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THE UNSPOKEN HEROINE IN WILLIAM FAULKNER'S

THE SOUND AND THE FURY

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY

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FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

BY

CHARLENE WHITFIELD

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. CADDY, SOURCE OF LOVE AND MOTHER-Figure FOR BENJY</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. CADDY, SYMBOL OF HONOR AND PURITY AND POSSIBLE STIMULUS FOR QUENTIN'S SUICIDE</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. CADDY, OBJECT OF HATRED IN THE EYES OF JASON COMPSON</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. CADDY, WILLIAM FAULKNER'S CONCEPT OF WOMANHOOD</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Women have been responsible for providing the incentive towards, and being the motivating force for, countless creations. William Faulkner said that his novel *The Sound and the Fury* "began with a picture of a little girl with muddy drawers, climbing a tree to look in the parlor window with her brothers who didn't have the courage to climb the tree." Thus, moved by this vision, Faulkner created Candace Compson, a character so complex and beautiful that she is only seen through a number of striking descriptions given by her brothers. Even the inspiration of Caddy suggests that she is more adventurous than her brothers. Faulkner felt that he could achieve something much greater and more passionate by unveiling Caddy through someone else's eyes.

Caddy's portrait, as created by Benjy, Quentin and Jason, will be examined, and an evaluation of the depth and accuracy of each characterization will be given. The idiosyncrasies and basic temperaments of the brothers will also be analyzed, to provide additional criteria for judging the validity of their opinions.

The first chapter of this thesis will be concerned with the relationship Caddy has with her idiot brother Benjy, and will examine her responsibility as a mother-figure for him. Because of Benjy's extreme sensitivity, he can easily detect any sexual escapades which Caddy may engage in, and his possessive, smothering love causes her to flee for survival. Benjy's

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narration exposes a very complex and multi-faceted picture of Caddy. She tenderly nourishes him, plays with him and adds light to his hopeless future. Her enormous depth and strength of character is strikingly manifest in this section. The birth of an idiot son is, in addition to other factors, a contributive reason for the degeneration of the aristocratic Compson family. Chapter I will expose a picture of Caddy's reactions to Benjy along with the pathetic reactions of the other members of the Compson family to him.

Quentin, the oldest Compson and the family intellectual, is obsessed with protecting Caddy and her purity. Chapter II focuses upon Caddy, the symbol of something pure and unspoiled to believe in. Besides being vital to Benjy's sole existence, she is also very essential to Quentin's survival. Caddy is Quentin's romantic ideal, and her failure to measure up to his standards leads to his eventual suicide. Quentin is completely enthralled by the idea of his sister's virginity. "Quentin is represented as one whose disordering self-love motivates not only his masochistic delight in creating inner chaos but also his erotic lust for his own death."¹ Quentin burdens Caddy with the responsibility of being his epitome of perfection. She is symbolic of Southern womanhood and the entire region of the South in Quentin's eyes.

Chapter III reveals the single-minded and vicious hatred which Jason harbors for Caddy. Jason definitely has no family loyalty, and is

essentially very primitive in nature. Jason has no love for his ancestry and rejects all blood kin or connections with anything in the past. He has a kind of monomania that allows him to hate his sister with tremendous viciousness. In Jason's section Caddy's agony is movingly elicited while in the final section she is no more than a memory. Caddy is exploited and victimized by Jason because of the concern she has for the daughter whom she has abandoned. She becomes a total outcast, and Jason preys upon her dilemma.

It is an important element that Caddy is never seen directly, but only through the eyes of her three brothers, each with their own biases. The last section is written in the third person and is William Faulkner's attempt to omit comment on Caddy once more. When asked why he had not devoted an entire section to her he comments that it was more "passionate" to do it through her brothers. Describing a beautiful woman physically somehow destroys some of her beauty. Caddy is an essential focal figure. The novel revolves around Caddy, and after sorting the viewpoints of the monologues of each of her brothers, some portrait of Caddy must be derived. Chapter IV is a final statement of the totality of Candace Compson.
One of the basic concerns of _The Sound and the Fury_ is the absence of love in the Compson family. This lack of love is a catalyst for the fate of the entire family. Both parents seem enmeshed in a kind of self-love. Traditionally, the mother-figure is the major love-giving force. Mrs. Compson is a total failure, and the exact opposite of everything a mother should be. She gives no love to any of her offspring, and her daughter Candace must assume the mother role, as Mrs. Compson becomes a neurotic, whining recluse.

Benjy, the youngest child of the Compsons, is mentally retarded, and as soon as this is discovered he is totally rejected by his mother. The impulsive Mrs. Compson even goes so far as to change Benjy's name from Manry (her brother's name), to Benjamin, so that no shame will be brought to her family name. Ironically, Benjy's uncle, Maury L. Bascomb, is a drunkard. Mrs. Compson views Benjy as some form of punishment thrust upon her, and she cannot relate to him in any way. Her reactions to him leave the perpetual three year-old completely helpless, and the burden of motherhood is thrust upon Benjamin's vibrant, willing older sister, Candace. Mrs. Compson's incapacity to relate to Benjy is so intense that she interferes with Caddy's relationship to him.

Benjy's too big for you to carry. You must stop trying. You'll injure your back. All of our women have prided themselves on their carriage.
Do you want to look like a washerwoman? "He's not too heavy." Caddy said. "I can carry him." ¹

You humor him too much." Mother said. You and your father both. You don't realize that I am the one who has to pay for it...

"You don't need to bother with him." Caddy said. "I like to take care of him. Don't I, Benjy." ²

Feelings of pride, emerging from the once unblemished Compson aristocracy, color Mrs. Compson's reactions to Benjy, and she looks upon her own son with disdain. He is like a diseased extension of her that she wishes did not exist. Whenever she tries to help with Benjy, he only bawls louder. Benjy is not taken in by her false displays of affection, and is aware of them only as the meaningless words and gestures that they are. He responds not to these displays, but to the tone and situation that express the truth behind these words. Mrs. Compson is virtually incapable of understanding his needs, and it is as if Benjy instinctively senses that she has rejected him. Mrs. Compson has misplaced the deficient affection that she has to give onto the sadistic, self-centered Jason. She apparently has problems in evaluating the intrinsic merit of people throughout the novel. Although Mrs. Compson rejects Benjy, Caddy lovingly offers to help with him.

Therefore, at a very early age, Caddy performs the functions of a mother. She even mothers Mrs. Compson, as she urges her to "hush, Mother."


² Ibid., p. 78.
Caddy said. "You go upstairs and lay down, so you can be sick." Caddy would rush to ask her father if she could be in charge of her brothers at times, and she would relish this position of authority and concern.

The Benjy section, narrated through the mind of an idiot, is not as completely disordered as one would suspect. More intricate details of Caddy's life are exposed in this section than any other section in the novel. Because Benjy is an idiot, he gives the reader isolated events as they actually happened, with no apparent interpretation. He has the infant's innocent mind, and Caddy's genuine love for him is the crucial factor that determines a sympathetic reaction to her.

Judged within the frame of values decisively determined by Benjy's function in the story Caddy emerges a creature of pathos. We assent to the judgment involved in Benjy's perception that she smelled like trees; and note that this is the most difficult act of intelligence in his section, where almost everything is simple discrete perception without connections except with similar perceptions in the past, which is not even recognized as past.  

The character Benjy bears some resemblance to a "big foolish dog," and he emerges as a kind of passive, mechanical subhuman. "Entire incidents from his past are preserved intact to be called forth by proper association. . . The complete objectivity of his recollections indicates that, with Benjy, the imagination exerts no shaping influence." Thus, the Benjy section,

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1 Ibid., p. 78.
in a very complex and artistic manner, gives the reader an unbiased view of Caddy. If the novel had been arranged differently, her actions could be misconstrued.

Benjy remains independent of the flux of time, and hence can siphon events from the past through associations which are definable as purely passional and the products of physical stimuli. "Time is chaotically scrambled to create an illusion of the free association of sensations that constitute the memory process in an idiot's mind." Caddy is the center of Benjy's universe, so most of his sensations center around her. He is a prisoner in a timeless present, and can exercise no control whatsoever over his future. Furthermore, his relationship to time and his idiolect show extreme sensitivity juxtaposed to extreme primitivism. For Benjy, all time is enveloped into one sensuous experience; he is stimulated mainly by pleasurable events. Thus, his section has the largest amount of explicit allusions to the past and covers the longest time-span. Caddy's childhood is exposed here, and she fills Benjy's life with any small meaning that it may have. Benjy can feel menacing devi-

ations from the regular orderliness of the things around him, although he can do nothing about any of them and has no hope for the future.

A feeling of chaotic stasis surrounds Benjy, as he clamors for some order in his life.

Caddy had discovered ways for satisfying his instinctive and unreasoning hunger for escape from pain through pleasure-

able moments of touching, tasting, smelling, seeing, and hearing. She had often soothed him by calling attention to the

bright shapes of the dancing flames in the fireplace, and the attractive colors of red and yellow in a cherished cushion and to the soft texture of a satin slipper which became his property, and to the fragrance of growing things and to the music of the rain on the roof. Throughout their childhood, Caddy had often lulled Ben to sleep in her arms.¹

Caddy is the principal sustainer of any family unity that survives. "We see her as the liveliest spirit among the children and their natural leader, as the protector and comforter of Benjy, and even as the pacifier of her mother, and it is highly significant for us as well as for Benjy that she is persistently associated with such elemental things as the fire, the pasture, the smell of trees, and sleep..."²

The order in Benjy's life, formerly provided by Caddy, is taken from him with the premature loss of her virginity and her leaving the Compson household. Caddy usually smelled like trees to Benjy, but whenever she was engaged in any kind of promiscuous act she momentarily ceased to smell like trees. Benjy would immediately start to howl or bellow, but of course could do nothing about the irregularity he sensed. His complacency, then, is directly related to Caddy, and she is burdened by the idea of his dependence. Early in the novel, Caddy strives to please Benjy, but eventually she can no longer satisfy him.

Sensory experiences in the present jog Benjy's mind to earlier and


similar experiences with Caddy. The mention of the cold weather by Versh just before Christmas nudges Benjy's memory to an earlier scene with Caddy.

Keep your hands in your pockets, Caddy said. Or they'll get froze. You don't want your hands froze on Christmas, do you.

"It's too cold out there." Versh said. "You don't want to go out doors."1

Benjy's desire to go outdoors stems from his reactions to certain sensory impressions, as with his response to the coldness. Most of his associations originate from some experience he has had with Caddy.

Certain objects also induce recollections to earlier events for Benjy. He has a fondness for an old satin slipper that once belonged to Caddy. This slipper serves as a kind of pacifier in Caddy's absence. "Benjy's mind works not by association, which is dependent, to some extent, on an ability to discriminate as well as compare, but by mechanical identification."2

Years after Caddy's marriage, Benjy has a desire to go to the gate because he had always stood there and waited for Caddy to come home from school when both were children. Also, when Benjy saw Miss Quentin in the swing with a beau he immediately associated the scene with an earlier one with Caddy and a friend named Charlie. Benjy bellows instinctively. The very syllables of Caddy's name invoke a hopeless crying from Benjy. When he hears the golfers call for "caddie," he bellows. His love is inarticulate,

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2 Ibid.
and therefore formless. It is expressed in endless toneless bellowing.

Caddy fills Benjy's world with warmth and love, and Benjy cannot help being even more distraught at her leaving. She is imprisoned and dedicated to the care of Benjy. Other than Dilsey Gibson, the maid, no one can help him except Caddy. She feeds, protects and plays with him. Because of all the love and warmth Caddy contains and the utter lack of love in the Compson household, she is driven to sexual promiscuity. Her benevolence to Benjy is paralleled by the sexual relationships she has with men. Caddy, being a realist and an adventurous individual, becomes sensitive to the degenerate conditions of the Compson family and realizes that she must leave. Of course that is tragic for Benjy, for he is more derelict now than he has ever been without Caddy.

Benjy's section describes quite artistically, appealing to the optical and olfactory senses, Caddy's period of sexuality. His sense of smell is so acute that he is said to be able to smell the death of his father and grandmother. Benjy was first sensitive to Caddy's deviations toward promiscuity as she used cheap perfume and no longer smelled like trees. Faulkner had already symbolically suggested her promiscuity by the wearing of muddied drawers earlier in the novel. Using his sense of smell, Benjy could sense any aberrations and would walk away from Caddy and begin to bellow.

"Benjy, Caddy said, Benjy. She put her arms around me again, but I went away. "What is it, Benjy." she said, "Is it this hat." She took her hat off and came again, and I went away. "Benjy." she said, "What is it, Benjy. What has Caddy done."1

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The most primitive of the senses is used to detect the sensuous symbolism of the perfume Caddy wears, and Benjy immediately bellows and wants to push Caddy into the bathroom to wash away her sins. After Caddy realizes that it is the perfume that offends Benjy, she gives the perfume to Dilsey.

"Dilsey." Caddy said, "Benjy's got a present for you..." "Hold it out to Dilsey now." Caddy held my hand out and Dilsey took the bottle... We don't like perfume ourselves. Caddy said.¹

She implied that common servants can use the cheap perfume, but that aristocratic Compsons do not. She still clings to the semblances of an aristocracy in this passage. Caddy is still a virgin at this point in the novel, because she can wash away her deviation with soap and water.

Another encounter with sexuality occurs in a porch scene, as Caddy and a friend named Charlie are kissing on the swings. Discovering them, Benjy cries and pulls at Caddy's dress. She tries to break away, and Charlie remarks that Benjy cannot talk, but Caddy replies "He can see." Faulkner introduces an optical allusion also in this scene, in addition to the olfactory allusion of the honeysuckle odor which threatens the order in Benjy's world. After a brief struggle with Charlie, Caddy goes to the kitchen and washes her mouth with soap. Again she can wash away her experience, for she remains still a virgin. Later in the novel, when she actually loses her virginity, she cannot wash away the honeysuckle odor. The honeysuckle odor is, in fact, appropriately indicative

¹ Ibid., p. 51.
of a sexual encounter to be juxtaposed to the fresh, natural scent of trees.

The heavy, choking fragrance of honeysuckle dramatizes the conflict between order and the blind forces of nature which constantly threaten to destroy it. Honey-suckle is the rife animality of sex.¹

As Caddy self-consciously returns from her first complete sexual encounter, Benjy is disturbed because of the expression in her eyes.

Caddy came to the door and stood there, looking at Father and Mother. Her eyes flew at me, and away. I began to cry. It went loud and I got up. Caddy came in and stood with her back to the wall, looking at me. I went toward her, crying, and she shrank against the wall and I saw her eyes and I cried louder and pulled at her dress. Her eyes ran.²

The optical allusions are symbolic of her loss of virginity and guilt feelings. Faulkner manipulates the eye imagery even further with:

We were in the hall. Caddy was still looking at me. Her hand was against her mouth and I saw her eyes and I cried. We went up the stairs. She stopped again, against the wall, looking at me and I cried and she went on and I came on crying, and she shrank against the wall, looking at me. She opened the door to her room, but I pulled at her dress and we went to the bathroom and she stood against the door, looking at me. Then she put her arms across her face and I pushed at her, crying.³

Benjy functions as a moral mirror for Caddy, as she cannot face up to her sin. She realizes that she cannot wash away the scent this time,


³ Ibid., p. 85.
and that somehow Ben knows what she has done.

Benjy serves as a moral catalyst or mirror for all of the Compsons. Caddy is perhaps more sensitive to this than any of the other characters. Although Benjy is unaware of moral values, he is a kind of moral reflector. Negative reactions to the ever-constant idiot have little or no effect on him, for he only remembers events that have brought him pleasure.

Tenderly, solicitously, Caddy has discovered ways of appealing to Benjy's limited responses, to satisfy his instinctive and unreasoning hunger for orderliness, peacefulness, and serenity. The fire, the red-yellow cushion, the smooth satin slipper are only a few of the objects used by Caddy to provide Benjy with values that are positive to him because they are somehow sustaining.¹

Benjy can feel deviations from the regular orderliness of the things around him. He has no hope for the future and can do nothing about any of the deviations. He cannot be a moral agent, as defined in terms of conscious moral decisions under stress or of a moral code to be investigated by the thinker and rejected for one better adjusted to reality. He cannot be morally significant because he has no consciousness. Benjy can reflect the other characters' behavior, and the reader will formulate an opinion of the individual by evaluating the treatment the idiot receives from that character. Only the very sensitive and loving Caddy can translate his moans into empirical truths and moral judgments.

Although the Benjy section is overwhelmingly the most difficult to

read, it has been labeled a tour de force by most Faulknerian critics. It can be isolated as the basis of the entire narrative, as it is certainly the most accurate and unaffected by subjective opinions. The four parts of the novel "talk back and forth to each other, poetically, in ways which greatly extend and complicate (and ultimately clarify) meanings which remain unuttered."¹ Benjy's primitive associations of images and actions cause the reader to make positive assumptions as to Caddy's true nature. Therefore, early in the novel, the reader finds Benjy obsessed with a chaotic, unreasoning search for his long-lost sister Caddy. Benjy possesses an ability to love which, as Faulkner believes, can be found in the twentieth-century Western world only in the mentally retarded, the childish, the maimed, the illiterate, and the eccentric and pathetically obsessed beings whom he has observed around him. One cannot help assuming that Caddy is a positive character because of the positive effect that she has had on Benjy.

Shakespeare's "tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury," definitely signifies a great deal in the context of The Sound and the Fury. Both Caddy and Benjy are hopelessly victimized, and Benjy's section exposes the process. Taken "realistically or figuratively, Ben's instinctive search is for the redeeming power of love."² This instinctive search for love is equated to a search for Caddy, as she is his source of love throughout the novel. That love has given a degree

¹ Ibid., p. 30.

of positive significance to Benjy, and has created in the character of Caddy a gentle, loving, yet very tragic individual.
CHAPTER II

CADDY, SYMBOL OF HONOR AND PURITY AND POSSIBLE STIMULUS FOR QUENTIN'S SUICIDE

An obsessive, self-destructive love for Caddy emerges as the principal motivating factor of Quentin Compson III's brief life. Quentin committed suicide in Cambridge, Massachusetts, June 1910, only two months after Caddy's wedding day. The entire Quentin section is told from within his mind on the day he commits this horrible act. Throughout Part Two or Quentin's section, the pessimistic Quentin views himself as a victim of forces beyond his control. Quentin pictures Caddy as a promiscuous, high-strung, selfish sister whom he loves very much and who has hurt him very deeply. She is both a focus of order and the instrument of the destruction of all order for him. He is plagued throughout the novel by his unnatural love for Caddy and her failure to live up to the rigid demands he has imposed upon her. Quentin is the intellectual of the Compson family, and a tremendous financial sacrifice has been made to send him to Harvard. Quentin is an introvert and psychologically cannot bear the burden of Caddy's sin. He despises the passage of time, for it carries the pain of Caddy's sexual aberrations and the eventual disintegration of the Compson aristocracy. Quentin is probably more sensitive than any of the other Compsons to the decadence surrounding them; yet he weakly adds his crime of suicide to the growing list of Compson dishonors.

Quentin seeks to destroy time, because his father has indicated to
him that a person will forget all sorrow and remorse and that all things will be healed in time. Quentin does not want to forget the bereavement that Caddy's promiscuity has caused him. He feels that his life will have no meaning if he forgets, and that all order in life will thus be destroyed for him. Quentin clearly has selfish motives in his concern for Caddy, and takes rather than gives love to her. It is also evident that, like Benjy, Quentin has a definite need for order in his life. Slowly his family is degenerating, as is the whole of Southern integrity, pride and morality. Quentin feels incarcerated and unable to withstand the pressures created by time. He consumes all of his energy trying to understand and eliminate this menace called time.

The Quentin section of the novel is structured by means of two sets of events, one past and the other present. The narration begins as Quentin reflects upon his grandfather's watch and the advice his father gave him when presenting the watch.

I give the mausoleum of all hope and desire; it's rather excruciatingly apt that you will use it to gain the reducto ad absurdum of all human experience which can fit your individual needs no better than it fitted his or his fathers. I give it to you that you might forget it now and then for a moment and not spend all of your breath trying to conquer it.\(^1\)

Quentin's father had warned him against the futility of trying to keep up with time. He sees it as arbitrary and wasteful, and points out that it has no useful purpose and is only a burden to man. "...the position of the mechanical hands on an arbitrary dial which is a

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symptom of mind-function." Excrement Father said like sweating.\(^1\) Throughout the narration, Quentin is constantly remembering cynical comments his father has made about time. Both Quentin and his father view the passage of time as the source of unavoidable human frustration.

Faulkner’s concept of time is enveloped in change, the flux of events and ultimate destruction. It travels through recurring cycles of continual change and destruction, and the process is unending. Because the movement of time is cyclic and continuous, all time exists in any one moment of it. "Past and future possess an independent identity only in the world of logic; actually they are both contained in and their contours subtly altered by an eternal growing present."\(^2\) The past may be defined psychologically as memory, and memory is an entity that lives in the present. Therefore, past, present and future are one. Each present action confirms the design of the past or destroys it, and must be enmeshed into a continuum. Quentin, not being able to cope with this concept of time, tries to destroy it. Realizing, perhaps, that suicide would be the only possible solution,

Quentin is trying to establish a kind of permanent identity in the face of a shifting and ambiguous reality. This attitude underlies his suicide, which is not an act of deliberate self-destruction, but an attempt to free his consciousness from the inevitability of change and decay. Quentin wants to live forever in the moment when

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 94.

conscience still exists but when time, which alone can bring death, has been forever stopped. In this abstract moment, a defeated or dead time will release the full potentiality of the human self, and in this sense be paradoxically alive.¹

Quentin is mortified by the apparent indifference of his father to Caddy's loss of virginity. Quentin wants to preserve his grief regarding Caddy's sin, because if he forgets it all of his values will become meaningless. Mr. Compson's view that there are no significant values in human life, and that "virginity is an invention of men and of very little concern to women,"² add to Quentin's dismay. Quentin tries to disprove Mr. Compson's philosophy, but is unable to do so. He is ashamed that he is still a virgin while Caddy is not, and is hurt by his father's attitude towards this subject. He cannot live without a system of values. He is, with the exception of Benjy, the only member of the family who attempts to grasp some ordered meaning from life. The frustration and ultimate death of Quentin can be equated to the dissolution of his family traditions.

Quentin's initial attempt to stop time is shown by his turning the hands off his watch. Even after this act, he is still very conscious of time, and indeed constantly inquires about it. This permits an atmosphere of futility to surround his struggle. If Quentin can forget the mechanical time marked off by the clocks, he cannot forget


such natural phenomena as the sun's movement and shadows, which mark
off spaces of time. His thoughts constantly return to Caddy and her
sins. The fatalistic comments by his father also serve as a catalyst
for his eventual suicide.

Because Father said clocks slay time. He said time
is dead as long as it is being clicked off by little
wheels; only when the clock stops does this time come to
life.\footnote{Ibid., p. 105}

Quentin's suicide consummates his flight from time towards oblivion,
and he is destroyed because of his exorbitant awareness of the passage
of time and his failure to free himself from Caddy's deviations.

Caddy is presented as a daring extrovert who is also apparently
shameless. Quentin grieves over her flagrant indiscretions, and proves
sensitive to them even as a child. Early in the novel, the children
have been sent to the pasture to keep them away from the house during
their grandmother's funeral. Caddy climbs a pear tree to look in at
Damuddy's funeral, and the three brothers and Dilsey's children look
up at the muddy seat of Caddy's drawers. The symbol of the soiled
drawers represents the sexual stain she later bears, as she is set
shamelessly in view of all.

Some of Quentin's early reactions to Caddy are found in the Benjy
section of the novel, in the scene by a small creek where Caddy is
playing with the other children and, having gotten her dress wet, takes
it off to dry. Like Caddy, Quentin is a young child, but he objects to
her behavior and splashes water on her.
Quentin is faced with the painful inadequacy he exhibits when trying to protect Caddy's honor. He is plagued by the idea that Caddy does love Dalton Ames. Ames obviously possesses enormous vitality and masculinity. He is a wealth of knowledge for Caddy, for she tells Quentin: "He's crossed all the oceans all around the world." Ames has violated her, and Quentin's code of honor dictates that he must kill him, for he fantasizes that Ames must have made Caddy do it. Quentin arranges a meeting with Dalton Ames.

I came to tell you to leave town...
What will you do if I don't leave
I'll kill you don't think that just because
I look like a kid to you ... listen no
good taking it so hard its not your fault
kid it would have been some other fellow.

Ames humiliates him, and after a brief scuffle rides off, but only after he has exhibited his expertise with a pistol. Interestingly, when Quentin finds Ames he is pulling bark off a tree and tossing it into the river. Benjy associates Caddy with trees, and Ames is certainly destroying the bark. He even fires his pistol into the river, scattering the bark into smaller pieces.

It floated on it was quite still in the woods. I heard the bird again and the water afterward the pistol came up he didn't aim at all the bark disappeared then pieces of it floated up spreading he hit two more of them pieces of bark no bigger than silver dollars.

1 Ibid., p. 187.

2 Ibid., p. 199.

3 Ibid., p. 199.
It is tragic indeed that Caddy would waste her love on someone who would destroy it. Quentin is further humiliated because he passed out "like a girl" instead of hitting Dalton Ames. He tries, but cannot hurt Ames even momentarily. With Caddy rushing to his rescue, he feels that he cannot hold her respect, although the comment Ames makes about her character indicates that she is sexually promiscuous. Almost blind to her worth, Ames causes Caddy to believe that she is worthless. "Caddy is abandoned by Dalton; in his crass, brutal masculinity, and his belief that all women are "bitches," he denies the purity of Caddy's femininity and the worth of her love."¹

Caddy does have a sense of a profound void in her life. She tells Quentin: "I died last year I told you I had but I didn't know then what I meant."² Both Dalton Ames and Quentin are responsible for her spiritual death.

Her acceptance of irredeemable guilt, her self-condemnation, has killed a precious part of her; and in sexual experience she perpetually reenacts that self-condemnation and guilt and is haunted by a sense of dread and a fear of damnation. Living a fleshly existence she suffers a continual death through the flesh.³

Quentin also attempts to prevent the arranged marriage of Caddy to

Sydney Herbert Head, an extremely eligible young Indianan, using some very real hypocrisies which he has found Head to possess. Caddy’s destruction is symbolically sealed in her marriage to Head, whose character designates all that is contemptible and base. Quentin refers to him as "a liar and a scoundrel" and mentions that "he was dropped from his club for cheating at cards and was sent to Coventry and caught cheating on midterm exams and expelled." Quentin calls Head a "black-guard" and feels that Caddy, deplorably, thinks nothing of the family honor and reputation. Head’s only concerns are money and sex, and Caddy has tragically discarded her self-esteem to signify formally that she is as worthless as he is. On April 25, 1910, Caddy, a few months pregnant, marries Herbert Head in order to give her child a legal father. Then, in 1911, she is divorced by him, for he knows the child is not his. Quentin is cursed with high principles, and his dilemma is that the world he lives in is too defiled for any kind of principles.

Quentin believes that he alone is sensitive to the destruction of the Compson family honor, symbolized by Caddy’s virginity. He contends that Caddy is selfish and should think of Benjy and their father also, if not of him. Frantically, Quentin asks of Caddy:

Why won't you bring him to the house, Caddy?
Why must you do like nigger women do in the pasture the ditches the dark woods hot hidden furious in the dark woods.  

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2 Ibid., p. 114.
She tells Quentin: "don't cry I'm bad anyway you can't help it."¹
Caddy does not receive pleasure from her illicit affairs, but rather a
grotesque, nightmarish vision. "There was something terrible in me
sometimes at night I could see it through them grinning at me through
their faces...²

Quentin is obviously very close to his father, and the effect his
father had on him is apparently very powerful. He probably inherited
his Calvinistic principles from him. Jason Compson, the father, offered
some semblance of love to the love-starved Compson children. "Mr.
Compson by 1910 was a defeated man. Perhaps he had always been a weak
man, not endowed with the fighting spirit necessary to save his family.
But there are plenty of indications that he was a man possessed of love
and compassion."³ Mr. Compson evidently regressed because of Caddy's
sin. Caddy tells Quentin: "Father will be dead in a year they say if
he doesn't stop drinking and he won't stop he can't stop since I since
last summer."⁴ Although Mr. Compson tried to rationalize, for Quentin's
sake, that

Women are never virgins. Purity is a negative state
and therefore contrary to nature. It's nature is hurting

¹Ibid., p. 196.
²Ibid., p. 138.
³Cleanth Brooks, William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country (New
⁴William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (New York: Random House,
you not Caddy and I said That's just words and he said So
is virginity and I said you don't know.¹

Quentin's stream of consciousness races back and forth among various
ideas and comparisons derived from conversations with his father. Al-
though Mr. Compson counsels acquiescence in the meaninglessness of life,
he seeks refuge by drowning himself in alcohol, and Quentin follows him
by his death through drowning in the Charles River. There are, then,
similarities in the ways father and son deal with their grief concerning
Caddy's sin.

There are constant allusions to the shadows and the mirror which
emphasize the obstruction between Quentin and reality. "The number of
times that the shadow images are fused with images of water indicates
that death by water is Quentin's way of reconciling his two worlds, of
merging shadow and reality and tempering their conflict.² Quentin is
especially sensitive to the shadow, since he identifies his oncoming
death with it. The recurrence of his shadow on the water and his
attempt to trick it out of water so he can trample upon it suggest a
death wish. He remembers that "niggers say a drowned man's shadow was
watching for him in the water all the time."³ Quentin feels that a man

1
Ibid., p. 143.

2
Olga W. Vickery, "Worlds in Counterpoint," Twentieth Century
Interpretations of The Sound and The Fury, ed. by Cowan, Michael H

3
William Faulkner, The Sound and The Fury (New York: Random House,
who is dead needs no shadow, but his still accompanies him as if it were mirroring reality. He insists that he has indeed tricked his shadow, for he considers himself dead already. Quentin feels that the Compson family is cursed and that a shadow hovers over all of them.

The shadow is a dominant motif in the Quentin section, for the events of the past are ambiguous and confusing to Quentin, thus assuming a "shadowy form."

I seemed to be lying neither asleep nor awake looking down a long corridor of grey half-light where all stable things had become shadowy paradoxical all I had done shadows all I had felt suffered taking visible form antic and perverse mocking without relevance inherent themselves with the denial of the significance they should have affirmed thinking I was I was not who was not was not who.¹

Carvel Collins, a critic of Faulkner's writing, points out that the word "shadow" appears at least forty-five times in Quentin's monologue. Quentin intuits that he is only a shadow of his ancestors, for the family traditions have gradually been erased through the generations. There are no more respected members in the family. Furthermore, all of his gallant attempts emerge as merely ridiculous. When Quentin decides that he must and will be joined in suicide by Caddy, he is the one who cannot complete the act. Also, his father only laughs at him when he says he has committed incest with Caddy. He is again ridiculous in his unsuccessful attempt to confront Dalton Ames. Thus, all of Quentin's actions are mere shadows of real actions. Unlike most tragic protagonists, he takes his life before the novel ends. This implies that modern man cannot cope with problems of life and will destroy himself

¹Ibid., p. 211.
Caddy and her older brother Quentin definitely exhibit different interpretations of love. Caddy realized that love consists of giving and receiving, but Quentin wants only to receive love from Caddy. Caddy adores her older brother and actually wants to imitate him. Mrs. Compson sums up Caddy's attitude by stating that she and Quentin were always together and that Caddy could do nothing without Quentin. To emphasize the closeness, Faulkner confuses the reader by utilizing "Quentin he" and "Quentin she" at close junctures in the narration. "Quentin she" is Caddy's illegitimate daughter, named for the brother whom she had adored -- Quentin.

Quentin and Caddy would engage themselves in sexual games of follow-the-leader. Quentin would boast of playing at sex to try to make Caddy jealous. Once, secreted in the Compson barn with a neighborhood girl named Natalie, Quentin played at lovemaking and boasted of the episode to Caddy.

She stood in the barn looking at us with her hands on her hips You pushed me it was your fault it hurt me too We were dancing sitting down I bet Caddy can't dance sitting down...I don't give a damn what you were doing You don't you don't! I'll make you. I'll make you give a damn.1

Apparently Caddy is not affected by Quentin's escapades, but he is definitely jealous of hers. Quentin's encounters are fantasized about, however, and juxtaposed to Caddy's real exploits they are ludicrous. Quentin is thoroughly interested in whether Caddy has enjoyed her indiscretions with Dalton Ames and others. "Did you love them Caddy did

1 Ibid., p. 169.
you love them when they touched me I died." Thus, Caddy can be pitied for the results of her desperate love-search. She gives love freely, and wonders why she does not receive love. She is doomed, for her capacity for love cannot be quenched, and the misguided fixation-love given by Quentin is fruitless. Quentin tortments Caddy with the question:

Have there been very many Caddy I don't know too many will you look after Benjy and Father You don't know whose it is then does he know Don't touch me will you look after Benjy and Father."

Caddy comments that if she had only had a mother perhaps things would have been better. She is victimized by her family, and her relationships are forms of rejection springing from the hypocrisy and artificiality of the once-valid Compson pride and honor. Caddy is a realist, and her acts also assert her individuality and her effort to combat the horror of the Compson world. The innocent Caddy "gives herself to Dalton Ames with the same purity of love she has previously given, in different forms, to Benjy and Quentin. Thus she stands finally as betrayed by her parents, by Quentin, by Dalton Ames, and by Jason."  

Throughout Quentin's death-day recollections and associations, Caddy seems to be the central motivating force for his suicide. She has destroyed the order in his world. "Caddy came to disgrace herself, in

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1 Ibid., p. 185.
2 Ibid., p. 143.
love, to such an extent as to become, eventually, the shame of the Compsons along with Ben."¹

¹ Ibid., p. 36.
CHAPTER III

CADDY, OBJECT OF HATRED IN THE EYES OF JASON COMPSON

Caddy is presented as the object of hatred in Jason's life, and both she and her daughter Quentin are victimized by him. Jason Compson IV, Caddy's younger brother, is considered the defiler of the familial loyalty, and ultimately he is the only Compson to survive the disgrace of Caddy's sin.

It is characteristic that Jason should be the only member of the family who is able to cope with the practical and social implications of Caddy's defection. Where Mrs. Compson can only moistly complain, Benjy bellow his incomprehending grief, Quentin commit suicide, Jason can adjust himself into the situation and turn it to his own advantage and profit.¹

The reprehensible Jason, an outcast as well as an extortioner and thief, lives in a world of the immediate present. Jason has rejected all of his ties with the past, and sees it as holding a relatively small amount of importance to him. He is angry, and feels cheated that he was deprived of a position in Herbert Head's, Caddy's fiance's, bank. He fails to realize that Caddy is the only reason he is even considered for the job. The loss of the job is justification for stealing the money Caddy tried to send to Miss Quentin. By gaining Mrs. Compson's power of attorney, Jason cheats her out of large sums of money. He convinces her that she should burn the checks Caddy sends for the care of her daughter. He shrewdly replaces the real checks

with false ones, and after the ritual burning of Caddy's checks he deposits the real ones, pretending they are his wages. He reacts logically rather than emotionally, and is the perpetrator of self-induced frustrations and acts of sadism. "The money placed in a strong box, hidden in a closet, kept in a locked room is symbolic of Jason's world."\(^1\)

Jason is plagued by horrible headaches, partially because of his animalistic acquisitiveness. He drains Caddy both directly and through her daughter, Miss Quentin. Small wonder, then, that he simultaneously gains his wealth and revenge through her. The lack of 

Jason only reacts to various experiences; he cannot control them. Although he is not destroyed, his survival is futile, more or less, for he is the last of the Compson line and a childless bachelor.

Jason is the only one of the Compson children who merits the love of Mrs. Compson. She spoils him and sets him apart as a true "Bascomb." Ironically, he is the only one of her children who does not want her love and will not return it. In a conversation with her husband, Mrs. Compson complains about Caddy and shows much concern for Jason.

You cannot hurt me any more than your children already have and then I'll be gone and Jason with no one to love him shield him from this ... We are to sit back with our hands folded while she not only drags your name in the dirt but corrupts the very air your children breathe Jason you must let me go away. I cannot stand it let me have Jason and you keep the others they're not my flesh and blood like he is strangers nothing of mine and I am afraid of them not known I'll go down on my knees and pray for the absolution of my sins that he may escape this curse try to forget that

She denounces her other offspring. The adoration of a vile and selfish son is perhaps characteristic of a whimpering, neurotic woman, and is a commentary on both Jason and his mother. In return for her love-efforts she is rewarded by Jason's stealing her money and ultimately calling her an "old fool."

Jason's inhumanity is one of the controlling ideas of the third section. Because of his callousness he is able to survive. His perversity is as strong as his self-esteem. He never speaks a kind word to anyone in his section of the novel. Jason's singleminded and ruthless pursuit of material profits separates him not only from his family, but from the community as a whole. Jason has been called a Satan figure because of the familial atrocities for which he is responsible. An example of his cruelty is exhibited in the taunting of Luster with carnival tickets. Jason has two tickets to the carnival which he is not going to use. Dilsey's son Luster wants desperately to go to the show, and begs Jason for the tickets. Instead of giving Luster one of them, he burns both of them. Jason is also the person most responsible for the castration of Benjy and ultimately for sending Benjy to the insane asylum at Jackson. He abhors Benjy and his keeper, as is illustrated in the passage:

Well at least I could come home one time without finding Ben and that nigger hanging on the gate like a bear and a monkey in the same cage. Just let it come toward sundown and he'd head for the gate like a cow for the barn, hanging

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onto it and bobbing his head and sort of moaning to himself. That's a hog for punishment for you. If what had happened to him for fooling with open gates had happened to me, I never would want to see another one.¹

Jason has contempt for everything from Babe Ruth to pigeons in the park. He is a repulsive character who persists in torturing the scanty remains of the Compson family. Most of his evil efforts have been channeled toward Caddy and her child. He has succeeded in frustrating all of Caddy’s attempts to see her pathetic daughter, and has stolen all of the money sent for her welfare.

Jason lives entirely in the present, and consequently feels no allegiance to his ancestors. "Jason violently breaks from the past; and the concluding section completes the book’s movement from a claustrophic private world to a sterile public world, from the subjective heart of Compson life to a cold record of its death."² The Jason section moves rapidly, because he does not rationalize and ponder over the past as Quentin, his older brother, must do. His only involvement in life is that of cheating and trying to get ahead. Jason feels that he has had a hard life, unlike that of Quentin. "I never had time to go to Harvard like Quentin or drink myself into the ground like Father. I had to work."³ Jason feels that he has to cheat and connive to prosper in the world.

¹ Ibid., p. 315.


If there had been any people of greater worth in his past, he and the present Compson clan "would be down at Jackson chasing butterflies with the rest of the insane people in the state."¹ Jason refers to his mother's "good name" and the family's "position" in the community satirically, for any business gains that he can receive. He is a product of a decayed aristocracy, with his cruelty resting upon self-deception and "heightened dramatically by his role as a genuine though perverted Compson."²

In the Jason section, the present world of 1928 comes sharply into focus.

Since Jason's instincts are commercial and materialistic, they are also anti-rural and anti-traditional: his is a willed deracination from the community in which he continues to live. It is, however, this very materialism and deracination which makes Jason the one male Compson with any practical competence.³

He is indeed the most detestable of children, and derives a sadistic pleasure from destroying Benjy's paper dolls. Jason and Caddy seem always to be at odds, usually with Jason trying to destroy Benjy and Caddy trying to protect him. Later, Jason is extremely severe in his repression of the freedom and pleasure of Miss Quentin. Even Mrs.

¹ Ibid., p. 286.


Compson thinks that he is sometimes too brutal to her.

Jason, whose very name mythologically evokes the pursuit of the golden fleece, establishes his life on the accumulation of wealth. His ruthlessness and perversity create their own destruction, as he loses money in his cotton speculations and is robbed by his niece. Jason outsmarts himself, as illustrated by Uncle Job, a Black worker whom he detests:

"I won't try to fool you," he says.
"You too smart fer me. Yes, suh," he says, looking busy as hell, putting five or six little packages into the wagon. "You's too smart fer me. Ain't a man in dis town can keep up with you fer smartness. You fools a man what so smart he can't even keep up wid hisself." He says, getting in the wagon and unwrapping the reins. "Who's that?" I says. "Dat's Mr. Jason Compson," he says. 1

Quentin, Caddy's daughter, is much like her mother in her promiscuity and her relationship with Jason. Much of Quentin's rebellion is revealed through her illicit sexual misconduct, which she utilizes as a weapon against Jason. The theft from Jason is both an immediate vengeance against him and an opportunity to run away from the much-hated Compson environment, a milieu almost totally controlled by Jason. Quentin is continuously tormented by him.

"I want to know where you go when you play out of school," I says. "You keep off the streets, or I'd see you. Who do you play out with? Are you hiding out in the woods with one of those damn slick-headed jellybeans?"

1
Ibid., p. 229.
Is that where you go? "You -- you old goddamn!" she says. She fought, but I held on to her. "You damn old goddamn!" she says.\(^1\)

She is very near a belt-lashing from Jason when the enduring Dilsey stops him. Dilsey's dedication is apparent, as she tells Jason to strike her and leave Miss Quentin alone. Quentin, like Caddy, must leave the Compson household for some kind of peace. Quentin wonders why she receives such harassment from Jason, and piteously begs her grandmother: "Why does he treat me like this, Grandmother?" she says. "I never hurt him."\(^2\)

Jason makes Quentin's life unendurable, as he compares her morals to her mother's and what he believes to be the morals of "nigger wenches" in town. She is at the point of exploding:

"I don't care," she says, "I'm bad and I'm going to hell, and I don't care. I'd rather be in hell than anywhere you are."\(^3\)

These lines in essence convey the same hopelessness her mother had felt in the Compson household years before. Jason feels that Quentin is immoral because she has it in her blood.

"Like I say you can't do anything with a woman like that, if she's got it in her blood, you can't do

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\(^1\) Ibid., p. 312.

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 323.

\(^3\) Ibid., p. 235.
anything with her. The only thing you
can do is get rid of her, let her go
and live with her own sort."¹

Quentin attributes her plight to Jason.

"Whatever I do, it's your fault...
If I'm bad it's because I had to be.
You made me. I wish I was dead.
I wish we were all dead."²

It is hypocritical that Jason spends his money on a crude Memphis whore
named Lorraine, yet condemns obsessively his sister and niece. Jason
reveals his total resentment towards Miss Quentin, as he refers to her as
"the bitch that cost me a job, the one chance I ever had to get ahead,
that killed my father and is shortening my mother's life everyday and
made my name a laughing stock in the town."³

Peter Swiggart, a Faulknerian critic, relates Jason's hatred of
Caddy to his most characteristic phobia, the smell of gasoline. Mrs.
Compson traces his psychosomatic headaches caused by gasoline to his
early childhood. Swiggart contends that "it might well have originated
with the car which Caddy's fiance gives her, and which reminds Jason of
his lost job."⁴ Jason's own car is purchased with a thousand dollars
which Mrs. Compson has given him to buy a share in the general

¹ Ibid., p. 290.
² Ibid., p. 324.
³ Ibid., p. 379.
⁴ Peter Swiggart, *The Art of Faulkner's Novels* (Austin: The Uni-
merchandise store where he works. His employer, Earl, knows that he has not used the money as Mrs. Compson instructed and also that he has her power of attorney. However, Jason does not care how much Earl or anyone else knows.

Jason has a rather unique relationship with time, because there never seems to be enough of it for him. Time is equated to money, and Jason doesn't have enough of either one. He looks at time conventionally, and, like many people, he cannot keep up with the fast-moving occurrences around him. Jason rushes around in section three, always trying to get somewhere and always arriving late.

I went back to the store. It was half past three almost. Damn little time to do anything in, but then I am used to that. I never had to go to Harvard to learn that.1

Unlike his brother Quentin, Jason does not reflect upon the past and considers it extinguished. The two brothers do have one thing in common, however. Each feels that Caddy has brought irreparable disgrace on the family. Quentin commits suicide because of Caddy, and Jason tries to receive financial profits.

Jason has nothing but scorn for the Compson family. He feels that he has no illusions about his family or himself. While searching for Quentin and her carnival-employee lover, he reflects on the possible attitudes of the townspeople.

And there I was, without any hat, looking like I was crazy too. Like a man would naturally think, one of them is crazy and another one drowned himself and the

other one was turned out into the street by her husband, 
what's the reason the rest of them are not crazy too. 
All the time I could see them watching me like a hawk, 
waiting for a chance to say Well I'm not surprised I 
expected it all the time the whole family's crazy.¹

Jason has the conviction that only he has a firm grasp on the reality 
of the situation and that he alone can face the facts.

Jason reacts logically, rather than emotionally. "His particular 
method of ordering and explaining his actions in terms of cause and 
effect, profit and loss, is all too familiar."² He does not imagine 
that there are any other facts or any other points of view except those 
that affect him directly.

His is a world reduced to calculation in which no 
subjective claims are tolerated and no margin for 
error is allowed. This calculating approach to ex-
perience pervades his every act, no matter how 
trivial.³

Jason's sanity is something inhuman. He does not even love his mother, 
as Faulkner tells us, for he is:

A sane man always, and love always involves a con-
tradiction of such sanity. Benjy's idiocy and Quentin's 
quixotic madness are finally less inhuman than Jason's 
sanity. To be truly human one must transcend one's mere 
intellect with some overflow of generosity and love. 
Faulkner tells us that Jason is able to compete with and 
hold his own with, the Snopeses. This is the highest 
accolade that Faulkner can bestow on Jason, and of

¹
Ibid., p. 290.

²
Olga W. Vickery, "Worlds in Counterpoint," Twentieth Century 
Interpretations of The Sound and The Fury, ed. by Michael H. Cowan 

³
Ibid., p. 49.
course, the worst damnation he can utter. When a Compson turns Snopes, then the family has indeed run out, and the end of the order has come.¹

CHAPTER IV

CADDY, WILLIAM FAULKNER'S CONCEPT OF WOMANHOOD

The final section of The Sound and the Fury, narrated by the omniscient author, is Faulkner's final attempt to tell Caddy Compson's story. Initially, Caddy is seen through the monologues of Benjy, Quentin and Jason. All of their fragmented glimpses are difficult to focus into a single impression of her. Although Caddy is the central figure of the book, she is sometimes not considered an entirely successful creation. Faulkner often spoke fondly of Caddy at the University of Virginia:

To me she was the beautiful one, she was my heart's darling. That's what I wrote the book about and I used the tools which seemed to me the proper tools to try to tell, try to draw the picture of Caddy.¹

The Compsons are living in the attitudes of the eighteen-sixties. Caddy's promiscuity is exaggerated out of proportion in the first three sections and is re-evaluated in section four. Caddy is banished from the Compson household because of her sins. Mrs. Compson, at one point in the story, resorts to the wearing of black as a sign of death in retaliation for one of Caddy's early indiscretions. Benjy, the idiot son, becomes more derelict than ever and loses all of the existing order in his world because of Caddy's sin. Quentin, the intellectual, bases his existence on Caddy's virginity and honor. The thin membrane

that determined her virginity symbolized to Quentin the honor of his family and of the entire Southern region. Caddy's sin is ineradicable in Quentin's eyes, and has destroyed all of the order in his shallow existence. The animalistic Jason uses Caddy's sin as a means of draining money from Caddy and sadistically torturing both Caddy and her daughter Quentin. The weak Mr. Compson finally drinks himself to death as a result of Caddy's indiscretions. Assuming that the loss of virginity has started a chain-reaction of events in the Compson family, the reader inevitably forms a mental picture of the female protagonist, Caddy Compson.

Caddy, woman and essence of woman, a being with whom Faulkner felt in such close relationship that she could only be described through an aura of epithets, associations, shiftings of registers and symbols: a presence above all, since she is more action than words, more intuition than reasoning, and is not allowed a section like her brothers, but a honeysuckle-intoxicating, full-bodied, triumphant presence.1

In Chapter Four of the novel, the perspective shifts from the interior monologues to a straightforward narrative. Once Caddy, who does possess the ability to love, is cast out of the Compson household, the scene becomes a wasteland of activity "signifying nothing." The Compson family has lost the "life force, a condition symbolized by the dead end of Benjy and his sterilization and the bachelorhood of Jason."2


An action of endurance is offered in Dilsey's journey to the church with Frorny, Luster and Benjy. Dilsey, the Compson maid, must attempt to salvage the ruins of the Compsons. She is the prophet who has seen the beginning of the Compson family and now foresees the end. Dilsey is the character Faulkner focuses upon as his enduring witness to the decline of the family.

"I've seed de first en de last," Dilsey said. "Never you mind me."
"First en last what?" Frorny said.
"Never you mind," Dilsey said. "I seed de beginnin, en now I sees de endin."1

Dilsey has adjusted to the inequities of life, and is a perfect example of selfless service. The inaccurate clock for which she accurately and unhesitatingly compensates is an example of her innumerable adjustments.

A cabinet clock ticked, then with a preliminary sound as if it had cleared its throat, struck five times.
"Eight o'clock," Dilsey said.2

Although Dilsey can make mental allowances for the inaccurate clock, she cannot set it back in order. This is symbolically analogous to her inability to set the Compsons' lives in order. Dilsey can only mirror the actual familial situation, as Benjy does in the first section of the novel.

At no time does Dilsey judge any of the Compsons, not even Jason, though she does object at one point to those


2 Ibid., p. 342.
who frown on Benjy's presence in a Negro church. But her presence enables the reader to judge not systems but actions and hence to grasp the truth instinctively. And though she does not judge, Dilsey is never deceived; her comprehension of the relations between Caddy and the rest of the family is unerring.1

A very moving and compelling picture of the Compson decline is exposed through the characterizations of Benjy and Dilsey. Clearly, in Faulkner's conception of the suffering Dilsey the reader can feel the sum of the existing evil in the Compson household. "Some of the elements making for life do appear within the Compson family group, most notably in Dilsey but also in Caddy and her daughter."2 There is a closeness that exists in Dilsey's relationships with both Miss Quentin and with Caddy. Dilsey is the sole available love-giving force, and provides an overall reassurance and even serenity to all of the children.

Dilsey's ability to stand unwavering in the face of circumstance finds further expression in her patient preoccupation with the present. Dilsey's endurance is tested by the frivolous and inconsiderate demands made upon her by the Compsons. Although Mrs. Compson does nothing but whine and complain throughout the novel, she consistently reminds everyone in the novel, including Dilsey, that:

"You're not the one who has to bear it," Mrs. Compson said. "It's not your responsibility. You can go away. You don't have to bear the brunt of it day in and day out. You owe nothing to them, to Mr. Compson's memory. I know


you have never had any tenderness for Jason. You've never tried to conceal it.

Dilsey said nothing. She turned slowly and descended, lowering her body from step to step, as a small child does, her hand against the wall.¹

Mrs. Compson is totally incorrect in her whinings, for the burden is unmistakably on Dilsey.

By working with circumstance instead of against it she creates order out of disorder; by accommodating herself to change she manages to keep the Compson household in some semblance of decency. While occupied with getting breakfast, she is yet able to start the fire in Luster's inexplicable absence, provide a hot water bottle for Mrs. Compson, see to Benjy's needs, and soothe the various ruffled tempers. All this despite the constant interruptions of Luster's perverseness, Benjy's moaning, Mrs. Compson's complaints, and even Jason's maniacal fury. The same calmness is evident with regard to Caddy's affair, Quentin's suicide and the arrival of Caddy's baby.²

Dilsey is a source of love for the love-starved Compson children. Her calm, morally unambiguous stance is a refreshing change from the neurotic self-absorption of their natural mother, Caroline Bascomb Compson. Dilsey also has clear moral vision; she has suffered tremendously, but has not whimpered or filled her mind with self-pity.

Dilsey...becomes through her actions alone the embodiment of the truth of the heart which is synonymous with morality...In a sense, Dilsey represents a final perspective directed toward the past and the Compsons, but it is also the reader's perspective for which Dilsey provides the vantage point. There is no doubt but that Dilsey is meant to represent the ethical norm,


the realizing and acting out of humanity.¹

When Dilsey takes Benjy to church on Easter Sunday, Faulkner employs a sample of the love that is absent in the Compson family. The preacher, Reverend Shegog, speaks to the congregation about love until:

...there was not even a voice but instead their hearts were speaking to one another in chanting measures beyond the need for words.²

Dilsey offers Benjy the love and patience that he has been denied. Temporarily, he can find some solace and a restoration of order in his dreary existence through Dilsey. The Easter service in the Black church provides an atmosphere of love, innocence and purity.

In the midst of the voices and the hands Ben sat, rapt in his sweet blue gaze. Dilsey sat bolt upright beside, crying rigidly and quietly to the annealment and the blood of the remembered Lamb.³

Faulkner also emphasizes the supportive quality of Dilsey. She is effective, orderly and in touch with reality, with no interest in making false pretensions. Dilsey's presence allows the reader to view the tragedy of the Compsons more clearly. Quentin makes a remark about Blacks early in the novel that can be used to further clarify Dilsey's presence. He feels that Negroes


³ Ibid., p. 370.
come into white people's lives... in sudden sharp black trickles that isolate white facts for an instant in unarguable truth like under a microscope.¹

A character sketch of Jason reveals a certain imprisonment which he believes to be a direct result of his relationship with Dilsey.

In 1865, he would say, "Abe Lincoln freed the niggers from the Compsons. In 1933, Jason Compson freed the Compsons from the niggers."²

Therefore, Dilsey is a positive force juxtaposed with the negative force of the rotting Compson aristocracy.

Faulkner is cognizant of the dangers of slipping into sentimentality through his portrayal of Dilsey. Dilsey may have been brought forth as an almost sentimental antidote to the vast amounts of degeneration and hypocrisy which are major ingredients of the story. In Faulkner's vision of evil, his portrayals are perfectly rational and empirical.

It's possible that evil is inherent in human nature, not so much in the character of writers but in human nature itself, that it's easier to conceive of evil than of good — that evil is easier to make believable, credible than good.³

It is clear, however, that Faulkner does not intend a simple moral division between his Black and white characters. Dilsey's decency and faith are ineffectual, for neither she nor the church service has touched

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² Ibid., p. 422.

Luster. The mischievous Luster occasionally plays very cruel jokes on Benjy. Luster comically emphasizes the fact that Benjy is the very essence of meaninglessness when he protests to Dilsey. "I ain't lying." Ask Benjy ef I is."¹ He knows that Benjy can neither confirm or deny anything. Luster also cruelly teases Benjy by repeating Caddy's name or taking his bottle.

Faulkner does not make the mistake of accounting for Dilsey's virtues through some mystique of race in which good primitive black folk stand over against corrupt wicked white folk. Dilsey herself has no such notions. When Luster remarks of the Compson household: "Dese is funny folks. Glad I ain't none of them," she says: "Lemme tell you somethin, nigger boy, you got jes es much Compson devilment in you es any of em" (p. 374). She believes in something like original sin: men are not "naturally" good, but require discipline and grace.²

It becomes quite obvious that Faulkner's portrait of Dilsey will dominate the meaning of the novel, and that she will become the final means of permitting the reader to evaluate the Compson family. Dilsey will give a final perspective, for she is Faulkner's tool and privileged to express a final positive view of the heroine, Caddy Compson.

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The facts of Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* are narrated four separate times from four different perspectives. The story travels through thirty years of the Compson family's history. The four sections of the novel are concerned with distinctive views and possible consequences emerging from Caddy's promiscuity.

The controlling image of the story is unmistakably Caddy's "dirtied" drawers, and this image colors the testimonies of all of the narrators involved. Caddy does not speak, which adds to her overall effectiveness in the novel. Faulkner believed that to allow an entire book to be told from her point of view, following, perhaps, after earlier materials, would reduce her beauty and poignancy and lessen the impact of her betrayal by her family. After Caddy's ill-fated love affair with Dalton Ames, she is in fact married to Herbert Head, but immediately cast off by him and refused a home by her mother; her father, tormented and loving, would have been willing to accept her permanently, and does accept the responsibility of his grandchild. Caddy is a tragic victim of her surroundings, and it is much more evocative to view her through someone else's eyes.

Although Caddy is always seen indirectly through her brother's attitudes toward her, the descriptions of Caddy serve to make her physical presence felt throughout the novel. Caddy's willingness to be a mother to the idiot Benjy and his responsiveness to her provide some of the few evidences of natural love discoverable within the Compson family. Caddy's love and loyalty are exhibited in the first section, as she loves...
and remains as loyal as her life permits. Caddy does not exist in a vacuum, and as she matures her need for growth and fulfillment is manifest. Benjy's love is smothering and possessive, and when their inevitable break occurs the idiot is left a lost and motherless child. On the other hand, Quentin's idealization of Caddy and her virginity is the most impossible obsession of all, and Quentin, like Benjy, will undoubtedly suffer a tragedy.

Statues of marble purity and sheer glass vases can be "practical" symbols of ideality, but the virginity of human and mutable woman is an ideal inevitably doomed to destruction.1

Quentin's attempt to limit Caddy's existence to an ideal symbolic function destroys her. Jason Compson channels most of his cruelty and hate towards Caddy and her daughter Quentin. The content of the Jason section is based on Jason's almost maniacal hostility towards Miss Quentin. By means of their nervous gestures, Faulkner skillfully communicates the intense emotional despair of Caddy and her daughter, resulting from Jason's cruelties.

The reader can sense Caddy's enormous vitality, as she struggles against the outrageous demands thrust upon her by her family. Although she is so seldom permitted to speak, and only fragments of her letters are quoted in the Jason section, Caddy Compson rightfully emerges as the primary tragic figure in the novel. "The Sound and the Fury is a powerful indictment of the idealization of virgin purity and a moving portrayal

of the destructiveness this idealism precipitates."¹ Man's need of woman is one of the primary themes in the novel. Caddy is, finally, the ultimate heroine of The Sound and the Fury because the Compsons desperately need her feminine qualities of warmth and responsiveness, her aggressive courage, and her ability to assess realistically life's limitations and possibilities.

¹ Ibid., p. 48.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources


Secondary Sources


51


**Periodicals**


