

# Reconstruction of Spiritual Balance in *The Sound and the Fury*

Xinghuan Li<sup>1</sup>, Zhenhua Lyu<sup>1\*</sup><sup>1</sup>Department of Foreign Studies, North China Electric Power University, Baoding, Hebei, P. R. ChinaDOI: [10.36348/sijll.2022.v05i12.004](https://doi.org/10.36348/sijll.2022.v05i12.004)

| Received: 29.10.2022 | Accepted: 05.12.2022 | Published: 08.12.2022

\*Corresponding author: Zhenhua Lyu

Department of Foreign Studies, North China Electric Power University, Baoding, Hebei, P. R. China

## Abstract

This paper explores the ways to reconstruct spiritual balance in William Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury*. This paper also elaborates on the social implication of the construction of spiritual balance.

**Keywords:** Spiritual balance, *The Sound and the Fury*.

**Copyright © 2022 The Author(s):** This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

## INTRODUCTION

William Faulkner was one of the most celebrated writers in American literature and his works had significant influence worldwide. His works are known not only for the bold experimentation of different writing techniques but also for the profundity of themes. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1949 "for his powerful and artistically unique contribution to the modern American novel".

We can find the manifestation of spiritual imbalance on three female characters, namely Caddy, Mrs. Compson, and Dilsey in William Faulkner's representative work *The Sound and the Fury*. Caddy used to be a lively, optimistic, and caring girl, but her failure in revolting against the rules and social values lead to her imbalanced spirit. Mrs. Compson's imbalanced spirit is caused by her internalization of the puritanical and patriarchal view of gender. For Dilsey, the unfair racist system and thoughts lead to her spiritual ecological crisis.

What should be done to construct their spiritual balance and harmony? Based on Lu Shuyuan's spiritual ecology theory, this paper gives advice from two aspects. Firstly, women should receive education, which can help them cultivate independent thoughts and gain more chances to control their life. Secondly, women should grasp the opportunities provided by the changing society and strive for their deserved rights. Education can deepen women's insight in dominating their destinies and struggle can entail them the courage to change their status. Thus they can realize balanced spiritual ecology.

## I. Receiving Education

Being independent is critical to the construction of spiritual ecology. An independent mind will not be easily influenced by the social environment; therefore the education of women is particularly important and plays a vital role in the construction of women's balanced spiritual ecology.

For a long time, the male-dominated society has not taken women's education rights into account, afraid of women's voice. As Mr. Compson says, "[w]omen are like that they don't acquire knowledge of people we are for that they are just born with a practical fertility of suspicion that makes a crop every so often and usually right they have an affinity for evil for supplying whatever the evil lacks in itself for drawing it about them instinctively as you do bed-clothing in slumber fertilizing the mind for it until the evil has served its purpose whether it ever existed or no." (William Faulkner 82) In the patriarchal society, women are always marginalized, lacking educational rights and economic freedom, and so cannot cultivate an independent mind. Caddy, the only female character with a strong rebellious mind in the novel, unable to get rid of the idea of relying on men to make a living as well. Therefore her tragedy is doomed. However, if Caddy has the opportunity of receiving education, she will be able to confront the widely-accepted Puritanical view on gender confidently and bravely from the beginning to the end, and have the courage to resist Jason's suppression and even save Quentin's life.

As for Mrs. Compson, she may be able to understand that the so-called Puritanical view on gender is in essence suppression of women's natural desires, denial of women's rights and silencing of women's

voice if she is well-educated. In this way, it is possible for her to construct a balanced spiritual ecology. More importantly, a mother with healthy spiritual ecology will know how to raise her children. Therefore, there is a great opportunity that she may change the fate of the Compson family and reverse the loss.

Therefore it can be concluded from the above analysis that education is the only way for people to free themselves, pay more attention to their spiritual world and be more faithful to themselves. Only in this way can they improve their spiritual ecology, construct a balanced spiritual ecology and change their destiny.

## II. Keeping Pace with the Times

In the era of the collapse of slavery and the invasion of industrial civilization, the southern plantation society was heading for an unpredictable future. Women should keep pace with the changing times and create the opportunity of reconstructing their spiritual ecology.

Firstly, Caddy should get rid of the idea that losing her virginity is a shame to the family. Traditional Puritanism and Puritanical view on gender has been severely challenged and virginity is no longer considered to be as important as life. So Caddy needs to be aware of the fact that she is still a complete person and doesn't need to take responsibility for the fall of the Compson family.

Secondly, Dilsey should realize that they are independent citizens since American's slavery was abolished. The awakening of Dilsey's sense of equality is vital to restore her balanced spirit. In this way, she can fight against racial discrimination and injustice like all black people do. Even if she still serves the Compson family, she will no longer be the submissive and numb slave.

Thus, only when female characters can sensibly feel the changes of the times, can they obtain the guidance to bravely break old conventions and cast off the spiritual shackles to reconstruct their own balanced spiritual ecology.

## III. Social Implication

This paper provides some guidance for the spiritual crisis faced by modern people, especially modern women based on the experience of three female characters in the novel. Lu Shuyuan's spiritual ecology theory holds that modern people's life is full of the pursuit of material things due to the development of science and technology, which is the major reason why people's spiritual world deteriorates and thus they lose spiritual freedom. Therefore, value orientation, mode of life and cultural perception of contemporary human beings should be optimized, and social and natural ecology should be improved so as to improve spiritual ecology.

As for women, we know that the status of women is a standard of the civilization of the era. In China, the rise of the feminist movement promoted the development of feminism and awakened women's subjective consciousness. In the old society, most women fought for the freedom of marriage and education, while modern women fought for spiritual freedom. They have to fight against gender discrimination in the workplace, speech discrimination in society, contradictions in parenting responsibilities in the family, and so forth. Generally speaking, women's spiritual world is much stronger and richer than before, but with the development of society, endless spiritual barriers still imprison women. Although most modern people already have the right to sexual freedom, the underlying logic remains that a woman's chastity equals her integrity. Few men can let go of their worldly vision and take a progressive view of the integrity of women. From this aspect, even if a woman has profound knowledge and a complete personality, as long as her body is not complete, she will be devalued. In today's increasingly severe confrontation between men and women, to improve women's social status, we need to improve the social ecology to optimize women's spiritual ecology. So it is necessary to expand publicity to encourage men to respect women from the heart and regard women as individuals with independent spirits. Whether in the workplace or in family life, women should be given the same rights as men. Besides, women should recognize their current situation, actively strive for the economic and social status of independence, meanwhile, keep independent thinking, live a free life, and finally, take maximum advantage of the women to enhance their hearts' strength, and build a healthy and balanced spiritual world gradually.

Moreover, the study finds the uniqueness and limitation of Lu Shuyuan's spiritual ecology theory. The uniqueness is that he pays great attention to the balance between the individual spirit of people and the mainstream ideology of the society, emphasizing that the development of industrialization has caused people to gradually lose their sense of art and reality, and calls on people to restore their own spiritual ecology. All of these views show his profound humanistic views. The limitation lies in persuading people to slow down the process of industrialization and digitalization, return to primitive nature, and advocate people to live a simple life. But in general, this theory guides us to face up to the spiritual and ecological diseases of human beings, enlightens us to be alert to the invisible harm caused by "anthropocentrism" and prompts us to create a harmonious balance between individual spirit and the society.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was financially supported by the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities (Grant NO.2015MS75).

This research was financially supported by the First Rate Universities and Disciplines Fund of Graduate School, North China Electric Power University for Fostering Excellent Talent.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Asci, Y. (2019). Tragedy and Tragic Characters in William Faulkner's novel *The Sound and The Fury* [J]. *Journal of International Social Research*, 12(66), 5-10.
- Bowling, L. E. (1948). Faulkner: Technique of *The Sound and the Fury* [J]. *The Kenyon Review*, 10(4): 552-566.
- Hye-Kyung, H. (2004). Caddy and Lena: Faulkner's Beautiful Women [J]. *The New Studies of English Language & Literature*, 28: 173-192
- Jean, S., & William, F. (1956). An Interview with William Faulkner [J]. *Paris Review: The International Literary Quarterly*, 12: 28-53.
- Kelly, D. A. (2019). River Goddesses, Personhood and Rights of Nature: Implications for Spiritual Ecology [J]. *Religions*, 10(9): 502-502. doi:10.3390/rel10090502.
- Michael, G. (1975). Criticism in New Composition: *Ulysses* and *The Sound and the Fury* [J]. *Twentieth Century Literature*, 21(3): 265-277
- Over, K. L. (2021). Nation, Narration, and Race: William Faulkner and the discursive limits of the southern condition [J]. *A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory*, 77(1): 57-82
- Pilip Dubuisson, C. (1992). Dilsey's Easter Conversion in Faulkner's *The Sound and The Fury* [J]. *Studies in the Novel*, 24(4): 423-423.
- Susan, M. D. (2019). Buddhist Integration of Forest and Farm in Northern Thailand. *Religions*, 10(9): 521-521. doi:10.3390/rel10090521.
- Shilin, J. (2021). Discussion on the Spiritual Ecology Construction of Interior Decoration Design with Calligraphy as the Medium [J]. *Scientific Journal of Economics and Management Research*, 3(4): 99-103.
- William, F. (2018). *The Sound and the Fury* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.). 云南人民出版社. URL:<http://e.dangdang.com/products/1901112854.html>
- 鲁枢元. (2000). 生态文艺学 [M]. 西安: 陕西人民教育出版社.
- 鲁枢元. (2002). 生态批评的知识空间 [J]. *文艺研究*, (05): 4-10.
- 鲁枢元. (2002). 精神生态于生态精神 [C]. 海口: 南方出版社.
- 鲁枢元. (2006). 生态批评的空间 [M]. 上海: 华东师范大学出版社.
- 鲁枢元. (2021). 我与“精神生态”研究三十年—后现代视域中的天人和解 [J]. *当代文坛*, (01):4-18.