

Being of Time vs. Clock Time: Temporal Experience of Modernity in *The Sound and the Fury*

Zhang Shiyuan & Yang Jincai

Abstract: Modernity is saturated with a new view of time. In the twentieth century of time obsession, *The Sound and the Fury* reveals the contradiction between personal being of time and social clock time. Heidegger's philosophy of time becomes a lens to inspect modernity's perspective of time on history, capitalism and religion, revealing temporal experiences of modernity in conflict. Opposing modernity's emphasis on the present, Quentin is indulged in history and the past. Jason tries to pursue the speed of capitalism, only to find himself has fallen behind everyday life. By taking an ethical responsibility for the other, Dilsey to some extent achieves a transcendence of time, but her whole-life endurance becomes a refutation against the view of progress. In the end, Benjy, the idiot's montage-like narration exposes the ephemeral, fugitive and contingent character of modernity's time, and his feeling of space and forgetfulness creates presentness which turns out to be a direct expression of the temporal experience of modernity.

Keywords: *The Sound and the Fury*; William Faulkner; Time; Modernity

Author: **Zhang Shiyuan** is a Ph.D. candidate at School of Foreign Studies, Nanjing University (Nanjing 210046, China). Her research interests are British and American literature (Email: 13104271130@163.com). **Yang Jincai** is Professor of English at School of Foreign Studies, Nanjing University (Nanjing 210046, China). His research interests cover the fields of British and American literature, contemporary Chinese literature and culture (Email: jcyang@nju.edu.cn).

标题: 存在时间与钟表时间：《喧哗与骚动》中的现代性时间体验

内容摘要: 现代性与崭新的时间观紧密相连，《喧哗与骚动》生动体现了时间痴迷的 20 世纪背景下，个人存在时间与社会钟表时间的冲突。海德格尔的时间哲学成为透视历史、资本主义经济、宗教方面现代性时间观念的棱镜，揭示出矛盾冲突下的现代性时间体验。昆汀一反现代性时间对当下的强调，自溺于过去与历史之中。杰生看似全力追赶资本主义的时间进程，却早已在日常生活中被淘汰。迪尔西的为他性伦理打开了未来时间的超越维度，而终其一生的忍受同时成为对进步观念的反驳。最后，班吉蒙太奇式的瞬时叙述以及由空间与遗忘所营造的当下性成为现代性时间体验正面且直接的表达。

关键词：《喧哗与骚动》；福克纳；时间；现代性

作者简介：张诗苑，南京大学外国语学院博士生，主要从事英美文学研究。
杨金才，南京大学外国语学院教授，主要研究英美文学、当代中国文学等。
本文系江苏省研究生科研创新项目“医疗人文与共同体：英美文学中的疫病书写研究”【项目编号 KYCX20_0014】的阶段性研究成果。

Wyndham Lewis's seminal work *Time and Western Man* (1927) defines the 1920s as time-obsession under the influence of Einstein and Bergson's revolution on time theory. Though Lewis controversially polarizes space against time, he is persuasive to reveal the time machine working in the works of Proust, Joyce, Woolf, T. S. Eliot, as well as Faulkner. The variable narrative time and recurring, poetic and philosophical description of time in *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) confirm Sartre's remark about the novel, "Faulkner's metaphysics is a metaphysics of time" (203). Sartre emphasizes that most characters in the novel are trapped in the past, for them "the future is closed" (209). In response to Sartre, Skirry analyzes four main sections of the novel under Sartre's theory of temporality and emotions, holding that it is the emotional constellation that replaces a rational chronological ordering of events (39). Arthur Geffen categorizes the time in *The Sound and the Fury* into profane, sacred, and confederate dimension, analyzing its religious, historical and Southern context (180). And Deland Anderson adopts the theory of St. Augustine and Heidegger to explore Dilsey and Quentin's view of time respectively, arguing that the former "has its origin in the dawn of Christianity," and the latter "belongs to modernity's twilight" (320). Chinese scholars also notice the special position of time in Faulkner's works, related research covers narration, myth, Lacan's subjectivity theory, Bergson and Meileau-Ponty's philosophy of time. It seems that the theme of time has become commonplace to savor Faulkner's works, and some of them refer to the background of modernity;¹ however, the temporal meaning of modernity and its association with Faulkner's time have not been interpreted systematically and thoroughly. In *The Sound and the Fury*, Heideggerian being of time collides with modernity's clock time, exposing opposite time perspectives on history, capitalist economy and religion. In the end, Faulkner chooses to expose the real temporal experience of modernity directly through an idiot's montage-like narration.

1 The above Geffen's and Anderson's articles mention "modernity" as the prison of the white world, and its conviction of time becomes a social standard. In Wang Xiu-mei's paper "Past in Present: A Study of Modernity of Time in William Faulkner's Works", Wang considers that "past in present," Faulkner's concept of time, demonstrates "the postwar value of the Southerners and their pursuit of modern Southern spirit" (86). See more in *Shandong Foreign Language Teaching* 36.5 (2015): 86-91.

Modernity, perceived as a “temporal demand” (Doane 4), is about new forms of experience of time (Osborne 15). The root of the word modernity is Latin *modo*, which means “just now.” *Modernus*, coined in the sixth century, means “now existing,” and “modernity” was recorded in OED in 1672 with the meaning of “present times,” all of them imply a temporal connotation.¹ Calinescu distinguishes two kinds of modernity in *Five Faces of Modernity* (1987), these are the modernity as a phase in the history of Western civilization and modernity as an aesthetic concept (41). The former includes the belief in progress, science and technology, the concern with time, reason, and the ideal of freedom “within the framework of an abstract humanism,” meanwhile pursuing success with the guidance of pragmatism (41). And the latter is the one that breeds avant-garde, and expresses its repulsion for the middle-class scale of values through “rebellion, anarchy, apocalypticism and aristocratic self-exile,” which turns out to be a rejection of the former bourgeois modernity (42). Though the directions seem opposite, they both associate with time closely. First, modernity is a structure of historical consciousness born out of European colonialism and the world market before the development of capitalism² and it changes with time (Osborne 29). Second, the aestheticization of modernity as a “rebellion against the modernity of the philistine” works within the temporal structure of Baudelaire’s and Flaubert’s “newest time” (Osborne 12). In these two conflicting but intertwining categories, modernity is understood in the categories of period, quality and experience.³ Modern individual undergoes an unprecedentedly complex experience of life, and the modernist culture is exactly the historical writing of such experience (Wang 10). The temporal experience of modernity coordinates with Heidegger’s transformation of philosophy from pure intellect to a terrain which “meditates on what it feels like to be alive” (Eagleton 54), and it is incarnated as the being of time in contrast with the clock time regulated by the development of capitalism and the discourse of progress. Specifically, in the 1920s, the poor South fell behind the whole progress of modernity in the United States,

1 There has been a quarrel between “the ancients and the moderns” since the Renaissance, and now it is replaced by a contradiction between “the moderns and the contemporaries” (Osborne 12-13).

2 On the one hand, there is a widespread tendency to juxtapose “capitalism” (Marx) and “modernity” (Durkheim and Weber) as competing alternatives to interpret the same historical object (Osborne 200). On the other hand, it is agreed that modernity connects to capitalism integrally. The bourgeoisie constructs modernity in the west-centered perspective since the Enlightenment to distinguish itself from the underdeveloped and barbarian other, which is discussed by Weber, Simmel and young Lukács. This will be discussed in the second section of this paper.

3 Concerning with period, Marshall Berman periodizes modernity into three phases—1570-1789, 1789-1900 and 1900 onwards (Osborne 8). And Ardonio emphasizes the aspect of quality, “Modernity is a qualitative, not a chronological, category” (qtd. in Osborne 9).

even became a synonym of anti-modernity. But it is surprising that a renaissance occurred in Southern literature simultaneously, which caused a spectacle of artistic experiment juxtaposing regionalism, and cotton planting in parallel with cubism (Davis 89-91). In such contradicted and increasingly modern background, the temporal experience of modernity finds its echos in *The Sound and the Fury*, and the being of time, no matter authentic or not, encounters obstacles under the principle of modernity's clock time, showing Faulkner's disagreement with modernity in the *durée* of family, South, literature and life.

Past and Present: Getting Lost in Time

For Benjamin, modernity is essentially a destruction of tradition, accompanying with the initiation of new forms of historical consciousness. The present is a model of Messianic time, a conception of the present as the "time of the now" which lies in every side of the era (Benjamin 263). In "The Painter of Modern Life" (1863), Baudelaire argues that "by 'modernity' I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent..." (798), and its most striking features are the impulse toward immediacy, the attempt to recognize an affective present kept in transitoriness, and the opposition to a lifeless past fettered by traditions. In his discussion on literary modernity, Paul de Man points out directly that in general understanding, history is the most fruitful enemy among the possible opposites of modernity (144). In this way, it seems that modernity characterizes itself in respect of our measuring the time as "a series of nows" (Scott 190), the new consciousness of time is to distance itself from the past and face the future. However, Quentin turns out to be a young man walking in the opposite direction from modernity to the past and history. Like a poet and philosopher of time, he compares the hands of clock as "a gull tilting into the wind," and learns from his father that as the "mausoleum of all hope and desire," clock slays time. In his short life, Quentin aims to release time from the prison of clock and pursue being¹ in the horizon of temporality, during which exposes a labyrinth of the past and the present and a conflict with the presentness of modernity.

Like Heidegger, Quentin treats time as the very structure of human life itself; however, his pursuit of being of time leads to a suicide under the burden of the declining honor of both his family and homeland without hope of redemption, as Satre comments that he is choked by the past and the future is closed. In Heideggerian context, death is exactly the channel that connects the past and the

¹ Being equals to "sein" in German, which is a copula, a revelation of the thing it represents, time is the field where the meaning of being is able to reveal.

future. Death is understood as an “ownmost nonrelational possibility not to be bypassed” (Heidegger 232). “The ending that we have in view when we speak of death, does not signify a being-at-an-end of Da-sein¹, but rather *a being toward the end* of this being” (228). In this way, Heidegger turns upside-down the ordinary progression, according to which time moves forward, from the past to the present and then to the future.² As a being toward death, Da-sein simultaneously returns to its inmost has-been (*Gewesen*). “Having-been arises from the future in such a way that the future that has-been (or better, is in the process of having-been) releases the present from itself” (Heidegger 300).³ It means that as the death in the future is certain, then the present is being in the mode of recollection or the process of having been, such as the nostalgic atmosphere and the sense of death in Proust’s *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*.⁴ Similarly, Quentin’s section narrated in the past tense is “presented from the perspective of the end, as a return to the has-been” (Biemel 54), like Satre’s being-toward-death metaphor, “This suicide is an immobile wall, a thing which he approaches backwards” (207).

Biemel reminds, “What is primary for Da-sein is not the past, but the anticipation of what is not yet in being but which is nevertheless appertains to me—as my death. Only because Da-sein has the ability to anticipate, and is thus oriented to the future, is it possible for it to return to its has-been and so retain its has-been, not lose it” (54). It means that Heidegger’s recollection from the future belongs to a clear and determined mind without blocking other possibilities. In opposition to a meaningless despair, “anticipation discloses to existence that its extreme inmost possibility lies in giving itself up and thus shatters all one’s clinging to whatever existence one has reached” (Heidegger 244). However, Quentin’s “being toward death” is extremely negative, and his progression of time in fact differs from Heidegger’s. From the beginning of have been to the end of having been, Quentin experiences the world in a way that is immersed in the past rather than accessible

1 Da-sein means an ideal person, an authentic existing, different from the “they”, which means the ordinary people taking care of things in the inauthentic time. For Heidegger, temporality is the horizon where Da-sein shows itself. The definition of temporality is shown in note 3 on this page.

2 Biemel explains, “Heidegger distinguishes between the has-been (*Gewesen-sein*) and the past or bygone (*Vergangen-sein*). The entity that exists—Dasein—is not bygone but has-been. ‘Has-been’ carries a suggestion of still “be-ing” (55).

3 The following sentence is a definition of temporality, “We call the unified phenomenon of the future that makes present in the process of having-been temporality” (Heidegger 300).

4 Faulkner said in an interview, “I feel very close to Proust. After I had read *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* I said ‘This is it!’—and I wished I had written myself” (72). *Lion in the Garden: Interviews with William Faulkner, 1926-1962*. Ed. James B Meriwether and Michael Millgate. New York: Random House, 1968.

to the future, which means the past holds the dynamic life that the future lacks. As the elder son of the declining Compsons, Quentin is locked in the past that Caddy lost her virginity and married a vulgar businessman; His family sold the remaining piece of mile to afford his education in Harvard; In the early twentieth century, the South is a place bereft of modernization and urbanization, lagging behind the national progress due to division, regionalism and poverty. For Quentin, death seems impending and imminent as enticing drives and possibilities are removed from the present and the future. Feelings, such as boredom, sadness, melancholy, and despair, which can be founded in a having-been (Heidegger 317), coexist with various temporal experiences in depression.

The presentness of modernity is not absent in the novel, but is represented by the watch, clock, chime and other measurements of time, for “The existential and temporal meaning of the clock turns out to be making present of the moving pointer. By following the positions of the pointer in a way that makes present, one counts them” (Heidegger 385), and “what is counted are the nows” (386). Quentin is morbidly indulged in listening watch and counting chimes, as the opening of Quentin’s section shows, “...then I was in time again, hearing the watch” (Faulkner 50). Though Quentin knows that the “constant speculation regarding the position of mechanical hands on an arbitrary dial which is a symptom of mind-function” (51), as Ratcliffe argues that the experience of time can take several different forms in depression (115), he just cannot control himself: From his boyhood in school, “I never could come out even with the bell” (59) as a result of his disturbed clock counting, to his university period, “I was hearing my watch and I began to listen for the chimes (113). When Benjamin analyzes Baudelaire’s poetry and its relation to modernity, he writes, “time becomes palpable: the minutes cover a man like snowflakes” (184). Time felt by Quentin is indeed a weight and a source of anxiety, he walks under the burden of time until he is “worn away by a minute clicking of little wheels” (51).

Clock as a handy¹ thing has become accessible in its regular recurrence in a making present that awaits (Heidegger 380). The fact that Quentin twists the pointers off exposes what he wants to escape from is exactly the present represented by the clock; however, double ironies remain in his subsequent flee from the present. First, though the watch is broken, the “primitive” Da-sein can measure

1 Handy means useful, beneficial, suitable and convenient. Only in its use rather than a theoretical observation, can a tool be encountered as what it is. A tool is closely connected to its use. “On hand” and “objectively present” are two elemental ways of being besides Da-sein, the former represents the “nearness” to being.

the shadow cast by some being available at any time, which means “Da-sein does not even need to wear a clock, it is it in a way itself” (Heidegger 382). From the dating of sun arises the “most natural” measure of time (Heidegger 379), as Quentin confesses, “The shadow of the sash was still there and I had learned to tell almost to the minute” (51), sunlight like slanting pencils casts shadows which turns out to be a natural clock for Quentin, and what he cannot help doing is “watching my shadow, how I had tricked it” (61). Second is that the present time represented by Mrs. Bland and her son Gerald, also a symbol of conceited and “noble” South, catches Quentin up (he should have been with them according to the schedule), and this leads to a collapse of Quentin who gets lost in time, considering that he is punching Dalton Ames, the man who makes Caddy pregnant, but in fact is fighting with Gerald. Quentin’s lost just evidences his father’s words, “...clocks slay time...time is dead as long as it is being clicked off by little wheels; only when the clock stops does time come to life” (56). However, as the little wheels of the broken watch is still clicking, Quentin seems to forget his father’s advice when he accepts the grandfather’s watch, “I give it to you not that you may remember time, but that you might forget it now and then for a moment and not spend all your breath trying to conquer it. Because no battle is ever won” (50). After his one-day preparation for death, listening to the watch telling its furious lie on the dark table, Quentin murmurs, “Non fui. Sum. Fui. Non sum. Somewhere I heard bells once. Mississippi or Massachusetts. I was. I am not. Massachusetts or Mississippi” (115). This monologue just exposes the sharp contrast between the past and the present, from a noble ancestry to Caddy’s “degeneration,” from Jeffersonian Southern superiority to the backward agricultural system and the surge of poor whites. In such disillusionment of pride and power, and in mom’s complaints about defending her own family name, Quentin descends into abyss.

When Bauman says “The history of time began with modernity. Indeed, modernity is...the history of time...modernity is the time when time has a history” (110), he means that the hardware (clock, watch) replaces the wetware (the humans, the oxen or the horses) to calculate time precisely. However, ironically, it is this clock time that Quentin wants to escape from. As Benjamin’s present comes to be defined as the site of “a tremendous shattering of tradition,” a crisis in experience, memory and history, relations between generations are “no longer the medium of historical continuity, but of crisis, rupture, and misunderstanding. Youth is no longer a sign of apprenticeship or hope, but of an empty infinity of possibilities, disorientation and potential despair” (Osborne 135). And this turns out to be a vivid depiction of Quentin. “I walked close to the left wall when I entered, but

it was empty: just the stairs curving up into shadows echoes of feet in the sad generations like light dust upon the shadows, my feet waking them like dust, lightly to settle again” (113-114), the scene bears the effect of emptiness, in which Quentin belongs to the sad generations alienated from the presentness of modernity. “...and i temporary and he was the saddest word of all there is nothing else in the world its not despair until time its not even time until it was” (118), if this murmur before Quentin’s suicide is punctuated as “was/ (is) the saddest word of all,” then it exactly points to the tragedy of the past, the failed pursuit of being of time, and the despairing experience of modernity’s time, for “was” is a past tense of “sein.”

Capitalism and Everyday Life: Falling behind the Time

When Calinesco talks about modernity’s concern about time in the context of Western civilization, he means that “A measurable time, a time that can be bought and sold and therefore has, like any other commodity, a calculable equivalent in money” (41). Marx delineates the way in which time has become the measure of value in capitalism, thus connecting commodity and labor-time. Simmel links the precision of the calculative nature of money to the precision “effected by the universal diffusion of pocket watches” (412), and claims that “technique of metropolitan life” is inseparable from a punctual practice of “a stable and impersonal time schedule” (413). Meanwhile, in Simmel’s critique of modernity, anything that is valued as distinctive comes to be devalued through the levelling process of money purchase. What follows is that Lefebvre reveals modernity and capitalism’s association to everyday life, with the fact that both “modernity” and “the everyday” are mainly temporal terms and derive more significations from the temporal form.

If Quentin cannot escape from the clock-time, then Jason fails to catch up with it. Heidegger discusses the calculation of time through the vulgar concept of time, which “always occurs basically in the horizon of a taking care of time that we know as astronomical and calendrical time-reckoning” (378). And the vulgar concept of time owes its origin to “a levelling¹ down of primordial time: temporality” (Heidegger 372). Moreover, as factual *Da-sein* takes account of time without existentially understanding temporality, “the person who exists inauthentically loses time and never ‘has’ any” (Heidegger 377). Ironically, when Quentin sees the boys swimming, he yearns and presumes, “If I had time. When I have time” (90). And

1 This has a coincidence with Simmel’s levelling process. Heidegger also says, “The covering over contained in the vulgar concept of time and for estimating how far the ecstatic and horizontal constitution of temporality has been levelled down” (390).

Jason complains to his mother, “I never had time to be. I never had time to go to Harvard or drink myself into the ground...I can *watch* her (Quentin IV) during the day” (119-120). This complaint has a similarity in both structure and content with Luster’s reply when Jason asks him to put a spare tire on the back of his car, “I aint had time,” Luster says, “Aint nobody to *watch* him (Benjy) till mammy git done in de kitchen” (123). The above “watch” has a new meaning compared with Quentin’s section, which adds a dimension of discipline to the subject of time, connecting to modernity’s standardization and rationalization of time under social surveillance. Furthermore, it is because of Luster’s refusal that the tire out of air becomes an unhandy thing in Jason’s chase of Quentin IV, thus breaking the heedful association as a succession of “experiences” occurring “in time,” which implies Jason’s falling behind in the vulgar time.

The reckoning of time is prior to the measuring instruments, and first makes the use of clocks possible (Heidegger 371). Calculation is prominent in the process of modernity, not only because calculation aims at “in the expression that characterizes technics as modern” (Stiegler 226), but also due to its response to the precision of money economy. When Jason despises Job’s earnestness about the show, he confirms “time is money” implicitly: “How about the dime or fifteen cents you’ll spend for a dam two cent box of candy or something. How about the time you’re wasting right now, listening to that band” (152). And Jason’s calculation of time is more extreme even cold-blooded in his deliberate quibbles about the literal meaning of the phrase of time. When Caddy wants to see her daughter secretly, she promises Jason, “If you’ll fix it so I can see her a minute I’ll give you fifty dollars” (134). Jason charges one hundred but only lets Caddy catch a glimpse of Quentin IV who is still in the carriage from afar, then he refutes his sister’s accusation, “Didn’t I do everything I said? I said see her a minute, didn’t I?” (135). However, Jason gets his retribution when he infuriates an old man in the chase, the latter takes out a knife and wails, “Lemme go. Lemme go just one minute. I’ll show you” (202). Ironically, now it is Jason’s turn to beg for more time, “Here. Here! I’ll get out. Give me time, and I’ll get out” (201). Modern spirit is more and more proficient in calculation, however, Jason in fact fails in measuring both time and money, in the end, he is “robbed” not only of the appropriated four thousand dollars, but also of the three thousand which he saves frugally during almost twenty years.

Meanwhile, the measurement of time brings about a making public of time (Heidegger 384). The industrial and united “one” proceeds from the watch: “The clock that one has, every clock, shows the time of being-with-one-another-in-the-world” (Stiegler 227), which means that technological time is public time,

such as the impetus brought by the development of railroad and telegraph to the rationalization of time. “This publicness of time is all the more compelling, the more factual Da-sein explicitly takes care of time by expressly taking it into account” (Heidegger 377), and it is extremely conspicuous in the capitalist market. Jason is busy taking care of his telegram report to transact his share on the cotton market, but the report is always lagging behind.

He handed me a telegram. “What time did this come?” I says.

“About half past three,” he says.

“And now it’s ten minutes past five,” I says.

“...I just bought a little of it while under the impression that the telegraph company would keep me informed as to what it was doing.”

“A report is posted whenever it comes in,” he says.

“Yes,” I says. “And in Memphis they have it on a blackboard every ten seconds.” (160)

The time which is made public essentially has the nature of world, as Heidegger calls the time that makes itself public in the temporalizing of temporality “world time” (380). In Stiegler’s understanding of Heidegger, to calculate means to eliminate difference, all calculating anticipation amounts to looking for synchronization (225).¹ The world time contains simultaneity as well, for simultaneity is a convention, which belongs to the time of modernity and time of empire. And the lagging telegraph is the symbol of both the contingent capitalist market without constancy and Jason’s falling behind with modernity’s time.

It is not difficult to notice that Jason’s narrative rests in the temporality of everydayness, which is marked by the meals and his working time in the little shop. Different from the vulgar representation of time, “everydayness is a temporal mode of existence, which means the How in accordance with which Da-sein ‘lives its day’” (Heidegger 339). And the violent breakfast and supper, belated and missed dinner are metaphors of the fact that Jason even cannot catch up with the elementary progress of time. The lunch at home also results in a dispute between Jason and his boss Earl, who hopes his employee to have an instant meal for the trade is busy because of the show in the afternoon. Though Jason is treacherous enough, it still

¹ But Stiegler himself has a different view about calculation of time: “A time is constituted that is not ‘private’ but deferring and differing (différant). The calculation of time is thus not a falling away from primordial time, because calculation, qua the letter-number, also actually gives access in the history of being to any difference” (237).

exposes the logic of capitalism about working time. Ironically, it is just a little shop in the Southern town, let alone the “sure enough factory” as the Northern boy tells and the “Chicago and New York Sweatshops” in the appendix. Undoubtedly, such day will repeat again and again. Da-sein can “suffer” dully from everydayness, for “the tomorrow that everyday taking care waits for is the ‘eternal yesterday’ ” (Heidegger 339). Lefebvre holds that the time of everyday life¹ can be measured in two ways: one is the cyclical temporality of nature, the other is the mechanical and rational repetition of clock time, as father’s words “man the sum of his climatic experiences” (82) and Jason’s mediocre life exhibit. For Lefebvre, “everyday life responds and corresponds to modernity, the one crowning and concealing the other, revealing and veiling it” (24). It means that the temporality of capital accumulation in the clothes of modernity imposes itself upon the quotidian present as repetition, both in the cyclical form of nature and labor. In this way, as a failure of everyday life, Jason is also eliminated by the time of modernity, though he has endeavored to catch up with it even in the background that everyday life can be the most oppressed place by modernity as well.

Religion and Resurrection: Temporal Redemption of the Other

Jason’s case shows one facet of modernity that “engineering common time stood where God’s absolute time had been” (Scott 192). In fact, the modern age begins as a rupture with Christian society. The conflict between God and being becomes insoluble, reason defeats divinity and grows vigorously. In the aspect of time, firstly, modernity inherits the unlinear and irreversible time of Christianity, which severs the cycle and introduces finiteness and irreversibility of time, as St. Augustine insists in *The City of God* that the history of universe is “single, irreversible, unrepeatable, rectilinear, unfolding as a uni-dimensional movement in time from the creation through its centre in Jesus to the end of the world” (Patrides 5). History progresses in a linear way from the creation to the Judgement Day with the transformation of everything. This characteristic of time accentuated by Christianity paves way for modernity to “exalt change and convert it into a foundation” (Paz 17). Secondly, modernity begins as a criticism of Christian eternity. “The values of heaven and hell are transferred to earth and grafted onto history” (Paz 31). Eternity is abolished, and the future, condensed by difference, separation, otherness, plurality, novelty, evolution, revolution, history, becomes the archetype. In conclusion, as Paz says,

¹ Though the early stage of Lefevre’s critique of everyday life is influenced by Heidegger, it is different from Heidegger’s everydayness. The former refers to the residual of all superior and professional activities, meanwhile, is the sum of everyone’s social relationships. Heidegger’s everydayness is a form of being where Da-sein can emerge, it is proposed from the view of existentialism and ontology.

modernity is ruled by the principle of change, and this historical change “adopts two forms: evolution and revolution, both have the same meaning: progress” (32). In other words, change in the name of progress replacing Christianity’s eternity becomes modernity’s view of time. At the time of Easter, which is around the one thousand eight hundred ninety-fifth anniversary of the day of the Lord’s resurrection, Dilsey, a pious black woman, shows her temporal experience of modernity in the aspect of religion, ranging from finiteness, salvation to progress.

If the novel writes about only one character’s getting old in a realistic way, it is Dilsey, from strong and vigorous to “lame” and “nearly blind.” Different from Benjy with the eternally three-year-old intelligence, Quentin who tragically dies in youth, myth-like Caddy, and the bed-ridden hostess, Dilsey unfolds the journey of life as a normal person, open to the finiteness as Christianity tells. When Roskus complains about the Compsons’ inauspicious house, Dilsey refutes, “Show me the man what aint going to die, bless Jesus” (20). At the beginning of novel, Caddy asks Dilsey to explain the funeral of the Damuddy twice, Dilsey both replies “You’ll know in the Lawd’s own time” (17). Symmetrically, near the end, after hearing the powerful sermon, Dilsey repeats “I’ve seed de first en de last” correspondingly twice (194), which seems to be an eventual answer to the beginning, as Isaiah 46:10 records, “declaring the end from the beginning.” Dilsey believes in and accepts the irreversible time of Christianity piously and calmly.

However, different from modernity’s refusal of eternity, Dilsey insists on the lasting of something. As the conversation between Dilsey and Caddy shows:

My name been Dilsey since fore I could remember and it be Dilsey when they’s long forgot me.

How will they know it’s Dilsey, when it’s long forgot, Dilsey, Caddy said.

It’ll be in the Book, honey, Dilsey said. Writ out.

Can you read it, Caddy said.

Wont have to, Dilsey said. They’ll read it for me. All I got to do is say Ise here (39).

At this point, what death brings is a future. The resurrection of Jesus brings an enduring world time—human’s future, and this future in Dilsey’s belief is not the product of Heideggerian being toward death, but Levinasian original and concrete temporality which responds to the other. Levinas offers “a phenomenology of the constitutive role of the other in human temporalization” (Osborn 117). In his view, authentic time can only stay in the relationship with the other. Considering death can

never appear at the existing present, the relationship between people and death is a unique association with the future (Levinas, *Time* 71). Moreover, the time beyond death does not belong to me but the other, therefore, “The future is what is not grasped, what befalls us and lays hold of us. The future is the other. The relationship with the future is the very relationship with the other” (Levinas, *Time* 77). The aim of such time which is beyond ontology always points to the ethics as the first philosophy, thus opens another dimension to temporality through “the objectively ethical and moral examination and dialectically historical explanation of literature” (Nie, “Talks” 9). As the third-person narrative of Dilsey’s section implies, Faulkner seems to endeavor to shape Dilsey as an “other,” he even exposes the *face* of her in a defamiliarized language:

She had been a big woman once but now her skeleton rose, draped loosely in unpadded skin that tightened again upon a paunch almost dropsical, as though muscle and tissue had been courage or fortitude which the days or the years had consumed until only the indomitable skeleton was left rising like a ruin or a landmark above the somnolent and impervious guts, and above that the collapsed face that gave the impression of the bones themselves being outside the flesh. (173)

Face, in Levinasian ethics, represents a field or space where the other exposes his nakedness. The other stays in a higher position but is extremely precarious, his words are both command and crying for help, as if I, by my possible indifference, become the accomplice of his death. However, opposite to the general master-slave relationship, it is the “slave other” who makes the “ethical choice” to take responsibility for the masters’ lives. Moreover, in the familial myth with animal factor of losing virginity, imaginary incest, idiot’s physical instinct, hate and abuse, it is the black servant who holds the highest human factor (Nie, “Value” 74). Dilsey, an incarnation of a loving and kind mother, takes care of the whole Compsons with the elapsing of time, whose ethical identity has similarity with the Lord she believes in. Meanwhile, descendants like T. P., Frony and Luster represent the infinity of future, the posterity in this black family shows that Dilsey can “across the definitiveness of an inevitable death,” prolong herself “in the other” (Levinas, *Totality* 282). In contrast, the Compsons turns out to be deserted, the death of Damduddy at the beginning of the novel just implies the barrenness of this white Southern family.

Dilsey can read time precisely off a one-hand clock, even when it is invisible

at night. "A cabinet clock ticked, then with a preliminary sound as if it had cleared its throat, struck five times. 'Eight o'clock,' Dilsey said" (179). It seems that Dilsey is beyond Heideggerian vulgar concept of time, and achieves a Levinasian transcendence and Benjamin's Messianic exteriority. However, at the same time, it is important in this respect to remember that "Benjamin does not write of now-time as Messianic per se, but only as a 'model' of the Messianic, site of a 'weak' Messianic power. Redemption, the reception of the fullness of the past¹, does not come until Judgement Day: the end of time" (Osborne 142). For this reason, instead of the Messiah, it is Klee's Angelus Novus who sees history as "one single catastrophe," rather than a linear progress, that defines Benjamin's later view of history. A similar refusal of the progress of modernity is contained in the appendix, when Faulkner writes about Dilsey, the only three words are more powerful than other detailed descriptions, "They endured" (271). The word "endure" comes from the late Latin *indurare*, which means "to make hard," and the root "deru" means "to be firm, solid and steadfast." Such solidity represents not only the strong and silent character of these black people, but also a stagnation of the Southern society, where the situation of the black does not experience a fundamental change, such as the out-of-time Southern "Uncle Tom" on the mule in comparison with the Northern black man in decent clothes on the bus. Faulkner sets different rates of modernity's time that the South is lagging from the North, and the black falls behind the white (Tung 145). Poverty, racial discrimination, cruel plantations and lynching are still dark shadows covering the black people, and those immigrating to the North face various obstacles as well. In this way, Dilsey's seeming transcendence of time is indeed a refutation against modernity's linear view of progress.

Montage and the Invasion of Space: The Real Temporal Experience of Modernity?

It is well-known that the novel's title comes from Macbeth's classical confession, "It is a tale/ Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,/ Signifying nothing." In fact, this source is also an allegory of time if the whole speech is considered: "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow/ Creeps in this petty pace from day to day/ To the last syllable of recorded time,/ And all our yesterdays have lighted fools/ The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!" (Shakespeare 5.5. 76). Compared with the above negative discords with modernity's time, Benjy, the fool in the novel, may represent the temporal experience of modernity in a direct way.

¹ Osborne explains, "Benjamin's aim was to refigure the interruptive temporality of modernity as the standpoint of redemption and thereby to perform a dialectical redemption of the destruction of tradition by the new; to turn *Neuzeit* into *jetztzeit*, new-time into now-time" (115).

As Fredric Jameson claims that the transformation from modernism to postmodernism is the change from montage to collage, Benjy's section indeed reflects this technique of film,¹ "primarily through the use of rapid, cinematic jump-cutting across time and space, linking disparate years and places through overt visual references" (Baldwin 43). Because Benjy's intelligence only equals a three-year-old child, he cannot distinguish past and present precisely, thus, in Benjy's narration, the events happening in different times often juxtapose without any transition or commentary, sometimes they are connected by the image of fire, mirror, rain and color, which achieves an effect of Eisenstein's concept of montage as dynamic juxtaposition, and a sense of eternal present. Meanwhile, montage also implies typical temporal experiences of modernity, such as instant, ephemeral and fragmentary, there are 22 timelines in Benjy's section, and the changes of time are as much as 90 times. Benjamin compares the now-time as montage which interrupts the narrative continuity of historical time. For Leo Charney, film unites modernity and a new understanding of the moment, bringing about the fact that "with the advent of increased stimuli and sensory impressions," it is increasingly difficult to grasp "even one moment fully or in its immediacy" (Lurie xv). Such shift also occurs to the structure of the novel, the narrative tradition gives way to the more complex and fractured modernity's time, as Robbe-Grillet discovers, "film and novel today meet in the construction of moments, intervals, and of sequences which no longer have anything to do with those of clocks or calendars" (151). Under such background, Benjy's transient consciousness, various narrative rhythms, remains of memory, and jumping affects are exactly the real depiction of the modern western mind (Yang 163-164).

Besides the ephemeral and fragmentary experience and presentness, montage also achieves a reconstruction of both time and space, and what is unusual about Benjy's part is that it shows an invasion of space. Though it has become a cliché to assume that modernity is about new experiences of time, and postmodernity begins a revolution in spatial relations,² the distinction is not that absolute. There is a well-designed and symbolic symmetry at the beginning and the end of the novel in which

1 As Kawin says this does not mean that Faulkner gets the idea from films, but he does something that the cinema also does. At present, there are many researches on Faulkner and film, mainly about the interdisciplinary study and Faulkner's Hollywood period. See more in Bruce Kawin. "The Montage Element in Faulkner's Fiction." *Faulkner, Modernism, and Film*. Ed. Evans Harrington, Ann J. Abadie. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1979.

2 Jameson emphasizes the temporality of modernism and the spatiality of postmodernism many times: If spatiality, to some higher degree, provides us with a key to understand postmodernism, then the key term to understand modernism is temporality.

Benjy passes a Southern soldier statue in the square. In the closing plot, Benjy is out of control due to the wrong direction while passing the statue, which should be right instead of left. Eventually, Jason shows up in time to correct Luster's mistake, and the novel comes to its end with the scenery back in order in Benjy's view: "...façade flowed smoothly once more from left to right, post and tree, window and doorway and signboard each in its ordered place" (209).

Human existence, Heidegger argues, firstly is always being-in-the-world: Da-sein is "in" the world. And this spatiality of being-in based on the world¹ shows the character of de-distancing and directionality. As Da-sein has an essential tendency toward nearness, "de-distancing" means making distance disappear, and bringing the being at a distance of something near (Heidegger 97). Therefore, a carriage to cemetery brings the statue of Southern soldier as well as the historical events near, which can be seen as a metaphor for the declining South. Meanwhile, "directionality" that belongs to de-distancing is also grounded in being in the world. "Every bringing near has always taken a direction in a region beforehand from which what is de-distanced approaches so that it can be discovered with regard to its place." (Heidegger 100) In this way, left and right are not something "subjective" for which the subject has a feeling, but are "directions of orientation in a world which is always already at hand" (Heidegger 101). So Benjy's order which is from left to right is not ironic or meaningless, but reflects another approach to the temporality of Da-sein: making present brings something near from its wherefrom. "Bringing-near and the estimating and measurement of distances within what is objectively present within the de-distanced world are grounded in a making-present that belongs to the unity of temporality in which directionality is possible" (Heidegger 337). And from those spatial relations that making present constantly meets up with what is at hand (338). Thus, Benjy's experience of space is still entangled with the duration of time, emphasizing the presentness of being in the world.

However, the above making present is not the authentic Moment, which should temporalize itself out of the authentic future. Making present risks distortion and covering up, which is shown in Benjy's forgetfulness. In the appendix, Faulkner adds:

(Benjy) loved three things: the pasture which was sold to pay for Candace's wedding and to send Quentin to Harvard, his sister Candace, firelight. Who lost none of them because he could not remember his sister but only the loss of her,

¹ This being in the world does not mean spatiality directly but contain connotations in two aspects: first is to be familiar and to dwell existentially, second is the nature of taking care of things.

and firelight was the same bright shape as going to sleep, and the pasture was even better sold than before. (269)

Benjy's present is based on forgetting the past, and only on the basis of this forgetfulness can "the making present that takes care of and awaits retain things" (Heidegger 312). For Heidegger, forgetting is not nothing, nor is it just a failure to remember, it is rather a "positive" even ecstatic mode of having-been, making an understanding of present possible (312). Benjy's "happy" life must be on the foundation of forgetting his favorite people and things, as well as his castration so that the present can continue. More astonishingly, such forgetfulness is based on ignorance. Similarly, modernity's pursuit of presentness is also through the covering up of the have-been, sometimes such farewell to the past is a must, but sometimes it is painful even irresponsible.

Meanwhile, the Southern soldier statue itself represents a world that no longer exists, however, "what were previously innerworldly in the world and encountered as things at hand are still objectively present" (Heidegger 348). In this way, the statue contains two temporal meanings. Firstly, these innerworldly beings as such are historical and included in the history of the world (Heidegger 355). Recent years, some American states has sprung up a removal of Confederate monuments because of their implication of white supremacy and violence, in order to show the ethos of a new age.¹ Secondly, history of the world also refers to the innerworldly "occurrence" in what is at hand and objectively present (Heidegger 355), which means time also flows in the statue itself. As Bergson's *durée* of the inorganic substance and the continuity of physical world, now the statue becomes the experienced object, time develops in the form of consciousness. Based on the philosophical thinking of "surrounding world containing specific spatiality" and "space splitting up in places," Heidegger reminds in "Art and Space" that "Sculpture would not deal with space... Sculpture would be the embodiment of places" (qtd. in Mitchell 249). The spirit of the place embodied in some sculptural figures activates the place by incarnating its special character (Mitchell 249), and the place in the novel is obviously the South.

1 The vicissitude of these statues' fate is also in the horizon of time. Most of the Confederate monuments were built in the periods of racial conflict, such as the era of Jim Crow laws (1877-1964). And the peak of the construction of Civil War Monuments occurred between the late 1890s up to 1920, during which *The Sound and the Fury* was written. However, in the wake of the Charleston church shooting in June 2015, some American states sprung up a removal of Confederate monuments. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, at least 114 Confederate monuments have been removed from public spaces from 2015 to 2018. See more in Wikipedia entry "Removal of Confederate monuments and memorials".

In this way, the invasion of space not only reveals the presentness as the modern experience of time, but also wraps the South as the core with the elapse of time. Through a tale told by an idiot, Faulkner exposes the immediate, fragmentary and momentary temporal experience of modernity directly, and the South is present at any time no matter as a covered myth or a retention of history.

Conclusion

Modernity's time emphasizes presentness, calculation and progress. Quentin who is indulged in the past, Jason who lags behind everyday life, and Dilsey who endeavors to achieve a transcendence of time by taking an ethical responsibility for the indeed show their contradicted temporal experiences of modernity. Faulkner, however, chooses Benjy, the idiot, to expose the ephemeral, fugitive and contingent feeling of time, and the presentness brought by spatiality and forgetfulness. The fact that the underdeveloped South juxtaposes strengthening modernity, and the conservative social background is accompanied by avant-garde literature, increases the sense of paradox and division. Ironically, an idiot's tale turns out to be the reality of temporal experience of modernity in this modernist heteroglossia. In an episode about a librarian who finds a doubtful photograph which seems to be Caddy in the novel's appendix, Faulkner uses the pictorial fixation of time to breed a literary myth. "Here at six o'clock you could close the covers on it and...put it back...on the quiet eternal shelves" (267). It seems that literary narrative is treated as a firm anchor in the roaring waves of time, which can stand still in the scouring of history, society and humanity. Through the free metamorphosis of time, Faulkner creates a poetic magnificence, which is a meditation upon human's destiny and nature in an aesthetic way (Yang 164), and forges a modern capacity for experiencing, feeling, and self-critique, as Paul Ricoeur concludes, "Time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated in a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence" (52).

Works Cited

- Anderson, Deland. "Through Days of Easter: Time and Narrative in *The Sound and the Fury*." *Literature and Theology* 4.3 (1990): 311-326.
- Baldwin, Doug. "Putting Images into Words: Elements of the 'Cinematic' in William Faulkner's Prose." *The Faulkner Journal* 16.1/2 (2000/2001): 35-64.
- Baudelaire, Charles. "The Painter of Modern Life." Trans. Jonathan Mayne. *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Vincent. B. Leitch. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2001.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000.

- Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. Ed. Hannan Arendt. Trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books, 1968.
- Biemel, Walter. *Martin Heidegger: An Illustrated Study*. Trans. J. L. Mehta. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977.
- Calinescu, Matei. *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism*. Durham: Duke UP, 1987.
- Davis, David A. "Southern Modernist and Modernity." *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the American South*. Ed. Sharon Monteith. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013. 88-103.
- De Man, Paul. *Blindness & Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*. New York: Oxford UP, 1971.
- Doane, Mary Ann. *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1996.
- Faulkner, William. *The Sound and the Fury*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2014.
- Geffen, Arthur. "Profane Time, Sacred Time, and Confederate Time in *The Sound and the Fury*." *Studies in American Fiction* 2.2 (1974): 175-197.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. New York: State U of New York P, 1996.
- Lefebvre, Henri. *Everyday Life in the Modern World*. Trans. Sacha Rabinovitch. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1971.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. *Time and the Other*. Trans. Richard A. Cohen. Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 1990.
- . *Totality and Infinity*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1979.
- Lurie, Peter. "Introduction." *Faulkner and Film*. Ed. Peter Lurie and Ann J. Abadie. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 2014. ix-xxxi.
- Mitchell, W. J. T. *What Do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Love of Images*. Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 2005.
- 聂珍钊: "关于文学伦理学批评", 《外国文学研究》1 (2005): 8-11.
- [Nie, Zhenzhao. "Talks on Ethical Literary Criticism." *Foreign Literature Studies* 1 (2005): 8-11.]
- : "文学伦理学批评的价值选择与理论建构", 《中国社会科学》10 (2020): 71-92.
- [—: "Value Choice and the Theoretical Construction of Ethical Literary Criticism." *Social Science in China* 10 (2020): 71-92.]
- Osborne, Peter. *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde*. London: Verso, 1995.
- Patrides, C. A. "Introduction: Time Past and Time Present." *Aspects of Time*. Ed. C. A. Patrides. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1976: 1-20.
- Paz, Octavio. *Children of the Mire: Modern Poetry from Romanticism to the Avant-Garde*. Trans. Rachel Phillips. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1974.
- Ratcliffe, Matthew. "Varieties of Temporal Experience in Depression." *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 37 (2012): 114-138.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *Time and Narrative, Volume 1*. Trans. Kathleen McLaughlin, David Pellauer. Chicago:

- The U of Chicago P, 1984.
- Robbe-Grillet, Alain. *For A New Novel: Essays on Fiction*. Trans. Richard Boward. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1965.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. "On *The Sound and the Fury*: Time in the Work of Faulkner." *Aspects of Time*. Ed. C. A. Patrides. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1976. 203-209.
- Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. Ed. Robert S. Miola. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2004.
- Simmel, George. "The Metropolis and Mental Life." *The Sociology of George Simmel*. Trans and Ed. Kurt H. Wolff. Glencoe: The Free Press, 1950.
- Skirry, Justin. "Sartre on William Faulkner's Metaphysics of Time in *The Sound and the Fury*." *Sartre Studies International* 7.2 (2001): 15-43.
- Scott, David. "The 'Concept of Time' and the 'Being of the Clock': Bergson, Einstein, Heidegger, and the Interrogation of the Temporality of Modernism." *Continental Philosophy Review* 39 (2006): 183-213.
- Stiegler, Bernard. *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*. Trans. Richard Beardsworth, George Collins. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998.
- Tung, Charles M. *Modernism and Time Machines*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2019.
- 汪民安: 《现代性》。南京: 南京大学出版社, 2020年。
- [Wang Min'an. *Modernity*. Nanjing: Nanjing UP, 2020.]
- 杨金才: "《喧哗与骚动》的艺术整体感与意识流小说结构", 《当代外国文学》1 (1994): 162-167.
- [Yang Jincai. "On *The Sound and the Fury*'s Artistic Wholeness and the Structure of Stream of Consciousness Novel." *Contemporary Foreign Literature* 1 (1994): 162-167.]