"I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood": Quentin's recognition of his guilt

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**Abstract** (Document Summary)

The three scenes replayed after Quentin Compson is knocked unconscious by Gerald Bland have each been suggested as the climax of the second section of William Faulkner's "The Sound and the Fury." Compson's recognition of his betrayal of his sister is examined.

**Full Text** (9055 words)

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The three scenes replayed after Quentin Compson is knocked unconscious by Gerald Bland have each been suggested as the climax of the second section of William Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury. Because all three scenes involve Quentin's discovery of Caddy's sexual relationship with Dalton Ames, it is generally agreed that the reason for Quentin's suicide at the end of his section is related to his sister's loss of virginity. Most critics draw their theories about Quentin's motivations from one of the first two scenes played out while Quentin is unconscious: the scene with Caddy at the branch when Quentin proposes either incest or a double suicide, and the confrontation between Quentin and Dalton on the bridge. Theories vary, however, regarding what exactly it is about Caddy's relationship with Dalton that is so devastating to Quentin: there are those who believe it is Caddy's lost virginity, the symbol of their family's honor; some think it is losing Caddy to another man; others argue that it is Quentin's fear of forgetting his grief over Caddy's actions; and still others reason that it is the discovery of his own impotence and the impotence of the codes he lives by. This essay will not discount these theories, but, rather, add another, first proposing that it is the third scene in this flashback, Quentin's last extended memory of himself and Caddy before his suicide, which is the climactic moment of the section. This recollection is particularly agonizing to Quentin because it reminds him of his own culpability regarding Caddy's destruction. Once this memory surfaces, Quentin can no longer escape the fact that for him his sister gave up a chance, however slight it may have been, of leading a "normal" life: concerned about her brother, Caddy
did not go after her lover to stop him from leaving, the consequence of which was promiscuity, which led to pregnancy and a hurried, deceptive marriage to a man Quentin finds repugnant. Quentin's inability to live any longer with this guilt, then, can be seen as another reason for his suicide. Given that its disclosure comes so close to his jump off the bridge, I propose here that it may very well be the deciding reason.

This reading not only confirms Quentin's recognition of his betrayal of the sister whose love for him is unqualified; it also provides a further explanation of the novel's Easter weekend structure. Quentin's suicide at the end of the Maundy Thursday of the novel is reminiscent of the death of Judas, who also betrayed one who loved unconditionally and then, "when he saw that he was condemned, repented . . . and went and hanged himself" (Matthew 27:3,5). Therefore, this reading leads to a view of Caddy-more so than Benjy, Quentin, or Miss Quentin-as the Christ figure of the novel. Because of his age at the time of three of the four sections of the novel (thirty-three), blonde hair, blue-eyes, and innocence, Benjy has often been viewed as the novel's Christ figure. As will be further remarked upon in this paper's conclusion, at least one reader, James Dean Young, sees parallels between Quentin and Christ. More convincing than either of these are the arguments for Miss Quentin as Christ-like in her role in the novel. She is the character who has the capacity for redeeming the Compsons, if they would only have made up for their treatment of Caddy by treating her better; she is also the one who is "tortured" on Good Friday (by Jason) and "resurrected"-or at least she escapes-on Easter Sunday. The case I will make for Caddy as a Christ figure is, I believe, even more convincing than the case for Miss Quentin in that not only is Caddy's fate Christ-like, but so is, to a greater extent than Miss Quentin's, her character. Her selfless love and sacrificed life are particularly illuminated in the memories of her older brother in his section of the novel. Of course, regardless of which character is viewed as the novel's Christ figure, there is no promise of salvation in the end. Benjy is, after all, still a tormented imbecile the last we see him in the novel and, according to the novel's appendix, is eventually sent to the state asylum in Jackson.

Quentin's death is followed by no promise of a better life for those he leaves behind, and we are not told what kind of life Miss Quentin lived after her escape/resurrection. Caddy's fate on and following the novel's Easter Sunday will be discussed later. Suffice it to say for now that she does not pass from the Compson world to any paradise.

Throughout the day on which the Quentin section takes place, Quentin's thoughts move towards recognizing his responsibility for Caddy's behavior and current situation (pregnant out of wedlock, then married to someone she does not love). Although the events of the physical world through which Quentin wanders as he passes the day of his suicide do have some part in calling up certain memories, critics have often noted that the order of Quentin's memories is also somewhat related to their degree of painfulness to him. I would add to this observation that the degree of painfulness of each memory is in direct proportion to the degree of guilt he feels for his actions during the recalled event. In the beginning of the section, fragments of memories pop into and out of Quentin's mind, some provoked by analogous occurrences happening around him, others slipping in while he is walking aimlessly. In either case, his preoccupation with the past is unmistakable. He is reliving those memories that trouble his conscience, and he slowly comes to realize the source of the disturbance: guilt over the subconscious knowledge that he, along with other members of his family, participated in the treatment of Caddy that has resulted in her misfortune.

Quentin's gradual acceptance of his guilt is reflected in the increasing duration and intensity, from fragmented thoughts to whole scenes recalled, of significant memories as the day wears on. The first of the whole scenes he relives is his mother's self pitying monologue, which epitomizes the atmosphere of the Compson household (102-104). In particular, Mrs. Compson's tirade reveals not only her condemnation of Caddy's recent promiscuous behavior but also her inability to offer love or affection to any of her children besides Jason, and that of course includes Quentin as well as Caddy. This scene and the scene that follows involving Herbert Head, Caddy's fiance, are recalled at length, but, at the same time, Quentin is still conscious and therefore still somewhat in control of
his thoughts. He can shake them away when they become too painful. For example, in the first of
these extended memories he cuts his mother's voice off just after she has mentioned wanting to
"escape this curse [and try to forget that the others ever were" (104). Significantly, Quentin thereby
halts the flow of memory just after recalling his mother's implicit rejection of him, which places him
in the position of victim along with Caddy (and of course Benjy). As Lawrance Thompson notes,
"The central irony in Quentin's death-day monologue is provided by the stubborn manner in which he
censors all the attempts of his conscience to make him see that he shares with the other
Compsons the moral responsibility for what happened to Caddy" (41). In other words, although he
recalls his mother's rejection of him, he does not allow himself at this point to see that it compares
with his own rejection of Caddy, which, indeed, repeats his mother's condemnation of her: both
consider Caddy tainted by her sexuality. Indeed, Mrs. Compson's words, quoted above, are later
echoed by Quentin when he shares with Caddy his belief that their family is cursed (158).

Although painful enough as a reminder that his mother does not seem to love him, the memory
described above, if allowed to play through, would also lead to an uncomfortable recollection of his
own shortcomings with Caddy (who does seem to love him) regarding his failure to express to his
family his disapproval of his mother's idea of finding a husband for Caddy, as well as of her later
choice of Herbert Head. The reader recalls that earlier in this memory sequence Quentin had
recalled Mr. Compson's advice after the discovery of Caddy's pregnancy that, rather than take
Jason and leave her family, Mrs. Compson should take Caddy away to French Lick for a while until
they can figure out what to do about her shameful condition. Agreeing to do so, Mrs. Compson
suggests that she might even find a husband for Caddy there so that she can be married off before
her condition is even known. Karl Zender argues that Quentin "view[s] the journey to find a
husband for Caddy as an interring of his sister within the death-in-life of Mrs. Compson's obsession
with respectability" (111). However, Quentin makes no effort to put a stop to Mrs. Compson's
scheme beyond asking Caddy not to marry Herbert. If he is aware of the consequences ("death-in-
life") of coercing Caddy into a loveless and treacherous marriage, then his failure to speak up to
his parents on Caddy's behalf is a betrayal of his sister. Furthermore, it reveals his mixed-up
priorities: Caddy's-and even his own feelings for Herbert are less important than the fact that
Caddy is pregnant and must marry to save the family from shame. Although Quentin does not
analyze his memories (he does not, in other words, consciously make the connections I have
noted above), in contrast to his youngest sibling who is retarded, he is capable of doing so;
therefore, one can conclude that at some subconscious level he is recognizing the significance of
these memories, as evidenced by the very fact that he stops them short of illuminating his partial
but crucial responsibility for Caddy's fate.

When the next long memory, involving the subject of Caddy's marriage, becomes too
discomforting, Quentin cuts it off as well, not wanting to face that which he apparently is on the
verge of recognizing: the effect that the Compsons, including himself, have had on Caddy, which
realization would culminate in the fact that she married Herbert Head largely for Quentin's sake.
After recalling his first meeting with Herbert, Quentin remembers begging Caddy not to marry "that
blackguard" (111). Caddy's bitter tone and harsh admonishment: "You're meddling in my
business again didn't you get enough of that last summer" (111) reflects the effect that her family's
unmerciful treatment has had on her usually affectionate nature. At the same time, Quentin is
reminded of her more natural compassion by her request that he take care of their father and
Benjy in her absence. He should realize, too, if not at the time, then perhaps upon recollection, that
her acceptance of his view of her as corrupted by her loss of virginity has broken her spirit.
Although she can still love, she can no longer fight. Had he been capable of truly loving his sister
he would have fought for her against the family's arranged marriage.

Caddy does not take up for her fiance during this conversation; rather, she merely reminds Quentin
that she has "to marry somebody" (113) because of a condition that if revealed before she weds
would be particularly destructive to her brother's precious family name. Quentin abruptly switches
his focus back to the present after his sister alludes to her pregnancy but not before an earlier memory slips in: "told me the bone would have to be broken again" (113). This seemingly vagrant thought reveals a realization that he has habitually brought on his own pain and thus supports the argument that Quentin is moving towards a recognition of his guilt. He may not stop to analyze the significance of these memories, but their juxtaposition reveals that at some level he makes a connection between them. Just as his obsession with Caddy as representative of family honor has been partly responsible for her having to get married, creating a situation emotionally painful to him, so also a similar concern about his sister's honor once resulted in his suffering physical pain when, trying to chase away one of her early admirers, he had moved around too much on a broken leg, causing it to mend incorrectly and, consequently, to have to be re-broken and reset. Again, Quentin does not analyze the parallel; rather, as before, he focuses his senses on the physical present.

Although he cannot keep his mind from wandering, Quentin does not allow himself to get lost in the past again; apparently he is resisting, which also implies that he is recognizing, the truth these memories reveal to him about himself. The next extensive replay of the past occurs only after he has been knocked unconscious by Gerald Bland. According to Kathryn Gibbs Gibbons, "Quentin's unconsciousness is a device by the author analogous to a hypnosis situation in which the patient becomes unconscious so that the psychologist can discover the source of illness more quickly. Quentin's unconscious 'talks' about what bothers him" (18). The transition into this long memory is abrupt, just as it would be if he were suddenly knocked out, and, examining the type of the text, one realizes that Quentin has indeed been rendered unconscious, as Gibbons as well as Lawrence Bowling (133) and Noel Polk (151) have noted. Just before Quentin is knocked out, his thoughts of the past are represented in italics and interspersed into the dialogue going on around him, which is printed in regular type and properly punctuated. Abruptly, then, Faulkner switches to standard type without punctuation or capitalization for the flashback. This change indicates that Quentin is knocked out just after he recalls asking Caddy, "Did you love them Caddy did you love them," and hears her reply, "Then they touched me I died" (149). This answer, with its Elizabethan view of sex as "a little death," suggests the reason Caddy has become promiscuous: through her sexual encounters she can escape, for a little while at least, the physical world that oppresses her.

This "dream sequence" is the flashback containing the three most crucial scenes of Quentin's section. The first scene of this sequence involves the revelation to Quentin of Caddy's loss of virginity, which many critics believe is what drives him to commit suicide. Though devastating to the youth, who considers Caddy's virginity to be a symbol of his family's honor, it is still not the revelation that decides Quentin's fate, as I will soon argue. The scene begins just after Caddy returns from meeting with Dalton, when Benjy's unceasing bellows reveal that he notices a significant difference in her. (She cannot calm him by washing her mouth this time.) Caddy leaves the house and Quentin finds her sitting in the branch. Seeing her, he realizes the reason for Benjy's bellows: Caddy has lost her virginity. The long memory extends through the confrontation between Quentin and Dalton to another scene with Caddy. I argue that it is this third scene in the sequence that ultimately determines Quentin's fate.

Arnold Weinstein comments on the length and significance of the whole memory: "No longer through elliptic glimpses and spurts, the final revelation now comes to us with crushing and imperious finality. In this last encounter the present completely vanishes, and we witness the most direct and moving confrontation between Quentin and Caddy." Weinstein is mainly referring to the
first scene of this memory. He is one of the critics who sees it as the section's climax: "Here Caddy outspokenly asserts her sexuality and love for Dalton Ames as well as the willingness to grant Quentin whatever he may ask of her. . . . Its very length is an index of its paralyzing and enduring hold on Quentin" (127). According to Melvin Backman, "The disclosure of [Quentin's] impotence, in the scene with Caddy at the branch and [the second scene] with Dalton at the bridge, is the climax of the Quentin section" (23); more recently, Noel Polk has linked these two scenes—"the one recounting Caddy's love affair with Dalton Ames and [Quentin's] ineffectual efforts to stop it"—and called them "crucial" (149-150). In preparation for my contention that neither of these scenes is the source of realizations so devastating that Quentin must kill himself to escape them, I first point out that Quentin has allowed fragments of both of these memories into his consciousness earlier in the section—while he still maintained some control over his thoughts. In contrast, the third scene in the sequence, the final recalled conversation with Caddy, from which he snaps back into consciousness, is the only memory that is not found—even fragmented—earlier or later in his section of the novel. Noel Polk has pointed out that Quentin's memories "exist in degrees of intensity, of psychic pain" (149). I would argue that the depth of this scene's repression indicates that its degree of painfulness to Quentin is unmatched even by these other two extensive scenes. This is not to say that these other scenes are not relevant to Quentin's suicide. Their revelation to Quentin of the extremity of his weakness and the confirmation of Caddy's loss of virginity are, of course, significant to his plans to end his life. He must prove that he is strong enough to die for his codes in order to make Caddy see that they are more important than love. But he had tried to commit suicide before, as will be discussed subsequently, at the branch scene mentioned previously, and he had been unable to go through with it. What pushes him to carry out his plan this time is his realization that he and his codes have helped to ruin Caddy's life.

Polk describes Quentin's section as "his effort to sort out, analyze, and come to terms with those scenes of pain that he can handle, and to evade, to repress, those he cannot. He is trying to shape his memory into an acceptable version of his life that will both explain his present misery and justify his decision to commit suicide" (150). In contrast, I argue that although Quentin has successfully "evaded and repressed" his most painful memories in the past, on the day of his death, he ultimately relives them, too, and through doing so achieves insight about his own behavior with which Polk does not seem to credit him. Yes, Quentin has planned to commit suicide all along, but I argue that he is looking for a reason not to, examining his memories in hopes that they will not reveal what he is beginning to realize: his true, rather than imagined, role in Caddy's destruction.

In the first crucial scene of this flashback, the branch scene with Caddy, the connection between intercourse and death is reiterated when Caddy tells Quentin, "I would die for [Dalton] I've already died for him" (151). Here, too, then, Caddy's choice of words suggests that orgasm, which allows one to transcend the self, has provided brief escapes from her oppression, the source of which includes her older brother's codes of honor and morality. Following this admission of having engaged in and even, in spite of her word choice, enjoyed sexual relations, Caddy asks Quentin, "you've never done that have you" (151). As already noted, some critics believe that Quentin's realization of Caddy's active sexuality, compounded by his own fear of sexuality, is the climactic moment of the section. But, as noted previously, Quentin has recalled this part of their conversation earlier in the novel: shortly before he is knocked unconscious, he hears Caddy's voice repeating, "Have you ever done that" and "Poor Quentin you've never done that have you" (148). Unconscious now, he relives the whole scene, and it surprisingly plays out to a somewhat encouraging (to him) conclusion. After Caddy asks him this question, Quentin draws his knife on her, an act perceived by many critics as his asking her to commit incest with him, given the language of the dialogue and the earlier connections made between sex and death. Therefore, Quentin's alleged proposition to Caddy has also been alluded to throughout this section of the novel whenever Quentin recalls or imagines telling his father that he and Caddy committed incest. In fact, as early as the fifth paragraph of his section, the words, "I have committed incest, Father," enter Quentin's mind (77).
That Quentin has earlier recalled fragments of this memory indicates that it is not as painful to him as the scene he has completely repressed. Furthermore, the knife scene read literally becomes an ironically positive memory for Quentin in comparison to the later scene with Caddy: Caddy's willingness to either die or have sex with him in this scene, depending on how the reader—or Quentin—chooses to interpret their dialogue, attests to her love for him as well as, perhaps, a beginning acceptance of his values, perverted though they may be (i.e., his notion that sex with him is somehow more acceptable than with Dalton Ames, who is apparently not a member of the southern aristocracy). In addition, Caddy's willingness to surrender to Quentin's desires puts him on a level with Dalton, in that she thereby shows that her love for Quentin is proportionate to her feelings for Dalton. Of course, the knife scene is still to a great extent a painful memory, since Quentin's inability to go through with the suicide pact/sexual proposition reveals his cowardice and impotence and would also remind him of Caddy's ultimate rejection of her brother: after Quentin drops the knife she gets up and goes to her lover, a man who is able to carry out propositions.

Melvin Backman sees this choice of the "sexual[ly] poten[t]" Dalton over Quentin as "the ultimate reason for Quentin's suicide" (27). But Quentin has recalled his realization of Dalton's superior virility before, too, which suggests that it, too, is a less painful memory than the one that he has completely repressed. While riding with the Blands earlier, he had thought about how, the first time he saw Dalton (when, at the end of the same scene described above, Caddy left her brother to go with her lover), he noticed the man's strength: "with one hand he [Dalton] could lift her to his shoulder and run with her" (148). Now, recalling the scene while unconscious, Quentin notices how, as Dalton extends his hand to shake Quentin's, "he held [Caddy] in one arm like she was no bigger than a child" (155). Ironically, the recollection of Dalton's strength is in one sense another strangely positive memory, for it supports Quentin's hope, expressed earlier in the scene, that Dalton forced Caddy to have sex with him: "did he make you then he made you do it . . . he was stronger than you" (150). Finally, the strangely positive nature of this memory is supported at the end of the scene, too, when Caddy returns from her tryst with Dalton and seems to offer herself to her brother again. Her response to Quentin's command that she go home is as sexually suggestive as their earlier conversation over and about the knife (though in contrast to the critical analysis of the sexual nature of Quentin's request in that scene, critics have overlooked Caddy's sexual innuendo in this one):

[CADDY, in response to Quentin's command to go home] yes I will if you want me to I will

[QUENTIN:] go on to the house like I told you [CADDY:] yes Ill do anything you want me to anything yes [QUENTIN, to himself] she didn't even look at me I caught her shoulder and shook her hard [QUENTIN, to Caddy:] you shut up (156)

Although Quentin is apparently not comfortable with the possibility that his sister is accepting the very proposition he is afraid to make, the memory of her offer would undermine the painfulness of the first part of this scene through its suggestion that, even after meeting with Dalton, she is still willing to have sexual relations with Quentin—or do whatever Quentin asks of her. Indeed, she tells Quentin at this time that she "do[es]n't know" if she loves Dalton and again shows an acceptance of Quentin's views of her as tainted by her sexuality: "dont cry," she tells her brother, "Im bad anyway you cant help it" (158). Thus, there is not only the possibility of Caddy's preference for him; Quentin also still has hope at this point that he can bring his sister to accept his code of ethics.

But first he must get rid of Dalton. Quentin's unconscious reminiscing switches abruptly to his encounter with his sister's seducer. This scene, too, has been recalled very early in his section: while dressing on the morning of his suicide, he had remembered "when he [Dalton] put the pistol in my hand" (179). While unconscious after his beating from Gerald, Quentin relives the humiliation
of fainting after refusing Dalton's offer of the gun. He has realized he was no match for Dalton, and the truth of his weakness compounds the damage done to his ego in the preceding scene when Caddy left him to go to Dalton. Quentin remembers thinking, "I had just passed out like a girl but even that didn't matter anymore" (162). He seems to be relieved that he knows the nature of Caddy's relationship with Dalton and thus no longer has to wonder what his sister is doing when she is out of his sight. He remembers that he "felt almost good after all those days and the nights with honeysuckle [which he associates with Caddy's sexuality] coming up out of the darkness into my room where I was trying to sleep" (162). He may be unable to get rid of the man, but at least as long as Dalton is around, he knows where Caddy is when she disappears. Therefore, here again the memory's painfulness is subdued by a way to view it optimistically. Another positive note can be found in Quentin's earlier recollection that, when he saw Dalton at the bridge, he had noted that his shirt was "of heavy Chinese silk or finest flannel." Saying the name "Dalton Ames" to himself, then, he had thought, "It just missed gentility" (92). Taken with his relief expressed at the end of the whole memory, the thought suggests that Quentin was toying with the idea that Dalton might be a suitable mate for Caddy after all. Donald M. Kartiganer suggests that Quentin creates Dalton, like a character in a romance, in his recollections of the man (85-86). I would add, then, that he now begins to re-create this character -from rake to knight in shining armor.

His peace of mind is short-lived, however, for in the next scene, when Caddy does choose him over Dalton, she gives up a chance for reciprocated love, which I argue is the crucial recollection/realization in this sequence of memories. Quentin has successfully suppressed recalling Caddy's sacrifice for him until he is unconscious: no part of this conversation with Caddy can be found anywhere else in the section. However, now that he is unconscious and thus no longer able to control his subconscious, he cannot stop his mind from proceeding through this painful memory, thereby revealing to him the truth of his responsibility for Caddy's eventual destruction. The memory begins as Caddy runs up to Quentin after hearing the pistol shots. On the way, she apparently met Dalton and, thinking he had shot her brother, sent him away, telling him she never wanted to see him again. This encounter with Dalton is suggested when, upon finding her brother unharmed, she tells Quentin that she must hurry and rectify her mistake in sending Dalton away. But Quentin holds her back. Concerned about her brother, she stays, and, as far as the reader knows, never sees Dalton Ames again.

I contend that Quentin has come to view Dalton Ames as Caddy's missed opportunity for a happy, or at least less destructive, life. Although there is no proof in the novel that Dalton would eventually have married Caddy and taken her away from her family, Quentin must wonder what might have been if he had let Caddy go to her lover. He has earlier recalled that when he told Dalton to meet him at the bridge, Dalton asked if Caddy was "all right" and if "she needed him for anything now" (158-159); and later, at the start of the confrontation between the two young men on the bridge, Dalton again expressed concern for Caddy: "listen save this for a while I want to know if she's all right have they been bothering her up there" (159). In light of this concern, which is certainly more concern than any expressed by the Compson family members for Caddy, Dalton's seemingly insulting advice to Quentin about his sister--"no good taking it so hard its not your fault kid it would have been some other fellow" (160)--may reflect, rather than disrespect for Caddy, an understanding of her situation. Knowing Caddy so intimately, perhaps Dalton has recognized that her desire for love, which has not been fulfilled at home, would inevitably lead her to look elsewhere for it. In any case, Dalton's concern for Caddy's well-being, together with Caddy's "surge of blood" (163) when she hears her lover's name, reveals to Quentin that, regardless of what she may not be to Dalton, she it to him a human being, rather than just a symbol, as she is to her family. Therefore, once she lost this man who saw her as more than an idea, thereby giving her life, Caddy began to seek such rejuvenation (as well as the aforementioned sense of escape achieved through sexual relations) with other men who come along. Quentin realizes, then, that by keeping her from making amends with her first lover that day, he is in large part responsible for Caddy's sequential promiscuity, if not also for the missed chance to spend her life with a man...
whom she loves.  

Upon Quentin's regaining consciousness after reliving this whole experience (indicated by the return to proper punctuation and capitalization for the narrative and italics for the echoes from the past), his roommate Shreve reveals the sequence of events leading to the altercation between Gerald and Quentin, which ultimately shows that Quentin is seeking to be punished for his treatment of his sister. The reader can see how Gerald's story of a woman he once left waiting for him may have been an uncomfortable reminder to Quentin of Caddy's loss of Dalton. Shreve goes on to report "how [Gerald] lay there being sorry for [the woman] waiting on the pier for him, without him there to give her what she wanted" and how Gerald had commented about "how tough women have it, without anything else they can do except lie on their backs" (167). Quentin's assault of Gerald at this point is evidence that he perceives the sad parallel between Gerald's callous treatment and opinion of women and Caddy's loss of Dalton Ames and subsequent self destructive promiscuity.

Although Caddy had thought that she could make amends with Dalton -"I can tell him [apologize to Dalton for sending him away] I can make him believe anytime" (163)-apparently, for whatever reason, this was not the case. And so, the suppressed memory of how she stayed behind with Quentin while her lover, having been dismissed by her, left town resurfaces while Quentin is unconscious. Surely Quentin's guilt over his responsibility for Caddy's loss, which led to her later promiscuity, would be of greater anguish to him than his realization of Caddy's sexuality or his weakness. He has lived with knowledge of the latter two facts since the earliest recorded event in the novel: the branch scene from their childhood when Caddy, oblivious to propriety, took off her dress to keep it from getting wet, and, oblivious to her father's forbidding it, climbed the tree to find out about their grandmother's death. But when he realizes his part in Caddy's promiscuity, which resulted in pregnancy and her marriage to an unworthy husband who took her away from him, Quentin is overcome with grief and strikes out at another man for whom he knows he is no match: Gerald Bland. A beating is not enough punishment to assuage his guilt, however. Having grown up in the Calvinistic South, Quentin feels he must pay "an eye for an eye": for his crime of destroying Caddy's life, he must sacrifice his own life.

The argument that Quentin realizes his responsibility refutes Lawrence Bowling and other critics who deny that Quentin ever accepts his part in Caddy's destruction. Bowling writes that the outside world "passes [Quentin's] life before him in review, in order that he may discover his error . . . but Quentin . . . remains impenitent, rejects life, and dies without ever achieving any significant understanding, either of himself or of the world in which he has refused to live" (139).13 Bowling supports this theory with other events occurring in the physical present of 2 June 1910 that parallel events being recalled in Quentin's mind. Hearing the boys fishing for the prize trout, Quentin thinks of their already spending money not yet won, "making of unreality a possibility, then a probability, then an incontrovertible fact, as people will when their desires become words" (117). Bowling says that Quentin "apparently does not realize that the tragedy of his own life has stemmed from the same basic error in thinking. Repeatedly, Quentin has ignored reality and attempted to will his personal desire into `incontrovertible fact'' (131). It is also possible, however, that these thoughts, since they are worded so that they could also apply to his own desire to tell his father he and Caddy committed incest, do indicate a realization of the parallel between these boys' foolishness and his own.

I would also argue that Quentin recognizes the parallels between the little Italian girl and Caddy. Although Lawrence Bowling notes the echo of the past in the closing events of Quentin's adventure with the little Italian girl-"Like Quentin's proposal for 'saving' Caddy by their committing incest, Julio's beating his sister would have been more injurious than any harm the sister had received from anybody else"-in contrast to Stephen Ross (182), John Matthews (Play 89, Sound 60), and myself, Bowling believes that "from Quentin's reporting of the incident there is no indication that he
perceives either the irony of Julio's actions or the basic similarity between Julio and himself" (132). Since meeting the girl, however, Quentin has called her "sister" and is thereby connecting her, consciously or unconsciously, with Caddy, as Ross and Matthews have asserted. Furthermore, at one point Quentin says, "Goodbye, sister;' and runs from her. Looking back he describes her as "a small figure clasping the loaf of bread to her filthy little dress, her eyes still and black and unwinking" (133), and he runs again. The child's dirty dress is reminiscent of the aforementioned memory of the child Caddy, and Quentin's futile running recalls the way he tried to run away from the knowledge of the nature of Caddy's relationship with Dalton: when Caddy leaves with Dalton after the scene at the branch, Quentin runs across the pasture (156). Also, the little girl's sudden reappearance parallels Caddy finding Quentin after this particular liaison with Dalton. He can shake neither female: like the little Italian girl, Caddy remains "unwinking" in Quentin's consciousness. When the girl shows up again he begins to think more and more of Caddy All of these connections would indicate that he does associate the girl with Caddy. That he wants to lose the girl reinforces the notion that she provokes painful memories of Caddy, whose memory follows him as well. As Wolfgang Iser proposes, "the desire to get rid of the child awakens in Quentin the memory of how he once used to worry about his sister Caddy; at the time he wanted to win Caddy's love, [whereas] now he wants to be free of the child"-i.e., free of Caddy's memory, which awakens his guilt and drives him to his death. But the child is as "dumb[ly] persisten[t]" as the memory of "the painful relationship with the sister" (147).

Bowling believes that Quentin's "endeavor to help the little Italian girl find her way home . . . is . . . the first truly unselfish act of his life, his first act of love, compassion, and sacrifice" (133). Here, too, Bowling provides evidence against his own argument that Quentin does not make any connections between the day's events and his memories from the past: if one views Quentin's care for the girl as an attempt to pay for his crimes of selfishness and insensitivity against Caddy, this would indicate that Quentin does make the connection between the two girls and does realize he made mistakes in his treatment of Caddy, for which he must somehow make up. Finally, Quentin's hysterical laughter upon being accused of "stealing" the Italian's sister indicates that he notices the irony of the accusation: he already has a sister whose memory he has been trying all day to escape. Why would he want another? Charged with molesting the child, his hysteria increases, further indicating a realization of the parallel between the child and Caddy. His being blamed for a sex crime he did not commit is ironic, poetic justice for the crime he did commit against his sister, in part because of not being able to commit incest with her.14 But once again Quentin is not allowed to pay enough for his crime. One dollar to the girl's brother and six dollars to the sheriff will not appease Quentin's conscience. He must go through with his suicide plan. His last view of the child brings up another bout of uncontrollable laughter; this time, though, Quentin thinks "that if [he] tried too hard to stop it [he]'d be crying" (147). Perhaps he realizes at this point that this last view of "Sister" is in a way his last view of his sister, for he will soon be dead.

As has been shown, at least a subconscious perception of his responsibility for Caddy's destruction can be found in Quentin's abrupt discontinuance of those memories that lead him to recognize his guilt, the poignant scenes he relives while unconscious, and the connections he recognizes between the people and events in the physical world and those in his psyche. Looking back, then, to the end of the very first paragraph of the Quentin section-when Quentin recalls his father telling him, "The field only reveals to man his own folly and despair, and victory is an illusion of philosophers and fools" (76)-one can find even further evidence that guilt pushes Quentin to his decision to commit suicide. Contemplating "the field" of his experiences, Quentin realizes "his own folly and despair," i.e., his responsibility for Caddy's predicament. Whereas he did succeed in getting rid of Dalton Ames, the "victory" was only "an illusion of philosophers and fools"-with Quentin qualifying as both since the "philosopher's" ideals, which made Caddy a symbol rather than a human being who needed to be loved, pushed the "fool's" sister into looking for a love that acknowledged her physical being. His foolish defense, then, of her honor resulted in her promiscuity, pregnancy, and loveless marriage. His "victory," ironically, is manifested in the ruin of
the only person in his family who had the chance to break free from the Compsons' destructive codes and to live a less restricted life. Quentin's other memories during this day recall the aspiring as well as loving girl he helped to destroy: the only Compson child willing to chance punishment for knowledge (when she climbed the tree to find out about Damuddy's death); a girl who scorned the double standards set by men for women (evidenced in her anger at catching Quentin with Natalie after he has been harassing her about the boys she kissed); a young woman who gave love to a family incapable of returning it (the extent of her love reflected in her marrying a man she cared nothing for in order to save the Compsons from shame). Quentin betrayed this love and can no longer live with the guilt. He would perhaps like to believe that his inept parents or his unlikable brother Jason (who spied on Caddy for their mother) are to blame for his sister's fate, while he is innocent, but he was present at each of these crucial testimonials to Caddy's generous and admirable nature, and it was his voice that criticized loudest against her defiance of society's standards. Consequently, this girl who would be king= "You know what Pd do if I were King? she never was a queen or a fairy she was always a king or a giant or a general" (173)-has come to accept Quentin's view that she is damned. The loss of her spirit reflected in this acceptance is tragic-and another painful burden for Quentin's conscience.

After his recollection of the crucial scene in which Caddy gave up her stimulating relationship with Dalton Ames out of concern for her brother, Quentin holds an imaginary debate with his father over the value of his codes of honor and morality in one last attempt to exorcise his guilt by establishing that his ideals are more important than Caddy's life. But he rejects his father's view of humanity as "dolls stuffed with sawdust" (175), thereby indicating his recognition of the value of human life. Therefore, his despair at the realization of the "temporary" nature of this life can be connected to a recognition that one should make the best of the short amount of time allotted him or her. Again, then, his guilt is compounded for what he has done to ruin Caddy's brief, though longsuffering, life.

Faulkner's setting the Quentin section on the Maundy Thursday of the novel's Easter Week structure is evidence that the author intended guilt as a crucial motivation for Quentin's suicide. Maundy Thursday is the day not only of the Last Supper but also of Judas's betrayal of Christ. In his article on "Quentin's Maundy Thursday," James Dean Young compares what happens to Quentin during this day with, surprisingly, what happened to Christ on Maundy Thursday. My essay has shown, however, that Quentin's recollections of his behavior towards his sister equate him with Judas, the betrayer, and Caddy with Christ, the betrayed.15 During the Last Supper, Christ spoke of dying so that men could live. It is Caddy, not Quentin, who has sacrificed her life for others. Quentin, on the other hand, has repeatedly betrayed Caddy's love for him. Apparently Quentin does not see himself as a Christ figure, as is evident in the beginning of the section when he thinks "that Christ was not crucified: he was worn away by a minute clicking of little wheels. That had no sister" (77). Indeed, the idea of Christ being "worn away" reinforces the parallel just made between Christ and Caddy, who may sacrifice herself for others but does not die. The end of this quotation can be interpreted as mean- ing that Christ was innocent-he had not betrayed a sister. Quentin is thereby denying any connection between himself and Christ.

In Matthew 27:4, Judas says, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." Like the traitor Judas, Quentin kills himself after recognizing the extent of his guilt. But, just as Christ still had to withstand his torture and bear his cross, Caddy must go on living the life of selflessness Quentin has pushed her into, beginning with a loveless marriage and then apparent prostitution, whereby she repeatedly sacrifices herself for the pleasure of others. Unlike Christ, then, Caddy is not so "fortunate" as to die the day after Quentin's betrayal. She continues to endure the misery of this world, at least until 1943 when, according to Faulkner's appendix to the novel, she is spied in a magazine by a Jefferson librarian. Quentin kills himself at the end of a fateful Thursday, but not in the rejuvenating month of April and not in the same year that the rest of the novel takes place. Caddy's trial goes on: the novel's Good Friday does not come for eighteen years, and, even after its Easter Sunday two days later, Caddy is not rewarded for her sacrifices with a resurrection. As
revealed by the photograph of her with the Nazi general, she has "descended into hell" and lived among the damned for at least fifteen years past Easter.16

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1. See Melvin Backman's detailed explanation of this progression (iG-17).
2. Stephen M. Ross also discusses Quentin's fluctuating control over his story. Although, as I suggest above, Quentin has the power, while he is conscious, to cut off his recollection of painful memories, as Ross points out, he cannot stop them from entering his mind in the first place (i73).
3. Also relevant to the issue of Quentin's control over his, memories is Arnold L. Weinstein's discussion of the conversation Quentin has with Herbert, after which, he points out, Quentin begins to lose control over his memories (iz3).
4. Arnold Weinstein calls this reference to Quentin's broken leg "the `objective correlative' of the suffering which Caddy has caused and which he can no longer repress" (123). I argue, rather, that it reminds him of his own responsibility for his own and Caddy's suffering.
5. Stephen Ross also comments on absence of punctuation in these scenes, relating it to Quentin's lack of control over his memories. He, too, suggests these memories' particular painfulness to Quentin, although he does not note that these scenes take place while Quentin is unconscious.
6. John T. Matthews (Sound 46) and Dawn Trouard (43) explain Caddy's association of sex and death similarly. My interpretation is a more positive reading than, for example, Doreen Fowler's belief that Caddy's words reflect the influence of her mother, who also "pair[ed] sex and death" when she dressed in mourning after witnessing Caddy kissing a boy (144).
7. It seems that Quentin's reasons for contemplating a sexual relationship with Caddy may go back to some historical allowances for incest, as listed by Constance Hill Hall, including "a privilege . . . reserved for royalty" (6). One is reminded here of events in Absalom, Absalom!; as recreated, significantly by Quentin and his roommate Shreve: Henry Sutpen, with whom Quentin has seemed to identify since first hearing that ultimately Henry killed his sister's fiance, had at one point made his peace with allowing his half brother Charles Bon to marry their sister with the assertion that "kings have done it! Even dukes!" (273). In theories similar to Hall's, Warwick Wadlington describes "Quentin's desperate fantasy of incest" as "a rigorous extension of the inbreeding attitude of a household that feels itself surrounded by relative nonentities" (4i6); and Andre Bleikasten explains that "in sociohistorical terms, (Quentin's) obsession with incest may reflect the panic of a declining social class which struggles for survival but refuses any influx of outside blood" (227). In this light, in spite of his puritanical nature, Quentin would view the notion of Caddy committing incest with him as more acceptable than sexual relations between Caddy and Dalton Ames, whom he probably would classify "poor white trash."
8. Referring to this as well as other examples of Quentin's self deception, Andre Bleikasten comments on his tendency to deny or "twist" the truth "when faced with unpleasant facts. . . so as to minimize their significance" (07).
9. Richard Godden has offered a provocative reading of an earlier scene, after Quentin and Caddy seem to consider a double suicide (or committing incest) and just before Dalton arrives and Caddy introduces him to Quentin. Godden points out how Caddy seems as aroused as Quentin during their interaction following the knife scene (125).
10. In support of this reading of Caddy's offer to her brother is, first, Herbert Head's remarks to Quentin, recalled earlier, regarding how much Caddy talked about her brother to him (io7-io8). Second, in Jason's section Mrs. Compson remarks to Jason, "when Quentin started to school we had to let her go the next year, so she could be with him." She believes that Quentin, had he not committed suicide, "could have controlled" Caddy because "he seemed to be the only person she had any consideration for" (261).
Herbert and Mrs. Compson, though not the most reliable of sources, both suggest that Caddy's devotion to-perhaps obsession with-Quentin is as strong as his for her. Again, one might also read Richard Godden's analysis, referenced in the preceding note, for another critic's view that the incestuous attraction was not one-sided.
11. As I will continue to develop it, my reading of Quentin's growing understanding of his responsibility for
Caddy's promiscuity differs from Giles Gunn's view of Quentin's "idealistic" and "romantic" attempt "to take the responsibility of Caddy's promiscuity upon himself by implying that it was caused by an initial, and initiating, act of incest" (57; emphasis added). I argue that in the course of the day Quentin ultimately-and rightly-accepts his actual, rather than imagined,

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responsibility for Caddy's destruction (her promiscuity being only a symptom of which)-not in his fantasy role as her lover, but in his very real role as her brother-and that it is that acceptance that drives him to commit suicide.

12. Richard Feldstein makes the same argument for why Quentin provokes Gerald (7). However, Feldstein is not referring to the same offense (i.e., against Caddy) that this paper argues drives Quentin to seek punishment; rather, he believes that Quentin wants to be punished for his cowardly behavior during his meeting with Dalton Ames.

13. Edmond Volpe apparently disagrees with Bowling on this point, for he believes that Quentin "makes judgments, establishes relationships, derives significance from remembered scenes and from the situations he becomes involved in as he wanders about during his final day" However, Volpe adds that "the significance of these memories for Quentin is not necessarily their real significance," thereby making his position about Quentin's perception of the parallels ambiguous (92 -93; emphasis added).

14. Philip Weinstein also discusses the parallels between the two situations in such a way as to suggest that Quentin recognizes that he is "implicated in Caddy's experience" (48).

15. John Matthews also suggests that Caddy is the novel's Christ figure (Play ion).

16. Interestingly, when asked about the chances "of getting (Caddy) back from the clutches of the Nazis;' Faulkner commented on Caddy's tragedy in terms of her not being "resurrected" (Gwynn and Blotner r). Also noting the absence of a positive resurrection, Gary Lee Stonum remarks upon Reverend Shegog's sermon, which "is curiously lacking in emphasis on the Resurrection. [Reverend Shegog] dwells instead on suffering in the temporal world and on the generations passing away" (54).

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