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Hope from Hopelessness: Finding Contemporary Southern Literature through Anne Tyler's Use of *The Sound and the Fury*

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Hope from Hopelessness:

Finding Contemporary Southern Literature through Anne Tyler's Use of *The Sound and the Fury*

Critical debate focuses on the trend of Southern writers and the classification of their work within the tradition of Southern literature. One side of the argument supports contemporary writers as part of the Southern literary tradition. That is, it proposes that contemporary Southern writers continue to write Southern literature not by writing with the same style and magnitude as Faulkner and Warren, but by basing their writing on this tradition and modernizing it. An excellent example lies in Anne Tyler's use of William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* as a foundation for her *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*. Through characterization and structure Tyler builds on traditional Southern literature to create contemporary Southern literature. By borrowing from Faulkner's characterization of the Compson family, as each of the Tulls align with an equivocal Compson, and through her structure, which mimics Faulkner's, Tyler continues to write in the Southern literary tradition. However, as much as Tyler's characters align with Faulkner's, it is precisely the differences in the characters, constructiveness and hope opposed to Faulkner's destruction and hopelessness, that make Tyler's work a piece of contemporary Southern literature.

As a Southern writer Tyler is indirectly connected to Faulkner since he, in many ways, is the father of post World War I Southern literature and the key figure in the Southern Renaissance; however, the direct connection between the authors and their works is surprisingly small. Tyler's *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* has been related to Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* though infrequently while the connection between Tyler's novel and *The Sound and the Fury* remains unexplored. A search for articles on both authors returns only two results: Adrienne Bond's "From Addie Bundren to Pearl Tull: The Secularization of the South" and Mary J. Elkins's "*Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*: Anne Tyler and the Faulkner Connection."

Perhaps the lack of connection between the two authors stems from obviousness. As Bond notes, “Anne Tyler’s urban, secular south is so very different from William Faulkner’s rural, Calvinist one, that she is as free to use him for a model as Joyce was to use Homer” (64). It remains true that Faulkner’s and Tyler’s souths differ greatly and it is Tyler’s choice to use Faulkner that makes the connection so important. However, it is obvious and logical that a contemporary Southern writer would rely on the keystone of the genre. Yet, when the survival of the genre becomes an issue, even the most obvious connection becomes essential. Further, while it may seem evident that Tyler would use Faulkner, the depth in which she uses him is far from obviousness. While “Tyler may be intending an evocation of *As I Lay Dying* In fact, [she] seems to be throwing out hints that she wants the reader to suspect a connection between the two,” the connection goes beyond merely scratching the surface (Elkins 119). Indeed, both *As I Lay Dying* and *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* examine the issues of family, familiar bonds, and offer unsentimental portraits of families (Elkins 122). They also exhibit similar character structures (Elkins 120). What’s more, they have similar structures as novels: “In Faulkner’s novel, each chapter is given over to one of the character’s voice, one character’s description of and reaction to the events taking place; the individual chapters contain conflicting viewpoints and philosophies, differing attitudes toward the mother, the other members of the family, and the task the family has taken on” (Elkins 119). This statement may also be made about *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*. Tyler’s novel “is not, then, a contemporary retelling of the Bundren story. The parallels between the two are suggestive rather than exact, and they call attention to the deeper thematic resemblances and dissimilarities of the two novels,” as Elkins notes; in fact, the connection extends much farther into the novel (122).

While the connection between Tyler and Faulkner in *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* and *As I Lay Dying* is all well, good, and much deserved and applauded, critics have missed a previous, and perhaps, stronger connection between the two authors in Tyler’s *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* and Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*. In writing *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* in 1982, Tyler had access to both of Faulkner’s texts: *As I Lay Dying* published in 1930 and *The Sound and the Fury*

published in 1929. While critics managed to point out the connection between Tyler's text and Faulkner's later text, they either missed, or thought insignificant, the relationship between Tyler's text and Faulkner's earlier text. *The Sound and the Fury* shares many of the structural characteristics of *As I Lay Dying*, as well as a focus on family dynamic, although *The Sound and the Fury* may contain a theme more focused on time. Nonetheless, *The Sound and the Fury* offers a significant and stronger connection to *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* because it was both written and published first and influenced *As I Lay Dying* since Faulkner was conscious of his construction of both novels and compared the two: "I learned only from the writing of Sanctuary [sic] that there was something missing; something which *The Sound and the Fury* [sic] gave me and Sanctuary [sic] did not. When I began *As I Lay Dying* [sic] I had discovered what it was and knew that it would be also missing in this case" (Intro 226). Thus, since *The Sound and the Fury* resembles both *As I Lay Dying* and *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* and is considered by many, not the least of which is Faulkner himself, his best, or most seminal, text, it is time for an exploration of the connection between *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* and *The Sound and the Fury*.

The connection between the two novels becomes most evident in the equivalent characterizations of each family member. Both novels have absent parental figures that contribute to the dysfunctionality of the families. Each family must cope with an absent patriarchal figure, which ultimately disturbs the psychological balance of the family, as well as a semi-absent and often incompetent matriarchal figure. In *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* the Tull family must deal with a physically absent father. Beck abandons his wife and children in 1944, as a way of escaping his responsibility and the reality of being a husband and father (Tyler 9). As Beck later tells Cody, "[Pearl] wore me out . . . used up all my good points" (Tyler 300). When Beck could no longer deal with his reality he escaped it by running away. Beck's physical absence aligns perfectly with Jason III's figurative, or psychological, absence in *The Sound and the Fury*. Though Jason is physically present throughout the childhoods of his children, he too escapes his reality, though his means of escape is alcohol. Likewise, both Pearl and Caroline are semi-absent characters. Both are physically present in the novels; however, Pearl spends much of her time

merely trying to survive and provide for her family and Caroline spends most of her time in hypochondriac stupors rather than acting as mothers. Yet, the most important connection between the two novels shows through the children since the children are both the focuses of the works and traditionally symbols of hope for the future.

Tyler's foundation on Faulkner exists in the characterizations of the children as each Tull child builds on a Compson child. A complication arises from the fact that there are only three Tull children, two boys and one girl, but four Compson children, three boys and one girl. To resolve this issue Tyler maintains the equal ratios of daughter to daughter, Caddy paired to Jenny, and youngest to youngest, Benjy paired to Ezra, but combines the two semi-competent brothers, Jason IV and Quentin, to create the foundation for Cody's character.

Jenny's alignment with Caddy is much less complex than the other children's connections. As the only daughters in their respective dysfunctional families, both girls encounter similar difficulties, but perhaps the most striking but obscure similarity comes in the form of their names. Both characters have names that mean white. Candace, for which Caddy is a diminutive, means "Brilliantly white" and is most likely of Latin origin (Wallace 41). Jenny, the most common diminutive of Jennifer, means "White and smooth [or] soft" and comes from Welsh origin (Wallace 107). Thus, perhaps, Tyler chose Jenny as a name because it meant the same things as Caddy in order to align the two characters. Although we cannot overlook the fact that Jennifer was, and still is, an extremely popular name, especially around the time when Jenny was born as "Its immense 20th [sic] - century popularity began in the 1920s and grew to a 1950s peak in Britain" (Wallace 107). Further, "in the U.S. the name reached the number one spot in the eighties," near the time when Tyler wrote *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* (Wallace 108). While it is possible that the naming was completely coincidental, it remains highly improbable especially since authors sometimes use name books with meanings to aid in naming characters. Additionally, in using a name that means white, with white of course often symbolizing innocence and purity, Faulkner creates irony in Caddy's character. In his favorite character, "the only thing in literature that would ever move [him] very much," Caddy, Faulkner created an ironically symbolic character: the pure and innocent girl

child with dirty drawers that would become the tarnished woman (Intro 227). Tyler then mimics this irony in her character Jenny, the seemingly pure and innocent girl who Pearl constantly accuses of being “dirty” and who as a woman becomes nearly as tarnished as Caddy.

Both women ultimately fall from the ideals of their names and their positions as Southern women through their promiscuity and marriages. As a teenager, Caddy, for reasons too vast to explore in the scope of this paper (though individuality and strength would be among them), chooses to abandon the pedestal that society had placed her on by becoming sexually promiscuous. In a conversation with Quentin she admits to her actions: “Have there been very many Caddy I don’t know too many . . . You don’t know whose it is then does he know” (*SATF* 115). Ultimately, she marries Herbert Head, because she became pregnant, presumably by Dalton Ames, but the marriage ends when Herbert discovers that Quentin isn’t his child. Though we never see it in the text, the “Appendix” tells us that Caddy married and divorced a second time and disappeared: “Married in 1920 to a minor movingpicture magnate, Hollywood California. Divorced by mutual agreement, Mexico 1925. Vanished in Paris with German occupation, 1940” (711). While no proof exists, it is probable that Caddy continued her trend of promiscuity, perhaps even with several more marriages and divorces.

Jenny resembles Caddy especially in her fall. Jenny too seems to be an innocent and pure girl who chooses for some reason to soil herself. While not as opprobrious as Caddy’s actions, Jenny, as a teenager, kisses Josiah Payson who most consider to be lower class and unrespectable. This action earns Jenny Pearl’s wrath: “You piece of trash . . . You tramp. You trashy thing” (Tyler 79). While the reader still may not find Jenny to be a soiled character, her actions certainly foreshadow her later reputation. Just as Caddy becomes a thing to be used and thrown away, as displayed by her multiple sexual encounters and marriages, Jenny becomes a disposable thing to others and to herself.

Instead of multiple premarital affairs, Jenny has several failed marriages. She first marries Harley Baines out convenience and practicality, much like Caddy’s first marriage to Herbert. Jenny, “late in her senior year, . . . fell in love” with Harley Baines who was going to “be at Paulham University . . . [and] Jenny was going to Paulham too” (Tyler 84). Though, at the time of Harley’s proposal, Jenny “was

pulled only very slightly by the feelings she's had for him earlier," she marries him anyway (Tyler 88). Jenny didn't really love Harley. She was mildly attracted to him, like "a schoolgirl [with a] crush brought on by senior panic" (Tyler 89). However, they were going to the same school so it would be convenient, and he was an extremely practical man. It is somewhat reminiscent of Caddy and Herbert's marriage. Caddy didn't love Herbert, but "[she's] got to marry somebody," so she marries him because he is wealthy and will provide financial support for her child and herself.

Jenny's second and third marriages are contrasts to her first. Jenny's second marriage to Sam Wiley was apparently out of love since he was "the one she's loved the best" (Tyler 207). It is also the only marriage in which she has a child. Yet, it lasted only a short time, "by the eighth month [of her pregnancy] the marriage was finished," because Jenny "had been unlovable, [and] had lacked some singular quality that would keep a husband" (Tyler 208). While Jenny ended her first marriage, Sam ended her second. Thus it seems that she becomes disposable; further, Jenny's resulting attitude, that she "has been unlovable" and lacks qualities to keep a husband, shows that she feels disposable, hollow, and most likely suffers from low-self esteem.

Jenny's third, and presumably final, marriage to Joe seems successful but somewhat hollow. It is not necessarily a marriage of love for Jenny, though it is for Joe: "I fell in love with her the moment she walked in," said Joe . . . "It's hard to resist a man who needs you." "Need had nothing to do with it," Joe told her. "Well, who admires you, then?" (Tyler 189). They seem to make a good pair despite their motivations for getting married. However, both seem so preoccupied that they hardly seem like husband and wife. Joe spends most of his time caring for the seven children, and Jenny immerses herself in her medical practice and the children. It is as if being a parent supersedes being a spouse; therefore, the marriage enjoys relative success. Yet, it does seem that after her discovery that she was "unlovable," she finds a way to allow herself to be loved. Further, despite the seeming hollowness of the marriage, it appears that both partners are content in the union.

Though Jenny, like Caddy, becomes a promiscuous, through her many marriages, and somewhat hollow woman, she remains both more constructive and more hopeful than Caddy. As an adult Caddy

continues on the path of destruction she began as a teenager. She continues to be a promiscuous and hollow woman. In her last conversation with Jason she attempts to gain custody of her daughter, Quentin, by bribing Jason with one thousand dollars which he believes she will earn through prostitution: “‘And I know how you’ll get [the money], . . . You’ll get it the same way you got her’” (*SATF* 209). While Jason is not the most reliable source for information about Caddy, his assumption about the source of the money is most likely accurate given Caddy’s history. As Faulkner notes in the “Appendix”, Caddy “Vanished in Paris with the German occupation, 1940, still beautiful, and probably still wealthy too, since she did not look within fifteen years of her actual forty-eight, and was not heard of again” (711). Presumably then, Caddy continued her promiscuity using men for their money and perhaps still searching for her own fulfillment. Ultimately, she is lost, hopeless, and essentially destroyed since she “vanished . . . and was not heard of again.” In the same conversation with Jason, Caddy also admits her hollowness: “‘No,’ she says, then begun to laugh and to try to hold it back all at the same time. ‘No. I have nothing at stake,’ she says, making that noise, putting her hands to her mouth. ‘Nuh-nuh-nothing’” (*SATF* 209-210). Caddy seems to realize, in the middle of her pleading, her true position—an empty and destroyed woman—and begins to laugh, and perhaps sob, at the realization. Essentially, Caddy is left hopeless and destroyed by her own actions; however, Jenny’s actions result in hope and construction.

Unlike Caddy, Jenny both finds an outlet for her individuality and strength and has an escape from her family that allows her to become a hopeful character. Because Jenny lives in a society where going to college and becoming a doctor is a perfectly acceptable career for a woman she is able to be constructive and hopeful; whereas, Caddy finds herself doomed from the beginning as a strong and individual woman in a society that merely wants to place women on pedestals and relegate them to household roles. Thus, while Caddy remains alone with nothing and separated from her family (because she escaped her family but had no where to go and no role to fulfill without a husband), Jenny stays surrounded by her family with a new baby. Jenny chooses, after living away from them while at college, to live in Baltimore near family—her mother and Ezra. Further, in the closing scene of the novel, Jenny is surrounded by her family, but most importantly, plays the role of mother to her first “joint child” with

Joe: “The baby wailed and turned pink. Hiccupping, she was dragged from the high chair and placed on her mother’s lap, where she settled down cheerfully and started pursuing a pea around the rim of Jenny’s plate. ‘Will I live to see them grown?’ Jenny asked the others” (Tyler 196, 296-297). Jenny is a successful doctor, has a content marriage, and has a new baby. She seems to have found some type of fulfillment in her life. The results of her actions are positive, constructive and hopeful.

Next, while it may seem a bit awkward to compare a perfectly sane and capable man with a completely retarded and incompetent one, the similarities between Ezra and Benjy are really rather astounding. Like Jenny and Caddy, both names have similar characteristics. The meanings are different, but both boys have biblical names, specifically, Old Testament names. Benjy is named, although only after it is discovered that he will never be normal, after Benjamin from the book of Genesis. He is “our lastborn, sold into Egypt” (“Appendix” 718). Benjamin in the Old Testament is Jacob and Rachel’s youngest son and Joseph’s brother. Likewise, Ezra was a priest and teacher of the law.

Perhaps also in the broadest of similarities, both characters are constantly referred to as idiots. *The Sound and the Fury* is Benjy’s story, or at least it began so: “it is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing” (*Macbeth* 5.5.25-27). Precisely, Benjy actually is the idiot in the classic or medical sense of the word. He simply does not have the mental capacity to behave normally. He can never be cognitively older than a toddler. Though Ezra is also often referred to as an idiot, “You raving idiot,” his idiocy relates to the slang or colloquial sense of the word (Tyler 57). When people, especially Cody, call Ezra an idiot it is because he has seemingly done or said something foolish and the name becomes a derogatory term.

While Ezra absolutely acts responsibly as an adult, he often exhibits childlike qualities that align him with Benjy. Most obviously, people treat Ezra like a child. In addition to constantly calling him an idiot, they also pity him like a child saying, “‘Poor, poor Ezra’” (Tyler 64). This is the same treatment Benjy receives as a perpetual child: “poor Benjy” (*SATF* 150). While Benjy, by definition is a perpetual boy, Ezra also becomes defined as an eternal boy: “Then as a man, Ezra was . . . well, to be honest he was not much different from when he was a boy . . . he was an *eternal boy*” (Tyler 172). Even Ezra’s physical

features make him child like: “He had grown to be a large-boned man, but his face was still childishly rounded, with wide eyes, the downy cheeks, the delicate lips of a school boy. His hair seemed formed of layers of silk in various shades of yellow and beige” (Tyler 67). Ezra literally looks like a big kid.

One of the most childlike things about Ezra, and one of his strongest connections to Benjy, shows in his sensual nature; that is, like children, Ezra experiences things through senses. Benjy experiences everything through smell, “I could smell the cold . . . Caddy smelled like leaves . . . She smelled like trees . . . [Father] smelled like rain . . . [and] Quentin smelled like rain, too” (*SATF* 6, 9, 64, 65). Benjy identifies everyone and thing by smell, thus he always smells things to identify them. Ezra is very similar. Though he is in no way relegated merely to his sense of smell, Ezra relates things to smell. In a statement much like Benjy’s, Ezra notes that his niece: “smelled of crayons and peanut butter – homely smells that warmed his heart” (Tyler 274). Further, Ezra’s obsession with food, “Oh, if it had to do with food, he was endlessly appreciative,” correlates to his sensuality (Tyler 198). Food stimulates all of the senses. It can be smelled, tasted, felt, seen, and sometimes even heard. However, smell is one of the most important senses in relation to food since taste and smell are related, a fact that anyone with a cold can verify. Thus, as a childlike person, Ezra too is a very sensual person.

Yet for all their similarities, Ezra is a much more productive and hopeful character. Benjy remains incompetent and hopeless. He will never be anything more. His only future lies in the mental institution in Jackson: “Committed to the State Asylum, Jackson, 1933” (“Appendix” 719). Ezra on the other hand is a competent man with a future. He serves, albeit for a short time, in the Army. He cares not only for himself, but for his dying mother as well. Also, he manages his own restaurant that, while not thriving, is surviving. Perhaps most importantly, though, he finally manages to have a family dinner in the final scene of the novel even though it is interrupted. He, like Jenny, is successful, hopeful, and surrounded by his family in the end of the novel – a very different picture than Benjy. Indeed, it is precisely Ezra’s ability to speak, think, and take care of himself and others that prevents him from becoming a doomed character. His competence gives him the opportunity to become a hopeful and productive character unlike Benjy.

Finally there is Cody. He primarily aligns with Jason IV; however, there are a few important similarities to note between Cody and Quentin. Both characters are the eldest sons in their families. This becomes particularly important in relation to the issue of absent fathers. As the oldest child, and especially the oldest son, both men feel the absence of their fathers more strongly than the other children because they feel that they must take the responsibilities of protecting the family onto their own shoulders. Cody rarely shows his feelings of loss directly. Actually, he displays it only twice in the entire novel, once early in the novel when, as a teenager, he asks, “Was it something I said? Was it something I did? Was it something I didn’t do, that made you go away?” (Tyler 47). Then a second time as an adult when he meets Beck: “How could you do that? . . . We were kids, we were only kids, we had no way of protecting ourselves. We looked to you for help” (Tyler 300). Cody’s anger and pain in these two instances certainly illustrate his loss.

Quentin displays his sense of loss a bit differently since his father’s absence is figurative, or psychological through alcohol abuse and cynicism, rather than a physical absence. While Cody experiences pain and anger associated with his loss, Quentin becomes haunted by and obsessed with the cynical and nihilistic advice his father gave him. Throughout the novel, during his increasing fragmentation, Quentin reviews the conversations he had with his father. For instance, the conversation he had with his father about his grandfather’s watch haunts Quentin:

and when Father gave it to me he said I give you the mausoleum of all hope and desire; it’s rather excruciating-ly apt that you will use it to gain the reducto absurdum of all human experience which can fit your individual needs no better than it fitted his or his father’s. I give it to you not that you may remember time, but that you might forget it now and then for a moment and not spend all your breath trying to conquer it. Because no battle is ever won he said. They are not even fought. The field only reveals to man his own folly and despair, and victory is an illusion of philosophers and fools. (*SATF* 76)

This is an excellent example of his father’s negative and hopeless advice that haunts Quentin. Jason’s absence and advice most likely contribute to Quentin’s psychological fragmentation and ultimate suicide. After Quentin’s seemingly never-ending fight to protect Caddy, perhaps he takes his father’s advice that no battle is ever won, that victory is an illusion, and decides that the only way to escape his problems is to

escape time, or rather, to die. Further, this piece of fatherly advice may have led to Quentin's obsession with time, and is obviously the reason Quentin destroys his watch.

The absence of fathers leaves both boys to fill the role of protector. Cody's ascension to the role of protector comes in the Christmas shopping scene. During the shopping trip Cody carefully keeps, somewhat symbolically, the three children together to protect them from being separated: "After a minute they resumed walking three abreast, and Cody took a pinch of Ezra's sleeve, too, so they wouldn't drift apart in the crowd" (Tyler 62). Here Cody physically grasps both of his siblings to prevent them from being separated in the crowded department store. Yet there remains a sense that he also holds them together, through a great effort on his own part, as a family.

Further, like Cody, Quentin demonstrates a need to protect his family, especially his sister Caddy, though, unlike Cody, he constantly fails to do so. As a teenager Quentin tries to protect Caddy from Dalton Ames by telling him to leave, "I came to tell you to leave town . . . I say you must go not my father not anybody I say it," and then, when Dalton asks, "what will you do if I don't leave," by threatening Dalton with death: "Ill kill you" (*SATF* 159-160). Though Quentin's instincts to protect are well intentioned, he fails to intimidate Dalton and actually ends up passing out. So it becomes yet another symbol of his impotence.

In addition to their feelings of loss concerning their fathers, both characters also express feelings of loss in connection with their mothers. Though Cody's mother, Pearl, cares for her children as best she can, Cody often feels that she never acts the way a mother should. He feels this loss and laments it: "What [Cody] wouldn't give to have a mother who acted like other mothers! He longed to see her gossiping with a little gang of women in the kitchen, letting them roll her hair up in pincurls, trading beauty secrets, playing cards, losing track of time—" (Tyler 59). Cody's lament aligns perfectly with Quentin's who constantly wants a mother: "if I'd just had a mother so I could say Mother Mother" (*SATF* 172). Obviously, Quentin did have a mother. Caroline Compson actually outlived Quentin; however, she was always locked up in her room in one of her hypochondriac states worrying about her social status instead

of her family. Essentially, then, Quentin had no mother whom he could rightly call a mother and as such feels the loss and laments it, much like Cody.

Perhaps the strongest link between Cody and Quentin shows through their obsessions with time and the past, a notably Southern characteristic. Quentin, of course, is completely obsessed with and consumed by time. He spends much of his life trying to turn back time and much of his section in *The Sound and the Fury* trying to escape time because he cannot cope with his sister's actions, her fall from the pedestal of Southern womanhood, and his failure to protect her. Quentin begins his section, and the last day of his life, by awaking to time: "When the shadow of the sash appeared in the curtains it was between seven and eight o'clock and then I was in time again, hearing the watch" (*SATF* 76). Time continues as Quentin's obsession throughout his day. All day long, even against his will at times, he seeks signs of the time: clock towers, chimes, and shadows. Quentin constantly notes shadows, "the shadow on the stoop was gone," and clock chimes, "I heard a clock strike the hour," even when he doesn't consciously want to: "There was a clock, high up in the sun, and I thought about how, when you don't want to do a thing, your body will try to trick you into doing it, sort of unawares" (*SATF* 82, 83). Ultimately, Quentin becomes completely obsessed as he can think of little else but time and escaping it.

Cody also finds himself obsessed with time and the past in ways reminiscent of Quentin. Cody also wants to turn back time, especially in relation to issues involving his father: "In these dreams, Cody was not his present self. He had somehow slid backward and become a toddler again" (Tyler 47). Because his father was absent for a great portion of Cody's childhood, Cody becomes obsessed with the past. He even fanaticizes as an adult about returning to the past, or escaping from time: "If they had a time machine, I'd go on it . . . It wouldn't much matter to me where. Past or future: just out of my time. Just someplace else'" (Tyler 223). Likewise, he also becomes obsessed with time: "Time is my obsession: not to waste it, not to lose it. It's like . . . an object to me; something you can almost take hold of. If I could just collect enough of it in one clump . . . If I could just pass it back and forth and sideways, you know? If only Einstein were right and time were a kind of river you could choose to step into at any place along the shore'" (Tyler 223). Just like Quentin who seems to think that if he could just

escape time then he could make everything right, Cody feels that if he could simply control time, then he could make things right. Perhaps Cody summarizes both his and Quentin's obsession with time in one simple sentence: "Everything . . . comes down to time in the end—to the passing of time, to changing," since both men's obsessions with time stem in some way from an inability to change and adapt (Tyler 256).

The most important difference between Quentin and Cody, the result of their obsessions with time, also points to Tyler's modernization of Faulkner, and hence her status as a contemporary Southern writer. While both characters succumb to time, they ultimately handle their situations in completely opposite manners. Quentin's need to escape time ultimately leads to his suicide since he can find no other way to cope with time, perhaps largely due to his impotence as a character. Thus he becomes a dismal and hopeless character. As a child and youth, he should represent hope and promise for the future. However, Quentin becomes a futureless and hopeless character. Cody on the other hand takes his need and desire to escape or turn back time and makes it a career choice. That is, he decided to attempt to control time, by becoming an "efficiency expert," or "A time-study man," instead of having it control him (Tyler 83,291). Thus Cody becomes a productive member of society. Since he does not need to escape time through the only means available, death, he becomes a hopeful and productive character. Further, Cody's competence and ability to successfully fulfill the roles forced upon him, unlike Quentin's general impotence and failure, give Cody his hopefulness and productiveness.

Though Cody exhibits many similarities to Quentin he most resembles Jason IV in both behavior and attitude; Cody and Jason are extremely angry, hostile, greedy, womanizing men who are forced into the role of provider for their families. Both Cody and Jason feel, quite rightfully, that they have been deprived of opportunity and as such become very angry men. For Cody, his lost opportunity is his childhood. He feels that "His father . . . ruined their lives . . . first in one way then in another," because the absence of their father disrupted their lives physically and psychologically (Tyler 59). The disruption to Cody's life was the loss of his childhood: "'You're getting big enough for me to start relying on,' [Pearl] said. 'I'm only fourteen,' Cody told her" (Tyler 42). Because his father left when Cody was only

fourteen and Pearl could not manage both roles, as mother and father, by herself, Cody was forced to give up his own life as a teenager and to become a protector and provider for his siblings. Ultimately, he regrets this and becomes angry, hostile and bitter about it much like Jason.

Jason Compson, like Cody Tull, finds himself deprived of his opportunity to live a life of his choice and instead becomes the provider and head of the Compson household, or what remains of it. When Caddy marries Herbert Head, he promises a position at the bank to Jason: “Herbert has spoiled us all to death Quentin did I write you that he is going to take Jason into his bank when Jason finished high school” (*SATF* 94). Further, Jason III “sold Benjy’s pasture so that Quentin may go to Harvard,” and then he continues to drink himself to death (*SATF* 94). Thus when Herbert divorces Caddy before Jason can assume his position, Jason loses his opportunity, and because most of Compson’s Mile has already been sold and Jason III and Quentin are both dead, Jason finds himself forced into the position of provider for the Compson family. However, he remains very angry and bitter about it: “‘Sure,’ [Jason] says. ‘I never had time to be [a reproach to Caroline]. I never had time to go to Harvard or drink myself into the ground. I had to work’” (*SATF* 181). Instead of pursuing the successful life as a businessman he dreamed of, Jason becomes the sole provider for his hypochondriac mother, retarded brother, illegitimate niece, and “a whole dam kitchen full of niggers” (*SATF* 186). This injustice ultimately leads Jason to become a very angry and bitter young man, just like Cody.

The anger and bitterness that come with the loss of opportunity also leads to other behavioral issues with Cody such as his inability to properly express anger, his treatment of his brother, his isolation, and his greed. Because Cody feels so deeply wronged by forces outside of his control, he begins to think of everything in terms of revenge and he never learns to properly deal with the anger. Rather, he assigns fault to other things and people. Often he reacts with violence. In the case of his accident at work when he is struck with the girder, he cannot necessarily assign blame to a person and for once he cannot blame his brother. Therefore, he takes his anger out the only way he knows how, he treats those around him, his wife and son, poorly, but mostly he reacts with violence: “‘What I mainly am is mad . . . This whole damn business has left me mad as hell. I felt that girder hit . . . I really felt it hit, and it hurt, and all the

time I was flying through the air I wanted to hit it back, punch somebody; and now it seems I'm still waiting for the chance. When do I get even? And don't talk to me about lawsuits, compensation. The only thing I want to do is hit that girder back'" (Tyler 219). In some ways Cody's behavior is purely childish and pathetic. Perhaps it is a type of arrested development; that is, perhaps his violence is the one part of his childhood that he retains.

Jason is also a character who cannot relieve anger constructively. Like Cody, he feels wronged and wants revenge. He often assigns blame or turns to physical violence to cope with anger; however, like his impotent brother, Jason frequently becomes frustrated and incapable of action. Jason blames Caddy for the loss of his opportunity, but he usually displaces the anger he feels for his sister onto his niece, Miss Quentin. Thus he frequently attempts violence toward her in the guise of, albeit much needed, discipline: "I want to know where you go when you play out of school . . . You may can scare an old woman off, but I'll show you who's got hold of you now . . . You wait until I get this belt out and I'll show you,' [Jason] says, pulling [his] belt out. Then Dilsey grabbed [his] arm" (*SATF* 184-185). Though Jason desperately, and repeatedly, would like to whip Miss Quentin, he always finds himself thwarted by either his mother or Dilsey, so that he becomes a completely impotent character. However, the best comparison to Cody shows in Jason's dealings in the stock market: "I don't see how a city no bigger than New York can hold enough people to take the money away from us country suckers. Work like hell all day every day, send them your money and get a little piece of paper back, Your account closed at 20.62. Teasing you along, letting you pile up a little paper profit, then bang! . . . Well, I just want to hit them one time and get my money back" (*SATF* 234). Like Cody, Jason wants someone to blame and he wants physical revenge. While Jason's desire to "hit them one time" may simply be a slang reference to making a large profit, the most literal implication should not be overlooked: That Jason would physically like to hit, strike, or beat those in charge of the market, or simply the markets themselves—an idea as absurd and childish as trying to punch a girder.

Cody's sense of being subjected to injustice and his inability to cope with anger also spill over into his relationship with his brother. Ezra frequently becomes the target of Cody's anger and violence

whether or not he actually deserves it. During their youth Ezra often finds himself the target of seemingly unprovoked attacks by Cody. Cody intentionally breaks a window and then blames it on Ezra. He defames Ezra twice: once by rigging Ezra's bed to collapse and distributing pornographic and semi-pornographic magazines around it, and a second time by posing Ezra surrounded by empty liquor bottles in a picture. Further, Cody often verbally abuses Ezra, especially in relation to Ezra's whistle: "You dunce . . . You raving idiot. Do you think she's got money to spare for goddamn *whistles*?" (Tyler 57). Cody is particularly angered by Ezra's whistle because it represents something so carefree – something that has been stolen from Cody. Essentially everything about Ezra is child like, and as such Cody resents Ezra and consequently treats him horribly even into their adulthoods.

Like Cody, Jason also acts terribly cruel to his brothers; he never becomes physically violent, but he is frequently purely mean and verbally abusive. As a child Jason "cut up all the dolls . . . Benjy . . . made . . . just for meanness," and he got his brother in trouble by telling his father that "Caddy and Quentin threw water on each other" at the branch (*SATF* 65, 23). As an adult Jason acts even more cruelly toward his brothers, though Quentin is dead and Benjy cannot understand anything. Out of self-pity and his indignation about losing his opportunity at success, Jason insults his dead brother and makes fun of Benjy: "no I never had university advantages because at Harvard they teach you how to go for a swim at night without knowing how to swim and at Sewanee they don't even teach you what water is . . . you might send me to the state University; maybe I'll learn how to stop my clock with a nose spray and then you can send Ben to the Navy . . . or to the calvary anyway, they use geldings in the cavalry" (*SATF* 196). Jason seems to take pleasure in mocking Quentin's suicide and Benjy's castration because in some demented way it gives him the revenge he seeks.

Because Cody is pushed into adulthood prematurely more so than his siblings he begins to feel isolated and to isolate himself. As a child he often stays aloof from his family and keeps whatever friends he has isolated from the family as well: "Cody has to keep things separate – his friends in one half of his life and his family in the other half" (Tyler 48). He feels that he doesn't need anyone. When asked about his friends he responds, "Nah, I don't need anybody" (Tyler 48). This trend continues into his

adulthood when he refuses to settle anywhere, to establish a community, or to even keep friends apart from his business partner. In short he remains isolated.

Jason too isolates himself, although he does so physically both by keeping his room locked and by keeping his affairs separate. Jason, like Cody, keeps his affairs separate. His “room stays locked all day long” and he is the only one who has a key. Jason is sure to keep his business, personal, and family affairs separate. Whenever he is out chasing Miss Quentin when he should be at work he always makes an excuse unrelated to family. Likewise, he won’t let Lorraine, his whore in Memphis, so much as call him, “I says I don’t mind you writing me now and then in a plain envelope, but if you ever try to call me up on the telephone, Memphis wont hold you,” because that would risk mixing his personal, business, and family lives (*SATF* 194).

Cody resembles Jason very much in his greed and obsession with becoming a businessman, although Jason does not necessarily demonstrate the competitiveness or success that Cody does. From a young age Jason demonstrates an addiction to business and a greed for money and success. As a child Jason’s “hands were in his pockets” constantly, presumably to prevent losing his money: “‘Jason going to be rich man’ Versh said. ‘He holding his money all the time’” (*SATF* 36). As a child Jason even goes into business: “Jason furnished the flour. They made kites on the back porch and sold them for a nickel a piece, he and the Patterson boy. Jason was treasurer” (*SATF* 94). However, Jason does not show the success at business that Cody does; instead, he frequently fails: “the Patterson boy was smaller than Jason too they sold the kites for a nickel a piece until the trouble over finances Jason got a new partner still smaller one small enough anyway because T.P. said Jason [was] still treasurer” (*SATF* 175). Obviously, greed and desire for success in business are simply traits born into Jason, and as such they do not relent. This partly explains Jason’s enormous anger and bitterness about losing the position promised him. He saw it as his whole future; it was his only chance to escape Mississippi which he felt lacked opportunity: “What the hell chance has a man got, tied down in a town like this and to a business like this” (*SATF* 228).

His natural inclination toward business also explains his need to play the stock market. He thinks he has become a smart business man: “‘It’s a suckers game, unless a man gets inside information . . . I happen to be associated with some people who’re right there on the ground. They have one of the biggest manipulators in New York for an adviser’” (*SATF* 192). His pride about his business sense only increases his anger and bitterness once he fails in the market. He also becomes extremely greedy about money. He keeps the money Caddy sends to Miss Quentin for himself, even though he believes: “money has no value; it’s just the way you spend it. It don’t belong to anybody, so why try to hoard it. It just belongs to the man that can get it and keep it” (*SATF* 194). While this statement is contradictory in itself and especially contradicts Jason’s basic behavior, it does illuminate another reason for Jason’s greed. If he doesn’t want the money for the value, then he must want it for revenge. Robbing his niece of her money was Jason’s revenge on her for an act her mother committed and of which she wasn’t even conscious, which is precisely the reason Jason becomes so outraged at the robbery and Miss Quentin’s disappearance: “But to have been robbed by that which was to have compensated him for the lost job, which he had acquired through so much effort and risk, by the very symbol of the lost job itself, and worst of all, by a bitch of a girl” (*SATF* 307).

The last issue resulting from Cody’s lost opportunity is his competitiveness, greed, and obsession with business. Since Cody feels so separated from everyone else, he automatically views everything as a competition: “[Cody] has always been striving and competitive, a natural-born player of games, has had to win absolutely everything” (Tyler 173). Essentially, he pursues his natural talents in competitiveness, money, and eventually business. As a teenager, Cody loves to play monopoly, a game that, as everyone knows, requires the employment of shrewd business tactics and pure greed to win; however, his family didn’t like to “allow him in their games; he had this problem with winning. He absolutely insisted on winning any game he played. And he did win too--by sheer fierceness, by caring the most. (Also, he’d been known to cheat.) Sometimes he would even win when no one else suspected it was a contest” (Tyler 55). Cody compensates for his lost childhood by becoming very competitive and successful at whatever he does.

Ironically, it is precisely his competitive nature and need for success that lead to his relationship issues with women. Cody constantly finds it impossible to have successful relationships with women because he always makes the relationship a competition and the woman a prize. In that sense he objectifies women and becomes as much of a womanizer as Jason. In a conversation with his sister Cody asks, “Have you ever noticed what happens when I bring around my girlfriends? They fall all over [Ezra]. They have ever since we were kids. What do they see in him, anyway?” (Tyler 108). Jenny replies, “Honestly, Cody . . . I wish you’d grow out of this,” recognizing Cody’s behavior as childishly competitive (Tyler 109). Jenny recognizes what Cody has not: Cody has turned every potential relationship into a competition with his brother. Cody never understands women, “‘Women!’ [Cody] said . . . ‘Who can understand them,’” because he spends all his time in a boyish competition with his brother (Tyler 48). Even Cody’s marriage to Ruth is a semi-doomed relationship because Ruth was the only girl Ezra ever seriously cared about, and in order to spite his brother, Cody won her as a prize of the competition: “he . . . has had to win absolutely everything, even something he doesn’t want like a runty little redhead far below his usual standards” (Tyler 173). Cody finally realizes when he meets an ex-girlfriend at the train station, that he missed the point about women – that love actually plays a part and it isn’t all competition.

Cody’s childhood competition and greed becomes the basis of his adult success and ultimately his fulfillment. His greed for money parallels his greed for success which he achieves in his career: “Cody had become a success—shot ahead through several different firms, mainly because of his ideas for using the workers’ time better, and then branched out on his own to become an efficiency expert” (Tyler 83). Not only does Cody excel at his career, but he also becomes successful enough to be his own boss – an entrepreneur. Though his greed for money and success continue throughout his life, “‘I’m getting rich I tell you. Five years from now I can walk into an auto dealer, any dealer—Cadillac—and slap cold cash on the counter and say, ‘I’ll take three. Or on second thought make that four’ . . . Ten years more, you’ll be riding in a limousine,’” Cody still uses his success to fulfill the role forced on him, to provide for his family: “‘And Ezra can go to Princeton, if he likes. And I can buy Jenny a clinic all her own. I can pay for

her to specialize in every field, one by one” (Tyler 91). Though in some ways Cody also uses this generosity to boast of his success, his pride is not the only motivation. Indeed, he offers several times to continue to provide for his mother and siblings: “Cody wanted Pearl to get a new furnace; he would pay for it, he said. Pearl said she had a little savings, but Cody kept insisting, as if there were something gratifying, something triumphant in buying a person a furnace” (Tyler 251). There is something gratifying for Cody in buying his mother a furnace. It proves that he has fulfilled his role, or succeeded, and in some ways, it is the only way he knows how to express his love and nurturing. While Ezra and Jenny have their own ways of loving and nurturing, Ezra in his food and daily care of his mother, and Jenny in her medical practice, the only thing Cody has, or has even been good at, is his financial success.

Jason, like the rest of the Compsons, remains a destroyed and hopeless character because he allows his bitterness, rage, and greed to conquer him. At the end of the novel he is consumed by rage at his niece’s disappearance with his money. A rage that nearly drives him crazy: “It was not \$2840.50 or three thousand dollars either, it was almost seven thousand. And this was Jason’s rage, the red unbearable fury which on that night and at intervals recurring with little or no diminishment for the next five years, made him seriously believe it would at some unwarned instant destroy him, kill him instantaneously dead as a bullet or a lightning bolt” (“Appendix” 719). Further, he is a failure as a businessman, and he remains isolated and bitter. Cody, however, becomes a positive and hopeful character. He has a successful career as a businessman. Further, because Cody’s greed stems from a desire to prove his success and support his family rather than from rage and bitterness, it allows him to become hopeful and productive. Also, he recognizes his relationship issues with women, and he, like his siblings, has some reconciliation with his family. This reconciliation, or perhaps forgiveness in some form, also gives Cody a hopeful outcome where as Jason finds himself destroyed by his own bitterness and revenge.

Ultimately, there seems to be hope for the dysfunctional Tull family unlike the Compsons. The Compson family is completely dysfunctional and hopeless. They are stuck in the Deep South—an area still feeling, in some ways, the aftershocks of the Civil War which has little or no industry during the post World War I era and pre-Depression era—and have no real parental, or authority, figure, merely Dilsey

who they apparently don't feel obligated to obey since she is merely the Negro servant. These environments factors disallow hope, and the Compsons find themselves doomed to destruction and hopelessness. The family falls apart; members become isolated, and the family is destroyed.

Similarly, the Tull family, while always connected by blood, seldom exhibits a sense of community. Frequently they fight and remain isolated from one another. However, their environment encourages hope. They live in Baltimore, a more industrial area, during the post World War II and following era of victory and economic boom. They also have a parental and authority figure in their lives. While Pearl remains far from an ideal mother, she attempts to parent her children, and if nothing else instills a sense of fear in her children. Further, while the family unit is often weak and rocky, they never completely give up on being a family, especially Ezra. All of these factors contribute to the hopeful outcome of the novel and characters, as in the final scene mending occurs and a sense of hope takes over:

Cody . . . happened to look toward Prima Street and see his family rounding the corner, opening like a fan. The children first, running and the teen-agers loped behind, and the grown-ups --- trying to keep pace --- were very nearly running themselves, so that they all looked unexpectedly joyful. The drab colors of their funeral clothes turned their faces bright. The children's arms and legs flew out and the baby bounced on Joe's shoulders. Cody felt surprised and touched. He felt that they were pulling him toward them . . . Cody held on to [Beck's] elbow and led him toward the others. (Tyler 302-303)

In this final scene they all come together as a community for the first time. The image of children bouncing and people running to meet the rest of the family give the indication of both joy and hope. Further, Cody and Beck's movement toward the rest of the family indicates a sense of mending and reunion. They are a family at last (even Pearl is present symbolically as Cody remembers her beach dream heaven). Unlike the Compsons who are left separated, destroyed, hopeless, dead, and dying, the Tulls come together as a family and move toward a promising, hopeful, and constructive future. Susan Gilbert, in reference to the final scene, believes that "there is no hope that this vision will effect any change in Cody's way of seeing himself, his brother, or his wife and son" (Gilbert 270). However, the fact that Tyler concludes the novel with this scene allows the reader to draw her own conclusion. Had Tyler wanted the reader to draw the conclusion that Cody would remain unaffected, unchanged and unhelpful,

she would not have ended in the manner she did. That Tyler leaves room for interpretation shows that she wishes to instill some sense of hope in the text.

The hope and constructiveness exhibited by the Tulls shows Tyler's modernization of Southern literature. While writers often display dysfunction in Southern families, frequently resulting in destruction, Tyler offers hope for the family, and essentially, hope for the future of contemporary Southern literature. This may actually relate to her gender as well as her generation: "Though Southern women writers are not blind to evil or irrationality they are also less preoccupied by them" (Betts 5). As Betts also notes, "The women's 'Southern' may offer one shift in theme—that thread of optimism" (7). Nevertheless, whether Tyler's optimism owes to gender or generation, "consistently in her work [Tyler] affirms the possibilities of rebirth and renewal" – essentially she offers hope (Bryant 197). As Elkin concludes about *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*: "The end is not Faulknerian: the determinism is downplayed, the optimism is limited but unmistakable" (134). In her novel, Tyler begins by building on Faulkner's example set out in *The Sound and the Fury*, but ends by creating a masterful and contemporary work of Southern literature.

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