

# The varying perspectives of caddy compson



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In Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, Caddy, the central figure, is never given a voice. Instead, her character is revealed through the narratives of her three brothers. Since the novel is largely surrounded by the concept of alternating truths, these three perspectives take on very different angles. By using the three different narratives, Faulkner stresses the individuality of man, even between family members, and facilitates this idea of alternating truths: that truth is essentially subjective in nature and relies heavily on the eye of the beholder. The fact that Caddy doesn't have a voice forces the reader to look at the perspectives of Benjy, Quentin, and Jason and come up with his/her own vision of who the true Caddy is. These three brothers have vastly different personalities and intelligence levels and some very dichotomous views of Caddy are put forth as a result. She is a mother-figure, a whore, the only thing pure, a case of innocence lost, or a variety of other things according to which of her brothers one believes. But despite their disagreement over the quality of her character, all of the brothers consistently reminisce a great deal about Caddy and are tormented by her memory in one way or another. They lament her loss of innocence or her escape to adulthood or something else that makes them feel violated or insecure. The reader ascertains each narrator's feelings about Caddy through reflections, and in these reflections we can understand and learn just as much about the narrator as we can about Caddy. In the case of Benjy, Caddy simply defines his existence. Throughout his section there are constant references to Caddy and events that involve her presence. Caddy's first appearance in the novel comes when Benjy remembers her saying, "Keep your hands in your pockets...Or they'll get frozen.... You dont want your hands froze on Christmas do you. ?" Immediately she

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presents herself as caring and motherly. Caddy means so much to Benjy because she is the only one who respects him and tries to understand his mentally challenged state. Other characters in the novel have a tendency to talk down to him or yell at him to "hush" because they don't understand how his mind works. "Hush up," Frony said. "You needs a whipping, that's what you needs." (20) Other people can't understand what he wants when he bellows. His only form of expression is to holler and cry, but Caddy is able to read his emotions and determine what he wants. Benjy recalls one time when he started bellowing because Caddy had perfume on. She's able to recognize what is upsetting him and washes off the perfume just to ease his mind.

"Of course Caddy wont. Of course Caddy wont (wear the perfume) ...Dilsey...Benjy's got a present for you." She stooped down and put the bottle in my hand. "Hold it out to Dilsey, now...We don't like perfume ourselves." (27) Here Caddy reveals herself as Benjy's protector and the one person who will give of his/herself to ensure his happiness. It also shows Benjy's obsession with routines. As a result of Benjy's mental state, change is a disturbing force to him. In his small world, which consists of a very limited amount of people and area, it is best that everything operates routinely and that he have access to the few things that give him pleasure. He likes Caddy the way she is and wants her to remain in his one-dimensional, timeless existence without changing. Her maturation and experiment with perfume become areas of sadness and provoke him to cry. "You a big boy," Dilsey said. "Caddy tired sleeping with you. Hush now, so you can go to sleep...but I didn't hush..." (28) This recollection is particularly telling because

having someone to sleep with in order to feel comfortable and safe is something that we normally associate with early childhood. But Benjy exerts no desire to break out of that shell. His obsession with routines and the norm makes it impossible for him to really grow up and results in his fixed state in time. The fact that he lives in this fixed state becomes problematic because of the fact that Caddy is his only motherly figure. She not only protects him and sleeps with him, but she cares for him, defends him, and provides for his happiness.

â † ☞ â † ☆Is mother very sick? â † ☞ Caddy said. â † ☆No. â † ☞ Father said. â † ☆Are you going to take very good care of Maury? â † ☞

â † ☆Yesâ † ☞ Caddy said. â † ?(p. 48) Although it is good for Benjy to have this motherly figure, it becomes dangerous because, unlike a normal mother, Caddy canâ † ☞t be around for very long. Eventually she leaves the house and subsequently leaves her brother and his small world. This has a dramatic effect on Benjy as he spends most of his time waiting for Caddy to return and thinking about her because he doesnâ † ☞t understand why she had to leave. We understand this to mean that his attention is so narrow that he cannot fathom the real world and the expanse beyond the Compson house. He lives solely on the decaying estate and goes through life as if it were one day, almost oblivious to the meltdown occurring within the family around him. Quentinâ † ☞s section introduces the reader to a more intellectually advanced response to Caddy. Like Benjy, Quentin has a large amount of recollections of Caddy and struggles with some of the same attachments and desires. They are so similar in their obsession with their sister that it is almost fair to say that Quentinâ † ☞s section is the intellectual extension of his brotherâ † ☞s. He feels and behaves closely to the way one would imagine Benjy would if he were mentally capable. Quentinâ † ☞s first

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recollection of Caddy illustrates this extension beyond Benjy's capacity. "I have committed incest I said Father it was I it was not Dalton Ames." (51) Here he recalls confessing that he had committed incest with Caddy to his father, which really never occurred. But the fact that he confesses it indicates his quasi-sexual feelings for his sister and also his borderline insanity. Because of the explicit nature of the comment, it cannot even be assured that he actually made such a confession. It's possible that he could be imagining what it would have felt like to confess such a thing to his father. Regardless, this scene takes the strong feelings that Benjy has for Caddy, which are so pure because of their naivety and ignorance, and distorts them into a highly intellectual and contemplative mind. His sexual feelings are confused, however, because they are only bred out of a desire to protect her from the world. "Only you and me then amid the pointing and the horror walled by the clean flame" (74) Caddy's promiscuousness and blooming sexuality torment Quentin to the point where he can't function normally. He mixes up his pain over the fact that she commits sexual acts with others and the influences around him who try to convince him that virginity and innocence are shams and simply insignificant inventions of men. "He said it was men invented virginity not women. Father said it's like death: only a state in which the others are left" (50) "Purity is a negative state and therefore contrary to nature. Its nature is hurting you not Caddy..." (74) His recollections about Caddy reveal that he tries to fight his pain over her sexuality by trying to settle into isolation with her. "Quentin has shot Herbert he shot his voice through the floor of Caddy's room." (67) He tries to chase away all of the men she is involved with and at one point even imagines threatening Dalton

Ames to leave town. In a setting that resembles an old western movie, Quentin imagines himself standing up to Dalton Ames and protecting his sister, which most likely didn't really happen. His struggle is analogous to someone trying to put their finger over a leaky faucet in that he wants to temporarily stop the flow of men into Caddy's life. He recalls conversations with her where he would talk about running away together.

On what on your school money the money the sold the pasture for so you could go to Harvard...? (79) Quentin gives Caddy a voice and returns the reader to reality from Quentin's daydreams and contemplations as she rejects his proposal and tries to make him realize what he should be focusing on in life. Here we see Quentin's recollections and speech becoming confused and quick-paced as the section progresses. Thinking about Caddy gradually makes him frantic and unorganized in his thought pattern. Quentin is ideological because he obsesses with protecting Caddy, but with no real solution or result. Through his references to Caddy's sexual experiences that he witnessed, the reader realizes the lofty price Quentin places on her virginity and the self-torment that he inflicts. He overstates the importance of her remaining pure and inflates it in a way that causes more internal pain.

...her head against the twilight her arms behind her head kimono-winged the voice that breathed over eden clothes upon the bed by the nose seen above the apple. ? (67) Quentin illustrates Garden of Eden imagery when he describes her making love to someone else and in this shows the high significance he attaches to the act. The fact that he watches also depicts his apparent level of jealousy and a self-destructive desire to crush himself emotionally. Following two sections in which the narrators are in love or infatuated with Caddy, Jason provides a

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strong contrast to this mentality right from the opening lines. "Once a bitch always a bitch, what I say." (117) Although this comment is in reference to Miss Quentin, Caddy's daughter, Jason's attitude toward the two go hand-in-hand. He labels Caddy and her daughter with selfish promiscuousness and considers their behavior the main reason for the Compson family's decline in reputation. In complete contrast to his two brothers, Jason does not feel any love toward his sister and doesn't care about protecting her from damaging her personal reputation or getting involved with the wrong kind of man. His only worry is how her actions reflect on him and the family name. Jason's recollections of Caddy's character are much less in number than his brothers and usually are presented vicariously through his mother. "You don't know, Mother says. To have my own daughter cast off by her husband. Poor little innocent baby," she says, looking at Quentin. "You will never know the suffering you've caused." (125) Due to his naturally selfish and mean-spirited personality and the fact that he is surrounded mainly by his mother, who casts this kind of attitude toward her daughter, Jason develops a very condescending opinion toward Caddy. His recollections are very rarely a direct conversation with Caddy, but rather they follow the idea that he has internalized the morally skewed preachings of his mother. She looks to shun Caddy and also blames her for the fall of the Compson family. Mrs. Compson tends to isolate Jason as her only good child and therefore gives Jason justification to continue to behave in his cynical and blaming way. In one important recollection, we see Jason's character revealed in full as he responds to a request made by Caddy. He recalls the day of Quentin's funeral when Caddy comes to pay her

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respects and encounters Jason in the process. She is cordial and even apologetic about causing Jason to lose his job, but he remains hostile and bitter throughout the entire meeting. "Don't think that you can take advantage of this to come sneaking back. If you can't stay on the horse you've got, you'll have to walk," I says. "We don't even know your name at that house," I says. "(128) This is more than just a little hostility, however. He seems simply plagued with hatred and a desire to seek revenge or solidify a higher moral level for himself by degrading Caddy. He's presumptuous in his assumption that she is sneaking back? based on her appearance at her own brother's funeral. This is based on his own ideology that everything must have a motive, and doing things out of the goodness of one's heart is a waste of time. Caddy goes on in the scene to bribe Jason with one hundred dollars for him to allow her to see Miss Quentin, her daughter. He agrees to the idea, solely based on its payoff, and ends up giving Caddy only a quick glimpse of her own baby, whose life has been kept away from her. Even with Caddy's amiable and apologetic attitude and the money that he receives for doing the deed, Jason cannot help but exert his dominance and reduce Caddy to the joke of the family and one who should be lucky that he gives her the glimpse of Quentin. "I says I reckon that'll show you. I reckon you'll know now that you can't beat me out of a job and get away with it." (129) This comment, which coincides with his drive away from Caddy after giving her the glimpse of Question, solidifies the notion that Jason harbors no sense of forgiveness. Beyond that, there is a bit of irony in the fact that he is so terribly preoccupied with the job that Caddy



first place if it werenâ€™t for her marriage to Herbert. And chances are that Jasonâ€™s personality would have lost it for himself soon enough anyway. Yet he frequently laments Caddyâ€™s infidelities because of their direct consequences on his life and gives no consideration whatsoever to his sister who has been divorced and stripped of her own daughter. Throughout the novel, Faulkner generally presents Caddy as a protagonist. She exists in the first two sections as an idealized icon and a symbol of love and sometimes heartache. She is the central character because such a large amount of the thoughts, actions, and attitudes of the main characters reflect or are directly related to her. Also, despite the fact that the sections of her brothers are presented in biased, first person narrations, the reader never gets the sense that any of the brothers get the better of Caddy, or play a dominant role to Caddy in any way. Obviously due to Benjyâ€™s retardation, she is a mother figure and therefore dominant. But even in Quentinâ€™s stunning intellectuality, we see Caddy reject his dreamy hopes for him and his sister to run away. She is more practical and more knowledgeable about getting ahead in life. And even when Jason belittles her to her face and labels her the disgrace of the family, there remains the sense, especially in their face-to-face encounter, that Caddy has him figured out. He can baulk all he wants to and make his claims, but Caddy will remain unfazed and a stronger person than Jason. For his condemning of her is somewhat the result of him being intimidated by her. This intimidation leads to insecurity, which leads to frustration and hatred. Ultimately, it is all of her brothersâ€™ failure to understand Caddy that leads to their responses to her and their ever-contemplation of her. These responses are shaped by the character of their

personality. Benjy responds by bellowing, Quentin by committing suicide, and Jason by hating her and blaming her for his own shortcomings.