

# Reflections of Disfunctional Family in the Characters of William Faulkner's "The Sound and the Fury"

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**Reflections of Dysfunctional Family in the Characters of William  
Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury***

Završni rad

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## Summary

William Faulkner is one of the best known American authors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In his novels, Faulkner focuses mainly on the life in the American South, a place where he was born and raised in, and the changes following the lives of some aristocratic families. One of these novels, also his first famous novel is *The Sound and the Fury*. This novel depicts the decline of a once famous and reputable aristocratic family, the Compsons. The decline of the family ensued from the complex relations between its members which are the result of the inappropriate upbringing and inadequate parental care. The aim of this paper is to examine the relationship between the three male children in the family and their sister, through which Faulkner portrays the decline of the family and the changes in the American South. This paper will try to show the importance of good guidance and the consequences of not having one by explaining the characteristics of four main characters of the novel. Because of the difficult and challenging childhood, and the fact that parents never showed any real love or caring, Caddy became a promiscuous girl who had to search for love elsewhere, Benjy, a mentally impaired child, became obsessed with order and impossible to silence, Quentin turned into a time-obsessed, suicidal maniac, and Jason came to be a materialistic misogynist.

**Key words:** William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury*, family, sister, chaos

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## **Introduction**

William Faulkner is one of the most important authors of the first half of the 20th century. In his works he deals with problems and difficulties of life in the American South. Being a Southerner himself, he focuses on describing the lives of several aristocratic families in the South and their development and decline through different periods of American history. One of his most famous novels, and also one of his most challenging works, is *The Sound and the Fury*. In this novel he describes the lives of the Compson family through the eyes of four narrators: Benjy, Quentin, Jason, and a third- person narrator, probably the servant Dilsey. The frame of the novel's plot is the decline of the family, the loss of their honor, and the ruin of family relations. However, the main theme of the novel is the relationship between the brothers and their sister, described from the viewpoint of each of the brothers. The characters of the novel are very complex, and therefore make the novel hard to read and comprehend. This is why this paper will explore the reasons for the complexity of characters and how the dysfunctional family is presented in each of them, and examine the psychological consequences of the inappropriate parental care and inadequate upbringing.

Structurally, the paper begins with a short description of Faulkner's life and the novel itself. The following chapter discusses the Compson family, in particular, the parents. The main section of the paper analyzes the main characters of the novel: Caddy, Benjy, Quentin, and Jason and their relationships. The paper concludes by focusing on the decline of the family and the reasons for the decline.

## 1. William Faulkner

William Faulkner, one of the most prominent American authors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was born in New Albany, Mississippi in 1897 as the first of four sons in the family. He was raised in the Southern family which left a great influence on his writing style and the themes of his works. Faulkner attended the University of Mississippi in Oxford and was a member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity. During the First World War he was a member of Canadian, and later British, Royal Air Force, but he never experienced wartime action. He served as Writer-in-Residence at the University of Virginia. He died in 1962 from a myocardial infarction and was buried in St. Peter's Cemetery in Oxford.

William Faulkner wrote his first literary work in 1919 but remained relatively unknown until he received Nobel Prize in Literature in 1949. Besides winning the Nobel Prize, he won the Pulitzer Prize for two of his works, *A Fable* and *The Reivers*. One of his most famous novels *The Sound and the Fury* was ranked sixth in the list of hundred best English-language novels of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Faulkner is best known as a writer of novels, but he is also a writer of short stories of which the best known are "A Rose for Emily", "Red Leaves", "Dry September", and others. Some of his most famous novels are *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying*, *Light in August*, *Absalom, Absalom!*, and many more. Most of his novels and short stories are set in a fictional Yoknapatawpha County. In addition to novels and short stories, Faulkner wrote two volumes of poetry, *The Marble Faun* and *A Green Bough*, and a collection of crime-fiction short stories, *Knight's Gambit*.

Faulkner was also a man of big heart so he donated part of his Nobel winnings to the foundation for new fiction writers which later resulted in the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction. He also donated money for funds that support African-American education majors at Rust College in Mississippi.

### **1.1. *The Sound and the Fury***

*The Sound and the Fury* was published in 1929 as Faulkner's fourth novel. The novel portrays the downfall of a, once very influential, Southern family, the Compsons. Minter calls this novel "a moving story of four children and their inadequate parents" (379). The story of the novel is told in four sections, each by a different narrator, which show different perspectives on the events. The first section is told by Benjy, the second by Quentin, the third by Jason, and the fourth by a third person narrator believed to be the servant Dilsey, and presents the most objective view on the story. However, the first three sections revolve around Caddy, the sister and the only girl in the family, and portray different views on her sexuality and relationships:

The story moves from the remote and strange world of Benjy's idiocy, and innocence, where sensations and basic responses are all we have; through the intensely subjective as well as private world of Quentin's bizarre idealism, where thoughts shape sensation and feeling into a kind of decadent poetic prose full of idiosyncratic allusions and patterns; to the more familiar, even commonsensical meanness of Jason's materialism where rage and self-pity find expressions in colloquialism and clichés. (Minter 381)

The novel is written using the new technique called stream of consciousness with which the author writes down the thoughts of the character without any relevance to one another and without any chronology of the events. With this technique, as William Van O'Connor says, "the novelist allows, or seems to allow, the story to tell itself" (13). The first section provides the best usage of the technique whereas the third section is almost entirely ordered. Because of the new technique, "it is easy to forget how simple and how moving its basic story is" (Minter 382).

*The Sound and the Fury* is set in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but the events are not chronologically united due to the usage of the stream of consciousness technique. The setting is the same in three chapters of the book: the first, the third, and the last one and it is mostly the mansion of the Compson family in Jefferson, Yoknapatawpha County, and the nearby city called Mottson. The second chapter, narrated by Quentin, is set in Cambridge, Mississippi, particularly Harvard University.

## 2. Historical Context

Most of Faulkner's short stories and novels follow the lives of Southern aristocratic families. As a person born and raised in the American South, Faulkner is obsessed with the history of this region. In his stories, through the lives of his characters he portrays the downfall of the Old South and the loss of traditional values. Particularly, through Caddy's sexuality and the loss of her virginity in *The Sound and the Fury*, he presents the new values and the loss of the old ones. Most of his works present the life in the imaginary Yoknapatawpha County which is a literary picture of Lafayette County, where Faulkner spent almost his entire life.

The novel also has racial connotations as there are several black servants as important characters in the book. To show that Blacks were treated unjustly and that they were not respected at all, Faulkner uses the word "nigger" many times in the book. In this particular book, Jason Compson epitomizes a racist who treats his servants as objects. However, by the end of the novel, Faulkner presents the changes in the roles of African Americans in the American society. They are slowly starting to get their own rights and are able to live their lives as free people, not slaves.

The novel also portrays the changing role of women in the American society. In prewar years, women had no rights and they served mainly to fulfill men's desires and produce heirs, "women's roles within the paternal, and higher classed, society were well understood and severely limited" (Wagner-Martin 149). Three of the novel's sections portray women as weak, dependent creatures. However, as the last section of the novel is narrated from the point of view of a woman servant, the changes are evident. Women in the United States finally gained their own rights and their independence. They were finally able to take care of themselves and get whatever they want. Caddy partially presents the new type of woman, the type that rejects to be controlled by men, and the type that is capable to stand on her own and fight for what she thinks is right.



### 3. Family

As it has already been mentioned, the novel *The Sound and the Fury* is basically a story about a downfall of an influential Southern family. Faulkner in this novel presents the life and the world of the Compson family, the world which is “a deteriorating world, represented symbolically by Faulkner in the physical and spiritual maladies of its inhabitants” (Brown 544).

The head of the family is Jason Compson III even though it oftentimes seems like Mrs. Compson has the last word in everything. The two of them have four children: Benjy, the mentally disabled child who presents a “shame” for others; Quentin, the rebellious child; Jason, who is very inclined to his mother; and Caddy, the only girl in the family, who brings a lot of trouble and problems to the other members of the family.

The Compsons were once very rich family and their mansion was set on a large parcel of land and consisted of ancestral house, garden, stables, and a house for servants. However, due to a number of inconveniences their mansion fell apart, as the father was obliged to sell a large parcel of the land to pay for his children’s needs.

As the head of the family, Jason Compson III is supposed to be the sanest member of the family, but actually he is “a weak, nihilistic alcoholic who toys with the emotions and needs of his children” (Minter 383). Rather than providing money for his family, he spends his days indulging in whiskey and cigars. In his book *William Faulkner: An Interpretation* Irving Malin states: “He lives intellectually according to an inflexible pattern which permits him to sit all day drinking, reading Horace and Livy, and writing bitter elegies about his fellow townspeople” (16). He is the representative of the old Southern values and traditions which greatly influence Quentin’s view of things. Mr. Compson often thinks about life, about religion, he thinks that “men are limited not only by time and space but also by their inability to realize their own stupidity and weakness” (Malin 17). Unfortunately, Mr. Compson, to his own delight, is able to transfer his beliefs to Quentin, believing he himself is better than most other men and that his knowledge will help Quentin “to live properly according to the authoritarianism he himself has adopted” (Malin 17).

Another person who is supposed to have a great influence on the children is the mother, Caroline Bascomb Compson. Unfortunately, she is a “cold, self-involved woman who expends her energies worrying about her ailments, complaining about her life, and clinging to her notions of respectability” (Minter 383). Out of all her children she is inclined only to her son Jason because she feels that he is the only one that takes after her side of the family, the Bascombs. Her other children, especially Benjy, embody for her the punishment for her sins which she emphasizes by changing Benjy’s name from Maury to Benjamin. She does not take care of her

children, but leaves them in the hands of the servants while she spends days in her room suffering from an imaginary illness. Because of that, Caddy is bound to grow up very early because she is the only one who is able to take care of her mentally disabled brother Benjy. Caroline is unable to show any motherly love for any of her children except for Jason, who in the end turns out to be the worst of all.

Father's inability to provide decent care for his family, mother's unwillingness to show any interest in her children's needs, and the fact that none of the two, who were both obliged to be the idols to their children, showed any real parental love for them, left the four children at the mercy of bitter and harsh world and marked their destinies forever. There is no wonder why the lives of the children fell into ruin and why the family lost all of their dignity and pride. It all happened because the parents, who were supposed to prepare their children for their adulthood and give them the childhood they deserve, failed to do that and left them to find their own paths with no one to guide them: "It can be read as a failure of love within a family, an absence of self-respect and of mutual respect" (O'Connor 16). The Compsons show how one's destiny can go wrong without any guidance, how inadequate upbringing can develop wrong ideas about the self and the world, and how dysfunctional family reflects on the lives and characters of its members.

#### 4. Caddy

Caddy is the central character in the novel even though she never tells her story but it is told from everybody else's perspective. Because of that, it cannot be known for sure what kind of a character she is. Her life and her actions form a skeleton around which the lives of everybody else revolve.

As a young girl she is playful, happy, enjoys spending carefree days with her brothers, exploring the world outside the house. However, she does not get to enjoy her childhood for a long time. As she is the only girl in the family, and as the mother is never there to take proper care of her children, especially Benjy, Caddy has to take over that role as she is the only one able to keep Benjy calm. Minter asserts: "Like Benjy, Quentin and Jason also turn towards Caddy, seeking to find in her some way of meeting needs ignored or thwarted by their parents" (383). However, the fact that she has to grow up faster and the fact that she never experiences a great deal of love inside the family, make her eager to find love elsewhere. Because of that, she starts having little love affairs very soon, which leads to her losing her virginity before the men in the family. Her little sexual games are a real frustration to others and make their lives difficult. Quentin and Benjy are terribly affected by her loss of virginity and it can be said that it was the life changing experience for them, more than it was for Caddy.

When she gets the baby and is cast out from the family because she ruined their name, she remains strong and does not let it keep her down. She sends letters and money to her daughter, and wants to make sure that she leads a pleasant life and that she has everything she needs. This shows that she is a kind and caring person, and that she would do everything for the people she loves even if it can make her life a living hell. She is a strong character who is able to endure all the unpleasant things that she encounters in her life.

Caddy presents the new woman, the kind which is independent and can take care of herself even though at times it can be really difficult and challenging. She is not afraid of men and does not allow them to control her life: "Caddy establishes her independence and achieves freedom" (Malin 385). Moreover, she uses her looks and shrewdness to control men and make them do as she pleases. Her loss of virginity presents the downfall of old, traditional values and beliefs, and the rise of new, more modern views and opinions.

## **5. Benjy**

The narrator of the first section is Benjy, a mentally impaired and unstable child in the family. His retardation is what makes him derelict by the rest of the family and is, therefore, a source of shame to the others. Their mother sees Benjy as a punishment for her sins and for the fact that she accepted to marry their father. His idiotism in the book is presented through his concept of time. Benjy goes back and forth into the past and the future, making this section of the book very difficult to comprehend. Benjy's world is restricted only to the physical side of events because he is mentally incapable to think about things. Therefore, his world is inflexible and he protests loudly against every change of order: "Luster knocked the flowers over with his hand. 'That's what they'll do to you at Jackson when you start bellowing.' I tried to pick up the flowers. Luster picked them up and then went away. I began to cry" (Faulkner 66).

Benjy is not capable to talk and, therefore, his only means of communication is crying and producing other loud noises. He is not able to control himself or his bodily responses when he finds himself in an unknown situation: "He cries when he means to, and when he does not, he shows little interest in the sound" (Roggenbuck 583).

However, despite all his crying and moaning, Benjy suffers the least of all the characters in the novel because he is unable to connect with anyone on a deeper level. All his loud reactions are not reactions to pain and suffering, but merely his response to the changes of order and his means of communication. Benjy is the only character that manages to disconnect himself from the real world and, therefore, does not feel the effects that this cruel world has on his brothers or his sister. Just as much as he is an idiot he is also a very clever character who designs his own world and escapes the turmoil of his family's present life: "Like his brother Quentin, Benjy's life wears him and he withdraws. Unlike, Quentin, he withdraws into his mind, to better versions of his life than the bleak present" (Roggenbuck 592).

### **5.1. Affection for Caddy**

Benjy's love for his sister before and after her sexual act may also be seen as the change of order: "any alteration in Caddy makes her not-Caddy" (Vickery 35). Caddy is a part of his orderly world, but other than that, she has no existence for him. He is not aware of her absence until something reminds him of her name, the golfers yelling "caddie", or when someone says "candles" which reminds him of "Candace", his sister's real name. Yet at the same time, his three most favorite things are associated with Caddy: pasture, leaves, and fire. At the very beginning of the book, Faulkner expresses Benjy's obsession with his sister's name and with the

pasture which is now a golf course: “‘Here, caddie.’ He hit. They went away across the pasture. I held to the fence and watched them going away” (Faulkner 1). Further, his obsession with fire is due to its reflection of light which reminds him of his sister’s skin. Looking at the fire has the same effect on him as Caddy does; it calms him: “‘but I didn’t hush and she came and put her arms around me” (Faulkner 29).

His change in attitude towards Caddy may best be presented through his obsession with the smell of leaves. First, Benjy loves the smell of leaves because it reminds him of his sister. However, after her involvement in the sexual act, he cannot feel the smell anymore. That is the evidence that something about Caddy has changed and that she is not the same any longer: “‘Benjy’, Caddie said, ‘Benjy.’ She put her arms around me again, but I went away” (Faulkner 48).

## **6. Quentin**

Quentin is the oldest son in the family and he is “uniquely qualified to relate this tale of family destroyed by its own helplessness, perversion, and selfishness” (Brown 544). Quentin is a troubled and problematic child in the Compson’s family. He is the one that has the opportunity to make something of his life as he is the only one that gets the opportunity for education. However, he does not enjoy it or feel any satisfaction in it. All he can think of are time, his relationship with his father, and his sister, Caddy. Quentin is the passive observer; he never does anything to even try to make his life better or to become happier and fulfilled. Stephen M. Ross argues that

for most of his life Quentin has listened passively to the voices swirling around him. Always being told things, he could never really do anything, never affect events by his own acts either because there was nothing to do or because this conception of action was so hopelessly romantic. (Loud 252)

Connected with this are his thoughts on committing incest, he is able to think about it, even to talk about it, but he is not capable of committing such deed, and everyone knows that. Furthermore, he has never experienced sex and everything he knows about it is what others have told him. “Quentin is helpless when words will not suffice, and for him they almost never do” (Ross, Loud 254).

Because words are not enough to solve all of his problems, the only thing Quentin manages to do to escape them is the most cowardly thing anyone can do - he kills himself. Suicide is not the exit from the everyday problems, but it makes the problems to everyone around. If Quentin had not killed himself, the future of the whole family could have been saved. Unfortunately, he does not look into the future but is obsessed with the past, which throughout his section remains his main preoccupation.

### **6.1. Obsession with Time**

Quentin's problematic character can be recognized right at the beginning of his section where he expresses his obsession with time, “a fixation which determines not only the language in which he speaks but also the structure of his section of the novel” (Brown 545). It is evident from the very beginning that for Quentin time has much more relevance than for other characters in the book, for him “time is painful and destructive” (Brown 545). He is troubled by the clicking of the watch he got from his father: “It was propped against the collar box and I lay listening to it. Hearing it, that is” (Faulkner 94). Quentin cannot stand the ticking of the clock because it

constantly reminds him of his own mortality. He cannot stand the sound of time, he cannot bear to look at the watch, but at the same time, by not seeing the watch, he keeps on asking what time it is. Time for Quentin is a reminder of his own agony and his miserable life.

His desperate view of life is imposed on him by his father and his belief that life is miserable and that “the field only reveals to man his own folly and despair, and victory is an illusion of philosophers and fools” (Faulkner 93). Even though he desperately tries to escape his father’s influence and create his own life, he does not succeed in that, and time is the constant reminder that his whole life will be miserable and unworthy. One of the ways in which Quentin tries to break free from the grips of both time and his father is by breaking the watch, but still he wears it in his pocket all the time and cannot separate from it.

## **6.2. Suicide**

In his desperate attempt to show everyone that he can be independent and that he is not controlled by anyone, that he can decide on his own, he does the most cowardly thing, he reaches for, what he thinks is the only exit from his problems, suicide. When all the other attempts of his rebellion failed, he sees no other solution but to end his life and release himself from all the miseries that follow him in his life. The reason why he chooses water for his final destination is because water is calming, soothing, tranquil, and, above all, silent. He sees water as “a purifying agent” (Brown 549) in which he will be unable to hear the clicking of the watch and could finally free himself from time and his own misery. Water is “less a regenerative force than a peaceful escape from the ‘loud world’ and time” (Brown 549).

## **6.3. Incest**

Quentin’s relationship with Caddy is more complex than Benjy’s: “At first all of Quentin’s desire seem to focus on Caddy as the maiden of his dreams. But as his desire becomes associated with ‘night and unrest’, Caddy begins to merge with ‘Little sister Death’- that is with incestuous love forbidden on threat of death” (Minter 387). For Benjy, Caddy is a mother-like figure, but for Quentin she is much more, a guardian of family honor, as she is the only girl in the family. Even in their childhood he wants to make her aware that she is the guardian of their family’s honor: “At the Branch he slaps her for disregarding his orders, and periodically after that he reasserts his control, scouring her head in the grass for kissing boys and smearing her with mud for not being concerned with his behavior” (Vickery 38). Quentin is very traditional

and therefore believes that female virginity should be kept until there is someone worth losing it. He is a firm believer in old values and because of that he “associates Caddy simultaneously with an older, mythic, pre-industrial social order” (Miller 39).

However, he loves Caddy too much and believes that no man is good enough for her, which is the main reason for his opposition to her sexual experiences. Another important reason is his virginity. He cannot stand the fact that his sister lost her virginity before he did, because he believes that losing virginity for women is much more important than for men. Even his father, who, one would believe, is even more traditional, tells him that virginity is not that big of a deal, that it is invented by men, and contrary to the nature itself. Quentin’s father says that “in the South you are ashamed of being a virgin. Boys. Men. They lie about it. Because it means less to women. Father said. He said it was men invented virginity not women” (Faulkner 96). As Quentin tries to prove to his father that he is wrong, and that virginity is something important, he lies to him about committing incest, because he believes that it will give more importance to his sister’s virginity. However, his father knows that Quentin is incapable of committing such an unethical deed so his aspirations stay merely words. Lying about incest is another way of Quentin’s rebellion against his father and his beliefs. Irving Malin, too, asserts that “incest also symbolizes the rebellion of the son against the father. If he can acknowledge the evil in himself, overstep the limits of morality and commit the deed, he can defeat the father as a law-giver” (17).

Caddy’s relationships are the cause of Quentin’s pain mainly because when she is involved with someone else, he feels excluded from her life. Caddy’s marriage “signals the foreclosure of the incest option as a means of escape from domestic authority” (Folks 36). He wants to make himself “a causative agent in it [the world], erasing Caddy’s actual lovers, asserting his role as the sole controller of her ‘innocence’ and her ‘honor’” (Ross, Loud 245).

The change of his perception of Caddy is presented through the smell of honeysuckle. At first, Quentin enjoys the smell because it reminds him of Caddy, but after her affair with Dalton Ames and her loss of virginity, he starts hating it: “damn that honeysuckle I wish it would stop” (Faulkner 191). Caddy is also one of the reasons why Quentin chooses water as his final exit. Being unable to make any physical connection with Caddy he tries to connect with her through water because it reminds him of their childhood games.



## **7. Jason**

Jason's section presents the world which is different from the first two, mainly because it is the most rational and, therefore, the most comprehensible section. Jason is the one which is realistic and down-to-earth, and does not allow feelings to control his view of life. He is bitter and malicious which is the reason why he is incapable to have any real connection in his life. What is important to say is how he differs from his brothers. Benjy is incapable to differentiate past, present, and future, Quentin is stuck in the past, but Jason is focused on his present life and near future. He does not think of the past and how to correct the mistakes from the past, but thinks of how he can make his life better in the present. Furthermore, he is probably the one that suffers the most as he has to live and suffer the consequences of other people's deeds. He has to work and watch out for his family because his parents were unable to do so and left the family in misery and hardship. As he is not able to make amends with his parents he seeks revenge by torturing people around him, particularly the ones he knows cannot do anything to hurt him back:

Although he is aggressive in expressing the hostility he feels for his parents, Jason is never able satisfactorily to avenge himself on them. Accordingly, he finds his victims where he finds them, his preference being for those who are most helpless, like Benjy or Luster, or most desperate, Caddy. (Minter 384)

He is miserable and unhappy with his own life, and sees pleasure in torturing other people probably because he loves to see other people suffer just like he does, or even more. However, "the darkness of Jason's world is largely of his own making" (Ross, Jason 285).

### **7.1. Materialism**

One of Jason's most important characteristics is his obsession with money and material wealth. The reason for his materialism can be found in the fact that he is the only one of the children that has to work to earn money for his own needs and desires, Caddy marries well, and Quentin goes to Harvard thanks to the selling of the family's pasture. After the death of his father, Jason becomes the head of the family and responsible for the lives of everybody who lives in the house and that results in his need to control everything that is happening inside the house: "In his own house he insists that dinner be served on time to all the members of the family even though such familiar repasts become grotesque parodies of conviviality and family life" (Vickery 44). All the money he earns he pretends to spend on his family when, actually, he spends it all on himself and his desire, which is why when he has money he is obsessed by

preserving it: "I took the box down and counted out the money and hid the box again and unlocked the door and went out" (Faulkner 296). His obsession with wealth can also be the result of the fact that money somehow always slips from his hands, he is always close to getting it, but never actually has it. First, his father sells Benjy's pasture in order to send Quentin to Harvard and, therefore, Jason is left without his heritage. Next, his sister's marriage with Herbert Head presents to him the opportunity to have a job but, unfortunately for him, Caddy's marriage crash leaves him without the only source of income. Jason's materialism is expressed even in childhood: "'Jason going to be rich man.' Versh said. 'He holding his money all the time'" (Faulkner 42), and continues later in his life, so by keeping his money locked up in a strong box, inside the closet in a locked room, he wants to prevent someone from stealing it. His whole view on life and people is based on money and therefore he sees people as source of money and the possibility of gaining wealth, which can be presented through the way he sees his sister and niece. First, Caddy's marriage is the good opportunity for him to get a good job and make money, but after Caddy gives birth to Miss Quentin, whose father is not Herbert Head, Jason loses everything. However, in his niece, Jason sees the opportunity to extract money from his sister by taking care of her daughter and charging her for it.

On the other hand, money is a burden to him, because through it, he is in constant relation to his sister. His final loss of money presents "the end of his involvement with Caddy, who has always, even in her absence, represented the threat of the irrational and incalculable" (Vickery 46).

## **7.2. Misogyny**

His twisted view of life in general, money, and women, can be traced to his relationship with his mother. He is the only child that ever caught mother's attention in a positive way: "Jason is clearly his mother's, for his adolescent perversity can be traced to his role as her favorite, her last hope among her lost brood" (Ross, Jason 288). The others are more of a burden and a shame, and she only cares for the bad things they had done. Jason is the only one she is proud of and the only one she is not ashamed to call her child, what is more, she often says that he is the only one of her children who shares the blood of her family and is, therefore, more a Bascomb than a Compson: "Jason will make a splendid banker his the only one of my children with any practical sense you can thank me for that he takes after my people the others are all Compson" (Faulkner 116). However, as he is incapable to render the feelings, that incapability continues later in his life.

Just as he is incapable to love his mother, he is incapable to have any romantic feelings for any women in his life. Moreover, he becomes a real misogynist. Stephen M. Ross argues that “he despises women and fears their judgment of him and brags that he knows how to handle them- with a bust in the jaw” (Jason 286). His hatred is more concentrated on his sister and her daughter, two women who are the main reason why he is miserable his whole life. His attitude towards women is evident at the beginning of his chapter: “One a bitch always a bitch, what I say” (Faulkner 223).

Jason’s relationship with Caddy and his perspective of her affair with Dalton Ames is more different than Benjy’s and Quentin’s:

Like both of his brothers, Jason is preoccupied with Caddy, but where Benjy’s and Quentin’s preoccupations are affectionate, Jason is almost purely malicious, based entirely on getting her into trouble and generally disapproving of her behavior. (On *The Sound and the Fury*)

As children, Caddy and Jason constantly fight, mainly because she is the only person that he can never control. He is the one to tell on her when she does something wrong because he wants to gain control over her: “You think you’re grown up, don’t you. You think you’re better than anybody else, don’t you. Prissy” (Faulkner 48). Jason’s relationship with his sister is reflected in his relationship with other women. He negates every irrational emotion and does not want to subject himself to something he cannot control, and, therefore, he cannot be in a serious relationship: “In that part of his life, Loraine must not intrude by so much as a phone call at the risk of terminating their ‘contract’” (Vickery 43).

The problem with Jason is that he is not afraid to raise a hand on a woman, and if that is the only way to control her, he will gladly do that. “I never promise a woman anything nor let her know what I’m going to give her. That’s the only way to manage them. Always keep them guessing. If you can’t think of any other way to surprise them, give them a bust in the jaw” (Faulkner 240).

## **8. Break of the Family**

As can be seen from the chapters above, the children in the family and their complex characters are the product of the failures in parental care. The complex characters of Benjy, Caddy, and Jason are the result of mother's mistakes, whereas Quentin's character is the result of father's influence and his pessimistic view of people and life. Therefore, it is no wonder that the Compsons broke down. The family whose members hate each other and do not take care either of themselves, or the family, is determined to fail. This particular family started to fall apart when the father was still alive, but it reached its bottom under the hand of materialistic Jason, the one who showed a potential to reclaim family's name but failed to do so because of his selfish needs and aspirations. The Compson family is the example how person's selfish desires can ruin the lives of many people around and lead to the decline of even the most prominent and reputable family.

## Conclusion

Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury* is a story about a decline of a prominent family, even though it may not seem to be that. The decline of the family is a theme, other than Caddy, which connects all of the sections and, therefore, forms a frame in which other events happen. The breakdown of the family is the result of the complex and troubled characters in the novel, characters who are so preoccupied with their own lives and seemingly trivial things that they forget to take care of the family and preserve a good family name. However, characters of the children are the result of many different circumstances, the main one being the inappropriate upbringing. The parents, who are supposed to teach their children about life and prepare them for their future, failed to do so, which resulted with them not being able to take proper care of themselves or the family. This novel shows how childhood, and the ideas one forms in this period of his/her life, have a great psychological influence on a person later on in his/her life. Moreover, it shows how children of the same parents, raised in the same family, usually develop characters that are quite different. Another thing that led to the downfall of the family are the complex relations between its members which are probably also the result of the inadequate parental care and surveillance.

All in all, *The Sound and the Fury* is a story about the decline of the Compson family and the tragic destinies of its members, which are the result of a negative influence of the mother and father, inappropriate upbringing, and complex relations between the main characters.

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