

Analyzing the Role of Caddy's Absence in *The Sound and the Fury* Based on Textual Close Reading and Corpus Analysis

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Abstract: *The Sound and the Fury* is a masterpiece of American writer Faulkner's novels, and it is also an outstanding achievement of the writer's exploration of stream-of-consciousness narrative. The novel set in the post-Civil War American South, depicts the decline of a big family and old society orders. The purpose of this paper is to reveal the symbolic meaning of Caddy's "absence" in the narrative through close reading of the text, psychoanalysis and corpus searching methods, so as to look into the deeper meaning of the text. By analyzing Caddy's image from various angles, the paper finally concludes that Caddy's absence is not only a symbol of the era of decline, rupture and uncertainty, but also a means to strengthen the interactivity and extensibility of the text, as well as implying the author's understanding and awareness of women. By excluding Caddy from the text, the novel itself becomes an interpretation of Caddy.

Keywords: characterization construction, narrative method structure, stream of consciousness, multi-perspective narration, corpus analysis

1. Introduction

Texts reflect their time and society, interacting with other texts in a constant state of flux and influencing their readers. The study of a text's own characteristics and structural patterns has become increasingly important in contemporary times. The study of the symbolism of the important characters in the text is closely related to understanding the main idea and is also an important clue to interpret the dilemma of the times. Based on this, this paper aims to analyze the role of Caddy's characterization in the novel *The Sound and the Fury* and to explain her "absence" based on the preliminary conclusions drawn from a close reading of the text, psychoanalysis and corpus analysis.

The Sound and the Fury is a novel set in the post-Civil War American South that depicts the decline of the Compson family. The book consists of four chapters, each narrated by a different narrator. The book's title, *The Sound and the Fury* is taken from Shakespeare's play *Macbeth*: "Life is tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." In contrast, the text is characterized by an atmosphere of noise, confusion, and desolation, a true reflection of the American South after the end of the Civil War.

In earlier studies, many researchers have pointed out that Caddy is significant in the text. Some studies have interpreted Caddy's journey of oppression and resistance from a feminist point of view; some have looked at the religious meanings in the novel. Generally speaking, studies on the text

mainly focus on stream-of-consciousness analysis, narrative method study and feminism. Based on the existing research results, this study makes some innovations based on previous conclusions, proposes the hypothesis that Caddy's absence and the textual structure together serve the textual interactivity, and seeks to prove it based on the results of textual close reading, psychoanalytic theory and corpus analysis.

The main basis for the selection of this paper is the unique reading and aesthetic experience created by the specificity and typicality of Caddy's characterization. The narration of unreliable narrators increases the ambiguity and distance of the text, and their narratives unfold with Caddy as the common axis, gradually constructing Caddy's outline in the trivial and interwoven details. This unique narrative technique brings a slightly claustrophobic reading experience with distinctive features. In addition, "absent" characters often appear in stream-of-consciousness novels, such as Percival in *The Waves*. The narrator repeatedly mentions the absent characters as a link between different narrators and is also betrothed by different narrators with their thoughts and feelings. Among these characters, Caddy's image is exceptionally distinctive, and she is even more three-dimensional than the text's narrator. Therefore, Caddy is a typical representative of "absent" characters and has her own unique nature and constant artistic charm. Undoubtedly, both her "presence" and "absence" play an important role in the construction of the text. To conclude, This paper will analyze the construction of Caddy's image and the reasons for such construction from the text's characteristics.

2. Textual Characteristics

The text of the novel embodies the typical characteristics of polyphonic narrative. The three males of the Compson family (Caddy's three brothers) take the stage, in turn, to recount their memories, experiences and insights, while the common feature of the three texts is that they secretly revolve around Caddy, who is not the protagonist of the narration but is undoubtedly the dark line running through the narration [1]. At the same time, the text is mainly composed of dialogues and memories, which, on the one hand, leads to the disappearance of the author's voice and, on the other hand, blurs the boundaries of the narrative. The text is strongly colloquial, and the trivial and incoherent narration creates a noisy and cacophonous atmosphere. Each narrator's point of view is slightly different, complementing each other and encompassing the theme.

In addition, unreliable narrators are an important element of the text; Caddy's three brothers are an idiot, a suicidal college student, and a self-serving villain. The polyphonic narrative dominated by the unreliable narrator blurs the image of Caddy and creates an artificial sense of distance. The narrator's unreliability reduces the text's readability and credibility, further blurs the plot, and highlights the "Sound and the Fury" embedded in the text. In addition, the fragmented and broken narrative undermines the importance of the plot and emphasizes the characters and the narrative voice itself. In the process of reading, the reader mainly perceives the difference in tone of the different narrative voices and the different images of Caddy that pass through the different narrative voices.

The lack of a future-oriented time direction in the text, which consists mainly of fragmented memories, creates a stagnant and fractured effect as if the Compson family is suffocating in a fragmented past [2]. This is both the overall atmosphere of the story's setting and Caddy's fate and symbolizes the decline of the American South in the traditional sense.

In summary, the novel text has three main aspects: narrative style, voice, and perspective. Constructing the text through dialogue and recollection enhances the interaction between the text and the reader. Therefore, this paper will analyze Caddy's character construction from three perspectives: narrative, language and interaction.

3. Image Construction

3.1. Narrative

From a narrative point of view, Caddy is the driving force behind all the major plot points; Caddy is a character that is described and constructed in the text. The author leaves the narrative to the other characters and constructs the absent Caddy through "silence". Caddy is an object of scrutiny in the text and is excluded from the author's consciousness.

By analyzing all the passages in the text describing Caddy's behaviour and language in chapters, it can be seen that Caddy, from different characters' perspectives, has different and complex qualities. Benjy's Caddy consists of extremely specific details that flashback from time to time later on in his life; Quentin's Caddy has a dual nature of being both beautiful and dual nature: it is a collection of beautiful and pure imagery but also symbolizes rebellion, uncontrollability, and depravity; Jason, on the other hand, cares less about Caddy himself, and more about what he can get out of Caddy, and his depiction of her is nothing but contempt and hatred, except for considerations of profit.

Caddy symbolizes light and warmth to Benjy, who repeatedly refers to Caddy as having a "woody scent" [3]. This scent is masked by the perfume, suggesting Caddy's "innocent loss" [4]. Every time Caddy shows a tendency to grow and change, Benjy instinctively cries, evoking a sense of responsibility and guilt, allowing him to play Caddy's moral guardian. Benjy's lack of ability to perceive time means that his narration is characterized by many interspersed events in different periods, in which Caddy's figure flashes back and forth. Caddy's figure weaves in and out of them, flashing back and forth. However, his retention and need for Caddy inevitably fail, and Caddy's fall and flight directly cause Benjy's castration and Quentin's suicide.

Benjy's character exhibits two contrasting facets embodied by Quentin. Quentin harbours an irreconcilable dread of the inexorable march of time and embraces a puritanical outlook [5]. Within his psyche, Caddy assumes a dual role, symbolizing both a celestial angel and a fallen siren [6]. During his bouts of profound madness, he conjures fantasies about revealing his incestuous liaison with Caddy to their father, and the narrative of Quentin abounds with intricate philosophical contemplations as well as recollections, interpretations, and reveries concerning bygone times. Quentin's active mind leads to a mixture of facts and fantasies that are sometimes very difficult to distinguish. His suicide by throwing himself into the water may represent the ultimate and only form of reconciliation with his own "shadow". Quentin sees no other way out [7].

Caddy is not the central character in Jason's narrative, but the high degree of relevance of Benjy, Quentin, his mother, and Caddy's illegitimate daughter, little Quentin, to Caddy, leads to Caddy wandering like a ghost in Jason's sober and sensible narrative. Caddy wanders like a ghost in Jason's sober and sensible narrative. Jason is filled with contempt and hatred for Caddy and takes an extremely harsh approach to the control of Caddy's illegitimate daughter.

It can be seen that there is no objective Caddy in the text; Caddy is a composite image projected by a collection of wavering subjective wills. In the fragmented narratives of the three brothers, the reader gradually pieces together the complete story of Caddy. The "deprivation of discourse" means that Caddy is wrapped in layers of text, both outside the text and at the centre of the narrative, which seems to be fragmented and wandering but always revolves around her.

3.2. Linguistic

From a linguistic point of view, Caddy is intertwined in three chapters of narratives with different styles and points of view constructed by the language of her three brothers. Voices from different perspectives make her more three-dimensional and elusive than they are.

In the narrative section, we have already talked about the subjective and fragmented character of the text's narration. Analyzed from a linguistic point of view, the narrators in the text are confused, blurred, and fragmented, sinking into a time and space that lacks a future orientation. They turn to Caddy, who holds a full, strong life force that the other characters (narrators) in the text do not possess. Therefore, the narrator's voice is both a desire for her and a plundering of her and can be seen as an extension of her spirit. Caddy, however, cannot fulfil their demands because she has no future. She becomes a "fallen woman" and breaks up with her family. In these demands, which can never be satisfied, lies stagnation and decline.

The three different narrative tones are extensions of her spirit on three different levels. It is three interpretations of her. Perhaps the three brothers can also be interpreted as the author's mouthpieces; they are his mouthpieces. Moreover, Caddy is outside his consciousness, beyond his grasp. He desires her, but that desire can never be satisfied.

The psychoanalytic view is that the human spiritual world consists of three parts: the ego, the id and the superego. The ego is the more primitive and instinctive part of human nature, which acts according to the principle of pleasure and demands the immediate fulfilment of desires. The superego is the moral force in personality, symbolizing restraint and transcendence. The superego requires a person to restrain instinctive desires and act for a more long-term or noble goal. The ego is often repressed in the subconscious and is a primitive kinetic force; the superego is often internalized from external standards and represents the ideal. The ego is the reconciling force between the id and the superego, following the principle of reality and seeking a way out in integrating desire and morality. In the novel, the three brothers correspond to the ego, the self, and the superego, representing instinct, struggle, entanglement, and the disciplinary force above them[8]. After Caddy's departure, Benjy is castrated by Jason, Quentin commits suicide by throwing himself into the water, and Jason lives a life of bitterness and hatred, unable to live the desired life of abundance. Their endings symbolize confusion, uncertainty, and inevitable dissolution.

It is worth noting that the fourth chapter (that of Dilsey, the black maid) gives an overview of the book from a higher point of view. Dilsey's perspective is clearer and more complete in comparison to the other three chapters, revealing a certain religious undertone. The scene of Dilsey and Benjy listening to a sermon in a church has strong religious symbolism. In the midst of fractured time and the unsustainable old order, man turns to faith. Dilsey's narrative tone is simple and compassionate, symbolizing sobriety, transcendence, and salvation. In contrast, Caddy disappears from view and is only mentioned in memories and narratives; Caddy exists outside the picture and falls into nothingness. Caddy exists outside of the picture and falls into nothingness. The characters closely associated with her also fall from the reader's view. This symbolizes the inevitable fall of purity and innocence. Dilsey's presence in the text is more of a mourning or a consolation.

Figure 1 and Table 1 show the frequency of *say* and *say* in the whole text and the statistics of the total number of times the characters' names appear in the text, respectively[9]. It can be seen that the high frequency of *say* and *say* in the text represents that the text mainly consists of narratives and dialogues, so the corpus analysis method is very suitable to be applied to this text. In addition, texts mainly composed of narratives have a relatively strong stream-of-consciousness character, and the author hides outside the text and maintains an objective and neutral attitude.

Said appears heavily in the first and fourth sections of the text, representing the fact that the narrators of these two sections narrate with a great deal of reminiscence of the past and that they are less likely to interact with real people or even to confuse the boundaries between memories and reality in their thoughts (mainly referring to Benjy.) Benjy has no notion of time, and he moves through fragmented memories; Dilsey is a character who belongs to the past, and she is a faithful witness. *Say* appears heavily in the third part of the text, representing the fact that there is a great deal of interaction with real characters in Jason's life. Analyzed in the plot context, most of these interactions

are disciplinary, oppressive, and exploitative. Jason is the closest of all the narrators to the "present" and the "future"[10]. Comparing Part I with Part II, Quentin's narration is much less frequent than Benjy's. However, it also features the intertwining of memory and reality, which may imply that Quentin's thoughts and narration are more abstract, with a great deal of associations and discursive ideas. At the same time, Benjy's world is highly concrete, a dense material world. Quentin also shares Benjy's lack of a future, but a fatal and irreconcilable contradiction at the level of thought characterizes him. This ultimately leads to his suicide.

Table 1 lists the frequency of occurrence of characters' names in the text, with Caddy coming in at number three. Caddy is not a narrator in the text, yet her name is repeatedly brought up. The next step in the analysis proposes to focus on the frequency of Caddy's name in different locations in the text and use this to draw further inferences.



Figure 1: Frequency statistics of "say" and "said" in *The Sound and the Fury*.

Table 1: Frequency Statistics for Character Names in *The Sound and the Fury*.

Character	Dilsey	Jason	Caddy	Quentin	Mother	Benjy
Frequency	442	339	317	241	272	108

3.3. Interaction

Analyze from the perspective of text-reader interaction. After the double gaze of the narrator and the reader, the image of Caddy becomes more wandering and chaotic. She exists in the web of consciousness of many characters and enters the readers' thoughts through this form. At the same time, the chaotic and broken time structure makes Caddy's existence more unrestricted. She intersperses between texts and achieves a more permanent sojourn (linger). Dense material forms and abstract philosophical reflections are highly relevant to her. She hovers in the center of the text, leaving the reader with much room for interpretation. What the reader does here, however, is a "reading of the reading". It is difficult for any one point of view to cover the whole picture of Caddy, who has been portrayed from different sides. The text asks the reader to interpret Caddy's image. The writing style dictates this strong interactivity.

To summarize, the image of Caddy is mainly realized indirectly through the construction of other characters, and the author has constructed a large number of flat characters to build a three-dimensional Caddy through their mouths; however, Caddy does not speak in person, and the reader has to be aware of the fact that the text's portrayal of Caddy may be at variance with the truth. This ambiguity, on the other hand, further energizes Caddy's vitality.

4. Conclusion

Through analysis, this paper concludes that Caddy is the central character of the text and, at the same time, has a strong symbolic meaning. The novel itself takes Caddy as its starting point and interprets her; this interpretation is carried out indirectly by constructing other characters closely related to Caddy. The reader is engaged in the process of interpretation of interpretation, thus making the text highly ambiguous and malleable. Caddy's image is complemented by the image of the reader reading. At the same time, the indirect way of narration and the unreliable narrator make Caddy's image cannot be fully grasped by the readers. Caddy wanders in and out of the text.

Caddy's "absence" symbolizes not only the decline of the old order in the American South but also an unfulfilled and unanswered desire; it symbolizes the author's understanding of women and gives the reader more space to think, imagine, and understand. *The Sound and the Fury* is a more typical stream-of-consciousness text, which does not exist in the plot development process but in the reader's consciousness and thoughts and embodies its value in its impact on the reader, just like Caddy itself. The more deeply the reader interacts with the text, the more real and meaningful the spectral text becomes.

The main contribution of this paper is to present a new view of the text as an explication of Caddy and to focus on the intertextuality and interactivity of the text, explaining the absence of important characters from a relatively novel perspective. Meanwhile, the paper cites previous corpus research results to support the viewpoint of this paper.

The limitations of this study are that the corpus analysis fails to dig deeper, and the relationship between the recurring symbols, characters and plots is not explored more deeply in the textual close reading. In the follow-up study, the frequency of important characters and symbols can be analyzed in the corpus, and the role of symbols in character construction, plot organization, and deeper meanings can be explored in the context of the text. On this basis, further research will be carried out on the way the text is composed and its relationship with other texts and readers.

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