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Faulkner's Mothers: The Relationship of Fact to Fiction

In The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying

By

Spring P. Zuidema

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Arts in English at Longwood University, Farmville, Virginia, December, 2002

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Introduction

The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying are two of William Faulkner's most renowned works. Faulkner himself felt an appreciation for these two novels that he did not especially feel for his other pieces. Writing both of these novels at a time of personal struggle gives Faulkner the sensitivity and ability to create the tragic stories of the Compson and Bundren families. It is easy to see that the origin of these fictional dysfunctional households comes from Faulkner's own memories. The family dynamic evident in The Sound and the Fury is somewhat similar to that in which Faulkner developed. The portrayal of women in both The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying is related to Faulkner's own attitudes. Although Faulkner's own mother was especially protective and partial to him, she was also controlling and domineering. In these novels William Faulkner created matriarchal homes with heartless, apathetic women at the helm. The fictional Compson and Bundren families both live in homes essentially void of a loving, caring mother.

The lack of a compassionate mother creates several types of problems for the Compsons and Bundrens. Problems exist between the two sets of parents; in both novels the mother resents her husband and is bitter toward him and at times toward their children. Marital problems create tension between both the mother and the children and the father and children. The children's relationships with each other are also strained. In The Sound and the Fury the daughter, Caddy, attempts to fill the void left by her mother, but in As I Lay Dying Dewey Dell, the only daughter, is far too concerned with her own problems to support her brothers. Each of these situations breeds trouble among the children.

Investigating William Faulkner's background and comparing his life and experiences to that of the characters in The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying, reveals that there is not only a connection between the two novels, but a connection that ties Faulkner to these works on a more personal level. Exploring the various relationships between the mothers, fathers, and children of these books is an interesting way to delve into William Faulkner's personal thoughts and fears established early in his childhood. By focusing on his mother along with the mothers in these two novels, one can fully explore the significance of the link between William Faulkner's life and the characters and conflicts he developed in The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying.

William Faulkner: An Artistic Mother's Dream, a Working Father's Nightmare

William Faulkner's novels The Sound and the Fury (1929) and As I Lay Dying (1930) focus on turmoil created by the Compson and Bundren family members themselves. The characters in these books need no help from outsiders in shaping their bad luck and even their own destruction, and it was Faulkner's own family's volatility that gave him insight into the dysfunctional family matters portrayed in these novels.

William Faulkner, the firstborn son of Murry and Maud Faulkner, namesake to his great-grandfather William Clark, was destined to disappoint his parents from the beginning. Stories of William Clark Faulkner's exploits and accomplishments were passed down from generation to generation and practically committed to memory. But young William did not grow up to be a famous war hero, big, brave, and strong; he matured into a small, quiet, seemingly lazy young man who couldn't hold a job. William later changed his name by adding the extra "u" thus rejecting his father's surname and in a sense his father, the person most disillusioned with William. A man who felt inadequate himself, Murry Faulkner could not appreciate William's artistic abilities, and as David Minter writes in his biography William Faulkner: His Life and Work, "to the end of his life . . . also denied reading anything his son wrote" (16). Because of his own feelings of failure brought on by the overwhelming strength and condemnation of his wife and the lack of respect given to him by his father, Murry did not feel comfortable fostering a close relationship with his family. William's father spent a lot of time on outdoor excursions and drinking whiskey.

Murry Faulkner's drinking problem was a major source of contention between him

and his wife. Maud Falkner was a pious woman who hated her husband's drinking. While the intoxicated father would become argumentative and violent, the mother of the Falkner household would become more and more contemptuous. Maud Falkner was not one to take abuse without retaliation; when her husband would drink himself into a stupor, Maud would use his behavior as an opportunity for retribution. Stephen Oates describes Mrs. Falkner's vengeance in his biography William Faulkner: The Man and the Artist: "she [Maud] would see to it that he [Murry] got to a hospital near Memphis for 'the cure.' She would follow on the train with Billy and his brothers, and together they would wait for the father to emerge, debilitated but sober and chastened. Then, with an air of righteous superiority, Maud, with Billy and his brothers, would take her husband home on the train" (11). This type of humiliation inflicted by his own wife caused Murry Falkner to become more and more distant from his family.

Maud Falkner wanted William to choose between his parents. She felt that she, and only she, deserved William's love and loyalty. While Maud was at home pushing for a choice, a pledge of allegiance, from William, his father continued to look down upon him and treat him with ridicule. Oates writes, "Billy himself, who was small and smart like his mother, seemed to be a target for his father's resentments. Even neighborhood boys noticed how much harder he [Murry] was on Billy than on his other sons. He would call the boy 'Snake-Lips,' a slur against the boy's mother, too" (11). Being put in a position where he felt the need to choose between the failure of his father and the overbearing fierceness of his mother caused William to withdraw from not only his parents, but school as well. He became very quiet and indifferent; once a great student, William was willing just to sit quietly and not participate or even go to classes. His

father tried to involve him in his work by giving him a job at the livery stable he ran, but William was lazy and uninterested in his father's manly world. Without any other ideas, Murry and Maud Falkner sent William to Ripley to live with some relatives. This change of scenery was a relief, an escape for William, and "given a few months apart from his feuding parents and the confusion and pain they caused in him, he started on his way toward a resolution" (Oates 12). He returned to Oxford and to his mother.

Maud Butler Falkner was a very intelligent and ambitious woman who had put herself through college even after her father abandoned her and her mother. She thought she married well, believing Murry a good catch. Unfortunately she was disappointed with her choice in spouses, but she had her sons, especially her oldest boy William, to shape and teach the literature and art that she so loved. These things that her husband would not or perhaps could not understand were absorbed into William's being, increasing his difference from the rest of his brothers and even from the rest of the town. Although Maud was pleased with William's artistic progress, she was not an especially warm or doting mother. Minter writes,

she conveyed a clear set of expectations: that they [her sons] learn quickly and well; that they absorb the conventional pieties; that they live with stoic resolve; and that they give her their devotion. Although warmer and more affectionate than her taciturn husband, she practiced restraint, and she was capable of severe sternness. (10)

What Maud did offer William was her understanding and acceptance of a teenager who was more interested in books, poetry, and painting than anything else. He became completely dedicated to his mother and, as Oates points out, "the father, in Billy's eyes,

now loomed dull and contemptible” (13).

The devoted William was willing to adhere to any of his mother’s wishes without complaint or question. For example Maud noticed William’s having a stoop in his shoulders, she decided that in order to ensure William’s good posture he would have to straighten his shoulders by wearing a canvas vest. Although the vest hindered his movement and was quite uncomfortable, William wore the contraption every day for “nearly two years with scarcely a murmur” (Minter 15). The restrictions the vest put upon William added to the young man’s silence and series of self-punishments, but he accepted them. Faulkner seemed to thrive on disciplining himself through various self-denials. As David Minter explains,

At one time or another, he practiced denying himself almost everything—not only baseball and football but hunting and dancing as well. As though to accentuate the fate of being small, he began wearing tight clothes and limiting his breakfast to toast and black coffee. But it was more than being small that troubled him; it was the shame and guilt born of witnessing conflicts between his parents to which he could find no acceptable response. (15)

The restraining vest his mother forced him to wear seemed just another thing William had to endure to prove his love for her. He had already taken on her love for the aesthetic and given up pursuing any kind of relationship with his father. What more could there be?

Although William did have a love interest in his teenage years, Estelle Oldham, this girl was never much of a threat for Maud. While Maud Falkner was tolerant of William’s eccentric lifestyle, the Oldhams found him lazy and did not accept the idea of

having him as their son-in-law. So Estelle's mother began negotiating a marriage between her daughter and Cornell Franklin from Honolulu. Estelle had offered to elope with William, but he refused to marry her without her parents' blessing. Therefore, in April of 1918, after a disappointing breakup, Estelle was married to another man.

Although he continued to have feelings for Estelle, William continued to find ways in which to prove his love and faithfulness to his mother. Wanting to be a pilot in the war, William was rejected by the American forces because he was too short and underweight, but he traveled to Canada and enlisted in the Royal Air Force. Quite telling is the pretense under which William acted. He told the officer that he was born in England and that his name was William Faulkner. Stephen Oates describes the persona Falkner created; along with changing his name, William got rid of his father as well. Oates writes that William told the recruiting officer,

Maud Faulkner, now living in Oxford, Mississippi, was the person to contact in case he died in battle. He made no mention of his father, implying that he was either dead or gone. And so, in a single blow, Billy repudiated his alcoholic father, claimed his mother for himself, and created a new last name for them both. Now as William Faulkner he could start life over again with her; he could be a rootless war hero, a romantic outcast from the world that had hurt him. (22)

William Faulkner attempted to let go of the inadequacy he was plagued with in the past and tried to recreate himself as a man who was stronger and braver than before. He was ready to become a fighter pilot and go to the war; he gladly studied navigation and did physical training every day to prepare. But during "his final phase of pre-flight training,

almost within reach of an airplane,” as Minter notes, the war ended and William Faulkner, honorary second lieutenant, R.A.F., returned to Oxford, Mississippi (31).

On his homecoming Faulkner found a more peaceful dwelling than that he had left. His father had become the secretary and business manager of the University of Mississippi; having a more compliant attitude toward his own success and future, Murry Falkner became content with his station in life and even his wife. While the relationship between Murry and Maud grew more comfortable, Murry maintained his aloof demeanor toward William. Oates writes, “It was only because Maud considered him a darling of destiny that Murry tolerated the boy at all and let him go on living at home even after he had turned twenty-one” (27). William tried to please his parents, especially his mother, by sporadically working and studying, but he fell back into his debilitating tendencies. He drank to excess just like his father. Often Faulkner would write alone in his room with nothing but the whiskey bottle as company. His father did not understand his oldest son at all; “that Billy didn’t work, that all he did was write and read poetry up in his room, galled Murry beyond words” (Oates 27). No matter what William did, he could never please his father and the more apparent Murry’s disapproval became to William, the less William tried.

Faulkner spent time in New Orleans where he met and fell in love with another unattainable woman, Helen Baird. William and Helen began a romance, but while Helen found William’s eccentricities interesting, her mother hardly approved and took her daughter off to Europe. Shortly after Helen’s departure Faulkner joined a friend, William Spratling, on a voyage to Genoa. He spent several months in Europe and returned home for the publication of Soldier’s Pay, which was appreciated by the critics but thought

scandalous by his neighbors in Oxford. With everyone buzzing about his disgraceful novel, Faulkner reveled in giving his townspeople something interesting to discuss. He even refused when Maud Falkner told him he should leave the country to escape disgrace. Not following his mother's directions was something Faulkner rarely did.

That summer, tired of New Orleans and Oxford, William decided to go to Pascagoula, Mississippi where his beloved Helen Baird was living. Unfortunately his poetry and bohemian appearance did not make an impression on either Helen or her mother. As William became more and more passionate, Helen responded to his love with apathy and coolness. William dedicated his second novel Mosquitoes to her; however, on May 4, 1927, one week after the publication of Faulkner's second work of fiction, Helen Baird married Guy Lyman.

William started writing again, only this time it was on two projects: one entitled "Father Abraham," which focused on the Snopes family, and the other, a tale about the Sartoris family—this one he called Flags in the Dust. He eventually put "Father Abraham" aside to concentrate on Flags in the Dust. Faulkner worked fervently, and, when he finished with the six hundred-page manuscript, he was excited and positive it would be THE book. Unfortunately, Faulkner was extremely over-confident and was crushed by the rejection letter he received from Boni & Liveright saying his book "lacks plot, dimension and projection" (Oates 67). Shocked by his publisher's refusal to print his book, Faulkner revised it and sent it off to his friend Ben Wasson. Wasson acted as his literary agent, passing the manuscript along to several publishers, as Faulkner could not pay for the postage himself. Each time the book was rejected Faulkner fell deeper and deeper into depression; he thought he might never be published again. Between his

feelings of mistrust and frustration toward the now-needy Estelle, who was seeking a divorce and looking to him to marry her, and the terrible sense of denunciation he felt from the publishing industry, William Faulkner felt he would be better off in his own fictional place.

Faulkner couldn't even turn to his own mother for comfort; Maud would never accept complaint from her children and certainly shouldn't be expected to placate William for his failure. Faulkner's brother Murry comments on Maud's stringent attitude about complaining in his biography, The Falkners of Mississippi:

Nothing to her [Faulkner's mother] was smaller and meaner than for an individual to complain about his own shortcomings and apparent misfortunes. Characteristic of this conviction was a cardboard placard hanging above the stove in her kitchen as long as I can remember, on which she had written in red paint in her neat, clear brush strokes, "Don't Complain—Don't Explain." It was, in a real sense, her philosophy of life, and she passed it on in full measure to her children. (9-10)

Having grown up in such a household looking at that placard everyday, William must have had an even greater sense of disappointment in himself for feeling rejected and depressed. Faulkner had always been successful in obtaining his mother's approval and praise by using his writing and creativity, but it seemed as though now even his art was failing him. In addition, William couldn't bring himself out of the state of hopelessness and despair he was feeling due to the rejection of his work. He knew his mother would not understand; she was set in her ways and would never give William the solace he so needed. Feeling alone and isolated from everyone around him, Faulkner threw himself

into his writing and what he produced—out of bitterness, disappointment, and loneliness—was perhaps his best work, The Sound and the Fury.

In 1929 Faulkner had started writing stories about the Compson children; the first two were “That Evening Sun” and “A Justice.” Minter states that “both were based on memories out of his [Faulkner’s] own childhood, and both concern children who face dark, foreboding experiences without adequate support or adequate sponsors” (93). Faulkner was taking his painful childhood memories, reexamining them, and dealing with them by bringing them to life in fiction. The third story that was to be called “Twilight” turned out to be The Sound and the Fury. The writing of this novel came at a time of such pain and insecurity, no one—not even Estelle or William’s close friend Phil—knew anything about it until the novel was almost finished. In September 1928 Faulkner finally invited Phil Stone to read his novel. Oates describes the scene using information found in Susan Snell’s Phil Stone of Yoknapatawpa:

Only now [that the story was finished] did he take Stone, his one time mentor, into his confidence. He invited Stone up to his tower room in the Delta Psi house and exultantly showed him the work. Then Faulkner read him the entire manuscript, night after night, in his high, soft voice, as if to say, See what I have created on my own, out of my own vision and experience, without writing by your dictates or trying to impress anyone else? (75)

What was obvious to Phil Stone as he listened to Faulkner read each night was that Faulkner was not only writing about something extremely personal; but also writing in a groundbreaking way. His complete disregard toward getting the novel published gave

Faulkner the freedom to experiment with style and technique in The Sound and the Fury.

While Faulkner was working on The Sound and the Fury, he got news from his friend Ben Wasson that Harcourt, Brace and Company would publish a cut version of Flags in the Dust. Although Faulkner did not agree with the cuts, he signed the contract for what would be titled Sartoris. While he was in New York overseeing the editing of Sartoris, he was revising and writing the final copy of The Sound and the Fury; Faulkner felt that having taken a chance on Flags in the Dust, Harcourt, Brace and Company might be willing to publish his new masterpiece as well. After finishing the beloved novel that Faulkner had delved deep into his own memories and emotions to create, he felt a type of loss. Stephen Oates gives his interpretation of Faulkner's feelings after finishing his great novel: "Writing a book was always like that: you got swept up in the protracted demands and ecstasy of creation, and when you were done, it left you drained, disoriented, and lonely" (80). Oates then describes how, upon finishing the book, Faulkner started drinking bootleg gin and drank and drank until he was found unconscious and oblivious in his hotel room.

After dealing with the emotions stirred up by writing his novel, William had another old wound to tend. Estelle's divorce had finally come through and she was desperate to marry. Not only was she divorced, but she had two children to support. Stephen Oates writes of Maud's resistance to the idea of William's marriage to Estelle, "Maud Falkner didn't want her Billy marrying anybody, let alone a divorced woman who drank. She couldn't bear the thought of sharing her brilliant and gifted son with another woman. She liked things exactly as they were, with thirty-one-year-old Billy living and working at home under her care" (83). Faulkner had concerns himself; Estelle had hurt

him before, and the pain had run deep. Then there was also the agonizing rejection by Helen Baird. Faulkner was not sure if he was willing to step in and accept Estelle second-hand, opening himself up for more disappointment, but the neediness in Estelle prompted him to be the hero, to prove that he was someone of strength who could comfort and care for Estelle and her children. Oates explains Faulkner's decision to marry Estelle in terms of his relationship with his parents:

. . . she appeared to be his last hope, too. He couldn't go on living at home under the care of his mother—no, he recognized the danger in that. And there were no other prospective mates in his life. Here was his chance to assert his independence and get out on his own. Here was his chance to prove to his father and Major Oldham and all his other detractors that he was a man, not a wastrel, who could support a wife and have a family. (84)

So Faulkner took Estelle to the courthouse, got a marriage license, got permission from her parents, and then on June 20, 1929, married her in College Hill Presbyterian Church.

Wedded bliss did not come quickly to the newly wed Faulkners. Not only was Estelle used to being able to spend extravagant amounts of money on clothes; she too dealt with loneliness and frustration by drinking. William was too damaged to be able to communicate with Estelle and was often distant and taciturn. As Oates explains, "He was unable to open up to Estelle and trust again. He had experienced too many personal hurts, too much torment in his parents' home, too many rejections, to do that" (87).

Estelle had once been the one person William could talk to and now she was just another person against whom he guarded himself.

Back home in Oxford, even though he was now married, Faulkner resumed his daily visits to his mother's house. Since Maud disliked Estelle, William would make these visits alone and continued to make them until his mother died in 1960. Although he had disappointed Maud with his decision to marry Estelle, Faulkner still needed to please and appease his mother. Part of the reason he had to marry was to get away from his mother's house, yet he found himself back there each day. The power that Maud Falkner had over her son was incredible and long-lasting. Gwendolyn Chabrier interprets Maud's power in her book Faulkner's Families: A Southern Saga:

Though experiencing no brother-sister relationship with emotionally incestuous overtones, Faulkner was involved in two incestuous relationships: one with his mother and the other with his stepdaughter Victoria Franklin. Both are incestuous in the sense that they are mutual adorations superseding the banal or normal attitudes of mother-son or father-daughter relationships characteristic of most families. (50)

Chabrier is not insinuating that Faulkner's bond with his mother was anything physically inappropriate; she simply states that it was beyond the norm on an emotional level.

Whether it resulted from her fawning over him as an impressionable and sensitive young man, her instilling in him a love and desire for art, literature, and creativity, or simply her understanding in times when his father was disappointed and abusive, Maud Falkner had an influence over her son that neither of them ever denied.

While the Great Depression was beginning Faulkner was writing his second great novel. He was using ideas and characters developed in previous short stories, but the Bundren family was a new creation. As I Lay Dying was a deliberate book which

Faulkner wrote in about six weeks. He sent it to his friend and publisher Hal Smith, and it was published less than a year after Faulkner began writing. Faulkner had a new spirit and confidence in his writing, one that he had not had since before Flags in the Dust

David Minter writes of As I Lay Dying's impact and Faulkner's revived attitude,

Like The Sound and the Fury, it attracted large notice and small sales, and so disappointed Faulkner. But nothing could diminish the boost writing As I Lay Dying had given his confidence: not even The Sound and the Fury had done so much to help him recapture the enthusiasm of discovering the Snopeses and Sartoris. (120)

At a time when the rest of the nation was in tumult, William Faulkner had found peace. He immediately began publishing his short stories for quick money and was handsomely rewarded.

Although Faulkner's life stabilized with the publication of As I Lay Dying, Faulkner experienced the loss of his first child, a strained marriage, and other problems. Throughout his life, though, there was one constant figure and that was his mother. Maud Falkner saw her son almost every day for most of his life: as he died less than two years after her death. Whether her influence was positive or negative can be debated, but what cannot be denied is that, in a way, Miss Maud and her family provided the foundation for some of William Faulkner's greatest work. While current events pushed Faulkner to write, it was his past experiences and relationships that he wrote about. The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying are two specific works that can be tied directly to Maud Falkner's influence.

Faulkner's Regression and Rejuvenation: The Sound and the Fury

William Faulkner wrote The Sound and the Fury at one of the lowest points of his life; publishers were consistently rejecting Flags in the Dust, the book he thought was the pinnacle of his writing, and his personal life was in turmoil. Feeling like a failure in every aspect of his life, Faulkner regressed and buried himself in the solitude of his writing. What he found in this immersion was the story of his own family—only now he could manipulate the events of his painful childhood and extract a kind of revenge on his father, and more pointedly his mother, for their neglect. The void of the mother figure is especially evident in The Sound and the Fury, and considering Faulkner's childhood experiences and his inability to look to his mother for support as an adult, this portrayal is no surprise.

The lack of love portrayed through Faulkner's description of the Compson household is disturbing and sad. Jason and Caroline Compson have never been viewed as positive role models for parenting. Yet Faulkner was forced to live in a similar atmosphere while he was growing up. The pain and destruction of the family that Faulkner wrote about in The Sound and the Fury is similar to the anguish that he himself had to endure. It is possible that the four Compson children actually combine to reveal Faulkner's own hurt. Carvel Collins comments on the Compson parents and their effect on their sons:

- The three monologues clearly show the reader the effect which the failures of the Compson parents have on the sons, whether the three sons are regarded on a realistic level as individuals or on a symbolic level as parts of the personality of one symbolic composite child. All three of the sons

(or all three parts of the composite son, if you will permit) are injured by lack of love. (124)

William Faulkner could be that composite son. Writing this novel as a way of reevaluating the past and trying to deal with his feelings toward his domineering mother and pathetic, alcoholic father, William Faulkner could actually be all four of the Compson children. Benjy represents his weakness—when he could not stand up to his father’s spiteful comments; Quentin represents his sensitive, rejected, misogynist side; and Jason takes revenge for Faulkner—reacting to all of the hate, anger and rage Faulkner felt but could never express directly. Finally, there is Caddy. Caddy represents Faulkner’s need for acceptance—his desire to please his publishers, his father, and most importantly his mother. In a sense, the author creates these characters from his own life, past and present.

A careful examination of the character Caroline Compson, the mother in The Sound and the Fury reveals the connection between Faulkner’s own life and the novel. Critics for over seventy years have written about Caroline and how she is a terrible mother. This view is not only true but completely consistent with the image that Faulkner wanted to create. Even though William was Maud Falkner’s favorite son, he still experienced her strict methods and almost Spartan attitude about complaints and failures.

While Faulkner was writing this book, his feelings toward women in general were quite negative, and again he was struggling with ambivalent emotions regarding his mother, Maud. In Robbing the Mother, Deborah Clarke makes a comment on the men in The Sound and the Fury that could also be applied to Faulkner himself: “The Compson

men find that the feminine within themselves leads to their own destruction. Wounded both physically and psychically, they lose life, language, and masculinity” (35). William Faulkner had always been criticized by his father for having too many of his mother’s characteristics. He was ridiculed by his peers and classmates for being prissy and dressing and acting like a “dandy.” It is possible that Faulkner blamed his mother for instilling these peculiar artistic characteristics in him and attributed his femininity to her. In this case, it would make sense that he would write about the Compson mother with such disdain. Faulkner’s development of the characters of the Compson family reveals his unresolved feelings and frustrations with his own family.

The Sound and the Fury chronicles the disintegration of the Compsons, a genteel Southern family. The blame for the destruction of the Compson line has been placed on several people and circumstances. Like Faulkner’s own father Murry Falkner, Mr. Compson was a weak man who, when unable to deal with his family problems, shut them out with the help of a decanter of bourbon. However, most critics find the reason for the downfall of the Compson family in the coldness of Mrs. Caroline Compson, the mother. Caroline admits that her marriage to Jason increased her social status but regrets it because she feels a continual sense of inferiority. Caroline tells her husband, Jason, her feelings after she realizes Caddy is pregnant,

I thought that 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 . . . but I see now that I have not suffered enough I see now that I must pay for your sins as well as mine what have you done what sins have your high and mighty people visited

upon me but you'll take up for them you always have found excuses for your own blood only Jason [the son] can do wrong because he is more Bascomb than Compson while your own daughter my little daughter my baby girl she is no better than that when I was a girl I was unfortunate I was only a Bascomb. (Faulkner 63)

Because Caroline is so aware of her mistake in marrying Jason for the wrong reasons, she is resentful toward him and their children. Caroline's inability to show love for her husband and children is what led to the certain end of the Compson line. As Cleanth Brooks states in his book William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpa Country,

The basic cause of the breakup of the Compson family—let the more general cultural causes be what they may—is the cold and self-centered mother who is sensitive about the social status of her own family, the Bascombs, who feels the birth of an idiot son [Benjy] as a kind of personal affront, who spoils and corrupts her favorite son [Jason], and who withholds any real love and affection for her other children and her husband. (334)

A mother is supposed to be the nurturing force in children's lives, yet Caroline is not the nurturing type. Jason Compson may have been a weak and pathetic man and father, but traditionally he would not be blamed for the outcome of his children. Despite his faults he does truly love his children and they love him; unfortunately his wife does not share a similar relationship with their children.

Mrs. Compson tells the family that she has to carry the burden for all of their sins; she states again and again that Benjy, her youngest, retarded son, was born as a

punishment on her. This is another case of her feeling sorry for herself and trying to get others to feel the same way. Her attitude toward Benjy is totally opposite of her daughter, Caddy's, as is evident at the very beginning of the novel. Caddy wants to take Benjy to play outdoors and Caroline does not want to let him go:

"Let them go, Caroline." Uncle Maury said. "A little cold won't hurt them. Remember, you've got to keep your strength up."

"I know." Mother said. "Nobody knows how I dread Christmas. Nobody knows. I am not one of those women who can stand things. I wish for Jason's and the children's sakes I was stronger."

"You must do the best you can and not let them worry you." Uncle Maury said. (Faulkner 5-6)

Caroline uses the situation to provoke sympathy for herself. She even tells Caddy that "Someday I'll be gone, and you'll have to think for him [Benjy]" (Faulkner 6). Again Caroline is filling her children with negativity by talking about her own death. With these words, Mrs. Compson is already passing on the responsibility of caring for Benjy to her daughter.

Caddy has already taken this responsibility from her mother, but does not begrudge it at all. After her mother pulls Benjy close and calls him her "poor baby," Caddy hugs him and states, "You're not a poor baby. Are you. Are you. You've got your Caddy. Haven't you got your Caddy" (Faulkner 6). Caddy does not see her brother as a bother; she loves him unconditionally and without judgment, unlike her mother. In his book Faulkner's Women: the Myth and the Muse, David Williams comments on Caddy's reaction to her mother's calling Benjy "poor baby": "She [Caddy] reacts doubly,

it would seem, to the belittlement implied in 'poor', both in the sense that Benjy through his handicap is humanly impoverished, and in the corollary meaning which Caddy seizes upon—that he is motherless" (73). Caddy feels it is her duty to care for and console her youngest brother Benjy. Repeatedly Faulkner shows Caddy's compassionate nature through his description of her relationship with her retarded brother. As compared to the sister Caddy, the true mother of the child is portrayed as harsh, cold, and uncaring.

Faulkner could identify with the loyal and motherly side of Caddy. At times his personality was similar, but these qualities were usually revealed only to his mother. It is ironic that the person who caused Faulkner to feel rejected would be the person that Faulkner wanted to nurture the most. Maud was never demonstrably affectionate to William, but he continued to love and support her despite her maternal failures.

The following scene illustrates how Caroline, like Faulkner's own mother, does not know how to care for her son. It is Caddy who has to assume the mother role. Mrs. Compson wants to see Benjy, but he cries when Caddy takes him to her. Caddy tells her mother that if she shows Benjy the cushion he will stop crying, but Caroline does not listen:

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

"You don't need to bother with him." Caddy said. "I like to take care of him. Don't I, Benjy." (Faulkner 39)

Caddy states that she likes to take care of Benjy, leaving the reader with the feeling that

Caroline does not. Caddy uses the word "bother" when talking about her mother's care for her brother—a word that she has heard her mother say previously when discussing his care. It is obvious to the rest of the family that Caroline is "bothered" by the extra attention her youngest son needs.

The scene continues, and Caroline pulls Benjy to her, telling Caddy to put the cushion away and sit down. She tells Caddy that Benjamin "must learn to mind." Benjy cries. Caroline tries to stop his crying and falls apart herself:

"Stop that." she said. "Stop it."

But I didn't stop and Mother caught me in her arms and began to cry, and I cried. Then the cushion came back Caddy held it above Mother's head. She drew Mother back in the chair and Mother lay crying against the red and yellow cushion.

"Hush, Mother." Caddy said. "You go up stairs and lay down, so you can be sick." (Faulkner 40)

This episode proves that Caddy is the family's caregiver, not Caroline. In fact, here Caddy takes care of Caroline as well as Benjy. Caddy knows that her mother is unable to understand what Benjy needs. When Caroline is reminded of her maternal shortcomings, she breaks down, leaving Caddy to take over as "mother" both to her and to Benjy.

Caddy's comment "so you can be sick" reminds the reader of Caroline's continual whining and complaining about her health and the stress she is under. Even the young Compson children look upon their mother with a sense of fear and pity. The youngsters are too innocent to see that their mother is using her "sickness" to control their father and family. David Williams comments on Caroline's manipulation: "Through her

hypochondria, she preys on the decency and sympathy of those around her; she is thus able to exercise power in a cold and ruthless way, all the while preserving her self-engendered image of a lady” (69-70). Caroline’s reign over the Compson estate lasts far beyond the lives of her husband and her oldest son Quentin, who commits suicide before the present setting of the narrative. Her constant reminders that she would “be gone one day” are just meaningless threats to those still living with her. Jason, Caddy’s daughter (Quentin), Benjy, and Dilsey are still listening to and waiting on Mrs. Compson at the end of the book. Much like Maud Falkner (who died only two years before William), it seems that Caroline Compson just will not die.

While Faulkner’s family life was somewhat different from his portrayal of the Compsons, there are significant similarities. Maud Falkner did require a close bond with her sons (expecting daily visits or letters throughout their entire lives), yet she was not openly affectionate toward them. Like Caroline Compson, Maud Falkner was emotionally distant from her family, more than likely because of the frustration and disappointment she felt in her marriage. Maud Falkner and Caroline both married for social gain and both were disillusioned with the results. Maud’s contempt for her husband and her own concept of self-worth contributed to her negative treatment of her family. Gwendolyn Chabrier explains in her book Faulkner’s Families: A Southern Saga, “The Faulknerian mother very often tends to be self-involved and also domineering, thus leaving her children with the sense of being unloved” (108). Chabrier is not only speaking of characters like Caroline Compson, but of William Faulkner’s mother, Maud, as well.

The other major similarity between Caroline Compson and Maud Falkner is their

favor for one of their children over the others. For Caroline, it was Jason, “the only true Bascomb,” and for Maud, it was William. This position of favorite is not one that carries with it a positive reward; oppositely, the boys who were given this title were merely smothered by the mothers. Chabrier writes of Caroline, “Caroline Compson is completely self-involved, a self-pitying hypochondriac unable to give her children the minimal emotion they require except, of course, for Jason whom she favors and even smothers with love at the expense of the others” (108-109). This description is only partly reflective of Maud Falkner in that Maud was definitely not a hypochondriac nor self-pitying, but she was self-involved and unable to provide her sons with the love and affection they needed. Like Caroline, Maud smothered her son William to an almost abnormal extent.

An important difference between the mother-son relationships of Maud and Caroline is depicted in Faulkner’s characterization of Jason. William, although probably secretly resentful of his strong tie and responsibility to his mother, was never anything but courteous and accommodating. Faulkner abided by Maud’s every wish, even to the extent of taking time away from his own wife and family to be with her. Jason Compson, on the other hand, does not exhibit this type of love for his mother. In fact, in his section of the novel, it seems he is fairly annoyed by her and is just waiting for her to pass away so that he can run things his way.

Jason’s negative attitude toward his mother seems a just result of Caroline’s terrible mothering of her other children. David Williams writes, “If Mrs. Compson’s societal ambitions are twisted, it is because they are self-centered; she rejects her Compson offspring, excepting Jason whom she describes as a ‘true Bascomb.’ . . .

Incapable of love herself, she favors her one unloving child” (69). It is possible that Caroline saw in Jason a reflection of herself and that is the reason for her fawning over him. This is quite similar to Maud’s favor for William, the son that shared her creative and artistic qualities. In the context of Faulkner’s own life, Jason could be a reflection of Faulkner and his relationship with his mother. It seems realistic that Faulkner and Jason both experienced some of the same feelings of resentment toward their mothers although Jason was the man willing to admit it.

Caroline constantly sets Jason apart from the other children, saying how he is different, sane, as compared to the others. The reality of the situation is that she and Jason are the people who do not behave appropriately; as a result, the other Compsons are left motherless to fend for themselves and each other. Deborah Clarke writes, “Her [Caroline’s] maternal absence is largely filled by Caddy, but Caddy has no maternal model, for her mother has only indicated how to be a lady” (30), not how to be a mother. In the novel Caroline’s only interest is not preserving her family but preserving the family’s reputation.

Caroline’s obsessive concern with her family’s status contributes to the downfall of the entire family. By treating her daughter with contempt and judgment, Caroline pushes Caddy into a series of romantic involvements ultimately ending with her pregnancy, failed marriage, and banishment from the Compson home. Not feeling any love from her parents, Caddy is forced to seek affection from boyfriends; she pushes herself further and further into sexual activity as she strives to give and receive tenderness. In her article “The Beautiful One,” Catherine B. Baum writes that

those qualities in her [Caddy’s] character that are admirable are the ones

which lead to her fall: her complete selflessness, which leads her to be indifferent to her virginity and to what happens to her; her willingness to put the other person's interests first; and her great desire to communicate love. She is too selfless for the world she is in, because all that the world, in the form of Jason and Dalton [the man who fathers her child], knows how to do is take advantage of that selflessness. (43)

Because of her mother's blatant apathy toward her family when Caddy is a child, Caddy becomes accustomed at a very young age to giving unconditional love without care or thought for herself. This habit that begins with Benjy's dependence on her grows into a characteristic that causes her to put herself last, even below the desires and sexual needs of her boyfriends.

When Caroline witnesses Caddy in a romantic embrace with one of her lovers, she reacts by donning mourning garb. Walking around the next day with a black veil over her face, Caroline lets Caddy and the entire family know exactly how she feels about her daughter and her transgression. Jason describes his memory, ". . . like that time when she happened to see one of them kissing Caddy and all next day she 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 girl was dead. . ." (Faulkner 138). This is only the beginning of Caddy's string of physical affairs; she continues looking for affection until she becomes pregnant. Once Caroline realizes that Caddy has made that step into womanhood, Caroline feels Caddy can't be trusted.

Caroline feels the best thing to do—even before she thinks of marrying Caddy off—is to take Jason and leave town. The conversation she has with her husband

concerning this issue shows how truly heartless and cold Caroline Compson is:

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 absolution of my sins that he may escape this curse try to forget that the others ever were. (Faulkner 64)

This passage above all others proves that Caroline Compson does not love her children. Her message cannot be any clearer; she believes the Compson family name is ruined and now that it is not prestigious, she wants to give it back. Caroline wants to renounce the name she fought so hard to uphold and take her "only real Bascomb" and go away, leaving her three other children and husband behind.

It is possible that at times Maud Falkner felt the same way. Like Faulkner's character Caroline, she had married above herself socially and was disappointed with the outcome. Perhaps on a quiet night Maud had told William or given him the impression that the two of them should run away from Murry Falkner and his other sons. Or perhaps William had wished it so and created this passage in the novel as a way of recreating his past. Regardless, the problem Caroline has in dealing with her alcoholic husband and her children is based on the fact that she feels no one respects her because her family line is not as prominent as the Compsons'. Caroline's obsession with social status is ironic because the only one in the Compson family concerned with heritage and social standing is Caroline; this belief of hers only shows her own fixation. The rest of the family is simply trying to get along without provoking one of her emotional outbursts or series of

complaints.

Similarly, Murry Falkner's house was quiet and tense due to the constant threat of an argument between Murry and Maud. Murry felt looked down upon by his wife and often spent time drinking, which only increased her contempt. Because Maud felt herself much smarter than her husband she took silent pleasure in belittling him in front of his children. Gwendolyn Chabrier writes in her book Faulkner's Families: A Southern Saga, "His [Murry's] uncommunicativeness is probably best illustrated by the fact that he did not allow any conversation at the meals until their conclusion, when he would put down his napkin" (36). Murry did not want to give his wife something to correct or ridicule, so the Falkners ate in silence. William's feelings of helplessness and confusion in his own home are portrayed through the Compson children and the atmosphere in which they were forced to struggle toward their growth.

However, in William Faulkner's home there was no compassionate sister. Perhaps this void in Faulkner's childhood makes Caddy so dear to him. Over and over in interviews, Faulkner calls Caddy "my heart's darling." The reason could be that she is the creation that helped him deal with his painful childhood; it is possible that he made Caddy sister to the three Compson brothers to be the protector that he wished the four Falkner brothers had had. Faulkner wrote The Sound and the Fury as a type of self-therapy, and Caddy is the character that helped Faulkner the most. He was able to wage his revenge upon his drunken, pathetic father, deal with his feelings of extreme loyalty and resentment toward his mother, and finally, feel consolation and understanding from a caregiver with unconditional love. Part of William's desire to become a writer was based in pleasing his mother. Therefore it is plausible that Maud Falkner's favor for William

was not unconditional but contingent upon his being like her. In that case, Caddy's role in the novel would represent something that William Faulkner desired but never had—until he wrote the book.

Much like Maud Falkner, Caroline Compson is not a warm and loving mother but more stern and aloof; in fact, Cleanth Brooks writes,

Caroline Compson is not so much an actively wicked and evil person as a cold weight of negativity which paralyzes the normal family relationships. She is certainly at the root of Quentin's lack of confidence in himself and his inverted pride. She is at least the immediate cause of her husband's breakdown into alcoholic cynicism, and doubtless she is ultimately responsible for Caddy's promiscuity. (334)

Caroline's "cold weight of negativity" is shown repeatedly in her constant complaints about her family problems and poor health. Caroline uses this excuse of poor health to keep her family at a distance throughout her entire life. The children are always being reminded to be good or be quiet because they do not want to disturb their sick mother—a mother that spent most of her time in her room without even joining her family for meals.

There is one point in the novel where Caroline asserts herself, even in her unhealthy condition, and that is when Caddy's marriage is ended due to the untimely birth of Caddy's baby, and Caddy returns home to leave her daughter in care of the remaining Compsons. It is Caroline herself who makes the conditions that have to be followed so that the baby can stay in the Compson house. Caroline tells her husband and Dilsey, her cook and housekeeper,

"You can say nonsense," Mother says. "But she must never know."

She must never even 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."

"Don't be a fool," Father says.

"I have never interfered with the way you brought them [the children] up," Mother says. "But now I cannot stand anymore. We must decide this now, tonight. Either that name is never to be spoken in her hearing, or she must go, or I will go. Take your choice." (Faulkner 120)

Caroline does not care about her daughter, or her granddaughter. If she did, she would never insist on keeping them separated. Her rules practically destroy Caddy and certainly contribute to the problems that Quentin has as a teenager without any real parents. David Williams writes, "The only thing she seems ever to have cared about is her own image in the community. The pronunciation of this social accent must be remembered in her rejection of Caddy" (70). Caroline's denial of her daughter seals her fate. Caddy gives her daughter to her parents to raise because she believes that is the best she can do for her. Thinking her daughter safe in her father's home and left to care only for herself, Caddy is forced to become what her mother was so afraid of—a mistress and a prostitute. That Caddy gets her money from men is not directly stated in the text. Her brother, Jason, implies it when Caddy offers to pay him one thousand dollars to convince their mother to give her daughter back:

"You haven't got a thousand dollars," I says. "I know you're lying now."

"Yes I have. I will have. I can get it."

“And I know how you’ll get it,” I says. “You’ll get it the same way you got her. And when she gets big enough—“ Then I thought she really was going to hit me, and then I didn’t know what she was going to do. (Faulkner 126)

Jason’s comment and Caddy’s reaction to it give the impression that Jason has a good grasp on where Caddy is getting the money to support her daughter.

Because of her daughter’s “fallen woman” status, Caroline will not allow Caddy to come home. The image of having a proper home is more important to Caroline than actually running a proper home in which family members are considered important. In order to maintain the goodness of her own name, Caroline sacrifices her only daughter.

Robbing the Mother author Deborah Clarke writes,

After Caddy’s transgression it is Caroline who judges her. It is Caroline who refuses to allow her to return home, and Caroline who will not permit her name to be spoken, thus reversing the strategy of her husband and son [Quentin], who invent labels—virginity—in an attempt to control female sexuality. Mrs. Compson erases Caddy by refusing to name or label her. (31)

Caroline “erases” her daughter because she does not fit into her idea of one who is socially acceptable. While her husband and her son damage themselves as a result of Caddy’s mistake, Caroline exacts her retribution on Caddy herself.

The last two sections of the novel show what Caroline Compson has caused with her narcissistic attitude and paranoid tendencies. Because of Mrs. Compson’s unreasonable demands and expectations, Jason the father has drunk himself to death,

Quentin has committed suicide, and Caddy has been exiled from her own home and child. There are only Caroline, Jason [the son], Benjy, and Caddy's daughter Quentin left in the house. The atmosphere is filled with anger, resentment, and dread; the family members are merely biding their time until they are rid of each other. Caroline, who would seem to have everything she wants with her husband and Caddy out of the picture, is still complaining. She realizes that she is simply being tolerated, but does not change her behavior.

Dilsey, of course, is still there trying to keep some sense of love and order alive in the Compson mansion. Dilsey, not Caroline, is the main adult caregiver and nurturer for the Compson household. She states several times throughout the book that she raised the Compson children and will continue to care for the Compsons until they are all gone. Caddy has tried to help Dilsey in making up for her mother, but after she's sent away, Dilsey is left to take care of Benjy and the baby Quentin on her own. Faulkner treats the character of Dilsey with respect and what seems like a touch of genuine affection.

Faulkner had his own version of Dilsey growing up in Mississippi; her name was Caroline Barr. Joseph Blotner in Faulkner describes the woman whom the Falkner boys called Mammy Callie: "She was a neat black woman weighing less than a hundred pounds. . . . Her own children grown, she became a second mother to Willie, Jack, and Johncy. They loved her stories and they loved her. In her starched dress, ironed apron, and immaculate headcloth, she was second in authority over the children to Miss Maud" (13). The love that William felt for this woman is clearly represented in his portrayal of Dilsey. Probably Mammie Callie was the person who mothered the Falkner boys, while Maud Falkner gave directions and made the rules.

The fact that Dilsey is such a large part in the lives of the Compsons, Caroline and Jason included, shows the great influence Mammie Callie had on Faulkner and can be seen as a type of tribute to her. Faulkner states in his Mississippi Quarterly version of his introduction to The Sound and the Fury, written in 1933, that, “Then the story was complete, finished. There was Dilsey to be the future, to stand above the fallen ruins of the family like a ruined chimney, gaunt, patient and indomitable” (414). Dilsey provides the reader with a sense of hope—not hope for the Compson family especially, but hope in that there are those people that are good that will continue to “endure,” as Faulkner put it in the Appendix (Faulkner 236).

The last two sections of the novel are especially sad in regard to Caddy, Faulkner’s heroine (if one can call her that). Caddy is as much a part of the young William Faulkner as the rest of the Compson children. There is even the similarity of her being sent away from the family as a rebellious teenager. Faulkner, too, was sent to live with his aunt when his parents could not figure out what to do with him. Surely that was painful for such a vulnerable adolescent, especially considering the favor he had previously received from his mother. Caddy represents both his pain and his healing found through writing.

So: was Caddy created when Faulkner was in his twenties or was she there all along? Could it be that there was a Caddy lurking somewhere in the back of young Faulkner’s imagination? Or was she created from fond memories of his childhood friend and sweetheart Estelle mixed with his own sensitive, feminine side his father could never appreciate? It doesn’t matter what the actual answers to these questions are; what is important to realize is that the character of Caddy Compson is a piece of William

Faulkner's soul. Faulkner wrote in the Mississippi Quarterly introduction to The Sound and the Fury that, "I did not realize then [when he wrote the novel] that I was trying to manufacture the sister which I did not have and the daughter which I was to lose, though the former might have been apparent from the fact that Caddy had three brothers almost before I wrote her name on paper" (413). Faulkner admits here and in numerous other interviews and letters that Caddy was much more to him than just another character.

Clearly there is a definite connection between The Sound and the Fury and William Faulkner's family life. Chabrier points out that "it is possible to see a definite correspondence between these [Faulkner's] complex and often disharmonious intrafamilial relationships and ones that he created in his fiction" (19). This statement supports the idea that Faulkner used the writing of this novel to explore his own relationships and background. By writing such an autobiographical account, Faulkner was able to release himself from some of the long-time pressures imposed upon him by his father and especially his mother.

At the time of publication of The Sound and the Fury William Faulkner's life had similarities to the novel. Unlike Mr. Compson, Murry Falkner was still alive; William's brothers were all away from home, away from Maud Falkner's tight grasp. It was William who remained close by, tied to his mother and her demands. Faulkner's willingness to placate his mother—to make her happy, to provide for her needs—shows the side of Faulkner that Caddy represents. His feelings of resentment toward having to do these things are found in the character of Jason Compson at the end of the novel.

The Sound and the Fury helped William Faulkner to get his life together. By writing about a family torn apart by the void of a mother, he was able to examine and

come to terms with his own family problems. The success of the book was not a financial one, but the critics, and more importantly William Faulkner himself, saw The Sound and the Fury as a groundbreaking piece of literature. By analyzing his own feelings about his mother and their relationship, Faulkner was able to create some of the most beautiful and tragic characters ever known.

The Inescapable Mothers—Addie Bundren and Maud Falkner

Faulkner began writing As I Lay Dying in October of 1929, just weeks after The Sound and the Fury was published. He had married Estelle Oldham shortly after her divorce was granted, and the couple was already going through some problems. One of the things that created tension between the two newlyweds was Maud Falkner's dislike of and refusal to accept Estelle. Even though Estelle tried to be nice to Mrs. Falkner, she was never appreciated and soon gave up, letting her husband go alone on his daily visits to his mother's home. William never complained about the time he spent with his mother, but the negative focus on the mothers in his earlier works suggests he was keeping his true feelings to himself. Only through his writing could he release his emotions. While Faulkner portrayed Caroline Compson as a heartless living corpse in The Sound and the Fury, he created a mother who was a true corpse, Addie Bundren, in As I Lay Dying. Living or dead, both of these women cause great sorrow and injury to their children—children who are not able to do anything but live out their fate. In Faulkner's Families, Gwendolyn Chabrier writes: "In his early and middle work, Faulkner again strongly projects his personal unhappiness into his fiction. In general, children are presented as helpless victims at the mercy of their parents. They are, furthermore and to an exaggerated degree, unable to extricate themselves from their inevitable destinies" (98). Perhaps Faulkner himself felt that he was unable to break free of his mother and live out his own life separate from his mother.

As I Lay Dying's Addie Bundren dies at the beginning of the novel; the rest of the story focuses on the journey her family makes to bury her in the Jefferson cemetery with her family's dead. As in The Sound and the Fury, this tale is told through a variety of

points of view including Addie's husband, sons, daughter, neighbors, doctor, and ever-guilty lover. Even Addie herself is given a voice from beyond the grave. David Williams compares Faulkner's depiction of Addie with that of Caddy Compson: "The manner of Addie's presentation is also similar to Caddy's; excepting her single monologue, she too exists as an oblique presence in her own story, seen while still alive through other eyes, and felt when dead as a continuing force" (112). While Caddy's absence is literal; Addie's family is well aware of her decomposing body as they make their way to Jefferson. While the brothers' versions of Caddy in The Sound and the Fury almost romanticize her character, the outside accounts of Addie essentially vilify her. This is not surprising considering Faulkner's feelings for these two characters. One could see Caddy as Faulkner's protectress and Addie Bundren as his soul's nemesis.

When one notices the attitudes of the Bundren children toward their mother, it is easy to see that, like Maud Falkner, Addie maintained control over her children without ever really providing them with the maternal nurturing they required. At the beginning of the novel, the oldest son Cash is shown working constantly on the coffin that will hold his mother's body. He obviously takes the task very seriously and does not see the horror in the fact that he is making this casket right outside his dying mother's window. Cash sees his work as a sort of tribute to his mother in that she will have a proper resting place after she passes away. With Jewel accompanying Darl on a trip, it is Cash who is present when Addie dies. David Williams writes, "Cash, as much as Jewel, however, has been throughout a beloved son of the mother—. . . and Addie, in the absence of Jewel, calls out to him at the moment of her death—and [Cash] continues that relationship in his silent agony on the wagon" (117). Cash remains loyal to his mother throughout the novel

and endures the most physical pain as a result. What is interesting to notice is his refusal to complain about his broken leg even when the doctor is removing the cement in which his family so stupidly encased it. This attitude brings to mind Maud Falkner's "Don't complain, don't explain" sign in her kitchen. The fortitude that Cash exhibits is impressive, but almost ridiculous considering what he experienced going to Jefferson to bury his mother's body. Cash Bundren's loyalty and willingness for self-sacrifice is similar to Faulkner's own. Both men would do anything to please their mothers.

Addie does return Cash's love in her own way. Although she never outwardly expresses herself, she admits that there was a mutual admiration between her and her son. Addie's own words express her feelings for Cash, her firstborn:

He [Anse] had a word, too. Love, he called it. But I had been used to words for a long time. I knew that that word was like the others: just a shape to fill a lack; that when the right time came, you wouldn't need a word for that anymore than for pride or fear. Cash did not need to say it to me nor I to him, and I would say, Let Anse use it, if he wants to. (158)

Addie admits that she never verbally expresses her love for her son, but she also recognizes her feelings. Perhaps it is Addie's stoic personality that influences her firstborn to be so accepting of pain. After watching his mother slowly wither away, it is possible that Cash felt he did not have a right to complain about his own physical pain after he broke his leg. Cash's attitude may reflect William Faulkner's own inability to request solace when he was in pain before writing The Sound and the Fury.

The way that Addie describes herself is reminiscent of the way Maud Falkner is portrayed by Faulkner's biographers. Both women are shown to be hardened and less

than sympathetic. The determination in both women is evidenced by the way they raised their children. The Bundrens and the Falkners were raised to take what the world gave them and keep any grievances they had to themselves. Complaint was a sign of weakness and would not be tolerated.

Addie, herself, has things to complain about: a husband she really does not love and children she does not especially want. Addie is less than thrilled with the news of her second pregnancy. She expresses her feelings by saying:

Then I found that I had Darl. At first I would not believe it. Then I believed that I would kill Anse. It was as though he had tricked me. . . . But then I realized that I had been tricked by words older than Anse or love, and the same word had tricked Anse too, and that my revenge would be that he would never know I was taking revenge. And when Darl was born I asked Anse to promise to take me back to Jefferson when I died.
(Faulkner 158-59)

Addie promises to punish Anse for chaining her to him emotionally and physically with their children. She decides that in death she will not remain tied to Anse's family but will reside with her own family's dead in Jefferson. She wants to be buried near her father whose negativity had influenced her in a way that was never resolved. The idea of bearing another child does not evoke affection from Addie Bundren. Deborah Clarke writes, "She now recognizes that motherhood is as great a trick as language. . . . Betrayed by both the figurative word and the literal experience, Addie finds no comfort in maternity once it becomes repetitious. Where the initial act liberates her, the repetition entraps her" (38). Perhaps it is this feeling of entrapment that makes Addie such a bad

mother. A strong-willed woman is not generally happy being in the shadow of a man and his children.

Addie seems dominated by feelings of entrapment in her marriage, as Miss Maud may have been, given her intelligence and drive. It is possible that William felt his mother's discontent with her life and gave her characteristics and problems to Addie Bundren. The frustration and need to inflict physical pain on others that Addie experiences may reflect Maud Faulkner's negative traits. Perhaps Addie's being a symbol for his own mother is the reason Faulkner decided to kill her off at the beginning of the novel. Maybe he was dealing with his deep-seated desires in his fiction.

Mrs. Bundren needed to know that she was having some kind of effect on those around her, and words were not enough. Addie's need to inflict physical pain is evidenced in the first paragraphs of her chapter. She explains her feelings toward her students:

I would look forward to the times when they faulted, so I could whip them. When the switch fell I could feel it upon my flesh; when it welted and ridged it was my blood that ran, and I would think with each blow of the switch: Now you are aware of me! Now I am something in your secret and selfish life, who have marked your blood with my blood for ever and ever. (Faulkner 155)

With a need to make others feel her presence, Addie creates an almost grotesque image of herself. The woman who seems so lost in her need for recognition arouses a mixture of contempt and pity. David Williams writes, "The whippings seem to be a monstrous perversion of childbearing—an attempt by unnatural means to make blood other than her

own flow. Addie's hatred stems, of course, from stasis, from being confined within the schoolhouse and within the rudimentary life of the intellect" (108). It seems as if Addie wants to be a part of something; then when Anse makes her a part of his life and family, she resists and is resentful.

Addie does not appreciate or love her second son Darl as she does Cash. She loses interest in being a good and loving mother and wife. Maud Falkner also went through a time in which she lived to disparage and demean her husband, and she did so in front of her children. Addie's character, overbearing and contemptuous, is similar to Maud's.

Addie's rejection of Darl weighs on him his entire life. He knows from the beginning that he is the unwanted one, and throughout his adult life struggles with his jealousy over his brother Jewel. Darl seems to know that Jewel is his mother and Whitfield's lovechild when he asks his brother, "Whose son are you?" (Faulkner 195). The frustration of knowing these two truths and not being able to talk openly about them contributes to Darl's emotional problems and eventual madness. Because Darl never feels a part of his family, he has a hard time establishing his own identity. Irving Howe writes in his William Faulkner: A Critical Study, "Darl is the family sacrifice. An unwanted son, he seeks continually to find a place in the family. The pressures of his secret knowledge, the pain of observing the journey, the realization that he can never act upon what he knows—these drive Darl close to madness" (181). Had Darl received any love or support from his mother, perhaps he might have been able to center himself in his own existence.

Addie Bundren has no problem separating herself from her family. She views herself as completely independent, with no connection to her husband. Like Maud Falkner's attitude toward Murry, Addie seems to see Anse Bundren as a mistake she is made and cannot repair. Gwendolyn Chabrier states that, "Since she is not emotionally involved with Anse, she deems her children are hers alone. Consequently, she becomes Whitfield's mistress" (61). Addie's accepting the town preacher as her lover exemplifies her apathy for her husband's feelings and reputation. Addie even explains that she was not especially afraid of getting caught in her affair: "I hid nothing. I tried to deceive no one. I would not have cared. I merely took the precautions that he thought necessary for his sake, not for my safety, but just as I wore clothes in the world's face" (Faulkner 161). Addie's refusal to feel remorse for her transgressions with Whitfield shows her true heartless nature. Feeling that she is no part of Anse makes it possible for Addie to look elsewhere for what she feels she needs.

Unlike Cash and Darl, Jewel, the son of Whitfield, is Addie's favorite. She says of him, "He is my cross and he will be my salvation. He will save me from the water and from the fire. Even though I have laid down my life, he will save me" (Faulkner 154). What Addie tells Cora is actually prophetic in that Jewel does save Addie's coffin from the fire started by Darl so that her wish to be buried in Jefferson can be fulfilled. Jewel's devotion to his mother is never questioned throughout the novel. He makes the most significant sacrifice of all the family in selling his beloved horse to ensure the continuance of the burial journey. This act shows how much Jewel loves his mother and how important he believes it is to fulfill her wishes, even after her death.

Jewel's character must forgive Addie Bundren because she has a hard time expressing herself and would mistreat him for no apparent reason. In her book, Gwendolyn Chabrier discusses Addie's treatment of Jewel:

Though Addie adores her illegitimate son, she is basically incapable of love. This is demonstrated by the fact that she vacillates between whipping and petting him, a reaction which Jewel himself repeats with his revered horse . . . Addie's need to hurt her idolized Jewel is also her means of communicating with him, and thus, alienation becomes another problem between parent and child. (110)

Like Maud Falkner's, Addie's behavior is seen as confusing to her children. It is difficult for a child to grow up in a home in which he does not know if he will be praised or reprimanded at any given moment.

While it is not documented that Maud Falkner beat her boys, it is evident that she was quite disrespectful and hurtful to their father. Coming from a line of very prestigious and impressive men, the four Falkner boys probably found it difficult to see their father treated in such a degrading way. It must have been bewildering to young William to see his parents at each other's throats one minute and then getting along to the point of having additional children the next. What Faulkner is doing in As I Lay Dying is showing how people endure what seems terrible to others for what good they can uncover themselves. The good of a situation does not have to be evident to the outside world as long as there is some sort of satisfaction that is achieved between the parties involved. Jewel is a portrayal of Faulkner himself and his relationship with his mother. It shows emotional growth and acceptance of a woman who is not especially deserving of his

dedication and steadfast loyalty. The novel is not an apology for Faulkner's actions or his mother's; it simply reveals Faulkner's attitudes toward his family and specifically his mother.

The character of Dewey Dell creates an interesting situation for the reader. Like her brothers, Dewey Dell is not privy to her mother's affection. Addie states in her monologue that she "gave Anse Dewey Dell to negative Jewel. Then I gave him Vardaman to replace the child I had robbed him of. And now he has three children [Darl, Dewey Dell, and Vardaman] that are his and not mine. And then I could get ready to die" (Faulkner 162). This statement shows Addie's feelings toward her daughter; she believes it was her duty to her husband to have another child since her son Jewel was the son of another man. David Williams comments, "She means literally, of course, that her husband's daughter is a kind of balancing for the child with which Anse has been cuckolded; 'housecleaning' results initially in the increase of life. In a broader sense, however, Dewey Dell reflects the negativity of her mother in the act of conception" (110). Addie's seeing Dewey Dell as a type of payment to her husband helps to establish her apathetic attitude toward her daughter.

Dewey Dell is the only daughter of the Bundrens and would normally be expected to step into the mother position after Addie's death, but she is too concerned with herself and her own problems to think about the feelings of her brothers. Dewey Dell does not comfort or speak to her brothers about their feelings of loss for their mother. For example, after Vardaman becomes upset and confused about Addie's death, Dewey Dell does not even try to explain what has occurred:

"She never hurt him and he [Dr. Peabody] come and kilt her."

“Hush.” He struggles. I hold him. “Hush.”

“He kilt her.” The cow comes up behind us moaning. I shake him again.

“You stop it right, now. Right this minute. You’re fixing to make yourself sick and then you cant go to town. You go on to the house and eat your supper.”

“I dont want no supper. I dont want to go to town.”

“We’ll leave you here, then. Lessen you behave, we will leave you.” (Faulkner 57-58)

This is obviously not the compassion and understanding a young boy needs hours after his mother has died. Dewey Dell resorts to threats to try to get her brother to calm down. She really displays no sense of responsibility for him at this point or later. As Williams states, “She is preoccupied, of course, with a problem more urgent than her mother’s death; but that explanation belies the basic artistic reason for this silence. She is the mirror image of her mother” (110). As her mother provided little support and affection toward her children, Dewey Dell slights her brothers in their time of need.

Dewey Dell reacts to the circumstances of her mother’s death and subsequent burial trip with less concern than her brothers. In Robbing the Mother, Deborah Clarke writes about the Bundren brothers’ replacement of the mother with various objects: Cash with the coffin, Darl with the horse, and Vardaman with the fish. She explains that the boys’ replacing Addie with physical items is a symbolic substitution for their separation from their mother that doesn’t work (40-41). Conversely, Dewey Dell doesn’t need to find a substitute for her mother. Clarke writes about Dewey Dell’s ability to accept her

mother's death and move on to worry about her own problems: "Having buried the mother well before the epic journey begins, Dewey Dell has no need to replace the mother figuratively, for she literally replicates the mother in her own pregnancy" (41). Dewey Dell doesn't need to reinstate her mother; she is the mother. Yet she is reinforcing her failure to play a maternal role with her brothers by attempting to end her own pregnancy. The naiveté of Dewey Dell is evidenced by not only her unintended pregnancy, but her decision to terminate her child's life as well. Dewey Dell's blundering attempt to deal with her unwanted baby is important to remember in evaluating her role as another mother figure. Again the Bundren brothers are left with no mother to care for them; some of the boys can handle this void and some cannot.

This need for the mother's attention is the same need that Faulkner experienced, especially when Maud was pregnant with her youngest son Dean. William felt ignored by Maud and did not look kindly on having another brother. An additional baby gave Maud Falkner one more thing to focus her attention on other than the sensitive William. Dewey Dell's refusal to mother her brothers is important in that it could represent a time in Faulkner's life where he felt his own mother's denial.

The death of Addie Bundren and its consequences are especially confusing and bewildering to Vardaman, the youngest Bundren boy. It seems especially harsh that Vardaman is left to manage his emotional problems on his own. In the young boy's mind, the transference of his mother to Jewel's horse and finally to the fish is natural. David Williams writes, "To Vardaman as well, Addie and the horse are an equitable life force. The moment the woman dies, the young boy runs crying to the barn where Jewel's horse becomes a ritual solace to him through the stroking and smelling of its skin. In a

sense it is one confirmation of the ongoing character of his mother's life" (120-21).

Unable to accept Addie's death, Vardaman continues to worry about her after she's put into the coffin. He wants to believe his mother is still alive in some way and creates her in various forms, beginning with the horse.

The final transformation of the mother occurs in Vardaman's chapter in the novel that states merely, "My mother is a fish" (Faulkner 74). David Williams explains this seemingly odd statement: "In his anguish of mind, Vardaman thinks of the fish in sacramental terms; it too appears to be a given life, or, when ritually eaten, to be metamorphosed into the lives of its partakers" (121). What is ironic is that throughout the novel Addie does not seem to be "given life." Rejecting her children and having an affair with the town preacher are hardly activities of a stereotypical self-sacrificing mother. But, on the other hand, Vardaman is the most innocent of the Bundren children and may have not fully understood or felt the denial and apathy of his mother.

Addie Bundren's influence on her children stays with them even after her death. Although each person has his or her own reason for making the trip to Jefferson, the burial of the mother is what seems to force the family to continue what appears to be a doomed journey. Addie even has her own chapter during the journey in which she gives her side of things. David Williams writes of the significance of Addie's continuing presence:

The phrase "As I Lay Dying" raises a very interesting problem. Addie Bundren is the only person in the novel who dies, yet the past tense of the intransitive verb "to lie" suggests that she goes on speaking. The mind of a decaying corpse, in other words, looks back upon the story of its own

life as an already completed action; Addie Bundren speaks to us from beyond the bound of death. (100)

By giving Addie the power to speak after death, Faulkner gives her power in the narration of the novel. Her focus on the terribleness of living is maintained throughout the book through different points of view and through the experiences of the characters. What is certain is that because Addie believes that “living was terrible” her family is forced to fulfill her sentiment.

Faulkner's own family was forced to live up to their mother's expectations. It was obviously difficult for William and his brothers to be loyal and dedicated to such an unreasonable extent. Maud Falkner expected daily visits or letters, she never approved of any other woman in the boys' lives, and she would never accept any kind of complaint. Maud's influence was as lasting as Addie Bundren's, only in Faulkner's case his mother just wouldn't die. Faulkner only outlived his mother by two years. William Faulkner began dealing with his family's problems through his fiction in The Sound and the Fury and continued through As I Lay Dying. Although the two novels are quite different as far as the socioeconomic class of family being portrayed, they are alike in the void of the mother. The effect of this void was enormous in William Faulkner's own life and equally important in the lives of his characters.

Conclusion

The Sound and the Fury was republished in one volume with As I Lay Dying in 1946. Critics have paired these two novels together for various reasons including their similar themes. In Faulkner's Women: The Myth and the Muse, David Williams states, "The pairing of As I Lay Dying with The Sound and the Fury in the Modern Library Edition (1946) is more than the binding of one volume of temporally adjacent works; the theme of the former is also, in part, the lack of mother-love and its consequent impact upon a family" (97). Other scholars say that Faulkner was writing about the decline of the South and the traditional southern family. It is probable that these theories are completely true and not so far removed from each other, that Faulkner is showing how the southern families are falling apart because of the lack of the supportive and kind-natured mothers and the unfortunate inclusion of weak and pathetic fathers.

In both The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying the mothers are stronger characters than the fathers. In William Faulkner's own life, Murry Falkner was a broken-spirited man who had little true involvement with his wife and children. William was especially alienated from his father because of his sensitive, artistic side that his mother fostered. Because of his father's rejection and as a result of seeing his mother's degrading and belittling of his father, William Faulkner grew up in an atmosphere similar to that in both of these early novels. Faulkner, like the Compson and Bundren children, was raised in a home where the father was looked upon with contempt and the mother had a strong, yet emotionally distant relationship with the children.

Critics have noticed that there seems to be a reversal of roles in the families of these early novels. The mothers take the traditionally stronger male role and the fathers

take the female perspective. Both Caroline Compson and Addie Bundren exhibit strong influence over their families, including their husbands. Deborah Clarke states, “Critics have long castigated Mrs. Compson for being unmotherly, but maybe she simply plays the wrong parental role. She takes over the position of the father redefining the Compson family as the Bascombs” (32). The most striking example occurs when Caroline agrees to take in Caddy’s baby, only with the promise that Caddy be banished not only from their home but from their conversations as well. Clarke writes, “While Mr. Compson wallows in alcoholic verbiage, unable to impose order or even oppose his wife’s interdiction against speaking Caddy’s name, Mrs. Compson is redefining her family and her world” (32). Caroline sets the rules and the defeated Mr. Compson does nothing but drink more in order to forget. It can be said that the mothers run most homes, but the hard-nosed disciplinarian in the family is traditionally the father. This is the case in neither the Compson nor the Bundren households. Both mothers exert their head-of-the-household power over every aspect of the family life, including discipline.

While Caroline Compson is not portrayed as being physically abusive, it is obvious throughout As I Lay Dying that Addie Bundren is in favor of physically disciplining her children. Addie’s need to inflict pain on children began during her teaching career. As described in her monologue, she would take students who misbehaved and beat them until their blood ran, receiving some kind of pleasure from making them acknowledge her power over them. She continued to wield her authority over her own children with physical violence. Chabrier writes, “Addie’s way of relating to her children, unlike her socio-historical Southern counterparts is, as with her students, through physical cruelty” (110). Even though it was common for children to be

disciplined physically, even in school, the concept of a mother (or even a teacher) receiving satisfaction from harming her children is something that seems unnatural.

Both Caroline Compson and Addie Bundren are hard to understand. How can mothers not love their children? David Williams compares Addie to Caroline Compson: “where the destructive power of Caroline Compson has been accounted for in terms of human frailty and of social incompetence, no equivalent attempt has been made to resolve the character of Addie Bundren” (97). Williams seems to have more sympathy for Caroline than Addie; most people feel that Caroline’s “human frailty” is all in her head, and it is possible that Addie has a similar feeling of “social incompetence” in that she too married above herself. Gwendolyn Chabrier writes, “As both Addie and Caroline married men who were socially superior to themselves, they are consequently aware of the social dissimilarities which bring a greater division between them and their husbands. While Caroline is obsessed with being a Bascomb, Addie is likewise fixated with being buried with her family” (89-90). While Williams believes that without real explanation for Addie’s behavior the reader is left to view her as a simply heartless and callous individual, Chabrier and other critics think that Caroline and Addie are both emotionally void and apathetic because of some kind of deep-seated jealousy or resentment.

Maud Falkner could be described as callous and emotionally void as well. She too married for social gain and was continually reminded of the privilege and stature that went along with the Falkner name. Several Faulkner biographies indicate that Maud was full of resentment toward her husband (and perhaps his family). Therefore, it makes sense that the portrayal of the mothers in The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying is representative of Faulkner’s conflicting feelings toward his own mother. Was Maud

Faulkner's strength what helped him to succeed in life? Or were her sternness and overbearing demands what caused him so much trouble in his youth? Faulkner was trying to figure things out at this point in his career, and he was obviously starting with a careful examination of his family life and specifically his relationship to his mother. The mother's playing the father's role in The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying is consistent with Maud's role in the Falkner family.

Murry Falkner spent a lot of time away from home working, hunting, and many times drinking. With a weak father figure, Maud took over as the dominant parent in the Falkner home. This reversal of roles was probably somewhat troubling to the Falkner boys, who were brought up with complete adulation and reverence for their grandfather. To see their father perceived as a failure by not only his own father but also his wife must have disappointed the boys. This weak father figure found its way into Faulkner's early works along with the loveless and overbearing mother.

Faulkner based The Sound and the Fury's Jason Compson on his own father. Chabrier writes, "Faulkner's dislike of his father is also connected to Murry's nihilism, which Faulkner despised. The pessimism that Murry consistently voiced is that which the author later projects onto Mr. Compson in The Sound and the Fury" (37). The relationship between Jason and Caroline Compson is quite similar to that of Faulkner's parents. Jason's drinking problem and its effects on his marriage and family is especially reminiscent of Faulkner's childhood. The fact that the drinking made Jason even more compliant to his overbearing wife is sad in that, unlike Murry Falkner, he really does seem to love his children and want what is best for them. Jason is just too run down and tired of fighting, so he lets Caroline have her way. Maud Falkner took control of the

family as well when her husband was out on a drinking binge or in one of his discontented slumps.

In As I Lay Dying, Anse Bundren is portrayed as more of a pathetic, down on his luck kind of character. The character of Anse arouses sympathy until it is made clear that he too has ulterior motives for making the trip to Jefferson. Through most of the novel Anse is made to look lazy and incompetent, yet willing to carry out his dead wife's last wish. What is also shown is that he had little to no positive influence over his children. He does not really comfort the young Vardaman and is willing to take his own daughter's money to buy his false teeth. The most surprising thing Anse does is marry a new woman within hours of burying his wife. Again Faulkner creates a father that is in no way a good role model for his children.

The relationship between Anse and Addie does not seem to be especially healthy. It is painfully obvious that Addie is not happy in her marriage as this is exemplified by her decision to have an affair with Whitfield. She even comments that she would not have cared if people found out about her infidelity—she just kept it quiet to protect her lover. The strained relationship between her and Anse contributes to her unmotherly treatment of their children.

The marital relationships of both Caroline and Addie are not loving or even normal, so it is no wonder their children were emotionally wounded. What Faulkner shows in these two novels is that a family run by an insufficient father and a determined mother who feels the need to overcompensate does not create a positive atmosphere for the development of children.

Both Caroline Compson and Addie Bundren express the feeling that their children are not a part of them—that raising their children is yet another burden that they have to endure. Caroline explicitly tells her husband that Quentin, Caddy, and Benjy are “not my flesh and blood” (Faulkner 63). The only child she accepts as hers is Jason. This statement is similar to Addie’s favoring Jewel over the others. Both mothers harm their children by not providing all of their children with the love and support needed to mature.

The Sound and the Fury’s Quentin and As I Lay Dying’s Darl are similar; each boy is desperate to find some kind of identity, and when he cannot he is destroyed. They are both affected by their mothers’ attitude toward them. Quentin repeats the statement, “If I’d just had a mother so I could say Mother Mother” (Faulkner 105); Darl says, “I cannot love my mother because I have no mother” (Faulkner 84). Darl’s feelings of rejection by his mother make him seem especially comparable to Quentin Compson, and like Quentin, he ends up going insane. David Williams writes of these two characters: “For Darl, like Quentin, is thoroughly committed to an anti-maternal world of pure spirit. Whether these identical dispositions are caused by or provoke a lack of mother-love, they are subject to the same “terrible fate” (117-18). Although these two characters’ “terrible fate” is the same, one difference between Quentin and Darl is that, while Quentin’s insanity is created by his confused feelings for his sister as well as his sense of abandonment by his mother, most of what drives Darl toward insanity is the result of his mother’s actions alone. What is so sad is that neither mother seems to understand what she is doing to her children. Chabrier writes of Addie, “like the earlier heroine [Caroline Compson], Addie is also completely insensitive to the noxious affect her attitude has on her other children,

particularly on the most fragile one, her son Darl” (109). It is also possible that William Faulkner may have felt that, like Addie and Caroline, his mother was unaware of her negative affect on her sons. Perhaps he was using these early novels to show his mother what she was doing to him.

The characters in each of these novels most deserving of pity are Benjy and Vardaman. Benjy is the youngest brother of the Compson family and is mentally retarded. His mother sees him as a punishment for her marrying Jason Compson for social gain. Caroline is never openly affectionate toward him, yet tries to have others see her as a saint for trying to raise him. It is Caddy who really loves Benjy; it is she that he continues to look for and remember long after she’s gone. Having had no real mothering from Caroline, Benjy is in desperate need of emotional support; and, when his sister, the only family member to give it, is banished from the house, he is left with only Dilsey’s grandchildren to give him any attention. Vardaman is also left alone with no one to care for him. After his mother’s death, he is extremely distraught and even Dewey Dell will not take the time to explain what has happened. It is clear throughout the journey that Vardaman is becoming increasingly confused and alienated from the others. It is evident that he is going to feel the effects of his mother’s death more than any other family member simply because he is young and not able to deal with his feelings and the reality of the situation.

The one Bundren character that has no pair in The Sound and the Fury is Cash. Cash is the first born but is not at all like Quentin. He is the child, though, that probably had the most stereotypical relationship with his mother. Addie speaks of her affection for Cash in her monologue and prefers him to her daughter when she asks for him before she

dies. Cash is portrayed throughout the novel as the devoted and obedient son who never complains. It is possible that Faulkner is trying to show the type of son that he wishes he could be—a simple man who merely loves his mother without resentment, contempt, or complaint.

Faulkner's position in his parents' home was the favorite, much like the favored sons in the novels, Jason and Jewel. These two men receive what little affection and love Caroline and Addie possess. What is interesting is that receiving this partiality does not necessarily mean the two boys are the most successful of the children. Jason turns out to be the worst member of the Compson family; he is jealous, mean-spirited, and completely unhappy with his life. On the other hand, Jewel seems to be one of the strongest Bundren children. David Williams makes a comparison between Caroline Compson's favorite, the selfish, apathetic Jason, and Jewel Bundren, who sold his beloved horse to ensure his mother's burial: "Jewel, in this pure expression of selflessness, is revealed as utterly unlike Jason, the other beloved son of a destructive mother" (120). What is interesting in comparing Jason to Jewel is that they are completely opposite in their attitudes toward their mothers. While Jason seems apathetic and contemptuous, Jewel continues to be loyal even after his mother's death.

The pattern of behavior of William Faulkner's characters in The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying can be traced back to William Faulkner himself. It is more than likely that Faulkner wrote The Sound and the Fury as a type of self-therapy, in order to relive and recreate his painful childhood. The Sound and the Fury embodies the hurt and frustration of Faulkner's own life. When Faulkner wrote As I Lay Dying, although he was still dealing with issues concerning his mother, he was faced with serious problems

in his own life including his new wife's attempted suicide during their honeymoon. Estelle (and Faulkner) drank quite a bit and was hurt by Faulkner's alternating silence and verbal barbs; evidently she was overwhelmed and walked into the sea with the intent to drown herself. On the other hand, time away from his mother's home had given Faulkner the opportunity to think about his past and sort through some of his own emotional obstacles. Because of this opportunity for reflection, it is understandable that Jewel, second version of the mother's favorite, would be more compassionate, more forgiving, more like him. Joseph Blotner uses Johncy Falkner's My Brother Bill: An Affectionate Reminiscence to discuss Faulkner's personal connection to his works:

He was always frank to say he wrote from his own experience. . . . Others perceived this. "I have never known anyone who identified himself with his writings more than Bill did," said his brother Johncy. "Sometimes it was hard to tell which was which, which one Bill was, himself or the one in the story. And yet you knew somehow that the two of them were the same, they were one and inseparable." (213)

As Faulkner changed his attitude toward his own family, his characters evolved as well.

Both Jason and Jewel represent parts of William Faulkner's feelings toward his mother. Faulkner uses young Jason Compson to reveal the more resentful side of Faulkner's own disposition. Jason does nothing to keep the Compson family together after the deaths of his parents; Caddy and his brother Quentin are both gone, and Benjy is in the mental hospital in Jackson. Only Jason and Dilsey are left. There is little prospect of the continuation of the Compson line. Faulkner shows the reader what happens to the family of such a miserable mother. Meanwhile, Jewel is the side of William that went to

see Maud everyday, the side that wrote her long and loyal letters from other towns and countries. Jewel shows Faulkner's faithfulness to a woman to whom he felt that he owed something.

Like Jason and Darl, the two daughters of The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying may less obviously represent Faulkner as well. The feelings of isolation and confusion caused by the alienation of Caddy and Dewey Dell from their mothers is similar to Faulkner's own conflicted feelings living in his parents' home. Caroline and Addie's denial of emotion extends beyond their sons to their daughters. It seems harsher for these mothers to abandon their daughters, as the mother-daughter bond is what teaches young women to become mothers themselves. Nancy Chodorow writes about several theories pertaining to motherhood in her book The Reproduction of Mothering; one of the theories states, "women's mothering, like other aspects of gender activity, is a product of feminine role training and role identification" (31). These two daughters react to the rejection by their mothers in very different ways. While Caddy Compson takes over as the nurturer of the Compsons as long as she's able, Dewey Dell has no similar interest. Both of these girls are reacting based on their relationships to their mothers. While Caddy felt it necessary to take the selfless compassionate role, Dewey Dell chose a role closer to Addie's—that of detached apathy. This is well warranted considering Addie's treatment of her. Gwendolyn Chabrier writes of Addie: "Addie Bundren, the maternal anti-heroine of the South's lower class, is an example of Faulkner's negative incarnations of her socio-historic predecessor. Not only does she favor her son, Jewel to the exclusion of her other children, but she totally rejects her daughter Dewey Dell" (99). Addie had no interest in Dewey Dell; in fact when she is ready to die she calls for Cash

even though it is her daughter who has kept her bedside while she lay sick. Addie shows no appreciation for what Dewey Dell does; this must have been painful for the girl who was dealing with her own problems at that time. Faulkner's use of the only daughter in As I Lay Dying is completely contrary to his use of Caddy in The Sound and the Fury. Dewey Dell is a carbon copy of her mother; therefore, she is the opposite of Caddy Compson, who acts as a foil to her mother.

Dewey Dell's pregnancy is the one thing that makes her similar to Caddy Compson. In both instances, the girls' pregnancies take away from their ability to provide care for the rest of the family. In Caddy's case she has been the nurturer of the house, and her pregnancy causes her to have to marry and move away from home. Caddy has to leave her brothers with only their unloving mother to look after them. In Dewey Dell's situation, she is also unable to provide support for her brothers because of her obsession with ending her own pregnancy. In As I Lay Dying the mother is literally dead as well, so the rest of the family is left to fend for themselves without the help of Addie or her daughter. Faulkner's own feeling of abandonment during his mother's pregnancy and the years after can be seen in both The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying. As Caddy's literal motherhood took her away from her role as care-provider for the Compsons, Dewey Dell's impending motherhood took her attention away from her brothers and their grief over losing their mother.

Both Caddy Compson and Dewey Dell are taken advantage of by men, possibly because of a lack of feminine influence during their childhood. Yet it could additionally be attributed to the ineffectual fathers found in the novels; Nancy Chodorow writes, "Girls who grow up in family settings which include neither other women besides their

mother nor an actively present father tend to have problems establishing a sufficiently individuated and autonomous sense of self” (212). No one took the time to talk to them about what it means to be a woman, the need to protect oneself from men who only want sex without marriage. The sense of confusion and loss depicted through the characters of these two girls is similar to the sense of uncertainty and emptiness that William Faulkner felt as a child and young man. Faulkner signifies himself using Caddy and Dewey Dell to show the more vulnerable side of his character.

Faulkner’s negative portrayal of pregnancy throughout As I Lay Dying could be related to his pessimistic view of women at the time. Although he was working toward a better understanding of women and his relationship to them, Faulkner still was struggling with issues stemming from his mother and his rocky relationship with his wife Estelle. Perhaps at this point in Faulkner’s career he was showing the realistic side of life—he and his brothers had no Caddy to care for them. While Caddy Compson is the ideal, Dewey Dell is reality. Faulkner created Caddy for himself; she was his savior in many ways. Caddy got his writing career back on track, helped him with his damaged ego and self-esteem, and established some comfort in his fictional childhood found in the pages of The Sound and the Fury. Dewey Dell in As I Lay Dying is representative of the fact that William and his brothers actually had no sister; she is the reality of the four Falkner boys’ need for a sympathetic and affectionate mother, or mother figure.

In The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying both families are unsuccessful in preserving any kind of family unity or happiness. It seems as though Faulkner is saying that families cannot prosper under these circumstances. Parents need not only to take control over their children but also to love them; mothers need not only to show strength

but to demonstrate emotional warmth as well. William Faulkner uses his early novels to illustrate what his own mother and life in the Falkner household had taught him; Faulkner showed this connection more openly with the sons of the Compson and Bundren families and more subtly through the fictional daughters. By relating his own life to his novels' characters, William Faulkner showed that without a combination of authority and tenderness a woman cannot be a good mother, and without a decent mother a family cannot prosper and grow with any happiness. The void of an affectionate and supportive mother negatively affected the children in The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying just as it negatively affected Faulkner himself.

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