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INNOCENCE IN WILLIAM FAULKNER'S
THE SOUND AND THE FURY

by
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CHAPTER I

"MAN IS STRONG BEFORE HE IS MORAL"

The Sound and the Fury is wide in its scope and has sustained numerous interpretations. Sartre proclaims that it is a metaphysical novel about time. Irving Howe asserts that it is a social novel about the fall of the Compson family and the American South. Volpe analyzes it in terms of loss and deterioration and Campbell interprets it in Freudian terms. This study proposes to analyze The Sound and the Fury in terms of innocence.

In The Paris Review in 1956, Faulkner stated:

The child has the capacity to do but it can't know. Between twenty and forty the will of the child to do gets stronger, more dangerous, but it has not begun to learn to know yet. Since his capacity to do is forced into channels of evil through environment and pressure, man is strong before he is moral.¹

The end of man, according to Faulkner, is to become moral, and unless moral knowledge is attained, the "child" does not "know". Action is a means to knowledge, a stepping stone to

¹As quoted in Lawrence E. Bowling, "Faulkner and the Theme of Innocence," Kenyon Review, XX (1958), p. 467.

morality. In his attempt to gain knowledge, man's original inexperience leads him into "channels of evil," but it is only by passing through such an experience that man may strengthen himself, learn from his errors and become wise. It is only then that he acts meaningfully, comes to grips with reality, and acquires insight into the human condition.

The acquisition of knowledge, therefore, and here Faulkner insists on good, moral knowledge, means a loss of innocence and naivete, a state which man must strive to achieve. A basic assumption from which Faulkner develops his conception of innocence is expressed by Bowling as: "Life is action; inaction is death."² Faulkner considers positive action where there is giving and receiving. Otherwise, passivity is an aspect of innocence and passive persons as well as those who do not acquire worthwhile knowledge or spiritual depth out of their own experience remain innocent. Consequently, an innocent is not necessarily a good and naive person; he might be evil and a villain. Bowling in "Faulkner and the Theme of Innocence" expounds his theory of innocence by dramatizing two conflicting views of it, namely, the Puritan and the Humanist. I should acknowledge here my indebtedness to Bowling on whose article my arguments are based.

²Ibid., p. 478.

Randall Stewart, in American Literature and Christian Doctrine, asserts that:

Faulkner embodies and dramatizes the basic Christian concepts so effectively that he can with justice be regarded as one of the most profoundly Christian writers in our time. There is everything in his writing the basic premise of Original Sin: everywhere the conflict between the flesh and the spirit. One finds also the necessity of discipline, of trial by fire in the furnace of affliction, of sacrifice and the sacrificial death, of redemption through exercise. Man in Faulkner is a heroic, tragic figure.³

Faulkner's concern with "Original Sin", and his emphasis upon discipline, sacrifice and redemption is indeed religious. What T. E. Hulme asserts in "Humanism and the Religious Attitude" is relevant, and can to a certain measure be applied to Faulkner. What is important, Hulme says, is

What nobody seems to realize - the dogmas like that of Original Sin, which are the closest expression of the religious attitude. That man is in no sense perfect, but a wretched creature who can apprehend perfection.⁴

³As quoted in Cleanth Brooks, The Hidden God (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1963), p. 22.

⁴T.E. Hulme, Speculations, Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1924), p. 71.

Ethical values, Hulme claims, are not relative to human wishes and feelings, but are absolute and objective. It is in the light of these absolute values that man is judged to be essentially limited and imperfect. He can occasionally perform acts which partake of perfection but he can never himself be perfect. A man is essentially bad and can only accomplish anything of value by discipline, be it ethical or political. Order is creative and liberating. Human and social institutions are necessary. It is when the gap between the human and the divine widens that a sense of sin and evil is felt.⁵

To Faulkner, evil is an abuse of the natural, a rejection of the human. He is no follower of Rousseau and as such he does not regard the natural, the instinctive, and the impulsive as necessarily good. He does not believe in the natural goodness of man.⁶ Faulkner calls his notion of Christianity a "code of behaviour by means of which [a man] makes himself a better human being than his nature wants to be if he follows his nature only."⁷ At the same time, Faulkner does not believe that society is perfectly organized that no

⁵Ibid., p. 47.

⁶Brooks, The Hidden God, p. 43.

⁷Ibid., p. 24.

one has to exert any effort to be good. His characters are not products of their environment. They must face what is evil and make moral choices. They must show courage in making and living by their choices.⁸ This parallels T.E. Hulme's view that people have to achieve their goodness by discipline and effort.

For Faulkner, therefore, man has to lose his innocence and discover reality through a process of initiation. Man's awareness of evil is a necessary part of this initiation. Proper moral growth can only occur with the encounter of evil. The exposure of the innocent to evil involves loss and suffering. The result, however, the "expanded consciousness" is a victory. The acquired wisdom does not negate the ugliness of evil which helps bring it about.⁹ The initiation into the nature of reality is "analogous to the crisis of conversion and the character's successful entrance into knowledge of himself [and others], analogous to the sinner's experiencing salvation."¹⁰ Faulkner's noble characters accept the fact that men learn through suffering. Man is not accidentally subjected to pain and loss, nor are they there in the form of

⁸ Ibid., p. 30.

⁹ J.A. Ward, "Henry James and the Nature of Evil," Critical Approaches to American Literature, Walt Whitman to William Faulkner, ed. Ray Browne and Martin Light (New York, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1965), Vol. II, p. 125.

¹⁰ Brooks, The Hidden God, p. 35.

punishment to be paid for man's sins and errors. They can be the means to better and deeper knowledge. They can lead the way into a more meaningful life.¹¹ This is not to imply that any person who suffers is affirmed; it is only a way to salvation. The Subadar in Faulkner's short story "Ad Astra" says: "A man conquers himself. Out of the lust, the travail, out of the travail, the affirmation, the godhead; truth."¹²

Truth which "covers all things which touch the heart and define the effort of man to rise above the mechanical process of life,"¹³ is essential. It is not of the past, present or future. It is of all times. To attain truth and lose one's innocence, one must have a proper notion of time. One must make sense of the clock which measures past, present and future. Man should not only look backward to the past, but also forward to the future, and unless he does so, he is not free. Man, according to Faulkner, though doomed by certain limitations, is free within these bounds. He is free to follow a positive course of action or a negative one. He

¹¹Ibid., p. 43.

¹²As quoted by Bowling, op. cit., p. 467.

¹³Robert Penn Warren, "William Faulkner," Modern American Fiction, Essays in Criticism, ed. A. Walton Litz (New York, Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 156.

is free to encourage the positive or negative elements in his nature. To lose one's innocence, however, one should act positively and do the best he can within his own limits. "Unless the controlling purposes of the individual," says Brooks,

are related to those that other men share, and in which the individual can participate, he is indeed isolated and forced to fall back upon his personal values, with all the risk of fanaticism and distortions to which such isolation is liable.¹⁴

The community is the field for man's action and the standard by which he is judged and condemned. Faulkner agrees with Hulme that institutions are necessary and coming back to the community is necessary for redemption and loss of innocence.

It is equally essential for man to be human to be redeemed by love. It is through love that one might get hold on reality. Love negates lust, power over nature and other men. In his Nobel Prize Speech, Faulkner says that the writer should dedicate himself to:

the old verities and truths of the heart, the old universal truths lacking which any story is ephemeral and doomed - love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice.

Faulkner stresses love. It is the highest "truth" in human experience. It is the one "universal truth", without which

¹⁴Brooks, The Hidden God, pp. 39-40.

any human life is "ephemeral and doomed." Compassion and sacrifice are aspects of love. The absence of pity lays a curse on mankind and hastens the doom. The recognition of love as a human bond shows a great respect for the human. And, therefore, the way to salvation and out of innocence, Faulkner implies, is through love, through the exercise of pity and compassion and communion with something outside and beyond the self.

Two other elements in the loss of innocence are "belief" and "understanding." They are identified in the Nobel Prize Speech as "enduring" and "prevailing." Faulkner argues that man should believe to endure and understand to prevail. Belief raises man above the animal level, understanding above himself. This is not to imply that all of man's belief is necessarily good and its result just. It determines the nature of man's action. Belief and understanding do not make man perfect. They do make him significant. It is when man understands that he is neither perfect nor damned, but has a responsibility for his actions and beliefs that he prevails. A Faulknerian character, therefore, in order to lose his innocence, must have a belief in something to be capable of significant action. The object of this belief

determines the significance and moral quality of the action.

In the light of the above statement about innocence and Faulkner's attitude towards it, I propose now to analyze each of the main characters of The Sound and the Fury and to see to what measure each represents a different approach to innocence.

CHAPTER II

BENJY: "HE DOESN'T KNOW. HE CAN'T EVEN REALISE."

The fact that Faulkner begins The Sound and the Fury with Benjy's section is by itself significant in relation to the theme of innocence. It is not only that Benjy is an idiot and by definition ignorant and innocent but also that his section deals mostly with the early lives of Compson children, that is, with the innocent world of childhood.

Benjy by nature does not possess those human dimensions that will enable him to attain knowledge and lead him out of innocence. Dalton Ames refers to him as "the natural",¹ (p. 178) and his mother states: "Poor little boy. He doesn't know. He can't even realise." (p.215) Benjy cannot talk or comprehend the speech of others. At the age of thirty-three he does not know that fire burns and he communicates his feelings by "hollering" and "moaning". He records and recalls

¹All quotations of the novel are from the Vintage edition, New York, 1946.

sensations but he is incapable of making judgements or of rational understanding. He is disfigured and despised. The compassionate reader is shocked by Benjy's repulsive delineation:

--- a big man who appeared to have been shaped of some substance whose particles would not or did not cohere to one another or to the frame which supported it. His skin was dead looking and hairless; dropsical too, he moved with a shambling gait like a trained bear. His hair was pale and fine. It had been brushed smoothly down upon his brow like that of children in daguerrotypes. His eyes were clear, of the pale sweet blue of cornflowers, his thick mouth hung open, drooling a little. (p. 290)

This description (omnisciently presented in the Dilsey section) indicates the corrupt body of Benjy which has been partly mutilated by birth and partly by castration. His body is an image of chaos and disease: prime matter without intelligent form. The reference to "children in daguerrotypes" and to the "clear", blue eyes emphasizes Benjy's "natural" innocence.

Benjy suffers, but because of his primal innocence he cannot deal with it responsibly. His suffering is a result of a sense of loss, a loss of love, security and order in a child's world. Most of Benjy's recollected scenes present an important element in his childhood and then its

loss.² His greatest suffering results from his deprivation of Caddy who is no longer there to love him and to smell like trees. In fact, all his losses are related to the loss of Caddy. The pasture is sold to pay for her wedding and Quentin's year at Harvard. He waits for her at the gate but she does not come. The school girls pass by and he chases one of them. He is castrated. Benjy, however, does not understand his loss. "I got undressed and I looked at myself, and I began to cry. Hush, Luster said. Looking for them ain't going to do no good. They're gone He put my gown on. I hushed." (p. 92) Jason comments: " --- he didn't know what they'd done to him I don't reckon he even knew what he had been trying to do." (p. 280) Benjy is not capable of any significant action to offset his loss except to race up and down the pasture which has been turned into a golf course and moan when he hears golfers shout "Caddie". This tends to combine dramatically two objects of his love and their loss.

It is Benjy's senses that suffer. He responds to sounds and his intuitiveness gives him considerable pain.

²Edmond L. Volpe, A Reader's Guide to William Faulkner (New York, Farrar, Straus and Company, 1964), p. 101.

He cries each time Caddy cries or her leaving is mentioned. There are plenty of references to his sense of smell. He can "smell the cold" (p. 26) and the pigs. (p. 40) He likes to smell Versh (p. 47) and T.P. (p. 48) He is never happier than when Caddy "smells like trees," and he is miserable when she uses perfume. This instinctive love for the "natural" also shows itself in his refusal to ride Jason's car.

I says that old rattletrap's just an eyesore, yet you'll keep it standing there in the carriage house a hundred years just so that boy can ride to the cemetery once a week. I says he's not the first fellow that'll have to do things he doesn't want to. I'd make him ride in that car like a civilised man or stay at home. What does he know about where he goes or what he goes in, and us keeping a carriage and a horse so he can take a ride on Sunday afternoon. (p. 267, italics mine)

Benjy can smell death and sickness, too. Roskus, Dilsey's husband, speaks of Benjy's intuitiveness and his instinct for approaching death. "He know lot more than folks thinks ... He knowed they time was coming, like that pointer [dog] done. He could tell you when hisn coming, if he could talk. Or yours. Or mine." (p. 51) And he can tell from Caddy's presence and from her eyes when she was seduced. Quentin, thinking back to Caddy's surrender to Dalton Ames, affirms that Benjy "took one look at her and knew" (p. 119) a fact made clear elsewhere in the novel. (pp. 87, 109, 168)

It is significant that Benjy's reaction to death is similar to Dan and Blue, the dogs. When Roskus dies, "Dilsey moaned [.] Luster said, Hush, and we hushed, and then I began to cry and Blue howled under the kitchen steps." (p. 52) When Mr. Compson dies, Dan howls and so does Benjy. T.P. asks: "He [Dan] smell it ... Is that the way you found it out." (p. 54) There are other references to Benjy's "animality". Luster calls him a "mulehead." (p. 69) He has a "bull-frog voice," (p. 54) he "bawls" and "lows" like a cow (p. 239) and eats like a pig. (p. 89) He moves with a "shambling gait like a trained bear" (p. 290) and hangs on the gate like one too. (p. 269) The sassprilluh makes him feel like a "squinch owl" (p. 57) inside and he watches Luster like a "foolish dog". (p. 313) Benjy's "animality" is further emphasized by the different sounds Benjy produces: moaning, slobbering, bawling, crying, belling, hollering, mumbling, yelling, whimpering, wailing, weeping, bobbing, fussing and racketing.

It is therefore Benjy's senses and his vision in particular that is innocent. Faulkner describes Benjy's eyes as "empty and untroubled," (p. 335) and "empty and blue serene." (p. 336) Benjy's serenity, however, is not the

serenity of wisdom and understanding because "the confederate soldier gazed with empty eyes". (p. 335) It is rather the serenity of innocence where knowledge and understanding is not attained.

Benjy was capable of love, He "loved three things: the pasture --- his sister Candace, [and] firelight."(p.19) It is love in its most simple and childlike form, and innocent love. He loves Caddy intensely and instinctively. He asks for innocence in return. Benjy is horrified when he smells the perfume Caddy wears. The clean, "natural" and innocent smell of trees that he associates with her is stained. He is happy when she washes off the perfume, the artificial smell. When Caddy kisses Charlie, Benjy howls. Caddy washes her mouth. Each time water restores innocence, but when Caddy loses her virginity, washing is useless. Benjy responds: "Cad put her arms around me, and her shining veil, and I couldn't smell trees anymore and I began to cry". (p.59) It is significant, Volpe notes, that so long as "Caddy is sexually innocent, she remains with Benjy; as soon as she loses her innocence, she goes out of his child's world."³

³Ibid., p. 102.

Benjy enjoys playing with his "graveyard" -
 "a small mound of earth. At either end of it an empty
 bottle of blue glass --- In one was a withered stalk of
 jimson weed --- and a twig --- in the other bottle."(p.330)
 This game, Volpe comments,

unites symbols of all his losses. The mound
 is the cemetery with its adornment of flowers.
 Jimson weed, a weed with a nasty smell commonly
 known as stink weed, is an ironic symbol of
 the loss of Caddy who smelled like trees. The
 weed was used by Southern Negroes as a contraceptive
 medicine, and among hill people it was considered
 a symbol of the male sex organs. The two weeds
 in the bottle become a memorial to Benjy's
 sexuality.⁴

Sex is a constant threat to Benjy's security and peace. It
 is the measure by which he "senses" Caddy's innocence or
 lack of it. She is his "sense" of sexual and moral evil.
 His instinctive responses serve as a moral judgment.

The pasture is for Benjy the past and firelight
 is purely sensational. Looking at it gives him pleasure
 and satisfaction. It may be "analogous to Jung's theory
 that fire love in early man represented a quasi - onanistic
 activity."⁵ Benjy, therefore, can exist upon his love but
 he can never contribute to man's ability to prevail. Deprived
 of intellect he does not learn through suffering the truth

⁴Ibid., pp. 103-104.

⁵Harry Modéan Campbell and Ruel E. Foster, William
 Faulkner (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1951), p.46.

about himself and about reality. Hurt and loss and pain are not for Benjy the means to deeper knowledge and to a more meaningful life.

Moreover, Benjy is not conscious of time. Past, present and future mix together in his mind and events are related only through association. He only lives in a timeless present. Benjy has no more "sense" of time than an "animal" and, therefore, possesses no more freedom, unless it be freedom without form, direction or meaning. He lives in a "specious eternity," a purely "negative eternity" where past and future do not exist.⁶ Benjy is incapable of entering a proper relationship with time, and therefore, he is incapable of attaining truth or losing innocence.

Faulkner believes that man has free will, the power to make decisions and to act responsibly, to win his goodness through effort and discipline. Benjy does not evade responsibility. Because of his nature, he cannot either assent or dissent. He has no intellect and is therefore unable to make moral choices. Benjy cannot lose his innocence and

⁶Cleanth Brooks, William Faulkner, The Yoknapatawpha Country, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1963), p. 330.

cannot discover reality through initiation. Meaning to him consists of patterns that he can ironically recognize, of "cornice and facade" flowing smoothly "from left to right; post and tree, window and doorway and signboard, each in its ordered place." (p. 336) When Luster swings the horse to the left of the courthouse square rather than to the right, Benjy howls. His usual routine is disrupted.

CHAPTER III

QUENTEN: " A HALF-BAKED GALAHAD"

QUENTEN III --- loved not his sister's body but some concept of Compson honor --- loved not the idea of the incest which he would not commit, but some Presbyterian concept of its eternal punishment. (p.9)

Quenten is essentially a puritan and an innocent. He judges the Compson honor in terms of Caddy's virginity and he equates religious and moral values with her sexual innocence.¹ As such the Compson honor is "precariously and (he knew well) only temporarily supported by the minute fragile membrane of her maidenhead as a miniature replica of all the whole vast globy earth may be poised on the nose of a trained seal." (p.9) When Quentin is eight years old, he already exhibits a puritan moral concern. He forbids his sister to soild her clothes and fights with her to keep her dress on lest she might lose some of her innocence by letting the other children see her body. He reacts at every manifestation of Caddy's sexual maturity in an effort to keep intact his youthful world, the world

¹Volpe, op. cit., p. 111.

of innocence. When she is fifteen, he slaps her because she lets "some darn town squirt" (p. 152) kiss her. When she goes to meet Dalton Ames, her seducer, and one whom she cares for, maybe loves, Quentin suggests that they commit suicide together. The announcement of her wedding to Herbert Head becomes Quentin's death sentence.

Quentin, in his innocence, fails to understand that Caddy does not believe in his code of honor. Virginity to her is something "on which she placed no value whatever: the frail physical stricture which to her was no more than a hangnail would have been." (p.10) When her virginity is violated, Quentin tries to convince his father that they have committed incest. He hopes it would be a means by which he and Caddy will be cast to hell amid "the clean flames." His reaction at "the breakdown of sexual morality" is typically puritan. "When the standards of sexual morals are challenged," says Brooks,

a common reaction and one quite natural to Puritanism is to try to define some point beyond which surely no one would venture to transgress - to find at least one act so horrible that everyone would be repelled by it.²

This sin of incest is so dreadful that, Quentin hopes, all

²Brooks, William Faulkner, pp. 331-32.

the occupants of hell "would be repelled by it" and flee from them in horror. In reality Quentin does not want to accomplish this union physically but by making others think it so. He only wants to isolate himself and Caddy from the rest of the world as they were in their childhood. When his father asks him if he has actually committed incest with Caddy he answers: " --- i was afraid to i was afraid she might ---" (p. 195) revealing thereby a puritan fear of the flesh.

At nineteen Quentin is still innocent, physically and psychologically. He is not only obsessed with Caddy's virginity but his own. He knows sexual desire but he resists it. Quentin responds sexually to Natalie but after Caddy sees them he "jumped hard as [he] could into the hogwallow and mud yellowed up to [his] waist stinking [he] kept on plunging until [he] fell down and rolled over in it." (p.155) This is an expression of Quentin's "revulsion against his sexual feelings."³ It is not only the act but the desire, too, that he considers a stain upon his morality. He comforts himself not only in sexual innocence but also in "the thought of childhood sexlessness."⁴ Self-Castration offers no solution.

³Volpe, op.cit., p.111.

⁴Ibid., p. 108.

Versh told me about a man mutilated himself. He went into the woods and did it with a razor, sitting in a ditch --- but that's not it. It's not not having them. It's never to have had them then I could say O That That's Chinese I don't know Chinese. (pp. 134-35)

Quentin resists sexual maturation. Unless "adult" sex is completely alien to him as in childhood, he is disturbed. At one time though, he feels so strongly attracted to girls that he doubts his ability to remain a virgin:

I'd thought about I could not be a virgin, with so many of them walking along in the shadows and whispering with their soft girl-voices lingering in the shadowy places and the words coming out and perfume and eyes you could not feel not see but if it was that simple to do it wouldnt be anything and if it wasnt anything, what was I. (p. 166)

Quentin resists girls, says Bowling, because they are "the epitome of the world's imperfection."⁵ Ironically enough, Julio charges him with "meditated criminal assault." (p.159) If Quentin is truly guilty of violating the little Italian girl, it might make him a better man; action may lead him out of his innocence. But Quentin is dedicated to a sterile, passive ideal and purity. He is incapable of any significant action at all. He realizes that he should drive Dalton Ames

⁵Bowling, op.cit., p. 471.

out of Jefferson. But he is not up to the heroic role. He tries but he cannot even hurt him, much less kill him. His meeting with Ames is disastrous, says Volpe. "His conception of himself in the traditional role of protector of women collapses, not only because he fails to accomplish his purpose but because he is forced to recognize his own weakness."⁶ His claim of Caddy's illegitimate child and his suicide are not meaningful to anyone beyond himself. Quentin wants to remain an innocent.

Quentin's concern for puritan morality demands of him an **absolute** purity and cleanliness. His obsession with spots and stains and his constant effort to clean them is relative. Bowling emphasizes this point greatly.⁷ In his obsession for purity and virginity, he says, Quentin dislikes roses. They are colored, not pure white. "Roses. Not virgins like dogwood, milkweed --- I have committed incest --- Roses. Cunning and serene." (p.96) He associates roses with Caddy's wedding and her loss of virginity and innocence in the same way as honeysuckle comes to symbolize sex for him. Quentin refuses to accept the "damned" "new" fifty dollar

⁶Volpe, op.cit., p. 113.

⁷Bowling, op.cit., pp. 468-69.

bill which his brother-in-law gives him, although Herbert assures him that it is "--- just out of convent [pure and innocent] --- not a blemish not even been creased yet." (p. 129)

Quentin persists in his obstinacy and Herbert tells him: "--- be damned then see what it gets you if you were not a damned fool you'd have seen that I've got them too tight for any half-baked galahad of a brother ---" (p. 129) This reference to the noblest knight of the Round Table asserts Quentin's assumed role of restoring the Compson's Holy Grail, namely, honor. Herbert tempts Quentin to smoke because "it [the cigar] is a pretty fair weed cost [him] twenty-five bucks a hundred wholesale." (p.127) Quentin refuses the "expensive" cigar. He is only afraid lest Herbert should burn the mantel. He simply cannot accept Herbert because he is a "liar and a scoundrel --- was dropped from his club for cheating at cards got sent to Coventry caught cheating at midterm exams and expelled." (p. 142) This is not in accord with Quentin's moral principles.

Still a boy, Quentin is irritated because Louis Hatcher hasn't cleaned his lantern since the flood. "And we'd sit in the dry leaves ---, the rank smell of the lantern fouling up the brittle air." (p. 134) He gets mad

at Caddy because she does not bring her boy friends to the house. "Why must you do like nigger women do in the pasture the ditches the dark woods hot hidden furious in the dark woods." (p. 111)

On June 2nd, 1910, Quentin's obsession with "cleanliness" and with perfection destroys him. He bathes himself, shaves, paints his wounded finger with iodine, and puts on his new suit. All this "primping" raises Shreve's ironical question: "Is it a wedding or a wake?" (p. 101) He takes a "good breakfast" and buys a fifty cent cigar which the girl recommends as the "best" brand available, even more expensive than the one Herbert offered him. In the car, Quentin notices " --- the crowns of people's heads passing beneath new straw hats not yet unbleached," (p.108) while another man's hat is "stained". The bridge is "of grey stone, lichened, dappled with slow moisture where the fungus crept." (p. 134) The buggy has "spidery wheels," (p. 143) and the little Italian girl has a dirty face and a dirty dress. The coin in her hand is "moist and dirty, moist dirt ridged into her flesh. The coin was damp and warm. [He] could smell it, faintly metallic." (p.145) When Quentin is arrested he is more concerned with the appearance of the courtroom than with his trial. He observes

A bare room smelling of stale tobacco. There was a sheet iron stove in the center of a wooden frame filled with sand, [the grate is not cleaned yet though it is summer, June 2nd.] and a faded map on the wall and the dingy plat of a township. Behind a scarred littered table a man with a fierce roach of iron grey hair peered at us over steel spectacles ---. He opened a huge dusty book and drew it to him and dipped a foul pen into an inkwell filled with what looked like coal dust. (p.161)

Quentin quarrels with Gerald but he is not concerned with his injury as he is with cleaning his vest from the blood and asking Shreve about the shape of his collar. Though he is close to the place where he wants to commit suicide, he returns to Cambridge to change his bloody shirt and tie and to clean his vest. On his way home he is conscious of his eye bruise and finds a seat on the left side of the car. In his room he removes the blood stains from his clothes with gasoline, exchanges his dirty handkerchief for a clean one, brushes his teeth and squeezes the brush as dry as possible. He remembers too to wear his hat but he brushes it first. Only his bruised eye annoys him. Nevertheless, he goes to his death dressed like a gentleman. He drowns himself so that his body will rest upon the "inviolable sand." (p.99)

Water, to Quentin, is a cleansing agent for the absolution of sins. Caddy washes off the perfume. Caddy and Quentin wash off the mud that Quentin smears on them after the Natalie scene. When her family discovers her affair with Dalton Ames, Caddy immerses herself in the water of the creek. After his fight with Gerald, Quentin is annoyed that the rag with which he cleans his blood "stained the water." (p.182)

Quentin is emotionally committed to the Code, to the Southern tradition of morality and honor, where female purity is an important concept. Unfortunately, the code becomes abstract, meaningless and unreal for him. He fails to comprehend its essence. His father explains to him:

--- it's because you are a virgin: dont you see? Women are never virgins. Purity is a negative state and therefore contrary to nature. It's nature [innocence] is hurting you not Caddy and I said that's just words and he said so is virginity and I said you dont know. You cant know and he said yes. On the instant when we come to realise that tragedy is second-hand.
(p.135)

His father goes on to say:

--- you are still blind [innocent] to what is in yourself to that part of general truth the sequence of natural events and their causes which shadows every mans brow even benjys you are not thinking of finitude you are contemplating an apotheosis in which a temporary state of mind will become symmetrical above the flesh and aware both of itself and the flesh --- you cannot bear to think that someday it will no longer hurt you like this. (pp.195-96)

This is a clear description of Quentin's innocence. Mr. Compson, in his pessimistic way, explains to his son that it is useless "to impose moral convictions upon life," because "reality cannot measure up to such values." Virginity is meaningless and so are human values. They are formed by man and as such they are not absolutes. Nothing in life is stable.⁸ Quentin refuses to accept his father's view that his pain is only temporary and it will be forgotten with time. He simply cannot take the advice that "we must just stay awake and see evil done for a little while." (p.195) In fact, he refuses to accept the presence of evil along with the good. He rejects an initiation into the nature of reality, where he can learn something about the basic human principles. He resolves on being an innocent.

⁸Volpe, op.cit., p.114.

Quentin escapes reality rather than coming to terms with it. His attempt to escape time is part of this escape. He breaks his watch to stop time but so long as he breathes this is impossible. His shadow which reflects the progress of the day into night, the sound of the bells, the factory whistles, the hunger in his "stomach saying noon" (p.123) - all these remind him of time and reality. His gesture of breaking his watch becomes symbolic of his death.

It is not only his effort to escape time that makes Quentin an innocent, but also the way he interprets it. On the morning he kills himself, Quentin passes a jeweler's shop, the window of which is filled with clocks that tell different times. This satisfies Quentin who is given an image of what time signifies. He uses his broken watch as an excuse, enters the shop and asks the jeweler, "Would you mind telling me if any of these watches in the window are right?" (p. 103) Quentin is not interested in the answer; he only wants to assert that "--- each [clock] with the same assertive and contradictory assurance that mine had, without any hands at all. Contradicting one another." (p. 104) With this assertion, Thompson says:

Quentin strikes a posture of self-blinding and self-deafening arrogance as he projects on time and on life his own inner chaos of "assertive and contradictory assurance." But the jeweler's answer to his question had implicitly endowed the entire episode with the quality of a parable: "--- they haven't been regulated and set yet."⁹

Quentin is incapable of dealing with past, present and future - all of which are aspects of eternity. When he insults Gerald Blaid, he is not aware of it; he relives his quarrel with Dalton Ames. When Blaid hits him, the present quarrel is submerged under Quentin's past quarrel with Ames. He thinks of his last day in the past as if he is already dead. The future does not exist for him.

Quentin, as Cleanth Brooks expresses it:

wants to take eternity by storm - to reach it by a sort of shortcut, which in effect means freezing into permanence one fleeting moment of the past. Eternity is thus for Quentin not something which fulfills and enfolds all time, but simply a particular segment of time.¹⁰

Quentin, in his innocence, never learns the Christian notion that time has moral significance. But shortly before he dies, perhaps he realizes his mistake of trying to attain

⁹Lawrence Thompson, William Faulkner (New York, Barnes and Noble Inc., 1963) p.40.

¹⁰Brooks, William Faulkner, p.331.

perfection by ignoring the actual and real world.

I seemed to be lying neither asleep nor awake looking down a long corridor of grey half-light where all stable things had become shadowy paradoxical all I had done shadows all I had felt suffered taking visible form antic and perverse mocking without relevance inherent themselves with the denial of the significance they should have affirmed thinking I was I was not who was not was not who. (p.188)

Quentin's material world and his physical actions become unreal and illusory. His feelings replace external reality but they do not make his life more meaningful, nor do they help him to understand the external world and its significance. On the contrary, they confuse him. He is unable to differentiate between idea and actuality. He does not know what part of him "was" and what part "was not".

And at this point, Quentin, the intellectual, comes to resemble Benjy, his idiot brother. Though Quentin's obsession with innocence does not lead him to idiocy, the consequences are the same. Quentin's inner life becomes so vivid and real to him that, like Benjy, he does not distinguish between illusion and reality, imagination and actuality. In this state of confusion, Bowling says,

Quentin's mental activity, like Benjy's, does not make sense but only sensation. What Quentin has not originally foreseen is the ironic fact, if he really could achieve the complete innocence to which he has aspired, Quentin would not be a perfect man but only an idiot, like Benjy.¹¹

¹¹Bowling, op.cit., pp. 474-75.

CHAPTER IV

JASON IV: "THE FIRST SANE COMPSON"

JASON IV. The first sane Compson since before Culloden and (a childless bachelor) hence the last. Logical rational contained and even a philosopher in the old stoic tradition: thinking nothing whatever of God one way or the other and simply considering the police and so fearing and respecting only the Negro woman, his sworn enemy since 1911 when she too divined by simple clairvoyance that he was somehow using his infant niece's illegitimacy to blackmail its mother, who cooked the food he ate. Who not only fended off and held his own with Compsons but competed and held his own with the Snopeses--- (p.16)

Jason's "sanity," needless to say, is ironic. Jason, in his "sanity," does not exhaust himself on foolish enterprises like the other Compsons, nor does he uphold impossible notions of honor and virginity. For Jason healthy human relationships are divorced. Jason's "sanity" isolates him from his family, acquaintances and business associates rather than making him an accepted member of his society. Jason's "sanity" makes Benjy not a brother but a burden, another mouth to feed. While Benjy sleeps, Jason refers to him as "the great American Gelding snoring away like a planning

mill." (p. 280) He castrates him in 1913 and sends him to the State Asylum in 1933 - as soon as his mother dies. Jason envies Quentin because he does not have a similar chance of education. He reacts to his suicide "sanely" and ironically but not "emotionally."

I says no I never had university advantages because at Harvard they teach you how to go for a swim at night without knowing how to swim and at Sewanee they dont even teach you what water is. I says you might send me to the State University; maybe I'll learn how to stop my clock with a nose spray --- (pp. 213-14)

Bitterness and hatred dominate Jason's memory of his father. Mrs. Compson comments on it several times.

At one time she tells him:

You have no respect for your father's memory and I says I dont know why not it sure is preserved well enough to last only if I'm crazy too --- (p. 250)

At his father's funeral, Uncle Manory takes a few drinks and tries to hidethe smell by chewing cloves.

Jason discovers it and he comments:

I reckon he [his uncle] thought that the least he could do at Father's funeral [was to take a drink] or maybe the sideboard thought it was still Father and tripped him up when

he passed. Like I say, if he had to sell something to send Quentin to Harvard we'd all been a damn sight better off if he'd sold that side-board and bought himself a one-armed strait jacket with part of the money --- at least I never heard of him offering to sell anything to send me to Harvard. (p.215)

When his sister begs him to take good care of her daughter because he has his father's name, Jason answers bitterly: "That's so, --- he did leave me something." (p.227)

He does not love Caddy either. Her divorce deprives him of the job Herbert promised him, and it takes Jason eighteen years to avenge himself. He steals the monthly checks that Caddy sends for the benefit of her daughter and deceived^s his mother into refusing them by burning forged ones. He treats Caddy cruelly and fights every effort she makes to see her daughter. His revenge extends itself on to his niece who reminds him of the lost business. He deliberately annoys and hurts her feelings until he finally drives her out of town. In his "irrational bitterness" that is identified with sadism, Jason enjoys seeing the disappointment on Luster's face as he purposefully burns the tickets to the show.¹

¹Brooks, William Faulkner, p. 337.

His relationship with Lorraine is devoid of passion; it is as business-like as his relationship with his boss, Earl. In each case there is a contract to be observed. Jason wishes to reduce all human relationships to business dealings. Jason's "sanity", therefore, is not compassionate or human. It is not one in which wisdom and understanding of human relations is attained. Jason's "sanity" is corrupt. It is the "sanity" of innocence where reality is ignored. His emotions are distorted and only "self-love" prevails. This is partly because of his mother's influence. She spoils him and insists on his being most like her people. "All the Compson gave out before it got to" him, thus leaving him pure Bascomb, the only one who has any "business sense." This isolates him from his father, sister and brothers and makes it difficult for him "to establish an affectionate relationship" with them. He opposes everything the Compsons represent and he denounces all they believe in. They cherish family tradition; Jason makes fun of it.² "Blood, I says, governors and generals. It's a damn good thing we never had any kings and presidents; we'd all be down there at Jackson chasing butterflies." (p. 147) He translates the code of

²Volpe, op.cit., pp. 122-23.

honor into: "ONCE A BITCH ALWAYS A BITCH." (p. 198)

Jason in some ways resembles his mother. Their lack of love is brought out in the statement:

--- he and his mother appeared to wait across the table from one another, in identical attitudes; the one cold and shrewd, --- the other cold and querulous --- (p.295)

Jason, however, as Faulkner tells us in the Appendix, does not even love his mother because he is "a sane man always." (p.17) Love contradicts Jason's "sanity". To be truly human, says Brooks, "one must transcend one's mere intellect with some overflow of generosity and love."³ And Jason uses his mother for his own purposes. He feeds her emotions about Caddy so that she might burn the forged monthly checks, and he cashes the genuine ones. Ironically enough, Mrs. Compson comments after she burns one of these checks: "Let me never see the day when my children will have to accept that, the wages of sin --- I'd rather see even you dead in your coffin first." (p.238) And indeed the love element within Jason is dead. "You never had a drop of warm blood in you," (p.226) Caddy tells him and

³Brooks, William Faulkner, p. 338.

when he forbids her to see her daughter Dilsey reproaches him with: "You'se a cold man, Jason, if man you is."

(p.225) When he has no longer any Compson to hate, Jason hates everyone: "--- all the rest of the town and the world and the human race too except himself were Compsons, inexplicable yet quite predictable in that they were in no sense whatever to be trusted." (p.17) This "lack of any capacity for love," writes Brooks,

is a common trait in Faulkner's villains. Their [villains] lack of love shows itself in two ways, two ways that come eventually to the same thing: their attitude toward nature and toward women. They do not respond to nature - they may very well violate nature. In quite the same way, they have no interest in women, or use them as means to their own ends --- Jason Compson, with no interest in nature, or in women except as objects to be manipulated, is of this breed.⁴

Jason, in his innocence, only believes in himself and his own self-righteousness. He judges everything solely and pragmatically in terms of its effect upon himself. He abhors Caddy's illicit behaviour because its result deprives him of the promised job and not because he believes in female purity. He does not object to Quentin's immorality except that people talk. "I dont

⁴Ibid., p. 339.

care what you do, myself, --- But I've got a position in this town, and I'm not going to have any member of my family going on like a nigger wench." (p.207) To Jason's "practical sanity" surface appearance is more important than the essentials of the Code. Conscience is meaningless: "I'm glad I haven't got the sort of conscience I've got to nurse like a sick puppy all the time." (p.246) He thinks "nothing whatever of God one way or the other" (p.16) in a religious sense, but he can exploit Him for his own purposes, as an outlet for his fury. As he chases his niece he challenges God with: "And damn You, too, --- See if you can stop me, thinking of himself, his file of soldiers with the manach^ed sheriff in the rear, dragging Omnipotence down from his throne, if necessary; of the embattled legions of both hell and heaven through which he tore his way and put his hands at last on his fleeing niece." (p.322)

Money is Jason's only value. Still a child, he always keeps his hands in his pockets. Versh comments: "Jason's going to be rich man --- he holding his money all the time." (p.55) Together with the pattesson boy, Quentin remembers, they make kites and sell them a nickel a piece. "Jason was treasurer." (p.113) Later on he

replaces his partner with a still younger boy. At his father's funeral, he looks at the flowers heaped on the grave and estimates that they must be worth fifty dollars. Caddy, knowing the person he is, offers him fifty dollars to have one minute with her daughter. At another time she tempts him with a thousand dollars if he'll convince his mother to let her have her daughter back. When Uncle Job sympathizes with the cotton weavers who have to work on Saturday, Jason responds: "Saturday wouldn't mean nothing to you, either, --- it it depended on me to pay you wages." (p.208) The cables he sends to Caddy and to New York are "collect". At the rush hour, Earl commands Jason to have lunch at Rogers "and put a ticket in the drawer." (p.233) Jason hates "any damn foreigner that cant make a living in the country where God put him, [and] can come to this one and take money right out of an American's pockets." (p.210) One reason he wants to send Benjy to the State Asylum is to get "benefit out of the taxes" (p.239) he pays. The tax money, however, spent on roads is not very profitable: "yet we spend money and spend money on roads and damn if it isn't like trying to drive on over a sheet of corrugated

iron roofing." (p.255) Even love and revenge are measured in terms of money.

Jason is not satisfied that Earl should get only eight percent profit. He boasts: "Why I could take his business in one year and fix him so he'd never have to work again, only he'd give it all away to the church or something." (p.246) A careful examination of Jason's conception of himself as a successful business man exposes him. If we consider that Jason receives every month for fifteen years \$160 as a clerk in Earl's office and \$ 200 from Caddy one would expect him to have a pretty good sum that is invested in some big business. But this is not the case. All that Jason saves is the \$7,000 that Quentin steals. Where has the rest of the money gone? It cannot have been spent on family expenses alone because the Compson's standard of living is not high. The mirror in the library is not replaced, the carriage needs repair and the barn is empty. Benjy's birthday cake "never come[s] out of Jason's pantry" (p.79); Dilsey buys it with her own money. Jason considers the \$40 he gives Lorraine an extravagant sum.⁵

⁵Volpe, op.cit., pp.120-21.

Jason thinks that he is better than the other cotton speculators. On April 6, 1928, however, he loses \$200. Has the rest of the money been lost in the same way? If so, how successful is Jason as a "practical businessman"? He withdraws the \$1,000 from Earl's business to buy a car, thus losing their profit and reducing his position from partner to clerk to buy a machine that gives him considerable headaches. Jason's concept of the business man drives Quentin away, thus losing the income Caddy provides him with.⁶

Jason's practical formula of conduct is, therefore, ultimately nonpractical. Jason chases Quentin and the pitchman around the countryside. They see him and know that he is tracing them. Jason, in his "practicality" and perverse innocence, wants to catch them making love.⁷ Two days later, Quentin robs him of all his savings and the futile chase goes on. The irony is that Jason is not able to go after his niece, because if he catches her he will be exposed. Yet he fools himself and chases them to Mottson: "he must see them first, get the money back, then what they did would be of no importance to him while

⁶Ibid., p121.

⁷Ibid.

otherwise the whole world would know that he, Jason Compson, had been robbed by Quentin, his niece, a bitch." (p.234) In his "practical" way, Jason does not think at all of "the arbitrary valuations of the money," nor of his niece. "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.321) Therefore, the "practical", "sane" money-obsessed Jason sets out not to recover his niece, nor the stolen money but an abstract symbol. Quentin's material victory over Jason drives him into rage but not to "insanity" or suicide. "It catches him in the stomach but not in the heart." He survives it and lives out the rest of his life in "sanity", the defense that protects him from terrible psychical and spiritual torments.⁸

Jason, in his innocence, also does not realize the contradictions in his life. He condemns Caddy's promiscuity but he uses her money to pay a prostitute. In his business life he continually condemns those who are doing the same thing as he, but who are more successful. He does not

⁸William R. Mueller, The Prophetic Voice in Modern Fiction (New York, Association Press, 1959), p. 118.

understand that he wishes to gain the same ends as they. In his naive corruption Jason fails to understand the contradiction in his own character which are emphasized time after time. When Jason speaks his actions refute his words. He gives Lorraine's maid \$5 and ironically boasts: "After all, like I say money has no value; it's just the way you spend it. It dont belong to anybody, so why try to hoard it. It just belongs to the man that can get it and keep it." (p.212) All his other claims are refuted as well. He fails to make money, people talk, and his status in the town is reflected in the Sheriff's response to the capture of Quentin. "Part of the comedy," says Thompson,

^{lies}
 His in Faulkner's arrangement to let Jason unintentionally unmask and condemn himself not only in the eyes of the reader but also in the eyes of almost all the characters who deal with him.⁹

The old Negro Job, describes Jason's situation:

"--- I wont try to fool you," he says.
 "You too smart for me. Yes, suh, ---
 You's too smart for me. Aint a man in
 dis town kin keep up wid you fer smart-
 ness. You fools a man whut so smart.

⁹Thompson, op.cit., pp. 44-45.

he cant even keep up wid hisself," ---
 who's that?" I [Jason] says. "Dat's
 Mr. Jason Compson." (p.267)

Jason has no compassion for people or a sense of responsibility towards them. His interest in human beings is merely for objects to be manipulated. In his innocence, he fails to accept them as human beings with their necessary virtues and vices. As such life becomes a matter of measuring one's own strength and cleverness against that of others, and pain is caused when one is outwitted or defeated.¹⁰ However, the pain which Jason suffers is not likely to lead him out of his innocence. His life is empty and meaningless, "full of sound and fury signifying nothing." One of the reasons for this lack of meaning in his life, says Volpe, is his alienation from the past which he disregards.¹¹ Jason is "harried by time." He wants to "catch up with it." He constantly races the clock but he is usually late¹² - another contradiction in his life. He thinks of time as measurable hour by hour and minute by minute. He does not attain any freedom by thinking only of the future because he insists on seeing time in terms of things to be done and is therefore inca-

¹⁰Mueller, op.cit., p.118.

¹¹Volpe, op.cit., p.122.

¹²Brooks, William Faulkner, p. 328.

pable of any real living. Jason, in his innocence, is always preparing to live, not living. His eternity, says Brooks, "is the empty mirage of an oasis toward which he is constantly flogging his tired camel and his tired self."¹³

Jason, therefore, in spite of all his immoral and vicious acts, remains innocent. He does not learn the truth about himself nor about others. He remains spiritually dead. At the end, he has acquired nothing worth getting and he had learned nothing worth knowing. "Jason, the naturalist," remarks Bowling, "like Benjy, the natural, remains innocent."¹⁴

¹³Ibid., pp. 330-31.

¹⁴Bowling, op.cit., p.475.

CHAPTER V

CADDY: "DOOMED AND KNEW IT, ACCEPTED THE DOOM
WITHOUT EITHER SEEKING IT OR FLEEING IT"

The Sound and the Fury began as a short story
conceived around the image of:

the muddy seat of a little girl's drawers
in a pear tree, where she could see
through a window where her grandmother's
funeral was taking place and report what
was happening to her brothers on the
ground below --- the girl was the only
one that was brave enough to climb that
tree to look in the forbidden window
to see what was going on ----¹

This supports the centrality of Caddy's relation to the
other members of her family. She does not narrate a section
of her own but through her brothers' recollections we get
a comprehensible picture of her story.

As an adolescent Caddy attracts and responds to
boys. She wears pretty dresses and hats and uses perfume.
Benjy cries when he sees her and Jason explains: "He don't
like that prissy dress --- You think you're grown up, dont
you. You think you're better than anybody else, dont you.

¹As quoted in Thompson, op.cit., p.29.

Prissy." (pp. 59-60) To smell like trees again, Caddy takes off the dress and hat and washes off the perfume. She even gives the perfume bottle as a present to Dilsey.

Then Caddy kisses a boy. Her family reacts violently. Her mother, Jason remembers, "went around the house in a black dress and a veil and even father couldn't get her to say a word except crying and saying her little daughter was dead." (p.247) Benjy discovers her with Charlie in the swing and his bellowings make her feel frightened and guilty:

Caddy and I ran. We ran up the kitchen steps, onto the porch, and Caddy knelt down in the dark and held me. I could hear and feel her chest. "I wont". She said "I wont anymore, ever. Benjy Benjy." Then she was crying, and I cried, and we held each other. "Hush." she said. "Hush. I wont anymore." So I hushed and Caddy got up and we went into the kitchen and turned the light on and Caddy took the kitchen soap and washed her mouth at the sink, hard. Caddy smelled like trees. (p.67)

Quentin's reaction to the kissing is annoying: "what did you let him for kiss kiss." Caddy teases him: "I didn't let him I made him." (p. 152) He slaps her, throws her on the ground, rubs her head in the grass and tells her to say "calf rope." Caddy responds: "I didn't kiss a dirty girl like Natalie anyway." (p.153) Benjy seems to have

the greater influence on Caddy. His reaction touches her more deeply and she feels remorse for her action.

Caddy meets Dalton Ames. Her mother sets Jason to spy on her. Benjy howls at her. Quentin meddles in her affairs. He threatens to kill Dalton if he does not leave town. Dalton, however, treats him kindly and with understanding. He is more concerned about Caddy and whether she is bothered at home. Caddy hears the pistol shot and thinks that Quentin is harmed. She tells Ames never to see her again. She realizes then that Quentin is quite safe, runs after Dalton to apologize but Quentin holds her back. He proposes a death-pact and she agrees. Quentin retreats. She even agrees to commit incest if it will ease Quentin's suffering, but he is afraid. This offer of herself, writes Volpe,

is an act of abnegation, motivated by a love that is almost maternal. Caddy's dilemma is that she must sacrifice her own response to life if she is to keep her brothers happy; but she is too passionate, too vibrantly alive, too vital to immolate herself.²

Her family's reaction to her loss of virginity magnifies its sinful element and ignores the love and passion that

²Volpe, op.cit., p.100.

go beyond it. They drive Caddy to ^{be} the illicit. On her wedding night she explains to Quentin:

There was something terrible in me some-
times at night I could see it grinning
at me. I could see it through them
grinning at me through their faces it's
gone now and I'm sick. (p. 131)

The result is catastrophic. They kill Caddy spiritually. Caddy tells Quentin: "I cant even cry I died last year I told you I had but I didn't know then what I meant I didn't know what I was saying." (p. 142) Nevertheless, she begs Quentin to take care of Benjy so they will not send him to Jackson. She is concerned about her father, too, who cannot stop drinking because of her. Quentin proposes to escape together but in her unselfish way she explains: "On what on your school money the money they sold the pasture for so you could go to Harvard dont you see you've got to finish now if you dont finish he'll [Benjy] have nothing." (p.143)

Caddy is "two months pregnant with another man's child," (p.10) when she marries Herbert. She does not love him but she has to save the family's name from disgrace. A year later her husband divorces her. She is not allowed to go back home. She just sends her daughter ("regardless of what its sex would be she had already named

Quentin after the brother," p.10) a monthly allowance of two hundred dollars and sometimes more in an effort to make her daughter happy. Finally, Caddy becomes a prostitute, but a high class, expensive prostitute. The picture of Caddy that the librarian shows to Jason is

--- filled with luxury and money and sunlight - a Cannebière backdrop of mountains and palms and cypresses and the sea, an open powerful expensive chromiumtrimmed sports car, the woman's face hatless between a rich scarf and a seal coat, --- beside her a handsome lean man of middle-age in the ribbons and tales of a German staff general --- (p. 12-13)

Caddy, needless to say, supplies her brothers with the mother image. She loves and cares for Benjy more than any other member of her family. She is sensitive to his needs and makes him happy by satisfying his instincts through his senses - seeing, smelling, hearing, hearing and tasting. She asks him to look at the red flames and at the red and yellow colors in the cushion. She lets him feel the softness of her satin slipper and teaches him the cold by holding a piece of ice against his face. She calls his attention to the sweet smell of plants and perfumes and to the music of the rain on the roof. At thirteen Benjy cries if he is put to bed alone. Caddy lies with him until he is asleep. In one of Benjy's remembered

scenes (p.81), Caddy is seen mothering Benjy, but ironically enough, at the end of it Caddy mothers her mother: "You go upstairs and lay down, so you can be sick. I'll go get Dilsey." (p.83) She points out to her that if she holds Benjy in her arms and gives him more love he will stop crying.³ She also resents her mother's attitude of calling Benjy "my poor baby." Unlike her mother, Caddy puts her arms around him and tells him: "You're not a poor baby. Are you. You've got your Caddy. Haven't you got your Caddy." (p.28)

Mrs. Compson sums up Caddy's attitude towards Quentin:

They deliberately shut me out of their lives --- It was always her and Quentin --- I always told your father that they were allowed too much freedom to be together too much. When Quentin started to school we had to let her go the next year, so she could be with him. She couldn't hear for any of you to do anything she couldn't --- (p. 278)

Caddy loves Quentin and understands his feelings more than he does his own. Faulkner writes in the Appendix, that she

³Thompson, op.cit., pp. 33-36.

Loved her brother despite him, loved not only him but loved in him that bitter prophet --- not only this, she loved him not only in spite of but because of the fact that he himself was incapable of love, accepting the fact that he must value above all not her but the virginity of which she was custodian --- Knew the brother loved death best of all and was not jealous--- (p. 10)

It is Quentin who pushes Caddy into the stream and gets her underpants dirty. He teases her with his sexual games. In the Natalie incident she tells him that she does not "give a damn" what he does. Quentin gets mad and smears mud on her. He does it more than once and the significance of the action rises above its literal denotative value. It becomes symbolic. He keeps on teasing her until she loses her virginity. Then she tell him: "Poor Quentin youve never done that have you." (p. 167) He keeps on teasing her until the mud and spot on her underpants smear his concept of honor. Her statement to Quentin in the water - splashing incident: "It was all your fault ---- I hope we do get whipped," (p.39) picks up symbolic significance.

Caddy's relation to Jason is not full of love. His mother gives him enough of it. Caddy attacks him,

however, when he cuts Benjy's paper dolls and she wants to "slit his gizzle." (p. 84) Jason's later treatment of Caddy is tyrannical. He does not allow her to return home nor does he write her when her father dies. He cold-bloodedly forbids her to see her daughter and he drains her out of the money she sends to her daughter. His love of her, if it can be called love, is a material one measured in terms of money.

Caddy, then, judged in terms of the Puritan moral code, is condemned. She has violated its dictates. Her virginity is something "on which she placed no value whatever: the frail physical stricture which to her was no more than a hangnail would have been." (p.10) She is promiscuous, conceives an illegitimate daughter and ends up being a professional prostitute. Caddy's "love," in the words of Brooks as applied to Quentin, does not "parallel the Puritanism of the Cathars and their fear of the flesh."⁴ Caddy constantly washes her sins and guilt feelings with water, a ritual which loses its effect once her virginity is lost.

It is true that Caddy is the **only** person in the

⁴Brooks, William Faulkner, p. 332.

Compson household who has the courage to love and live, but where does this courage lead her and what does she achieve? She is brave enough to climb the pear tree, which signifies "a tree of knowledge,"⁵ but what spiritual depth does she gain, and what is the worthwhile knowledge she attains? She loves, pities and is concerned about others - attributes which are lacking in the other Compsons, and which are commendable in a person who earns them. Caddy, however, possesses these qualities by "nature" and not by a willful act of her own. She is born with them and not because she makes an effort to gain them. Her concept of love is understood instinctively and not realized as a result of her actions or experience. The "innocent Caddy," says Thompson, gives

herself to Dalton Ames with the same purity of love she has previously given, in different forms, to Ben and Quentin. Thus she stands finally as betrayed by her parents, by Quentin, by Dalton Ames and by Jason.⁶

Her "love" does not give her enough stature to raise her above her "natural" level. She remains innocent.

⁵Thompson, op.cit., p.32.

⁶Ibid., p.49.

At fifty, Caddy is "ageless and ^bBeautiful, cold serene and damned." (p.12) Caddy is physically ageless, Bowling comments, because spiritually she does not achieve maturity. She is cold because she learns nothing about love. She is damned not only because of her illicit behaviour but because she chooses to live in a "state of perpetual sin" with no desire or hope for salvation. She is "doomed and knew it, accepted the doom without either seeking it or fleeing it." (p.10) She is damned too because she rejects her duty towards her daughter and allows her to grow up in the same loveless family which has driven her to her doom. Her serenity is the serenity of innocence in which understanding is not achieved.⁷

In her innocence, Caddy thinks that the money she sends to her daughter is substantial enough to replace the love and care that her daughter needs. She does not understand nor foresee that the heartless Jason whom she begs to be kind to Quentin and to take good care of her, and the self-pitying mother who does not "even know she [Quentin] had a report card," (p. 198) or plays Hookey, are going to drive Quentin to the same end she has been driven to. One tragedy is not enough of a lesson to the innocent Caddy,

⁷Bowling, op.cit., p. 476.

for she cannot understand her own.

Caddy has the potentialities of being better than any other Compson, but she does not strive to do the best she can to live up to these potentialities. She justifies herself by agreeing with Quentin: "theres a curse on us its not our fault is it our fault." (p.176) In fact Caddy goes from better to worse. When the librarian shows Dilsey Caddy's picture in an effort to save her, Dilsey "knows Caddy doesn't want to be saved hasn't anything anymore worth being saved for nothing worth being lost that she can lose." (p. 16)

CHAPTER VI

MRS. COMPSON: "I DONT EVEN WANT TO KNOW ABOUT IT"

I suppose women who stay shut up like I do have no idea what goes on in this town --- My life has been so different from that ---- Thank God I dont know about such wickedness. I dont even want to know about it. I'm not like most people (pp. 275-76)

Mrs. Compson declares herself innocent, and indeed she is. Such a statement erases all evidence that she acts responsibly or confronts evil. She is not only shut up in her room and is thereby isolated from the rest of the town, she is isolated from her children, too. Her duty towards them ends after childbirth; Dilsey takes over from there. Benjy to her is "a poor baby" and a judgment on her. She does not give him a mother's love nor is she sensitive to his needs. She does not understand that looking at the fire or at the bright colors in the cushion pacifies him; Caddy informs her. On the way to the cemetery Benjy howls. She is not aware that he wants to hold a flower in his hand; Dilsey instructs her. It takes her some time to accept his idiocy. When she can no longer escape it, she changes

his name from Maury (his uncle's name) to Benjamin, in an effort to free herself of the shame his name reflects on the Bascombs. In spite of everything she tells Caddy: "You humour him too much --- You and your father both. You dont realize that I am the one who has to pay for it." (p.82) Like Jason, Mrs. Compson's words refute her actions.

Quentin's attitude to his mother is summed up in his statement: "--- if I'd just had a mother so I could say Mother Mother." (p.190) He associates her with a picture in one of the books. The picture is of "a dark place into which a single weak ray of light came slanting upon two faces lifted out of the shadows." In his agony, Quentin keeps on looking at the picture until he sees his mother and father: "I'd have to turn back to it until the dungeon was Mother herself she and Father upward into weak light holding hands and us lost somewhere below even them without even a ray of light." (p.191) Quentin justifies his suicide with: "Done in Mother's mind though. Finished. Finished. Then we were all poisoned." (p.121) Mrs. Compson, however, considers his suicide "inconsiderate" and selfish: "When her [Caddy's] troubles began I knew that Quentin would

feel that he had to do something just as bad. But I didn't believe that he would have been so selfish as to - I didn't dream that he - [would commit suicide.]" (p. 278)

Mrs. Compson contributes a great deal to Caddy's promiscuity. When Caddy kisses a boy, she goes around the house in a black dress and a veil "crying" and saying her little daughter is dead. When Caddy meets Dalton Ames, she sets Jason to spy on her. Mr. Compson reproaches her and she exclaims:

---- your own daughter my little daughter
my baby girl --- she is no better than
that when I was a girl --- I was taught
that there is no halfground that a woman
is either a lady or not but I never dreamed
when I held her in my arms that any daughter
of mine could let herself dont you know
I can look at her eyes and tell --- you
dont know her I know things she's done that
I'd die before I'd have you know --- (p.123)

Caddy loses her virginity. Her mother reacts:

What have I done to have been given children
like these Benjamin was punishment enough
and now for her to have no more regard for
me her own mother I've suffered for her and
dreamed and planned and sacrificed I went
down into the valley yet never since she
opened her eyes has she given me one unselfish
thought at times I look at her I wonder if
she can be my child. (pp. 121-22)

To hear her speak in this way, one would think that Mrs. Compson is an ideal mother, one who devotes all her time and effort "to raise them [her children] Christians," (p. 297) not one who deprives them of the maternal love that is their due. What Mrs. Compson wants when Caddy gets pregnant is a cover-up for the family's honor. She provides Caddy with a rich husband and a loveless marriage. The tragedies Mrs. Compson faces might have given another woman stature but not her. She shuts herself up in her room and nurses her ever-lasting headaches with the camphor-cloth on her head. She pities herself and cries. Quentin, remembering the Wistaria odor, mentions that:

On the rainy days when Mother wasn't feeling quite bad enough to stay away from the windows we used to play under it. When Mother stayed in bed Dilsey would put old clothes on us and let us go out in the rain ---- But if Mother was up we always began by playing on the porch until she said we were making too much noise, then we went and played under the Wistaria frame. (p.187-88)

Jason's section is saturated with "mother's crying." When Mr. Compson brings the Quentin baby home, Jason comments: "Anyway it'll give her something to sure enough worry over now!" ---- Then Mother started sure enough." (p. 216)

He recalls, too, that: "Mother called me and cried on me awhile." (p. 218) In the scene where she burns Caddy's forged check, Jason excuses himself by saying: "If you've got any crying to do --- you'll have to do it alone, because I've got to get on back [to work]." (p. 243)

At another time Jason and Mrs. Compson discuss Quentin's frequent absence from school. As she cries on the pillow she tells Jason: "I know I'm just a trouble and a burden for you," and Jason rubs it in: "I ought to know it --- You've been telling me that for thirty years. Even Ben ought to know it now." (p. 199)

Mrs. Compson succeeds in separating Quentin from her mother. She pronounces her "innocent and prevents her "knowing" of her mother.

Poor little innocent baby --- she must never know. She must never ever learn that name. Dilsey I forbid you ever to speak that name in her hearing. If she could grow up never to know that she had a mother I would thank god. (pp. 216-17, italics mine.)

Ironically enough, not only Quentin but all the Compson children grow up never knowing their mother. Mrs. Compson "is not so much an actively wicked and evil person as a

cold weight of negativity that paralyzes the normal family relationships."¹ She constantly forces her passivity upon others. Because of this passivity Mrs. Compson is not only an innocent but also the "personification of death itself."² Mr. Compson is passive, too. When Benjy, the youngest Compson, is born, he is completely passive, intellectually and physically. Their "passiveness" achieves "complete sterility."³

Mrs. Compson's remarks reveal her Puritan view of innocence as moral purity and virtue. Like Jason, she concerns herself more with appearances than moral integrity. The values she upholds are best revealed in the kind of man Jason becomes: he is the only child who turns out as she wants. She does not necessarily believe that virtue depends upon action. Mr. Compson, in an attempt to direct his son, describes her situation aptly:

You are confusing sin and morality. Women dont do that your Mother is thinking of morality whether it be sin or not has not occured to her. (p. 121)

Neither does Mrs. Compson understand her relationship with

¹Brooks, William Faulkner, p. 334.

²Bowling, op.cit., p. 478.

³Ibid., pp. 480-81.

God. When Quentin runs away she says: "It's in the blood. Like uncle, like niece. Or mother. I dont know which would be worse. I dont seem to care ---- I dont know. What reason did Quentin have? Under god's heaven what reason did he have? It cant be simply to flout and hurt me. Whoever god is. He would not permit that. I'm a lady." (p. 315) When she realizes that Quentin has eloped, she asks Dilsey to hand her the Bible she has dropped on the ground. It stays on the bed untouched. It is clear that Mrs. Compson knows nothing about either sin or salvation. On Easter Sunday, instead of attending church, she nurses her sickness.

Mrs. Compson regards her children as a punishment for her sins. Only once does she define her "sin":

I thought Benjamin was punishment enough for any sins I have committed I thought he was my punishment for putting aside my pride and marrying a man who held himself above me --- I loved him ---- because of --- my duty. (p. 122)

Mrs. Compson pretends that humility, a Christian virtue, is her only sin. Her real crime, of course, is pride which she considers a virtue. Mrs. Compson's attempt to discover something important about herself and about her

family "misses the point because she makes the observation not in a positive search for the truth, but in a negative attempt to justify her self-pity."⁴ Mrs. Compson's sickness and the "camphor handkerchief" held to her mouth are in a way identical with Quentin's escape into death, Caddy's promiscuity, and Mr. Compson's whisky. They are all mechanisms of escape, an evasion of responsibility to the suffering world around them. Typical of Mrs. Compson's escape from responsibility and suffering is the attitude she takes after Caddy loses her virginity.

Jason you must let me go away I cannot
stand it let me have Jason and you keep
the others they're not my flesh and
blood like he is strangers nothing of
mine and I am afraid of them I can take
Jason and go where we are not - known
I'll go down on my knees and pray for the
absolution of my sins that he may escape
this curse try to forget that the others
ever were. (p. 123)

Mrs. Compson does not choose to confront the hard choice, nor does she through a process of initiation discover the nature of reality or acquire a knowledge of basic human principles. In her willful escape: "I dont even

⁴Ibid., p. 481.

want to know about it," Mrs. Compson cannot achieve salvation since redemption for Faulkner implies a return into the community. She shuts herself up and is ignorant of what goes on in town, much less her own house. She does not realize that her own beloved son has robbed her of the thousand dollars she has invested in Earl's business. She does not know that her granddaughter runs away from school and is emulating her mother. Mrs. Compson's "innocence" is wicked because it consists of escaping from reality.

CHAPTER VII

DILSEY: "THEY ENDURED"

Dilsey is the only important character who loses her innocence; she follows a course of positive action. Like the other Compsons, Dilsey is doomed. Her black skin is one aspect of her doom and the loveless situation of the Compson family is another. Being a Negro, however, does not stand as an obstacle to her goodness, and living among the Compsons does not prevent her from loving.¹

Dilsey serves people unselfishly and she becomes a mother to the Compson children. Mr. Compson brings the Quentin baby home and Dilsey says: "I raised all of them and I reckon I can raise one more." (p.51) Mrs. Compson considers Benjy as a judgment upon her; Dilsey loves him and recognizes his humanity. On Easter Sunday, Benjy hardly stops bellowing, Dilsey

led Ben to bed and drew him down beside her and she held him, rocking back and forth, wiping his drooling mouth upon the hem of her skirt. "Hush, now," she said, stroking his head, "Hush, Dilsey got you." (p. 332)

¹Bowling, op.cit., p. 481.

Dilsey recognizes love as a human bond. This shows her respect for the human. It is, therefore, possible for her to lose her innocence and to be redeemed by love. She is "capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance." As such Dilsey's reaction to her suffering is the reaction of man at his best.² She carries her burden responsibly and stands up to "the sound and fury" of life courageously and with endurance.

Faulkner's description of Dilsey on April 8, 1928 (Easter Sunday) sheds light on her character. She has once been a big woman, but now

Her skeleton rose, draped loosely in unpad-
ded skin that tightened again upon a paunch
almost dropsical, as though muscle and tissue
had been courage or fortitude which the days
or the years had consumed until only the
indomitable skeleton was left rising like a
ruin or a landmark above the somnolent and
impervious guts, and above that the collapsed
face that gave the impression of the bones
themselves being outside the flesh, lifted
into the driving day with an expression at
once fatalistic and of a child's astonished
disappointment, until she turned and entered
the house again and closed the door. (p.282)

The "skeleton" and "guts" are enough to serve the Compsons for five more years. On Easter Sunday, while Mrs. Compson

²Mueller, op.cit., p. 112.

bothers Dilsey, she carries stovewood to the kitchen, lights the fire, fills Mr. Compson's hot water bottle and prepares breakfast. She finds time, too, to take Benjy and her family to church. There she affirms the love and faith she has shown. It is Dilsey's presence which prevents the Compsons from sinking into utmost corruption.

Dilsey does not only grieve and suffer but she also bears the griefs of others. Because she is not innocent, she faces the fact that men learn the deepest truths about themselves and about reality only through suffering. Her suffering requires some measure of assent. When Jason threatens to whip Quentin with his belt, Dilsey's response is typical of her entire relationship to the Compsons: "Hit me, den," she says, "ef nothing else but hittin somebody wont do you. Hit me." (p.203) It is Dilsey who assumes the Compson's responsibility. Ironically enough, Mrs. Compson addresses her:

You're not the one who has to bear it ---
it's not your responsibility. You can
go away. You dont have to bear the brunt
of it day in and day out. You owe nothing
to them --- (288)

All the Compsons, except Benjy, evade their rightful responsibility and each fails in his own way. Dilsey, on the other hand, accepts her responsibility and her

burden. She does the best she can within her own limits, "I does de bes I kin: Lawd knows dat," (p. 332) and is capable of losing her innocence. She holds the family together not for the hope of reward but because it is the decent and proper thing to do. Like the Compsons, Dilsey suffers, but unlike them, she achieves affirmation and truth.³ She loses her innocence.

Moreover, Dilsey is charitable and has a good sense. Frony tells her that taking Benjy to church with her makes people talk. Dilsey answers:

What folks? --- And I knows whut kind of folks, --- Trash white folks. Dat's who it is. Thinks he aint good enough for white church, but nigger church aint good enough for him (p.306)

Frony insists that people still talk and Dilsey tells her:

Den you send um to me, --- Tell um de good Lawd dont ker whether he smart er not. Dont nobody but white trash keer dat. (p.306)

All of this, says Brooks, "amounts to sound manners and to sound theology as well."⁴ Dilsey is a religious person

³Bowling, op.cit., p. 482.

⁴(Bowling, op.cit., p. 482.)

Brooks, William Faulkner, p. 342.

and she views the world in Christian terms. Her theology is simple and limited. But her religious beliefs support her in cases where affairs need to be interpreted or when events go wrong for her. To the Compson's Benjy's change of his name from Maury to Benjamin is a suitable change. Dilsey and Roskus believe it interferes with baptism. Dilsey in losing her innocence believes in Original Sin. Man is essentially evil and he achieves his goodness through his discipline and grace. She accepts her own family the way ^{it is} they are as well as the faults and weaknesses of the Compsons. She does not question the dark color of her skin, nor her place as a servant and cook at the Compson's. It is in her genuine acceptance of life as it is that Dilsey loses her innocence, and proves to be a "sustaining force."⁵ This is important since the Compsons appear to have no idea of their dependence. It is toward the close of the novel that Jason realizes it. Her humanitarianism makes her stand above the Compsons to whom she is a servant. Nevertheless, she is not the innocent servant, but the kind of servant from whom Jason insists that he has freed the Compsons.

"Her life of its round of daily tasks and responsibilities," Brooks comments, "is related to the larger life of

⁵Ibid., p. 342.

eternity and eternal values."⁶ Dilsey interprets her backward and defective clock correctly. It strikes five times and she declares it is eight o'clock. She makes sense of the clock which in effect means making sense of past, present and future - aspects of eternity. "Dilsey, in her simple religious faith believes in an order that is grounded in eternity."⁷ She has the necessary strength to live with and beyond herself in time. She accepts the Christian principle that time has moral significance and thereby proves herself not innocent.

Dilsey is not always lenient with her children nor does she always treat the Compsons kindly. She rebukes Mrs. Compson when the latter shouts at her from the top of the stairs to get her the hot-water bottle with: "I dont see how you expect anybody to sleep, wid you standin in de hall, holl'in at folks from de crack of dawn;" (p. 287) Dilsey refuses Mrs. Compson's hypocritical offer to fix breakfast: "En who gwine eat yo messin." (p. 287) In Dilsey the life of the instincts and emotions, the ideal values and rationality are related meaningfully to one another to

⁶Brooks, The Hidden God, p. 42.

⁷Brooks, William Faulkner, p. 328.

make her the uninnocent person she is. She does not strain, like the other Compsons, to make a certain desire or dream meaningful. Her whole world is solid and meaningful. It is filled with pain and difficulties but she does not destroy herself. As a negro she remains close to a world of values and, therefore, is "less perverted by abstraction and more honest in recognizing what is essential and important."⁸ She responds to individuals and to life genuinely. In fact, she is the only one who is capable of dealing with life and the only one who is not an innocent. She is, as expressed by Brooks,

not a primitive figure who through some mystique of race or healthiness of natural impulse is good. Dilsey is unsophisticated and warm-hearted, but she is no noble savage --- Hers is no mere goodness by and of nature, if one means by this a goodness that justifies a faith in man as man. Dilsey does not believe in man, she believes in God.⁹

Dilsey fulfills Faulkner's notion of Christianity as a "code of behaviour by means of which [a man] makes himself a better human being than his nature wants to be, if he follows his nature only." She achieves her goodness and loss of innocence by effort, discipline and grace.

⁸ Brooks, The Hidden God, p. 42.

⁹ Ibid., p. 43.

Dilsey's life becomes a process of initiation, where she confronts the hard choice, subjects herself to moral choices, accepts her guilt and live up to the best of her potentialities and capacity. She redeems herself by losing her innocence. Dilsey is all that Faulkner means by: "They endured." She embodies his faith in man as expressed in his Nobel Prize Speech:

--- I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance. [of losing its innocence.]

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

Innocence, as has been demonstrated in this study, is lost in the acquisition of good and moral knowledge. It is a condition which man must strive to rise above it. Action is a way to salvation out of this "negative virtue." Through it man is initiated into the real world. He faces evil and makes moral choices. He learns through suffering the truth about himself and about others, and achieves his goodness by effort and discipline. The community is his norm of judgement. In losing his innocence, man learns to come to terms with reality and with time accepting past, present and future as elements of eternity, and the Christian notion that time has moral significance. Most of all, man is redeemed by love and recognizes it as the highest truth in human experience. Belief and understanding help man to endure and to prevail.

Dilsey is the only person in The Sound and the Fury who loses her innocence and her humanity is her source of strength. She responds to individuals and to life, and

accepts the pleasures as well as the pains of her existence. She demonstrates that in the heart and not in the mind lies the salvation of mankind. Unlike the other members of the Compson family, Dilsey **accepts** her guilt and does the best she can within her own limitations. She does not question her fate nor her situation in life but accepts it the way it is. This course of action is open to the Compsons, but each resolves on escaping it. Quentin flees from it by committing suicide. Caddy follows a negative course of action where sex becomes the solution to her guilt, and Jason seeks his doom by a "sane rationalism." Mr. Compson escapes the real world and his suffering by a decanter of whisky, and Mrs. Compson by a camphor handkerchief which she uses to nurse her ever-ailing headaches shut up in her room from her family and the rest of the world.

There is no doubt that all the Compsons suffer, Benjy through his senses, Quentin by realizing his weakness and his inability to hold together the Southern code of honor, Jason by all his failures and Caddy by the sense of guilt that her family foster in her. But what does their suffering amount to? They do not achieve the truth

and affirmation that Dilsey does, nor do they come out triumphant of the loveless situation that they are thrust into. Dilsey provides them with all the love their mother deprives them of, and she alone stands up to "the sound and fury" of life courageously and with endurance. She alone can make sense of time and she does not escape into a past where the present and future are obliterated as Quentin does or alienates herself from the past as Jason demonstrates. Past, present and future rather unite together to make Dilsey's life a meaningful one, and her world of values (is) not an abstract one. It is by striving to make herself a better human being than her nature wants to be, that Dilsey is redeemed and loses her innocence.

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