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The Perspective of Feministic Analysis In *The Sound And The Fury*

By William Faulkner

Abstract

William Cuthbert Faulkner was one of the most established prominent novelists of his era. Faulkner was an American, who won the Nobel Prize from Oxford, Mississippi. He was an outstanding writer who was awarded Nobel Prize for Literature and Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for his great contribution to American literature. In the entire part of his literary life, he created many famous novels and short stories, such as, *The Reivers*, *Absalom, Absalom*, and *A Rose for Emily*. 'The Sound and the Fury' is Faulkner's masterpiece which employs several narrative styles at his best in the career. In *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner depicts two different typical women characters (a white woman and a black woman) who witness the development of feminism with the background of the fallen southern economy in America. This present research paper is to intend to portray the perspective analysis of feministic

characterisation of Caddy's thoughts and other related feminine characters how they view the society and their family. Feminine rebellion against the southern lady hood and the pursuit of freedom and independence are analysed to give a clear picture of William Faulkner's theme over the play.

Keywords – Female thoughts, Independence, freedom, rebellion actions

Introduction

William Faulkner (1897–1962), one of the most effective modern writers in American literature, he is regarded as a unique writer who can express his thought on time spirit. In his cherishing golden time, his major classic novels reflect his southern complex. Faulkner expresses his adoration and yearning on southern natural sights and society, and betrays his sympathy and understanding the inner consciousness of southern people and traditional customs. In 1949, his one of the remarkable masterpiece—*The Sound and the Fury*—was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. It is widely recognised and acknowledged as Faulkner's most outstanding and brilliant achievement for the script drafted, which shows his southern complex, and it is also the most brilliant achievement in modern American literature. The brilliant story is set in Jefferson, Mississippi, which mainly focuses on the Compson family, former Southern aristocrats struggling to do with the degeneration and the collapse of their family and its reputation. Over the complete course of the 30 years or so related in the story, the family is under the brick of the financial crisis, lost its religious loyalty and the respect of the town of Jefferson, and due to this many of them died miserably. In this successful novel, Faulkner describes the history of downfall in an old family in Jefferson Town. He describes the hidden position of the existing condition the history of the collapse and the vivid reflection of southern society, which implies the decline

of Southern plantation economy and the rise of Northern capitalist economy. What makes the play very interesting that really counts is the portrayal of main characters, especially Caddy and Dilsey both the characters displayed their feminism spirit in male-dominated society.

The novel was drafted into four parts which related most of the same episodes, each from a different perspective and thus with emphasis upon different themes and details. “The most interweaving and nonlinear structure makes any true synopsis of the novel difficult, especially since the narrators are all unreliable in their own way, making their trustable accounts not necessarily trustworthy at all in the process of times” (Deland, 1990, p. 321). Furthermore, in order to create a sensational literary aesthetics and attraction, Faulkner uses italics to show writing features in each part where the narrative is moving into an important moment belonging to the past.

Feminist Thought And Patriarchal Society

In *The Sound and the Fury*, the author presented the characters, in a critical situation how they react and reveal their real nature and how women grasp their own fate for dignity and freedom, this gradually go into depravity in man-dominated society, which reflects the spirit of feminism. The Patriarchy is a social system in which men hold dominating power. Males are supposed to predominate in different social and domestic roles, such as, political leadership, social privilege, moral authority, and control of wealth. Within the family, it was the customs hold traditionally that males or male-figures hold authoritative power over females and children.

“Many leading patriarchal societies are also patrilineal, meaning that property and title are inherited by the male lineage. The female oriented equivalent is matriarchy.

Significant historically, patriarchy has manifested itself in the social, legal, political, and economic organization of a range of different cultures”. (Fedwa, 2007, p. 29)

In the region of patriarchy society, females in western countries have been subjected to the oppression and exploitation by males for almost over a thousand years. The glorious era, since the first wave of women liberation movement, females began to establish a consciousness to rebel against men in order to deprive themselves of the oppressed and the exploited. In this awakening sense, many literary works center on the theme of feminism sprouted out to help more females physically and spiritually. In *The Sound and the Fury*, the heroin Caddy the character sets a good example for women who expect to have a sober mind and pioneering spirit against inequality between men and women.

The narrative word “feminism” comes from France in the 18th century, which refers to women liberation, that is, “women’s pursuit for gender equality with men which provides them with legal rights to express their own voices with complete liberty and to strive for a comparatively higher social status” (Castille, 1992, p. 430). The complete Women’s liberation movement became prevailing in Britain and America in the 1960s and 1970s which introduced pioneering spirit upon women and even writers in that era. The concept of feminism can be simply divided into three categories according to the different backgrounds of women. In the whole process of movement, white feminism promoted black feminism, in turn, black feminism enriched white feminism. In the beginning colored feminists (the third world feminists) offered a telling criticism to the main stream feminism (white feminism). They truly admitted sexual identity, and specially emphasized the relations between different races and classes. It is worthy of great necessity to point out that a woman should belong to a

certain class and come from certain nation, so each woman has her own perspective of unique experiences.

Bell Hooks, a famous critic and black feminist, strongly insisted that “white women’s feminism theories cannot summarize the diversity and complexity of all kinds of women’s, and white women cannot completely represent the benefits of women from different races either” (Hooks, 1984, p. 58). From now on, black feminism is purely advanced and diversified into further. The acts of black feminist carried special significance, which took unique viewpoints to display specific value outlook on culture, race, class, and social sex, politics, and economy, even individual factors. The concept of the black feminism that opposes hegemony and fights for right and justice enlightens people who have the same dream to pursue.

In *The Sound and the Fury*, there is no denying saying that Caddy is a complicated protagonist who is both loved and hated by men. Her determined character and dispositions are brought into being mainly by social factors at her time. The olden days quote: Where there is oppression, there is resistance. The entire social environment suppresses the nature of human; however, there still exist the solutions to it though it is a long way to go. During in the process of time, southern economy in America largely depended on southern plantation economy. The vital economic system determined the value of southern man-dominated society. In this prevailing society, it was focused on race, sex, class, and a series of stern rules in all respects. In the complete family existing in such a society, men were in an absolutely dominated position, that is, a father was the center of a family. As a leader of the family, a male was expected to be majestic and heroic so as to occupy the highest power; he should be a role of determiner and leader of domestic affairs. As a mother in the family, a woman

should be a pure, gracious, and noble lady. Adding to this, she should be busy with family matters and take good care of all the members, in the meanwhile, her husband was expected to be the whole world for her. This was sensational reflection of the common value in southern society, and anyone who failed to follow the trend would be satirized and denounced.

Faulkner once pointed out: “In South, above all, there is still a common acceptance of the world, a common view of life, and a common morality” (Faulkner, 2004, p. 31).

During the end of American Civil War there was a declaration of the abolishment of slavery. However, the picture of the southern ladyhood was still deep-rooted in the fallen environment of southern plantation economy and traditional value, because southern people could intend to protect their last valuable and beneficent spiritual support from being collapsed so that women maintained the image of the ladyhood. The complete image of Caddy was created under such social circumstances. Where an individual specific environment, there is a hero to be different. As a peculiar woman, there was a period of time for her to grow up from an adolescent to an adult. Caddy was very bold and endowed with natural qualities, such as, kind-hearted, passionate, and courageous enough to love and hate, to think, and to behave. She was an unique and deliberate mind set girl who was very powerful enough to internalize the independent and pioneering spirit; she still remained a bit bewildered though the character maintained throughout the play as she was like other women oppressed in the same patriarchal pattern.

The character Caddy always tended to rival for priority since childhood. She never thought of the sense of fear, no matter what happened or what would happen, she would

always make every effort to take the first place in any competition. Even while playing the games with boys, she was active to be the king or the general. And during the time of critical situation when her grandmother passed away, only Caddy dared to clamber up the tree to discover the secret of her house and to narrate the picture of what happened to her brothers, however, her brothers were too timid and not matured to follow her example.

In a male-dominated society, men held that mediocrity was the virtue of women so that many traditional women became the victims. Caddy's mother, Mrs. Compson, was proved to be a good example because she held that women were born to take care of men and to teach children, so women should maintain traditional images. However, fortunately and amazingly, Caddy never followed in her mother's steps and she took men as her example and almost acquired the rights as a man had. She boldly went to school like boys at the age of seven which seemed to be unbelievable as for a girl. Caddy at the very early age started to date different kinds of men when she became an adult, which was the public rebellion to her family. The bold statement when she said: "I will run away and never come back" (Faulkner, 1993, p. 18). That was her stunned declaration to fight against imprisoned social system in patriarchal society.

Caddy was a determined character at times of critical time she remained calm what she did could not be understood by her family and society, but nobody could deny the cause and the action taken because it was the strong rebellion to the patriarchal tradition for she ran in the opposite position to the image of ladyhood. As a consequence, she touched the baseline of the society. Virtue always stood for family's fame and deep-rooted traditional value, so in man-dominated society, a woman's body belonged to a man and family, which could be his inviolability property.

Faulkner rightly pointed out: “The value of women lies only in their virtue, and it is more important than life. To keep their utmost virtue, men completely prevent their physical desire and deprive of right of voice” (Faulkner, 2004, p.194).

In the society, if a woman failed to maintain an image of lady hood, she could be regarded as the atrocious demon for the society was flooded with gender prejudices and discrimination. Although the character Caddy was harshly denounced finally, she still survived in the man-dominated society. After a hardship of struggle for the process of surviving the collapse condition of family and disillusion of dream, she became a symbol of liberation, freedom, and hope for women eventually

Pursuit Of Freedom And Independence

In the whole story, Caddy frequent absence and silence arouse more curiosity of the readers since she was not given enough chances to voice, which was the reflection of women’s social status at that time. The complete skills of plot knitting, Faulkner never disregard or disrespects women at all; instead, he respects and admires women. He never humiliated the female character and what he intends to express his love and sympathy for women like Caddy through the perspective of three brothers. In the narrative style of males can be more objective to show the hardships and dilemma of females at that time.

The character Benjy was Caddy’s youngest brother with intelligence as a three-year-old child. While he was a kid, Benjy desired for maternal love, however, Mrs. Compson was a bit indifferent to him. The bold Caddy was his only sister who could devote her love and gentleness to protecting him. Benjy always viewed Caddy as his mother and a pure angel.

When Caddy determined to wear adult clothes and started to use perfume to date men, which was entirely different from what she used to be; Benjy could not bear it first, because he thought of his little sister who was like an angel, pure and simple, so that she could not be desecrated by other men. At times, Benjy was scared to confront the growth and independence of Caddy. It was completely seemed to him that his sister began to lose her virtues as a pure traditional girl. Benjy was too immature to learn that Caddy came to show her understanding towards independence and freedom.

The most important character is Quentin who was Caddy's eldest brother who had strong affections for her. In the process of novel, he acted as a spokesman of the man-dominated society. He completely regarded Caddy's chastity as family honour and fame. He was very much attracted with her chastity that in order to protect her, he tried to prohibit Caddy from pursuing love. When Caddy lost her chastity, he expelled the man who claimed to be responsible for her. He was always cherished Caddy's virtue, once it was destroyed, he became crazy and helpless. He could not bear the critical condition of Caddy's character when she lost her way and started to hate Caddy completely and viewed her as an adulterous. "He must concern the value about all not her but the virginity of which she was custodian and on which she placed no value whatever" (Faulkner, 1993, p. 412). For a reputed family in the customs who existed in the society a woman's chastity was valuable in a noble family, especially for family Compson so that in this sense, Caddy was brought up absolutely a deviationist based on such patriarchal value system.

The entire family was being collapsed due the character of Caddy's behaviour. Caddy's young brother, Jason, the character held a complicated feeling to her, both contempt and resentment. The determined Jason was not only another spokesman of man-dominated

society, but also a product of capitalist economy. For the reputation of family it was the one root cause, he despised and loathed women and viewed their chastity as the honor and reputation of the family. And another, with the development of capitalist economy, he became a follower of money worship and believed that money meant everything to him. He would rather betray his sister for money, just as he betrayed his sister's marriage for his job. However, in the sudden change of when Caddy's husband discarded her, Jason lost his job as well so that Caddy meant nothing just like deserted rubbish in the eyes of Jason. Later, he harboured indecent thoughts about Caddy's daughter in order to revenge her. Caddy was not allowed to see her daughter unless she gives him money. Finally, to the astonishment Caddy's daughter stole Jason's money, which is taken to be the sign indicated a threat to a man's authority.

The whole process of the play sometimes Caddy the character seemed to gain important and in some stages to be less important role, compared with her three brothers. Nevertheless, for the societal cause and in fact, all the three brothers acted as the spokesman of patriarchal society because they all showed the desire to control their sister, Caddy, rather than protecting her. In the critical process to fight against the spiritual shackles brought by the brothers, Caddy displayed her great courage to be independent and free by chasing after her love and even lost her chastity. Though very much involved in the whirlpool of man-dominated society, Caddy made good use of her awakening feminist consciousness to rebel against inequality and fight for independence and freedom.

Conclusion

The play, *The Sound and the Fury* was created in the 1920s when women were thrown into the situation with the absence of discourse right. The entire part of Southern

America in that era was a typical patriarchal society where women were oppressed and exploited by man's power. This typical novel not only depicts special female images, but also reveals males' attitudes and viewpoints towards females so as to make us discover men's inner world. It clearly seems that women at that time became the victims of man-dominated society. Under such critical circumstances, the existence of the bold female protagonist of the story, Caddy, can be well suited and considered as one of the excel proof to show to the world that a minority of women came to establish the feminist consciousness with pioneering spirit.

At a certain point of time, we may think that Caddy was unfortunate because she was born into that patriarchal family and into that man-dominated society; while, on the other perspective we may tend to argue that just because she suffered a lot in such a family and social pattern, she began to establish feminist consciousness and even survive and struggle in the man-dominated world. The actions taken by her bold attitude what she had done and said was an absolute courage to the women at her time. In the modern time, feminism develops so rapidly so that females are gradually respected and equally treated by men. The time ripened and their social position has changed radically. It was regarded as a paramount achievement for a writer like Faulkner and his followers can strive for the path of women's success.

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