The Sound and the Fury: A Study of Jason Compson and His Relationships with Women

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Recommended Citation
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THE SOUND AND THE FURY: A STUDY OF JASON COMPSON

AND HIS RELATIONSHIPS WITH WOMEN

(TITLE)

BY

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THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1976

YEAR

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William Faulkner, in speaking of his character from *The Sound and the Fury*, has described Jason Compson as the most vicious character he ever created—a representation of "complete evil." Although some critics would disagree with his statement, it is generally agreed that Jason Compson ranks near the top of the list of Faulkner's most despicable creations. Why is Jason the way he is? is a question one might ask. He was not born evil, and as a child he was not much worse-behaved than many children are as youngsters. Who and what were the primary contributing factors in the development of this macabre personality?

It is this writer's contention that females were the basic cause of Jason's misanthropy, and I hope to illustrate how they initially contributed toward his maladjusted personality, and as time passed, how they became more and more the target of his wickedness, thus creating a sort of perpetual motion mechanism for his poor relationships with females. A primary task will be to trace the development of Jason's attitudes toward women as evidenced by his relationships with them during his childhood, youth, and young adulthood. During each of these periods, Jason was to occupy a different role in relationship to the women in his life, and during each successive period he managed to acquire more and more anti-feminine attitudes and patterns of behavior—culminating in the utterly despicable adult personality Faulkner was referring to.

However, before beginning the study of the development of Jason's relationships with women, I believe it will be most helpful to the reader to have a character sketch of Jason as the reader last observes him.
Aside from his admittedly poor rapport with the women in his life, what is Jason Compson like with the rest of the world, one might ask? What are his attitudes toward his friends and associates, toward people in general, toward the condition of the world, and toward life in general?

To answer the last question first, Jason represents the epitome of rationalism triumphant over feeling. As Cleanth Brooks so aptly puts it,

Jason hopes to find meaning in life by discarding all idealisms, illusions, and emotional ties, and reducing life to its inexorable brass tacks. He manages to come out with a meaning of a sort, but it is a very thin and impoverished one. . . . He has indeed finally succeeded, with his brittle rationalism, in outsmarting himself."

At the end of the novel, after boasting that he is a free man, able to stand on his own two feet without help from anyone, Jason's gasoline-induced headache forces him to pay a Negro to drive him back to Jefferson without having obtained the object of his pursuit—Miss Quentin and the stolen money. As his emotional condition indicates after this wild goose chase, Jason, living in an almost perpetual state of outrage, "sees life almost entirely as a conspiracy to frustrate him."

He feels victimized not only by life in general, but also by particular segments of society ranging from "foreigners," to New Yorkers, to Jews, and to such a motley group as the carnival people. Jason ascribes dangerous ulterior motives to even them; he accuses them of bribing Buck Turpin with ten dollars so that they may fleece at least one thousand dollars from residents of the county. Unable to derive any satisfaction for himself from life's simpler pleasures, Jason begrudges the same to the townsfolk—particularly the Negroes, for whom he holds nothing but contempt. When old, black Job is incredulous that someone might actually charge to let the carnival people put on such great
entertainment, and when he exclaims that he would willingly pay them ten dollars himself if he had it, Jason thinks to himself, "And then a Yankee will talk your head off about niggers getting ahead. Get them ahead, what I say. Get them so far ahead you can't find one south of Louisville with a blood hound." Later, he goes on to say,

"Like I say the only place for them is in the field, where they'd have to work from sunup to sundown. They can't stand prosperity or an easy job. Let one stay around white people for a while and he's not worth killing. They get so they can outguess you about work before your very eyes, like Roskus the only mistake he ever made was he got careless one day and died. Shirking and stealing and giving you a little more lip and a little more lip until some day you have to lay them out with a scantling or something. Well, it's Earl's business. But I'd hate to have my business advertised over this town by an old doddering nigger. . . . (p. 194)

Jason's prejudices are not limited to white trash and blacks. He reserves a special brand of bigotry for any recognizable class of people "out there" who he feels is doing him wrong, particularly when money is involved. He reveals some of those prejudices as he talks with a drummer about the cotton market and about how the farmer cannot come out ahead no matter what kind of crop he raises.

"Let him make a small crop and he won't have enough to gin. And what for? so a bunch of damn eastern jews, I'm not talking about men of the jewish religion," I says, "I've known some jews that were fine citizens. You might be one yourself," I says.

"No," he says, "I'm an American."

"No offense," I says. "I give every man his due, regardless of religion or anything else. I have nothing against jews as an individual," I says. "It's just the race. You'll admit that they produce nothing. They follow the pioneers into a new country and sell them clothes."

"You're thinking of Armenians," he says, "aren't you. A pioneer wouldn't have any use for new clothes."

"No offense," I says. "I don't hold a man's religion against him."

"Sure," he says, "I'm an American. My folks have some French blood, why I have a nose like this. I'm an American, all right."

"So am I," I says. "Not many of us left." (p. 149)

Jason continues to himself, "Well, I reckon those eastern jews have got
to live too. But I'll be damned if it hasn't come to a pretty pass when any damn foreigner that can't make a living in the country where God put him, can come to this one and take money right out of an American's pockets." (p. 150)

Jason, like many of his contemporaries, and as is typical of certain provincial types, hates people and ideas that are foreign to him or that he cannot understand; but Jason's malevolence knows no such simple boundaries. He directs it toward everyone he comes into contact with--"friends," acquaintances, or even strangers among his clientele.

His long-suffering employer, Earl, encourages Jason to take off early when business slacks off; does not tell Jason's mother about the misappropriated thousand dollars; does not dock Jason's pay for all the time he spends checking up on the stock market, tending to his family banking, supposedly visiting the dentist, and chasing Miss Quentin all over town; but all poor Earl gets in return is sarcasm, rudeness, and humiliation.

I [Jason] went back to the store... Earl says, "I hope it wasn't anything serious."
"What?" I says. He looked at his watch. Then he went to the door and looked at the courthouse clock. "You ought to have a dollar watch," I says. "It won't cost you so much to believe it's lying each time."
"What?" he says.
"Nothing," I says. "Hope I haven't inconvenienced you."
"We were not busy much," he says. "They all went to the show. It's all right."
"If it's not all right," I says, "You know what you can do about it."
"I said it was all right," he says.
"I heard you," I says. "And if it's not all right, you know what you can do about it."
"Do you want to quit?" he says.
"It's not my business," I says. "My wishes don't matter. But don't get the idea that you are protecting me by keeping me."
"You'd be a good business man if you'd let yourself, Jason," he says.
"At least I can tend to my own business and let other peoples'
alone," I says.
"I don't know why you are trying to make me fire you," he says.
"You know you could quit anytime and there wouldn't be any hard
feelings between us."
"Maybe that's why I don't quit," I says. "As long as I tend to
my job, that's what you are paying me for." I went on to the back
and got a drink of water and went on out to the back door. (pp. 190-91)

Jason is a know-it-all toward the world and toward his close
associates, and the reader has a difficult time understanding how he can
get away with his unceasing hatefulfulness. However, the manner in which
this self-proclaimed, pre-eminent businessman treats his clients leaves
the reader incredulous.

"... Earl started yelling for me up front, so I put them a-
way and went and waited on the damn redneck while he spent fifteen
minutes deciding whether he wanted a twenty cent hame string or a
thirty-five cent one.
"You'd better take that good one," I says. "How do you fellows
ever expect to get ahead, trying to work with cheap equipment?"
"If this one aint any good," he says, "why have you got it on
sale?"
"I didn't say it wasn't any good," I says, "I said it's not as
good as that other one."
"How do you know it's not," he says. "You ever use airy one
of them?"
"Because they don't ask thirty-five cents for it," I says. "That's
how I know it's not as good."
He held the twenty cent one in his hands, drawing it through
his fingers. "I reckon I'll take this hyer one," he says. I offered
to take it and wrap it, but he rolled it up and put it in his over-
alls. Then he took out a tobacco sack and finally got it untied
and shook some coins out. He handed me a quarter. "That fifteen
cents will buy me a snack of dinner," he says.
"All right," I says, "You're the doctor. But don't come complain-
ing to me next year when you have to buy a new outfit."
"I aint makin next year's crop yit," he says. Finally I got rid
of him." (pp. 151-52)

Jason, as can be seen from this brief portrait, is totally alienated
from everyone--from friends, clients, acquaintances, and the world in
general. His personality is dominated by bitterness and hate, but nowhere is this acrimony more pointedly directed than it is toward the feminine world in general and the women in his immediate family in particular. It is here that his cruelty develops extra barb and his sarcasm evolves to outright brutality. The question is, "Why?"

I believe the text bears out the basic theory that very early in his life Jason learned that he could not depend upon females or trust their motives. The Compson's were not a social family, so Jason's closest associations were always with members of his immediate family, including the Negro help. That the female half of the family tended by chance to have the stronger, more domineering personalities could not help but cause Jason to have a lopsided attitude about which were the powerful forces in his own private world. His father was a henpecked, alcoholic philosopher without the gumption or energy to follow through with his convictions; Uncle Maury is a sniveling, parasitic drunk; and brother Quentin was a romantic idealist who lacked the capacity to face reality and deal with it. The strong personalities in Jason's world, those he would only naturally try to emulate and look to for guidance, all happened to be women.

As he bit by bit became disillusioned by each one's behavior, it is not too surprising that he concluded there was a correlation between women and misery. This distorted viewpoint, I contend, would never have been allowed to develop had Jason been subject to a balanced influence of strong, admirable men and women. As it was, he saw the ineffectuality of the male population right from the start, and when the stronger half—those persons a child would naturally turn to for guidance—failed him, he aimed all his bitterness and hate toward those who
had hurt, disappointed, and disillusioned him. One does not condemn those from whom he expects nothing--only those from whom he expects
delusion.

Some of the first negative reactions toward a female that Jason experienced were feelings of insecurity and abandonment. Jason was
only a few years old when his grandmother "Damuddy" died, but it seems that she had a genuinely affectionate relationship with the young boy. The implications of her funeral were incomprehensible to Jason, but his feelings of deprivation were noted by Dilsey, who scolded him for crying so much.


Mrs. Compson further substantiates Jason's and Damuddy's loving relationship when she scolds Caddy for pampering Benjy and draws a parallel between the two sets of relationships.

"You humour him too much." Mother said. "You and your father both. You don't realise that I am the one who has to pay for it. Damuddy spoined Jason that way and it took him two years to outgrow it, and I am not strong enough to go through the same thing with Benjamin." (p. 48)

So even Jason had his caretaker; but unfortunately for him, and possibly for the rest of the family's happiness, Jason's only real contact with a warm and loving woman was torn from him at an early age.

Loss of a parent-figure at an early age can cause feelings of in-
security in the strongest of children, but in Jason's case, Damuddy was his only rock. Mrs. Compson certainly never showed real affection to her children. Although she never ceases to proclaim her love and willing self-sacrifice for Jason throughout his lifetime, she is all wind and no substance. Cleanth Brooks describes her fittingly as cold and self-centered and overly-sensitive about the social status of the Bascombs, whose standing has been irreparably damaged by the birth of an idiot son—which she takes as a personal affront. He justly accuses her of giving no love or affection to any of her children and of spoiling and corrupting Jason. "Caroline Compson is not so much an actively wicked and evil person as a cold weight of negativity which paralyzes the normal family relationships." 9

Mrs. Compson is a failure as a mother, so Dilsey does her best to step in and become the mother Mrs. Compson could never be. 10 Although Dilsey never mistreated Jason, there is evidence from Mrs. Compson, albeit biased, that Dilsey never showed any tenderness toward him as a child; (p. 211) quite a bit of evidence points to the conclusion that Jason was one of those unattractive children whose appearance and behaviorisms were repulsive rather than lovable.

The reader is presented over and over with images of young Jason scuffling along, hands in pockets, tripping over his own feet. (pp. 17,78) Various family members scolded him about that habit time and time again, but he paid no attention to them. Also, he evidently had another rather annoying habit of chewing—with or without paper in his mouth.

Jason came out of the corner.
"What are you chewing." Father said.
"Nothing." Jason said.
"He's chewing paper again." Caddy said.
"Come here, Jason." Father said.
Jason threw into the fire. It hissed, uncurled, turning black. Then it was gray. Then it was gone. Caddy and Father and Jason were in Mother's chair. Jason's eyes were puffed shut and his mouth moved, like tasting. (p. 55)

Along with this disgusting habit and his sullen disposition was his probably unattractive physical appearance. In addition to puffy eyes, Versh characterizes him as fat and rather slow.

"I'm hungry." Jason said. He passed us and ran on up the walk. He had his hands in his pockets and he fell down. Versh went and picked him up.

"If you keep them hands out your pockets, you could stay on your feet." Versh said. "You can never get them out in time to catch yourself, fat as you is." (p. 17)

The fact that Jason just was not the type of child one wanted to cuddle gave him a definite handicap right from the start.

As for Caddy's attitude toward Jason, when she was not bullying him, she merely ignored him and ran off to play with Benjy and Quentin. She treated him, for the most part, as one would an inanimate object, while lavishing all her love and affection upon Benjy and Quentin. The only time Caddy paid any attention at all to Jason was when she tormented him. A very strong-willed, domineering young lady, Caddy tried and usually got her own way with everyone. She gloried in playing mother to Benjy, big sister to Quentin, and lord and master with everyone else—particularly Jason.

"Remember to mind Dilsey, now." [Father] said behind us. I leaned my face over where the supper was. It steamed up on my face.

"Let them mind me tonight, Father." Caddy said.

"I won't." Jason said. "I'm going to mind Dilsey."

"You'll have to, if Father says so." Caddy said. "Let them mind me, Father."

"I won't." Jason said, "I won't mind you."

"Hush," Father said. "You all mind Caddy, then. When they are done, bring them up the back stairs, Dilsey."

"Yes, sir." Dilsey said.

"There." Caddy said, "Now I guess you'll mind me." (p. 18)
And a few minutes later:

"He said to mind me." Caddy said.
"I'm not going to mind you." Jason said.
"You have to." Caddy said. "Come on, now. You have to do like I say." (p. 20)

And:

"How did you all get back out." Frony said.
"We've got company." Caddy said. "Father said for us to mind me tonight. I expect you and T.P. will have to mind me too."
"I'm not going to mind you." Jason said. "Frony and T.P. don't have to either."
"They will if I say so." Caddy said. "Maybe I won't say for them to." (p. 24)

Jason resented all these bossy females--Mrs. Compson, Dilsey, Caddy--always trying to make him do what they wanted, which was the only time any of them really paid him any attention. He felt helpless against them, so in order to assert his own feelings and perhaps to gain a little more recognition for himself, Jason reacted by playing the role of the typically spoiled child. However, as is usually the case, his behavior backfired on him and started a vicious behavioral circle. He cried over the least little annoyance; Dilsey and Mrs. Compson grew irritated and told him to be quiet; then the other children disgustedly called him a crybaby and taunted him with other cruel and childish names, which only made him cry again.

None of the other children pay much mind to Jason, which annoys him, but Caddy's behavior, especially, is an enigma to this innocent, if annoying, child. She sows the first seeds of his distrust of females and his inability to understand their motivations. When Caddy talks to Jason at all, it usually only to taunt or tease him. When he finally breaks into tears, she adds insult to injury by humiliating him in front of the other children. His ineffectual retorts are almost humorous.
Caddy knows Jason has been crying every night since Damuddy became sick, yet she presents him with a vision of a buzzard eating up his beloved grandmother.

T.P. lay down in the ditch and I [Benjy] sat down, watching the bones where the buzzards ate Nancy, flapping black and slow and heavy out of the ditch. . . .

"Do you think buzzards are going to undress Damuddy."

Caddy said. "You're crazy."

"You're a skizzard." Jason said. He began to cry.

"You're a knobnot." Caddy said. Jason cried. His hands were in his pockets.

"Jason going to be rich man." Versh said. "He holding his money all the time."

Jason cried.

"Now you've got him started." Caddy said. "Hush up, Jason. How can buzzards get in where Damuddy is. Father wouldn't let them. Would you let a buzzard undress you. Hush up, now."

Jason hushed. (pp. 26-7)

That was an extremely cruel thing for Caddy to say, and Jason was totally defenseless. With such a model to emulate, is it any wonder that Jason learned to retaliate in kind at an extremely early age? Habits acquired in childhood often continue into adulthood, often in a more sinister form.

First Caddy abuses Jason's emotions, and the next minute she grudgingly tries to comfort him. He cannot predict his older sister's behavior toward himself from one minute to the next, and such unpredictable treatment was bound to be confusing to his young psyche. How does one behave toward this girl who is mean one minute and almost nice the next? Undoubtedly, Caddy's mistreatment of Jason during his early childhood only served to reinforce his later rebellion against her.

Given such treatment, it is not surprising that a pervading feeling of insecurity, a dearth of love and affection, and an overall sense of being abused by all the females in his environment managed to get Jason off to an early bad start with regard to his attitude toward the fe-
male population.

His earliest experiences with females were not solely responsible for his later attitudes toward women, but they did get him off to a start in the wrong direction. Jason was doomed to be frustrated and injured by women, and bit by bit he turns from crying to verbal retaliation and sarcasm. During his early childhood he was totally helpless in standing up to these domineering women, but he became more adept with time. As Jason moved into boyhood and youth, to feelings of insecurity, rejection, and domination were added intense frustration, jealousy, and an urge to compete with women and gain ascendancy over them.

Throughout his youth, Jason's relationship with Dilsey remained relatively stable, particularly when compared to his relationships with Mrs. Compson and Caddy. Dilsey was the ever-present surrogate mother and authority figure, and although there is no evidence that she treated Jason with particular fondness, nowhere does she seem to give him an undeservedly rough time. Dilsey, more than any other female figure in his life, treats Jason with impartiality. Only Dilsey sees Jason's behavior for what it is—whether it be good, bad, or indifferent—but as he grows older and grows to resent all female authority, he naturally fights to free himself from Dilsey's control, too. Nevertheless, she never lets that stop her from telling him when he is wrong or from trying to make him behave. And up to this point in his life—adolescence—Jason still shows her the respect she deserves. When she scolds him for crying and tells him to "shut up that crying," he quickly hushes. (p. 20)

Jason's relationship with Caddy and Mrs. Compson, however, begins
to take a turn for the worse at this time. As stated earlier, it is his relationship with Caddy that first starts to sour, due to many complicated reasons, most important of which is Mrs. Compson's obvious partiality toward Jason. From the beginning, she was over-protective of him in relationship to the other children--always fighting his battles for him, rather than allowing him to learn to effectively make his own way in the world. She was constantly haranguing in front of the other children about how Jason was her pride and joy and the only one who was really like herself. The implication to the others had to be that Jason was her favorite, which tended to alienate him from them right from the start.

In addition, it was only natural that somewhere along the line, Jason would begin to imitate Mrs. Compson's behaviorisms and gradually acquire many of her habits. She was a whining, self-pitying, hypochondriac, so it does not seem surprising that early in life, Jason was best characterized as a crybaby. When Jason observes Mrs. Compson receiving at least token sympathy and attention, he has every reason in the world to expect similar methods will also work for him. All they do, however, is further alienate him from Quentin and Caddy, who show nothing but disgust at his behavior. All they desire is to stay away from this crybaby, so they tend to ignore him and leave him out of their childish games and confidences as often as possible.

That treatment, in turn, hurts and frustrates Jason, who must now invent some other ploys in order to win his siblings' attention and respect. Unfortunately for Jason, the only ideas he is able to dream up are those such as cutting up Benjy's paper dolls or threatening to tattle when Caddy plans some misdeed. Jason kicks a frog to draw
attention to himself, and to prove his bravery he says he is not afraid of a snake— all in hopes of impressing Caddy, who knows he is all hot air and out-argues him about his bravery. Even when he physically battles with Caddy, he loses. Jason is totally ineffectual in winning a place within the hierarchy of children; he knows it, Caddy knows it, and Jason knows that she knows it, which thoroughly frustrates and humilates him.

Meanwhile, as Jason becomes less lovable as a brother and Caddy naturally ignores him more and more, Jason feels even more hurt at this rejection. So, in addition to his total inability to win anything—fights, arguments, or respect— from Caddy, he is also deprived of any affection from this most loving young girl. And when he acts out his jealousy by picking on the special object of her affection, Benjy, she lashes out at him without mercy and even tries to give him a good swift kick. (p. 49)

Volpe places primary responsibility for Jason’s early problems on Mrs. Compson, whom he considers to be an inadequate mother. He justly charges Mrs. Compson with responsibility for alienating Jason from Caddy and Quentin, for spoiling him, and for managing to mold him into the exact opposite of what the Compsons stood for, solely because of her own feelings of inferiority. He contends that Mrs. Compson is directly responsible for preventing Jason from establishing rewarding emotional ties with the other children. It is only natural that Jason gradually turns bitter and hateful at being excluded, and the entire behavioral problem then develops a snowballing effect.

Mrs. Compson is at the root of Jason’s problems in more ways than one. His imitation of her whining behavior backfired on him and in
turn backfires on her in the same way with regard to her relationship with her "beloved" son.

Just as Caddy ignores or taunts Jason for his crying, Jason soon learns to turn off to Mrs. Compson's whining and complaining. This turn-off soon develops into an inability to feel compassion for the genuine suffering of anyone, particularly that of his mother, and in later years, Caddy and Miss Quentin. Jason early learns to recognize his mother's hypochondria, complaints, and martyrdom for what they are—a means to gain attention and to attain her own ulterior ends. After Damuddy has died, when all the children are sitting around the table eating, and they hear their mother crying, Caddy and Quentin stop eating, and they wonder what is the matter. Even Benjy senses something is wrong and starts crying. Only Jason keeps on eating. (p. 18) His lack of concern for Mrs. Compson's apparent illness is shown again when he noisily shuffles up the stairs, hands in pockets, to his mother's sickroom while both Mr. Compson and Caddy try to quiet him. (p. 47) It appears Jason became immune to Mrs. Compson's posturings at quite an early age.

It is Mrs. Compson's unscrupulous and unforgiving use of Jason as a snitch and ultimately as a spy on Caddy, however, that undoubtedly loses her his respect. As a boy, Jason became known as a tattletale, where earlier he had been called a crybaby. Based on what happens later, the odds are very high that he did most of his tattling to his mother and that she encouraged and possibly rewarded him for it. Jason would have given up trying to make Caddy love him, and his bitterness, jealousy, and hurt toward her soon found a simple outlet for revenge in simply reporting her frequent misdeeds. Mrs. Compson would have
lavished praise and attention on him and helped build up his severely damaged ego. Tattling made Jason feel important and easily led to his spying years later. Mrs. Compson's base use of her son in this way, whether or not he consciously realized it himself, could not have helped but make Jason sense her failings as a mother and as a female. This aspect of their relationship would have added another link to the chain of Jason's disillusionment, loss of respect, and basic distrust of women—and with good reason. Here was his bastion of womanhood, stooping to sneakiness and dishonesty and trickery against her own daughter. He must have wondered even then what else a woman would stoop to!

Jason felt he was punishing Caddy by tattling on her all the time, but his spying led him to new insights about females that only served to strengthen his growing disenchantment with them. Jason resents Caddy's strong, domineering behavior, but is helpless and lacking in allies. His methods of combatting her tyranny, particularly his tattling, are mostly ineffectual. Caddy is really the only one of the children or adults (other than Dilsey) who recognizes Jason for what he is truly becoming. When, as a youth, he threatens to tell on her, she tells him to go on ahead and do it; she knows he will tattle, but it does not matter since she does not fear him or anyone else. At this point in her life, Caddy feels she can handle anyone and anything. Unfortunately for Caddy, Jason will not remain subjugated forever, and when he does get the upper hand, he never lets her forget just what he is capable of doing.¹⁴

It is not only Caddy's strength of will and determination that bothers Jason; he also strongly resents her obvious attractiveness
and popularity. Except for token bits of affection from his mother and father, Jason receives love and tenderness from no one. And based on the few clues from the text already mentioned, he certainly was not an attractive child himself. Jason knows what a mischievous girl Caddy really is, so he finds it difficult to accept the fact that his two brothers absolutely idolize her and that young men are drawn to her. This episode takes place as Caddy tries to comfort Benjy.

"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.' "He dont like that prissy dress." Jason said. "You think you're better than anybody else, dont you. Prissy."
"You shut your mouth." Caddy said, "You dirty little beast. Benjy."
"Just because you are fourteen, you think you're grown up, dont you." Jason said. "You think you're something. Dont you." (p. 30)

Jason cannot begin to contain his jealousy. He resents Caddy's popularity and subconsciously blames her for his own lack of popularity, which is an early indication of his later proclivity for blaming someone else—usually Caddy, a female—for his own inadequacies. No doubt, he covertly believes she does not deserve such adulation, that she somehow tricks people into thinking well of herself just so she can achieve some hidden aim.

With regard to Jason's spying on Caddy and her boyfriends, the very suggestion from his mother that it was necessary to secretly watch Caddy's behavior and report on it would have insinuated to young Jason that she was doing something immoral. And when Mrs. Compson wore black for a week after she found out that Caddy had kissed a boy, it is not surprising that Jason's view of womankind and sex in general became warped. He received no such loving caresses himself, and his mother acted like Caddy's behavior was dreadfully wrong. This openly "sinful"
behavior served to further his growing contempt for the ways and wiles of females.

With that sort of preparation, all it took to send Jason over the brink was for Caddy to become pregnant. The shame to him and to his family's precious sense of reputation, blown to extremes by Mrs. Compson's ranting and raving, was never overcome by Jason. The whole affair served to further his notion that women's actions were always selfishly motivated, that they were all basically deceitful, and that they had no qualms at all about using other people, men in particular, for their own selfish ends.

That Jason knew Caddy and his mother were purposely deceiving Herbert is shown when the family discusses the breakup of the marriage and the arrival of Miss Quentin.

It was the same day one month that Father went up there and got it and brought it home and wouldn't tell anything about where she was or anything and Mother crying and saying "And you didn't even see him? You didn't even try to get him to make any provision for it?" and Father says "No she shall not touch his money not one cent of it" and Mother says "He can be forced to by law. He can prove nothing, unless—Jason Compson," she says, "Were you fool enough to tell—" (p. 154)

From this point on, Jason's respect for his mother and women in general goes into a steep decline. It is not too difficult to put oneself in his shoes. Jason's mother has made his sister out to be a slut, and her own behavior can hardly be called admirable. Here is an impressionable teenaged boy; the two major female figures in his life certainly offer him no model of feminine virtue.

The final straw with regard to the development of Jason's antifeminine feelings is when he realizes he has lost the chance for the bank job that Caddy, through Herbert, had promised him. His narrow
vision of his future success had been wound entirely around that promise, and when circumstances prevented the promise from being carried out, Jason slid right into the rut he had been gradually preparing for himself. Rather than blame himself, uncontrollable circumstances, or fate on life's disappointments, Jason chose to blame Caddy, the conniving female. Instead of realistically viewing the truth of the situation, he took the easy way out, and accused Caddy of purposely cheating him out of his due.

At that point in his life, Jason could have taken either of two paths. He could have shrugged off the misfortune and worked hard on his own to make his break in life, or he could have given up and spent the rest of his life bemoaning his fate and blaming everyone in the world for his troubles. Unfortunately for Jason and the rest of the family, he chose the latter pathway. He became a passive person who allows things to happen to him rather than one who makes things happen for him.

The rest of Jason's life revolves around the resentment he feels for losing the bank job. He now begins to devote his life to obtaining revenge, from Caddy in particular, for the financial loss he felt he sustained and for the loss of personal independence he suffered as a result of taking on the responsibility for the care of her daughter.

He sent me to help Dilsey get that old cradle out of the attic and I says, "Well, they brought my job home tonight" because all the time we kept hoping they'd get things straightened out and he'd keep her because Mother kept saying she would at least have enough regard for the family not to jeopardize my chance after she and Quentin had had theirs. (p. 154)

Within only a few years after the time that Quentin first came to live with the Compsons, Jason's attitudes toward life and woman's
place in that scheme were fairly well set. All that changed was the intensity of his feelings and actions. A detailed examination of these changes in relationship to each of the major female figures in his life should illustrate the degeneration of his relationship with women and the damage it did to his entire personality.

According to Volpe, by the time Jason reached his late teenage years, his only values were appearances and money. His concern with money had been noticed even when he was a child, but it took on an ominous tone as he grew older. As early as his father's funeral, Jason was evaluating events according to their monetary significance, as illustrated by his conjecture about the cost of the funeral flowers. (p. 157) Human relationships and feelings, as well as the pursuit of revenge, only have meaning to him in monetary terms. And like his mother, Jason demonstrated that he is more concerned with appearances than with moral integrity, particularly where women are involved.

As illustrated earlier in this paper, Mrs. Compson was at the source of many of Jason's problems. Ever since he was a baby, she had never stopped harping on the idea that Jason was her pride and joy and the only one of her children who truly loved her and did not give her a minute's sorrow. "Jason was the only one my heart went out to without dread." (p. 79) Not only did such behavior serve to further alienate Jason from his brother and sister, but what was even more tragic was that Jason, too, eventually came to attribute all those glowing qualities to himself. He agreed wholeheartedly that, as she put it, he did not have a streak of Compson selfishness or false pride. (p. 79) Mrs. Compson even threatened to run away with Jason in order to protect the poor thing from the scandals of the other children.
It is no wonder that after years of brainwashing Jason held such a high opinion of himself in relation to the rest of humanity. His mother had been telling him for years that he was better than everyone else, and he could not help but agree with her.

However, from his own pedestal of perfection, Jason could not help but slowly become aware of his mother's minor and then major failings. Her lowering in his estimation when he was a child, as already discussed, was gradual and mostly subconscious. With age, however, came a certain amount of insight. And as a picture of perfection himself, he could not help but demand the same from his relatives and associates.

That his mother turned out to be so disappointing must have been more damaging to Jason's personality than the loose behavior of his sister and his niece, although he never made a big issue about it consciously. It did not take him long to realize that when Mrs. Compson professed her undying love for himself, she was often just playing on his sympathies in order to get her own way about something or to get attention. When Miss Quentin first arrived at the house, Mrs. Compson made a scene and actually cried on Jason's shoulder. Jason, however, only had enough sympathy for himself. He realized only too well that he was the one who would end up having to support this baby, so he certainly could not sympathize with this whimpering woman, who had pretended to be on her deathbed for as far back as he could remember. By the time of his father's funeral, it is only too evident that Jason is fully aware that Mrs. Compson is really more concerned about appearing to be selflessly solicitous about him than she really is worried, and Jason is unable to hide his bitterness.
When they begun to get [the grave] filled up toward the top Mother started crying sure enough, so Uncle Maury got in with her and drove off. He says You can come in with somebody; they'll be glad to give you a lift. I'll have to take your mother on and I thought about saying, Yes you ought to brought two bottles instead of just one only I thought about where we were, so I let them go on. Little they cared how wet I got, because then Mother could have a whale of a time being afraid I was taking pneumonia. (p. 157)

Jason sees his mother for what she is--selfish, proud, and self-pitying--but what he does not see is that he is becoming a more vicious version of her himself. For the most part, Mrs. Compson never does see Jason's true nature; she sees only what she wants to see in him, not reality. The reader does get an occasional glimpse, however, of her subconscious awareness that her precious boy is not all that she makes him out to be. For instance, when they learn Herbert has thrown Caddy out, Mrs. Compson demands from Jason if he were fool enough to spill the beans to Herbert that everyone knew Caddy was pregnant when she got married. (p. 154)

Jason learns his lessons well from his mother; she plays the martyr and manipulates Jason and others to get what she wants. Jason learns her methods and improves their effectiveness tenfold. His consummate skill allows him to play upon his mother's emotions and guilts and selfish desires as a virtuoso would upon a musical instrument. He knows it makes her feel morally upright to burn Caddy's monthly support checks, and he knows also that should he prod her too much--so that she would no longer destroy them--his game would be up; Jason knows just how much to turn the screw, without breaking the string.

Mother was in her room. I gave her the letter. She opened it and took the check out and sat holding it in her hand. I went and got the shovel from the corner and gave her a match. "Come on," I says, "Get it over with. You'll be crying in a minute."
She took the match, but she didn't strike it. She sat there, looking at the check. Just like I said it would be.
"I hate to do it," she says, "To increase your burden by add-
ing Quentin...

"I guess we’ll get along," I says. "Come on. Get it over with."
But she just sat there, holding the check.
"This one is on a different bank," she says. "They have been
on an Indianapolis bank."
"Yes," I says. "Women are allowed to do that too."
"Do what?" she says.
"Keep money in two different banks," I says.
"Oh," she says. She looked at the check a while. "I’m glad
to know she’s so... she has so much... God sees that I am
doing right," she says.
"Come on," I says, "Finish it. Get the fun over."
"Fun?" she says, "When I think—"
"I thought you were burning this two hundred dollars a month
for fun," I says. "Come on, now. Want me to strike the match?"
"I could bring myself to accept them," she says, "For my chil-
dren’s sake. I have no pride."
"You’d never be satisfied," I says, "You know you wouldn’t.
You’ve settled that once, let it stay settled. We can get along."
"I leave everything to you," she says. "But sometimes I become
afraid that in doing this I am depriving you of what is right-
fully yours. Perhaps I shall be punished for it. If you want me
to, I will smother my pride and accept them."
"What would be the good in beginning now, when you’ve been de-
stroying them for fifteen years?" I says. "If you keep on doing
it, you have lost nothing, but if you’d begin to take them now,
you’ll have lost fifty thousand dollars. We’ve got along so far,
haven’t we?" I says. "I haven’t seen you in the poorhouse yet."
"Yes," she says, "We Bascombs need nobody’s charity. Certainly
not that of a fallen woman."
She struck the match and lit the check and put it in the shovel,
and then the envelope, and watched them burn.
"You don’t know what it is," she says, "Thank God you will never
know what a mother feels.
"There are lots of women in this world no better than her," I
says.
"But they are not my daughters," she says. "It’s not myself,"
she says, "I’d gladly take her back, sins and all, because she is
my flesh and blood. It’s for Quentin’s sake."
Well, I could have said it wasn’t much chance of anybody hurt-
ing Quentin much, but like I say I don’t expect much but I do want
to eat and sleep without a couple of women squabbling and crying
in the house.
"And yours," she says. "I know how you feel toward her."
"Let her come back," I says, "far as I’m concerned."
"No," she says. "I owe that to your father’s memory."
"When he was trying all the time to persuade you to let her
come home when Herbert threw her out?" I says.
"You don’t understand," she says. "I know you don’t intend to
make it more difficult for me. But it’s my place to suffer for my
children," she says. "I can bear it."
"Seems to me you go to a lot of unnecessary trouble doing it,"
I says. The paper burned out. I carried it to the grate and put it in. "It just seems a shame to me to burn up good money," I says. "Let me never see the day when my children will have to accept that, the wages of sin," she says. "I'd rather see even you dead in your coffin first."
"Have it your way," I says. (pp. 169-71)

Jason taunts and torments her, yet she appears oblivious to his disrespect and underlying contempt for her. Jason's relationship with his mother deteriorated during the years Quentin was growing up. First, he just felt disgusted with her; then he used her and played upon her emotions in order to gain his own ends. Manipulation, however, eventually turned to disrespect, overt cruelty, and finally physical abuse.

Strangely enough, even as she sits crying because Jason has upset her feelings, Mrs. Compson continues to declare what a joy he has always been to her.

"And now for Professor Junkin to call me on the telephone and tell me if she's absent one more time, she will have to leave school. How does she do it? Where does she go? You're downtown all day; you ought to see her if she stays on the streets."
"Yes," I says, "If she stayed on the streets. I don't reckon she'd be playing out of school just to do something she could do in public," I says.
"What do you mean?" she says.
"I don't mean anything," I says. "I just answered your question." Then she begun to cry again, talking about how her own flesh and blood rose up to curse her.
"You asked me," I says.
"I don't mean you," she says. "You are the only one of them that isn't a reproach to me."
"Sure," I says, "I never had time to be. I never had time to go to Harvard like Quentin or drink myself into the ground like Father. I had to work. But of course if you want me to follow her around and see what she does, I can quit the store and get a job where I can work at night. Then I can watch her during the day and you can use Ben for the night shift." (pp. 140-41)

He is sarcastic and impertinent, yet she still seems oblivious to it and merely turns the other cheek. In time, however, Jason becomes even more blatant with his sarcasm and in his humiliation of his mother. Mrs. Compson stops by Jason's business:
"What do you want." Jason said. He had his hands in his pockets and a pencil behind his ear.

"We're going to the cemetery." Mother said.

"All right." Jason said. "I don't aim to stop you, do I. Was that all you wanted with me, just to tell me that."

"I know you won't come." Mother said. "I'd feel safer if you would."

"Safe from what." Jason said. "Father and Quentin can't hurt you."

Mother put her handkerchief under her veil. "Stop it, Mother." Jason said. "Do you want to get that damn loony to bawling in the middle of the square. Drive on, T.P." (p. 8)

His rude abrasiveness soon turns to outright cruelty.

We ate awhile. I could hear Ben in the kitchen, where Luster was feeding him. Like I say, if we've got to feed another mouth and she won't take that money, why not send him down to Jackson. He'll be happier there, with people like him. I says God knows there's little enough room for pride in this family, but it don't take much pride to not like to see a thirty year old man playing around the yard with a nigger boy, running up and down the fence and lowing like a cow whenever they play golf over there. I says if they'd sent him to Jackson at first we'd all be better off today. I says, you've done your duty by him; you've done all anybody can expect of you and more than most folks would do, so why not send him there and get that much benefit out of the taxes we pay. Then she says, "I'll be gone soon. I know I'm just a burden to you" and I says "You've been saying that so long that I'm beginning to believe you" only I says you'd better be sure and not let me know you're gone because I'll sure have him on number seventeen that night and I says I think I know a place where they'll take her [Quentin] too and the name of it's not Milk street and Honey avenue either. Then she begun to cry and I says All right all right I have as much pride about my kinfolks as anybody even if I don't always know where they come from. (p. 172)

And:

"You've got a prize set of servants," Jason said. He helped his mother and himself to food. "Did you ever have one that was worth killing? You must have had some before I was big enough to remember."

"I have to humour them," Mrs Compson said. "I have to depend on them so completely. It's not as if I were strong. I wish I were. I wish I could do all the housework myself. I could at least take take that much off your shoulders."

"And a fine pigsty we'd live in, too," Jason said. "Hurry up, Dilsey," he shouted. (pp. 216-17)

A number of factors contribute to Jason's increasing disgust with his mother. The fact that she condones Uncle Maury's excessive drinking
and freeloading violates all of Jason's selfish instincts about money. He feels she lets her brother take advantage of her at Jason's ultimate expense. He is also ashamed of Quentin's behavior and afraid of what the townspeople must think about him. Jason cannot bear the thought that they might be laughing at him, and he blames the whole situation on Mrs. Compson's inability to discipline Quentin. She will not make her mind, yet she interferes when Jason tries to make her behave.

Jason even stoops to cheating and lying to his mother. He secretly used the thousand dollars she invested for him in Earl's store to buy a car, although gasoline fumes give him terrible headaches. He feels he deserves that money and any other amount he can appropriate because his share of the family wealth was dissipated before he reached adulthood. He uses the same rationale to justify lying to his mother about the checks Caddy sends every month and which he secretly cashes. He is incredulous that anyone could be so stupid as to burn money, particularly money he feels he deserves for losing the job and for raising Quentin.

Part of Jason's attitude toward his mother can be attributed to the fact that now that he is the breadwinner in the family, Jason believes it is his right and privilege to command obedience from the rest of the household. He relishes power and authority. For most of his life, he was dominated in one way or another by females; he now takes great pleasure in turning the tables with a vengeance.

Even poor, selfless, long-suffering, undeserving Dilsey is subjected to Jason's tyranny and growing contempt for women. As a youngster, Jason respected Dilsey's maternal authority, as most children do with a good parent. If he had not been so completely dominated by Mrs. Compson and Caddy, Jason might never have rebelled against Dilsey,
since she had been kind and just, yet firm with him. However, such was not the case. Jason shows no respect at all for Dilsey as a human being; he treats her like a piece of furniture--a non-person--for the most part, as long as she does not interfere with him and his plans. Except for Caddy, Dilsey is probably the only person who is really able to see Jason for what he truly is, and she is much more objective than Caddy can be.

As a child, Jason never defied Dilsey, but the reader observes him sassing her when baby Quentin is first brought home and everyone is arguing about whether or not to put her in Caddy's old room.

"And whar else do she belong?" Dilsey says, "Who else gwine raise her 'cep me? Aint I raised eve'y one of y'all?"
"And a damn fine job you made of it," I says. (p. 154)

In addition to sassing this self-sacrificing person who practically raised him, Jason early develops another method of proving his control over her and the household by closely controlling the family purse-strings. Dilsey does not even bother to ask Jason for money to buy ingredients for Benjy's birthday cake; she uses her own money rather than give him a chance to "jump on her" about such an extravagant misuse of funds. (p. 43)

Dilsey gives Jason the respect due to him as her employer, but she never sacrifices her own self-respect by quivering at his threats. In fact, she realizes only too well that Jason is often full of hot air and that his threats are mostly empty ones. Dilsey does not purposely goad him, but she never backs down to him when she knows he is wrong. In some respects, Jason is still a child to her, and when he misbehaves, she tells him in so many words, trying to shame him into mending his ways.
Has he got to keep that old dirty slipper on the table, Quentin said. Why don't you feed him in the kitchen. It's like eating with a pig.

If you don't like the way we eat, you'd better not come to the table, Jason said. . . .

Now, now, Dilsey said. He ain't going to bother you no more. . . .

Yes he will, Quentin said. You all send him out to spy on me. I hate this house. I'm going to run away. . . .

You've been running a long time, not to 've got any further off than mealt ime, Jason said.

See if I don't, Quentin said. . . .

Oh, I wouldn't be surprised, Jason said. I wouldn't be surprised at anything you'd do.

Quentin threw her napkin on the table.

Hush your mouth, Jason, Dilsey said. She went and put her arm around Quentin. Sit down, honey, Dilsey said. He ought to be shamed of hisself, throwing what ain't your fault up to you.

Dilsey knows exactly what to expect from Jason, and when he proves she is correct, she again tries to shame him, such as the time when he teased Luster and would not give him one of the free show tickets Earl had given him.

"That reminds me," I says, "I've got a couple of tickets they gave me." I took them out of my coat.

"You fixin to use um?" Luster says.

"Not me," I says. "I wouldn't go to it for ten dollars."

"Gimme one of um, Mr Jason," he says.

"I'll sell you one," I says. "How about it?"

"I aint got no money," he says.

"That's too bad," I. I made to go out.

"Gimme one of um, Mr Jason," he says. "You aint gwine need um bofe."

"Hush yo mouf," Dilsey says, "Dont you know he aint gwine give nothing away?"

"How much you want fer hit?" he says.

"Five cents," I says.

"I aint got dat much," he says.

"How much you got?" I says.

"I aint got nothing," he says.

"All right," I says. I went on.

"Mr Jason," he says.

"Whyn't you hush up?" Dilsey says. "He jes teasin you. He fixin to use dem tickets hisself. Go on, Jason, and let him lone."

"I dont want them," I says. I came back to the stove. "I came in here to burn them up. But if you want to buy one for a nickel?"

I says, looking at him and opening the stove lid.

"I aint got dat much," he says.

"All right," I says. I dropped one of them in the stove.

"You, Jason," Dilsey says, "Aint you shamed?"
"Mr Jason," he says, "Please, suh. I'll fix dem tires ev'ry day fer a mont'."
"I need the cash," I says. "You can have it for a nickel."
"You can have it for a nickel," I says.
"All right," I says. I dropped it in and Dilsey shut the stove.
"A big growed man like you," she says. "Git on outen my kitcher'" (pp. B7-98)

Dilsey understands Jason's character perfectly. She knows he is mean and cold and an unscrupulous liar, but she demonstrates her perception and lack of fear when she allows Caddy to sneak in to see Quentin. Jason thinks she is just an ignorant, freeloading nigger; but he misjudges her acuity when he lies to her and tells her Caddy has leprosy and that a person's flesh will rot off if he even looks at her. Dilsey does not let on and argue with Jason. Instead, she just goes ahead and does what she feels is right: she lets Caddy sneak in to visit Quentin.

Dilsey shows absolutely no consideration for this venerable, old lady to whom he owes so much. He bullies and mistreats her and does his best to dehumanize her. He knows she's old and decrepit and that climbing stairs takes a tortuous eternity, yet on Sunday morning he stubbornly refuses to let breakfast begin until she brings Quentin downstairs. He could go after her himself in a minute, but instead, he makes a scene, compels everyone to wait while the food is getting cold, and forces this gentle lady to struggle up the long stairs in order to fetch Quentin.

He had goaded her similarly a few days earlier about making Quentin and Mrs. Compson come down to dinner.

There hadn't been a sound from upstairs when Dilsey came in and sent Ben and Luster on to the kitchen and said supper was ready.
"All right," I says. She went out. I sat there, reading the paper. After a while I heard Dilsey looking in at the door.
"Whyn't you come on and eat?" she says.
"I'm waiting for supper," I says. "Hit's on the table," she says. "I done told you."
"Is it?" I says. "Excuse me. I didn't hear anybody come down."
"They aint comin," she says. "You come on and eat, so I can take something up to them"
"Are they sick?" I says. "What did the doctor say it was? Not Smallpox, I hope."
"Come on here, Jason," she says, "So I kin git done."
"All right," I says, raising the paper again. "I'm waiting for supper now."
I could feel her watching me at the door. I read the paper. "Whut you want to act like this fer?" she says. "When you knows how much bother I has anyway."
"If Mother is any sicker than she was when she came down to dinner, all right," I says. "But as long as I am buying food for people younger than I am, they'll have to come down to the table to eat it. Let me know when supper's ready," I says, wading the paper again. I heard her climbing the stairs, dragging her feet and grunting and groaning like they were straight up and three feet apart. I heard her at Mother's door, then I heard her calling Quentin, like the door was locked, then she went back to Mother's room and then Mother went and talked to Quentin. Then they came down stairs. I read the paper. Dilsey came back to the door. "Come on," she says, "fo you kin think up some mo devilment. You just tryin yoself tonight." (pp. 198-99)

Jason, a classic bully if there ever was one, thoroughly enjoys every opportunity to lord it over Dilsey and to prove to everyone else how much they have to depend on him. She was an authority figure to him in a childhood dominated by female authorities, and as each opportunity presents itself in later years, Jason takes advantage of it to prove his own authority and to get even for what he considers to be mistreatment as a child. Dilsey, as innocent as she is, is also made to suffer in order to help satisfy Jason's insatiable thirst for revenge upon women.

As mentioned earlier, the turning point in Jason's relationships with women came when the breakup of Caddy's marriage lost the bank job for him. If his relationship with his sister was poor before her marriage, it was absolutely disastrous after he missed his "great opportunity."
From that point, Jason focused the blame for any ill luck or personal inadequacy directly on Caddy, whom he held directly responsible for that earlier misfortune.

Jason's heretofore latent tendencies toward meanness were allowed to grow in intensity throughout the years Quentin was growing up, and some of the worst instances of that cruelty were directed at Caddy whenever the opportunity presented itself. Caddy had tormented Jason as a child, and he now took advantage of every chance to turn the tables.

Jason had learned from Caddy and especially from Mrs. Compson how one could manipulate people and events with half-truths, by following a promise to the letter and no further, so Jason justifies this type of dishonesty toward females as being their nemesis. He feels Caddy cheated him out of financial success and of his share of the family fortune, so he grabs every opportunity to deprive her of what is most dear to herself—knowledge of her daughter's welfare.

His first big opportunity presents itself when he spots Caddy after Mr. Compson's funeral. Jason's rage at losing the job boils up, even after Caddy tells him she is genuinely sorry about it. (p. 157) Needless to say, he does not believe her and even accuses her of having an ulterior motive in attending the funeral—that is, to claim a share of the inheritance. (p. 158) To turn the screw even tighter, he taunts her with the fact that her name is never spoken in front of her daughter or her beloved Benjy. (pp. 158-59) Jason says anything he can to hurt her.

But the piece de resistance is when Caddy begs Jason and finally bribes him to let her see Quentin for a minute. A minute is all she gets, too.
I saw [Caddy] standing on the corner under the light and I told Mink to drive close to the walk and when I said Go on, to give the team a bat. Then I took the raincoat off of [Quentin] and held her to the window and Caddy saw her and sort of jumped forward.

"Hit 'em, Mink!" I says, and Mink gave them a cut and we went past her like a fire engine. "Now get on that train like you promised," I says. I could see her running after us through the back window. "Hit 'em again," I says, "Let's get on home." When we turned the corner she was still running.

And so I counted the money again that night and put it away, and I didn't feel so bad. I says I reckon that'll show you. I reckon you'll know now that you can't beat me out of a job and get away with it. It never occurred to me she wouldn't keep her promise and take that train. But I didn't know much about them then; I didn't have any more sense than to believe what they said, because the next morning damn if she didn't walk right into the store, only she had sense enough to wear the veil and not speak to anybody. It was Saturday morning, because I was at the store, and she came right on back to the desk where I was, walking fast.

"Liar," she says, "Liar."

"Are you crazy?" I says. "What do you mean? coming in here like this?" She started in, but I shut her off. I says, "You already cost me one job; do you want me to lose this one too? If you've got anything to say to me, I'll meet you somewhere after dark. What have you got to say to me?" I says, "Didn't I do everything I said? I said see her a minute, didn't I? Well, didn't you?"

She just stood there looking at me, shaking like an ague-fit, her hands clenched and kind of jerking. "I did just what I said I would," I says, "You're the one that lied. You promised to take that train. Didn't you Didn't you promise? If you think you can get that money back, just try it," I says. "If it'd been a thousand dollars, you'd still owe me after the risk I took. And if I see or hear you're still in town after number 17 runs," I says, "I'll tell Mother and Uncle Maury. Then hold your breath until you see her again." She just stood there, looking at me, twisting her hands together.

"Damn you," she says, "Damn you."

"Sure," I says, "That's all right too. Mind what I say, now. After number 17, and I tell them."

After she was gone I felt better. I says I reckon you'll think twice before you deprive me of a job that was promised me. I was a kid then. I believed folks when they said they'd do things. I've learned better since. (pp. 159-60)

Jason believes Caddy tricked him out of the job, so he feels fully justified in tricking her, and he admittedly feels no guilt. Years later he further tortures her by implying that she gets all her money—she is green with envy—with her body and that her daughter will probably end up doing the same thing. (p. 162) Caddy hits home when she says
to Jason, "You never had a drop of warm blood in you." (p. 162)

Jason never had any love for Caddy; he became interested in her only when she began to affect his own welfare. Cleanth Brooks asserts that Jason lacks the capacity for love, that his only interest in women is to use them as a means to his own ends, and that he looks on women as objects to be manipulated. Jason does not love Caddy or any other woman. "The relationship he desires is a commercial one: you know where you stand; there is no romantic nonsense about it. Jason, if he could, would reduce all relationships to commercial transactions."

It is only fitting, then, that his one known sexual relationship should be with a prostitute, Lorraine. "His notion of the proper amatory relationship is to provide himself with 'a good honest whore'." As Jason matures, it is only natural that his sexual urges begin to manifest themselves. However, he distrusts anything he cannot control—that he is a childless bachelor is only one indication of his rejection of unpredictable and uncontrollable relationships and he prefers to protect himself from the irrational and to gain control over his world by making up "contracts" in his personal relationships. Jason supports his mother and in return expects Mrs. Compson to oversee the household and to supervise Quentin; he feeds and clothes and houses Quentin and expects her to respect him, to present herself at meals, and to behave properly in public; he provides a home for Quentin and expects Caddy not to interfere in the Compsons' daily lives. "Even when sincere affection is apparently involved, his relationship with Lorraine gives the impression of a contract duly notarized."

Lorraine is not allowed to intrude in his everyday life by calling him, at the risk of terminating their "contract." After Jason receives a letter from Lorraine,
he soliloquizes:

I tore it up and burned it over the spittoon. I make it a rule never to keep a scrap of paper bearing a woman's hand, and I never write them at all. Lorraine is always after me to write to her but I says anything I forgot to tell you will save till I get to Memphis again but I says I don't mind you writing me now and then in a plain envelope, but if you ever try to call me up on the telephone, Memphis won't hold you I says. I says when I'm up there I'm one of the boys, but I'm not going to have any woman calling me on the telephone. Here I says, giving her the forty dollars. If you ever get drunk and take a notion to call me on the phone, just remember this and count ten before you do it. (pp. 150-51)

Part of Jason's problem is that he is unable to trust a female, has spent the better part of his life maligning them, and subsequently finds it impossible, for appearances' sake and his own self-respect, to change his public position about females for even one woman. When he and his mother discuss the possibility of his marriage, Jason's pride alone prevents him from considering such a step. "I says no thank you I have all the women I can take care of now if I married a wife she'd probably turn out to be a hophead or something. That's all we lack in this family, I says." (p. 191) It is no wonder that Adams calls Jason "the embodiment of Freudian socio-sexual repression." 25

Jason has normal sexual urges but cannot admit--by being publicly associated with a woman--that all his harangues against women might be partly wrong. He believes all females are whores at heart, so by indicating that the best woman he can find is a whore, he proves his case--to himself, at least.

What attracts Jason most to Lorraine is that she does not pretend to be something she is not--as he feels the women in his family do. "I'd like to see the good, church-going woman that's half as square as Lorraine, whore or no whore," he declares. (p. 191) Jason cannot help but like Lorraine, but he does not dare to let her know it or even to admit the
intensity of his feelings to himself; he does not want to feel obligated to anyone or accept kindness, love, and affection from anyone--let alone a female. Possibly he remembers that no love or kindness was shown to himself without some sort of price attached to it, particularly with respect to his mother. For instance, Jason brags to himself about giving Lorraine forty dollars the last time he saw her and how he refused to accept anything in return. He did not want to feel obligated for even a beer. (p. 151)

His gift to Lorraine, his large tip to the maid, and Lorraine's accolades give the reader an indication that Jason still has a few human instincts left, but it is only around strangers that he feels uninhibited enough to indulge in them. Lorraine calls him "sweet daddy," says parties are not any fun without him, says he is a good enough lover that the others had better stay away or suffer the consequences, says she misses him, and writes him letters. (pp. 150, 181) If their relationship were strictly a business proposition, she certainly would not waste time writing letters to him. Nor would Jason take such comfort in the thought of merely lying in bed with Lorraine--"pleading with her to help him"--when he chases after Quentin and the money, trying to think of anything except the headache that is racked his brain. (p. 239) Jason needs genuine love and affection, and he longs for someone he can love in return, but he suffers from too many conflicting urges to be able to bring together his various wants and needs. Volpe is probably correct in his diagnosis that Jason's life and relationships lack meaning because he lacks traditional humanistic values and because the emotional stability he needs in order to provide for a meaningful life is distorted as a direct result of Mrs. Compson's inadequacies as a mother.
Another person might have snatched up the opportunity to lavish all those repressed emotions on baby Quentin when she arrived, but Jason's utter lack of loving experiences, his shame for Caddy, his bitterness about the lost job, and his resentment about the responsibility of raising a child conspire to turn him from what could have developed into a loving relationship with his niece. Instead, Jason used his growing power to focus all his bitterness against this innocent child. From the day she first arrived, he treated Quentin as an object to be manipulated for his own purposes. She was merely an "it," a "job" for him. (pp. 152, 154)

After Mr. Compson's death, there is really no one who can prevent Jason's mistreatment of Quentin. He takes advantage of her youth and dependence to steal Caddy's money from her, and he focuses all his growing frustrations and contempt for women on her because she is an easier target than Mrs. Compson, Dilsey, or Caddy. Her very existence is a constant humiliation to him and a continuing reminder of Caddy's disgrace. As the years pass, Quentin, for all practical purposes, becomes Caddy to Jason. As such, she bears the full brunt of his ripened malevolence.

It is sad and ironic that the destructive cycle must repeat itself. Jason as a child felt insecure and unloved and was tormented by Caddy to a relatively minor degree; Jason as an adult succeeds only too well in getting revenge by teasing, tormenting, and shaming Caddy's daughter. Is it any wonder that a girl like Quentin, with no father or mother, treated like a bitch by Jason, should eventually fulfill his predictions? Like Jason, Quentin feels unloved and unwanted, but her outlet becomes men, sex, and rebellious behavior in order to get the
attention she craves.

Quentin's only feeling toward Jason is hate; she has always viewed him as a punisher and says to Jason, "I'm bad and I'm going to hell, and I don't care. I'd rather be in hell than anywhere where you are." (p. 147) Their relationship is a continuing battle of stinging repartee, for which Jason has provided a good model throughout the years.

[Quentin] was trying to make Dilsey let her have another cup of coffee. I went in. "I reckon that's your school costume, is it?" I says. "Or maybe today's a holiday?"

"No, suh," Dilsey says, "I aint gwine do it. You aint got no business wid mo'n one cup, a seventeen year old gal, et lone what Miss Cahline say. You go on and git dressed for school, so you kin ride to town wid Jason. You fixin to be late again."

"No she's not," I says. "We're going to fix that right now." She looked at me, the cup in her hand. She brushed her hair back from her face, her kimono slipping off her shoulder. "You put that cup down and come in here a minute," I says.

"What for?" she says.

"Come on," I says. "Put that cup in the sink and come in here."

"What you up to now, Jason?" Dilsey says.

"You may think you can run over me like you do your grandmother and everybody else," I says, "But you'll find out different. I'll give you ten seconds to put that cup down like I told you."

She quit looking at me. She looked at Dilsey. "What time is it, Dilsey?" she says. "When it's ten seconds, you whistle. Just a half a cup. Dilsey, pl-"

I grabbed her by the arm. She dropped the cup. It broke on the floor and she jerked back, looking at me, but I held her arm. Dilsey got up from her chair.

"You, Jason," she says.

"You turn me loose," Quentin says, "I'll slap you."

"You will, will you?" I says, "You will will you?" She slapped at me. I caught that hand too and held her like a wildcat." (p. 143)

Quentin does not fear Jason a bit, but she knows he can hurt her; she has grown up knowing that most of his paper-tiger threats could be nullified by either Mrs. Compson or Dilsey, and she challenges him to carry them out.

Jason looked at her.

"What did I tell you I was going to do if I saw you with that show fellow again," he said. Quentin looked at the fire. "Did you
Quentin, on the other hand, eventually makes good on her threats about running away.

She has absolutely no respect for Jason, but then there is very little to respect him for. Jason, with unbelievable cruelty, takes advantage of every opportunity to make her feel guilty about her mother and the circumstances of her birth.

Has he got to keep that old dirty slipper on the table, Quentin said. Why don't you feed him in the kitchen. It's like eating with a pig.

If you don't like the way we eat, you'd better not come to the table, Jason said.

Now, now, Dilsey said. He ain't going to bother you no more.

Yes he will, Quentin said. You all send him out to spy on me. I hate this house. I'm going to run away.

You've been running a long time, not to 've got any further off than mealtime, Jason said.

See if I don't, Quentin said.

Oh, I wouldn't be surprised, Jason said. I wouldn't be surprised at anything you'd do.

Quentin threw her napkin on the table.

Hush your mouth, Jason, Dilsey said. She went and put her arm around Quentin. Sit down, honey, Dilsey said. He ought to be shamed of hisselI, throwing what ain't your fault up to you.

To himself, Jason calls her a whore and a bitch; to her face, he swears at her and calls her ugly names.

Mal right, I says, We'll just put this off a while. But don't think you can run it over me. I'm not an old woman, nor an old half dead nigger, either. You damn little slut', I says. (p. 144)

And even when she tries her best to be polite to him, he taunts her until a saint would break down and retaliate in a like manner.

I looked up and there Quentin came. In the back door. I heard her asking old Job if I was there. I just had time to stick [the letters] in the drawer and close it.

She came around to the desk. I looked at my watch.

"You been to dinner already?" I says. "It's just twelve; I just heard it strike. You must have flown home and back."
"I'm not going home to dinner," she says. "Did I get a letter today?"
"Were you expecting one?" I says. "Have you got a sweetie that can write?"
"From Mother," she says. "Did I get a letter from Mother?"
she says, looking at me.
"Mother got one from her," I says. "I haven't opened it. You'll have to wait until she opens it. She'll let you see it, I imagine."
"Please, Jason," she says, not paying any attention, "Did I get one?"
"What's the matter?" I says. "I never knew you to be this anxious about anybody. You must expect some money from her."
"She said she--" she says. "Please, Jason," she says, "Did I?"
"You must have been to school today, after all," I says, "Somewhere where [sic] they taught you to say please. Wait a minute, while I wait on that customer." (pp. 164-65)

Jason tries to make Quentin feel guilty and fear him, but only succeeds in making her hate him more. Although he probably does not realize it, Jason tries to humiliate and shame her in order to get even with Caddy, and when Quentin says she is sorry she was ever born, Jason implies that he, too, has regrets about that event. (p. 147)

He feels fully justified for any lying or cheating done with respect to Caddy and Quentin, so it is only natural that Quentin should dole out the same treatment to Jason. She makes a fool of him by stranding him in the country with a flat tire, and then she plays the ultimately ironic trick on him by stealing her own money from him and making off with it. It is indicative of his hard-core misogynous feelings that Jason is more upset about being outwitted by a female than he is about the loss of the money.

Of his niece he did not think at all, nor of the arbitrary valuation of the money. Neither of them had had entity or individuality for him for ten years; together they merely symbolized the job in the bank of which he had been deprived before he ever got it. (p. 238)

Then he thought of the money again, and that he had been outwitted by a woman, a girl. If he could just believe it was the man who had robbed him. But to have been robbed of that which was to have compensated him for the lost job, which he had acquired through so much effort and risk, by the very symbol of the lost job itself,
and worst of all, by a bitch of a girl. (p. 239)

Jason has hurt and hardened Quentin to the point that she finally fulfills his predictions about her behavior. Quentin was never allowed to develop any feelings of self-respect, and her tender ego was demolished at an early age. She is one hundred per cent correct when she says that Jason made her what she is, but she appears incapable of remediying the situation.

Quentin had quit eating. Every once in a while she'd take a drink of water, then she'd sit there crumbling a biscuit up, her face bent over her plate.

"Yes," Mother says, "I suppose women who stay shut up like I do have no idea what goes on in this town."

"Yes," I says, "They dont."

"My life has been so different from that," Mother says. "Thank God I dont know about such wickedness. I dont even want to know about it. I'm not like most people."

I didn't say any more. Quentin sat there, crumbling the biscuit until I quit eating, then she says,

"Can I go now?" without looking at anybody.

"What?" I says. "Sure, you can go. Were you waiting on us?"

She looked at me. She had crumbled all the biscuit, but her hands still went on like they were crumbling it yet and her eyes looked like they were cornered or something and then she started biting her mouth like it ought to have poisoned her, with all that red lead.

"Grandmother," she says, "Grandmother--"

"Did you want something else to eat?" I says.

"Why does he treat me like this, Grandmother?" she says. "I never hurt him."

"I want you all to get along with one another," Mother says, "You are all that's left now, and I do want you all to get along better."

"It's his fault," she says, "He wont let me alone, and I have to. If he doesn't want me here, why wont he let me go back to--"

"That's enough," I says, "Not another word."

"He is the nearest thing to a father you've ever had," Mother says. "It's his bread you and I eat. It's only right that he should expect obedience from you."

"It's his fault," she says. She jumped up. "He makes me do it. If he would just--" she looked at us, her eyes cornered, kind of jerking her arms against her sides.

"If I would just what?" I says.

"Whatever I do, it's your fault," she says. "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." Then she ran. We heard her run up the stairs.

Then a door slammed. (pp. 201-2)
Jason's treatment of Quentin destroys her, bit by bit. She becomes the epitome of obsessed agitation.

Faulkner skillfully indicates the extensive emotional despair that engulfs both Caddy and her daughter in the face of Jason's cruelty by descriptions of their nervous gestures. Caddy twitches her upper lip, raising it higher and higher as her anger with Jason mounts. Quentin frantically crumbles her biscuit while Jason mocks her, "her eyes cornered, kind of jerking her arms against her side."29

And when Jason forced her to endorse the money order without learning the amount,

She took the pen, but instead of signing it she just stood there with her head bent and the pen shaking in her hand. Just like her mother. "Oh, God," she says, "oh, God." (p. 177)

Jason has made Quentin what she is, and as Brooks points out, she is everything he accuses her of; she has even taken on some of his cruelty.30 However, Jason feels perfectly justified in his actions; he forced her to look outside her family for love and affection, and as often happens in such cases, Quentin's search for love took the route of promiscuity. Yet Jason has the audacity to lament,

Like I say you cant do anything with a woman like that, if she's got it in her. If it's in her blood, you cant do anything with her. The only thing you can do is to get rid of her, let her go on and live with her own sort. (p. 180)

Jason steals outright from Quentin and humiliates her every chance he gets, yet when she tricks him into chasing her and then lets the air out of his tires, his sense of injury is unbelievable.

Only I still couldn't believe she'd have had the nerve to. I kept thinking that. I dont know why it is I cant seem to learn that a woman'll do anything. I kept thinking, Let's forget for awhile how I feel toward you and how you feel toward me: I just wouldn't do you this way. I wouldn't do you this way no matter what you had done to me. Because like I say blood is blood and you can't get around it. It's not playing a joke that any eight year old boy could have thought of, it's letting your own uncle be laughed at by a man that would wear a red tie. (p. 188)
Jason’s blame and hatred for Caddy has transferred completely to Quentin. His conscience is clear, and he feels fully justified in his behavior toward Quentin when he complains to the sheriff.

"What do you aim to do with that girl, if you catch them?"
"Nothing," Jason said, "Not anything. I wouldn't lay my hand on her. 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 every day and made my name a laughing stock in the town. I won't do anything to her," he said. "Not anything." (p. 236)

Jason's relationships with the women in his life deteriorate rapidly over the years, but during Quentin's teenage years relations truly take a turn for the worse. That he uses physical abuse on occasion is indicated when Quentin threatens to have Jason whip Luster, and from time to time Jason threatens to take the strap to Quentin. He constantly berates Mrs. Compson for not letting him discipline the girl, by which he leaves no doubt that to discipline means to receive a good thrashing. To his mother he says,

"Do you want me to say anything to her about it?"
"Do you think it will do any good?" she says.
"Not if you come down there interfering just when I get started," I says. "If you want me to control her, just say so and keep your hands off. Every time I try to, you come butting in and then she gives both of us the laugh."
"Remember she's your own flesh and blood," she says.
"Sure," I says, "that's just what I'm thinking of—flesh. And a little blood too, if I had my way. When people act like niggers, no matter who they are the only thing to do is treat them like a nigger."
"I'm afraid you'll lose your temper with her," she says.
"Well," I says, "You haven't had much luck with your system. You want me to do anything about it, or not? Say one way or the other; I've got to get on to work."
"I know you have to slave your life away for us," she says.
"You know if I had my way, you'd have an office of your own to go to, and hours that became a Bascomb. Because you are a Bascomb, despite your name. I know that if your father could have foreseen—"
"Well," I says, "I reckon he's entitled to guess wrong now and then, like anybody else, even a Smith or a Jones." She begun to cry again.
"To hear you speak bitterly of your dead father," she says.
"All right," I says, "all right. Have it your way. But as I
haven't got an office, I'll have to get on to what I have got. Do you want me to say anything to her?"

"I'm afraid you'll lose your temper with her," she says.

"All right," I say, "I won't say anything, then."

"But something must be done," she says. "To have people think I permit her to stay out of school and run about the streets, or that I can't prevent her doing it. . . . Jason, Jason," she says, "How could you. How could you leave me with these burdens."

"Oh, now," I say, "you'll make yourself sick. Why don't you either lock her up all day too, or turn her over to me and quit worrying over her?"

"My own flesh and blood," she says, crying. So I say,

"All right. I'll tend to her. Quit crying, now."

"Don't lose your temper," she says. "She's just a child, remember."

"No," I say, "I won't." I went out, closing the door. (pp.141-2)

But soon:

I grabbed her arm. She dropped the cup. It broke on the floor and she jerked back, looking at me, but I held her arm. Dilsey got up from her chair.

"You, Jason," she says.

"You turn me loose, Quentin says, "I'll slap you."

"You will, will you?" I say, "You will do you?" She slapped at me. I caught that hand too and held her like a wildcat. "You will, will you?" I says. "You think you will?"

"Oh, Jason!" Dilsey says. I dragged her into the diningroom. Her kimono came unfastened, flapping about her, damn near naked. Dilsey came hobbling along. I turned and kicked the door shut in her face.

"You keep out of here," I say.

Quentin was leaning against the table, fastening her kimono. I looked at her.

"Now," I says, "I want to know what you mean, playing out of school and telling your grandmother lies and forging her name on your report and worrying her sick. What do you mean by it?"

She didn't say anything. She was fastening her kimono up under her chin, pulling it tight around her, looking at me. She hadn't got around to painting herself yet and her face looked like she had polished it with a gun rag. I went and grabbed her wrist. "What do you mean?" I say.

"None of your damn business," she says. "You turn me loose."

Dilsey came in the door. "You, Jason," she says.

"You get out of here, like I told you," I says, "but even looking back. "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? Is that where you go?"

"You--you old goddamn!" she says. She fought, but I held her. "You damn old goddamn!" she says.

"I'll show you," I says. "You may can scare an old woman off, but I'll show you who's got hold of you now." I held her with one
hand, then she quit fighting and watched me, her eyes getting wide and black.

"What are you going to do?" she says.

"You wait until I get this belt out and I'll show you," I says, pulling my belt out. Then Dilsey grabbed my arm.

"Jason," she says, "You, Jason! Aint you shamed of yourself."

"Dilsey," Quentin says, "Dilsey."

"I aint gwine let him," Dilsey says, "Dont you worry, honey." She held to my arm. Then the belt came out and I jerked loose and flung her away. She stumbled into the table. She was so old she couldn't do any more than move hardly. But that's all right: we need somebody in the kitchen to eat up the grub the young ones can't tote off. She came hobbling between us, trying to hold me again. "Hit me, den," she says, "ef nothin else but hittin somebody wont do you. Hit me," she says.

"You think I wont?" I says.

"I dont put no devilment beyond you," she says. Then I heard Mother on the stairs. I might have known she wasn't going to keep out of it. I let her go. She stumbled back against the wall, holding her kimono shut. (pp. 143-44)

Jason reaches a new low when he batters old Dilsey, but he goes even further when he tries to get into Quentin's room. When his mother does not seem willing to relinquish the key to Quentin's room, he actually shoves her and paws at her.

"The key," Jason said, "To that room. Does she carry it with her all the time. Mother." Then he saw Mrs Compson and he went down the stairs and met her. "Give me the key," he said. He fell to pawing at the pockets of the rusty black dressing sacque she wore. She resisted.

"Jason," she said, "Jason! Are you and Dilsey trying to put me to bed again?" she said, trying to fend him off, "Dant you even let me have Sunday in peace?"

"The key," Jason said, pawing at her, "Give it here." He looked back at the door, as if he expected it to fly open before he could get back to it with the key he did not yet have.

"You, Dilsey!" Mrs Compson said, clutching her sacque about her.

"Give me the key, you old fool!" Jason cried suddenly. From her pocket he tugged a huge bunch of rusted keys on an iron ring like a mediaeval jailer's and ran back up the hall with the two women behind him.

"You, Jason!" Mrs Compson said. "He will never find the right one," she said, "You know I never let anyone take my keys, Dilsey," she said. She began to wail.

"Hush," Dilsey said, "He aint gwine do nothin to her. I aint gwine let him."

"But on Sunday morning, in my own house," Mrs Compson said, "When I've tried so hard to raise them Christians. Let me find
the right key, Jason," she said. She put her hand on his arm. Then she began to struggle with him, but he flung her aside with a motion of his elbow and looked at her for a moment, his eyes cold and harried, then he turned to the door again and the unwieldy keys. "Hush," Dilsey said, "Shu, Jason!"

"Something terrible has happened," Mrs Compson said, wailing again, "I know it has. Shu, Jason," she said, grasping at him again. "He won't even let me find the key to a room in my own house!"

(pp. 218-19)

As Jason said earlier, in reference to the ideal way to treat women, "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." (p. 150)

It is doubtful that either Mrs. Compson or Dilsey is surprised at Jason's behavior at this point, and the reader does not doubt for a moment that if he could have quickly caught up with Quentin, she would certainly have received that bust in the jaw. However,

despite the tragedy of Quentin's ruined life, she is ultimately victorious over Jason, who is anti-woman and anti-life. Jason has no feeling for any human being, but he is particularly inhuman to women. His treatment of Caddy is criminal; he shoves and beats Quentin; he slams the door in Dilsey's face and ridicules her; he constantly sasses and mocks his mother; and his mistress, Lorraine, is merely a business proposition. Marriage, family, and the reproductive process of life which are offered by woman do not interest Jason in the least. It is altogether understandable that he is never able "to learn that a woman will do anything." When Jason pits his impotent masculinity against the vitality of woman and of life itself, it is inevitable that he will be defeated. . . . Though Quentin's life is tragic, she does outwit Jason by slipping down the blossoming pear tree.31

The question is, why was Jason defeated? Why were all his relationships with women failures? As noted throughout the text, his early childhood relationships with females got him off to a poor start. Subsequent events and his own character weaknesses added fuel to the fire, which continued to feed upon itself and grow all out of proportion.
This writer contends that Mrs. Compson, for one reason or another, was most responsible for the final condition of her son. She never stopped telling him how he was the only one of her children to turn out as she wanted. So, it is rather ironic that "the kind of woman Mrs. Compson is and the values she accepts are best revealed in the kind of man Jason becomes," which is to say that "Jason becomes an exaggerated reflection of his mother, carrying to extremes her self-absorption, her superficial social and moral values, her alienation from people." It is also ironic that Mrs. Compson never truly becomes aware that Jason uses and despises her and that he is the only one of the children who actually abuses her.

This cold, whimpering, self-pitying hypochondriac set the example for her son to follow, and follow it he did. By imitating his mother, he alienated himself from the other children and left himself open to ridicule from his domineering, self-confident sister. His fruitless efforts to get the best of this spunky little girl further served to frustrate him and to produce such socially unacceptable behavior as crying, tattling, and teasing weaker individuals such as Benjy. Caddy, who is overly-protective of Benjy and will not tolerate such actions, reacts quickly and effectively, which makes Jason jealous of Benjy and of Caddy's power.

This jealousy grows and feeds upon itself as Jason sees nearly everyone dote on Caddy but totally reject himself. He retaliates as best as he can by trying to be his mother's special darling—which carries with it tasks such as spying on Caddy and her boyfriends. Mrs. Compson's extreme and unnatural reactions to Caddy's early male-female relationships serve to warp the young Jason's mind about such normal
developments. And when Caddy unfortunately becomes pregnant, Jason and his mother are able to shake their heads knowingly and say, "I told you so."

Jason acquires more bad impressions about women and further learns to distrust their wiles when he observes his holier-than-thou mother conspire with Caddy to trick some poor sucker male into matrimony.

When Caddy's shame becomes public knowledge, and after Jason has lost what he saw as his life's opportunity for success, his negative attitude toward females passes a point of no return. He was jealous of his sister's wealth when she got married (he could not bear the thought that the first person in town to own a car was a girl), and her continued affluence after the dissolution of her marriage continued to gall him—particularly since he would soon take on the burden of raising her child.

The ever-present reminder of the family's shame, along with the financial drain she represented, were to continue to fuel Jason's fire of resentment against Caddy. And since she was not present to receive the full force of his wrath, Jason vented it on his mother and the innocent child, and finally on women in general. Since his mother and Caddy were not trustworthy, all women were not to be trusted. Being exposed to such an outlook all her life, it was inevitable that Quentin would grow up in an unhealthy environment and learn to react as was expected of her. She was never trusted, so in time, she lived up to Jason's expectations.

Finally, with no strong male figure to emulate, and having experienced no physical signs of love and affection from any woman in his life, except perhaps from Damuddy, Jason grew up not knowing how to love in the normal fashion. His mother warped his mind about sex, and his
sister misused her sexuality and shamed the family name—about which Jason was excessively concerned—so it is no wonder Jason became incapable of experiencing any normal relationship with a woman—be she mother, sister, niece, or friend. He fails to understand himself or other human beings, especially females. As such, "the life of the angry Jason, filled with sound and fury, is empty and utterly meaningless."
FOOTNOTES


4 Ibid.


6 Brooks, p. 326.

7 William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (New York: Random House, 1956), p. 179. All subsequent page references to passages from this novel will be noted by parentheses within the text of the paper.

8 Volpe, pp. 119-20.

9 Brooks, p. 334.


11 Volpe, p. 122.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., p. 123.


15 Volpe, p. 119.

16 Ibid., pp. 119-20.

17 Ibid., p. 110.

18 Faulkner, p. 54. Original in italics.
19Baum, p. 34.
21Ibid., p. 334.
22Ibid., p. 327.
24Ibid., p. 43.
26Volpe, p. 122.
28Faulkner, p. 54. Original in italics.
30Brooks, p. 340.
31Page, p. 67.
32Volpe, p. 110.
33Ibid., p. 123.
35Brooks, p. 444.
36Volpe, p. 119.
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