

Faulkner's Portrayal of a Decaying Southern Belle in *The Sound and the Fury*

تجسيد صورة حسناء الجنوب و تصوير انحطاطها للأديب الأمريكي ويليام فولكنر
في رواية الصوت و الغضب

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Abstract:

The present research paper seeks to shed light on one of the pertinent Southern issues rendered by the colourful Southern American writer William Faulkner. In his influential work *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner crystallizes for his readers a decaying state of a typical type of female characters, widely known as the Southern belle. The latter features tremendously as a recurrent character in Faulkner's body of fiction, more particularly in this novel. The Southern belle just like the American South; which was painfully and slowly moving on into a new changing South, could no longer resist change. Pride, modesty, beauty, strength and devotedness were the famous attributes of any Southern belle, yet confronted with an endless array of new challenges, expectations and loss of moral conducts, the Southern belle lost her innocence and the essential features that used to define her as a Southern woman. To explore this matter, this study will attempt to examine Faulkner's heroines: Mrs. Compson and Caddy Compson who appear to be a good case in point whereby they are painted by Faulkner as decaying Southern Belles.

Key Words : William Faulkner -Southern Belle -The Sound and the Fury – Decay – Loss of values

ملخص:

نحاول في بحثنا هذا الموسوم ب: تجسيد صورة حسناء الجنوب و تصوير انحطاطها و ذلها للأديب الأمريكي ويليام فولكنر في رواية الصوت و الغضب؛ تسليط الضوء على واحدة من بطلات فولكنر التي يعالج فيها قضية سادت في جنوب أمريكا خلال القرن 20 و يصور من خلالها تغير نمط الحياة و انعكاس عادات مستجلبة مستوردة حيث يراها غريبة عن مجتمعه . و تعتبر حسناء الجنوب هاجسا يراود السارد ويتخذها لازمة يكررها في الرواية . ومن هنا تتضح وجهة نظر أديب مخضرم في استعباد المرأة و كيف أصبحت خاضعة طيعة و يقارنها بمثيالتها من أجيالها السابقة ليعرج على تجسيد الظلم السائد آنذاك، فغدا واحدا من هالمهم صورة حسناء الجنوب . أحسن فولكنر ووفق في إظهار النقلة السلبية لمجتمع جنوب أمريكا و بالتحديد نساءه اللواتي جرفهن تيار الحضارة. و بذلك انحارت قيمهن من ضفة الفضائل إلى حافة الرذائل و اللتين شخصهما في أم و ابنتها هذه الأم التي تخلت عن وظيفتها للتحويل إلى هادمة للمجتمع مفرقة لقيمه مزعزعة بعاداته مدنسة لشرفه مغيبة ما تربت عليه.

كلمات مفتاحية: ويليام فولكنر ، حسناء الجنوب ، الصوت و الغضب ، انحلال ، فقدان القيم .

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Introduction :

William Faulkner (1897-1962) , the most celebrated American novelist of international fame has always and long been appreciated for his technical virtuosity , philosophical attitude , humanistic approach and moral vision . Indeed , his fiction attracts and fascinates the readers from various countries as he writes about the dilemma , deprivations , complexes , compulsions faith , pity and love of a common man .

Being a descendant of the American South , William Faulkner has been able to notice the great gap the war made between the greatness of the agrarian pre-war American South and the corruption of the same society hereafter . Some of Faulkner's novels render the corruption of the southern womanhood after the destruction of its wealth and way of life during the Civil War . Faulkner populates his novels about the South with old mansions , the inhabitants of which are noble families that fail to live up to their past greatness . Beneath the shadow of the old grandeur , these families attempt to cling to the old southern values and codes that are corrupted and out of place in the reality of the modern world . The families in Faulkner's fictional world are rife with irresponsible parents , failed sons and disgraced daughters .

Faulkner's indisputable loyalty and deep attachment to his native birthplace – the American South - and his great obsession with the once grand tradition into which he was born permitted Faulkner to paint the decay of the once prominent values that used to be associated with the southern Belle . As a member of the family who regarded themselves as aristocrats Faulkner grew up in an environment where the ethical manners , wealth and social status were of utmost significance . In the same regard , Faulkner could not escape nor resist the tremendous influence of the somewhat proud and mannered attitudes of his family.

The influential Robert Diane asserts in *Faulkner and the Southern Womanhood* (1995) that Faulkner inherited the images , icons and demons of his culture as being a vivid part of his heritage that he seems sometimes to cherish and other times to reject . Indeed , being a native Mississippian born in 1897 and publishing fiction from 1919 to 1962 , Faulkner lived in a period of Southern history which witnessed a maximum of turbulence , he lived between the contending forces of memorialisation and modernisation . No wonder , his fiction explores this tension between the Old South and the New one.

One of the controversial matters that Faulkner brought to the surface was the stereotypical figures of the Southern Belle which provide a useful point of departure for this study on two of Faulkner's female characters : Mrs. Compson and Caddy Compson . The way Faulkner embraces , develops and rejects the figures of the

Southern belle elucidates a jumbled array of aspects of his relationship to the complex issues of race, gender and sexuality in the Southern world.

2. Understanding the Southern Belle

The term Southern belle is derived from the French word *belle* (beautiful). As it is an archetype for an upper class Southern woman. The ideal of the Southern belle came into existence in the 1930s, it was associated with much of positive and magnificent attributes exemplifying a typical southern lady, wife, mother and daughter. A Southern belle was not only distinguished by her beauty but more particularly by a set of virtues, amongst the most noteworthy being honesty, purity, modesty, tenderness, honouring and protecting the family's name and a total devotion to her husband and family. It is of essence to state that a Southern belle reflected an image of a somehow perfect southern woman, whereby weakness is blended with fragility, and by possessing a huge amount of bravery and emotional strength to face the hardships of everyday life. In *The Encyclopaedia of Southern Culture*, Anne Goodwyn Jones illuminates the duties of a Southern belle in her following descriptive words:

Satisfying her husband, raising her children, meeting the demands of her family's social position, and sustaining the ideals of the South. Her strength in manners and morals is contingent. However, upon her submission to the source – God, the patriarchal church and her husband – and upon her staying out of the public life, where she might interfere in their formulation. (Goodwyn 1989, p1527-1528)

As stated formerly, during the early 19th century, southern women were expected to act in a certain manner and exemplify an image that would eventually be named the "Southern belle". Her description exemplifies an image of a highly privileged girl who was expected to grow up into a lady. She was supposed to be fragile and flirtatious while also sexually innocent. She was beautiful but risky to touch. She was also expected to be protected by men, more specifically from their sexual advances and harassment. In addition to this, sexual relationships were strictly forbidden as they were not approved even by society, a Southern belle was meant to be pure and there was no way that she could engage into any love affair.

As a further matter, it is plainly evident that the South into which Faulkner lived and grew up is placed at the centre of his enterprise. As a son of the South and a family who regarded themselves aristocrats, he was raised in an environment where ethical manners and moral conducts were extremely essential and of utmost significance. Faulkner's commitment to the southern aristocracy had an unquestionable effect on the formation of his sentiments of the ideal South. The fundamental concepts that the tradition was founded upon such as pride, purity,

honour , gallantry , bravery , honesty , grace , satisfaction of women , and devotedness to the preservation of the region's integrity were tremendously important for Faulkner . As a result , the deterioration of such concepts and moral conducts after the Civil War had a weighty effect on him as he painted it in his fiction .

In a like manner , during and after the Civil War , Southern women attitudes and expectations changed tremendously . It is worthy of note to state that it is also the time they started to act against their ideal image . Indeed , the pre-eminent features that used to identify them as Southern belles began to fade away , bit by bit and step by step . Faulkner , as a product of his hometown , culture and circumstances , he etched artfully and smartly this mode of thinking and pattern of behaviour in his fiction , more particularly in his novel *The Sound and the Fury* through a successful selection of heroines who crystallize thoroughly what has been said . Correspondingly , in this literary production , the Southern etiquette appears to be attributed to Mrs. Compson and her daughter Caddy in various shapes and forms . As a fruit of Faulkner's thoughtful imagination , each of the heroines possessed a touch of deterioration and decay .

3. Mrs Compson : A Salient Representative of a Decaying Mother

As a mother , Mrs. Compson is a puzzle . There is a temptation for the reader to vacillate about where Mrs. Compson belongs . First and foremost , it is of essence to note that Mrs. Compson's selfishness and negligence contribute enormously to the family degeneration. Her egocentricity withdraws her from children's affairs more particularly at time of urgency . More than this , Mrs. Compson's emotional absence is the genesis for her children's fall. According to Brooks , she is “ the curse upon Quentin and the rest of the Compsons” (Brooks 1953 , 292) Moreover , mothers whether southern or otherwise , are supposed to be a crucial family member . Although every member of a family is important , the mother who nurtures and cares for others is irreplaceable . A southern mother especially is caring for the wants and needs of her family. On the other hand , Weinstein asserts that “ mothers are supposed to be sacred servants.” (Weinstein 2008 , p71)

In Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* , the mother is everything but sacred and caring, a true disgrace for all mothers . She is trapped in her downfall and she ends up by dragging the whole family to it . Weinstein provides a genuine portrayal of Mrs. Compson saying that she is a socially constructed figure Her life can be split up in two periods : the premarital period and the post marital period . In the latter period , she keeps hiding from her failure as a woman , a wife and a mother . Weinstein endorses this point in his following words :

These are the only roles Mrs. Compson can play – premarital coquetry or post maternal grief. Her abandonment of her children emerges here

as saturated in the rituals and assumptions of her own virginal past . Between her childless adolescence and her child-complicated middle age no other viable script has become available to her . (Weinstein 2008 , p63)

Alongside the head of the family , Mrs. Compson is supposed to be a strong pillar upon which the family is established capable of taking care of her children and providing help when necessary . Unfortunately , she is a “ cold , self-involved woman who expands her energies worrying her ailments , complaining about her life , and clinging to her notions of respectability” (Minter 1979 , p 383) Constantly whining and self-pitying , she is not even able to fulfil her role as a mother within the Compson household. She often asks questions such as “ what have I done to have been given children like these” (*The Sound and the Fury* 1995 , p65). It becomes clear that Mrs. Compson is deeply trapped in the family to which she does not belong .

Mrs. Compson deliberately blinds herself to reality by separating herself from her children . Quentin best describes his mother's physical presence as a spiritual absence when he recalls himself as a young child stumbling in darkness to try to see a family photograph . As he studies the photo , he finds in it that “ the dungeon was Mother herself ... and [he and his siblings were] lost somewhere below [Mrs. Compson] without even a ray of light” (*The Sound and the Fury* 1995 , p65) She traps her children , as evidenced in her “ huge bunch of rusted keys” that she carries “ on an iron ring like a medieval jailer's” (*The Sound and the Fury* 1995 , p 175)

Out of all her children , she only cares for her son Jason . According to her Jason is the only one that takes after her side of the family , the Bascombs . She is unable to show any motherly love for any of her children except Jason , who in the end turns out to be the worst of all her other children with a main emphasis on Benjy embody for her the punishment for her past sins. She provides no maternal love for her children , leaving them in the hands of the servants while she spends days in her room suffering from an imaginary illness . It is for this reason , that Caddy is meant to grow up early , playing the mother figure and more importantly providing care and love for the whole family in general and her disabled brother ‘Benjy’ in particular .

Lost in a haze of hypochondria , she constantly retires to bed claiming that she is terribly ill. Her illness is a pretext to escape or reject her responsibilities . This highlights vividly her diseased personality and inability to contact with reality . Moreover , she is unable to grant love , sympathy or warmth for her posterity ; therefore , she is portrayed as a present character yet an absent mother . From the outset , her marriage seems to be a total failure since it was not strongly based on

mutual understanding and love , and so her duty to bring up dependable and honest offspring is neglected .

Correspondingly , Mrs. Compson retreats into self-absorption , just like her husband takes shelter in nihilism and fatalism , she acts as if nothing extraordinary is going around her because she “cannot bear the prospect that her world will no longer behave according to the traditions of leisure and authority she thinks are her due” (Mathews 2015 , p39) And so , she isolates herself in her *ivory tower* so that not to get involved in the familial issues that her family undergoes and considers the tragedy of her family as a direct outcome of the damnation they are all expected to . No wonder , such features prove Mrs. Comspon to be a cold and careless mother . She incapable to fulfil the responsibilities of motherhood , she depends wholeheartedly upon her black servant for the care of her own children along with the order of an entire household .

Even Cleanth Brooks asserts that Mr. Compson is an important factor in the family’s disintegration because he is weak , defeated man , a man who loves his children but who, at the same time , does not know what to do with them , he too puts the real burden of blame upon Mrs. Compson as he renders his view of Mrs. Compson in his following expressive words :

The basic cause of the break up of the Compson family ... is the cold and self-centred mother who is sensitive about the social status of her own family , the Boscombs , who feels the birth of an idiot son as a kind personal affront , who spoils and corrupts her favourite son , and who withholds s any real love and affection from her other children and her husband . Caroline Compson is not so much an actively wicked and evil person as a cold weight of negativity which paralyzes the normal family relationships . (Brooks 1983 , 334)

As highlighted in the quotation , Mrs. Compson deprives her children from any maternal love due to her excessive selfishness and negligence . Instead of showing concern to her children’s needs , she focuses her entire attention on her strong obsession with the family name and pride . Such a preoccupation is strongly pervasive in her endeavour to change the name of her mentally retarded son ‘Benjy’. Because she considers her own blood to be distinguished and in order to be associated with her family’s prestige , she names her youngest child after her brother Maury Bascomb . However , as a result of thefact that boy’s retardation is a handicap for his being an heir for her family , she therefore changes the name of her son from Maury to Benjamin at the age of five .

In a like manner , Sally R. Page not only agrees with Brooks about Mrs. Compson , yet she puts it more strongly that the Compson family is dying because

Mrs. Compson is incapable of loving or caring for her children she is a total failure as a mother. Even though, one person ordinarily cannot or does bring about the disintegration of a family by him or herself, still the failure of a mother to take charge of guiding familial relationships and of teaching family members to communicate functionally has to weigh heavily in the lives of the children.

Mrs. Compson's misconception of herself as a representative of southern gentility drags both herself and her family into a series of losses which cause her family's dissolution. Her lack of self-criticism estranges her from harsh facts of life, consequently, she becomes alienated to everything that goes around her. Mrs. Compson's self-centeredness affects Quentin the most. To illustrate this, Quentin appears as the only son who voices this experience of his absence of mother as he says "If I'd just had a mother so I could say Mother Mother" (*The Sound and the Fury* 1995, p213) In the light of these expressive words, it is obvious that Quentin's lack of maternal love is a consequence of Mrs. Compson's absent presence. Her detached manners causes her to ignore the fact that the suicide of her son Quentin is a direct result of her absence. The following words explore this matter artfully as such:

I don't know what reason did Quentin have? Under God's heaven what reason did he have? It can't be simply to flout and hurt me. Whoever God is, He would not permit that. I'm a lady. You might not believe that from my offspring [Caddy], but I am. (*The Sound and the Fury* 1995, p374)

In the same regard, it is apparent that Mrs. Compson believes that she is under God's special protection. However, what needs to be said is that this misapprehension brings about nothing but the figure of a feeble and an inert woman. Even the tragic death of her son does not seem to make her realize her failure as a mother. To this end, she can do nothing but lament for the losses her family encounters.

By the same token, it is worthy of note that one of Mrs. Compson's sensitive areas lies in her own background and the social position of her family. Above all, she appears to have no life story or no happy memories after she marries Jason Compson and after they consume the marriage. Indeed, "the picture of Mrs. Compson that emerges is of a woman whose life ceased to be narratable after her entry into marriage and its sexual consequences." (Weinstein 2008, p69) It is like everything she believed in as a young girl has gone with the wind and she gives into the dimensional and reputation-obsessed life which serves as a compensation for her lost status as a Bascomb. After she believed her children, she herself begins acting like a child exacting from her children the sustenance she should be offering them, she feels trapped in a life with the Compsons whereby she sees all of her physically

or psychologically deformed children as a curse except for Jason because he is more on a Bascomb side .

As highlighted previously , it can be seen that Mrs. Compson's feelings and emotions are strictly limited to one side of the family , namely the Bascombs ; whereas the Compsons do not seem to deserve her time . Indeed , she only cares for the Bascomb side of which she is very proud . Her brother Maury seems to serve as her way of remaining a Bascomb , of refusing to consummate her entry to the Compsonhood . And that is one of the powerful reasons she clings to Jason so tightly .

There is fictional instance that crystallizes vividly this situation where Caroline Compson asserts “ You [Jason] are my only hope , she [Caroline] says every night I thank God for you ... Thank God if he had to be taken too , it is you left me and not Quentin” (The Sound and the Fury 1995 , p70). Another noteworthy fictional illustration that endorses this point when Mr. Compson makes gentle but pointed fun of her brother Maury Bascomb : “ Maury says he's going to shoot the scoundrel ... I told him not to mention it to Patterson before hand” , and in response to Quentin's query about whom Maury is going to be shoot , Mr. Compson replies with an irrelevant or distracting response , which he hopes will put an end to the discussion : “ No body ... I don't own a pistol” (The Sound and the Fury 1995 , p33) At this point , Mrs. Compson begins to cry and to upbraid Mr. Compson for making fun of her brother in front of the children. In spite of Mr. Compson's assurances that he was joking , Mrs. Compson responds by defending her family's social status “ my people are every bit as well born as yours” (The Sound and the Fury 1995 , p33)

Furthermore , Caroline Compson wishes to return to her past , thereby making her present nothing more than a distortion of her past . Self-absorbed, she is portrayed as more concerned about herself rather than the well being of her children . To illustrate this , when Dilsey (the black servant) returns home from her Easter service , Caroline asks her ‘ did you find [the suicide note] ? (The Sound and the Fury 1995 , p186) She arrogantly declares that her granddaughter should “ at least ... have enough consideration to leave a note [because] even Quentin did that” . (The Sound and the Fury 1995 , 186) Obviously missing the essential problem that people are dead , Mrs. Compson appears here to be more concerned with the formalities of how she perceives one should go about conducting one's suicide .

Caroline's main problem seems to be the binary environment in which she was brought up where she was taught that “ there is no halfway ground that a woman is either a lady or not” (Weinstein 2008 , p 69) That kind of nurture completely damages her notion of purity . After her virginity is taken , she feels like she has lost herself together with it . As she perceives sex as a vile and degrading act of violation of a woman's dignity and sexual purity . This can justify the reason why she acts so dramatically when Caddy kisses a boy and even worse , when she loses her virginity .

Remaining a virgin is important to Mrs. Compson because it suggests to her that she remains in the past and has never become anything than a Bascomb .

Accordingly , Mrs. Compson silences the name of her only daughter , the one who reminds Caroline Compson of the child bearing path she took , but would like to forget . Mrs. Compson tells her husband and Dilsey that baby Quentin “ must never know. She must never learn [Caddy's] name ... I forbid you ever to speak that name in [Quentin's] hearing. If [Quentin] could grow up never to know that she had a mother , I would thank God (The Sound and the Fury 1995 , p125) In negating Quentin's mother , Caroline suppresses her past and frees herself from being a mother and a grandmother .

Metaphorically , Mrs. Compson is dead to her children . They notice on several occasions that “ mother's sick again” (The Sound and the Fury 1995 , p 146) Throughout the novel , the individual described as ‘sick’ is dead figuratively or literally . By way of illustration , on the night of their grandmother's death , Caddy says “Damuddy was sick” (The Sound and the Fury 1995 , p 17) Again , when Benjy divines that his father has died he thinks “ Father was sick there” (The Sound and the Fury 1995 , p 22) To this end , it can be argued that the Compson children are forced to look elsewhere to find a surrogate mother .

The above stated brief analysis illuminates that Mrs. Compson is an epitome of a decaying southern woman and mother . As she becomes the victim of the social roles and the environment in which she was brought up . Weinstein gives a comprehensive rendition of Mrs. Compson's downfall as a mother and also of mothers in Faulkner's fiction in general : “Selfless , unwavering care and concern : this is exactly what these mothers lack . It is also what they are posited by the culture as supposed to possess , and what they are excoriated for not possessing” (Weinstein 2008 , p 70) In addition to this , Weinstein argues that Caroline Compson is :

deformed by her social training –training shaped by class and race to the requirements of virginity – abandons her own flesh and blood upon the loss of that virginity . She has outlived her image of herself . Simultaneously rushing forward to death and backward to childhood , she repeats herself and takes to black . (Weinstein 2008 , p71)

4. Caddy : A vivid Epitome of a Fallen Southern Belle

Caddy Compson was one of Faulkner's favourite characters . In speaking of her with an intensely passionate devotion , he asserted : “ to me she was the beautiful one , she was my heart's darling. That's what I wrote the book about ... to try to tell , try to draw the picture of Caddy” (Gwyn & Blotner 1995 , p 06) According to Faulkner , she is not only crucial, but also beautiful and eye catching. Caddy Compson , a child at the beginning of the novel and an absent mother at the

end , serves as a mother figure especially for Benjy . She is portrayed as the central character of the novel even though she never tells her story , yet it is told from everybody else's perspective. To this end , the reader cannot have a clear-cut image what kind of a character she is . Her life and her actions form a skeleton around which the lives of everybody else resolve .

The Compson brothers turn to their sister , Caddy , to fill the mother role vacated by Mrs Compson . Although it is Caddy to whom they long to return , she herself is without definition . In a novel concerned with a search for identity and the hunt for wholeness , it is worthy of note that the main character is indefinable . Above all , Caddy is Faulkner's heart's darling , the one whose story he wrote five separate times trying to rid [him]self of the dream which would continue to anguish [him] until [he]did. ” He used the tools which seemed , according him , the proper tools to voice Caddy's reality by painting a vivid image of her. The tools Faulkner utilized and he deepened upon ; however , were words , which can never fully match the dream of the writer's imagination .

Caddy's voice is never directly heard in the novel . We hear her voice as it is recalled by others ; what we do not get is Caddy telling her own version of what is happening . She is simultaneously meaningful and meaningless , present and absent , alive and dead , child and mother , language and silence , is and was . The unifying force of the novel is Caddy's perceived sin , which the ‘muddy bottom of her drawers’ symbolizes ; the sin is the initial loss that each brother struggles to understand and interpret .

Thoughtful insights are pervasive in Faulkner's introduction to *The Sound and the Fury* where he crystallizes the loss upon which the novel is based . In discussing his initial ideas for the text , he writes : “ I who had never had a sister and was fated to lose my daughter in infancy , set out to make myself a beautiful and tragic little girl” (Faulkner's Introduction to the Sound and the Fury , 33) . In the same respect , Faulkner creates a body of fiction to compensate for his loss opportunity to have a sister . Since he never had a sister , Caddy remains outside of his reach and he creates what he perceives a sister is . Following the same pattern , Caddy is not an individual character , but a projection of other characters ' interpretations . In this regard , she is similar to her daughter Miss Quentin who declares that “ whatever I do it's [Jason's] fault ... if I'm bad , it's because I had to be , [Jason] made me” (The Sound and the Fury 1995 , p 162) To this end , it is obvious that Miss Quentin negates her individuality by making herself a pawn of Jason .

Furthermore , just like *The Sound and the Fury* requires the reader to learn how to read again , it challenges the traditional understanding of how a reader knows a character . The novel is Faulkner's attempt to know Caddy and so he offers a jumbled array of perspectives from which to see and analyze her . In essence , throughout the novel , the reader meets three different Caddy's : Benjy's , Quentin's

and Jason's . A genuine way to point up this idea is to examine *The Return of the Repressed* by Doreen Fowler ; whereby he reproduces a segment of an early draft of Faulkner's original introduction , Faulkner affirms that :

I could be in it , the brother and the father both . But one brother could not contain all that I could feel toward [Caddy] . I gave her three : Quentin who loved her as a lover would , Jason who loved her with the same hatred of jealous and outraged of a father , and Benjy who loved her with the complete mindlessness of a child . (Doreen 1997 , p 35)

Caddy means something different to Faulkner and each Compson . Faulkner searched for Caddy through writing *The Sound and the Fury* . In describing the emotion he felt while composing the novel , Faulkner states that it was an emotion definite and physical and yet nebulous to describe that ecstasy , that eager and joyous faith and anticipation of surprise which he yet unmarred sheet beneath my hand held inviolate and unfailing , waiting for release . Caddy is herself nebulous to describe and the reader remains waiting for her release , but never sees her . As the reader attempts to make sense of Caddy , he/she figures out that Caddy is portrayed through sensory language . Benjy feels Caddy's warmth through fire . While Quentin sees Caddy in water . Benjy finds her in the bright flickering flames of the Compson fireplace . The flames calm Benjy and allow him to relive some peaceful moments with Caddy.

Throughout the novel , Caddy as a young girl is portrayed as happy , playful and enjoys spending carefree days with her brothers . However , she does not appear to enjoy her childhood for a long time in the sense that she is the only girl in the Compson household . Since Mrs. Compson is a present absent mother who is never there to take proper care of her children , Caddy has to take over this role . David Minter endorses this point vividly , he asserts : “ Like Benjy , Quentin and Jason also turn towards Caddy , seeking to find in her some way of meeting needs ignored or thwarted by their parents” (Minter 1979 , p 383)

By the same token , the fact that Caddy has to grow up faster and as she never experiences a great deal of love inside her family make her eager to find love elsewhere . Because of her headstrong nature , she starts having little love affairs very soon which lead to her loss of virginity as she becomes a promiscuous woman . Her little sexual games are a real frustration to her family and others and make their lives difficult . Quentin and Benjy are terribly affected by her loss of virginity , it can be said that it was the life changing experience for them , more than it was for Caddy . As a result , Caddy is repudiated both by her husband and her mother because of her illegitimate child . John Mathews gives a comprehensive description of Caddy's situations as follows :

Caddy does refuse to obey the dictates of her community . She rejects the patriarchy's insistence on virginity as a condition for proper marriage ability. She follows her own desires , decides against fulfilling the role of mother [by abandoning her daughter] and flaunts her ability to make money independently . (Mathews 2015 , p 92)

In *The Sound and the Fury* , Caddy Compson as the only female descendent of a declined aristocratic family is quite burdened with the myth of the southern lady . Caddy embodies some typical qualities of a southern belle in the sense that she is tender , soft and caring , especially for her brothers for whom she symbolizes the mother figure they always lacked . Regrettably , she fails in trying to break free from the conventions and social conducts imposed by the southern society and her family , with a main emphasis on her mother . Indeed , contrary to Mrs. Compson's example of the traditional and aristocrat woman , her daughter Caddy is a total deviation from the established and idealized southern female roles .

In a similar vein , Caddy's defiance in accepting the conventional norms of the southern society upsets all the family members . There are many fictional instances that exemplify her extramarital relationships . By way of illustration , her mother's reaction to her kissing a boy described by Jason :

like that time when she [mother] happened to see one of them kissing Caddy and all next day she went around the house in a black dress and veil and even Father couldn't get her to say a word except crying and saying how her little daughter was dead. (*The Sound and the Fury* 1995 , 9 195)

As stated formerly , in the American South , and according to the Compsons who are of a well-born decent , “ female ‘ honour’ , that is chastity is a ‘verifier of family status’ , Caddy is an emblem to their status and an economic asset” (Diane 1994 , p 112) All of this is called into question when Caddy engages in promiscuous sexual Caddy becomes nothing but a fallen woman who is not allowed to visit her parental home and the very mention of her name is strictly forbidden . As she is not allowed neither to see nor to raise her daughter .

Correspondingly , Faulkner's portrayal of Caddy's deviation and promiscuity is a genuine indication of his realization of the radical changes that the southern aristocracy is going through . Caddy's outlook to a new way of life is not only a source of distress for the family , yet also a courageous act to challenge the clash of values of the past and the present. Faulkner explores this matter through a scene

where Caddy climbs a tree . The four Compson children are not allowed to be present in the funeral parlour of their grandmother Damuddy because of their age . Faulkner light up his feelings about this scene thusly

They were three boys one was a girl and 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 ... and it took the rest of the four hundred pages [of *The Sound and the Fury*] to explain why she was brave enough to climb the tree to look in the windows. (*The Sound and the Fury* 1995 ,p 218)

Furthermore , despite Caddy's displacement in Compson household , she is still powerfully present in the centre of the novel . She plays an outsized role and occupies an exceptional place in the lives of the family members . By way of illustration , she compensates for the maternal love which Mrs. Compson withholds from Benjy , she ironically becomes Quentin's obsession with purity , and she is the object of hatred for Jason because of her divorce from Herbert Head . Nevertheless , her climbing the pear tree can also be regarded as her climbing out can also be considered as her climbing her brothers ' lives ; thus her becoming the absent centre of the novel . The incidents prior to her peeping at the funeral parlour are of measurable significance in terms of what kind of a person she is to become in the future . On the day of the funeral , the Compson children play in the branch near their house . Benjy's memories about the branch scene foreshadow Caddy's absence in the lives of her brothers :

I hushed and got in the water and Roskus
came and said to come to supper and Caddy said ,
It's not supper time yet . I'm not going
She was wet . We were playing in the branch and
Caddy squatted down and got her dress wet and Versh
said ,
“ Your mommer going to whip you for getting your
dress wet . ”
“ She's not going to do any such thing . ” Caddy said .
“ How do you know . ” Quentin said . (19)
...
“ I'll take it off . ” she said . “ Then it'll dry . ”
“ I bet you wont . ” Quentin said .
“ I bet I will . ” Caddy said .
“ I bet you better not . ” Quentin said . (20)
...
“ You just take your dress off . ” Quentin said .

Caddy took her dress off and threw it on the bank .
Then she didn't have on anything but her bodice and
drawers , and Quentin slapped her and she slipped and
fell down in the water . When she got up she began to
splash water on Quentin , and Quentin splashed water
on Caddy . (20 , 21)

...

“ Now I guess you're satisfied .” Quentin said .

“ We'll both get whipped now .”

“ I don't care .” Caddy said .

“ Yes you will .” Quentin said .

“ I'll run away and never come back .” Caddy said .

I began to cry ... Caddy was all wet and muddy behind ,
and I started to cry ... (21)

The relationship between Caddy and Quentin can be regarded as hinting at the line of Caddy's digression from the established norms of morality , and her eventual disappearance from the lives of her brothers . Her undressing is too feminine for a seven-year-old girl , and her muddying the drawers she is wearing , in this respect , symbolizes her future promiscuity . Furthermore , the tension between Caddy and Quentin becomes stronger as the years pass by . As an oversensitive young man , Quentin can never manage to acknowledge the life style she adopts . In relation to Caddy's lack of chastity , he constantly blames himself for his inability to protect the honor of his family . Eventually , the harshness of the facts about his sister drives Quentin to suicide .

Despite her disrespectful state as a woman , Caddy's self-determination in playing the mother figure to her brothers can be considered as a strong influence in maintaining the wholeness of the family . Mr. Compson tells the children to be quiet after they return home from church . Caddy asks the reason for this , and immediately says , “ Let them mind me tonight , Father .” (The Sound and the Fury 1995 , p 28) . However , the children hear mother crying upstairs , in the funeral parlour . Aware of the fact that Damuddy is sick , the three boys think that something bad has happened to her . In the meanwhile , Caddy is trying to reassure her brothers by telling them that there is a party going on upstairs , and the voice they heard was of someone who was singing , apart from the funeral scene , Caddy's compensation for the absence of Mrs . Compson is especially significant in her relation to Benjy . John T . Matthews comments upon this situation as follows :

Three years older than her mentally retarded youngest brother , Candace Compson has taken on the role of nursemaid and protector for Benjy through their childhood . Benjy is unequipped to deal with

any but the simplest events in his life , so Caddy helps him dress , explains his surroundings to him ... ; tries to interpret his garbled speech ... ; and even soothes Benjy at night by sleeping in his bed ... (Mathews 2015 , p38)

The above quotation proves to be a thoughtful testimonial of Caddy's willingness to play the mother figure and her readiness to have her brothers under control are attempts of preserving the unity within the household . Nevertheless , such efforts prove to be worthless as her humiliation plays a crucial role in the disintegration and degeneration of her family .

From her childhood on , it is clear that Caddy's attitude which challenges the propriety of Southern aristocracy features her deviation from the established moral conducts . Despite the doubtfulness of the morality of her life style , Caddy stands as the only Compson who manages to get away from the tragic exhaustion of her family . However , her effect upon the disintegration of her family can be handled in terms of both the disgrace she brings upon the household and her absent presence in the lives of her brothers . The fact that she abandons her brothers as a dishonoured woman results in their feebleness to hold their lives and their drift into an endless experience of tragedy . Indeed , her success in keeping herself away from the misfortune of her family proves to have no effect upon the maintenance of the household's integrity .

In the final analysis , it can be argued that Caddy is a victim of the imposition of the rules of patriarchal southern society and her family alike . She appears to be a loser in her rebellion against male convention . At long last , she is a fallen belle and a fallen lady of the South who tried to express her feminine personality in a male dominated South . The patriarchal southern society and its idolizing the perfect southern belle did much damage to such women who could not meet all the expectations and failed to act out their role as a perfect belle .

Caddy represents the new southern woman , the kind of woman who is independent and can take care of herself even though at times it can be really difficult and challenging .She is not afraid of men and she does not allow them to have control over her life . To quote Malin's words : " Caddy establishes her independence and achieves freedom" (Malin 1972 , p 385) Furthermore, she uses her sexy looks and shrewdness to control men and make them do as she pleases . Her loss of virginity presents the downfall of the old and traditional mores and beliefs , and the rise of new more modern challenging views and conducts .

Each narrative within *The Sound and the Fury* is another attempt to know Caddy , but she manages to elude Faulkner , her brothers , and the reader . She represents a time to which we cannot return , an irrevocable loss. Wearing different masks and filling various roles , Caddy can never be fully understood . Ironically ,

she falls into experience through the silence of others . There would have been no need for her to climb the pear tree had her parents told her about Damuddy's wake . Through silence ; however , she manages to leave her mark and acts as the cohesive force in the novel .

5. CONCLUSION

In the final analysis , it can be argued that Southern women possessed the characteristics of much of what the South is known for. They were supposed to be Southern belles, who were pure and untouchable until they were married. They were honourable - or at least supposed to be -in the sense that they were faithful to their husbands, who in return would defend their honour if it was ever challenged. With the decline of the Southern morality , the reader comes to terms with the insignificance and futility of associating the attributes of purity and virginity to Southern women .

Out of the three heroines from *The Sound and the Fury* only Mrs. Compson and Caddy can compete to find themselves among the Southern belles . the former is ready to do everything to remain a true Southern ideal . Her understanding of the concept of the Southern belle is quite limited . Mrs. Compson failed as a wife and a mother. Her feelings are strictly limited to one side of her family , namely the Bascombs . More than this , she shows no love for her children . A true lady embodied the ideals of the South, and was thus hospitable and graceful , Mrs. Compson is far from an image of a Southern belle . Caddy , on the other hand , exemplifies to a high degree a decaying Southern belle as well through her actions . Even though , she is painted as a strong , caring and tender daughter and a wonderful sister , yet she fails considerably by becoming a promiscuous girl , the thing that neither society nor her family can accept .

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