities as a disenfranchised cultural constituency," and while this may be true for a majority of writers, it cannot be attributed to Faulkner (210). From Benjy to Popeye, characters with disabilities in Faulkner's novels endure condemnation and marginalization from the society they inhabit. Faulkner exposes the conflict between white patriarchal Southern society and disability by creating "white male characters whose disabilities push them into a status of otherness," to such an extent that they align with traditionally marginalized groups, such as African Americans, women, and gay men (Hagood 28). The intersectionality of disability is concentrated in three novels, *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying*, and *Sanctuary*—published between 1929 and 1931, a period in which Faulkner appears especially consumed with disability.

The term ‘disability’ is complex, fluid, and undergoing constant revisions. Because of this, it is necessary first to establish the parameters of the term’s current meanings and connotations. The discourse on disability typically exists within two differing spheres: the medical model and the social model. The medical model attempts to diagnose, or at least to contextualize disability within the realm of medical conditions. For example, critics using the medical model may classify Benjy as a character who has a condition that is symptomatically similar to profound autism. Alternatively, the critically preferred social model views disability as a social construct, in which disability constitutes anything that compromises an individual’s participation in ‘normal’ societal behavior, thought, or appearance. In his evaluation of the social construct of disability and its function in society, Davis asserts that “the ‘problem’ is not the person with disabilities; the problem is the way that normalcy is constructed to create the ‘problem’ of the disabled person” (2). Working upon this theory, disability studies scholarship emphasizes the fact that “disabled people are an oppressed group,” not unlike other minorities, and disability studies should promote and elevate the rights and collective identity of the disabled population (Shakespeare 197). Disability is often conceptualized as manifesting in three forms—physical, cognitive, and psychological—and while these specific terms are commonly used by critics, it should be noted that they are not universal and are liable to change (‘cognitive disability’ is often interchanged with ‘intellectual disability,’ and ‘psychological disability’ has recently been modified to ‘psychosocial disability’ by some critics).

Physical, cognitive, and psychological disabilities are equally represented in Faulkner’s 1929-31 output. Each form of disability appears in two characters from

separate novels, resulting in three distinct intertextual pairings. Cash Bundren in *As I Lay Dying* and Popeye in *Sanctuary* both suffer from physical disabilities marked by deficient appendages. Cash's imperfect leg causes him to walk with a limp, and this same leg becomes increasingly disabled as the novel progresses, initiating Cash's social degradation. Although not as visible as Cash's disability, Popeye's malformed and impotent genitalia destabilizes his masculinity, race, and social viability. In *The Sound and the Fury* and *Sanctuary*, Benjy Compson and Tommy embody the spectrum of cognitive disability. These characters' stunted intelligences, which range from moderate (Tommy) to severe (Benjy), prevent them from conforming to normative white patriarchal masculinity and sexuality; because of this exclusion from the patriarchy, Benjy and Tommy's disabilities are racialized and animalized. Quentin Compson and Darl Bundren's mad intellects predominate *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*, and serve as particularly relevant portrayals of psychological disability. These characters' highly depressive and dissociative minds obstruct their ability to engage in conventional narration and socialization. Quentin and Darl's disability also reconfigures their masculinity, which results in feminization and queering.

Based on the experiences of these six characters, disability in Faulkner's South invariably generates some form of marginalization, intersectionality, and overall dehumanization. Although there is nothing inherently threatening or distasteful about the bodies and minds of these characters, they are marked disabled because they depart from the general population and complicate Southern society's conception of 'normal.' These men's disabilities are social constructs determined by, as Cash says, "the way the majority of folks is looking at him" (*As I Lay Dying* 160). The further a character

deviates, physically or mentally, from the majority, the greater the degree of societal scrutiny. The abled population is discomfited by a body or mind “that makes folks talk,” like Tull claims Darl’s psychological differences do, which results in the systemic discrimination of the disabled minority (*AILD* 45). Along with delineating the nuances of alternative bodies and minds, the disability studies approach to these three Faulkner texts reveals the entrenched societal institutions and ideologies of the South that oppose disability and seek to purge it from the public sphere. Despite being exiled to the periphery of society, Faulkner’s disabled characters remain, from a critical standpoint, among the most central and enduring of all of his creations.

Physical Disability in *As I Lay Dying* and *Sanctuary*

Despite heightened awareness and expanded definitions of disability, the term is still widely interpreted as physical impairment or deformity. Coleman-Brown views physical disabilities as “severely stigmatized differences because they are physically salient, represent some deficiency or distortion in the bodily form,” and a prominent disability routinely translates to swift discrimination (147). Faulkner’s deployment of physical disability is subtle and less glaring than some notable literary predecessors (*Moby Dick*, *Richard III*), which may explain why his physically disabled characters receive insufficient critical attention for their disabilities. Hagood observes that “Faulkner’s body of work seems surprisingly bereft of deformed character bodies...and there are very few characters with missing or deformed limbs or disfigured faces,” yet Hagood’s claim only accounts for immediately noticeable physical deformities (156). After considering the less detectable disabilities, such as Cash’s easily overlooked limp in *As I Lay Dying* and Popeye’s concealed, functionless genitalia in *Sanctuary*, physical disability becomes more apparent in Faulkner’s work. As the principal characters with physical disabilities in the 1929-31 novels, Cash and Popeye’s respective abnormalities are critical to these characters’ identities. As each novel progresses, both Cash and Popeye’s disabilities become increasingly scrutinized by society, initiating what Coleman-Brown calls “a special kind of downward mobility [of disabled individuals],” and creating an inevitable intersectionality of disability, masculinity, and race in Faulkner’s South (147).

In their inaugural narratives in *As I Lay Dying*, Jewel, Anse, and Vardaman each make reference to Cash breaking his leg after falling off the roof of the church, an

accident that precedes the events of the novel yet lingers in the Bundren family's consciousness. Interestingly, Vardaman is the first family member to describe how "Cash turns and limps up the path," revealing the minor, yet permanent disablement caused by Cash's broken leg (*AILD* 36). The immobilizing effects of Cash's disability are further addressed when Darl notices how "Cash begins to fall behind, hobbling to keep up" (*AILD* 63). Early in the novel, the presence of this limp is eclipsed by Cash's expertise as a carpenter. The indefatigable movements of Cash's saw, deftly cutting the final boards for Addie's coffin, detracts attention from his imperfect leg. Within the context of prosthesis, Cash's saw serves as an enhanced appendage, achieving the common prosthetic goal "to resolve or correct...a deviance marked as improper to a social context" (Mitchell and Snyder 209).

Cash seems intent on using his saw and tools as a means of counterbalancing the lost mobility in his leg. Cash's limp, although a seemingly marginal inconvenience, acquires greater significance after considering Cash's fixation on symmetry, precision, and keeping everything "on a balance," and it makes sense that Cash would contrive to correct his own physical imbalance (*AILD* 62). Darl exhibits an acute awareness of the prosthetic function of Cash's saw when he mentions how "the motion of the saw has not faltered, as though it and the arm functioned in a tranquil conviction...in and out of that unhurried imperviousness as a piston moves in the oil" (*AILD* 49). In Darl's description, Cash's saw and arm coalesce into a single force, and Cash's movements appear inhumanly mechanical, mirroring the mathematical and emotionless content of Cash's first narrative section in which he concisely lists the specifications of coffin construction. In fact, Cash's second and third sections (both of which still precede his second leg

fracture in the river) are strikingly bare, and both cease prematurely, with no terminal punctuation. In a sense, Cash's early narratives are structurally disabled in that they deviate from the norms established by the surrounding narratives. If Cash's early narration is viewed as disabled, and thus in need of prosthesis (according to Cash's own philosophy of balance), then his vigorous and sonorous sawing becomes even more supplementary, especially considering that "throughout the first twenty chapters every character at least mentions the symphony of sounds made by Cash as he builds the coffin," and these dominant sounds balance out Cash's weak narrative voice (Todd 52).

The rigidity and predictability of Cash's character at the beginning of the novel, denoted by his prosthetic saw and narrative brevity, undergo a radical transformation following the brothers' botched attempt to escort the wagon and coffin across the flooded river. In one of the novel's pivotal moments, the force of the wrathful current tips the wagon and dislodges the coffin, and Cash is thrown into the turmoil of the water where he re-fractures his leg. This accident intensifies Cash's physical disability and redefines his character. As Cash lies helplessly upon the bank immediately following the injury, Darl observes how his brother's face "appears sunken...as though the wetting had slacked the firmness which had held the skin full" (*AILD* 105). Cash's crestfallen features suggest that he not only realizes the extent of his new injury (based on the pain), but he also intuits his leg's eventual failure to properly heal and the degradation he will endure from being a more markedly disabled man. In his explanation of how acquired physical disability typically generates more trauma than congenital physical disability (the soldier's shock over losing an arm in battle as opposed to an individual being born with one arm), Siebers insists that "In nearly no other sphere of existence do people risk

waking up one morning having become the persons whom they hated the day before” (326). It’s not that Cash fundamentally hates people with disabilities, but he does object to asymmetry and imbalance, and physical disability is an affront to society’s traditional expectations of bodily form. The magnitude of Cash’s new injury, and the devastating reality that he will have “to limp around on one short leg for the balance of [his] life—if [he] walk[s] at all again,” according to Peabody’s eventual prognosis, has a transformative effect on Cash and his values (*AILD* 165).

Upon fracturing his leg, Cash undergoes a narrative hiatus, and his previously resonant auditory presence becomes muted in other characters’ narratives. As Cash’s brothers and Tull scramble to retrieve the scattered tools from the river, Jewel notes that “[Cash] aint talked yet” (106). The physical and mental trauma of Cash’s heightened disability renders him despondent and linguistically impotent. This childlike degradation is further demonstrated when his brothers say “ ‘Look Cash’ ...holding the tools up so he can see; ‘what else did you have,’ ” to which Cash silently turns his head and vomits, evocative of an exchange between a pre-linguistic infant and adults (not unlike Benjy’s interactions with his siblings) (*AILD* 109). In addition to his inhibited speech, Cash is completely immobilized and dependent upon his family to find his tools (the once viable prosthetics that now seem toy-like). Cash enacts the social reality that “stigmatized people become dependent, passive, helpless, and childlike because that is what is expected of them” (Coleman-Brown 152). The infantilization of Cash strips him of his former masculinity, disqualifies him from family decision-making (evidenced by his inability to dissuade Anse from pouring the cement cast), and deprives him of agency.

Cash's humbling transformation also seems to have divine implications. From the explicitly Christ-like log (symbolic of crucifixion and physical torment) to the violent baptismal submergence, the scene of Cash's accident is charged with Christian imagery. Described by Darl on page 2 as "a good carpenter," Cash's connection to Christ, however tenuous, is established early, and it would not be unfounded to view Cash's re-fractured leg as a form of crucifixion. Christian ideals are perverted throughout the novel, so if Anse serves as the ironic God of the Bundren family, then Cash's physical sacrifice guarantees that "Anse's authority has been returned to him, and the price Cash will pay is an even greater physical imbalance,"—one which reshapes not just his body, but the overall nature of his character (Todd 58). Along with his physical sacrifice, Cash also surrenders his adult authority for childlike vulnerability. His worsened state of disability and degraded status complicate the "Christian tradition of reading [physical] disability as an index of morality...as a sign of God's wrath," in which physical disfigurement is an indicator of immorality (Berube 569). Cash's experience in the river leaves him decidedly amoral, not immoral. His former compass of good and evil—of sanity and insanity, ability and disability—recalibrates toward relativity, and he never again extols the virtue of balance.

Cash's new leg injury repositions him into a more profound state of physical disability. Because of his immobility, the family "hitched up and laid Cash on top of Addie" before continuing to Jefferson (*AILD* 122). Cash's disabled body is aligned with his mother's decaying corpse, and a new type of death begins to compound the oppressive mortality surrounding the Bundrens' journey. In her assessment of society's merciless stigmatization of individuals with disability, Coleman-Brown claims that

“stigma represents a kind of death—a social death,” and Cash’s decline from a successful carpenter to a helpless child undoubtedly signifies the death of his normal adult life (155). As the only actual child in the family, Vardaman is now Cash’s closest social peer; yet, even Vardaman begins distancing himself from Cash’s disabled sphere of existence. Vardaman differentiates his own abled-bodiness from Cash’s disability by remarking that “Cash has a broken leg. He has had two broken legs...Dewey Dell hasn’t got a broken leg and I haven’t...Cash can’t walk because he has a broken leg” (*AILD* 132-33).

Vardaman later observes how “Cash’s leg and foot turned black” as a result of the application of the cement cast (*AILD* 154). The black coloration of Cash’s leg, most likely a symptom of infection and reduced circulation, is racialized when Vardaman tells Cash, “Your foot looks like a nigger’s foot” (*AILD* 154). Vardaman’s observation underscores the complex and inevitable intersection of disability and race, especially within the context of the South. Although the experiences of disabled individuals and African Americans are uniquely different, Titchosky emphasizes that “Both disability and race can be understood as terms used against their bearers...To be disabled, to be racialized...is to be positioned on the borders of what has come to be regarded as human” (273). Cash’s disability tinges him with blackness, literally and figuratively, and this association with African Americans is the ultimate social death in white patriarchal Southern society.

Relegated into the furthest periphery of society, Cash is forced to rely on linguistic prosthesis (rather than physical) to assert and legitimize his existence at the end of the novel. After a significant absence, Cash’s narration returns after Darl’s permanent

removal, and Cash's final two sections are similar to Darl's in that they are sustained, observant, and laced with what Hagood calls "nonnormative thinking" (123). Radically different from his early narration, Cash's final sections exhibit the mental animation likely stimulated by his physical disability. Cash's mind, and the language it generates, becomes a prosthetic force, counterbalancing the inefficiency of his body. Hagood acknowledges the prosthetic element of these narratives, saying "Cash's assuming the predominant narrative control...fulfills the prosthetic role Darl has heretofore held," and while this is true, it neglects the transformative effect of disability on Cash, and simply reduces Cash to Darl's placeholder (121). Although Cash's musings may not be as cryptic or poetic as his brother's, they do reveal insights on social constructs and exclusion. Reflecting on Darl being sent to Jackson, Cash concludes:

"Sometimes I aint so sho who's got ere a right to say when a man is crazy and when he aint. Sometimes I think it aint none of us pure crazy and aint none of us pure sane until the balance of us talks him that-a-way. It's like it aint so much what a fellow does, but it's the way the majority of folks is looking at him when he does it" (*AILD* 160).

When applied to disability, Cash's words explain how conceptions of normal (or abled) are determined by the majority. Cash's own experience with disability likely contribute to his grasp of the "constructedness of normality and abnormality" (Hagood 122). Cash achieves Coleman-Brown's expectation that stigmatized individuals with disability can "regain their identity through redefining normality" (154). By the end of the novel, Cash has not necessarily embraced his physical disability, but his unique experience as a disabled individual helps redefine his perspective and suggests he will lead a productive life.

Contrasting Cash's experience with acquired physical disability, Popeye's physical abnormalities in *Sanctuary* are congenital, and his identity has been entrenched in disability since birth. The extent of Popeye's disability is gleaned gradually, culminating in the revelation that he is sexually impotent. However, the congenital source of Popeye's unnatural physicality isn't confirmed until the novel's inclusion of his family background and origin in the final chapter. Although never explicitly stated in the text, there is a critical consensus that Popeye contracted syphilis in utero, producing the early symptoms of poor eyesight, short stature, delayed verbal and motor skills, hairlessness, digestive intolerances, and of course his underdeveloped genitalia—the most disabling of his ailments because it means that “he will never be a man, properly speaking” (*Sanctuary* 242). Biologically, a man's primary and most instinctual function (and ability) is to sexually reproduce, so “[Popeye's] impotence—his inability to ‘make love’ and to create life” may have cultivated his disdain for life (Creighton 260). Unlike Cash, whose body transitions from abled to disabled, Popeye's body is labeled by Creighton as “congenitally deficient,” thus rendering him “deficient of humanizing traits” (261). While critics such as Creighton are quick to dismiss Popeye's disability as simply being a bodily symbol of his evil aura and misanthropic actions, the cultural complexities of Popeye's disability and its effect on his social identity deserve greater consideration.

In the novel's opening scene, Popeye wears his trademark black suit, of which he has an “innumerable” amount, and “His skin [has] a dead, dark pallor (*Sanctuary* 180, 2-3). Framed as a peripheral figure in opposition to Benbow's whiteness, Popeye is easily mistaken for being black during his initial exchange with Benbow. Perhaps mirroring the experience of the reader, Benbow assesses Popeye and thinks “He smells black.” and he

later reflects upon “Popeye’s black presence lying upon the house” (*Sanctuary* 4, 96). Popeye “affects the characters as if he is black, there is no doubt that he is white,” which means that, similar to Cash, Popeye is assigned with blackness because of the stigmatization of his physical differences, further emphasizing the conflation of disability and race in Southern society (Guttman 25). This reoccurs when Temple imagines that she “was a teacher in school and [Popeye] was a little black thing like a nigger boy” in the moments preceding his rape of her with the corncob (*Sanctuary* 174). It’s likely that Temple equates Popeye’s physical impotence with the social impotence of black citizens. Temple’s perception of Popeye confirms Garland-Thomson’s claim that society assumes “disabled and dark bodies are supposed to be dependent, incomplete, vulnerable, and incompetent bodies” (365). Interestingly, this list of attributes is also applicable to children, which may account for why Temple also infantilizes Popeye in her mind.

Described as “lurking about” Goodwin’s property “like a sullen and sick child,” with his “little, doll-like hands” and “arm...no larger than a child’s,” Popeye’s childishness becomes equally as evident as his blackness (*Sanctuary* 87, 2, 184). Perhaps even more devastating than his childlike physicality, Popeye’s sexual impotence and alcohol intolerance disqualify him from the two traditional benchmarks of adult manhood, which consigns Popeye to “the periphery of white Southern male culture,” despite his efforts to immerse himself in the business of bootlegging and prostitution (Guttman 27). His most immediate associate at Goodwin’s house is Tommy, another childlike man who is defined by a cognitive disability (which limits his intellectual capacity). Popeye and Tommy often appear together in the novel’s early scenes and are both ostracized by the other members of Goodwin’s bootlegging ring. Popeye resents

this undesirable pairing since he sees Tommy's cognitive disability as more inherently childlike and inferior to his own physical impairments. Popeye is often hostile and demeaning toward Tommy, and his murder of Tommy, along with being a necessity to get to Temple, may also be Popeye's attempt to eliminate an external reminder of the disability community to which he belongs. Goodwin's house acts as a sanctuary, so to speak, for disability (Popeye, Tommy, blind Pap), and in reference to the premises' frequent inhabitants, Ruby admits "I cook for crimps and spungs and feebs" (*Sanctuary* 5). In Popeye, "we see a man whose own disability...does not cause him to be sympathetic to other people with disabilities," as Hagood notes, and just as Cash acquiesces to Darl's seizure by the state hospital, Popeye provides another important example in Faulkner where disability is, often by choice, an isolating and solitary experience rather than one of collective identity (151).

Unwilling to find solace or affirmation in human interactions, Popeye resorts instead to prosthesis to promote a semblance of adulthood and manhood. As seen earlier with Cash, prosthetics are commonly used among individuals with physical disability, and just as Cash exerts power through his saw and tools, Popeye does the same with a few notable phallic substitutes. Popeye appears to be a skilled marksman, and he keeps his pistol near his body at all times. His propensity for murder demonstrates his desire to use the pistol for its intended function, perhaps offsetting his disused genitalia. Just after killing Tommy (and immediately before raping Temple), Popeye turns toward his victim and "waggled the pistol slightly and put it back in his pocket," further demonstrating the pistol's phallic overtones (*Sanctuary* 81). However, Popeye's primary sexual prosthetic, with which he performs the rape, is a corncob. Instead of belying his impotence, the

corncob only accentuates Popeye's physical impairment, demonstrating "the failure of prosthetics to do anything positive in this novel" (Hagood 139). Although not as prominent as the corncob, Popeye's cigarettes, which he smokes profusely throughout the novel, serve as another feeble prosthetic attempt to create an illusion of masculinity. Ultimately, prosthesis proves ineffectual, and Popeye remains unable to transcend the social confines of disability.

While all physical disability arouses some degree of social alienation, Popeye's impotence is especially contemptible because it contradicts society's expectations of masculinity. Although several characters suspect his sexual inability, Temple and Reba are the only ones who voice derision about his condition. Temple repeatedly accuses Popeye of not being a man, and Miss Reba admits:

"I knew it all the time...a young man spending his money like water on girls and not never going to bed with them. It's against nature. All the girls thought it was because he had a little woman out in town somewhere, but I says mark my words, there's something funny about him. There's a funny business somewhere" (*Sanctuary* 203).

In deeming Popeye's celibate existence as unnatural, Miss Reba excludes him not just from the masculine realm, but from humanity in general. This dehumanization is partially addressed by Bleikasten, who notes how "[Popeye] appears and disappears instantly," and likens him to "a demon or a phantom exempted from the laws of time and space" because of his uncanny stealth and voyeuristic tendencies (231). However, the novel seems to situate Popeye more as an animal/subhuman nuisance, and less as the preternatural force suggested by Bleikasten. When describing Popeye's movements through her brothel, Miss Reba mentions how he "goes on upstairs on them cat feet of his," and later in the novel Temple dismisses Popeye as a "little runt" when he tries to

intimidate her at the dance hall (*Sanctuary* 167, 185). To the women most acquainted with his disability, Popeye's abnormal body signifies an animal inferiority. This tendency to dehumanize disability is a trend in Faulkner's novels and likely stems from the enduring mid-nineteenth century ideal that "abnormality was that which pulled humanity back toward its past, toward its animal origins" rather than forward toward an evolved, unblemished embodiment (Baynton 20).

By the end of the novel, Popeye chooses execution over the possibility of continuing life with his particular disability and enduring further dehumanization. Wrongfully accused of a murder while driving through Alabama (though guilty of numerous other murders), Popeye rejects the efforts of a Memphis lawyer to acquit him, preferring instead to hang. When the lawyer asks "Do you want to hang? Is that it? Are you trying to commit suicide?" Popeye casually replies, "Jesus Christ...beat it now" (*Sanctuary* 248). Popeye's insincere invocation of Christ, paired with the fact that he was ironically born on Christmas Day, suggests that Popeye's death at the end of the novel acts perhaps as another symbolic crucifixion of a disabled body, though Popeye's lacks the sacrificial and transformative elements of Cash's. Popeye's self-induced death does not quite evince a "horrifying irreverence for the sanctity of life," as claimed by Creighton, but rather it demonstrates the hopelessness and passivity of a disabled individual in a society that strives to expunge abnormalities from its midst.¹ Seconds before letting Popeye fall to his death, the sheriff jokingly declares, "Sure I'll fix it for you," and although this is a reference to Popeye's hair, the sheriff's remarks also

¹ Faulkner revisits this phenomenon a year later in *Light in August* (1932) through the character of Joe Christmas. Popeye likely serves as a forerunner of Christmas, especially considering Christmas' racial ambiguity, sexual deviation, and public castration/death.

seem to be directly addressing the South and its socially constructed problem of disability (*Sanctuary* 249).

Through the characters of Cash and Popeye, Faulkner depicts two divergent examples of physical disability. Despite a shared experience of social degradation, especially in terms of the intersectionality of disability, race, and masculinity, Cash and Popeye's respective disabilities dictate two very different fates. While Popeye willingly succumbs to a violent death, Cash learns to accept his embodiment and expresses no lasting resentment toward society. In the penultimate paragraph of *As I Lay Dying*, Cash reveals that half a year has passed since the events of the novel, as he comments that new Mrs. Bundren's gramophone is "pretty as a picture, and everytime a new record would come from the mail order and us setting in the house in the winter, listening to it, I would think what a shame Darl couldn't be to enjoy it too" (*AILD* 182). Based on this image of the congregated family, Cash has resurrected from his social death, and he is once again an integral member of his family and presumably society. It is not a difference of external symptoms which elevates Cash over Popeye (disabled leg vs. disabled genitalia), but rather the radically different cause of his disability. Congenital disability, such as Popeye's, results in permanent social condemnation, whereas the stigmatization of acquired disability diminishes over time. Susan Wendell explains this crucial distinction between congenital/chronic disability and acquired disability:

"Blame and responsibility for our disabilities are more persistent issues for unhealthy than for healthy people with disabilities. Although people disabled by accidents that they themselves caused or risked unreasonably may be blamed at first for their disabilities, that blame does not usually follow them for long, perhaps because their disabilities are relatively stable...In contrast, people with chronic illnesses are likely to be blamed or held responsible" (169-70).

This differentiation demonstrates that social hierarchy exists within the sphere of disability, and these types of categorizations may explain Cash and Popeye's resistance toward any collective disabled identity. For these two characters, social survival is dependent upon their individual relationship to what society constitutes as normal. Interestingly, within the broader spectrum of disability in Faulkner's novels, physical disability is more socially acceptable than both cognitive and psychological disability.

Cognitive Disability in *The Sound and the Fury* and *Sanctuary*

An individual with a cognitive disability typically experiences some form of impaired brain function that results in below-average intelligence and irregular sensory and information processing. Although this type of disability may have certain physical manifestations, it is foremost a mental abnormality, and affected individuals are stigmatized primarily for their delayed or stunted mental development. During the early twentieth century, labels such as “idiot” and “imbecile” were clinically and socially acceptable when referring to someone with a cognitive disability, and “even the term ‘mongoloid idiot’ to describe a person with Down’s syndrome was used as recently as 1970s not as a pejorative term but in medical texts” (Davis 13). Within this historical context, Faulkner’s choice of the 1929 title *The Sound and the Fury*—a Macbethian allusion confirming that Benjy Compson’s section of the novel is intended to be “a tale told by an idiot”—adheres to the standards of the time period, although the term “idiot” has since been purged by the disability studies movement. Along with being Faulkner’s most identifiable disabled character, Benjy Compson is the epitome of what Hagood calls “The Faulknerian idiot,”—a type of character recurrent in other Faulkner novels who is “cognitively disabled in ways that affect his (all these characters are male) speech, his movements, his emotions, and the look in his eye” and “seems to lack a level of intelligence that would make him normal” (88).

Benjy’s specific cognitive disability is complex and multidimensional, but the most evident symptom of his condition (and the most disabling) is an absence of verbalized linguistic expression. Benjy’s attempts to vocalize his thoughts and yearnings produce an unintelligible sequence of bellows that frightens and disturbs other characters.

This inability to sensibly articulate incites both personal frustration and societal repercussions, exemplified during Benjy's violent interaction with the girls walking past the Compson fence:

“They came on. I opened the gate and they stopped, turning. I was trying to say, and I I caught her, trying to say, and she screamed and I was trying to say and trying and the bright shapes began to stop and I tried to get out” (*The Sound and the Fury* 35).

While the urgency and vitality of Benjy's internal monologue are conveyed to the reader, the exact nature of his mind remains unplumbed by other characters. Because Benjy's “lack of language signifies lack of thought,” his linguistic impotence and unnatural vociferations are accepted by society as proof of an inferior mentality and overall vacuity (Truchan-Tataryn 166). Luster crudely devalues Benjy's condition while talking to one of the show workers, explaining that “He cant tell what you saying...He deaf and dumb...Been that way thirty three years today...Born looney” (*SF* 33). Of course, Benjy is able to intake and mentally reiterate auditory language (albeit his vocabulary is limited); however, his processing and compartmentalization of language and sensory experiences is unconventional and problematic when compared to individuals with neurotypical minds.

The means by which Faulkner executes Benjy's unusual mentality attracts the majority of scholarship and remains disputed among critics of disability studies. Truchan-Tatryan believes that the criticism of Benjy has not evolved with shifting understandings of disability, asserting that “[Benjy] illuminates not the (lack of) subjectivity of a cognitively impaired individual in lived experience but rather imaginings projected upon a population denied agency and voice by...narrative texts” (163). Interestingly, in his assessment of Benjy, Hagood reacts to Truchan-Tatryan's

article and takes a differing stance. Acknowledging the paradox of trying to provide a realistic voice to the voiceless, Hagood praises Faulkner's attempt to "give us the 'secret' world of Benjy Compson's consciousness—life as seen by the inscrutable other," and that by "*approximating* what may be in Benjy's mind," Faulkner forces the reader to negotiate the realities of cognitive disability (93, 98). While both of these points deserve consideration, an equally crucial aspect of Benjy's experience lies not in the accuracy or idiosyncrasy of his narration, but rather in the ways in which Southern society strives to depreciate and expel the disruptive presence of Benjy and his cognitive disability.

Similar to the social degradation engendered by physical disability, Benjy's cognitive disability renders him infantilized, racialized, and dehumanized. Whereas Cash and Popeye's degradations appear incrementally, Benjy's are foundational to his existence, beginning with his name change. Aside from sparing Uncle Maury the humiliation of being the namesake of a disabled child, the substitution of 'Maury' with 'Benjamin' signifies the Compsons' efforts to delegitimize Benjy's place in the family and deny his potential for mental/social maturity. Instead of providing Benjy with age-appropriate stimuli and socialization as he transitions into adolescence and adulthood, the family confines him to a perennial childhood. Mrs. Compson frequently calls Benjy "the baby," despite his increasing age, to which Dilsey remarks "You calling that thing a baby...A man as big as T.P" (*SF* 7). The Compsons assign Luster, a teenager, the role of Benjy's primary caretaker (despite being nearly twenty years Benjy's junior). This pairing exposes what the disability movement identifies as the "uneasy relationship between disability and dependency" (Feder Kittay 308). Luster's immaturity and insensitivity create a physically and verbally abusive environment for Benjy. When

Benjy is disruptive or obstinate, Luster either “whips him” (as though Benjy is an animal), or further provokes him with comments such as, “You want something to beller about. All right then...Caddy. Beller now. Caddy” (*SF* 11, 37). Luster and Benjy’s unhealthy dynamic typifies the caregiver/dependent relationships common prior to the advent of disability rights. The contemporary disability movement advocates for a high level of dignified independence for the disabled, as opposed to being treated as an “infantilized object” deprived of agency (Feder Kittay 309). As Feder Kittay further notes, this “demand for independence for disabled people relies heavily on the availability and compliance of caregivers,” and Luster, because of his age, understandably lacks both the availability and compliance necessary to provide Benjy with opportunities to transcend his childlike existence (309).

In addition to perpetuating Benjy’s infantilization, the relationship between Benjy and Luster also reinforces the intersectionality of disability and race. Luster’s treatment of Benjy frequently resembles fraternal teasing, with Benjy functioning as Luster’s younger brother within the black Gibson family. Confined to the Compson property and barred from white patriarchal society, Benjy experiences levels of alienation and segregation typically imposed on African Americans. When Jason describes “Ben and that nigger hanging on the gate like a bear and a monkey in the same cage,” he is acknowledging the commonality of Benjy and Luster’s restrictive, dehumanizing experiences (*SF* 165-66). Because of Benjy’s altered cognition, he is largely unaffected by his own racialization and the derision it attracts, and he seems incapable of conceptualizing racial hierarchy. Benjy shows no predisposition to white patriarchal thought, and his narration is mostly dismissive toward race. Despite Hagood’s claim that,

based on certain grammatical and syntactic conventions in his narrative, “Benjy is, at least on the inside, much more one of the [white] folks than is Luster,” Benjy’s internal language actually differs from other white male characters in terms of race, especially compared to Jason. Benjy never identifies the race of other characters, and, excluding direct quotations, he abstains from using racial epithets. When encountering new, nameless characters, Benjy implements racially ambiguous pronouns. Upon seeing a group of Luster’s acquaintances in the branch, Benjy observes how “They were washing down at the branch. One of them was singing,” and the fact that “they” are African Americans only becomes apparent based on their subsequent dialogue (*SF* 10). Immediately following this interaction, Benjy abruptly shifts his attention to a group of white golfers searching for a ball, describing how “They looked along the branch. Then they went back up the hill” (*SF* 11). This indiscriminate use of the pronoun “they” disorients the reader and blurs racial identity. Benjy’s innate disregard for race is a transgressive feature of his disability, which immunizes him from racial indoctrination, yet ultimately jeopardizes his existence in Southern society.

Benjy’s deviation from societal expectations attracts scrutiny, especially from other white males. The sight of a cognitively disabled man like Benjy is deemed a social impropriety, prompting one passing golfer to complain “folks don’t like to look at a looney” (*SF* 13). Perhaps more than anyone, Jason believes “it don’t take much pride to not like to see a thirty year old man playing around the yard...lowing like a cow whenever they play golf there,” and he actively limits Benjy’s presence in the yard, often commanding Luster to “take [Benjy] round to the back” (*SF* 146, 123). Jason’s insecurity largely stems from Benjy’s prior assault of one of the white neighbor girls—an

unintentionally harmful action which the Compsons and Mr. Burgess use as justification for Benjy's castration. Along with eliminating Benjy's physical/sexual urges, thus preventing future incidents, the emasculating procedure also evinces a general societal effort to eradicate cognitive disability from future generations. Referencing the traction of the eugenics movement in early twentieth-century America, Oswald explains how "Benjy's sterilization emblemizes his family's eugenic effort to prevent him from passing on tainted blood" (294). Beyond castration, the perceived solution for individuals like Benjy, who "can't behave [themselves] like folks," is institutionalization in a state hospital and permanent isolation from society (*SF* 10). Jason emerges as a zealous proponent of institutionalization, often obsessing over it in his narrative. Instead of "robbing the state asylum of its star freshman," Jason intends to send Benjy to Jackson (*SF* 151). This advocacy of institutionalization is voiced to a lesser extent by other white males, like Miss Quentin's red-tied suitor, who asks, "Why don't they lock him up," (*SF* 33). The allure of institutionalizing the cognitively disabled originates from the eugenic ideology that "all feebleminded people were potential criminals," not unlike the baseless accusations of criminality made toward African Americans during the same period. State facilities like the one in Jackson became society's "catch all for 'problematic populations' that are deemed socially undesirable or dangerous" (Ben-Moshe 124, 127).

Even without consulting the Compson appendix, in which Faulkner confirms Benjy's eventual institutionalization, it is evident that Jason will fulfill his personal commitment of sending Benjy to Jackson. Jason idealizes the prospect of unburdening himself and society from cognitive disability, but his campaign for institutionalization is temporarily stalled by Mrs. Compson's reluctance:

“I says if they’d sent him to Jackson at first we’d all be better off today. I says, you’ve done your duty by him; you’ve done all anybody can expect of you and more than most folks would do, so why not send him there and get that much benefit out of the taxes we pay...I says you’d better be sure and not let me know you’re gone because I’ll sure have him on number seventeen that night...” (*SF* 146).

Assuming Benjy is sent to Jackson following his mother’s death, it is likely that his quality of life will further deteriorate, since “those incarcerated (in institutions or prisons) with labels of intellectual and developmental disabilities may in fact lose crucial life skills that they had before they were imprisoned” (Ben-Moshe 122). Although Benjy’s life at the Compson homestead is already highly restrictive, a relocation to the state hospital in Jackson may result in the erasure of the limited agency, skills, and comforts he possesses. For example, thirty-three-year-old Benjy reveals his ability to undress himself (seemingly without Luster’s assistance) when he says, “*I got undressed and looked at myself*” (*SF* 49). This is notable—especially considering Benjy’s inability to perform other rudimentary functions such as feeding himself—but it may be unlearned in Jackson. Furthermore, confined in a locked room at the state hospital, Benjy will be deprived of the outdoor mobility and socialization afforded to him at home, where he at least has agency to traverse the fence line and collect jimson weeds. Without daily exposure to the Compson property and its sensory reminders of Caddy, Benjy will experience reduced mental stimulation, potentially leading to an inhibition of his internal monologue. Ultimately, institutionalization will nullify Benjy’s selfhood and leave him with a profound sense of loss. Jason’s false assumption that “If they’d just sent him to Jackson while he was under the ether, he’d never have known the difference,” encapsulates the inhumane rationale behind society’s rampant institutionalization of the cognitively disabled (*SF* 172).

Regardless of the underestimation his condition, Benjy does in fact know the difference between physical states of being. Through a preternatural sense of smell, Benjy detects substantial alterations in his family members' bodies. He smells the presence of terminal sickness and death, first in Damuddy and later in Mr. Compson, and he even detects Caddy's transition from virginity (which he associates with the scent of trees) to sexual activity. Although Benjy grasps neither the social nor biological ramifications of lost virginity, his proclamation of "I couldn't smell trees anymore and I began to cry" displays his general discernment of, and opposition to, physical change and loss (*SF* 27). Interestingly, only Dilsey and Roskus, the elder members of the Gibson family, remark on Benjy's olfactory sensitivity. Appraising Benjy's uncanny sense of smell, Roskus insists that "[Benjy] know lot more than folks thinks...He knowed they time was coming, like that pointer done. He could tell you when hisn coming, if he could talk. Or yours. Or mine" (*SF* 21).

Like Roskus, critics note the overt canine quality of Benjy's sense of smell. Making the argument that "Faulkner *convokes* and *fuses* tropes of idiocy and caninity in a single figure: an idiot-dog hybrid," Oswald expounds upon ways in which "Benjy's sensual nature...associates idiocy with a domestic yet mongrel animality (289, 296). Truchan-Tataryn also identifies Benjy's sense of smell as one of his "canine analogues" (166). Unmentioned by critics, however, is the possibility that Benjy's penetrative sense of smell may function as a prosthetic force—one that compensates for his mental limitations by endowing him with levels of perception unattainable to others. The synesthetic capabilities of Benjy's senses, which allow him to "smell the bright cold" and "hear it getting night," further establish the argument for sensory

prosthesis (*SF* 5, 48). Benjy's super-sensory experience prefigures the types of elevated consciousness achieved through psychoactive drugs in later decades, suggesting that his alternative perception is actually (r)evolutionary, and not atavistic. Unfortunately, this transcendent feature of Benjy's cognitive ability is generally interpreted as being another animalistic attribute.

The animalization of the cognitively disabled reappears in *Sanctuary* through the character of Tommy. Although Tommy's cognitive disability is exceedingly less pronounced than Benjy's, he is still dehumanized—enough so that he subconsciously “self-identifies as dog” (Larson). Tommy's extensive use of the expression “I be dawg” indicates an awareness of his inferior status among the men at Goodwin's house (*Sanctuary* 13, 14, 36, 52). Most of the male characters at Goodwin's belittle Tommy, but none more than Popeye. Expecting canine obedience from Tommy, Popeye commands “Dont think...You've got along forty years without it. You do what I told you” (*Sanctuary* 35). When Tommy obstructs Popeye's path to Temple in the barn, Popeye “laid his hand flat on Tommy's face and thrust him back,” as one would an intrusive dog, before eventually murdering Tommy (*Sanctuary* 81). Tommy's submission to Popeye's dehumanizing, dog-like treatment supports Larson's assertion that “Tommy assumes a dog-master relationship with Popeye.” Despite Popeye's personal experience with disability, as discussed in the previous chapter, he refuses to equate Tommy's cognitive disability with his own physical disability. It is likely that Popeye, as an impotent man, resents the fact that a cognitively disabled man like Tommy possesses sexual potency; so, by framing Tommy as a neutered dog, Popeye delegitimizes Tommy's sexual viability and bolsters his own. Popeye is aware that if

Tommy were to harness and exert his sexuality, then Tommy's humanity and masculinity would be validated, and Popeye's would be compromised.

The arrival of Temple creates further friction between Tommy's disability and his sexuality. Similar to Benjy, Tommy's limited cognition prevents him from fully understanding his own sexuality, and the sexual maturity of his adult body contends with the childlike innocence of his mind. Although Tommy is physically attracted to Temple, he is unsure how to act around her. During his initial encounter with Temple, as he guides her and Gowan to Goodwin's house, Tommy displays a mixture of chivalrous concern and sexual curiosity. Noticing Temple's struggling gait, Tommy suggests that she remove her heels to alleviate her discomfort, but his attention then instinctively shifts to her body:

“He looked at Temple again with his pale, empty gaze. His hair grew innocent and straw-like, bleached on the crown. Darkening about his ears and neck in untidy curls. “She’s a right tall gal too,” he said. “With them skinny legs of hern. How much she weigh.” Temple extended her hand. He returned the slipper slowly, looking at her, at her belly and loins” (*Sanctuary* 31).

The inclusion of the word “innocent” suggests there is nothing sinister in Tommy's initial appraisal and sexualization of Temple's body. His carnal interest in Temple is mild and nebulous compared to the sexual aggression of Goodwin, Van, and Popeye. Upon witnessing the other men's predatory behavior, Tommy adopts a new refrain—“Durn them fellers” (*Sanctuary* 50, 53, 59). At first, this phrase seems to be a condemnation of the men's depravity, but after considering Tommy's cognitive disability, he might actually be voicing his frustration over his lack of sexual knowledge, and the feelings of exclusion from the masculine realm that this ignorance creates. Tommy is not so much agitated by the men's interest in Temple as he is at not understanding *why* they're

“pesterin” her (*Sanctuary* 51). When the other men notice Tommy good-intentionally offering Temple dinner, Van jokes, “He’s trying to get his with a plate full of ham,” but Tommy, not comprehending the sexual implications, asks “Git my whut?” (*Sanctuary* 50). During the same scene, as the men exchange stories of promiscuity, Tommy sits idly and “With the top of his mind he listened to them”— a description which underscores the purity and superficiality of Tommy’s thoughts (*Sanctuary* 51). If, as Hagood suggests, “one rule remains the same [at Goodwin’s]....that of heterosexual male lust,” then Tommy falls short of this white patriarchal code by exhibiting limited knowledge or appreciation of his own lust (137). Cognitively unable to engage in sexual discourse (or intercourse), Tommy subconsciously senses his own demasculinization and marginalization, and he consequently endeavors to access his latent sexuality, however unsuccessfully.

Temple’s presence at Goodwin’s arouses “that acute surge” in Tommy, “like his blood was too hot all of a sudden,” a sensation indicative of his growing sexual desire and jealousy (*Sanctuary* 59). As these sexual impulses begin to crystallize, Tommy indiscreetly peers into Temple’s room on her first night at the house, closely monitoring her movements. His voyeuristic fascination with Temple compels him to watch her undress into “her scant undergarments,” and listen to the “faint, steady chatter of the chucks inside the mattress where Temple lay” (*Sanctuary* 53). Deduced from the other men’s conversations, Tommy understands that the obscure act of sex requires intimacy, which explains why he becomes increasingly protective over Temple when Goodwin, Van, and Popeye enter her room. Although Larson sees this behavior as further evidence of Tommy’s caninity, labeling him as Temple’s “watchdog” when she hides in the barn,

Tommy's protective posturing is actually more reflective of a desire for sexual possession than asexual guardianship. While alone in the barn with Temple, Tommy voices his misguided intention to consummate his new sexuality when he tells Temple that "Lee says hit wont hurt you none. All you got to do is lay down..." as he assertively places "his hand clumsily on her thigh" (*Sanctuary* 79). However, Popeye's sudden appearance in the barn flusters Tommy, causing him to abandon his sexual ambitions and resume his former dog-like subservience; Tommy unquestioningly obeys Popeye's order to turn around and face the house, as Popeye pulls out his pistol. Popeye's murder of Tommy serves as retribution for Tommy's attempted transgression of the sexual restrictions placed upon the cognitively disabled. Also, assuming Popeye subscribes to the popular eugenic ideology of the time, his murder of Tommy can be viewed as a preventative measure against the genetic proliferation of cognitive disability.

The desexualization of Tommy and Benjy reflects society's fear and distrust of the sexuality of cognitively disabled men. Initially presented as asexual and physically harmless, similar to prepubescent children, Tommy and Benjy are punished for expressing intimations of adult sexuality. Benjy's castration and Tommy's murder are irrevocable and disproportionate penalties for relatively minor sexual infractions. Based on "the popular conception of cognitively disabled men as hypersexualized," there is an unfounded assumption that Tommy and Benjy, upon showing their first sexual inclinations, will inevitably become physically unbridled men² who are liable to commit rape (Freeman Loftis 476). In the context of Southern society and the "historical

² Another notable example of a hypersexualized cognitively disabled character is Lenny in Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* (1935). It seems plausible that Steinbeck drew inspiration from Benjy.

discourses surrounding rape and racism,” the perception of cognitively disabled men as potential rapists aligns with white patriarchal fears of black male sexuality (Freeman Loftis 475-76). Tommy and Benjy’s racialized sexuality threatens societal ideals of white womanhood, which may explain why Temple, as the embodiment of this womanhood, misidentifies Tommy as “that black man” on multiple occasions (*Sanctuary* 32, 38). Both Tommy and Benjy breach the sanctified physical spaces of young virginal white women (the passing school girls/Temple). In the case of Benjy especially, these types of white women are the presumed victims of future hypothetical sexual infringements in which they might be corrupted by “the source of Benjy’s disability...the defective blood he inherits” (Oswald 293). Similar to miscegenation, cognitive disability destabilizes Southern society by compromising ‘normal’ white heredity and sexuality.

Unlike Cash and Popeye’s physical disabilities, both of which have traceable origins, Benjy and Tommy’s cognitive disabilities stem from indeterminate causes. Predating any clinical understanding of abnormal cognition, the Southern society in these two novels adopts the theory that cognitive disabilities arise from contaminated bloodlines and sinful progenitors. An adamant spokeswoman for this theory, Mrs. Compson construes Benjy’s cognitive disability as “punishment enough for any sins I have committed,” and the foremost sin, in her opinion, is her decision to marry and procreate with Jason Compson III, whose genealogy she considers to be corrupted (*SF* 68). Mrs. Compson defames her children’s paternal Compson lineage, ultimately citing Benjy’s condition as proof that the family has lost the “fight against bad blood” (*SF* 69). Mrs. Compson’s association of cognitive disability and blood evokes an even greater hereditary fear among white patriarchal families—the introduction of African American

blood into the genealogy. This fear is realized in *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) as the formerly white, aristocratic Sutpen family terminates with Jim Bond—a black, cognitively disabled male heir, and the emblem of Thomas Sutpen’s sins. Although Jim Bond appears to be a close reincarnation of Benjy (both characters are nonlinguistic), the crucial difference of course is that Jim Bond is both cognitively disabled and black. The final scenes of *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!*—both of which contain outcries from the cognitively disabled characters—prove that racial identity significantly alters the experience of cognitive disability, even when two individuals of different races (Benjy and Jim Bond) have commensurate disabilities. While Benjy emits a wail that is “agonized, eyeless, tongueless; just sound,” Jim Bond produces a “howling with human reason since now even he could know what he was howling about” (*SF* 208, *Absalom, Absalom!* 300). The contrast between Jim Bond and Benjy in these scenes addresses a larger need to examine cognitive disability through the black experience.

Psychological Disability in *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*

Psychological disability comprises any condition characterized by abnormalities in emotional, behavioral, and mental regulation. The contemporary “biopsychiatric medical model” of psychological disability relies on pharmaceutical/therapeutic treatment for a diverse spectrum of diagnoses, such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, PTSD, and schizophrenia (Lewis 103). Prior to this medical compartmentalization, society labeled psychologically aberrant individuals as uniformly “crazy”—a term applied to both Quentin Compson and Darl Bundren (*SF* 92, *AILD* 164). This generalization of psychological disability may explain why Quentin and Darl are the two most symptomatically aligned characters of any disability-pairing in Faulkner’s 1929-31 novels. Both men are unable to productively socialize and assimilate into society because of their depressive and dissociative thought patterns. A distinct stigmatization develops around Quentin and Darl’s hyper-contemplative dispositions, since any man who “thinks by himself too much” (of which Tull accuses Darl)—in mental estrangement from the majority—is suspected of madness (*AILD* 46). Quentin and Darl’s madness marginalizes them from white patriarchal roles, especially heterosexual masculinity.

Quentin is mentally consumed by societal constructs of sexuality, masculinity, and virginity. In addition to his monomaniacal obsession with Caddy’s lost virginity (a loss which he feels partially responsible for), Quentin dwells on the delayed retention of his own virginity, and its social consequences. Quentin realizes that his irregular psychology limits his desire for sex, and he worries that his lack of participation in normative heterosexuality will compromise his masculinity. Because Southern society

correlates active sexuality with manhood, Quentin conceals his asexuality by claiming he's had sex "lots of times with lots of girls," and he even chooses to fabricate an incestuous relationship with Caddy rather than confront his sexual inexperience/ambivalence (*SF* 100). Addressing Quentin's preoccupation with sexuality and masculinity, Floyd Dobbs suggests that "Quentin's sexual anxiety and concerns over his own ineffectuality as a man also arise naturally from the mores of post-war Southern society," and the South's need to reestablish male dominance after an emasculating defeat (376). Ironically, Quentin's efforts to exert Southern heterosexual masculinity only exacerbate his inherent effeminacy. After Caddy loses her virginity to Dalton Ames, Quentin attempts to defend his sister's honor, but he "passed out like a girl" while trying to fight Ames (*SF* 108). In a similar encounter, when Quentin threatens to reveal Herbert Head's unsavory past to Caddy, Head condescendingly tells Quentin "Your hand here look at it its just out of the convent" (*SF* 73). Even during his tenure at Harvard, geographically removed from the South and its strict ideals of masculinity, Quentin is still feminized by other men. Miller determines that "Quentin's psychology is different from that of most of the men around him in that it is shaped so conclusively by and within the domestic sphere," and this sphere is traditionally associated with femininity (43). In response to Quentin's femininity and sensitivity, his Harvard classmates assign Quentin the domestic role of a wife by "calling Shreve [Quentin's] husband" (*SF* 52). Beyond feminization, this allusion to a homosexual relationship demonstrates society's tendency to queer psychologically disabled men (*SF* 52). Hints of homoeroticism surround Quentin's physical encounters with other men, from his bloody altercation with Gerald Bland to his more tender moments with Shreve, whose "hand touched [Quentin's]

knee again” in the backseat of Bland’s car (*SF* 97). The intersection of disability and Queer studies is logical, since “People with disabilities are often understood as somehow queer;” yet in the case of Faulkner, this statement applies almost exclusively to characters with psychological disability (McRuer 400).

Isolated as “the one that folks say is queer,” Darl is also subjected to homosexualization (rather than desexualization) as a result of his psychological disability (*AILD* 15). While the term ‘queer’ historically denotes strangeness and abnormality, it becomes endowed with more modern connotations after considering society’s scrutiny of Darl’s sexuality and masculinity. Although Darl never reaches Quentin’s level of feminization and homoeroticism, “he queers the boundaries between masculinity/femininity” because of his noncompliance to gender roles, and there is the possibility that “Darl’s queerness is sexualized through his forced penetrations into other’s consciousnesses” (Southard 48-9). Darl’s abnormalities are also (homo)sexualized by other characters. Because of his unmanly psychology, Darl is the only Bundren brother who receives censure for his bachelorhood, particularly from Tull and Cora. Southern society correlates “strange intellectualism and questionable manhood,” which explains why Tull and Cora consider Darl’s intellectuality to be an indicator of homosexuality (Southard 50). Tull prescribes heterosexual marriage as a remedy for Darl’s potential homosexuality, saying “Cora’s right when she says all he needs is a wife to straighten him out...nothing but being married will help a man” (*AILD* 46). Tull’s use of the word *straighten* is notable, considering its connotations with sexuality and Queer studies. When Cora claims “I always said Darl was different from those others...only one of them that had his mother’s nature, had any natural affection,”

she is differentiating Darl's femininity/homosexuality/domesticity from his brothers' masculinity/heterosexuality (*AILD* 13). Similar to Quentin, Darl's psychology alienates him from other men, and even Cash admits he can "see all the while how folks could say he was queer" (*AILD* 81).

In addition to their intersection with queer identity, Faulkner's psychologically disabled characters also converge with the immigrant/refugee experience. Quentin's mental detachment is paralleled by a spatial detachment from his home in Mississippi. Although Quentin conforms ethnically with Harvard and its environs, his identity as a Southerner creates sensations of cultural and geographical disorientation typically experienced by immigrants. On the day of Quentin's narrative, he forms a camaraderie with a non-English speaking Italian immigrant girl with whom he identifies. Because of her status as an immigrant, the girl draws rebuke from the locals, including a store owner who cautions Quentin about "Them foreigners," (*SF* 84). Mentally and socially, Quentin feels like a foreigner himself, and he expresses solidarity with the girl by repeatedly calling her his "sister"—a designation which, aside from evoking Caddy, places Quentin within the universal family of immigrants. Not unlike the Italian girl's language barrier, Quentin's misunderstood psychology impedes his ability to communicate and to adapt to society. The comparable experiences of Quentin and the girl emphasize how "the concept of disability was instrumental in crafting the image of the undesirable immigrant" in the late 19th/early 20th centuries (Baynton 26). Immigrants during this period were commonly classified as physically or cognitively disabled, yet Faulkner associates immigration with psychology, perhaps because of the relationship between

mental disunity and spatial displacement. Ultimately, Quentin attains neither mental nor spatial orientation, and he is persistently haunted by the “thought of home” (*SF* 58).

Echoing Quentin’s pangs of displacement, Darl plaintively muses, “How often have I lain beneath rain on a strange roof, thinking of home,” which appears to be his subtle allusion to his immigrant-like experience as a soldier in Europe during WWI (*AILD* 52). This integral part of Darl’s past is critically overlooked, even by Hagood, who insists that what is “problematic still, from a ‘clinical’ standpoint is that Darl actually has *no* backstory” (127). Darl does have a backstory, but he seems to intentionally omit any direct mention of his war experience, probably as a result of the psychological trauma it inflicted. Considering the modern understanding of PTSD in veterans, it would be natural for Darl to repress his memories of war. He can only approach the trauma after detaching from his own being; in Darl’s final section, after he mentally dissociates into third-person narration, he discloses “Darl had a little spy glass he got in France at the war” (*AILD* 176). Ironically, it is during this same narrative section that Darl is being transported to Jackson for institutionalization, commencing yet another environmental disorientation, and another “strange roof” for Darl to familiarize himself with. Like Quentin in Massachusetts, Darl’s mental unrest is accentuated by physical/spatial destabilization. As these characters lose the elusive sense of “home,” their minds descend into psychosis.

Quentin and Darl’s psychological deteriorations are heralded by outbursts of laughter. While being confronted for their unlawful transgressions (Quentin’s alleged “kidnapping” of the immigrant girl and Darl’s barn burning), both men begin laughing irrepressibly. Their laughter conveys an irreverence for societal codes and laws, and

those that uphold these laws interpret the laughter as evidence of derangement. Unable to suppress his laughter while being arrested, Quentin is deemed “crazy” by one of the officers:

“ ‘Oh’ I said. Then I began to laugh. Two more boys with plastered heads and round eyes came out of the bushes, buttoning shirts that had already dampened onto their shoulders and arms, and I tried to stop the laughter but I couldn’t.

‘Watch him Anse, he’s crazy I believe.’

‘I’ll h-have to qu-quit. I’ll stop in a mu-minute. The other time it said ah-ah-ah,’ I said laughing...After awhile the laughter ran out, but my throat wouldn’t quit trying to laugh...” (*SF* 92-3).

As Darl is subdued by state hospital workers, he succumbs to a similar fit of involuntary laughter, which is equally admonished. Cash notes the impropriety and discomfort caused by Darl’s laughter:

“He began to laugh again...He couldn’t hardly say it for laughing. He sat on the ground and us watching him, laughing and laughing. It was bad. It was bad so. I be durn if I could see anything to laugh at” (*AILD* 164).

Hagood concludes that “it is easy to read Darl’s laughing...as his final breakdown, his ultimate shattering into schizophrenia,” and although this diagnosis is disputable, Darl’s laughter, like Quentin’s, signifies the breakdown of mental and narrative cohesion (117). Immediately following Quentin’s outbreak of laughter, his narration abandons grammatical and structural conventions, as he lapses into a prolonged memory of Caddy’s lost virginity and the subsequent confrontation with Dalton Ames. This portion of Quentin’s narrative reflects the increasing fragmentation of his mind and ephemerality of his identity:

“you are
Quentin
my mouth said it I didn’t say it at all
Ill give you till sundown” (*SF* 106).

Quentin's radical stylistic shift makes it difficult to distinguish between speakers, which further illustrates how his psychological disability erodes his sense of identity. Near the end of his section, Quentin struggles to reconcile his disjointed sense of self, as he thinks, "I was. I am not. Massachusetts or Mississippi," and this sense of unreality likely hastens his imminent suicide (*SF* 115). Darl expresses similar existential concerns, admitting "I don't know if I am or not," and his identity is irrevocably fractured in his final narrative section (*AILD* 52). Mentally exiled to third-person, Darl's mind dissociates from his physicality, creating an illusion of two separate Darls. Watching himself from afar, Darl observes how "Darl has gone to Jackson, they put him on the train laughing" (*AILD* 176). Darl then mimics society's incredulity over his behavior by asking himself, "what are you laughing at?" (176). Southard partially answers this question, concluding that Darl's laughter stems from "his astonishment at the absurdity of his family's behavior," but Darl is more likely laughing at the general futility of trying to exist in a society that refuses to tolerate his psychological differences (58).

Darl's committal to Jackson demonstrates society's reliance on institutionalization to expel the presence of psychological disability (just as it does with cognitive disability). Vardaman summarizes the simple causality of Darl's fate when he says, "*My brother he went crazy and he went to Jackson*" (*AILD* 174). Since "*lots of people didn't go crazy,*" as Vardaman states on the same page, then the minority who do go "crazy" are systematically institutionalized to preserve the values and lifestyle of the sane majority. The reason for Darl's institutionalization transcends his destruction of Gillespie's barn; the barn burning only serves as an opportune justification for the Bundrens to send Darl to Jackson. According to Southard, the more significant reason

for institutionalization, from a societal standpoint, is Darl's ambiguous sexuality, which goes "beneath the mask of a clear gender binary;" Darl's subversion of gender roles threatens Southern masculinity and sexuality, and the "punishment for this threat is institutionalization; madness here becomes a social weapon to eliminate threatening members from society" (60). However, even more threatening to society than Darl's sexuality is his penetrative knowledge of the concealed sexual transgressions of others, and his desire and ability to expose these secrets. Darl knows of Dewey Dell's premarital sex with Lefe and her pregnancy, and he knows that Jewel is the product of Addie's adulterous affair with Whitfield. Darl's knowledge jeopardizes Dewey Dell and Jewel's status within the family and society, since the revelation of their secrets would result in their own marginalization. Because Dewey Dell and Jewel would benefit most from Darl's institutionalization, and have the most to lose if he remains, they both zealously assist the state hospital workers in the seizure of Darl. Dewey Dell displays uncharacteristic energy as she "jumped on him like a wild cat so that one of the fellows had to quit and hold her and her scratching and clawing at him like a wild cat," and Jewel holds Darl down while saying, "Kill the son of a bitch" (*AILD* 163-4). The siblings' aggressive restraint of Darl reflects Southern society's effort to defend its pretense of normative, moral sexuality. Darl is institutionalized not just for his own publicized deviances, but also for his ability to detect and unearth the hidden deviances of characters that surround him. Essentially, because of the inherent intellectuality of his psychological disability, Darl knows too much and is punished for it.

Contrasting Darl's compulsory institutionalization, Quentin chooses to commit suicide—a fate often associated with individuals who have untreated/mistreated

psychological disabilities. In their recent study on the ethics of suicide, Steffen and Cooley claim that “Those who are too depressed or have some other mental condition...can neither rationally choose nor commit rational suicide,” which means that Quentin’s abnormal psychology skews his thoughts toward self-annihilation, and that there is no rational agency in his choice (198). Quentin’s depression and dissociation on June 2, 1910 obscure his decision-making and narration throughout the day, and there are only scattered moments of rational thinking or clarity. Although he has premeditated the logistics of his suicide (the flatirons), his final resolve hinges on the recollection of a cryptic conversation with Mr. Compson. This back and forth transaction between father and son— recalled by Quentin on the penultimate page of his narrative—appears to contain Quentin’s veiled suicidal threat:

“...and i suppose i realize what you believe i will realize up there next week or next month and he then you will remember that for you to go to Harvard has been your mothers dream since you were born and no compson has ever disappointed a lady and i temporary it will be better for me and for all of us and he every man is the arbiter of his own virtues” (*SF* 118).

When Quentin suggests to his father that he will “realize what you believe,” he is referring to Mr. Compson’s agnostic, deterministic philosophy, one that would ideologically permit Quentin to kill himself “next week or next month.” Rather than affirm the inherent worth and importance of his son’s life (which Quentin desires), Mr. Compson appeals instead to the Southern societal stigma created by a family suicide, and how it would interfere with Mrs. Compson’s “dream.” Quentin’s insistence that his death would “be better for me and for all of us” is typical suicidal rhetoric in which one envisions the world benefitting from their absence. Mr. Compson dismisses his son’s suicidal language, and he ultimately condones whatever decision Quentin chooses. As

the spokesperson of Quentin's idolized South, Mr. Compson sympathizes more with a declining Southern society than he does with his ailing son. Miller's argument that "with suicide [Quentin] manages a sort of Modernist expression of the problems of Southern history" suggests that Quentin's suicide acts simply a repudiation of his father and Old Southern values, yet this argument neglects the psychology underlying Quentin's suicide (45). Quentin's depression overrides his reason and causes Quentin to devalue his existence. Quentin believes he has no place in Southern society (past nor present), normative masculinity, active heterosexuality, Massachusetts, or anywhere else. His conversation with his father convinces Quentin that he will not be missed, and Quentin irrationally uses this memory to induce his suicide. Apart from the likelihood that "(Dilsey would say) what a sinful waste," no family member will suffer any lasting agony over Quentin's loss (unlike how Caddy's loss effects Benjy and Quentin), and the suicide will only create occasional inconvenience (*SF* 60). Quentin identifies no purpose in his existence, and he convinces himself that the termination of his consciousness is the only relief for his psychological anguish.

In a moment of authorial transparency, Faulkner (veiled in the character of Shreve) poses the question, "Did you go to Psychology this morning?" (*SF* 67). In the context of the novel, this question addresses Shreve's concern over Quentin's avoidance of psychology class, but on a larger scale Faulkner seems to be challenging his readership to approach Quentin as a psychologically distinct character—one whom Faulkner reconfigures a year later in the character of Darl. Faulkner's implementation of these psychologically abnormal characters is not revolutionary (especially considering the ubiquity of Freud at the time), but it does suggest his prescience of the enduring cultural

importance of psychology in the century to follow. Psychological disability is the most recent addition to the disability studies movement, and the affected population is gradually achieving justice, advocacy, and collective identity. Addressing the current state of the psychologically disabled population, Price notes “many persons of the mad movement identify as psychiatric system survivors,” because of the prevailing misconception that a “mad person needs to be ‘cured’ by some means” such as prescription drugs, institutionalization, and manipulation by mental health/insurance establishments (334, 336). Although it would be difficult to determine how/where Quentin and Darl would fit into the contemporary movement, it seems likely that they would feel less isolation and find some level of solidarity, since psychological disability has become less stigmatized and more people are now willing to acknowledge and share their own psychological differences. As with any form of disability, psychological disabilities are relative to what constitutes the majority, and the growing number of diagnoses of psychological conditions has resulted in some level of normalization and acceptance. While pondering the dynamic relationship between psychological disability and humanity, Cash concludes, “It’s like there’s a fellow in every man that’s done a-past the sanity or the insanity, that watches the sane and insane doings of that man with the same horror and the same astonishment” (*AILD* 164).

Conclusion

The examination of disability in Faulkner's 1929-31 novels illuminates Southern society's marginalization and discrimination of individuals with physical, cognitive, and psychological abnormalities. Faulkner's disabled characters occupy intersectionalities with other disenfranchised groups, resulting in a compulsory subordination to 'normal' white patriarchal hegemony. If, as Davis suggests, the mission "for a developing consciousness of disability issues is the attempt, then, to reverse the hegemony of the normal," then Faulkner's narratives of disability succeed to some extent in upending white patriarchy and validating the disabled experience (12). By including at least two prominent characters with varying disabilities in each of these novels, Faulkner normalizes disability and elevates its role in the social discourse. Faulkner's portraits of disability include a diverse range of mentalities and embodiments, challenging the unrealistic societal ideal of a collectively normal mind/body. Most importantly, "Faulkner often presents disability as pressuring whiteness and maleness," traits which constitute the most privileged identity in Southern society (Hagood 28). Although each disabled character is a white man, their respective disabilities diversify their identities and demote them into lower social spheres; consequently these characters become victims of an unjust society rather than perpetrators of one.

The overwhelmingly tragic fates of Faulkner's disabled characters—from the premature deaths of Quentin, Tommy, and Popeye to the institutionalization of Benjy and Darl—may appear antithetical to Faulkner's personal artistic ambition to "help man endure," as expressed in his Nobel Laureate speech. However, the social survival of Cash offers evidence, however minimal, that disabled individuals have the potential to

endure, even within restrictive societies. More than any other character, Cash understands that arbitrary social constructs tend to shift and evolve, and a person's ability or disability is always relative to the society in which they inhabit. Reflecting on Darl's institutionalization, Cash rationalizes that "This world is not his world; this life his life," implying that in a better "world"—a more enlightened society with different constructs of normal—Darl would not be regarded as disabled and would attain agency over his life (*AILD* 182). Cash's statement addresses the essential nature of disability studies:

"How societies divide 'normal' and 'abnormal' bodies is central to the production and sustenance of what it means to be human in society. It defines access to nations and communities. It determines choice and participation in civic life. It determines what constitutes 'rational' men and women and who should have the right to be part of society and who should not" (Meekosha and Shuttleworth 189).

Relative to the standards of the 1920s South, Faulkner's disabled characters are abnormal and irrational, and therefore they are degraded, dehumanized, and (apart from Cash) disinherited from society.

After evaluating the treatment of disability in *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying*, and *Sanctuary*, it becomes easier to trace the advancements and stagnations of disability rights and advocacy over the last century, and to assess the general status of disability in contemporary American society and literature. Faulkner's novels help us determine which forms of disability have become less stigmatized, and which forms are still mishandled and misunderstood by society. For example, a person with Benjy's disability would currently be guaranteed educational rights and professional assistance, yet a person with Quentin's disability may be prescribed ineffective drugs and still have no other recourse but suicide. Fortunately, the emergence and growth of disability studies as a critical discipline has led to increased awareness of "the politics inherent in

disabled people's lived experience and the multiple sociocultural factors that can constrain their agency," which has resulted in several notable, publically-embraced novels in recent decades that portray main characters with disabilities (Meekosha and Shuttleworth 190). The majority of these current depictions of disability, especially those related to the Autism spectrum, are indebted to Faulkner. Although there is little evidence that Faulkner was personally invested or affected by disability rights/advocacy in his lifetime, his revolutionary depictions of disability, and the literary upheaval they would inevitably create, remain relevant and influential, especially as 21st century American literature becomes increasingly defined by the diversity of its characters and authors.

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