

A TALE OF SIGHT AND SMELL SIGNIFYING DEATH:
BENJY COMPSON REVISITED

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ABSTRACT

This essay refutes the long-standing idea that Benjy Compson in Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury is merely an idiot. Instead of focusing on the issue of his language or his concept of time, an analysis of his surveillance techniques reveals Benjy's various strategies as he exercises his power. The application of Michel Foucault's theories concerning the powers of the disciplinarian gaze forces a change in the terminology with which criticism has labeled Benjy. By the end of the essay, a re-conceptualization of Benjy's character occurs through a simple change of words: passive to active. This change opens up new doors of understanding and suggests that Benjy is a highly manipulative agent of surveillance, instead of the traditional view that he is a simple, bellowing man-child.

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I cannot explain my deep felt gratitude to Mark Boren who for the last year has helped me to become a better writer and thinker. The constant revisions, meetings, and conversations have helped me to understand literary criticism and to invent and communicate ideas.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother Diane Price who, when I decided to major in literature, gave me her old battered, much scribbled in copy of The Sound and the Fury.

INTRODUCTION

As English Departments engender the next round of literary critics and professors, the ambitious young scholar searches for a niche in his or her area of study. Today, a student often finds his or her “new” insights into a favorite Faulkner text have already been approached, written about, debated, and even cast aside as passé. Those seeking to burst through the critical barrier of referees to the esoteric club of the “published” must sometimes wade through hundreds of critical documents in the hope that his or her idea has not been discussed at length. When approaching William Faulkner’s The Sound and the Fury and its critical reception, I discovered this novel had been analyzed by all sorts of critics: structuralist, post-structuralist, feminist, new critic, and so on. And yet I soon learned, Faulkner criticism, as it stands today, is in a stasis of sorts; largely, this position can be traced to the fact that most published essays on the text utilize much of the same source material, most notably Andre Bleikastan, Cleanth Brooks, and Michael Millgate. All three of these Faulkner scholars contributed extraordinarily to the canon of criticism surrounding Faulkner studies, but with each inclusion of their work and the repetition of confirming or rejecting ideas from their respective seminal books, the “new” criticism becomes more and more recursive as a result of the weight each new subsequent essayist gives these “Fathers” of Faulkner criticism.

The Faulkner scholar today suffers greatly from the anxiety of influence; taking his or her idea and Faulkner’s text as the love-object, he or she is forced to endeavor to commit critical patricide to make him or herself heard. Instead of charting all three critics’ works and their domination of the critical field of Faulkner studies through time, I will use Andre Bleikastan and his book The Most Splendid Failure to illustrate this point

and, subsequently, to offer a way beyond such impasses.

Andre Bleikastan writes prophetically: “The amount of unnecessary repetition is enormous, critical commonplaces abound, and like so much Faulkner criticism, many discussions on The Sound and the Fury are founded on the disabling misconceptions about literature in general and modern literature in particular” (Most Splendid vii). In 1976 after the first tidal wave of Faulkner studies broke, this statement was a jab at the churning motion that charted the ideas within Faulkner criticism. Bleikastan proceeds to sum up the evolution of Faulkner criticism well enough to make one abandon future work in the field altogether. The necessary first breakthroughs initiated the comparison of the novel to the fall of Southern aristocracy (Arthur Kinney Critical Essays on William Faulkner: The Compson Family) which was followed by the perfunctory Freudian analysis in Carvel Collins’ essay “The Sound and the Fury: The Tragedy of the Lack of Love” that argues that Benjy is the id, Quentin the superego, and Jason the ego. A later link in the critical chain included mythological parallelisms (Richard Adams Faulkner: Myth and Motion). We can look back on these first essays with slight bemusement at how obvious they seem, but importantly these first essays began a discourse in which one speaks of Faulkner’s creations and accredited his work a certain legitimacy within the literary canon. Each of these early discussions paved the way for criticism to follow and created the foundation to explore ideas utilizing existing critical language. To give another example, Lawrance Thompson in 1953 writes an essay titled “Mirror Analogues in The Sound and the Fury” that postulates “the persistent allusions to mirrors in The Sound and the Fury would seem to invite the reader to notice that Faulkner has adapted the ancient literary mirror device and mirror principle to his own peculiar purposes”

(211). For today's literature student who faces the further domination of the field by literary theory, we see the word "mirror" and impulsively think Lacan! This response is exactly what Deborah E. Barker and Ivo Kamps did in their essay "Much Ado About Language and Desire in The Sound and the Fury" forty years later when they use Thompson's mirror-images to argue in Lacanian terms that "none of the brothers are able to negotiate successfully the mirror stage" of child development (373). Here, the reader chronicles the transformation of an idea using historical precedence and, subsequently, observes the morphing of that concept, with a new knowledge map, to elaborate a reoccurring image in Faulkner's text.

Within the progression of ideas that occur in Faulkner studies, the above example illustrates that although original criticism of Faulkner occurs, it generally does slowly and not without significant indebtedness to previous critics. Bleikastan observes the problem throughout literary analysis; critical study slows to a crawl because everyone is reading everyone else, thus bringing a certain similarity to the new essays produced. Perceiving the repetitiveness of Faulkner criticism, Bleikastan sets out to revolt--as much as a structuralist can--against this tradition; he changes the dialogue, elevates it to a position outside historicity and away from biography, and creates an environment in which Faulkner's novel can breathe on its own. Paradoxically, The Most Splendid Failure brought new life into Faulkner criticism, but Bleikastan created anew a domination within the field--the one thing he set out originally to destroy.

Today, an analysis of Faulkner without dealing with Bleikastan in some way is extremely difficult to do. Critics have stayed within Bleikastan's general idea of focusing on Faulkner's language and reasserting--sometimes unknowingly--the general analysis

presented in his book. Thus, although Barker and Kamps conclude the three brothers maneuver through the Lacanian Mirror Stage, they ultimately, end with a Bleikastanian assertion for example that in Benjy's section there is "no distinction between I and non-I" (Most Splendid 71). Even though Barker and Kamps try to create a new "onion-peel of interpretation" (to borrow from Roland Barthes), they cannot fully break away from Bleikastan, and at the end of their examination on Benjy, they conclude the formation of the Benjy-I is lacking, which is precisely Bleikastan's point. The Most Splendid Failure is extremely important in the diachronic experience of Faulkner studies, but Bleikastan, and others, have become the shibboleth of Faulknerian criticism, ironically to the detriment of the generation of new knowledge.

While I do not deny the need to probe Faulkner's use of language, the coin does have another side, which I call the "situational." Even when the French theory revolution was assimilated into the critical discourse of The Sound and the Fury, it only solidified the new circle of linguistic-based analysis, and Faulkner's characters took a back seat to the critics' desire to understand language as system and specifically Faulkner's use of it. I advocate an informed return to intra-textual issues, principally, the characters themselves, admitting they swim on and within Faulkner's performative language, but not letting the primary focal point only be the performance of language. I propose an analysis of the characters within their environments and situations with other textual characters, not treating them as "alive" but as functioning, constructed textual personalities, with all requisite acknowledgements to critical developments in theory. This idea adheres to the conceit of Barthesian theoretic of the text, and yet while not focusing on the mode of language or the primacy of the Text in and of itself, this "situational" reading suggests the

constant attention to the intra-textual characters and tries not to press them into an ideological function or to let a critical meta-text overly suffocate them.

Granted, like the majority of scholars, I am invested in the romantic idea of criticism as a creation of new knowledge from a primary text. However, in The Sound and the Fury, critical usage of outer textual material has not adhered to a metonymic usage but, within Faulkner's novel, has slipped into metaphor for the meta-textual material. For example, many attempts by early critics suggest that Benjy Compson is a Christ figure; sure, Faulkner plays some reference games here, but one wonders at validity of critically casting Benjy too strongly into the role of anyone else, especially Christ. Instead of appreciating Christ as a "suggested" metaphor, critics working on this image tried to transform Benjy into a Southern Christ himself, citing as evidence Benjy's age (33); the novel's ending on Easter Sunday, 1928; and his castration as crucifixion. Within this perspective, Benjy is suffocated by approaches that say more about the continual importance of Christian symbolism than about Benjy Compson.

Approaching Faulkner through a situational lens focuses on characters in relation to themselves, their constructions, and their fictive environment, which I believe leads the critic to insights that respect both Faulkner's text and meta-textual methodology. Surprisingly, my approach--informed by structuralism's post-structural theoretical context--also respects the characters of the novel as characters and reveals the true power of these characters. Discourses of power are actually among those least discussed in The Sound and the Fury criticism; not surprisingly, however, the historicity of power relations outside the text have had analytical dominance in the hope that the critic demonstrates the historical pressure that forms the novel (see for example Thadious M. Davis's "Jim

Crow' and The Sound and the Fury”). Related to such historical perspective exists the investigation of sexual/gender power essays that try to prove all women have enormous power over their male counter-parts, or that the female form is the catalyst for destruction due to male fear. While these topics have been discussed, they, like the meta-textual structuralist criticism and archetypal criticism before it, have privileged a superimposition of methodology over the text.

Within the critical context our ideas of power have been greatly influenced by the work of Michel Foucault who, from 1962 to 1982, devoted a career to the theoretics of institutional power and the formation of the subject, and yet every major figure in the French Theory revolution has been discussed in relation to The Sound and the Fury except Foucault, whose work has been ignored probably because of the non-linguistic focus of his writings. Foucault's writings tend to be concerned with institutional structures and the use or foundation of the subject; he investigates the situation of the subject to understand the modality of institutional power.

In this study, Foucault's ideas will be explicitly discussed as a backdrop to the situational aspects of Faulkner's characterization allowing me to further probe the mechanism of power's discourse within the text, once the characters themselves determine the structure and methodology of their own analysis. In doing so, I respect the primacy of the literary text over Foucault's theory, using it as a partial structural metaphor.

A TALE OF SIGHT AND SMELL SIGNIFYING DEATH: BENJY COMPSON REVISITED

Critics and readers have perennially termed William Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury a text that defies convention with characters who escape definition, but since the inauguration of the novel's critical reception in 1950s, the character Benjy Compson has been called an "idiot" so consistently that one wonders at the validity of the claim regarding Faulkner's definition-defying characters or the willingness of his critics to reassess their beliefs. Benjy's consistent characterization is understandable given that Faulkner, at times, himself describes Benjy as "the idiot."¹ One interview in Lion in the Garden includes Faulkner's explanation: "The only emotion for Benjy I have is grief and pity for mankind. You can't feel anything for him because he doesn't feel anything . . . He serves his purpose and is gone . . . He was an animal" (245-6). Over time, critics have concurred with Faulkner's characterization, and criticism of Benjy has evolved into the image of Luster's leading Benjy by the arm and searching for their anticipated quarters of interpretation in the branch of the text. The stasis of this character within criticism suggests an inertia supported by tradition, but a successful reconfiguration of Benjy, which is crucial to understanding how he textually functions, depends on the reader's checking the linearity of time and language at the door and immersing him or herself in a re-imagined world in which Benjy can be understood as he is, not as the critically-informed have learned to read him. This essay argues that to understand Benjy anew is to unveil some rather startling things about the act of reading, the nature of familial love, the intricacies of textual power, and the desperate struggle for control that occurs in the very act of reading itself.

To begin with, we must first reject the traditional, limiting notion of Benjy's idiocy in order to show how he is a character of specific cognizance; his mental acuity adheres to a strict guideline of rules which have pattern and predictability. The most discussed elements of Benjy's idiocy are the style of Benjy's illustrious "scene shifting" and narration; this jumping back and forth between present and past has created a cottage industry of essays charting these scene shifts.² Most recently, Robert Parker "recharts" the scene shifts, but quixotically, in the introduction, he writes, "the first section of The Sound and the Fury lies in the scene shift's extraordinary mix of anarchy and system" (4).³ Now is the time in the criticism of The Sound and the Fury to remove "anarchy" from this statement. While Parker is the most recent example, such double-speak regarding Benjy's chapter has not rung true for some time. Critics from Joseph Warren Beach (1941) to Parker (1996) have acknowledged that Benjy's section has structure; placing the elements of the text in sequence demonstrates order and an existence of structural time. Benjy's chronology, however, is related only to himself, and the reader must accept, assimilate, and maneuver within the character's organizational methodology. Beach's and Parker's works are provocative, but their emphasis is on understanding the present-to-the-past scene shifts, instead of focusing on the flashbacks for characterization.⁴ Although the charting of these shifts is interesting, the device is only a technical tool for Faulkner and is, in itself, limited as a means to understand Benjy who is not concerned with the present; all he cares about is the past. The shifts are windows-- nothing more.

For example, when Benjy finds Ms. Quentin by the swing in the present day, he is transported back to a moment when Caddy is on the swing (Faulkner 47).⁵ Ms. Quentin

does not matter to Benjy, but her presence is the catalyst which connects him to a significant past event. Later when Benjy is caught on the fence with Luster in 1928, the interior eddy of Benjy's visual memory cycles to the time when Caddy and he are in same position (4). Therefore, although a logical current of events exists between the instigating present event and the scene shift, the reader cannot concern himself overmuch with the actions on April 7, 1928; those occurrences function as signposts--like the swing and the gate--to comprehending the past. Andre Bleikastan points out in Benjy's section, "the past may be turned into an implicit comment upon the present, the present an ironic reminder of the past" (The Ink of Melancholy 68). However, Bleikastan misses that Benjy does not bellow about Jason's stealing, Ms. Quentin's escape, or his mother's unhappiness; essentially Benjy "patterns according to his central concern: virtually every remembered episode consists of other's conversations about him or of the incidents in which his sister Caddy plays a prominent role."⁶ The reader must slip into Benjy's shoes and adapt to Benjy's patterns because the character's *modus-operandi* lives in his memory, and thus to truly understand the character and how he functions textually, we must seek him there.

Before we do so, we must dispel another critical myth. Language, or Benjy's lack thereof, is another traditional indicator used to argue for Benjy's idiocy. Bleikastan relates: "Benjy's speech is indeed Faulkner's attempt to . . . verbalize the non-verbal" (64). In this statement, we find the dominant misconception of Benjy's character. The reader's desire for Benjy to "speak" in our language has, in fact, silenced Benjy, but his bellows, as Faulkner constructs them, are a form of articulate communication. If we assume the act of speaking pivots on hearing and interpreting, Benjy does speak a

language.⁷ Luster understands Benjy's "lingual" bellows (55), and Caddy responds to Benjy when she is preparing for a date, demonstrating a bilingual dialogue taking place within the text (42). Recently, Stacy Burton anchors the misconceptions of Benjy's concept of time and language in an argument against the idea of Benjy's idiocy. In her article, she suggests that "Criticism to date has tended to slight or even dismiss the dialogic context in which Benjy Compson lives and tries to speak" and more importantly asserts that "critics have tended to respond to the challenge of his [Benjy's] puzzling discourse by seeing it as Faulkner's formal experiment rather than Benjy's narrative" (208, 214). While Burton's essay is important in Benjy's critical reconstruction, the essayist chooses to play on the home-field of past criticism, when what is most needed is a change of venue. The analysis of Benjy should move to another field of inquiry--one with different equipment for investigation.

Michel Foucault provides a fecund and wholly untapped resource for the investigation of Benjy's character through the concepts of surveillance techniques and power.⁸ In his book Discipline and Punish and other essays on penal methodology, Foucault investigates how European culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries developed the power of incarceration and torture to create a community of "docile bodies" (135-69). Unlikely as it may at first appear, Foucault's description of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon is a particularly fruitful concept to reassess the character and function of Benjy. Foucault explains that the Panopticon is:

A ring shaped building in the middle of which there is a yard with a tower at the center. . . In the central tower there is an observer. Since each cell faces both inside and outside, the observer's gaze can transverse the whole cell . . . So everything that a individual does is exposed to the gaze of an observer who watches through shuttered windows or spy holes (Essential Works vol. 3, 58).

Bentham's placement of the tower allows surveillance of the institutional subjects, and given its placement and size, the surveyed people are aware they are being watched.⁹ This description of the Panopticon illumines the physicality of Benjy who is a "big man who appeared to have been shaped of some substance whose particles would not or did not cohere to one another or to frame which supported it" (Faulkner 274) and whose "shadow was higher than Luster's on the fence" (4). This human "tower" within the Compson household functions as a supreme site of textual surveillance; specifically, Benjy's height and eyes (spy-holes) provide a vantage point from which the reader observes the actions within the text. Bentham notes that the tower could be made out of "the most convenient scantlings of the timber" (39); its physical construction does not matter so much as its social function as a vector of power. Similar details coincidentally echo Faulkner's description of Benjy as a mental scantling; he is a "thing" (9) and a "baby" (8), which imply Benjy's mental acuity is composed of simple material. And yet, Faulkner gives the lead chapter--a quarter of his most famous work--to a simpleton who forces the reader to perceive the narrative through his own unimpaired vision.

The physical appearance of Benjy as an architectural tower is reinforced visually when Caddy, walking with Benjy in the cold, instructs him to keep his hands in his pockets (5). Here, Benjy is the structural image of the Panopticon; from an elevated seat of power, he and the reader observe his subjects and survey the Compson household. Foucault's theories of the Panopticon are particularly important in seeing Benjy as a narrative device in a discourse of textual power. The power of Benjy, however, does not seek the docility of the Compsons nor the propagation of his own supremacy; Benjy's power is observation itself. This power of his gaze leads Roskus to make his own

observation that Benjy “know lot more than people think” (Faulkner 31).

From the first line of the novel, Benjy’s Panoptic function controls his own “culture” through a discourse of surveillance.¹⁰ The first paragraph of his section tellingly serves as an induction into Benjy’s life. As Benjy looks through the fence at the golfers, the reader witnesses the relentlessness of his observation, “Then they went on, and I went along the fence. Luster came away . . . And we went along the fence and they stopped and we stopped and I looked through the fence” (3). From behind the fence, he stalks the golfers. This first paragraph, written as a transcript of events, illustrates an energetic observer fascinated by his prey. Although the pasture has been sold to pay for Quentin’s education, Benjy includes it in his world and subjects it to his surveillance; Luster knows this fact, “He still think they own this pasture. Cant nobody see down here from the house” (19). The movements of Benjy in relation to the golfers is the first evidence of Benjy’s narrative function: he sees, tracks, records, and by doing so structures the domain of his narrative.¹¹

As Benjy’s handler or attendant, but also as a subject of Benjy’s gaze, Luster indicates a dual role for the seen subject who is also a part of the seeing apparatus. In Foucauldian terminology, this “see/being seen dyad” remarks on the inability of the viewed subjects to observe the watchmen in the tower; Foucault calls this event the dissociation of the dyad (202).¹² In contrast, Benjy and Luster explicitly form a cohesive duality--a relationship only latent in Foucault’s system--which nonetheless concurrently allows for Benjy’s supremacy within the dyad configuration. Luster sees Benjy watching him, both aware of the other; however, Benjy’s elevated narrative lens records and classifies, a skill which Luster lacks. Essentially, as Dilsey remarks, “It’ll be in the Book

honey, Writ down” (58). In the text, Benjy demonstrates a supreme power: he “does not need to create life but rather possesses it with striking immediacy” (Kartiganer 25). Indeed, all the evidence of Benjy’s culture of surveillance, which the reader and the critic need for making interpretation, is chronicled in his section.¹³

A major narrative advantage that Benjy’s position and condition allow is his invisibility, precisely his ability to watch a person directly in front of him without being acknowledged. Throughout his section, he moves through the Compson household, listening and recording, in effect mapping the boundaries of his text and organizing the relationship between people, but others appear not to notice him at all. The conversation between Roskus and Dilsey about the lack of luck on the Compson estate suggests Benjy’s invisibility; Roskus tells Dilsey, in Benjy’s presence, “They ain’t no luck on this place. I seen it at first but when they changed his name I knowed it” (29). Roskus’s philosophy that the Compson plight is tied to the renaming of Benjy is one of the few explanations for the family’s downfall. In this case, Benjy’s invisibility serves as a highly profitable tool for gathering information from the servants of the estate about his family. Benjy moves behind the demarcation line of servant/master to view all sides, and his ubiquitous presence illustrates to the reader how he influences certain aspects of the Compson family. For example, Benjy’s observance of Dilsey’s control of Ms. Compson supports a servant/master dichotomy shift. After Benjy burns his hand, his mother bemoans her pitiful existence, and Dilsey counters, “You hush that now . . . You come on back up stairs” (60). This scene, as recorded by Benjy, suggests that Dilsey exercises control in the house; more to the point, this encounter shows the servant’s language as technology which controls the master. To Dilsey, Ms. Compson is just another child in

the house, and the interesting use of “You hush” demonstrates a link between Mrs. Compson and Benjy, suggesting that Caroline’s much-referenced unhappiness is one more bellow Dilsey must suppress.

Benjy’s ability not to be seen (what other critics see as passivity) allows him to record and thus organize his observations. Invisibility supports his cataloging of people and events for the reader that helps to decipher other elements of the novel. Outside of his section, Benjy’s surveillance becomes a cipher for the reader especially in Quentin’s section. When Quentin remarks, “If I could say Mother Mother” (95), the reader essentially taps into Benjy’s chronicle (the scene with Dilsey) to understand that Quentin laments the absence of motherly attention. Thus, the cold prose and Benjy’s transcription of events become intertwined and invaluable to the novel’s success.

Despite Benjy’s invisibility as he records other people, he is quite egocentric in what he reports. All flashbacks are determined by a Benjy consciousness, and the reader witnesses Benjy’s repeated attempts to seek the past instead of remaining in the present. Benjy’s transportation to his past, which consumes the majority of his section, is based solely on him and his encounters or exploits. Throughout the scenes on April 7, 1928, Benjy actively and quietly pulls Luster towards the psycho-analytic “switch” to guide his return to the past.¹⁴ After returning from the branch, Luster remarks, “Wait” as Benjy moves towards the swing where Ms. Quentin and the Man with the Red Tie are talking. Consciously, Benjy moves towards the swing because it allows him to rejoin Caddy in the same situation in the past (46). This occurrence moves Benjy’s panoptic function outside the normal past-present continuum; even though his present observations are valuable to the reader, Benjy’s past is where his most critical thoughts and actions lie. Benjy surveys

both the present and the past with the same efficiency--a Panopticon that not only travels in space but travels through time as well. Benjy, through his recording of the past, uses specific instances to illustrate his own pitiful existence as well as his tremendous power of surveillance.

Evidence of this power is when Quentin and T.P. hold him violently and force “sassprilluh” down his throat to keep him quiet (22). The horrific blandness in which Benjy relates the scene, “They held my head. It was hot inside me, and I began again. I was crying now, and something was happening inside me and I cried more, and they held me until it stopped happening,” illustrates sadistic qualities of both T.P. and Quentin for the reader (22). The duration of the first section chronicles Quentin’s torturing his brother, an act surpassed only by Benjy’s subsequent castration by his own family. The image of T.P., his constant “Whooeey,” and his drunken hollering serve as interesting commentary; when Benjy reports numerous times that T.P. falls all over himself, the reader wonders what is the difference between him and his supposed “sane” attendants. Ironically in this scene, Benjy becomes T.P.’s attendant by acting the more sane of the two. More to the point, T.P.’s acts reflect on the Compson household itself. If Benjy is in need of someone to care for him throughout the day, the choice of T.P. seems to be a gross dereliction. Drawing sympathy from the reader, Benjy’s recounting of events illustrates his ability as a subordinate to remark on his “superiors” and color their characterizations as brutal or inept. The power of these observations helps to frame Benjy as a victim and subtly draws the reader to him--a move creating empathy and validating his “unmotivated” observations and characterizations, and his construction is vastly different from an omniscient or typical third person narrator.

Benjy's enthrallment with the fence and surveillance of the golfers are keys to transporting himself to the scene of his own infamous crime and for controlling the reader's understanding of the event. At the fence in 1928, he remarks, "I went along the fence to the gate, where the girls passed with their book satchels," and Luster replies "You Benjy. Come back here" (51). Consciously, Benjy moves from the fence to the gate and engages this portal of memory to include his attempted "rape" of the Burgess girl. Benjy maneuvers to his goal; at the gate, he hears Luster say, "Come back," which Benjy uses to return to T.P.'s telling him, "You cant do no good looking through the gate." Benjy pursues this memory until T.P. says, "You, Benjy. What you doing, slipping out. . . You done skeered them chillen" (52). Here, Benjy links to the memory of the family's discussion about what they will do with him after the attack. Benjy's circuitous route to this memory establishes a predictable mind of remembrance that begins with the present and gradually winds back to specific past events. Once at the scene of the attack, Benjy provides the reader with a record of the event: "I opened the gate and they stopped turning. I was trying to say, and I caught her, trying to say, and she screamed and I was trying to say and trying and the shapes began to stop and I tried to get out" (53). The totality of the layers of memory demonstrates Benjy's panoptic ability used for egocentric purposes. The constant phrase "trying to say" leaves the impression of Benjy's harmlessly telling the little girl that she's overreacting; this scene with the Burgess girl comes immediately after his father and brother Jason discuss sending him to Jackson. Benjy's various memories from diverse experiences arise concurrently when he focuses visually on a gateway.

This sequence of events is deliberately organized. Benjy's version of events

emerges after the reaction to those events gives him the last word as he describes the scene in as sympathetic a light as possible. This method of discerning meaning, not chronology, is a “succession in due order” established by Benjy’s egocentrism (Brooks 137).¹⁵ Benjy’s memory demonstrates not a “mosaic or patchwork of many voices seemingly recorded at random by an unselecting mind” (Bleikastan, Most Splendid Failure 68) but a developed sense of surveillance manipulated to provide a biased record of events. In short, Benjy’s account of the sequence of events is a powerful rhetorical device.

To further the impression that he has been misunderstood by those around him immediately after the attack, Luster says “Here, looney” (53). Benjy’s convoluted path, from present to the past, is too linear to be considered arbitrary; the purpose of the pathway is to evoke the reader’s sympathy, and this fact is accomplished by a selective manipulation of the related events. Countering the impression that Benjy does not understand the ramifications of his own castration, Benjy’s sight engenders evidence that he is in fact in control of the narrative. In front of the mirror, Benjy remarks, “I got undressed and I looked at myself, and I began to cry” (73). This scene, in which he turns his lens upon himself, is one of the last in his section and provides more sympathy-evoking evidence of his cruel treatment. These events--with Quentin, the Burgess girl, and his castration--elicit the impression of victimization. By examining the frigidity of his brothers’ relationship to him and the brutality of his caretakers, Benjy separates himself from them; through this idea of victimization, Benjy functions as a transparent surveillance machine more efficiently.

Although Benjy is a competent apparatus of optic surveillance, his egocentricity

causes a blind spot in his vision. On the carriage going to visit his father's grave with Ms. Compson, Dilsey gives him a flower to hold; Benjy observes, "She gave me a flower and her hand went away" (10). While eating on the night of Dammud's funeral, Benjy describes his father's leaving as "Father went away" (24). A glitch in Benjy's optical surveillance becomes clear; he telescopically sees and relates to whatever is immediately in front of him. Like a camera, his eyes see objects move into a range of vision and out, thus, cutting off peripheral sight and disassociating the pan from the optic.¹⁶ Essentially, Benjy's limited range of sight is a vital indicator of his egotistical way of life; Benjy is highly narcissistic, perhaps, detrimentally so. His desire "to say" and his need to explain himself to the Burgess girl trump the possibility, in his mind, that she might be in pain, and when Benjy makes the observation that something "went away," he signals his complete disinterest in that object and establishes that he has no "links to the outside world but those arising from his immediate needs" (Bleikastan Most Splendid 75). This perception places the Compson family in tyrannical servitude to Benjy and his surveillance. A considerable amount of narrative space is devoted to Benjy's being fed (25-6), preparation for bed (44,75), and medical care (59). These memories serve to illustrate that those around Benjy serve him and, thus, imply that Benjy exerts control over the household.

Despite his ability to see and record what happens around him and to quietly place his recorded subjects under his authority, Benjy's peripheral optic impediment must have compensation in order for him to function as a more powerful pan-sensory agent of surveillance. Therefore, Benjy augments his complete peripheral input by utilizing his olfactory sense; his ability to harness his sense of smell allows him to transcend the limits

of the Panopticon, which is tied to sight, in a bifurcated extra-sensory being of surveillance.¹⁷ The ability of Benjy to smell becomes a vital tool in his processing of the world and illustrates Benjy's ability to adapt and understand events which others validate only through sight.

Benjy's nose serves as a surrogate for his inability to see certain events and bestially confirms experiences through smell. Coming to the gate and waiting for Caddy to come home from school, Benjy observes, "I could smell the cold. The gate was cold" (6). These simple statements essentially define Benjy's use of smell as another means of surveillance. His remark that he smells the cold validates the cold environment; this idea is reinforced when he feels the cold gate. Benjy notices the similarities between touch and smell, uses his smell to conclude that it is cold, and relates that signifier to the gate; hence, the gate is cold. This scene also presents Benjy's sense of smell as reliable, and once the reader learns it is Christmas time in this flashback, Benjy's olfactory observation is validated. In addition to the ability to perceive weather through smell, Benjy recognizes movement through smell as well. Walking with Luster back to the branch to look for the lost quarter, Benjy observes, "I could smell the clothes flapping, and the smoke blowing across the branch" (14). The notion that Benjy smells the motion of the clothes, without seeing it, demonstrates that his nose functions, to mix metaphors, as an olfactory "gaze."

Besides observing his environment and motion through smell, Benjy's olfactory sense perceives sickness and death. On the night of Mr. Compson's lying sick, T.P. and Benjy go to his room, and Benjy remarks, "Mother, feet walking fast away, and I could smell it. Then the room came, but my eyes went shut . . . I could smell it" (34). Here, a

perfect example of the olfactory taking the place of the optic creates peripheral subjective perception. Shutting his eyes to the scene, Benjy confirms his father's sickness with his smell. To further validate his correct perception, Benjy continues, "A door opened and I could smell it more than ever, and a head came out. It wasn't Father. Father was sick there" (34). Benjy illustrates his effectiveness as narrator by identifying that the person coming out of the room is not his father, and he provides the reader with the necessary transitional information to jump from Dammud's death to his Father's deathbed. Also, once the door opens and sight activates, Benjy remarks that he smells death "more than ever" and illustrates an element of degree between the smell before the door opens and after. In the realm of sensory surveillance, Benjy's smell confirms that his father is sick, and his optical and olfactory powers reinforce one another.

By reconfiguring Benjy through the prism of sensory surveillance, the reader witnesses the transformation of a idiot man-child into a manipulating, powerful agent. If one examines Benjy in this way, then such quizzical phrases as "I couldn't see it, but my hand saw it" become a comprehensible rhetoric of watching. Benjy's extended sensory self examines his world and determines what is happening and how to proceed. With the narrative configured through a Panopticon and his ultra-sensory surveillance, the text reveals new insights regarding the narrator's, and thus the reader's, relationship with Caddy.¹⁸ Piecing together the parts of Benjy's spying apparatus is profitable because he must utilize, and does, all his faculties to strive for control of his sister. Control is his goal, not love; in keeping with his narcissist egotism, he longs for Caddy because she is the one who goes away and does not come back. He is the warden, she is the escaped convict, and Benjy's section is a testament of his intractable pursuit of her. Critics have

argued that Benjy does not have the ability to understand subjective reasoning in the world around him; I argue that he just does not care. Benjy's selective mind, in actuality, chooses to disregard or chooses to "reduce everything to an unqualified opposition [Caddy and not-Caddy]" (Wadington 61).¹⁹ The events of Benjy and Caddy highlight the effectiveness of his power and ultimately his fallibility. By extension, the reader physiologically performs his or her own relationship with the disappearing love-object.

As Faulkner himself noted in countless interviews, the genesis of the novel starts with the "picture of the little girl's muddy drawers, climbing that tree to look in the parlor window with her brothers that didn't have the courage to climb the tree waiting to see what she saw."²⁰ Faulkner recounts that the entirety of conflict and exposition of the novel hinges on the act of surveillance. In relation to Benjy, this scene with his sister in the tree, as she spies on her family, signifies both the inauguration to his mode of living and the power that comes with the act of watching. Moreover, this scene is the induction to the basic underlying conflict between Benjy and Caddy; he remarks that he does not only see Caddy in the tree but "We watched the muddy bottom of her drawers. Then we couldn't see her" (39). Here is the microcosm of the Benjy (see)/Caddy (being seen) dyad. Out of reach but not out of sight, Caddy's soiled underwear serves as a precursor for her sexual promiscuity, which ultimately forces her to leave, or we might say "to be lost."

The beginning of Benjy's section moves quickly to his surveillance of his sister and serves as an indicator of her leaving; Benjy's first detailed flashback is of his waiting at the gate and hoping for Caddy to come home (6-7). Illustrating the need to have Caddy in his line of sight, the scene also introduces the olfactory associations that Benjy relates

to Caddy; she smells like leaves and trees, symbolizing a perfect Caddy, a natural unsoiled Caddy. This dyadic version is the uncomplicated connection between the two, the relationship between watcher and watched moving together to form a complete surveillance circuit. This image runs throughout Benjy's narrative. When he is in bed waiting for Caddy to come into his room, he remarks, "There wasn't anything in the door. Then Caddy was in it" (44). Here, Benjy's camera-like optical perception reinforces the problematic lack of periphery in viewing his world. Furthermore, this scene in the door illustrates Benjy's ultimate conflict--Caddy can and will act outside his line of vision.

However, when Caddy is in his boxed sight, he effects great power over her. At the swing as he watches Caddy and Charlie, Benjy deliberately tries to stand between Caddy and her boyfriend. His remark, "She put her arms around me and I hushed and held to her dress and tried to pull her away," exemplifies the gazing power and the attempted physical execution of his control (47). The reader witnesses Benjy's possessive antagonism towards Charlie, "the one in the swing got up and came, and I cried and pulled at Caddy's dress." This physical act is accompanied by the lingual exhortation for Charlie to keep his distance from Caddy and Benjy's renewed attempt to carry her away.

This scene could be viewed as her brother's trying to protect Caddy from sexual aggression, but Benjy could be viewing the actions of Caddy and Charlie as a catalyst for his sister to escape his surveillance. Caddy notices the force of Benjy's desire and sweetly entreats him to let her stay and speak to Charlie. However, Benjy's egotism is having none of it; he keeps pulling at Caddy's dress and crying louder, physically and linguistically prying Caddy from Charlie. His actions are rendered effectual when Caddy

tells Charlie to simply “Go away” (47). Benjy’s recording, “She began to breathe fast,” alludes to Caddy’s possible sexual excitement, and Charlie, believing Benjy is an idiot because he “cant talk” (47), continues his physical maneuvers providing a window into her actions outside of Benjy’s surveillance. Caddy cautions Charlie saying “No, no . . . No, no . . . Are you crazy . . . He can see. Don’t. Don’t” (47). Indicating both Benjy’s surveillance competence and his power to “see,” Caddy warns Charlie, not for his sake but for her own, and she disentangles herself from Charlie by running with her brother back to the house. Benjy illustrates his power, and more importantly the reader witnesses Caddy’s consciousness of his power and her desire to please him. This clearly performative rhetoric is for the reader’s benefit.

Caddy offers herself up for repentance to Benjy, as he berates her with his bellow, beseeches his forgiveness, and explains: “Hush. I won’t anymore” (48). The following line is most significant for Benjy’s power: “So I hushed and Caddy got up and we went into the kitchen and turned the light on and Caddy took the kitchen soap and washed her mouth at the sink, hard. Caddy smelled like trees” (48). Mollified for the present time, he hushes, and Caddy washes her mouth to prove that her repentance is genuine. Benjy demonstrates his control of the narrative and his love-object by recording that Caddy washed her mouth and did it vigorously. With Caddy’s action and Benjy’s watching and recording, Caddy redeems herself in his eyes, and he is contented. Benjy’s remark that Caddy “smelled like trees” after her washing demonstrates his acceptance of her penitence, and she regains her purity for the time being.

This tug-of-war for power scene is replayed on the night Caddy prepares for a date. Coming from the bathroom, Benjy seemingly waits for her in front of the door. At

the beginning of the scene, Caddy feels the need to ameliorate her brother's fear of her going away (42). As Benjy follows her into her bedroom, he bellows at the smell of perfume; linking the smell of perfume to the smell of Caddy at swing with Charlie, Benjy fears the smell will lead to Caddy's going away from him. Deftly, Caddy understands the signification of the smell of perfume and remarks, "So that was it. And you were trying to tell Caddy and you couldn't tell her . . . Of course Caddy went. Of course Caddy went" (42). Despite Caddy's statement that Benjy tried to "tell her," his crying is an admonishment of her actions, and his act of watching accompanied by his cry of reprimand leads Caddy to quickly comply with Benjy's wishes. Caddy leads him to Dilsey, presents her with the perfume bottle as a present, and states, "We don't like perfume ourselves" (42); connecting herself to Benjy with the pronoun "we," Caddy indicates her preferences coincide with her brother's as another demonstration of his power over her. From the scene with Charlie and the perfume bottle in Benjy's section, a tyrannical sibling law emerges which confines her, and the figure-head is Benjy.

Furthermore, Benjy's energy is devoted to restraining Caddy to a certain space within his box-shaped vision field.²¹ The conflict between Benjy's desire to limit her and Caddy's needs reaches a climax the night that she comes home after a date. Most critics cite this as the point in the text that suggests Caddy is no longer a virgin. The power in this scene is based on Caddy's conforming to Benjy's desire that she continue her innocent child-like self, but this scene is much more than a titillating "Did she do it?" This desperate power struggle is the ultimate showdown between the watcher who wants to hold tightly to the past and the subject who desperately tries to move out from under his surveillance.

From the beginning of this incident with Caddy, Benjy understands the instability of Caddy's subjection to him. He observes, "Caddy came to the door and stood there, looking at Father and Mother. Her eyes flew at me, and away" (68). The notation of her eyes suggests that Caddy's desire is to flee his gaze; her physical action reveals in a language he understands that she desires to leave him. Her subtle act of defiance is not lost on Benjy because after Caddy's fleeting gaze, he begins to cry loudly, "I went to her crying, and she shrank against the wall and I saw her eyes and I cried louder and pulled her dress. She put her hands out but I pulled her dress. Her eyes ran" (69). The interesting aspect of this encounter is not the physicality of her brother's pulling at her dress but the battle of the gazes between the watcher and watched. Benjy becomes desperate when he notices that Caddy looks at him, and he engages her physically, suggesting that his subject of surveillance successfully challenges his power over her. Caddy's watching him bothers Benjy so much that he refers to this act seven times in the course of two paragraphs. In fact, after the remark of Caddy's eyes running, he flees in a flashback to the instance of his name change and then cycles back to the scene on the night of Caddy's loss of virginity stating, "We were in the hall. Caddy was still looking at me" (69). Benjy uses these flashbacks as attempts to flee her gaze by reasserting his own internal vision, but coming back to the present, he finds himself still under Caddy's eyes.

The scene on the night of Caddy's loss of virginity is the beginning of Benjy's loss of power as well. On this night, the subjector becomes the subjected, and in 1928 the bellows at the gate are indeed the sounds of loss; however, the siren does not signal the physical loss of Caddy but the loss of Benjy's power. Of course, the April date of loss

leads to Caddy's wedding, her independence from Benjy, and the moment that Benjy's *raison d'être* becomes a search for a return to a sense of power. With no subject to control with his gaze, he accepts surrogate, fetish-objects to mollify himself, satisfying his loss with Caddy's slipper. Hence, the allegorical implications for the psychology of the identifying reader and for the very act of reading are profound.

Essentially from the moment of loss, Benjy's life in April 1928 is dedicated to awaiting Caddy's return to his field of vision, so he can once again gaze upon her with no interfering obstacles. His desire for Caddy's return is articulated once again in the last line of the novel; as he and Luster drive through the family plot on the "right" side of the monument, the omniscient narrator of the fourth section comments, "Ben's fist and his eyes were empty and blue and serene again as cornice and façade flowed smoothly once more from left to right, post and tree, window and doorway and signboard each in its ordered place" (321). The "ordered place" refers to the arrangement of tombstones in the cemetery and alludes to the sequence of Benjy's recorded surveillance in the first section; the order is not chronological, according to who died first, but results from Benjy's memories adhering to the familial lineage. As the head of the family, Mr. Compson comes first in flashbacks (9) and then Quentin's death (32), which leads Benjy, who believes in an ordered existence, to expect Caddy's "loss" next.

Of course, one can say Benjy's desire for Caddy "to be in her grave" suggests what ultimately drives Benjy's "love" is a need for power, the nature of which is ultimately chilling, and is modeled through Benjy's lack of peripheral vision. Because he cannot see beyond his "vision box," Caddy in a rectangular grave plot is the perfect match for his visual capacity. Such a conclusion is foreshadowed throughout the novel:

primarily through confined spaces, those ubiquitous “windows and doorways” (321). The image of Caddy framed in a doorway occurs for example, when he sees her coming into the house doorway (44), in the bathroom doorway (42), and in the window (40). Significantly, two scenes in which Benjy and Caddy sleep together on the rectangular bed present the image of Caddy’s confinement in a geometric space that is reinforced by Benjy’s flower bottle, which Dilsey calls his “graveyard”(55).²² On the final page of the novel, the reader witnesses Benjy peering into his little graveyard in his hand, which leads Luster and Benjy to the actual graveyard where his family is buried. As they pass the “wrong” side of the town’s Civil War monument, a memorial to fallen Compson relatives, Benjy bellows, frightens the horses, and forces Luster to retrace his path and pass the monument again on the side Benjy prefers. Once Luster gains control of the wayward horse Queenie and steers Benjy to the “right” side of the monument, “Ben hushed” (320) and was peaceful again. Benjy’s final allegorical journey, an enactment of his desire for a lost Caddy to return home “to her ordered place” in the family plot, is arguably the pinnacle of the novel. The psychological implications are profound; eternally Benjy and, by extension, the reader watch for the day when he can resume his surveillance and assert power once more over his vanished love object, even if that can take place only when she is in her grave.

¹ See James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate’s Lion in the Garden: Interviews with William Faulkner 1926-1962 (146-7, 222, 245-6). Interestingly, Faulkner hardly refers to Benjy by name and uses phrase “that idiot” in discussing his character. Worth noting is Sara McLaughlin’s essay “Faulkner’s Faux Pas: Referring to Benjamin Compson as an Idiot” arguing that Benjy’s actions are not “an idiot” but of someone with a form of autism. I do not believe that Benjy approximates verisimilitude of the “mentally ill or autistic” but is its presentation as a textual construct who does not conform to our conventional ideas of time and language.

² Robert Dale Parker points out in his essay “‘Where You Want to Go to Now’: Recharting the Scene Shifts in the First Section of The Sound and the Fury” (Faulkner Journal 14.2 1999, 3-19) that there was a “hiatus” between the years of 1964 to 1996. Within Parker’s essay, he gives the chronology of “scene shifting” criticism on page three.

³ Parker also comments that Benjy’s section keeps “promising a consistent system, but [that it] never reaches the system that [it] repeatedly promise” (16). This point is difficult to reconcile because Parker’s exercise proves that a consistent system is in the text.

⁴ Andre Belikastan warns in The Most Splendid Failure (Bloomington: Indiana Press, 1976) that “From the outset, the reader is jolted into the uncomfortable awareness of a text that refuses to fit into his prior reading experience” (68). However, he writes that Benjy’s section is a “mosaic or patchwork of many voices seemingly recorded at random by an unselecting mind” (68). Bleikastan also remarks in The Ink of Melancholy: Faulkner’s Novels from The Sound and the Fury to Light in August (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990): “Benjy’s monologue is a proto-narrative held in timeless suspension, waiting for the reader to give it form and meaning” (69). Echoing Bleikastan, Phillip Novak in his essay “Meaning, Mourning and the Form of Loss” (Faulkner Journal 14.2 1996, 63-90) argues, “if there is any real constituent of our concept of the novel as a form, it is the idea that although life as experienced contingent, without structure, we can nonetheless, we can in fact produce a perspective from which it would appear to have shape . . . And Benjy’s day is a narrative grounded in the total unavailability of any such perspective” (69). This essay disagrees with Bleikastan because once a removal of all notions that April 7, 1928 matter to Benjy, then this “mosaic” becomes quite uniform. It is worth noting that when Benjy is walking with Luster towards the barn in 1928, he remarks, “We passed the carriage house, where the carriage was. It had a new wheel” (9). The word “new” is linked to time, and Luster does not tell him the carriage wheel is new; therefore, we are led to believe that Benjy has a concept of “old” and “new.” Both Bleikastan and Novak place too much emphasis on the reader’s ability to understand, and not enough on understanding Benjy.

⁵ All in text quotations are from William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury: The Corrected Text (New York: Vintage, 1990).

⁶ Stacy Burton “Benjy Narrativity and the Coherence of Compson History,” [Caradozo Studies of Law and Literature] 7.2 1995: 207-28.

⁷ Deborah E. Barker and Ivo Kamps in their essay “Much Ado About Nothing: Language and Desire in The Sound and the Fury” (Mississippi Quarterly 46.3 1993: 373-93) posit that “Benjy has been alienated by language; and he will never resolve this “discordance with his own reality” (388). It is my belief that Barker and Kamps over-interpret Benjy’s language to fit Lacan’s idea of symbolic discourse. Benjy is not alienated by language; he has his own which the people around him understand. During the 1990s, work was done on the language of Faulkner’s text in relation to Lacan’s ideas of Symbolic Order; the best of these is Doreen Fowler’s “‘Little Sister Death’: The Sound and the Fury and the Denied Unconscious” (Faulkner and Psychology. Jackson: UP of Mississippi: 1994) who rightly asserts, “Benjy does not exist within the symbolic order” (5). It is profitable when examining Benjy’s language to remember that Saussure explains language is based on a sign/signifier relationship and predicated on at least two people to complete the “speaking-circuit” (Course in General Linguistics 11). Thus, Benjy’s bellows are received by Caddy and Luster and interpreted as a signifier of a particular sign; the circuit is completed.

⁸ As of the writing of this essay, Foucauldian theories do not appear in The Sound and the Fury criticism. It is my hope that this essay will create another venue for examining Faulkner's text. Paula Mesquita uses Foucault's theories of power in her essay about Sanctuary entitled "Law(s) and Disorder(s): Male Trouble in Faulkner's Sanctuary." Also, I am indebted to Simon During, for his book Foucault and Literature: Towards a Genealogy of Writing, who explains the realm of Foucauldian thought and applies it to certain literary texts to illustrate its effectiveness at creating new ideas about certain literary texts.

⁹ One must keep in mind that Foucault is "interpreting" the methodology of the Panopticon of which he disapproves. For a more Bentham-friendly interpretation and history of how the Panopticon began, see Janet Semple's Bentham's Prison: A Study of the Panopticon Penitentiary. She counters that the Panopticon was "not theoretical but a viable project which commanded wide-spread support" (18). In addition to the theories of Foucault and Semple, one could review Bentham's The Panopticon Writings, edited by Miran Bozovic.

¹⁰ Within this essay, the term "Panoptic" is the power of the gaze as explained by Foucault. This meaning will be contrasted by the lower case "panoptic" which is the literal use of the term.

¹¹ Symbiotically, Benjy and Luster work cooperatively to satisfy Benjy's need for surveillance. Luster understands what makes the Benjy function "happy," and he strives to feed Benjy's need for observation.

¹² Discipline and Punishment (trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Random, 1995).

¹³ Donald Kartiganer "The Sound and the Fury and the Dislocation of Form" reprinted in Harold Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: William Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury (Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 1998, 23-38).

¹⁴ Freud describes "switch words" as seemingly ambiguous or inconsequential words used during the act of speaking that "act like points at a junction" which, once the word is spoken, open up other memories stuck inside the unconscious. See Freud's Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria (New York: Touchstone, 1997).

¹⁵ This quotation is taken from Arthur F. Kinney's collection of essays on the Compson family entitled Critical Essays on William Faulkner: The Compson Family (Boston: Hall and Co., 1982). Cleanth Brooks' article reprinted in Kinney's compilation is from his William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1963 334-48).

¹⁶ Noel Polk in his book Children of the Dark House: Text and Context in Faulkner (Jackson: Mississippi U.P., 1996) remarks in his chapter on The Sound and the Fury that Benjy's "'narration,' is almost completely visual, cinematic, and what rolls through his mind is not 'memory,' . . . but rather more nearly reels, perhaps, from a movie of his life" (105).

¹⁷ Foucault believes that all disciplinary techniques and practices stem from the “laws of the optic” (D&P 177). Simply, Foucault believes that it is the optic gaze that properly utilizes surveillance, and the paranoia from this gaze causes discipline from those being watched. However, Benjy, as a institution of surveillance, demonstrates a more complex sensory apparatus of surveillance than just the pan-optic, possibly suggesting --against Foucault’s theory of discipline--that individuals can attain a more complex and more effective means of surveillance than man-made institutional structures, like Bentham’s Panopticon.

¹⁸ After all, understanding or “knowing” through metaphors of sight--“seeing the light,” “perceiving the truth,” etc.--is only a form of technology. Thus, the addition of new technologies--understanding through sight and smell for instance--allows for the generation of new knowledge.

¹⁹ Warwick Wadington “The Sound and the Fury and the Logic of Tragedy,” reprinted in Bloom’s Modern Critical Interpretations 57-68.

²⁰ Faulkner in the University (Charlottesville: U.P. of Virginia, 1995).

²¹ The transformation of the person Caddy into the slipper Caddy is an interesting aspect of Foucault’s ideas at play in Faulkner’s text. Foucault states that the purpose of discipline is not just transforming individuals into a “uniform mass,” but it is a “specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise” (D&P 170). Benjy advances this idea further by transforming Caddy, in her absence into the object of the slipper, pushing Foucault’s theory into the literal object instead of a metaphor in the discourse of power. Benjy uses the slipper as a means to revisit his power over Caddy demonstrating that the slipper acts an “instrument” in his surveillance technique. The slipper is a way to survey the past and also the only way for Benjy to watch a “part” of Caddy in her absence.

²² In a “Rose for Emily,” Faulkner describes the past not as a chronological series of events but something one passes into as though, “the narrow bottleneck of the most recent decade of years” (Collected Stories of William Faulkner, New York: Vintage, 1995). Emily and Benjy, as Faulknerian characters, represent the drive to confine the love-object, and failing to do that, Emily creates her own graveyard for her lover Homer Barron.

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Benjy Compson. Let's start at the very beginning. It's a very good place to start. Unless, of course, you're a reader of *The Sound and the Fury*. In that case, starting in Benjy's world can be a bit of a nightmare. Don't get us wrong – Benjy's a nice enough guy (unlike some other characters that we can think of). There are a few things that remain stable for Benjy: he's fascinated by the fire, he loves his slipper and his flower, and he loves his Caddy. In fact, stability might just be the name of the game for Benjy. He's a big fan of order, largely because it's often difficult for him to draw conclusions on his own. Abstract: This essay refutes the long-standing idea that Benjy Compson in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* is merely an idiot. Instead of focusing on the issue of his language or his concept of time, an analysis of his surveillance techniques reveals Benjy's various strategies as he exercises his power. The application of Michel Foucault's theories concerning the powers of the disciplinarian gaze forces a change in the terminology with which criticism has labeled Benjy. By the end of the essay, a re-conceptualization of Benjy's character occurs through a simple change of words: pass