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Motion in Faulkner: An Analysis of Movement in *The Sound and the Fury*
Faulkner a pohyb: analýza pohybu v románu *Hluk a zuřivost*

DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

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Abstract

The Gothic is an extremely viable mode in the history of American literature. As a genre concerned principally with distortions and aberrations, it provides a platform for writers to voice their concerns about periods of transformation and destabilized boundaries. William Faulkner, one of the leading authors of the American South, frequently employs the Gothic mode in his portrayals of the South as a traumatized region trying to cope with the echoes of the Civil War and with the disintegration of old aristocratic values, which manifests itself in the decay of institutions (such as the family) as well as a collapse of individual minds. This emphasis on the human psyche is evident especially in the novel *The Sound and the Fury*, whose main characters and narrators are representatives of the various extremities of the human psyche (severe mental retardation, suicidal tendencies, schizophrenia and paranoia). Faulkner's use of the Gothic mode is rather unorthodox and innovative, employing inversions and parody which can be appropriately demonstrated by the category of motion and his use of the traditional Gothic devices and character types. The traditional motion patterns – flight and pursuit, quest and purposeless wandering – that are originally connected predominantly with only one Gothic type (the persecuted maiden, the villain, or the romantic hero) are transformed to emphasize the importance of the momentary mental state of the characters and, consequently, to encompass much broader, modified, notions of the Gothic types, pointing out their psychological complexity and ambiguity.

keywords: Faulkner, Gothic, Gothic character types, motion patterns, psychology, mental disorders

Abstrakt

Gotický román je v historii americké literatury mimořádně životaschopným žánrem. Vzhledem k tomu, že jeho hlavním námětem je popis zkreslení a odchylek od objektivní skutečnosti, je hojně využíván k zachycení přechodných období a rozpadajících se hranic. William Faulkner, jenž byl jedním z nejvýznamnějších autorů amerického Jihu, používá gotický román k tomu, aby poukázal na specifický dějinný vývoj regionu coby oblasti poznamenané občanskou válkou a mizením starých hodnot spojených s aristokracií, což se projevuje jednak v úpadku role tradičních institucí (jako například rodiny), ale i v rozpadu lidské mysli jako takové. Důraz na psychologii je zřejmý zejména v románu *Hluk a zuřivost*, jehož hlavní postavy jsou představiteli nejkrajnějších odchylek lidské psychiky: těžká mentální zaostalost, sebevražedné sklony, schizofrenie, paranoia. Způsob, jakým Faulkner využívá gotické prvky ve svém díle, je nedogmatický a inovativní; jako příklad poslouží inverze a parodie, což je znatelné z jeho zacházení s kategorií pohybu a tradičními gotickými prvky a postavami. Tradiční pohybové vzorce jako útěk a pronásledování, bezcílné bloudění a výprava, jež jsou původně převážně spojeny s jedním typem postavy (pronásledovaná dívka, zlosyn, romantický hrdina), Faulkner přepracovává, a poukazuje tak na důležitost momentálního duševního rozpoložení a psychiku postav obecně. To vede k podrytí zavedených konceptů gotických typů postav a jejich větší psychologické propracovanosti.

Klíčová slova: Faulkner, gotický román, gotické typy postav, pohybové vzorce, psychologie, duševní poruchy

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1. Introduction

The Gothic: Origins, Development and Relation to Faulkner

Gothic is a genre that eludes an exhaustive satisfactory definition, or, to put it more precisely, as a genre it is so flexible that it encompasses a broad range of definitions, allowing us to label an astonishing variety of literary works as 'Gothic.' By its very nature, as a genre based on exploring boundaries, transgression, ambivalence and excess, it is open to incorporating new elements and to adapting and re-adapting itself which, on the one hand, adds to its characteristic fluidity, while, on the other hand, it procures its immense viability. There are no required settings (although, certainly, there are places eminently associated with the Gothic, such as ruined mansions, graveyards, and other bleak, gloomy locales), there is no strictly prescribed plot nor a clear-cut set of characters. To be sure, there are tendencies, motifs and themes inherited from the first Gothic works such as the novels of Horace Walpole or Ann Radcliffe, but even these (the flight-pursuit scheme, the wandering outcast, the theme of guilt and haunting past, to name only a few) have been subject to considerable changes and numerous adaptations. Since Gothic is most concerned with deviations, it finds a proper embodiment in its own development over time. In literary history Gothic mirrors, as it were, its own concerns as a genre: establishing notions only to refute them afterward, subverting expectations, splitting, doubling, and contradicting itself, to render the reader characteristically ambivalent toward the nature of the work he is reading, as well as to make him aware of the thin line between madness and sanity, the real and the illusory, the moral and the immoral.

1.1. English Gothic

The beginnings of the English Gothic date back to 1764 when Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* was published. Walpole's novel, a pioneering experiment, established the framework for Gothic fiction in terms of its settings and plots and became the platform on which subsequent Gothic works were based. From the beginning, the Gothic construed itself as a literature of opposition, an avant-garde genre whose genesis and development reflected the social and cultural situations in eighteenth-century Europe. As Botting points out, "Gothic style became the shadow that haunted neoclassical values, running parallel and counter to its ideas of symmetrical form, reason, knowledge and propriety."¹ The very term 'Gothic' was broadened and modified to encompass this notion: from denoting anything medieval it shifted to support the notion of the opposition to 'classical.' Furthermore, as a genre evoking deep-rooted terror and anxiety, it faithfully reflected the situation of the individual living in the tumultuous times of reevaluating one's relation to the world, religion no longer being the cornerstone and the basis upon which the society founded its understanding of the universe.

The Gothic and the real world fatally overlapped especially in the 1790s when the popularity of Gothic fiction reached its peak and the threat enacted on the pages of Gothic works were mirrored by the echoes of the French Revolution. The most notable representatives of the 1790s Gothic writing were Ann Radcliffe, whose work was an example of the white Gothic with an essentially moral, unambiguous happy ending, and stressed the rational explanations of seemingly unnatural events, and Matthew Gregory Lewis, whose dark horror novel *The Monk* stands in stark opposition to Radcliffe's fiction: full of violence, and abhorring incidents, it portrays the perverted sides of the human psyche in all its brutality. Romanticism in literature introduces new devices and reevaluations of the

¹ Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996) 32.

existing Gothic types², as well as growing emphasis on the inner life of the characters. The era of the traditional Gothic novels ends in 1820 with Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the Gothic elements began to appear in a wide range of very different literary works: from Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, with the character of the romantic villain Heathcliff, to Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*, which introduced the spectral, past-ridden Miss Havisham. The Gothic mode continued to assert its viability, incorporating new settings and concerns, shifting from the romantic, jagged mountainous scenery to the depiction of a bleak, gloomy city, and from an individual to the relationships within a family, often haunted by secrets of the past. The representatives of the urban Gothic are for instance *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson, and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

1.2. American Gothic

In the history of American fiction, Gothic is an especially prolific and significant mode of writing. Indeed, it has been identified as a constitutive element in the genesis of American fiction as such. Leslie Fiedler famously argues that, "Until the gothic had been discovered, the serious American novel could not begin; and as long as that novel lasts, the gothic cannot die."³ Charles L. Crow supports this notion and broadens it to include other literary works besides the novel: "Much of the country's literature is Gothic: it is not an obscure area, but includes some of its best-known literary works and authors. *Moby-Dick* is Gothic, so are many of the poems of Emily Dickinson; so are *The Sea Wolf*, *Absalom, Absalom!* *Native Son* and *Beloved*."⁴ Thus, what in the English conditions begins as a literary undercurrent, a reaction to the ruling genre of the time, is in America from the

² Romanticism introduces the theme of doubling, as well as a broadening of the concept of a villain, who becomes the ambiguous, complex hero, often a seducer and a victim at the same time.

³ Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (New York: Stein and Day, 1966) 143.

⁴ Charles L. Crow, *American Gothic: An Anthology 1787-1916* (Malden, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999) 1.

very beginning generated on a much broader scale, as a mainstream literature, readily adopted and widely used by the nation's most acclaimed authors.

The aptitude of the Gothic writing to become the primary mode of literary expression largely stems from the specific cultural and social conditions in eighteenth-century America whose fundamental 'gothicness' is unquestionable. As Fiedler points out, "There is, indeed, something blasphemous in the very act by which America was established, a gesture of defiance that began with the symbolic breaching of the pillars of Hercules, long considered the divine signs of limit."⁵ The very foundations of the American nation are thus drawn upon a profoundly Gothic experience: crossing barriers and pushing boundaries; giving rise to a new organism which, not unlike the monster of Frankenstein, starts to live its own life, having the inherent capacity for both good and evil. The unprecedented experiment of American democracy may be identified as one of the sources of anxiety that contribute to the Gothic atmosphere; at the beginning the unstable political establishment was prone to fatal deviations, threatening to overthrow the still fragile social order anytime. Other factors with a distinctly Gothic 'flavor' enveloping the foundation of the United States are the religious situation (namely the Puritan heritage with the mirage of the Salem witch trials hovering over it) and the frontier spirit with its inherent potential for violence and its isolation.

Allan Lloyd Smith argues that the great merit of the Gothic is "its ability to articulate the voice of the other."⁶ In this respect, it was used by the American writers as a platform for voicing the concerns about the American national myth; that is a country starting its history with a clean slate, with faith in the individual and his success. This notion was challenged with the help of the Gothic texts and confronted with the idea of those who were perhaps too 'individual', and certainly not all that successful: outcasts and misfits, eccentric and

⁵ Fiedler 37.

⁶ Allan Lloyd Smith, *American Gothic Fiction: An Introduction* (New York, London: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004) 8.

otherwise aberrant characters and, perhaps most importantly, those of a different racial background. The concept of race is thus one of the principal themes in the American Gothic, where it found its appropriate outlet: as a genre concerned with extremes, the Gothic started to explore the polarities of black and white and every shade of gray in between.

The tradition of American Gothic (and the American novel, for that matter) was established by Charles Brockden Brown toward the end of the eighteenth century. Brown's work acknowledged its English heritage, having been written at the time when the English Gothic reached the peak of popularity. Brown introduced some eminently Gothic themes and characters in the American literature: among others the outcast villain embodied in the character of Carwin in *Wieland*, or the destructive potential of a brother-sister relationship in the same novel. His works emphasize the grotesque and exaggerated, and establish a rich tradition that would later culminate in the Gothic writing of the American South. Furthermore, he adapts some of the English motifs and settings, substituting corrupted European noblemen and haunted castles with evil Indians and haunted forests. This, Fiedler argues, has profound implications for the meaning the Gothic fiction tries to convey. While the British original is predominantly a reaction, "an enlightened attack on a debased ruling class"⁷, Brown's use of a man of nature to symbolize evil internalizes the notion of corruption, identifying it as something natural, stemming from within, inherent in the man himself. Nathanael Hawthorne explores the relation between an outcast individual and the community, pointing out the characteristically uncertain line that is drawn between right and wrong, moral and immoral; the line that allows Arthur Dimmesdale to function as a member of the community, while Hester Prynne, guilty of the same sin, lives on the side of it. In *The House of the Seven Gables* Hawthorne uses the traditional device of a haunted mansion and its cursed inhabitants to stress the rational explanation of seemingly supernatural events. The strategy of rationalization is used sparingly by Edgar Allan Poe, who in turn focuses

⁷ Fiedler 160.

more on depicting the individual, the distorted human psyche and the blurred boundaries between the real and the illusory, and employs the devices that enable him to portray psychological schism, the mirrors and the doubles. A direct predecessor of Faulkner in the realm of the Southern Gothic is Mark Twain who, in his later works, uses the aspects characteristic of it: the grotesque and the racial concerns.

1.3. Faulkner and Gothic

William Faulkner's place in the immense bulk of American Gothic fiction is undeniable. While Twain only used some Gothic aspects in his work (such as the motif of double in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*) Faulkner's fiction is consistently Gothic, so much so that it enables Elizabeth Kerr to call Yoknapatawpha "a Gothic realm" since only "*As I Lay Dying*, *The Town*, and *The Reivers* are more in the romance vein than some version of Gothic novel or romance."⁸ In his fiction he employs the Gothic mode to portray the specific cultural and historical situation of the American South: that of a traumatized region trying to cope with the echoes of the Civil War that find their proper embodiment in the decaying ideals of the Southern aristocracy and the continuously unresolved problem of racial enmities. The disintegration manifests itself on several levels: not only as a decay of a particular social class but also as a decline of the family, as well as of individual minds. Faulkner's fiction thus presents a variety of distinctly aberrant characters: mentally challenged, schizophrenics, sexual deviants and paranoiacs, among others. The cruciality of the past for the South in Faulkner's fiction is also embodied in the psychological state of his characters, most of whom are, for various reasons, haunted by the past: as an embodiment of the lost ideal (as, for instance, Quentin Compson), a reminder of the conundrum of one's origin and identity (Joe Christmas), or as a remembrance of old wrongdoings (Rosa Coldfield, Jason Compson). Most of Faulkner's characters are in search of something, be it personal revenge,

⁸ Elizabeth M. Kerr, *William Faulkner's Gothic Domain* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1979) 221.

freedom, a quest to reestablish a lost status of an individual, or a family; all of these potentially Gothic themes are reflected in the movements of the characters to which the Gothic motion patterns are readily applicable.

The grotesque, that is a combination of the ludicrous and the terrible, abnormal and distorted, is used as a strategy for portraying individuals (Benjy Compson), as well as part of a larger design. Kerr identifies three ways in which Faulkner transforms the Gothic mode: reducing it, inverting it, and parodying it.⁹ The grotesque thus goes hand in hand with Faulkner's ironical inversions and parodies of various Gothic aspects, most notably portrayed, perhaps, in his inversions of the traditional Gothic types (such as Jason Compson as the Faustian villain, or Benjy Compson as the romantic hero). The grotesque is often accompanied by macabre humor and an inherent undercurrent of violence, embodied again, for instance, in Jason Compson.

As was argued above, Faulkner uses the Gothic mode to render an image of the American South. Equally significant are his achievements in portraying the individuals. His frequent use of the stream of consciousness enables him to present deep psychological portraits of the tormented, deranged minds, turning some of his works into psychological studies. Even though he himself denied being directly influenced by Freud, his works nonetheless built upon Freudian themes, combining them with the Gothic that is equally concerned with the irrational and suppressed that works upon one's psyche. In this respect, the Gothic mode functions as a platform that conveys the aberrations analyzed with the help of psychology.

⁹ Kerr 237.

2. Defining Basic Gothic Terms and Their Subversions in *The Sound and the Fury*

Faulkner uses a range of devices previously employed by other authors of Gothic fiction. Some of the rooted, traditional motifs are used in much the same way as in the case of his predecessors (such as the dilapidated mansion of the Compsons which is an outward manifestation of their inner decay, much like the Usher mansion in Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*); others are subject to considerable changes, distortions and subversions. Faulkner's strategy of subverting the traditional Gothic types is clearly visible in relation to the three movement patterns employed in the Gothic fiction.

2.1. Traditional Gothic Devices in *The Sound and the Fury*

2.1.1. Mirror Image, Mirroring: Doubles, Alter-Egos, Distorted Images

The introduction of the theme of mirroring in Gothic fiction is principally connected with its growing concerns with the human psyche and the internalization of fears and anxieties in the nineteenth century. "Signifying the alienation of the human subject from the culture and language in which s/he was located, these devices increasingly destabilized the boundaries between psyche and reality, opening up an indeterminate zone in which the differences between fantasy and actuality were no longer secure."¹⁰ The hero of this fiction thus faces a sense of uncertainty; not knowing whether the powers lurking over him (recurring, haunting memories, obsessions) come from within, or from the outside; his fears are embodied in the figure of the double, the negative identity containing the repressed parts of his psyche, the shadow. The double thus denotes an inherent split in the personality

¹⁰ Botting 11-12.

projected outward; coming back to the person in the form of a mirror image, be it the abovementioned shadow double, the twin, or the distorted image (as, for instance, Emily Brontë's Heathcliff who is the distorted reflection of his lover Catherine Earnshaw, mirroring her psychological features and distorting them by magnifying and intensifying them). The alter-ego can assume yet another significance, being an inverted image, symbolizing the better self, "an external image of good conscience,"¹¹ as in Poe's William Wilson.

Faulkner employs the mirror device consistently throughout *The Sound and the Fury*. The reflection imagery is predominantly linked with the character of Quentin who is the representative of a split persona. Quentin's double is embodied in his shadow, to which he obviously ascribes a high importance: by virtue of his persistent tries to trample, drown, and "trick" it, he acknowledges its significance, perceiving it as an embodiment of his repressed concerns and fears – his negative image. Benjy functions as a moral mirror in the Compson family and in this respect he can be perceived as a modulation of the Gothic inverted image: being the one that reflects the vices of Mrs. Compson, Jason and Miss Quentin, he is the good conscience in contrast to which the corrupted personalities of the rest of the Compsons surface with greater clarity. Elizabeth Kerr identifies Faulkner's use of the mirror imagery in *The Sound and the Fury* as the means to show the distorted relations within a family.¹² The device originally used to portray psychological schisms within an individual mind is thus used in a broader sense to represent a disintegration of a whole clan.

2.1.2. The "Other Room"

The "other room" (the label being based on Truman Capote's *Other Voices, Other Rooms* and coined by Irving Malin in his *New American Gothic*) is the American continuation of the traditional enclosed space of the Gothic fiction. The haunted castle with

¹¹ Botting 121.

¹² Kerr 70.

its secret chambers and dungeons is transformed into the dilapidated mansion full of closed rooms, or into other places of confinement: prisons and mental asylums, all denoting either an involuntary confinement, an entrapment, or else a self-imposed isolation. The Compson mansion is full of enclosed spaces: Mrs. Compson's sick room which she hardly ever leaves, Jason's private 'chamber' which he keeps closed and locked, or Miss Quentin's room, the most obvious prison cell, with Mrs. Compson locking and guarding it every night. In Benjy's case the ultimate "other room" is the asylum in Jackson where Jason eventually sends him, but he is entrapped even before that, in the garden enclosed by the fence, as well as in his own mind afflicted by mental retardation. Faulkner thus uses the concept of the closed room to point out the alienation of the characters from each other as well as from themselves, which leads to an all-pervading sense of isolation.

2.2. Distorted Motion Patterns and Psychological Subversions of the Gothic Character Types

2.2.1. Flight and Pursuit

Being the central plot of nearly every traditional Gothic novel, from the *Castle of Otranto* to *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the flight-pursuit scheme is one of the cornerstones of Gothic fiction, and, interestingly, also one of its doubling aspects. The flight-pursuit motif is a complementary one, of which the notion of the double is the core. Fiedler points out this mutual aspect in the relation of the persecuted and the persecutor, stating that they are "each other's obsession."¹³ The traditional Gothic types inseparably linked with this pattern are the persecuted maiden and the villain. The maiden, represented for instance by Walpole's Isabella, flees from the threats embodied in her persecutor in order to protect her chastity

¹³ Fiedler 131.

and, consequently, also her life. As Kerr puts it, “she may be fleeing from her own darker impulses as well.”¹⁴ At any rate, it is a flight that acknowledges the importance of purity and passive femininity, and rejects the active, penetrating masculine element.

Faulkner's persecuted maidens Caddy and Miss Quentin are distinct inversions of the archetypal notion: displaying clearly masculine traits, activity and resolution, they “fled to, not from, ruin.”¹⁵ The flight, as well as the subsequent persecution, is thus a result of their choice, not a necessity imposed upon them. By flying 'to' and not 'from' they modulate the notion of flight, effectively turning it into a quest: the journey to embrace their 'darker impulses' embodied in their tendency to sexual promiscuity.

The villain, as the pursuing element, can assume numerous possible guises: the ambiguous, mysterious and enticing Byronic hero (embodied in Lord Byron's Manfred), the complex villain-victim of Romanticism who bears the traits of Faust and the Wandering Jew (as, for instance, Maturin's Melmoth the Wanderer), or the diabolical villain of the first Gothic texts, Walpole's corrupt prince Manfred, or Radcliffe's bandit Montoni. Especially the romantic treatment of the Gothic villain complicates the notion of a clear-cut character, turning it into a hero-villain, the rebel drawn upon the Promethean archetype or the Miltonian Satan, or else the villain-victim, the outcast, persecuted by his own sense of guilt. Faulkner's villains in *The Sound and the Fury* are, with the exception of Jason Compson, marginal characters. Caddy's husband Herbert Head is a profoundly unsympathetic and repugnant persona, a wannabe Don Juan (of whom the double is the real seducer, the appealing Dalton Ames). Jason Compson is the ironic inversion of the Faustian villain. Essentially pitiable, he is the villain-victim of his own choices, trading his soul not for knowledge but for a much more pragmatic reason: money, that for him equals the control of life which Faust yearns to attain through knowledge. Jason's pragmatism is, significantly, in

¹⁴ Kerr 22-3.

¹⁵ Kerr 58.

dire contrast to his psychological state, which is essentially befuddled and paranoid.¹⁶ His paranoia effectively thwarts his accomplishments, causing him to rapidly shift focus from one source of personal affront to another, distorting his pursuit into a purposeless wandering.

2.2.2. Quest

The Gothic quest, which, very much like the flight-pursuit pattern, involves “recurrent or prolonged motion”, is constructed as “the positive journey directed toward a goal” undertaken by the hero.¹⁷ It may encompass numerous motivations, both imposed from outside and stemming from within: the traditional quest of the romantic hero helping the persecuted maiden, a quest to restore one's rightful position (as Theodore in *The Castle of Otranto*), which may also develop into a quest for identity and discovering one's heritage. The hero may pursue a personal quest which may be either concrete and tangible (economically motivated) or a metaphysical one (the quest for self-realization, truth, or freedom). Elizabeth Kerr further subdivides this theme according to the moral motivations of the hero, whose purpose may be evil (such as revenge realized by murder) or good (the revelation of truth and restoration of justice).

The romantic hero mirrors the persecuted maiden in his morality and virtue. He is the direct descendant of medieval chivalric heroes as well as the protector of feminine chastity and the values connected with the quintessential persecuted maiden. In his chivalry he does not hesitate to fight in order to protect his lady (a fact embodied again in Walpole's Theodore who defeats a knight in combat to defend the lady's honor); he is thus associated

¹⁶ Jason's behavior shows several traits of a paranoid personality disorder, which manifests itself through “1. Excessive sensitivity to setbacks and rebuffs. 2. Tendency to bear grudges persistently, e.g. unforgiveness of insults, injuries or slights. 3. Suspiciousness and a pervasive tendency to distort experience by misconstruing the neutral or friendly actions of others as hostile or contemptuous. 4. A combative and tenacious sense of personal rights out of keeping with the actual situation. 5. Persistent self-referential attitude, associated particularly with excessive self-importance.” “The ICD-10 Classification of Mental and Behavioural Disorders,” 18 June 2011 <<http://www.who.int/classifications/icd/en/GRNBOOK.pdf>> 150-151.

¹⁷ Kerr 23.

with the active masculinity as much as the aforementioned villain.

Faulkner's inversion of the romantic hero is evident in Quentin Compson: a feminine, passive character whom Kerr ruthlessly labels as “narcissistic [...] and probably semi-schizoid.”¹⁸ Quentin has inherited the notions connected with chivalry, such as the concept of virtue and protectiveness of dames but unlike the romantic hero he is not able to fulfill his aspirations physically. Quentin's quest to protect his sister's honor thus dissolves into a series of repeated attempts to defend her, none of which is successful. Psychologically, Quentin displays an inherent contradictoriness, verging on schizophrenia¹⁹, which could account for his repetitive obsessive tries to pursue his goal, as well as his subsequent lack of purpose and direction to actually achieve it. The notion of quest as a positive, directed journey is thus effectively refuted; it is distorted and dissolved into the other two motion patterns, depending on Quentin's momentary mental state.

2.2.3. Purposeless Wandering

Purposeless wandering in traditional Gothic fiction was designed as a punishment; “imposed as a doom, cast[ing] a man out of human society into isolation.”²⁰ The protagonist upon whom this punishment was inflicted was often a romantic villain; an outcast, a blend of the archetypal Wandering Jew with a Faustian figure, repenting for his sins (which are often represented by what Leslie Fiedler calls the diabolical bargain – selling their souls for some kind of controlling mechanism, knowledge, or power) by perpetually wandering the Earth in isolation. The notion of the wandering imposed as a punishment which supposedly

¹⁸ Kerr 62.

¹⁹ Schizophrenia, while very complex as to the set of symptoms and criteria that must be met in order to pronounce the medical diagnosis, can be, albeit with a risk of a relative oversimplification, labeled as a disintegration of personality. This process is accompanied by a characteristic disorganization, such as thought disorder “with rambling, non-goal-directed speech that shifts from one topic to another” and deficit symptoms that “often lead to poor motivation and a diminished sense of purpose and goals.” “Schizophrenia,” 19 June 2011

<<http://www.merckmanuals.com/professional/sec15/ch202/ch202e.html>>.

²⁰ Kerr 24.

invokes repentance is effectively undermined in *The Sound and the Fury* by Faulkner's use of Benjy as a chief representative of this motion pattern.

Benjy can by no means be treated as a representative of the Gothic villain, nor is his wandering construed as a deliberate punishment with the purpose of repentance. In Benjy's case, the wandering is solely a consequence of his mental state, that is severe mental retardation, possibly connected with autism.²¹ Benjy's repetitive motion patterns can thus be accounted for with the help of psychology. His purposeless wandering, however, retains one of its traditional characteristics: that of the wandering hero being the victim, the isolated outcast at once abhorrent to the reader as well as arousing his sympathy. In this respect, Benjy can be perceived as the distorted romantic hero, a grotesquely portrayed knight, unable to go on a quest for his lady not due to external factors but predominantly because of his mental deficiencies. Even Jason, who is the second representative of purposeless wandering in the novel, subverts the original pattern. In his case, the wandering is unknowingly self-imposed, perceived by him as a quest. Significantly, even in his case the grotesque mode plays a crucial role in depicting his victimization, making him a pitiable, as well as a ridiculous, villain-victim.

Faulkner's use of the Gothic mode is rather loose, full of inversions and deviations from established patterns. This method is especially evident in *The Sound and the Fury*, which is by no means his most obviously Gothic work, at least not in terms of the plot and characters. On the other hand, Kerr emphasizes the importance of Freudian psychology for the novel,

²¹ Patrick Samway identifies Benjy's mental condition as autism arguing that Benjy exhibits several symptoms connected with it, such as "laughing and/or crying for no apparent reason; an aloof manner [...] sustained odd play; obsessive attachment to objects; apparent oversensitivity or under-sensitivity to pain; no real fear of danger; noticeable physical over-activity or extreme passivity[...]." He also acknowledges that autistic individuals "manifest some behavioral patterns of those who are mentally retarded" and states that they often exhibit "repetitive patterns of behavior." Patrick Samway, Gentry Silver, "In *The Sound and the Fury*, Benjy Compson Most Likely Suffers from Autism." 18 June 2011 <www.soc.nii.ac.jp/wfsj/journal/no12/.../EJNo12_Samway_Silver.pdf>. 4-5. Mental retardation can also be accompanied by specific movement disorders involving repetition patterns, such as the stereotyped movement disorder: "Voluntary, repetitive, stereotyped, nonfunctional (and often rhythmic) movements that do not form part of any recognised psychiatric or neurological condition." "ICD-10 Guide for Mental Retardation." 19 June 2011 <http://www.who.int/mental_health/media/en/69.pdf>. 63.

which in turn makes it “more directly opposed to a rational point of view than [was] Walpoles *Castle of Otranto* [...]”.²² Essentially a novel disclosing the depths of the unconscious, it draws directly upon the Gothic fascination with the human mind, especially at its most extreme, deranged and aberrant. Faulkner thus employs the disguised, modified Gothic elements in the novel not primarily to achieve an all-pervasive gloomy Gothic atmosphere but rather to emphasize the 'Gothic' we all bear in our individual minds: the unrealized ambitions, unfulfilled wishes, and past sins that come back to torment the mind and under whose weight the mind collapses.

²² Kerr 53.

3. The Sound and the Fury

3.1. Benjy and Movement: Along the Fence

3.1.1. Psychological Factors Determining Motion

Benjy Compson is one of the most peculiar narrators in all of Faulkner's (and possibly all modern American) fiction. Severely mentally afflicted, his perception of the world is limited, distorted and exceedingly objective (i.e. unaffected by his own mental projections) at the same time. When stating that his view of the world around him is limited, it must be emphasized that these limitations do not apply to the category of motion. Quite the contrary: Benjy is acutely aware of all movement and the rhythm that comes with it, even though his perception of motion is very specific and, for understandable reasons, very much unlike any other description of movement one can come across in *The Sound and the Fury*.

For one thing, Benjy sees and renders all motion around him cinematically; his perception of the world is essentially image-like and he thus experiences motion as a peculiar succession of images, not necessarily as a continuous phenomenon. Thus, in the initial passage Benjy observes: "It was red, flapping on the pasture. Then there was a bird slanting and tilting on it. Luster threw. The flag flapped on the bright grass and the trees. I held to the fence" (3). One of his recollections of Caddy is presented in a similar way: "Caddy was walking. Then she was running, her booksatchel swinging and jouncing behind her" (4). "There wasn't anything in the door. Then Caddy was in it" (28).

"Give him a flower to hold." Dilsey said. "That what he wanting." She reached her hand in. "No, no." Mother said. "You'll have them all scattered." "You hold them." Dilsey said. "I'll get him one out." She gave me a flower and her hand went away.
(7)

A similar observation comes also later on: “Versh's hand came with the spoon, into the bowl. The spoon came up to my mouth”(16).

From each of these excerpts from Benjy's narrative it is apparent that there is no continuity in his viewing the set of images. They might as well be put in an entirely different order; Benjy's mind does not seem to make a direct link between 'Caddy walking' and 'Caddy running', the 'Caddy putting her feet into more rapid motion' seems to be missing entirely. This characteristic perception of Benjy's is also reflected in the fact that he hardly ever uses verbs denoting transition: thus, Caddy does not start running, she is walking at one moment and running a moment afterward. She does not appear in the door; first, she is not there and then, suddenly, she is.

Similarly, Ben obviously fails to see the relation between one moving part of a body and the body as a whole. Or, rather, both the whole body and the part of it are of equal importance in his perception, which in the text creates an impression of the different body parts as if moving of their own accord, independently of the body. In other words, Benjy always reproduces just what he sees, without making an additional synthesis of the various things he perceives which would result in some kind of interpretation of what he witnesses: Thus, it was Dilsey that reached in but it was only her hand that went away. Similarly, it was not Versh who put his hand into the bowl, rather the hand went there itself. This specific viewpoint is especially evident when Benjy talks about himself. The scene in which Benjy burns his hand on the open fire is very illustrative.

I put my hand out to where the fire had been. “Catch him.” Dilsey said. “Catch him back.”

My hand jerked back and I put it in my mouth and Dilsey caught me. [...] “Get that soda.” Dilsey said. She took my hand out of my mouth. My voice went louder then and my hand tried to go back to my mouth, but Dilsey held it. (38)

The fact that it was 'his hand' that jerked back not 'he jerking his hand back' denotes quite

clearly the lack of control he feels over the situation; the involuntary, reflexive movement that does not stem out of his conscious will to move his hand, but that happens, as it were, by itself and out of the blue. Later, when he tries to put his hand in his mouth, he still only observes the movement that is made by the hand, identifying *it*, not himself, as the sole source of the movement. Doreen Fowler comments on this phenomenon, stating that, “Benjy's body seems like a collection of unrelated fragments that act independently of any central volition.”²³

Olga Vickery in her study of Faulkner's novels analyzes Benjy's mental processes: “Benjy's mind works not by association which is dependent, to some extent, on an ability to discriminate as well as compare but by mechanical identification.”²⁴ This observation applies especially to the way in which Benjy's (for lack of a better word) memories are organized, nonetheless it also reveals a lot about how he perceives movement – identifying it every time with only one concrete 'doer'; hence the missing meronymy and the relation between the meronyms and the whole.

To elucidate a little bit more exactly how his mind works, not solely in relation to movement, there is a valuable passage in the novel, denoting precisely on what grounds Benjy is capable to perform the act of mechanical identification (i.e. his sole mode of cognitive processing).

Versh took me up and opened the door onto the back porch. We went out and Versh closed the door black. I could smell Versh and feel him. You all be quiet now. We're not going up stairs yet. Mr. Jason said for you to come right up stairs. He said to mind me. I'm not going to mind you. But he said for all of us to. Didn't he, Quentin. I could feel Versh's head. I could hear us. Didn't he Versh. Yes, that right. Then I say

²³ Doreen Fowler, “‘Little Sister Death’: The Sound and The Fury and The Denied Unconscious,” *Faulkner and Psychology*, ed. Donald M. Kartiganer, Ann J. Abadie, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994) 5.

²⁴ Olga W. Vickery, *The Novels of William Faulkner: A Critical Interpretation* (Baton Rouge :Louisiana State University Press, 1995) 32.

for us to go out doors a while. Come on. Versh opened the door and we went out.

(18)

As Vickery points out, Benjy constantly identifies one word with only one object. Thus, “Each person is freed from the multiplicity of descriptive relations which make him at once man and brother, father, Negro or white. For Benjy he is forever fixed as simply Jason, Quentin or Luster.”²⁵ In the abovementioned scene, where Versh is ordered to take care of the Compson children, while the adults mourn the death of Damuddy, even the first names of the protagonists suddenly disappear. Therefore, what under normal circumstances would read: “Mr. Jason said for you to come right up stairs.” Versh said. “He said to mind me.” Caddy said. “I’m not going to mind you.” Jason said”, turns into a chaotic set of anonymous utterances, because the whole scene takes place in the dark and Benjy thus loses the ability to see who is speaking at the exact moment. Thus, it is apparent that the person’s voice as the sole means of identification is not enough for Benjy and the visual element is prominent in his perception of the world.

Even though he identifies a lot of what is going on around him on visual grounds, it is not consistently and exclusively the case. His other senses are equally significant. He can ‘smell’ every deviation from the established order and the word ‘caddie’ overheard on the golf course never fails to provoke an emotional response in him. In addition, he shows clear marks of synesthetic perception: “I could hear him rattling in the leaves. I could smell the cold. The gate was cold” (4). “They were washing down at the branch. One of them was singing. I could smell the clothes flapping [...]” (9). “I squatted there, holding the slipper. I couldn’t see it, but my hands saw it, and I could hear it getting night [...]” (46).

Yet it is movement itself and, in the broader sense, every kind of transition, the breaching of an established order, that he is most sensitive to. Even what other people would perceive as an essentially static experience, Benjy experiences as motion: “Then they all

²⁵ Vickery 34.

stopped and it was dark, and when I stopped to start again I could hear Mother, and feet walking fast away, and I could smell it. Then the room came, but my eyes went shut. I didn't stop" (22).

That Benjy experiences the different levels of consciousness while falling asleep, or waking up as motion is even more apparent in another extract, in which he makes a direct link between going to sleep and a moving carriage. "“Hum up, Queenie.” T.P said. The shapes flowed on. The ones on the other side began again, bright and fast and smooth, like when Caddy says we are going to sleep’ (8).

Donald M. Kartiganer argues that what makes Benjy so sensitive to motion, change, and transition, is, in fact, his tendency to experience and render the world around him statically:

[...] an entire world of stasis, of people frozen in the unchanging posture, endlessly repeated, which has become for Benjy the particular norm of their identity: Mother ill, Father detached, Quentin distressed over some breach in custom, Jason isolated, tattling. Caddy is the only example of change in Benjy's monologue, and her portrayal reveals most emphatically the static effect of his unpremeditated narrative. He constantly represents her in what is for him the terror of transition, threatening to expand out of some prior identity [...] Since Benjy's perception is grounded in a principle of exact repetition, he regards transition as an aberration, unnatural [...].²⁶

From this perspective, his sensitivity to all movement is very natural, stemming out of the deep-rooted terror of being deprived of the very cornerstone that constitutes his entire world: an all- pervasive, underlying order in which Caddy and her attention constitute the center, forever stable and unchanging. What happens when this order is breached is most impressively portrayed in the very last scene of the novel: “For an instant Ben sat in an utter hiatus. Then he bellowed. Bellow on bellow, his voice mounted, with scarce interval for

²⁶ Donald M. Kartiganer, "“Now I can Write”: Faulkner's Novel of Invention,' *New Essays on The Sound and the Fury*, ed. Noel Polk (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 80.

breath. There was more than astonishment in it, it was horror; shock; agony eyeless, tongueless; just sound [...]”(199).

Noel Polk goes even further in elucidating Benjy's relation to motion; not only does Benjy experience the world statically, “He assumes himself to be the unmoved and unmoving center of the world: falling, he feels the ground come up to hit him; whirling he sees stationary cows run uphill.”²⁷ Ben therefore relates everything that happens around him solely to himself, completely unable to externalize any sensation he experiences. “The ditch came up out of the buzzing grass. The bones rounded out of the black vines” (23). “The fire came behind me and I went to the fire and sat on the floor, holding the slipper. The fire went higher. It went onto the cushion in Mother's chair” (39).

This trait of Benjy's mind demonstrates itself especially when he does not feel the usual familiar control of his body and the usual order is replaced by disorder, which he experiences primarily as motion, as, for instance, in this drunken incident:

I wasn't crying but I couldn't stop. I wasn't crying, but the ground wasn't still, and then I was crying. The ground kept sloping up and the cows ran up the hill. [...] we went toward the barn. Then the barn wasn't there and we had to wait until it came back. I didn't see it come back. It came behind us and Quentin set me down in the trough where the cows ate. I held on to it. It was going away too. (14)

“ [...] the cellar door and the moonlight jumped away and something hit me. [...] I ran into the box. But when I tried to climb onto it it jumped away and hit me on the back of the head and my throat made a sound” (25-6).

Furthermore, Benjy's sensitivity to what is 'normal', in order, and what is abnormal is so prominent that he tends to experience every kind of transition and change as movement; concretizing the otherwise vague sensation of something being out of the ordinary. Thus, all the instances in which he enters into a changed state of mind – be it because of intoxication

²⁷ Noel Polk, “Trying Not to Say: A Primer on the Language of *The Sound and the Fury*,” *New Essays on The Sound and the Fury*, ed. Noel Polk (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 80. 141.

(see above), because he is gradually losing conscience while falling asleep (be it naturally or with the help of anesthetics), or because of some kind of distress – are experienced as some sort of movement. That can be seen in the scene where Benjy attacks the passing schoolgirls; a scene that presumably merges in his mind with his being put under before the operation that takes place as a consequence of the incident:

They came on. I opened the gate and they stopped, turning. I was trying to say, and I caught her, trying to say, and she screamed and I was trying to say and trying and the bright shapes began to stop and I tried to get out. I tried to get it off of my face, but the bright shapes were going again. They were going up the hill to where it fell away and I tried to cry. But when I breathed in, I couldn't breathe out again to cry, and I tried to keep from falling off the hill and I fell off the hill into the bright, whirling shapes. (34)

Therefore, from what has been said, it is apparent that motion has prominence in Benjy's perception of the world, albeit as a negative concept, disruptive and threatening, encompassing his worst fears, all of which are embodied in the loss of Caddy.

3.1.2. Purposeless Wandering

As was argued above, Benjy's inner world is essentially a world of stasis and to a great extent this fact is reflected in his actual motion patterns. First and foremost, his movements are critically restricted and therefore devoid of unpredictability and, as it were, of a sense of a real physical 'action.' Almost all of his motion takes place within the area of the Compson premises and it follows a rigid set of rules, both temporally and spatially: the regular Sunday trips to the cemetery, Benjy's visits to his private graveyard, or his going up and down along the fence, copying the movements of the golf players on the green (which also happens only on certain appointed days). All of this adds to an all-pervading sense of entrapment, stagnation (or rather non-development and therefore stasis) and confinement.

A key concept closely linked to the abovementioned themes is the concept of isolation which is crucial in identifying and establishing Benjy's predominant motion pattern: purposeless wandering. Ironically, in Benjy's case the causality of the concepts of wandering and isolation is juxtaposed, as if to reflect his obverse vision of motion as an essentially static experience. It is the isolation caused by his mental state that is causal; the wandering comes as a consequence, stemming out of the fact that Benjy's mental condition (as well as the impositions of his family members) does not allow him to perform a significant action, for instance (in terms of motion patterns) a quest.

Benjy thus spends most of his days going up and down the fence and around the yard, moving as if in circles, with only slight variations in his movements as can clearly be seen in the opening scene: "Then they went on, and I went along the fence. Luster came away from the flower tree and we went along the fence and they stopped and we stopped and I looked through the fence [...] They were hitting little, across the pasture. I went back along the fence to where the flag was" (3).

Kerr comments further on the theme of isolation specifically with relation to the Compson family: "[...] the Compson house is isolated in spirit from the community and its inhabitants are alienated from each other."²⁸ While the isolation of the other characters is basically self-imposed and voluntary, be it physical, or otherwise (Mrs. Compson spending her long days alone in her room, Mr. Compson setting a curtain between him and the outer world with the help of liquor and Jason purposefully avoiding any deeper emotional entanglements, replacing them with surrogate pseudorelations and being "by necessity as well as by choice alone"²⁹, Benjy's physical isolation is the result of the restrictions put upon him by others. Therefore, he can be constantly perceived as trying to transgress these boundaries and this tendency is clearly reflected in his motion patterns. Benjy is acutely aware of the divisive power of the fence and yearns to go beyond it: "We went on along the

²⁸ Elizabeth M. Kerr, *William Faulkner's Gothic Domain* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1979) 57.

²⁹ Vickery 42.

fence. We came to the garden and we couldn't go any further. I held to the fence and looked through the flower spaces" (35).

[...] I went down to the gate, where the girls passed with their booksatchels. They looked at me, walking fast, with their heads turned. I tried to say, but they went on, and I went along the fence, trying to say, and they went faster. Then they were running and I came to the corner of the fence and I couldn't go any further, and I held to the fence, looking after them and trying to say. (33)

None of his attempts at transgressing the boundaries is sustained enough as to give reason to be treated as a singular instance of going beyond the pattern of purposeless wandering. There are, however, two deviations from the established order (i.e. Benjy moving unaccompanied only when restricted by the area marked by the fence) that deserve to be briefly commented upon, namely the two incidents in which Benjy leaves the garden on his own. Once, he is sent by his uncle Maury to deliver a letter to Maury's mistress, Mrs. Patterson (which, as Kerr sarcastically points out, leaves "a reasonable doubt as to which is more idiotic, uncle or nephew").³⁰ This occurrence is contrasted with an earlier instance when Benjy undertakes the same mission with Caddy: "uncle Maury is going to surprise Mrs Patterson with it. We got to give it to her without letting anybody see it"(9).

While in the first instance things go smoothly because Caddy functions as a guide, leading Benjy through the unfamiliar territory, the second incident ends unmistakably wrong; Benjy fails to deliver the letter properly (that is to say inconspicuously enough so that Mrs. Patterson's husband does not see) which results not only in Benjy's utter bewilderment over Mrs. Patterson's reaction which is obviously vastly different than the first time, but also in Mr. Patterson's chasing Benjy with a hoe, which as Polk observes, functions as "a metaphorical scythe prefiguring his castration."³¹

Thus, there is a direct link to the second incident which eventually results in the actual

³⁰ Kerr 62.

³¹ Polk 148.

castration of Benjy. This time, Benjy finds the main gate open and, seeing the passing schoolgirls whom he observes everyday through the barrier of the fence “trying to say”, he steps out onto the street and catches one of the girls – an event which immediately provokes a reaction very similar to that of Mr. Patterson's: Mr. Burgess, the father of the girl, attacks Benjy and knocks him unconscious. The consequences of this later event are, as was pointed out, much more dire: the family has Benjy neutered (164-5).

The fact that every time Benjy attempts to physically leave the premises unaccompanied his efforts are inevitably punished subverts the original purpose of this motion pattern. While traditionally the purposeless wandering in itself was designed as a punishment in order to make the hero repent for his deeds³², in Benjy's case it has no such function since it is the only mode of existence he knows. In other words, he is not cast into isolation as much as he is born isolated. The punishment comes only after he tries to breach the pattern of purposeless wandering; its main purpose is thus effectively refuted.

The concept of Benjy's isolation is inseparably connected to the Compsons' premises. As was stated before, the area behind the fence symbolizes both limitations and restrictions; it is the enclosed space where he is confined and forced to spend his days, but the range of meanings linked to it goes far beyond the Gothic concept of the 'other room'³³, that is the ultimate confinement. While Benjy can indeed be perceived as the one who is compelled to wander the premises for the rest of his days in eternal isolation from the outside world, it must not be forgotten that what is beyond the fence is essentially ungraspable, alien and therefore infinitely threatening. The premises thus also function as a safe space, a kind of haven (even though, arguably, a rather bleak and dreary one) sheltering Benjy from the even more hostile and incomprehensible outside world. All of the elements constituting Benjy's world can be easily preserved there with no intrusion from the outside, forever keeping the order of things unchanging and unchanged. Since it has already been demonstrated that

³² 2.2.3 Purposeless Wandering, 19.

³³ 2.1.2 “The other room,” 15-16.

Benjy's world is essentially a static one and his biggest terror is that of transition, it can indeed be said that the yard is his Edenic garden in which he is locked for his own good.³⁴

Elisabeth Kerr explains his motion as well as his attempts to transgress the boundaries predominantly as a consequence of his searching for Caddy.

Benjy's activity is aimless wandering, within the confines of the Compson place, retracing the patterns of all his days, with past and present inextricably fused. His search for Caddy, for love and security, was recalled by the cries of "Caddy" from the golf course, his lost pasture, but he was incapable of going on a quest for her, except for his abortive escape through the gate, which Jason may have deliberately left open.³⁵

In this light, it can be stated that Benjy's moving around in the yard, as well as in the house, is not so much purposeless (because he is, after all, in search of something) as it is ill-aimed. It is doubtful whether what he is looking for is Caddy as such, since Benjy is unable to grasp the relation between the signifier and the signified and, therefore, given the time elapsed since Caddy has vanished from his life, it is highly probable that he would not even recognize the person he learned to know as 'Caddy.' Therefore he longs rather for all the things that Caddy used to represent: safety, love, and harmonious order. For Fowler, Caddy is the quintessential mother figure for Benjy:

Throughout his section, he obsessively pursues one goal: to restore a lost unity with the banished mother figure. Benjy has not elected to separate from Caddy, the representative of a fused existence with the maternal body; rather, he is forcibly divided from her by the Law of the Father. The fence in his section functions as a concrete token of this Law; it separates him from all he desires: from his pastures, emblem of the signified, from the physical world, and from the mother-surrogate,

³⁴ Kerr 57.

³⁵ Kerr 67.

from Caddy [...].³⁶

Despite his inability to go on a quest for Caddy for the reasons discussed above, he is still acutely aware of the divisions between himself and what he yearns for. The divisive function of the fence has already been commented on. Similarly, Ben tries to annul other separating elements:

“I could hear them in the parlor and I clawed my hands against the wall...“Hush.” T. P. said. “They going to hear you. Get down quick.” He pulled me. Caddy. I clawed my hands against the wall Caddy”(25).

In the scene of Caddy's wedding, Benjy is put under the supervision of T. P. but his longing to remove the division and be with Caddy is evident. Equally significant is a comparison between his behavior and that of Jason when they are little children. While his older brother obstinately keeps his hands in his pockets even if it inconveniences him (“If you keep them hands out your pockets, you could stay on your feet [...] You cant never get them out in time to catch yourself, fat as you is”), Benjy, who is ordered to keep his hands in his pockets, constantly takes them out as if reaching to break out of his isolation. Thus, it functions as a symbolical reminder of the restrictions placed on him by others – restrictions that Benjy tries to break. Significantly, the only character 'reaching through' his isolation to him, is again Caddy: “She took my hand and we went on past the barn and through the gate”(15). “She put her hand on my hand”(16). ““I'll have to take him to the house.” she said. She took my hand’(31).

It has been argued that Benjy functions as a moral mirror in the novel.³⁷ It is through the reactions of other characters to him that the reader gets valuable information about their integrity. Much of Jason's monstrosity, for instance, stems from his behavior toward his idiot brother. Similarly, Caddy's positive traits, her compassion and affection, are grounded in her attitude toward Benjy. Significantly, the concept of mirroring, one of the essential themes in

³⁶ Fowler 6.

³⁷ 2.1.2. Mirror Image, Mirroring: Doubles, Alter-Egos, Distorted Images, 15.

the Gothic fiction³⁸, is also present in Benjy's motion. He mirrors the movements of the schoolgirls passing alongside the fence, as well as the golf players on his former pasture; he and Luster as if play a distorted, grotesque game of golf of their own. The fact that their reflecting the movement of the golfers is just empty motion without reason or substance (as opposed to the players who follow a set of rules aiming toward a goal), as well as Luster's elaborate hunt for the quarter which turns out to be in vain, only add to the general impression of uselessness, the sense of entrapment and ill-aimed attempts leading nowhere that are embodied in Benjy's motion of predominantly purposeless wandering.

3.1.3. Flight – Pursuit

The flight and pursuit scheme is obviously highly problematic in relation to Benjy, since all of his possible attempts to escape from his confinement and (or) pursuing what he is missing (and which finds the appropriate embodiment in the figure of Caddy) are effectively thwarted by his mental condition. Nonetheless, the fact that Benjy clearly is a persecuted character can be identified as loosely fitting the flight-pursuit concept. It is true that there is little textual evidence to support an actual physical persecution (mainly represented by the figures of adult male authorities such as Mr. Burgess, Mr. Patterson, or Jason), but the sense of the constant restrictions put upon Benjy, effectively driving him somewhere else and preferably out of sight, is omnipresent.

Benjy is restricted by the fence surrounding the Compson premises and dividing what is left of the Compson mile from the former Benjy's pasture. Moreover, his motion is restricted even within the house itself, only this time the limitations put upon him are not solid, physical boundaries, but restrictions practiced by his family members. As Irene Visser points out when discussing Mrs. Compson's treatment of her youngest son, "Her way of

³⁸ 2.1.2. Mirror Image, Mirroring: Doubles, Alter-Egos, Distorted Images, 14-15.

dealing with Benjy is twofold: she either wants him to be quiet, or else out of the room.”³⁹ Thus, she is one of the characters that constantly put Benjy in his appointed place: out of sight. Most of the members of the Compson household treat Benjy the same way as Mrs. Compson does, albeit for different reasons: Mr. Compson out of the consideration for his wife (“I’ll take him downstairs a while”), Dilsey for pragmatic reasons when she needs some work done, while Jason and Miss Quentin both react in a very similar way and want to avoid Benjy out of aversion and disgust: “Has he got to keep that old dirty slipper on the table, Quentin said. Why dont you feed him in the kitchen. It’s like eating with a pig” (45).

In Jason’s case, the feelings of loathing and disgust are clearly mixed with shame and concern for appearances in the public eye. His struggle to keep Benjy within boundaries and essentially somewhere else are most evident in him and he ultimately fulfills this tendency when he eventually sends Ben to an asylum. This particular deed is the clearest evidence of Benjy being a persecuted character, since the asylum is the quintessential enclosed space, the ultimate other room, which in the American Gothic replaces the traditional setting of a haunted castle.⁴⁰

Like I say, if we’ve got to feed another mouth and she wont take that money, why not send him down to Jackson. He’ll be happier there, with people like him. I says God knows there’s little enough room for pride in this family, but it don’t take much pride to not like to see a thirty year old man playing around the yard with a nigger boy, running up and down the fence and lowing like a cow whenever they play golf over there. I says if they’d sent him to Jackson at first we’d all be better off today. (139)

The fact that Jason is Benjy’s main persecutor manifests itself most notably in Benjy’s castration of which Jason is the initiator. The incident with the Burgess girl is used as an excuse to perform the surgery and Jason is the probable culprit, leaving the main gate deliberately open, clearly hoping that the incident will finally persuade the rest of the family

³⁹ Irene Visser, *Compassion in Faulkner’s Fiction* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen Press, 1996) 157.

⁴⁰ Kerr 70.

to send Benjy away (33-4). The castration obviously renders Benjy emasculated and feminized, and adds to the notion of his being the helpless 'persecuted maiden.'

The character of Caddy represents the complete opposite to the rest of the family (possibly with the exception of Quentin, whose presence in Benjy's memories is, as Visser puts it, "shadowy" and rather indifferent, therefore not prominent enough to give some textual evidence as to how Quentin habitually treats Benjy in terms of his physical presence or absence). While the other family members function as restrictive elements for Benjy, Caddy is the only character that does not impose limitations on him. In the introductory flashback she is the one that 'uncatches' him, thus denoting some kind of liberating quality, and she more or less keeps these character traits for as long as she is physically present in Benjy's world. It is with her that Benjy runs freely in and out of the house, and even goes beyond the premises when delivering a letter from uncle Maury to the neighboring Mrs. Patterson. Caddy is patient with him, aware of his needs and she is the first of a number of 'attendants' that look after Benjy, but, in sharp contrast to the others, she realizes the importance of her role and, being the one whom Benjy follows everywhere, she makes an effort to explain the world to him and teach him even when it comes to movement itself, "Uncle Maury said to not let anybody see us, so we better stoop over, Caddy said. Stoop over, Benjy. Like this, see" (3). Therefore, when she disappears from his life, Benjy loses the one link that exists between him and the outside world and he is left in complete isolation.

3.1.4. Quest

For the reasons discussed above, Benjy is unable to go on a quest to locate his missing sister (and anything and anyone else, for that matter). Most of the actions performed by the Compson siblings have been identified, by various critics, as motivated by the lack of paternal authority and love, and the search for the missing affection is a primary driving

force for them.⁴¹ In this respect, Benjy is no exception and he is aware of the lack of love he is experiencing now (or rather what is presented as the 'now' to the reader), as opposed to the affection provided by Caddy when they were children. Unlike his siblings, he is not capable of the sustained effort and progression toward a goal, simply because his mental condition does not allow him to discern his objectives, let alone identify the means to attain them.

Despite his inability to set out on a quest, Benjy does display a consistent tendency toward one action: preserving his sister's purity. He is as concerned with her virginity as Quentin is, even though in Benjy's case the behavior is clearly unconscious, motivated by his inherent yearning to preserve things as they are, i.e. Caddy forever smelling like leaves, untainted by sexuality. In this respect he can be perceived as a grotesque subversion of the romantic hero, his chivalry realizing itself mostly through inarticulate cries and pulling at Caddy's dress. He does not fight for his sister but he does all that his limited powers enable him to do: he is capable of capturing Caddy's full attention when she sits in the garden swing with her lover, and prevailing upon her to take him back to the house. Caddy's date with Charlie is thus effectively thwarted by Benjy's intervention. Instead of going back to Charlie she washes his scent off of her at the sink, once more becoming Benjy's pure Caddy (30-31).

Benjy's movements serve to point out a critical inversion of two traditional Gothic types. Firstly, Benjy is the grotesque romantic hero who, however, is completely unaware of his role and thus cannot actively and consciously assume the position, his tries limiting themselves mostly to acoustic manifestations of disapproval. Secondly, he is the equally

⁴¹ Kerr 63.

Michael Millgate, *William Faulkner* (Edinburgh, London: Oliver and Boyd, 1961) 34. Millgate comments on the "lovelessness" of the Compson household which causes the disintegration of the family.

David Minter in "Faulkner, Childhood and the Making of the Novel," *The Sound and The Fury*, ed. David Minter (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994) 347., points out the debilitating effect of the parents inadequacies on their children.

grotesque persecuted maiden: moaning and slobbering, moving “with a shambling gait like a trained bear” (171), unaware of the concept of chastity he is to defend, as well as the reasons for the punishment inflicted upon him (in the form of castration) when he, at least in the eyes of the other characters, does exhibit his sexuality. His perpetual wandering is not a token of repentance, nor a symbol of banishment but solely a reflection of his psychological limitations. He is, not unlike Quentin, the romantic hero lost in his own mind.

3.2. Quentin and Movement: The Fainting Fighter

3.2.1. Psychological Factors Determining Motion

Quentin, the oldest of the four Compson children, has been succinctly analyzed especially in terms of his relation to time and the themes affiliated to it. He is prevalently viewed as a profoundly tragic character and, at the same time, as a character who eludes an all-comprising definition as to what his tragedy precisely revolves around and what his motivations are. Several critics have pointed out his essentially contradictory, schizophrenic nature⁴², whose interpretation is critical in attempting to establish a sustained analysis of his movements. In none of the other characters in *The Sound and the Fury* is the category of physical motion so closely connected to their mental state. Thus, when Visser observes that,

Quentin is a protagonist who is both hero and antihero; noble-minded if Quichotic; sensitive if self-centred; innocent yet preoccupied with sin; brave yet afraid to face his own weaknesses; intelligent yet unable to distinguish shades and nuances of ethical behaviour; a Romantic, yet also a Puritan; a boy on the brink of adulthood, torn between feelings of incompetence and superiority, of love and hate,⁴³

⁴² For instance, John Irwin in *Doubling and Incest/Repetition and Revenge* (Baltimore, London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996) 28-9., points out that Quentin's personality splits into a good half and a bad half, a bipolarity that is typical of schizophrenia.

⁴³ Irene Visser, *Compassion in Faulkner's Fiction* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen Press, 1996) 201.

it is made clear that all of the facets of Quentin's complex personality must be taken into account when analyzing and interpreting the movement undertaken by him, because the outcome of the movement analysis is directly dependent on the personal traits that we choose to emphasize. Thus, most of his actions can either be formulated as a quest or a flight, depending on the point of view we adopt; in other words (to choose one of Visser's distinctions) whether we perceive Quentin as a hero associated with positive values, or as an anti-hero embodying and encompassing the negative ones.

3.2.2. Quest

Lawrance Thompson in his analysis of the mirror analogues in *The Sound and the Fury* sees Quentin as an “obverse reflection of Ben.”⁴⁴ This observation is valid not only structurally and in terms of general life principles (Benjy being identified with positive values, such as order, while Quentin is identified with the negative ones) but also in the case of physical movement itself. While Benjy's section is predominantly passive and static, the only consistently occurring motion pattern being purposeless wandering, Quentin's section of the narrative is loaded with motion: All of the events taking place on June 2, 1910 comprise a journey. Motion thus forms a frame of his narrative as such and his prevalent motion pattern is the exact opposite of purposeless wandering: a quest.

Moreover, it can be said that Quentin, not unlike Benjy, is also very sensitive to motion, albeit for different reasons, motivated first and foremost by his much-discussed attitude to time. An analysis of Quentin's obsession with time is not an objective of this thesis, yet time as a concept goes hand in hand with motion, and since Quentin's main problem and the source of his sorrow is the fact that time inexorably keeps passing, wearing away the big, supposedly steady ideas Quentin wants to believe are permanent, it can be

⁴⁴ Lawrance Thompson, “Mirror Analogues in *The Sound and the Fury*,” *Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Robert Penn Warren (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1966) 114.

stated that he is obsessed with motion as much as he is obsessed with the actual passing of time. Namely, he is obsessed with stopping all the motion there is. His main wish is to arrest the movement and detain the perfect moment (e.g. Caddy's innocence and consequently the family's untainted honor) when the world is freed of potential change that threatens to undermine the absolute, complete order.

If we perceive Quentin as a self-appointed guardian of values and thus ascribe an active role to him, most of the motion undertaken by him must then be treated in similar terms; as an active, progressive journey: a quest.⁴⁵ Throughout the narrative there are numerous instances pointing out a crucial contradiction inherent in Quentin's physical movement. Especially in Benjy's section, Quentin is depicted as an essentially passive character; tentative, always lagging behind, turning his face to the wall and avoiding confrontation ("if we go slow it'll be too dark for them to see"-13), yet Visser is equally justified in pointing out that from Benjy's narrative "the reader's scanty information on Quentin is that he is a boy who easily, and for various reasons gets into fights (chivalric, on behalf of the school mistress; outraged, on behalf of Benjy, who has been fed drunk by T.P.; indignant, for the sake of propriety, when Caddy takes off her dress to go into the water.)"⁴⁶ Indeed, the fight scenes are so prominent in Quentin's otherwise rather passive movement that they can be said to form a motion pattern, i.e. they function as a constitutive part of Quentin's self-appointed role of the guardian of the Compson honor, the brother avenger in relation to Caddy.

The following excerpt from Benjy's section demonstrates that very early on Quentin adopts a protective attitude to women, especially those in his own family whom he inevitably associates with the noble values that the Compson family, in his opinion, should represent:

"What was that." Caddy said. She put her hand on my hand. "That was Mother."

⁴⁵ 2.2.2. Quest, 18-19.

⁴⁶ Visser 164.

Quentin said. The spoon came up and I ate, then I cried again. "Hush." Caddy said. But I didn't hush and she came and put her arms around me. Dilsey went and closed both the doors and then we couldn't hear it. "Hush, now." Caddy said. I hushed and ate. Quentin wasn't eating, but Jason was. "That was Mother." Quentin said. He got up. "You set (sic) right down." Dilsey said. "They got company in there, and you in them muddy clothes. [...]" "She was crying." Quentin said. (17)

Quentin immediately stands up with resolve when he hears a woman, moreover a woman who is "a lady," cry, as if indicating that he is ready to offer his chivalrous assistance to a damsel in distress. Similarly, Quentin stands to oppose everyone who in his eyes threatens, or violates, the chastity of his sister. The concept of chastity is of the utmost importance here, because it is the embodiment of female honor, which in turn functions as "a verifier of family status."⁴⁷ Quentin thus reacts intensely (not unlike Benjy when he senses a breach in order) to every kind of violation of family honor, indeed even to a slightest kind of reminder of his sister's sexuality: "Caddy took her dress off and threw it on the bank. Then she didn't have on anything but her bodice and drawers, and Quentin slapped her and she slipped and fell down in the water" (12).

Similarly, he makes a persistent effort to control his sister's behavior and put her in her appointed place when she, in his opinion, breaches the boundaries and acts inappropriately. "Red print of my hand coming up through her face like turning a light on under your hand her yes going bright It's not for kissing I slapped you [...]" "It's for letting it be some darn town squirt [...]" (84-5). When Caddy comes home from her date with Dalton Ames, Quentin makes a point of fastening the gate behind her, as if to indicate that his role is to establish boundaries for his sister, and, if need be, impose them on her. ("I'm stronger than you I'll make you"). His confrontations with Dalton Ames, Herbert Head and Gerald Bland (of which the first one is obviously presented as a duel) are the clearest examples of

⁴⁷ Diane Roberts, *Faulkner and Southern Womanhood* (Athens :University of Georgia Press, 1994) 112.

Quentin's assuming the role of guardian of his sister's honor.

Ill (sic) give you till sundown

Quentin

he raked the cigarette ash carefully off against the rail he did it slowly and carefully
like sharpening a pencil my hands had quit shaking

Listen no good taking it so hard its not your fault kid it would have been some other
fellow

did you ever have a sister did you

no but theyre all bitches

I hit him (101-2)

Even if Quentin is clearly overwhelmed by Ames' authority (which probably largely stems from the fact that he used to be in the military), he still asks him to come to the bridge and face him, faithful to his role of a righteous, protective brother. The impact of Quentin's request ("I came to tell you to leave town") is considerably mitigated by Quentin's shaking and his eventual fainting in Ames' arms. Nonetheless, what disarms Quentin the most is not Dalton's formidability as an adversary, but rather his noble gesture at the end of their encounter ("you better not try to walk take my horse"), which Quentin in his clear-cut vision of the world as a place consisting solely of absolute concepts, is not able to reconcile with his perception of Ames as a mere villain who seduced his sister. Because he recognizes this underlying chivalrous streak in Dalton (a trait which he evidently sees first and foremost in himself) he cannot help admiring him.

Herbert Head, on the other hand, is unambiguous in his role of a morally corrupt man, a veritable villain who gets around by cheating and abusing others. Quentin thus has much less trouble to fit him into his pattern where the world consists principally of people who are either morally unimpeachable, or morally corrupt, in which case they need to be set right: ("I dont (sic) know but one way to consider cheating I dont think I'm likely to learn different

at Harvard” - 69).

The concept of Quentin as a romantic cavalier, protector of women, is not only his mental construct: it is observed and commented upon by other characters as well. Thus, when Quentin indignantly refuses Head's money after his future brother-in-law in an avuncular manner offers to tell him “about a little widow over in town”, Head immediately recognizes Quentin's motivations and preoccupations and retorts: “[...]...if you were not a damned fool you'd have seen that I've got them too tight for any half-baked Galahad of a brother [...]”(70). Similarly, Quentin's roommate Shreve compares him to Walter Scott's Lochinvar (59), while Spoade, another of his Harvard friends, calls him “the champion of dames” (106). Even Quentin's own mother recognizes the chivalrous streak in him and evidently appeals to his senses by assuming the role of the helpless, fragile Southern Belle: “Dont (sic) ask Quentin he and Mr Compson both feel a little insulted when I am strong enough to come down to the table [...]”(60).

Even Quentin's going to Harvard, an example of the most daring movement in space undertaken by a character in *The Sound and the Fury*, can be formulated as a quest based on similar principles as Quentin's 'duels,' that is to maintain the family status and thus fulfill the wish of his mother, for whom the fact that Quentin attends a prestigious school is a source of great pride. She repeatedly refers to Quentin as her “Harvard boy” and brags about it to Caddy's future husband Herbert Head upon Head's introduction to the family (59). And since “no compson (sic) has ever disappointed a lady” (113), Quentin feels obliged to comply with his mother's wishes, even if it means a decision that would later become a source of great torment and remorse for him.⁴⁸

It has already been mentioned that the events of Quentin's last day constitute a journey. It is a journey with a clear aim and Quentin proceeds meticulously with the plan he has laid out. He makes an impression that he is ticking off items on a list of chores: He

⁴⁸ 3.2.3. Quentin, Flight – Pursuit, 46.

packs all his things, bathes and shaves, addresses a couple of letters, and goes to a hardware store to buy flat-irons which he later hides under a bridge. His resolve, which is otherwise a scanty occurrence for him, is evident: When confronted with difficulties, younger Quentin would turn his face to the wall, withdrawing from the world around him. When facing both the literary and figurative walls on his last day, the Quentin of June 2, 1910 decides to climb them (84-5). Similarly, he incorporates even seemingly meaningless incidents into the larger picture. His encounter with the little Italian girl who is visibly lost thus changes from a random meeting into a quest of returning the girl to her home and restoring order.

Even Quentin's suicide, a theme that has received considerable critical attention and yielded numerous very varied interpretations⁴⁹, can be perceived in terms of a quest. As a person who is prone to think in absolutes, Quentin is clearly tormented by his own contradictoriness. His is a world consisting almost entirely of ideas, preferably of big, eternal concepts, such as purity, truth, virtue and honor. Change is not a constitutive part of his belief system; it is the primary symptom of the working of his sworn enemy, time. As Mr. Compson points out, temporary is "the saddest word" for Quentin (113) and since death means achieving a state of permanence, he goes on a quest to defeat temporariness and attain the state of stillness, which is what he yearns for and what goes hand in hand with his identity as the guardian of values, an emissary of 'unchange.'

3.2.3. Flight – Pursuit

Throughout *The Sound and the Fury* there is evidence of Quentin being a rather passive, physically inadequate character. From Benjy's narrative we get the sense that his motion is essentially tentative and slow and is often put in direct opposition to the much more active, daring movement of Caddy and other characters. "If we go slow, it'll be dark

⁴⁹ While Olga Vickery ascribes a completely passive role to Quentin, labeling his death as a "a withdrawal," John Irwin acknowledges the inherent duality of his deed: "[...] the subject is both the agent and the victim, at once active and passive, a conjunction of masculine and feminine." Vickery 38.
Irwin 154.

when we get there.” Quentin said. “I’m not going slow.” Caddy said. We went up the hill, but Quentin didn’t come. He was down at the branch[...]’ (13). “Quentin climbed up the bank and tried to catch Versh, but Versh ran away and Quentin couldn’t” (12). “Quentin wasn’t coming with us. He was sitting on the kitchen steps”(19).

This inherent passivity of Quentin’s can be directly linked to the notion of him being a character with obvious feminine traits.⁵⁰ Significantly, the femininity surfaces at its clearest in the instances when Quentin tries to assert his masculinity, be it in the role of brother avenger, or brother seducer. When challenging Dalton Ames he does not form a fist; instead he attempts to slap him with an open hand, like a girl (102). The ultimate proof of his femininity is the fact that both times he physically faces an adversary, first Ames and later Gerald Bland, the fight is effectively over before it even starts, because Quentin faints.

Similarly, in the scene by the branch, which Kerr identifies as “one of the few obviously Gothic scenes of potential violence”⁵¹ Quentin tries to assert his position of the man with Caddy. He fails completely and their position of man and woman is juxtaposed: Quentin is unable to use the knife to assert his will, instead he succumbs to Caddy’s (“push it are you going to...do you want me to...yes push it”-96) and starts crying. At one point, the juxtaposition of roles between Caddy and Quentin serves to reveal an ironic inversion of the traditional Gothic types: While Quentin becomes the persecuted maiden, Caddy assumes the role of cavalier on horse, coming to rescue Quentin (103). Quentin’s inherent passivity and femininity is thus a clear motivating force regarding the second motion pattern recurring in Quentin’s movement – that of a flight and pursuit.

Quentin is a persecuted character, but in contrast with the traditional Gothic type, he is prevalently haunted not by actual villains, but by vile thoughts and his own conscience.

⁵⁰ John Irwin identifies Quentin’s femininity as directly connected to his virginity. In the world where the man is supposed (unlike the woman) to lose his virginity as soon as possible, Quentin is unable to “assume the role of a man” and is thus rendered feminised and in stark opposition to his sister. Irwin 38.

⁵¹ Elizabeth M. Kerr, *William Faulkner’s Gothic Domain* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1979) 71.

Throughout his section there are mentions of his looking back (54-5, 84) that add to the notion of his being on the run. Similarly, the constant allusions to his shadow, which Quentin persistently tries to “trick” and annihilate, function as a reminder of his repressing the dark, negative side of his personality. Lawrance Thompson elucidates the problem of Quentin's haunted conscience when he identifies Quentin as one of the culprits in the misfortunes of the Compson family: “Psychologically unbalanced by his own inner and outer conflicts, Quentin is represented as being partly responsible not only for what has happened to himself but also for what has happened to some other members of his family.”⁵² It is obvious that Quentin is tormented by his conscience and haunted by the idea that it was for his sake that his family sold his youngest brother's pasture, which obliges Quentin to finish school and compensate for the sacrifice that has been made for him.

“Going to Harvard. We have sold Benjy's *He lay on the ground under the window, bellowing. We have sold Benjy's pasture so that Quentin may go to Harvard* a brother to you. Your little brother” (60). “To leave Harvard *your mother's dream for sold Benjy's pasture for*” (65). “[...] *money they sold the pasture for so you could go to Harvard dont you see you've got to finish now if you don finish he'll have nothing Sold the pasture*” (79)

Quentin's feelings of guilt and indebtedness become even more profound when Caddy, who is about to get married and leave the family, makes him promise to take care of father and Benjy and not let Benjy be sent to Jackson; a promise, Quentin knows only too well, he will not be able to keep. Ironically then, the actual journey to Harvard may be construed as both the flight from the bleak, oppressive surroundings in his family, and as a motivation for a further escape, caused by the feelings of guilt. Eventually, the sense of being persecuted can be identified as one of Quentin's chief motivations to perform the ultimate act of escape: a suicide.

⁵² Thompson 121.

It has already been pointed out that Quentin's suicide is very difficult to interpret, chiefly because it is the ultimate manifestation of Quentin's critically contradictory nature. Thus, it can be construed both as an active deed, a part of the quest design, and a passive one, a withdrawal. Kerr perceives Quentin's suicide as connecting the notions of quest and escape; the suicide is chiefly caused by Quentin's failure to complete the quest and fulfill the role of the romantic hero, that is to protect his sister's threatened honor.⁵³ The notion of Quentin's suicide as an act of deliverance from his mental torment, the escape from the grief that is both self-inflicted and put upon Quentin by the external conditions (the virtually nonexistent mother, the father whose nihilistic vision of the world compromises Quentin's own), is textually supported by Quentin's own words: "A quarter hour yet. And then I'll not be. The peace fullest words. Peace fullest words. Non fui. Sum. Fui. Non sum. Somewhere I heard bells once. Mississippi or Massachusetts. I was. I am not"(110).

An ironic twist in Quentin's narrative, turning a quest into a flight-pursuit pattern, is provided by the episodic story taking place on Quentin's last day, namely his encounter of the seemingly lost Italian girl. Faithful to his guardian role, Quentin makes an attempt to find out where the child lives, and deliver her safely to her parents. However, the noble protector suddenly changes into a supposed villain; when the girl's brother Julio misreads Quentin's intentions and behavior and accuses him of kidnapping ("stealing") his little sister. Thus, while Quentin perceives himself as a protector of the little girl, the sheriff hunts all over the town for an allegedly dangerous criminal ("It was about two hours before we caught him"-91). When Quentin realizes the misunderstanding and the inherent irony of his mistaken purpose, he breaks into an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

"I'll h-have to qu-quit," I said. "It'll stop in a mu-minute. The other time it said ah ah ah," I said, laughing. "Let me sit down a while." I sat down, they watching me, and the little girl with her streaked face and the gnawed looking loaf, and the water swift

⁵³ Kerr 59.

and peaceful below the path. After a while the laughter ran out. But my throat wouldn't quit trying to laugh, like retching after your stomach is empty. (88-9)

The episode serves as a humorous reminder of the essential contradictoriness of Quentin's nature and poignantly reveals that no matter how apparently clear his intentions might be, Quentin is infinitely prone to misinterpretations, simply because he forever oscillates between two extremes: stasis and motion, activity and passivity, quest and escape.

3.2.4. Purposeless Wandering

Even though a lot of Quentin's physical motion has the superficial traits ascribed to aimless wandering, that is passivity, loitering and lagging behind, his mind is too obviously set on attaining the goals Quentin has set out for himself (be it defending some concept of honor, or arresting time and thus escape from the whirlwind of contradictory notions tormenting him, or, ultimately, defeating the temporariness and achieving permanence). Since it has been argued that in Quentin's case the category of motion is critically connected to his mental state, his essentially restless, haunted mind simply does not allow him not to lead somewhere.

Ironically, when Quentin states to his father that he has committed incest with Caddy, the banishment and the eternal wandering connected therewith is precisely what he is looking for: "Finished. If things just finished themselves. Nobody else there but her and me. If we could just have done something so dreadful that they would have fled hell except us" (50-1). The idea of eternal banishment, of becoming the outcast doomed to wander hell for all eternity appeals to him, because it both embodies his tendency to view himself as a romantic figure and symbolizes the permanence which he so painfully longs to attain.

Donald Kartiganer is only partly justified when describing Quentin's last day as an "afternoon of aimless wandering."⁵⁴ Undeniably, Quentin's motion of that day contains a lot

⁵⁴ Donald M. Kartiganer, "'Now I can Write': Faulkner's Novel of Invention," *New Essays on The Sound and the Fury*, ed. Noel Polk (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 83.

of loitering and going to and fro, often literally down the same road. What Kartiganer's description omits is the fact that Quentin's motion also forms a circle, which is however not a prefiguration of an eternal entrapment in the meaningless, circular movement, but rather a prefiguration of the fact that the pattern is soon to be broken, effectively annihilating the notion of purposeless wandering from Quentin's section of *The Sound and the Fury*.

Quentin's motion is prevalently linked to his being an inverted romantic hero. Always on a quest to defend the honor of a lady, he faces one failure after another because of his physical inadequacy, as well as his mental instability. He is the grotesque chivalrous hero who cannot hold a weapon and when he tries to ride a horse, he ends up with a broken leg (72). Yet, he is a knight, at least in his intentions, even if he fails to transform these appropriately into actions. His tries to assume the role of a villain, the brother seducer who faces eternal banishment, are always unmistakably aborted. He is the romantic hero tormented by conscience who tries to flee from himself. The doubling nature of the flight-pursuit pattern⁵⁵ thus finds its proper embodiment in the character of Quentin, further emphasizing his essentially romantic, cleft personality.

⁵⁵ 2.2.1. Flight and Pursuit, 16.

3.3. Jason and Movement: A Hand in a Pocket

3.3.1. Psychological Factors Determining Motion

“The first sane Compson since before Culloden,”⁵⁶ Jason seemingly stands in stark contrast to both his brothers: he appears to be active, progressive, and self-sufficient. At first sight he displays no contradictory tendencies as Quentin does, and the fact that there is no mental affinity between Jason and Benjy seems to be beyond all doubt, simply because Jason is an embodiment of logic and rationality, while his younger brother is completely unable to even grasp these concepts, let alone incorporate them into his perception of the world. Jason's mind operates in economic, monetary terms: every concept is viewed chiefly in relation to profit, which, in turn, is always perceived in relation to Jason. Other people are effectively excluded from Jason's vision of the world. There is no place for them, unless they fit Jason's design and let themselves be abused, or else they are strong, or devious enough, so as not to conform to his design and make him suffer a loss. Control is a keyword in Jason's universe, as Olga Vickery points out:

[...] the conflict in which Jason is involved becomes explicit. [...] From the first he had distrusted everything he could not himself control. Unlike Quentin for whom reality lay in ethical concepts, Jason had learned to believe in whatever he could hold in his hand or keep in his pocket. That alone could be protected from chance and change. The money placed in a strong box, hidden in a closet, kept in a locked room is the symbol of Jason's world.⁵⁷

Because his main desire is to control those around him, Jason thinks mainly in terms of probability and predictability, in order to be able to be one step ahead of his adversaries.

⁵⁶ “Appendix Compson 1699-1945,” *The Sound and The Fury*, ed. David Minter (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994) 212.

⁵⁷ Olga W. Vickery, *The Novels of William Faulkner: A Critical Interpretation* (Baton Rouge :Louisiana State University Press,1995) 45.

Thus, he is constantly oriented toward the future. Time for him is an exclusively linear concept, a long line of opportunities to 'cash' money, a supposed gradual progress, which, however, fails to manifest itself in Jason's physical movement. Seemingly in constant pursuit of something (be it better stock exchange rate, or his escaped niece), he effectively moves not forward but in circles and, very much like Benjy, accomplishes nothing. Jason's movements thus reveal the inconsistency between his motivations and the means he uses to fulfill them, which he himself fails to see.

While Quentin's contradictoriness is apparent and therefore presents itself readily as a key factor in analyzing his movement, Jason's is much more concealed because he adheres to a certain mode of self-representation, namely that he consistently tries to present himself as a practical businessman, a man of action. Thus, in Jason's case motion serves to point out and assert the contrast between the essentially fallacious picture that Jason has of himself and that the other characters have of him. In other words, it is the movement patterns that show Jason for what he really is and reveal the self-delusion he suffers from. Therefore, while in Quentin's case the movement analysis hinged on the reader's different interpretations of Quentin's character and behavior, in Jason's case our interpretation must be contrasted with Jason's interpretation of himself; only then does it yield a comprehensive picture, elucidating Jason's movements in all their complexity.

3.3.2. Purposeless Wandering

From Jason's account of his day, the reader gets the notion that he is constantly in pursuit of something. He spends a considerable amount of time in his car, always heading somewhere: driving home from work and driving back to work, pursuing his niece around the neighborhood, or going all around town, hunting for a blank check. Thus, his motion always seems to be aimed at something; be it a person or a thing, there is always a goal that

has to be attained. Yet the very fact that his aim is always in the future indicates how elusive it is and how little he actually manages to accomplish in the present. Cleanth Brooks comments on this specifically with Jason's relation to time: "Jason, by insisting on seeing time only with regard to something to be done, is incapable of any real living. [...] Jason is so committed to preparation for the future that he is almost as enslaved as are his brothers."⁵⁸

That his preoccupation with the future effectively annihilates any activity done in the present is apparent from Jason's relation to work and the fact that the amount of actual physical labor performed by him in the section is very little. Mostly, he only talks about it. "You want me to do anything about it [Quentin's behavior], or not? Say one way or the other; I've got to get on to work" (117). "Are we going to have dinner soon?" I says. "Because if we're not, I'll have to go on back. We're pretty busy today"(138).

Similarly, on closer inspection, his seemingly vigorous activity turns into a mere chain of futile, meaningless actions changing the motion that Jason presents to the outer world (as well as to himself) as a highly effective quest for profit, into an exemplary case of purposeless wandering. Jason's motion is often ill-aimed, repetitive and circular: "I went on out the back to back the car out, then I had to go all the way round to the front before I found them"(117). "I went up front. The square was empty. Earl was back closing the safe, and then the clock begun to strike. "You lock the back door?" he says. I went back and locked it and came back"(157). Jason's tendency to aberrant, ill-aimed motion surfaces especially when he forces himself to move resolutely and purposefully, as, for instance, in the scene where he chases his escaped niece Quentin and her lover:

I parked and got out. And now I'd have to go way around and cross a plowed field, the only one I had seen since I left town, with every step like somebody was walking along behind me, hitting me on the head with a club. I kept thinking that when I got

⁵⁸ Cleanth Brooks, "Man, Time and Eternity," *The Sound and the Fury*, ed. David Minter (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994) 291.

across the field at least I'd have something level to walk on, that wouldn't jolt me every step, but when I got into the woods it was full of underbrush and I had to twist around through it, and then I came to a ditch full of briars. [...] When I finally got through I had to wind around so much that I had to stop and figure out just where the car would be. I knew they wouldn't be far from it, just under the closest bush, so I turned and worked back toward the road. Then I couldn't tell just how far I was, so I'd have to stop and listen [...] I didn't have any idea where the car was now. I couldn't think about anything except my head, and I'd just stand in one place and sort of wonder if I had really seen a ford even, and didn't even care much whether I had or not. (150-1)

Thus, at the crucial moment Jason completely loses his orientation and his pursuit of the girl changes into a whirlwind of contradictory, chaotic motions, leading him nowhere and rendering all the effort invested in the chase completely useless.

The fact that Jason's predominant motion pattern is indeed purposeless wandering (even if disguised as a quest) is further supported by the notion of isolation that is connected with him. Very much like Benjy, Jason roams the world all by himself. However, while Benjy's isolation is the consequence of his mental condition, as well as the restrictions inflicted upon him by others⁵⁹, Jason's is, characteristically, self-imposed: “[...] essentially fixed in the same place, the town where he was born. Increasingly, he was isolated, trapped within his own skin by his own choices, a one-man family living in a one-man apartment, with, finally, a one-man business.”⁶⁰

This particular trait of Jason's behavior finds its proper embodiment in his tendency to keep his hands in his pockets under all circumstances, not reaching out to anybody and keeping to himself, even if it should mean inconvenience for him. Most of Benjy's descriptions of Jason are very similar to each other and reveal the lack of development and

⁵⁹ 3.1.3. Benjy, Flight – Pursuit, 34-35.

⁶⁰ Joel Williamson, *William Faulkner and Southern History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) 360.

rigidity of both thinking and behavior that is characteristic of Jason. "Jason came behind us, with his hands in his pockets"(13). "'You're a knobnot.'" Caddy said. Jason cried. His hands were in his pockets'(23). "Jason was still climbing the stairs. He had his hands in his pockets"(40). The aforementioned remembrances date back to when the Compson children were little, while the following one presents Jason more than twenty years later: "'What do you want.'" Jason said. He had his hands in his pockets and a pencil behind his ear"(8). Significantly, the only physical description of Jason in Quentin's section is also concerned with this trait: "Jason ran on, his hands in his pockets fell down and lay there like a trussed fowl until Versh set him up"(64).

Michael Millgate points out that, "Jason's singleminded and ruthless pursuit of material self-interest serves to isolate him not only from his family but from the community as a whole."⁶¹ All the effort that Jason perceives as a quest for economic values (the numerous journeys connected with the stock exchange, the elaborate procedure of cashing the checks Caddy sends to her daughter) only puts him more into the role of an isolated character: always going somewhere in prospect of a looming economic benefit, not concerned about those around him, reveling in his self-sufficiency.

Jason's picture of himself as the pillar of the community, a veritable hero and an embodiment of effectiveness ("Why I could take his business in one year and fix him so he'd never have to work again") is so ingrained that he is completely unable to discern open sarcasm even when directly confronted with it: "'You too smart fer me. Yes, suh,'" he says, looking busy as hell, putting five or six little packages into the wagon. "'You's too smart fer me. Aint a man in dis town kin keep up wid you fer smartness. You fools a man whut so smart he cant even keep up wid hisself,'" he says, getting in the wagon and unwrapping the reins. "Who's that?" I says. "Dat's Mr Jason Compson," he says' (156). In the end, the self-imposed isolation gets the better of him, when he tries to appeal to the community he

⁶¹ Michael Millgate, "Story and Novel," *The Sound and The Fury*, ed. David Minter (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994) 307.

willingly put himself outside of, no help comes. The sheriff, significantly, keeps his hands in his pockets:

“Now, then,” the sheriff said. “That’ll do. That’s enough of that.” He looked out across the street, his hands in his pockets. “And when I come to you, a commissioned officer of the law,” Jason said. “That show’s in Mottson this week,” the sheriff said. “Yes,” Jason said. “And if I could find a law officer that gave a solitary damn about protecting the people that elected him to office, I’d be there too by now.” [...] Jason stood, slowly wringing the brim of his hat in his hands. He said quietly: “You’re not going to make any effort to catch them for me?” “That’s not any of my business, Jason.” (188-9)

Even when facing one failure of design after another (closed stock exchange account despite all his efforts to get the latest news on the financial development, or his inability to catch the girl Quentin which results in him being almost killed -193), Jason is still convinced that his undertaking is a meaningful journey, a quest.

At the very end of the novel, he is the one who restores the proper order, when Luster drives the carriage with Ben in the wrong direction. “With a backhanded blow he hurled Luster aside and caught the reins and sawed Queenie about and doubled the reins back and slashed her across the hips. He cut her again and again, into a plunging gallop, while Ben’s hoarse agony roared about them, and swung her about to the right of the monument. Then he struck Luster over the head with his fist”(199).

Significantly, Jason is not motivated by the notion of restoring order, thus acknowledging his affiliation to his family (i.e., purposefully relieving Ben of his agony which would make the gesture a meaningful act and Jason’s conviction of him being on a quest a little more justifiable); rather, he is motivated by his preoccupation with appearances and wants to avoid an awkward scene in public. Public opinion is critical for Jason, even if he is clearly convinced of the opposite, obstinately clinging to the notion of himself being a

self-sufficient man. When he quarrels with his niece in public he gets enraged not only because of Quentin's sulkiness but mainly because she dares to act this way in public. "Then I saw she really was trying to tear it [her dress], to tear it right off of her. By the time I got the car stopped and grabbed her hands there was about a dozen people looking. It made me so mad for a minute it kind of blinded me"(118). Furthermore, Jason's concern with proper public behavior can be seen in his compulsion to always wear a hat when in a public place. "Me, without any hat, in the middle of the afternoon, having to chase up and down back alleys because of my mother's good name. [...] I went on to the street, but they were out of sight. And there I was, without any hat, looking like I was crazy too"(145-6).

In this light, it is natural that his preoccupation with appearances is reflected in his movements as well. Jason is well aware that a proper, capable man of business moves with resolution, pursuing the goal he has set for himself. What he is not aware of is the fact that he is not one. Thus, what he perceives as activity, progressive motion, a quest, is by others perceived as chaotic and distorted motion that in the end does not lead anywhere; it is no more than purposeless wandering.

3.3.3. Flight – Pursuit

It has already been argued that Jason has a critically fallacious picture of himself. How far his self-delusion actually goes can be properly demonstrated with regard to the flight-pursuit pattern in his movements. Jason obviously plays the role of the villain in the novel. Cleanth Brooks observes: "For some eighty pages, in a coldly furious monologue, Jason pitilessly exposes himself [...] as one of the half-dozen of Faulkner's most accomplished villains. [...] Even so, in this company of prime villains [...] Jason's treatment of his sister, his idiot brother, and his niece shows studied cruelty that is unmatched by any of Faulkner's

other villains.”⁶² While Brooks stresses the active side of Jason, the physical violence he does not hesitate to use, as well as the manipulation he exerts on others, Kerr points out the irony of Jason's villainy, when Miss Quentin makes use of Jason's deficiencies and renders him “the villain victim.”

Jason is obviously his own worst enemy, which makes him both the pursuer and the pursued. He throws obstacles in his own way and when he remarks that “blood always tell” he is completely unaware what implications it has in relation to him. Thus, while Quentin's self-destruction is acknowledged by Quentin himself (embodied, for instance, in his obsessive effort to “trick” his shadow) and later exemplified in his suicide, Jason never starts to think about himself as the chief source of his trouble, instead obstinately blames his failures on others, which contributes to the fact that he feels persecuted.

Jason is the villain especially in relation to Caddy and her daughter Quentin. In exerting his control over them, he exhibits both the traits of physical violence and mental oppression.

I grabbed her by the arm. She dropped the cup. It broke on the floor and she jerked back, looking at me, but I held her arm. [...] She slapped at me. I caught that hand too and held her like a wildcat. “You will, will you?” I says. “You think you will?” [...] I dragged her into the diningroom. Her kimono came unfastened, flapping about her, dam (sic) near naked. Dilsey came hobbling along. I turned and kicked the door shut in her face. (115-6)

While in the abovementioned scene Jason's threats are completely physical and Quentin has the tendency to resist, the following one demonstrates the profound effect of the deliberate and more subtle mental cruelty inflicted upon her.

She looked at me. She had crumpled all the bread, but her hands still went on like they were crumpling it yet and her eyes looked like they were cornered or something

⁶² Brooks 294.

and then she started biting her mouth like it ought to have poisoned her, with all that red lead. "Grandmother," she says. "Grandmother - "Did you want something else to eat?" I says. "Why does he treat me like this, Grandmother?" she says. "I never hurt him." (162)

While Quentin was persecuted by his own tormenting thoughts and conscience, Benjy by loveless and restrictive surroundings, Jason, who has no conscience to haunt him ("I'm glad I haven't got the sort of conscience I've got to nurse like a sick puppy all the time"), nor any physical restrictions imposed upon him, manages to persuade himself of being persecuted. He is a paranoiac⁶³, convinced that the whole world is scheming against him, and while he boasts of never taking anything personally, he, in fact, does just that and throws himself constantly in the position of a victim. Thus, when he loses sight of the car with the escaping Quentin, he readily blames it on the quality of the road: "Yet we spend money and spend money on roads and dam (sic) if it isn't like trying to drive over a sheet of corrugated iron roofing. I'd like to know how a man could be expected to keep up with even a wheelbarrow"(149). Similarly, he perceives the pursuit of Miss Quentin as her fault: "Like I say, let her lay out all day and all night with everything in town that wears pants, what do I care. I dont owe anything to anybody that has no more consideration for me, that wouldn't be a dam bit above planting that ford there and making me spend a whole afternoon [...]" (151).

Jason's custom to keep his hands constantly in his pockets has already been discussed in relation to his isolation. This trait of his, nonetheless, also denotes Jason's tendency to be his own persecutor. The following scene clearly presents Jason as a person who stands in his own way, throwing obstacles under his feet:

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

⁶³ 2.2.1. Flight and Pursuit, 18.

hands out your pockets, you could stay on your feet.” Versh said. “You cant never get them out in time to catch yourself, fat as you is.” (15)

Jason exhibits some feminine traits, much like his brothers do.⁶⁴ He cannot stand the gasoline fumes of his car because they make him faint. That bothers him all the more because the car is obviously a source of pride to him (“I think too much of my car; I'm not going to hammer it to pieces like it was a ford”) and, as Doreen Fowler argues, he derives his sense of masculinity from the ability to drive it: “One manifestation of Jason's threatened masculinity is his precarious ability to drive his automobile; for, as Jason implies [...] only a “real man” is able to steer such a powerful machine. But in the course of Jason's pursuit of his niece and the showman, it becomes evident that he himself is not “man enough” to drive the car: its gasoline fumes reduce him to helplessness.”⁶⁵ Thus, the very object that should assert his position of the man not only fails to do that but, on the contrary, undermines it and emphasizes the feminine traits of Jason's.

Similarly, when he attempts to demonstrate his abundant physical power to the old man in Mottson, Jason not only overestimates himself, he also critically misjudges his adversary and what was supposed to be assertion of his masculinity nearly has him killed. Jason's movements throughout the fight are very confused and ineffective and the scene ends with a juxtaposition of the roles: the old man assuming the role of the aggressor, while Jason becomes the victim (193).

3.3.4. Quest

The contrast between Jason's delusional notion of himself and his actual substance is

⁶⁴ 3.1.3. Benjy, Flight – Pursuit, 36.
3.2.3. Quentin, Flight – Pursuit, 45.

⁶⁵ Doreen Fowler, ““Little Sister Death”: The Sound and The Fury and The Denied Unconscious,’ *Faulkner and Psychology*, ed. Donald M. Kartiganer, Ann J. Abadie, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994) 9.

significant also in analyzing his motion in terms of a quest. Jason's foremost motivation is to attain control – over his family, his surroundings, which symbolize the control over his own life that he feels has always been denied him (“I don't reckon I'll ever get far enough from the store to get out of your reach”). Furthermore, control for Jason exclusively equals financial means; his quest is thus a quest for profit which is to establish him in his rightful position of the man. It has been pointed out that Jason feels persecuted. Similarly, he feels like a victim of his own family because, in his view, they deprived him of his chance for a good living: (“What the hell chance has a man got, tied down in a town like this and to a business like this”). The principal culprit, in his eyes, is Caddy, whose behavior has cost Jason a job at Herbert Head's bank. The rigidity of thinking that Jason so clearly displays (“Once a bitch, always a bitch.”-113) accounts for the fact that he hates Caddy and begrudges his older brother the opportunities he himself never had, years after the incidents took place: “Selling land to send him to Harvard and paying taxes to support a state University all the time that I never saw except twice at a baseball game [...]” (146).

Caddy thus changes into an archenemy, symbolizing all the injustices that have happened to Jason and his life turns into a quest for revenge. Significantly, Jason does not physically go on the quest to avenge himself on Caddy; instead, he waits for the opportunity to come to him and when it does, embodied in Caddy's little daughter, he seizes his chance and uses Quentin as a hostage, a tool to subjugate, and eventually break Caddy. When they meet in the graveyard after Mr. Compson's funeral, they shake hands like adversaries before a duel but it soon becomes clear that it is not to be a fair fight, because Jason's crooked character simply will not allow it.

Mental torture is Jason principal means of attaining the goals he has set out for himself: not only is it safe, with a low risk of actual physical confrontation, it also enables him to exert full control over his victims, which he finds infinitely enjoyable. When he promises Caddy that he will let her see her daughter, he secures his financial position first,

and only when he has the money safely in his pocket does he feel that he has subjugated Caddy enough and permits himself to revel in it:

“Give me the money,” I says. “I’ll give it to you afterward,” she says. “Don’t you trust me?” I says. “No,” she says. “I know you. I grew up with you.” “You’re a fine one to talk about trusting people,” I says. “Well,” I says. I got to get on out of the rain. Goodbye.” I made to go away. [...] I put the money in my pocket. “You’ll do it, Jason?” she says. “I wouldn’t ask you, if there was any other way.” “You dam (sic) right there’s no other way,” I says. “Sure I’ll do it. I said I would, didn’t I? Only you’ll have to do just like I say, now.” (128)

He exerts his newly acquired control over Caddy with a sadistic relish stemming from the fact that he was able to outwit her, which fits very well with the picture he has of himself as a capable man, able to foresee different options and arrange so that he gets the most out of them. When Caddy eventually breaks down in front of him, Jason comments on it with an amazed disbelief because she acts in an unaccountable, irrational manner that shatters Jason’s notion of people acting essentially according to a fixed set of rules he is able to discern and predict.

Then I thought she really was going to hit me, and then I didn’t know what she was going to do. She acted for a minute like some kind of a toy that’s wound up too tight and about to burst all to pieces. “Oh, I’m crazy,” she says. “I’m insane. I cant take her. Keep her. What am I thinking of . Jason,” she says, grabbing my arm. Her hands were as hot as fever. [...] “No. I have nothing at stake,” she says, making that noise, putting her hands to her mouth. “Nuh-nuh-nothing,” she says. (131)

It is significant that unpredictability plays a crucial role also in Jason’s final ‘battle’ with Caddy’s avatar, his niece Quentin. Despite all his efforts to assert the same control over her as he did over her mother (“You’ve got to learn one thing, and that is that when I tell you to do something, you’ve got it to do.”), Quentin is still elusive, because, unlike Caddy, she

really has nothing at stake. When she escapes by the pear tree with the money Jason has taken from her, she effectively disarms him, rendering the whole intricate quest for control completely useless. In the end the red tie worn by Quentin's male companion becomes a symbol for Jason: the symbol of vanity of his efforts and a precursor of the fact that Jason's motion, however active, always changes back to purposeless wandering. "He believed that both of them would know him on sight, while he'd have to trust to seeing her first, unless the man still wore the red tie. And the fact that he must depend on that red tie seemed to be the sum of the impending disaster; he could almost smell it, feel it above the throbbing of his head" (191).

Jason's quest is thus principally a struggle to assert his position of what in his eyes is a real man: the able businessman, dignified citizen, and an effective head of a household. What he in his delusion fails to see is the fact that he does not really have a position to assert. His threatened masculinity has been discussed above; he is the community's laughing stock⁶⁶ and head of a dysfunctional, disintegrating family that completely falls apart under his hands. His quest is thus as delusional and ill-aimed as Jason himself and only leads him back to where he started. As Donald Kartiganer points out with regard to Jason's accomplishment on April 6th 1928, "By the end of his day he has accomplished nothing but motion itself."⁶⁷

In Jason's case all of the physical motion undertaken by him supports the fact that he is construed as a vile character. The notion is somewhat problematized by the complexity inherent in this particular Gothic type⁶⁸; Jason, however, principally displays the traits of the inverted Faustian villain: a man who is driven to exile by his own choices and his essentially unsound judgment, motivated by the urge to control. His purposeless wandering is not

⁶⁶ 3.3.2. Jason, Purposeless Wandering, 54.

⁶⁷ Donald M. Kartiganer, "Now I can Write": Faulkner's Novel of Invention, *New Essays on The Sound and the Fury*, ed. Noel Polk (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 88.

⁶⁸ 2.2.1. Flight and Pursuit, 17.

connected to the notion of repentance since Jason lacks a sense of conscience and, consequently, feelings of guilt that would haunt him. Jason's villainy is all the more ironical for the fact that he is not aware of it: having no moral scruples, he feels completely justified in his efforts and perceives all of his undertakings, be it his wandering around town or the pursuit of Miss Quentin, in terms of a morally unimpeachable quest. Thus, he is the grotesque villain deeming himself a hero, willfully casting himself into isolation that for him (and only for him) means a confirmation of his ability.

3.4. Caddy, Miss Quentin and Movement: Running out of the (Distorted) Mirror

3.4.1. Psychological Factors Determining Motion

Caddy's position in *The Sound and the Fury* is a particular one. Unlike her brothers she does not get her own section and is thus denied her own narrative voice. At the same time it is obvious that the respective sections of Benjy, Quentin, and Jason revolve around her. Faulkner himself acknowledged Caddy's position identifying the picture of her as the basis of the novel⁶⁹ and he commented on *The Sound and the Fury* as an attempt “to draw the picture of Caddy.”⁷⁰ André Bleikasten points out that: “A chimera to the author, she never ceases to be a chimera in the novel. To lament that she escapes satisfactory definition is hardly relevant, for she is both more and less than a 'character': she is at once the focal and the vanishing point, the bewitching image around which everything resolves.”⁷¹ Similarly, other critics have pointed out Caddy's elusive nature and, at the same time, her

⁶⁹ William Faulkner “Interview with Jean Stein vanden Heuvel,” *The Sound and The Fury*, ed. David Minter (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994) 233.

⁷⁰ William Faulkner “Class Conferences at the University of Virginia,” *The Sound and The Fury*, ed. David Minter (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994) 236.

⁷¹ André Bleikasten, “The Quest for Eurydice,” *The Sound and The Fury*, ed. David Minter (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994) 423.

prominence in the novel.⁷²

Discussing the complexity of Caddy's position in the novel is not within the scope of this thesis; the lack of textual support for Caddy's psychology, however, is relevant in relation to the motion analysis. While in the case of the three Compson brothers we get insight into their inner world and can draw conclusions as to their motivation for the motion they undertake, their relation to time, their sense of self, etc. In Caddy's case we must rely on an indirect representation. Naturally, that does not necessarily mean a less precise and distorted picture since even self-representation is prone to distortions (as can be seen very well in case of Jason); rather it gives more prominence to the external traits of Caddy's behavior, since they often become our only clues.

Motion thus gains a more prominent, crucial role in depicting the character of Caddy and it functions as an important element in reconstructing her psychology. This fact is even more evident in the case of Caddy's daughter Quentin, who is, at least where motion is concerned, a faithful image of her mother (and therefore will be analyzed in the same section). In Miss Quentin's case, the textual support is even scarcer. While in Caddy's case there are numerous instances of direct speech, especially in Benjy's and Quentin's sections, Miss Quentin's speech is limited to a few utterances in her dialogues with Jason. Her movements are therefore a very valuable clue revealing her inner state.

3.4.2. Flight – Pursuit

Both Caddy and Miss Quentin have a trait of essential elusiveness, which is evident in their movements. It has already been argued that Benjy associates Caddy with motion, since that is how he learned to know her: never standing aside, or lagging behind like her

⁷² For instance, Donald M. Kartiganer, "The Meaning of Form," *The Sound and The Fury*, ed. David Minter (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994) 328.

Dawn Trouard, "Faulkner's text Which Is Not One," *New Essays on The Sound and the Fury*, ed. Noel Polk (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), discussing the notion of Caddy's elusiveness and arguing that there are several Caddys depicted in the novel.

brothers. She is always running, climbing the trees and fences. "She took my hand and we ran through the bright rustling leaves. We ran up the steps and out of the bright cold, into the dark cold"(5). "She climbed the fence with the letter in her hand and went through the brown, rattling flowers"(9). "He went and pushed Caddy up into the tree to the first limb. We watched the muddy bottom of her drawers. Then we couldn't see her. We could hear the tree thrashing" (25).

Quentin, too, associates Caddy with motion and the first remembrance of her is, characteristically, a picture of Caddy running: "She ran right out of the mirror, out of the banked scent. Roses. Roses. Mr and Mrs Jason Richmond Compson announce the marriage of. Roses" (49). Moreover, Irene Visser argues that, "the reader is well aware that this is the last memory that Quentin has of Caddy, and that this running therefore also symbolizes his loss."⁷³ The elusiveness is thus strengthened, becoming the precursor of Caddy's final run; an escape from the Compson family. Both Quentin and Benjy significantly associate Caddy with things symbolizing transgression, or escape: windows, and especially doors. One of Quentin's memories of Caddy's wedding is triggered by a shadow in the door:

I stopped inside the door, watching the shadow move. It moved almost perceptibly, creeping back inside the door, driving the shadow back into the door. Only she was running already, when I heard it. In the mirror she was running before I knew what it was. That quick her train caught up over her arm she ran out of the mirror like a cloud, her veil swirling in long glints her heels brittle and fast clutching her dress onto her shoulder with the other hand, running out of the mirror the smells roses roses the voice that breathed o'er Eden. (52)

Benjy's reaction is similar when a person appears in the door or the window, and the fact that he associates Caddy with these places accounts for it. "The clock tick-tocked, solemn and profound. It might have been the dry pulse of the decaying house itself, after a while it

⁷³ Irene Visser, *Compassion in Faulkner's Fiction* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen Press, 1996) 185.

whirred and cleared its throat and struck six times. Ben looked up at it, then he looked at the bulletlike silhouette of Luster's head in the window and he begun to bob his head again, drooling. He whimpered”(177). “Ben sat down again facing the rosy door. He hushed. Then they heard the clock again, and Dilsey slow on the stairs. When she entered he began to whimper again. Then he lifted his voice”(178).

Moreover, both Caddy and Miss Quentin are associated with the element of water, symbolizing the fluidity and also elusiveness. Significantly, while in Caddy's case the water is still, peaceful and brings relief, (“Both Quentin and Caddy run to Branch to surrender themselves to its hypnotic rhythm which, like sleep, soothes the mind into unconsciousness, blurring thought and emotion, eliminating the necessity for acting”⁷⁴, for Miss Quentin it no longer has the positive connotations it does for her mother. What is left is only destruction and ruin: “Quentin pushed Dilsey away. She looked at Jason. Her mouth was red. She picked up her glass of water and swung her arm back, looking at Jason. Dilsey caught her arm. They fought. The glass broke on the table, and the water ran into the table. Quentin was running”(47).

Quentin is essentially a distorted mirror image⁷⁵ of Caddy. Where her mother leaves the house by the door to meet her lovers, Miss Quentin secretly slips out by the window. Her movements, including the final flight from the Compson house, are more radical than in Caddy's case and so are her reactions, because, unlike Caddy, she does not feel any affiliation with the house she lives in, nor with its inhabitants. While Caddy leaves Charlie in the swing and lets Benjy take her home, overwhelmed by remorse (“I wont anymore, ever. Benjy. Benjy.”), Miss Quentin reacts in a completely different way:

You old crazy loon, Quentin said. I'm going to tell Dilsey about the way you let him follow everywhere I go. I'm going to make her whip you good. “I couldn't stop him.”

⁷⁴ Olga W. Vickery, *The Novels of William Faulkner: A Critical Interpretation* (Baton Rouge :Louisiana State University Press,1995) 42.

⁷⁵ 2.1.1. Mirror Image, Mirroring: Doubles, Alter-Egos, Distorted Images, 15.

Luster said. "Come on here, Benjy." "Yes you could." Quentin said. "You didn't try. You were both snooping around after me. Did Grandmother send you all out here to spy on me." She jumped out of the swing. "If you don't take him right away this minute and keep him away, I'm going to make Jason whip you." [...] "Goddam you." Quentin said. "Do you want to get him started. Don't you know he'll beller all day. I'm going to tell Dilsey on you." She went away running. (31)

From this excerpt it is also evident who is the principal maker of Quentin's 'distortion'. She exhibits exactly the same traits as her uncle and persecutor, Jason. She is a paranoiac⁷⁶ and uses the threat of 'telling on others' as much as little Jason did. In this light, then, the persecution of Jason's succeeded, because even when Quentin escapes from the Compson household, she escapes morally corrupted.

Elizabeth Kerr points out that while both Caddy and Quentin can be denoted as persecuted maidens, there is also an ironic subversion inherent in their flight because their voluntary renouncement of chastity inverts the traditional notion of this particular Gothic type.⁷⁷ Caddy's final flight is essentially imposed on her by one of her chief persecutors: her mother. When her pregnancy is revealed, Mrs. Compson assumes the active role and takes her daughter to French Lick to marry her off. The involuntariness on Caddy's part is evident in one of Quentin's remembrances. "A face reproachful tearful an odor of camphor and of tears a voice weeping steadily and softly beyond the twilit door the twilight-colored smell of honeysuckle. Bringing empty trunks down the attic stairs they sounded like coffins French Lick"(61). Thus, when Caddy obstinately repeats to Quentin that she "got to marry somebody" (73), it is as much Caroline Compson talking through her as Jason can be heard through Miss Quentin. Before her marriage, Caddy makes Quentin promise her that he will take care of father and Benjy, which is another reminder of her leaving tentatively, knowing on the one hand that she has brought doom upon herself with her own deeds ("Im bad

⁷⁶ 2.2.1. Flight and Pursuit, 18.

⁷⁷ 2.2.1. Flight and Pursuit, 16-17.

anyway you cant help it"-100), on the other hand being aware of the fact that her mother makes her leave behind even the bonds that are important to her: her relationship with her father and her two brothers.

That Caddy indeed escapes to (and not from) ruin⁷⁸, becomes evident especially in Jason's section of the novel. After her marriage has ended, she gives up (or is forced to give up) her baby daughter and sends her to live with the Compsons. This incident turns out to be a crucial one in relation to Caddy as a persecuted character, as it enables Jason to assume the role of the principal oppressor and persecutor, using baby Quentin as a tool to subjugate, and eventually break Caddy.

Miss Quentin, on the other hand, escapes on her own accord and to seeming freedom. Her flight from the Compson Mansion is an embodiment of escape: at night, through a window out of the locked room which is the quintessential confinement, a veritable prison cell:

It was not a girl's room. It was not anybody's room, and the faint scent of cheap cosmetics and the few feminine objects and the other evidences of crude and hopeless efforts to feminise it but added to its anonymity, giving it that dead and stereotyped transience of rooms in assignation houses. The bed had not been disturbed. On the floor lay a soiled undergarment of cheap silk a little too pink, from a half open bureau drawer dangled a single stocking. The window was open. (176)

Miss Quentin escapes leaving nothing behind (indeed, she takes all that is rightfully hers) and her flight could thus be a more hopeful one than Caddy's, were it not for the fact that she is already broken, at least morally, which is something she is well aware of. "Whatever I do, it's your fault," she says. "If I'm bad, it's because I had to be. You made me. I wish I was dead"(162).

⁷⁸ 2.2.1. Flight and Pursuit, 17.

3.4.3. Quest

While each of the Compson brothers exhibits some feminine traits⁷⁹, both Caddy and Miss Quentin show masculine ones. Caddy is the obvious leader of the Compson children, assuming the authoritative position very early on. When Damuddy dies, Caddy seizes the opportunity seeing that the adults are occupied: ““Let them mind me tonight, Father””(16). She unmistakably does the exact opposite than the other children and her movements bear a trait of defiance: ““If we go slow, it'll be dark when we get there.” Quentin said. “I'm not going slow.” Caddy said’(13). ““I bet it's company.” Versh said. “You all better go in the back and slip upstairs.” “I dont care.” Caddy said. “I'll walk right in the parlor where they are.” “I bet your pappy whip you if you do.” Versh said. “I dont care.” Caddy said. “I'll walk right in the parlor. I'll walk right in the dining room and eat supper”” (15).

Quentin remembers that Caddy “never was a queen or a fairy she was always a king a giant or a general” (109). The picture of Caddy as a masculine character surfaces most clearly in Quentin's remembrances because he cannot help contrasting Caddy with his own femininity. She was the first girl in town to drive a car (something, Quentin recalls, made Jason mad, since his sister is able to perform a man's task which he himself cannot -109), she is the one that comes galloping to rescue Quentin after the attempted fight with Dalton Ames and, what torments Quentin the most, she is the one who actively seeks out sexual partners. The thought of a woman being the active element, the seducer, is unacceptable to Quentin and he obstinately clings to the notion of Caddy being the one who is pursued. When she acknowledges her position, he is stupefied and indignant: “What did you let him for kiss kiss I didn't let him I made him [...] My red hand coming up out of her face. What do you think of that [...]” (85-6).

Diane Roberts also observes Caddy's active role, pointing out that, “Caddy dares to

⁷⁹ 3.1.3. Benjy, Flight – Pursuit, 36.

3.2.3. Quentin, Flight – Pursuit, 45.

3.3.3. Jason, Flight – Pursuit, 59.

give herself, to act not as an object of transaction but as a transactor.”⁸⁰ Her quest can thus be summed up as a quest for love, which is something that she so painfully lacks. Undeniably, Caddy's position is a little less bleak than that of her daughter; her father has a considerable affection for her (which Mrs. Compson resentfully comments upon to Jason, identifying it as a chief source of Caddy's and Quentin's doom -163), and so do Benjy and Quentin. Their love is, however, connected with the notion of restriction. Millgate points out that, “None of them is capable of loving her. Each wants to impose upon her, for his own selfish purposes, a rigid and restrictive pattern of behaviour.”⁸¹ Benjy requires her constant physical presence and not only that; he exclusively requires the Caddy that “smelled like trees.” Similarly, Quentin also wants his sister to fulfill the notion he has of her, that of a chaste, innocent girl.

Caddy's search for love is therefore also a search for freedom; the transgression of boundaries and her going outside to meet her lovers is an embodiment of that. She does not bring her dates home because the restrictions are immediately imposed upon her: when she sits in the garden swing with Charlie, Benjy comes and she leaves Charlie there, taking Benjy home. Quentin senses the importance of her meeting her lovers outside of the Compson premises and comments resentfully upon that: “Why wont you bring him in the house, Caddy? Why must you do like nigger women do in the pasture the ditches the dark woods hot hidden furious in the dark woods” (59). The freedom Caddy strives for ironically brings the exact opposite to her: the marriage to Herbert Head is nothing but a confinement for her.

Miss Quentin exhibits a lot of traits that are constitutive of her mother's considerable resilience. She is equally active, opinionated and daring, always ready to defend her own rights when she feels they have been trodden upon. At a very early age she shows a proneness to defiance:

⁸⁰ Diane Roberts, *Faulkner and Southern Womanhood* (Athens :University of Georgia Press, 1994) 112.

⁸¹ Michael Millgate, *William Faulkner* (Edinburgh, London: Oliver and Boyd,1961) 33.

We finished eating. T.P took Quentin up and we went down to T.P.'s house. Luster was playing in the dirt. T.P. put Quentin down and she played in the dirt too. Luster had some spools and he and Quentin fought and Quentin had the spools. Luster cried and Frony came and gave Luster a tin to play with and then I had the spools and Quentin fought me and I cried. "Hush." Frony said. "Ain't you shamed of yourself. Taking a baby's play pretty." (19)

Similarly, she opposes authority like Caddy did, which manifests itself first and foremost in her encounters with Jason: "She got out and banged the door. "Remember what I say," I says. "I mean it. Let me hear one more time that you are slipping up and down back alleys with one of those dam squirts." She turned back at that. "I don't slip around," she says, "I dare anybody to know everything I do" (119).

Quentin's quest is, very much like Caddy's, a quest for love and freedom, none of which she experiences in her own home. She has an additional motivation (that in Caddy's case remains unrealized), which is to pay Jason back for all his 'fatherly' care. Her quest is therefore also a quest for revenge. When she takes from her uncle the money he has been denying her, she avenges not only herself, but also her mother. In this respect, Quentin's quest is successful; attaining freedom, effectively breaking up with the past and punishing the injustices.

3.4.4. Purposeless Wandering

It is significant that while for the male characters the pattern of purposeless wandering has prominence (especially for Jason and Benjy), it is almost nonexistent in relation to the women in *The Sound and the Fury*. Both Caddy and Miss Quentin consistently move with an aim, be it in search of love (or however possibly close to it they can get), or escaping from something, or someone. If there is a period in Caddy's life when she is confined to

wander the world, banished from society, there is not enough textual support for it.⁸² The indications there are, such as Jason's memory of how Miss Quentin got into the Compson family, are not enough:

[...]Father went up there and got it and brought it home and wouldn't tell anything about where she was or anything and Mother crying and saying "And you didn't even see him? You didn't even try to get him to make any provision for it?" and Father says "No she shall not touch his money not one cent of it" and Mother says "He can be forced to by law. He can prove nothing, unless – Jason Compson," she says. "Were you fool enough to tell –" (124)

Visser also points out that there is a gap in her history between Quentin's last memory of Caddy at her wedding and Jason's first after their father's funeral. "The text's characteristic indeterminacy where Caddy is concerned is here inherent in the mystery surrounding Caddy's unexpected appearance at her father's funeral. The reader gets no insight into her actual thoughts, her present circumstances, her way of life, the only indication of her situation is the fact that she has a considerable sum of money readily at hand."⁸³ Analyzing Caddy's situation after the wedding and prior to her father's funeral would thus be pure conjecture. The whereabouts of Miss Quentin after her escape from her family are equally unknown.

Both Caddy and Miss Quentin are essentially depicted as inverted persecuted maidens who renounce passivity and instead willfully pursue their sexual urges. Their inherent activity manifests itself even in their flight which is not constructed as the quintessential passive

⁸² In "Appendix Compson 1699-1945," *The Sound and The Fury*, ed. David Minter (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994), Faulkner elucidates Caddy's fate after she has vanished from Jefferson. Married and then divorced in Hollywood, she eventually disappears in Europe with the German Occupation, the last trace of her being a picture of her in a car beside a German staff general (209-210). The appendix was written 16 years after the first publication of *The Sound and the Fury* and will therefore not be treated as part of the novel as such.

⁸³ Visser 222.

deed but as a logical consequence of their own doings for which they assume responsibility, and also as a quest for freedom. Even if they have enemies and persecutors, they manage, directly or indirectly, to outwit them: Quentin's robbery is as much Caddy's vengeance on her oppressors as it is her own, and depriving Jason of the money that is constitutive of his position and status, as well as his masculinity, once again adds to the juxtaposition of gender roles. While Caddy does not hesitate to become the romantic hero on horseback for Quentin⁸⁴, Miss Quentin's final flight turns her into the avenging hero, the dauntless, masculine element, turning the persecuted maiden into the maiden persecutor.

⁸⁴ 3.2.3. Quentin, Flight – Pursuit, 45.

4. Conclusion

4.1. Movement in Context: Movement in *Light in August*

Light in August is a profoundly Gothic novel that discusses the themes of alienation, isolation and obsession with the past as a causal factor determining behavior. It is a study of the human mind distorted under the influence of extreme psychological conditions (uncertainty as to one's origin and identity) and of the consequences connected with this extreme situation: violence, sexual aberrations and religious fanaticism. As Kerr points out, the only significant Gothic theme omitted in the novel is incest.⁸⁵

At first sight, motion plays a distinctly more significant role in the novel than it does in *The Sound and the Fury*, the characters being obviously much more mobile than the Compson family for whom leaving the house (not to speak of the town, or the county) is a comparatively rare occurrence. The motif of journey as performed by Lena Grove forms a frame embedding the central narrative which is likewise nothing else but a journey: the endless wandering of Joe Christmas through “the street which ran for thirty years” (339) in desperate search of something he could become, something to claim as a constitutive part of his identity that would finally resolve the painful, existential question that echoes in his mind: who am I?

Light in August abounds in characters on the run, those who are on a quest, as well as with perpetual wanderers. These are sometimes combined and embodied in just one character. Like in *The Sound and the Fury*, motion serves as a factor demonstrating the inversions of the traditional types: the persecuted maidens who are themselves persecutors, the villains on the run, and the aimless wanderers on a quest.

⁸⁵ Elizabeth M. Kerr, *William Faulkner's Gothic Domain* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1979) 136.

4.1.1. Joe Christmas: “Doomed with Motion”

Joe Christmas is an emblematic, quintessential outcast: a wanderer confined to roam the Earth from the day he was born until the day he draws his last breath. Not unlike Benjy Compson, Joe finds himself entrapped in an endless circle of motion. In his case, the fence he strives to transgress does not assume a concrete physical form, nor is it embodied in his mental limitations; Joe's proverbial fence through which he looks at the outside world is inseparably linked to his lacking a sense of identity and, consequently, personal integrity, and belonging. Like in the case of the characters in *The Sound and the Fury*, his wandering is not construed as a penitence-invoking experience. Jason and Benjy are, albeit for very different reasons, unaware of any moral implications of the wandering as well as of the wandering itself.⁸⁶ Joe, as opposed to them, is acutely aware of his restlessness and aimlessness and of the fatality behind it: “doomed with motion, driven by the courage of flagged and spurred despair; by the despair of courage whose opportunities had to be flagged and spurred” (226). The ironic twist of his wandering is the fact that the actual crime (the murder of Joanna Burden) supposedly invoking penitence is not presented as a cause but as a consequence of his isolation and outcast status.

The notion of identity imposed by others as well as by oneself is crucial in Joe's case. Based on the notion of race as a sociocultural construct, it is far too complex an issue to be discussed here.⁸⁷ In terms of motion, Joe's ignorance in terms of who he is and where he belongs is a causal factor that needs to be at least touched upon. Similarly to Quentin Compson, Joe's psyche exhibits two irreconcilable strands that are closely connected: the 'black' and the 'white.' This schism results in Joe's schizophrenic and inconsistent behavior that changes according to what part of his personality Joe relates to at the particular moment. Like Quentin who oscillates between the extremes of a chivalrous brother avenger

⁸⁶ 3.3. Jason 62-3.

3.1. Benjy 38.

⁸⁷ Karolína Jelínková, William Faulkner's *Light in August*: Constructing Race in the Community 70-81.

on a quest and the failed, passive brother seducer, Joe's inherent personality cleft enables him to exert such seemingly incongruous deeds as beating up a white prostitute who, after he tells her he is a negro, fails to respond in the way Joe expects (225) and causing public disturbance in a negro church where he attacks the minister (223). The schizophrenic, inconsistent nature of his movement is clearly apparent during his final flight: "[...] the black blood drove him first to the negro cabin. And then the white blood drove him out of there, as it was the black blood which snatched up the pistol and the white blood which would not let him fire it" (449).

Thus, all of Joe's motion that is intended as a quest for identity and personal integrity changes into what can only be called purposeless wandering, since Joe is unable to identify and select the focal points he could relate to. In other words, he does not know what to pursue and which direction to take. In this respect he resembles Jason, whose frenetic activity is aimed at catching his niece and restoring both his possessions and his position, but his progress is hindered by the fact that the red tie of Quentin's companion functioning as an orientation sign may no longer be there.⁸⁸ Joe's uncertainty as to whether he should perceive himself as black or white drives him "into Oklahoma and Missouri and as far south as Mexico and then back north to Chicago and Detroit and then back south again and at last to Mississippi," (224) making motion the only constant thing in his life and the notion of being a wanderer the only constitutive part of his identity.

The flight and pursuit theme is equally significant in Joe's case. While the Compsons (with the exception of Miss Quentin) experience mostly a rather mitigated, modified version of this motion pattern, the persecution being mainly represented by actual or imagined mental oppression, in Joe's case the pursuit is a direct threat to his life, turning him into an exemplary 'persecuted maiden.' Interestingly, similarly to Benjy Compson's case, his being a persecuted character is stressed by his final feminization, the act of which is performed on

⁸⁸ 3.3.4. Jason, Quest, 62.

him by Percy Grimm. Joe fulfills the notion of a distinctly persecuted character even before the final flight caused by the murder of Joanna and his persecutors are embodied in a wide range of characters: the dietitian at the orphanage, his adoptive father Mr. McEachern, Joanna Burden, or his grandfather Doc Hines. Similarly to Miss Quentin, who under pressure begins to resemble her oppressor uncle Jason, Joe begins to exhibit similar traits to those of his corruptors. Thus, when he enters the negro church to cause havoc, he unconsciously mirrors an earlier incident where Doc Hines comes to a negro church and preaches white supremacy (378).

Like the Compsons, Joe Christmas is a distinctly past-ridden character; obsessed and haunted by his past because it contains the key to his origin. His obsession goes hand in hand with his isolation. Joe is forever looking back and forever running and, paradoxically, the more effort he exerts trying to reach integrity and a conclusion regarding his identity, the fewer results he gets. Only when he succumbs and yields does he get some recognition; by refusing to run further and thus fulfill the expectations of the community, he renounces his role of an outcast and a wanderer which enables him to potentially adopt a new identity. In this respect, Joe Christmas's search combines all three motion patterns; his quest for identity being realized by fleeing (in which respect he resembles Caddy and Miss Quentin) and wandering.

4.1.2. Lena Grove: "A Body Does Get Around"

The character of Lena Grove does not have an appropriate counterpart in *The Sound and the Fury*. At first sight, her situation reflects that of Caddy Compson. Lena, however, chooses to arrange her life in a very different way. Instead of acknowledging the labels inevitably connected with her condition and thus enabling her surroundings to impose

restrictions upon her (manifested in Caddy's case by Mrs. Compson's behavior⁸⁹), Lena acts according to her own moral code which enables her to move around with complete freedom and even relish stemming from the astonishment of broadening her horizons: "here I aint been on the road but four weeks, and now I am in Jefferson already. My, my. A body does get around" (30). While Caddy, under pressure of the judgment of others, adopts their perception of herself and feels corrupted⁹⁰, Lena never sees herself as a fallen woman, exhibiting unshaken faith in the purpose of her journey: "I reckon a family ought to be all together when a chap comes. [...] I reckon the Lord will see to that" (21). Her flight from her brother's house is therefore from the very first construed as a quest.

Lena always moves deliberately, purposefully, like "she knows where she is going" (9), never hesitating and never perceiving herself as a victim of her seducer Lucas Burch. In this light, even her pursuing Burch to Jefferson must be perceived as a positive journey to self-realization, not motivated by any prospects of compensation for having been wronged. Lucas Burch ironically assumes the role of the persecuted character because he judges Lena's action by his own standards where people inevitably fall into two groups: victimizers and victims. Similarly to Jason, he feels persecuted and this conviction finds its appropriate embodiment in his final flight from Lena which he performs, ironically, in much the same way the persecuted maiden would do (and in the same way Lena did when leaving her brother's house): through a window (432).

While Burch functions as the villain seducer whose own doings turn him into a villain victim⁹¹, the role of the romantic hero in relation to Lena is played by Byron Bunch. Bunch exhibits several characteristics of Quentin Compson: he adheres to a strict moral code (evident in his assuming responsibility for Lena and her baby) and he displays the same chivalrous streak combined with a similar physical inadequacy. When he confronts Burch

⁸⁹ 3.4.2. Caddy, Flight – Pursuit, 67.

⁹⁰ 3.4.2. Caddy, Flight – Pursuit, 67-8.

⁹¹ 2.2.1. Flight and Pursuit, 17.

after his final escape from Lena, the fight is over in “less than two minutes” with Byron “bleeding quietly about the face” (439).

Similarly to Byron, Lena has a distinctly romantic vein that provides a counterbalance to the inherent Gothic quality of Joe Christmas. It is apparent in her composed, gracious behavior, the unshaken faith stemming from her innocence, as well as reflected in the stance of other characters toward her: Mrs. Armstid giving her money so that she can continue her journey (22), or Byron perceiving her as a virgin (401). In addition, Lena Grove is the only major character in the novel that is not haunted by the past. While both *The Sound and the Fury* and *Light in August* abound in people apprehensively looking over their shoulders, tormented by the mirages of the past, Lena, when she does look back, does it for a very different reason: concern and care for those around her (496). While in the eyes of others she could easily become the persecuted maiden, she never consciously assumes this role. Instead, she is the serene pursuer of her goals, the maiden on a quest.

Light in August presents an undoubtedly wider scale of Gothic characters than *The Sound and the Fury*, and, consequently, manifests a more varied employment of the Gothic motion patterns in connection with the characters. The traditional Gothic types are sometimes maintained, albeit with some modifications (Joe Christmas as the perpetual wanderer, Lucas Burch as the villain seducer), sometimes parodied (Byron Bunch as the romantic hero), and sometimes refuted (Lena Grove as the persecuted maiden). The motion patterns thus serve to both assert and disclaim the use of the traditional Gothic types: while the notion of Lena being the persecuted maiden is effectively refuted by her purposeful movement, Joe's entrapment and eternal isolation are underlined by his wandering. In *The Sound and the Fury* the motion patterns also serve as an indicator of gender subversion and this tendency is even more developed in *Light in August*. The escaping, yielding characters are almost exclusively male, the favorite route of escape being the window, while women are

essentially the entrepreneurs on a quest, displaying apparently masculine qualities of resilience and resolution.

4.2. Perception of Motion in *The Sound and the Fury*

It has already been pointed out that there is a potential schism as to how the motion undertaken on the pages of *The Sound and the Fury* is perceived by the characters themselves and how it is perceived by the analysis. This is revealed mainly through various misunderstandings and misrepresentations.⁹² In addition, the notions harbored by the characters regarding their self-presentation is often disagreed upon (if not downright refuted) by the other personae in the novel. These incongruities between self-perception and the perception of others are another way of revealing Faulkner's innovatory presentation of the traditional Gothic types.

4.2.1. Benjy

Benjy's self-perception is, for obvious reasons, a highly problematic concept. The textual rendering of his sense of self reveals the deeply ingrained notion of self which stands isolated, unable to reach to the outside world, but it does not give a clue as to what perception of himself Benjy actually has. Likely, he is unable to ascribe an actual social role to himself, nor is he aware of the way he is perceived by others, which renders his perception of motion in relation to the Gothic types enacted by him effectively useless. This emphasizes the fact that his wandering is perceived by the analysis as an essentially unconscious process, caused by his desire to merge with his surroundings which, however,

⁹² The most prominent instances are Benjy's incident with the Burgess girl perceived by others as a sexual attack and Quentin's supposed kidnapping of the little Italian girl.
3.1.2. Benjy, Purposeless Wandering, 31.
3.2.3. Quentin, Flight – Pursuit, 47.

fails to manifest itself in an active deed, a quest. Similarly, his role of the romantic hero is an unconscious one, motivated by similar principles (preservation of purity) as in the traditional type, but for very different reasons.⁹³

The other characters in the novel essentially view him as pitiable, as a nuisance, a grotesque curiosity behind the fence. All these perceptions, although very varied and divergent, have one thing in common: Benjy as a marginal presence with limited faculties, who, due to his mental impairment, is unpredictable and therefore potentially both good and threatening. This notion accounts for the very incongruous interpretation of Benjy and the fact that he can at once be perceived as the comforting presence by Caddy and a violator of little girls by Mr. Burgess and Jason. In this respect Benjy's fence also offers very varied interpretations; from an element sheltering him from the threatening outside world to a barrier sheltering the outside world from him. Due to his mental condition, Benjy is never ascribed an active, positive role by others (save by some words of acknowledgment connected with awe from Roskus -20); he is thus never viewed as a hero. Rather he is connected with the unknown and ungraspable, which accounts for the constant attempts of the other characters to persecute him.

4.2.2. Quentin

Quentin's complex psychological condition has already been discussed.⁹⁴ He strives to find the way to reconcile his chivalrous aspirations with the darker, repressed sides of his personality, embodied in his attempts to reach eternal banishment by assuming the role of the brother seducer in relation to Caddy. Significantly, his prevalent perception of himself surfaces not as a consequence of his constant self-reflection but due to his interactions with other characters who function as mirrors, reflecting a broad range of qualities that Quentin

⁹³ 3.1.4. Benjy, Quest, 37.

⁹⁴ 2.2.2. Quest, 19.

3.2.1. Quentin, 38-9.

tries to encompass. This is most evident in his encounters with Dalton Ames and Herbert Head. While he is able to relate to Ames because of the underlying affinities⁹⁵, the violent repulsion he later feels toward Head shows how half-hearted his attempts to assume the role of the villain are. When he tells his father that he was afraid to try to make Caddy commit incest with him because he was “afraid she might” (112), he unknowingly admits his helplessness as to his supposed role of the villain. He is equally worried about the notion of Caddy that 'might' and about the notion of himself that would 'have to' play the role he does not really know how to play. Quentin thus unwillingly acknowledges his inability to assume the villain role, which effectively provides him with no other choice but to fully embrace the opposite role: that of a romantic hero. Since in his clear-cut vision of the world the only justifiable action a romantic hero can undertake is a quest, he formulates his struggles around this notion and the fact that he is not able to fulfill his quest troubles him all the more since he cannot see any other option for himself.

Quentin's inability to assume the villain role goes hand in hand with the marginal presence of the wandering pattern in the analysis. His perception of himself is consistent with the prevalence of the quest motion pattern, even if the quest (in terms of defending the honor of a lady) is ultimately a failed one. The presence of the flight and pursuit pattern is accounted for by the importance Quentin ascribes to his quest; the remorse and tormenting thoughts connected with his inability to fulfill the quest become the haunting, obsessive presence which he tries to escape.

Interestingly, the cleft in Quentin's psyche is almost unanimously ignored by the other characters (at least by those who know him considerably well⁹⁶). The tormenting contradictoriness Quentin experiences eludes them, leaving the reasons for his suicide obscure even to his family, which is evident in Mrs. Compson's pondering on his death (163). Quentin is thus consistently viewed as the romantic persona, the people around him

⁹⁵ 3.2.2. Quentin, Quest, 42.

⁹⁶ 3.2.3. Quentin, Flight – Pursuit, 47-8.

having no difficulty to discern the underlying motivations for acting the way he does.⁹⁷ Thus, Mr. Compson does not really seem to ponder the possibility that his son could have committed incest because it does not fit the generally shared idea of Quentin being the romantic hero.

4.2.3. Jason

The cleft between self-perception and the perception of others is most obvious in case of Jason. He sees himself exclusively as a capable man of action and a self-sufficient person. His isolation is thus perceived by him as a natural consequence of his status as a self-reliant personality and, as it were, as his own choice that is not even remotely connected with the notion of ostracism and punishment. Jason's having no interest in the people around him contributes to his ignorance as to how they perceive him, which, in turn, emphasizes his unsound, befuddled psyche. When he is finally forced to admit to himself that he is moving in circles, he puts the blame on others.⁹⁸ He thus views his movements solely as a quest and himself as a hero, despite numerous indications from his surroundings of it being otherwise.

Jason's essentially delusional state of mind⁹⁹ provides a basis for the analysis, which is thus contradictory to Jason's perception and principally in compliance with the perception the other characters have of him. Purposeless wandering is therefore the primary motion pattern and the isolation Jason perceives as voluntary is interpreted as banishment from the community.

The perception of the other characters regarding Jason is almost as unilateral as in the case of Quentin. Significantly, it also reveals the inconsistency between self-interpretation and the interpretation of others. While in Quentin's case his surroundings 'only' overlook one

⁹⁷ 3.2.2. Quentin, Quest, 43.

⁹⁸ 3.3.3. Jason, Flight – Pursuit, 58.

⁹⁹ 2.2.1. Flight – Pursuit, 18.

3.3.1. Jason, 50-51.

strand of his psyche, disproportionately emphasizing the remaining one, Jason's idea of himself is in direct opposition to that of the people around him. More precisely, while he perceives himself as a hero, the others (with the exception of Mrs. Compson) unmistakably label him a villain. Thus, when Earl voices his suspicions regarding the origin of the car Jason has bought for himself (143) he just echoes Dilsey's estimate of Jason: "I dont put no devilment beyond you" (117). The view of Jason being the villain with no moral scruples whatsoever is shared even by the members of his family; while Quentin compares him to Herbert Head (69), Mr. Compson deems him the probable culprit of opening the gate through which Benjy escapes (33). Hence the concept of double isolation connected with Jason: while he isolates himself to revel in self-sufficiency, the isolation imposed upon him by others is designed as a punishment for his deeds.¹⁰⁰

4.2.4. Caddy and Miss Quentin

The concept of self-perception in connection to Caddy and Miss Quentin is as problematic as in Benjy's case. The lack of textual support does not enable the reader to sufficiently establish the notion of Caddy's and Quentin's self, rendering the concept of self-interpretation vague and prone to conjectures. There are instances in which both Caddy and her daughter acknowledge their active roles of those who are on a quest for self-fulfillment¹⁰¹ (which in their case means love and freedom). On the other hand, both women also support the notion of feeling oppressed and persecuted.¹⁰²

This analysis treats Caddy and Miss Quentin principally from the point of view which is based on the actual physical motion itself (as rendered by the eyes of the Compson brothers). Their inherent activity and resoluteness thus underline the importance of the quest motion pattern. The flight-pursuit pattern, in turn, is mitigated by the inherent activity,

¹⁰⁰ 3.3.2. Jason, Purposeless Wandering, 55.

¹⁰¹ 3.4.3. Caddy, Quest, 69-71.

¹⁰² 3.4.2. Caddy, Flight – Pursuit, 67-68.

emphasizing the notion of a quest realized through fleeing.

Caddy is essentially viewed in terms of her elusiveness by the other characters. The interpretations this particular quality yields are very incongruous because each of the characters chooses to emphasize different aspects of it, so that the result conforms to the pattern he or she tries to fit Caddy into. Thus, for Quentin her constant outings to meet her lovers and her eventual marrying Herbert Head are clear proof of her being the persecuted maiden, while Jason ascribes a more active role to her when he perceives her undertakings as a personal affront threatening his position. Even Caddy's divorce from Head is perceived by Jason as a part of Caddy's quest to belittle him and deprive him of the job that he had been promised.

4.3. Summary

The analysis of motion in *The Sound and the Fury* reveals Faulkner's innovative use of the traditional Gothic devices. The original motion patterns are employed to reflect the recesses of the human mind and to show how prone the human psyche is to inconsistency, deviations and transition. Unlike the traditional Gothic types which are predominantly connected with one of the three motion patterns, Faulkner demonstrates the importance of the momentary mental state of his characters in respect to their movement. Thus, his modified Gothic character types are psychologically complex, often ambiguous characters (which also manifests itself in the cleft between their self-perception and the perception of others): at once villains and persecuted maidens, heroes and villains, depending on what part of their psyche manifests itself at the moment.

Furthermore, in blurring boundaries Faulkner also transgresses the gender line. His female characters display a lack of the traditional feminine passivity and even their flight from the oppressor is construed as an active deed, a quest; consequently, the men are mostly

portrayed as wanderers and escapists attempting to realize their quest through the other two motion patterns. The category of motion is thus used by Faulkner to enrich the traditional mode and considerably broaden the concept of the traditional Gothic types.

4.4. Concepts, Methods, Evaluation of Sources

In the concluding chapter of her study of the Gothic in Faulkner, Elizabeth Kerr points out that Faulkner “achieved the fusion of dream and reality in his Yoknapatawpha novels [...] by showing the outer world as it appeared to the mentally deficient, the psychologically disturbed, or the romantic idealist.”¹⁰³ Thus, she summarizes not only the platform upon which Faulkner's Gothic realm stands but also the world of *The Sound and the Fury*, which in this respect can be understood as a basis and a precursor of all the subsequent (and thematically much more obviously Gothic) novels of William Faulkner.

The Sound and the Fury, whose Gothic quality has not been universally acknowledged from the beginning,¹⁰⁴ thus seemed an appropriate choice for the analysis, providing an obvious, as well as unmapped territory. The abovementioned quotation reveals the direction in which this study was inevitably guided: an analysis of the Gothic aspects of Faulkner's novel as based on modern psychology. The relevance of the interdisciplinary approach with regard to the Gothic fiction is supported by numerous noted critical studies¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Kerr 220.

¹⁰⁴ This stance seems universally shared by the first Faulknerian critics. While *Absalom, Absalom!* is infallibly identified and labeled as Gothic; “[...] more than a bottle of Gothic sauce to be used to spice up our own preconceptions about the history of American society” by Brooks, and “Miss Rosa's Gothic thriller” by Vickery, *The Sound and the Fury* receives no such label, being primarily recognized for its structure and technical features.

Cleanth Brooks, *William Faulkner: the Yoknapatawpha Country*. New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1966) 295, 325-48.

Olga W. Vickery, *The Novels of William Faulkner: A Critical Interpretation* (Baton Rouge :Louisiana State University Press, 1995) 87, 28-49.

Similarly, as Kerr points out Leslie Fiedler views only *Absalom, Absalom!*, *Sanctuary*, and *Light in August* as Gothic.

Kerr 31.

¹⁰⁵ It has been argued in the introduction to this thesis that the Gothic genre is a comprehensive one. While it can incorporate numerous diverse influences, one trait seems to be generally agreed on: the preoccupation with human psyche, especially in its most irrational and abnormal, which, in turn, justifies the relevance of psychology/psychiatry for the analysis .

and the concept of the human being as subject to extreme psychological conditions and distorted under their influence was one of the criteria in determining the contrastive perspective, provided in this thesis by Faulkner's later novel *Light in August*. The character of Joe Christmas mirrors the Compson brothers in psychological complexity, embodying and magnifying the tendencies inherent in the Compsons. The concepts such as isolation and split personality manifest themselves clearly in his motion patterns and thus offer material for a direct comparison of Joe to the Compson brothers. The other criterion according to which the contrastive perspective was selected lies in the genre classification of the major novels. While *As I Lay Dying* is not treated by Kerr in *Faulkner's Gothic Domain*, being identified as a romance with macabre motifs¹⁰⁶ and *Absalom, Absalom!* is “so obviously Gothic that critical references to it as Gothic are inevitable”¹⁰⁷; both *The Sound and the Fury* and *Light in August* belong somewhere in between these two extremes, blending the inherent Gothic quality with other aspects. In the case of *The Sound and the Fury* the Gothic provides the platform for Freudian psychology, while in *Light in August* it manifests itself in stark contrast to the romance and pastoral motifs provided by the embedding narrative of Lena's journey.

Methodologically, this thesis draws upon sources which can be roughly divided into two groups. Firstly, there are the treatises which provide either a general literary analysis of the novel, or an interpretation based on psychological theories. Olga Vickery's study of Faulkner's novels as well as Irene Visser's *Compassion in Faulkner's Fiction* proved

Botting describes the Gothic as concerned with the “irrational, immoral, and fantastic,” while Lloyd Smith stresses the importance of the unconscious and of “the opposing aspects within the self”, as well as the fears “having to do with the suppressions of past traumas and guilt.” Hogle in “Introduction: the Gothic in Western Culture” goes even further, stating that the “Gothic have helped to prefigure and shape Freud's notion of the Oedipal conflict [...]”

Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996) 2.

Allan Lloyd Smith, *American Gothic Fiction: An Introduction* (New York, London: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004) 2, 6-7.

Jerrold E. Hogle, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 5.

¹⁰⁶ Kerr 221.

¹⁰⁷ Kerr 29.

valuable help as accessible analyses, elucidating some of the difficult points in the novel. John Irwin's book-length essay on Quentin's schisms provided the much-needed insight to the complex psychological state of Quentin, interpreting his motivations as based on psychological theories and elucidating them on the background of literary-philosophical texts of the first psychoanalysts, such as Freud, or Rank. Similarly, the collection of essays edited by Abadie and Kartiganer focusing on the psychology in Faulkner was very informative in respect to the abnormal psychological state of the protagonists of *The Sound and the Fury*.

Secondly, there are the sources which provide the basis for the Gothic reading of the novel. Leslie Fiedler's *Love and Death in the American Novel* proved to be a very valuable resource, combining the Freudian principles with the premise that American literature as such is a literature invariably drawing upon the Gothic. Charles L. Crow and Allan Lloyd Smith continue in a similar vein, while Fred Botting's *Gothic* provided the much-needed broader context of the British Gothic, as well as the traditional Gothic devices, which are treated, albeit very selectively, in the introductory part of this thesis. Ultimately, the most indispensable and invaluable source which literally provided a platform for the argument of the thesis was Elizabeth M. Kerr's *William Faulkner's Gothic Domain*, the only book-length study consistently treating all of Faulkner's major works as Gothic; thus discussing most of the concepts treated in this study, including the three motion patterns in connection with the Gothic types. This analysis draws directly upon Kerr's treatment of *The Sound and the Fury* as a profoundly Gothic text, elaborating to a greater extent the themes and motifs Kerr discusses in her study. Obviously, there are numerous other relevant literary approaches consciously omitted in this thesis for the sole purpose of a consistency of the argument. With regard to the limited scope and to avoid the risk of superficiality and oversimplification, the Gothic is treated exclusively as based upon psychological

readings.¹⁰⁸

While the analysis is rooted in Kerr's identification of the three fundamental motion patterns as well as the basic Gothic types in the novel, its benefit lies in the elaboration of the concepts, including a Faulknerian Gothic typology based on the motion patterns. Thus, in spite of Faulkner's loose use of the Gothic mode, there appear tendencies which are consistent and applicable to Faulkner's other works: the parodies and inversions which give rise to personae such as the maiden persecutor, the villain-victim, or the romantic hero lost in his own mind.¹⁰⁹ In addition, while Kerr acknowledges the importance of psychology suggested in the very title of the chapter entitled "The Freudian Dream," she does not make a direct link between the momentary mental state of the character and its physical manifestation embodied in one of the motion patterns, which are consistent, and present a pattern described in the thesis. Thus, the analysis further emphasizes and elaborates the interrelatedness of the Gothic and the psychological in Faulkner's work.

¹⁰⁸ Thus we leave out the gender/feminist theories which have relevance for the Gothic, especially in relation to the character of Caddy Compson. For instance, Kristeva's theory of the "abject" is readily applicable to Caddy's case who can be perceived as both presence and absence in the world of her three brothers. As Hogle points out, "[...] all that is abjected is thrown under [...] cast off into a figure or figures criminalized or condemned by people in authority and thus subjected to (again, thrown under) their gaze and the patterns of social normalcy they enforce.

Hogle 7.

¹⁰⁹ 3.1. Benjy, 38.
3.2. Quentin, 49.
3.3. Jason, 63.
3.4. Caddy, 73.

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