

Analysis of Caddy's Image in *The Sound and the Fury*

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Abstract: *The Sound and the Fury* is Faulkner's first mature work and one of the most far-reaching literary works in the 20th century. Caddy occupies an important position, almost the center of the novel, but in terms of the overall structural layout, her image is constructed by pluralistic narration with the absence of her voice. This paper firstly discusses the cause of this image, then analyzes the image of Caddy combined with pluralistic narrative techniques, and further explores its symbolic significance to interpret Faulkner's creative ideas and literary intentions.

Keywords: Caddy Compson, William Faulkner, Pluralistic Narration, Women's Resistance, Southern Patriarchal Culture.

1. Introduction

If we say *The Sound and the Fury* builds an intricate world, then the character Caddy is the key to unlocking the mystery of this world. She emerges from Benjy's infantile self-talk in the opening chapter, struggles in the chaos of Quentin's sorrowful thoughts, fights against Jason's mocking insults, and finally becomes complete in Dilsey's calm statement. She is the key character of the book, symbolizing the root and core of all conflicts and sufferings. In other words, she sustains everything and destroys everything. In the eyes of many critics, Caddy was simply seen as a "frivolous and debauched woman," as Charles Anderson once said: "Caddy is just a sexually confused slut"[1]; and the critic Gladys Milliner said, "Caddy was an unconventional Southern woman who became a mother not through love or temptation, but through a deliberate quest for sexual freedom, an escape from rules, and ultimately an escape from the isolation of the Compsons "[2]. Most critics have only seen the depraved side of Caddy, and relatively few have discovered in her tragic story that this "deviant" woman was actually struggling in the shadow of the patriarchal culture of the South, and few have seen her courage to rebel and her struggle to find herself. This paper attempts to start from the source of this image, through pluralistic narrative perspectives to analyze the beautiful and tragic character and her sufferings and struggles, so as to understand the deep meaning behind Caddy Compson.

2. The Cause of Caddy's Image

Faulkner, speaking of the creation of Caddy's character in *The Sound and the Fury*, once said, "It was to create a beautiful and unfortunate little girl for me, who had never had a sister and who was fated to lose his infant daughter." [3] From this, we seem to glimpse that the birth of Caddy, the center of the book and the archetypal character in the Compson family, is inextricably linked to is Faulkner's own experience.

Faulkner was born into a slave-owning family in Mississippi, the eldest male in the family, with three younger brothers. Influenced by the family, Faulkner, who had no sisters, subconsciously set a fixed environment for Caddy's upbringing: being born into a family of slave owners in the American South and having three brothers. This extreme similarity to Faulkner's own upbringing determines the

specificity of Caddy's image. It is the embodiment of the author's Faulkner's subconscious, a representation of the female image in his consciousness.

On the one hand, Faulkner has an unspeakably beautiful fantasy of Caddy, the embodiment of sisterly love. In his writing, Caddy plays the role of a good daughter and sister and she's even full of maternal glory and burning passion. On the other hand, Faulkner had a subtle resistance to women because of his failed love affairs and poor life, and "he was always suspicious of young women in spite of his love for them"[4]. In his preface written in 1933, Faulkner frankly admits his love and resentment of women: "She was destined to suffer a calamity.....one brother cannot contain all my feelings for her." [5] He believed that the growth of a woman is the process of going from purity to degradation, and once she becomes a woman, she loses her childish innocence and beauty, just as when Faulkner's daughter is coming of age, he exclaimed that the fact that she's about to become a woman indicates the end of the matter. In Caddy's adulthood, or from the age of fourteen, when she wore grown-up clothes and perfume, she became degenerate, indulging in lust and debauchery, eventually giving birth to an illegitimate child, becoming a prostitute, and becoming the mistress of a German Nazi officer. Caddy's turning from simple beauty to degradation is the embodiment of Faulkner's understanding of women, and a tragic fate that he set for Caddy in his subconscious.

In addition, the creation of Caddy's image is a reflection of the American society in Faulkner's mind. The Southern society in which Faulkner lived was at a turning point in social development. Growing up in a closed social hierarchy and a strict puritanical environment, Southern women, facing a new industrial and commercial civilization and a liberal social culture, broke out in their hearts with a strong spirit of resistance and rebellion. This social reality stimulated Faulkner and was also reflected in the work--Caddy possessed that rebellious spirit that dared to break free and yearn for freedom and the sense of escape from the "decaying Compsons"[2].

Thus, it can be seen that the influence of the author Faulkner's subconscious complex of sisterhood, feminist ideology and social reality environment determines the creation of the characterization of Caddy, as well as her upbringing and complex character traits.

3. Caddy's Image under Pluralistic Narration

Pluralistic narration, in narrative theory terms, refers to the existence of multiple narrators of a novel, perceiving the same or different but related facts from different perspectives. They have different focuses on the facts and perceptions of different degrees, which leads to different evaluations conclusions.

In *The Sound and the Fury*, the pluralistic narrative is mainly reflected in the plurality of narrative perspectives and narrators' identities, as well as the plurality and disorder in the chronological order of the four parts of the book. The narrative voices in the novel are emitted by Benjy, Quentin, Jason, and Dilsey, forming the internal and omniscient perspectives, resulting in different examinations and constructions of Caddy. In this section, this paper will analyze Caddy's image mainly from the internal perspectives of the first three narrators.

3.1. For Benjy: Maternal love and Angel

The first part of the novel is narrated through Benjy's disorganized and illogical consciousness. He observes and perceives Caddy from an unstable internal point of view. In his simple and genuine language, Caddy is an individual who takes care of him in every way, who dares to fight against Jason and others, and who faces the inner conflict in a real way.

In the Compson family where prestige is overrated, Benjy is treated with indifference, and he is not loved and truly cared for by anyone in the family, except for Caddy, who is the only one who cares for and loves him. When Mrs. Compson abandons her vocation as a mother, Caddy shoulders the responsibility of motherhood and unreservedly supports the emotional world of her mentally handicapped brother. Benjy's faith in the love that Caddy brings to him is as natural as a child's faith in the presence of an angel at his side. He crosses the river of time and searches for the footprints left in space, relying entirely on his limited consciousness and senses to create Caddy in his eyes, building an image of Caddy as pure as an angel and as warm as a mother.

But when Caddy loses her virginity, we can feel from the convergence and reproduction of his stream of consciousness that he loses the maternal care of his angelic sister and becomes very sad. His sharp cries make people feel infinite sadness. But at the same time, beyond the sadness, there is also a sense of his restriction of Caddy's natural growth, his conquest of her emotions and his unintentional harm to her. For example, on the day Caddy loses her virginity, Benjy's reaction is like this:

"She stopped again, against the wall, looking at me and I cried and she went on and I came on, crying, and she shrank against the wall, looking at me. She opened the door to her room, but I pulled at her dress and we went to the bathroom and she stood against the door, looking at me. Then she put her arm across her face and pushed at her."[6]

It was the time when Benjy felt the change in his beloved sister and wanted to push her into the shower to wash away her unchastity as he had done earlier to wash away the smell of perfume. Benjy liked the "smell of trees" on Caddy, which for him symbolized her purity and gave him a sense of security. In order to feel the "smell of the tree" in Caddy, he stops his sister from using perfume by crying cruelly, causing obstruction to Caddy's love, unconsciously suppressing and hurting Caddy's natural emotional development and needs.

Thus, in general, Benjy's childlike temperament gives him a thirst for love and an obsessive possessiveness towards Caddy, which, while shaping Caddy's motherly social personality, also obliterates her natural need for love.

3.2. For Quentin: A Symbol of Chastity, Family Reputation and Life

The second part of the novel is narrated by Caddy's elder brother, Quentin, on June 2, 1910, the day of Quentin's suicide.

As the eldest son of the Compson family, Quentin faithfully defends the family's honor, sticks to the traditional style, and acts like a southern gentleman. But Quentin inherited a dying tradition, and he was neither able to accept innovation nor to breathe new life into it. He was morbidly obsessed not only with the reputation of the Compson family and traditional Southern values, but also paranoidly tied both to Caddy's fragile virginity. In other words, Quentin worships Caddy's chastity because, in his view, it symbolizes family honor and traditional values. Perhaps Caddy's words are more convincing: *"he must value above all not her but the virginity....."*[6]

When he learned that Caddy got pregnant, he suffered from an unprecedented collapse. In order to maintain the reputation of the Compson family, Quentin went so far as to claim that his sister's child was his own and said to his father that he had committed incest. Quentin tries to use incest for the purpose of restoring the bond with Caddy, so that virginity will always belong to the Compsons. His intention is to isolate Caddy from the hustle and bustle of the outside world and return her to his mythical world of yesteryear. To his dismay, however, Caddy ignores his pleas, *"I am dont cry Im bad anyway you cant help it"* [6] *Even her conservative father is unconcerned with Caddy's loss of virginity." Because it means less to women, Father said. He said it was men invented virginity not women. Father said it's like death: only a state in which the others are left....."*[6] But Quentin could not bare the reality and fail see through future. The only sister he loved destroyed all his hopes of love, and the holy family honor was disillusioned in his heart. He was in such a breakdown that he finally drowned himself in despair.

For Quentin, Caddy is a symbol of chastity, family reputation and life. Since Quentin attaches too much importance to his sister's chastity, he generates a complex feeling of both love and hate for Caddy after she loses her virginity, and Caddy thus turns into the lover he can never have. In his consciousness, young Caddy represents purity, warmth, under his possession and protection, while the adult Caddy is a mixture of strength and beauty and family shame. Caddy carries with her the memory of his glorious Southern heritage, yet Caddy's chastity is so fragile and vulnerable that its precariousness foreshadows the disintegration of the Compsons. The loss of Caddy's virginity leads to a total collapse of Quentin's spiritual world. Faced with all this irreparable defeat and decline, the weak Quentin can do nothing but look forward to death, because death means forever escaping from the present and the future, living in the eternal past and memories.

3.3. For Jason: The Slut and the Object of Hatred

The third part of the novel is also based on the internal point of view, describing the situation after Jason became the head of the family, as well as his hatred and revenge against Caddy and her daughter Queenie.

Jason is characterized by his brutality, selfishness and lack of humanity in the book. He has always treated everyone around him with suspicion and disgust, and even more so with disgust and hatred for the sister who made him lose his job. He boasts that he is the only sound-minded person in the Compson family, and is rational and logical with self-control. In fact, his so-called rationality and logic is just a sense of male centrism in the guise of ethics and morality. In his view, women are mere tools. He sees women as objects of sexual desire, reproductive machines, laborers who can work without commission, and sources of fixed wealth. From this perspective, women who betrayed male cultural discipline, who lost their function as tools, became demons in the eyes of such men, and were treated with hatred and revenge. Jason's misogyny makes him prejudiced and hateful towards women, especially women like Caddy who are daring and rebellious.

Jason loses his dependence on his mother from childhood due to Mrs. Compson's failure to take up her mother's duties, and has since developed a deep-rooted hatred and despair for women. Jason never hides his contempt for Caddy. He cursed her as a slut, and her daughter Queenie as a bastard. According to God's law as Jason understood it, a woman like Caddy should be punished for her misbehavior. He believed that the failure of Caddy's marriage had cost him the job and social status in the bank that he should have received. Therefore, after Caddy left home, he turned his hatred to Queenie. By playing tricks, he took the money Caddy sent to Queenie for his own use. What's worse, he abused Queenie, and deprived Caddy of custody of her daughter, forcing her to live away from home. When Caddy begged Jason to let her see her daughter, Jason first extorted 100 dollars from her and then laid a trap so that Caddy would end up with nothing. Looking at Caddy's despondent state, Jason finally experienced the thrill of revenge, "*And so I counted the money again that night.....I reckon you'll know that you can beat me out of job and get away with it.*"[6]

Jason regards Caddy as a representative of hatred, selfishness and viciousness under patriarchal ideas. In his narrative, Caddy is just the crazy woman who has no access to her daughter and laughs under the dim streetlight. But at the same time, against the backdrop of Jason's abuse of Queenie, Caddy also presents an image of a woman who has been thrown out of her home, who has a hard life, but who has assumed the duties of a mother and the obligations of a child.

4. The Symbolic Meaning of Caddy's Image

4.1. Women's Resistance

Influenced by European medieval thought, Puritanism, with Calvinism as the core, was prevalent in the old American South. Puritanism believed in the laws of the Old Testament, advocated the suppression of human desires, and condemned any enjoyment and entertainment.[7] Thus, in the eyes of the cold, extreme Puritans, women represented sexual desire and debauchery, and were instruments of the devil to corrupt people, and the purity of women's chastity was worshiped as never before. In this way, the Puritan view of womanhood gradually took shape and gave rise to the view that "it was believed that a pure woman could not have sexual desire." [8] Cole Bliss, who served as governor of South Carolina, once said, "Whenever the Constitution comes

between me and the chastity of Southern white women, I will say: to hell with the Constitution."

However, in such a social context, Caddy Compson, from a young age, showed her dissatisfaction with the glimpse of male superiority and female subjectivity in American Southern society. "*Quentin slapped her and she slipped and fell down in the water. When she got up she began to splash water on Quentin.*"[6] She is stubborn and brave, not afraid of her brother's bullying. When Quentin slapped Caddy, she immediately resisted, showing no submissiveness or compromise to the idea of male superiority over female.

When she grows up and faces the deep-rooted patriarchal culture of the South, Caddy rebels against her father by having sex with the man she loves. In the patriarchal culture, a woman's value lies only in her virginity, even more than her life. Men set up the concept of female innocence and hold the power of "sex", while women do not even have the right to question the "chastity" of men. In order to ensure the "purity" of women, men kept forcing women to extinguish their physical desires and instilling in them the idea that women's sexuality is shameful. As a new woman with a new sense of female subjectivity, Caddy could not bear the oppression of women by the patriarchal culture. So, against the tradition, she boldly expresses her resistance to the patriarchal society. Since a woman does not have her own language or voice, the only thing she can use is her own body, and Caddy tears through the hypocritical veil of the patriarchal society by means of "sex".

Besides, Caddy also rebelled against the victims of the patriarchal culture represented by her mother. Mrs. Compson is a typical Southern woman and the most direct victim of the patriarchal society. But at the same time, she has internalized a sense of masculinity as a victim, who then inflicted on Caddy as inflicter. Mrs. Compson has consciously internalized the male standard toward women as her own code of conduct, regulating her own behavior in a male perspective and imposing all the traditional moral codes she adheres to on Caddy, so Caddy suffers from the double oppression of men and the "old woman" who defends men. However, Caddy does not conform to the rules and regulations set up by the male society for women, but has her own independent thinking, and she feels that the so-called lady image is just an empty shell. When Mrs. Compson refuses to hold her crying Benji in order to maintain her elegant image, Caddy takes care of Benji without any hesitation and expresses her strong dissatisfaction with her mother's behavior.

Although the failure of Caddy's rebellion in the end shows that she fails to transcend the patriarchal consciousness, her struggles for the construction of female subject consciousness are commendable, and it can be said that Caddy is a warrior struggling with the old Southern tradition and the awakening of self-awareness. As a typical representative of traditional Southern ladies' resistance to feudal rituals, Caddy Compson symbolizes the rebellious spirit of women's pursuit of equality and independence.

4.2. The Clash of Civilizations

Born during the transitional period of social development in the American South, *The Sound and the Fury* is the product of Faulkner's reflection of the American society in his mind, showing the conflict and failure of the traditional feudal system, slavery system and Christian morality in the face of modern industrial and commercial civilization.

Caddy is a woman brought up in a slave-owning family

under the traditional Christian morality, and her fate distinctly represents the clash of two civilizations, concepts and institutions: on the one hand, she wants to try her best to maintain the family, but on the other hand, she wants to escape; on the one hand, she is bound by traditional rituals, but on the other hand, she cannot resist the temptation of desire; on the one hand, she depends on her family and affection, but on the other hand, she wants to stand on her own feet. The clash of two civilizations in the inner world creates Caddy's complex personality traits and her rich symbolic meaning.

"The figure of Caddy suggests that the ethical and moral traditions of the Old South are irrevocably corrupt, degenerate, decaying, and decaying." [9] Caddy can be said to be a symbol of the old Southern civilization, and her fall is both a tragedy of the times and a human tragedy, representing the decline of Christian morality, traditional rituals, the bankruptcy of Southern moral regulations, and author Faulkner's despair of the old Southern system. Caddy is finally banished from her family and lives without dignity in the industrial society, symbolizing the ultimate fate of the decline of the old civilization in the American South. In the appendix of the novel, Faulkner mentions that her final image is "ageless and beautiful, cold serene, and damned" [6], just as the look of old Southern system and moral regulations after the bankruptcy. And although Caddy has left home, her belongings, i.e., old slippers, can still give Benjy comfort, indicating that despite the failure of the old system, moral regulations and civilization of the South in confronted with modern society, they can still bring people comforts and illusions by become the object of their nostalgia and the reason for their survival. The same way that Mrs. Compson, a proud Southern lady, boasts of herself in the castle built by the crumbling feudal system of propriety.

5. Conclusion

Through the above analysis, this paper recognizes that the portrayal of Caddy is influenced by author Faulkner's subconscious complex about sisterhood, feminist ideology and social reality. Then, by exploring the three brothers' view

of Caddy from pluralistic narrative perspectives, this paper preliminarily portrays a more complex and three-dimensional characterization of Caddy, and also incidentally portrays the mental outlook of three narrators. Finally, with the combination of backgrounds, the paper claims that Caddy symbolizes the resistance of women oppressed by the patriarchal culture and Puritanic view of women in the South, as well as the conflict between the old traditional feudal Southern culture and the modern industrial and commercial civilization, thus creating more space for diverse interpretations of Caddy's image and a further understanding of the work.

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