

In Search of Humanity: A Bakhtinian Dialogic Study of *The Sound and the Fury*

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Abstract

William Faulkner, as one most creative and influential American writers in the 20th century, has ever attracted scholars' concerns. First published in 1929, *The Sound and the Fury* is recognized as one of the most successful experimental American novels of its time. The discussion on it has involved many issues such as race, time, gender, etc. Mikhail Bakhtin proposes dialogic theory in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, which suggests the characters should have their perspective which can parallel with the author's voice. And the un-finalizability of dialogue involves constant responses that will continue endlessly. This study will explore the humanity of moral and evil displayed in different characters in the text through the Bakhtinian dialogue theory.

Keywords: *The Sound and the Fury*; humanity; dialogue; moral; evil; un-finalizability

Introduction

In *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), Faulkner successfully uses the multi-voiced narration, with four different perspectives telling the same story which forms a dialogic discourse. And its general feeling of time, loss, decay, and death are all present in *The Sound and the Fury* where that nihilism properly displays the people's dilemma under the dissolved Old South¹ social system. The first three sections consist of the different voices and memories of the Compson children who are Benjy, a 33 years old idiot, speaking on April 7th, 1928, Quentin, a young Harvard student, speaking on June 6th, 1910, and Jason, a store worker, speaking again on April 6th, 1928. Faulkner tells the fourth section April 8th, 1928 in an omniscient voice, but focuses on Dilsey, the Compson family's "Negro" servant who has devoted a lot in caring for the children. In this family, the parents Mr. Compson as an alcoholic, Mrs. Compson as a hypochondriac mother, both are irresponsible for their children. Quentin, as the older brother, is a sensitive man, whose philosophical thinking is exhibited deeply, Caddy is a rebellious and brave girl with kindness, Jason is a mean guy who is cold and cruel to everyone, Benjy as an "idiot" does not understand any feeling of time, always living at present, only depends on his sense to feel his surroundings.

About the studies of the novel, scholars paid more attention to Faulkner's modernism, like Andre Bleikasten's *The Ink of Melancholy: Faulkner's Novels from the Sound and the Fury to Light in August* (1990). Particularly, on *The Sound and the Fury*, his analysis of Quentin's suicide and the three brothers' desire for Caddy inspired readers to think deeply. With the appearance of de-structuralism, his works are deconstructed and viewed as lacking definite meanings. As Guan Jianming observed, "their interrogation of Faulkner's status

of independence and transcendence has not only ushered in a much broader view in Faulkner's studies but also furthered our understanding of his works" (Guan 7). Concord Ailen in "William Faulkner: The Novel as Form" explained the influence of the complex sentences and called readers to feel the implications and the author's creating process. Noel Polk's article "Trying Not to Say: A Primer on the Language of *The Sound and the Fury*" analyzed the author's inclination of hiding himself from the perspectives of word, punctuation, and syntax.

Likewise, In China, Faulkner's study has also achieved a great achievement. *The Critical Reviews on Faulkner*, edited by Li Wenjun collected the essays on Faulkner's life, art, and literary creation. In the book *The Study on William Faulkner*, Xiao Minghan analyzed deeply the relationship between Faulkner's creating and American southern society, the southern Christianity culture, and western modernism school. On *The Sound and the Fury*, his discussion on Quentin's section, especially the imagined dialogue between Quentin and his father has great enlightenment on this paper. In *Faulkner's Textualization of Subalternities*, Liu Jianhua through the question of woman's promiscuity displayed the class system of southern society. In *Faulkner's Text in Postmodern Context*, Guan Jianming explores the suspicion of the characters on the eternal pursuit and spiritual values against the backdrop of postmodern time. The essay "On the Dialogue between Tradition and Modern Time: The Study of William Faulkner's Creating Art" by Wang Zuyou comments the book from its dialogue and balance. Especially, the part of the dialogue which has enlightened this paper to have further research on the function of this dialogue in Faulkner's revealing the humanity in *The Sound and the Fury*.

Humanity has ever been discussed by philosophers. Views in the first kind see human beings as inherently good, as John Locke argues that people are born equal, and are willing to treat each other as they would like to be treated. This "will" is known as sympathy, the source of justice, and kindness. The Chinese philosopher, Mencius, holds a similar point, declaring that humans are naturally moral but are corrupted by the social environment. The second kind sees human beings as inherently bad. According to *the Bible*, there is the original sin; human beings are spotted by the sin of Adam and Eve. Xuncius, another follower of Confucius, asserted that human nature is evil. Others stand a neutral point and they believe that human beings' behavior is determined by both biological and social factors, and there is no clear boundary between "moral" and "evil". And this paper will not stay at the debate of humanity as above said, while, it will discuss the different humanity and its complexity according to the characters in this novel.

The Russian thinker Bakhtin's dialogue theory enables us to see a dialogic discourse, which is a form of resistance to the thinking that favors a single and absolute truth. In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin considers that for the author "the hero is not 'he' and not 'I' but a fully valid 'thou,' that is, another and other autonomous 'I'. The hero is the subject of a deeply serious, real dialogic mode of address, not the subject of a rhetorically performed or conventionally literary one." (Bakhtin 63). In this novel, the four different sections tell the same story which forms the great dialogue in structure, "And this dialogue- the great dialogue of the novel as a whole—takes place not in the past, but right now, that is, in the real presence of the creative process" (Bakhtin 63). "Dialogue has penetrated inside every word, provoking in it a battle and the interruption of one voice by another. This is micro-dialogue [...] the author retains for himself no essential "surplus" of meaning and enters on an equal footing with heroes into the great dialogue of the novel as a whole" (75). The dialogic strategy makes a text as a polyphonic novel

which creates not voiceless slaves, but free people, getting an equal position with their author and argues with him. Therefore, all the narrative forms, such as the heteroglossia² or the double voice according to Bakhtin both are the dialogic forms in art. And the characters are “not treated as the object of the author’s finalizing artistic vision” (Bakhtin *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* 5). In another word, because of the unfinalizability³ of dialogue, the novel is open to readers and always calls for readers’ different responses to it. Likewise, Benjy, Quentin, Jason, and the author all give their responses about the Compsons’ decline in this novel. This study through analyzing humanity in the novel from Bakhtinian dialogic theory tries to reveal the complexity of humanity and the art of dialogic narrative in this novel.

1. The “Morals” of Humanity

Humanity is complicated; it is hard to simply define a person as moral or evil. We only can review him or her from the main trend of his or her characteristics. The morals of humanity are displayed as kindness, honesty, loyalty, innocence, sensitivity, and kind-heartedness as such. In this novel, the morals of humanity are mainly represented by Benjy, Quentin, Caddy, and Dilsey.

1.1. Benjy’s Innocence: An Idiot’s Narration

Benjy, a 33 years old idiot, as one of voice, told the story which was full of confusion. Faulkner’s choosing an idiot to tell a story just responded to the title and the theme of the novel. In an interview, Faulkner said that:

“the only emotion I can have for Benjy is grief and pity for all mankind. You can’t feel anything for Benjy because he doesn’t feel anything. The only thing I can feel about him is a concern as to whether he is believable as I created him. [...] Benjy is incapable of good and evil because he had no knowledge of good and evil” (*The Paris Review Foundation*, No.12).

In Benjy’s world, there were no past and present and no evil and good as Faulkner said. Although he was not rational enough, yet he could feel tenderness and love through bellowing or crying expressing his feelings. Caddy as the sister is Benjy’s dependence. Thus, it was the threat to tenderness and love that caused him to bellow when he felt the change in Caddy that she lost the smell of trees which was instead of perfume. Because she had grown up and fell in love and Benjy felt he no longer had Caddy his own; being an idiot, he was not even aware that Caddy was gone. In the opening lines of the story, Benjy’s pasture was lost to a golf course.

Through the fence, between the curling flower spaces, I could see them hitting. They were coming toward where the flag was and I went along the fence.

“Here, caddie.” He hit. They went away across the pasture. I held to the fence and watched them going away (*The Sound and the Fury*, 3).⁴

“Here, Caddie.”, but sister Caddy was not here. Faulkner made us understand an idiot’s perception and horror. Benjy’s mental capacity is that of a 3-year-old and cannot reason or explain. He experiences things through senses and reports them as such. Heard of “Caddie”, he thought of Caddy, for the same pronunciation of both words, which reminded him of his dear sister. When Benjy caught a girl because he considered her as Caddy after Caddy being disowned by his family, “I try to cry [...] I try to keep. [...] falling the hill” (*SF* 53). The repeat “try to say” (*SF* 53) tells us: this girl is Caddy for him

and the deep love of Caddy for him. The call to a caddie, we eventually learn, agitates Benjy, because his emotional life centers on love for his long-gone sister Caddy.

The most bewildering modernist disorder in time is the first narrative in *The Sound and the Fury*, which in seventy pages shifts back and forth over a hundred times among eight major moments between 1898 and 1928, sometimes in the middle of a sentence, as these moments between merge in Benjy's disordered mind. As Faulkner explained, "to that idiot, time was not a continuation, it was an instant, there was no yesterday and no tomorrow, it all is at this moment, it all is now to him. He cannot distinguish between what was last year and what will be tomorrow, he does not know whether he dreamed it, or saw it" (*The Paris Review Foundation* No.12). Faulkner indicated to the reader that this idiot had no sense of time. As Guan Jianming observes that "[in] the total span of the thirty years, the most important affairs included in his memory are [...] the care and love from Caddy and his sister's social intercourse and loss of virginity and marriage" (Guan 73). Benjy's monologue is uttered in 1928 when he is 33 years old but concerns chiefly the years 1898-1912. Benjy's mind makes endless memories of Caddy to miss up the loss of her. It ranges over the significant events of his life dictated by a logic of continuity of sound or sense only, registering everything except his own "white noise" of bellowing or whimpering. This "tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury signifying nothing" (Shakespeare Act V Scene5), signifies nothing to the idiot while the other family members must put up with the sound and the fury from Benjy. In this whole family, only Caddy loves Benjy and gives him warmth, Quentin's indifference, Jason's hatred along with Mrs. and Mr. Compson's coldness all displayed on this innocent boy. To some extent, Benjy can be regarded as a mirror of morality.

"A character's word about himself and his world is just as fully weighted as the author's word usually is; [...] It possesses extraordinary independence in the structure of the work; it sounds, as it were, alongside the author's word and in a special way combines both with it and with the full and equally valid voices of the other characters" (Bakhtin 7). Here, Faulkner tells the story of Compson family decline with an idiot's point of view, some fragments of his consciousness, and his real sense to the people and his surrounding world. Including Caddy's loss of virginity, Benjy's sleeping alone and Caddy's using perfume all disturbs Benjy's mind. And the only way to express his emotion is to bellow or cry. "The position from which a story is told, a portrayal built, or information provided must be oriented in a new way to this new world – a world of autonomous subjects, not objects" (Bakhtin 7-8). From this section, through Benjy's senses, the losses of childhood, time, love, and the property of the Compsons are displayed clearly and the readers can feel the innocence of Benjy and Caddy's deep warmth for him.

1.2. Quentin's Thoughtfulness: Quentin's Monologue

Unlike Benjy, Quentin is a normal man and is the most complex character in Compson family. As a Harvard student, he is intelligent enough to understand what the family has been in the past and too sensitive to cope with what it has become in the present.

When the shadow of the sash appeared on the curtains it was between seven and eight o'clock and then I was in time again, hearing the watch. It was Grandfather's and when Father gave it to me he said I give you the mausoleum of all hope and desire; ... I give it to you not that you may remember the time, but that you might forget it now and then for a moment and not spend all your breath trying to conquer it (SF 93-94).

Heavily influenced by his father, who has taught him that "all men are just accumulations dolls stuffed with sawdust swept up from trash heaps" (*SF* 175). Quentin's narrative shows his father's words mingling with his own. This dialogue does not happen between his father and him but happens to himself. For Quentin, Caddy's virginity is the most important honor; when Caddy lost her chastity, he suddenly felt that the family honor was stained and could not be rescued which finally led to Quentin's committing suicide. The concept of honor brings Quentin into an eternal struggle with time. In Quentin's mind, the sense of the Southern past is noble, courageous, and honest which is opposite the present deceit and dishonor. What's more, Quentin is often reminded of his weakness to defend his sister's honor according to notions of chivalry and family pride. Because of Caddy's deprivation, he emotionally breaks up which makes him lose his mental strength to continue living.

Unlike the idiot's helpless dependency on Caddy, the relationship between Quentin and Caddy is much more complicated. "Benjy's love for Caddy hardly strikes us as abnormal once we know that he is fated to perpetual childhood; Quentin's, on the other hand, develops into a morbid passion whose outcome can only be despair and death" (Bleikasten 71-72). Quentin lives in the past all the time, the honor, the nobility, the purity of the southern woman has rooted in his mind. "What the confusion thus achieved is meant to render is, of course, Quentin's emotional turmoil, but paradoxically it also testifies to his greater intelligence" (Bleikasten 71-72). Part of Quentin's reason for hating and fearing clocks and watches is that he is so hurt by the passage of time. He wants to stop time, and remain with Caddy in some eternal and changeless way: "Finished. If things just finished themselves. Nobody else there but her and me" (*SF* 79). But this is impossible. He can find only one final and changeless act, and that is suicide. Father to him is very important whose occupation is over Quentin's mind. Because he is unable to protect the honor of family which Caddy stands for. Time for him becomes a barrier which he wants to return to the past when Caddy was pure. And the terror of sexuality makes him fall into a fantasy that his committing incest with Caddy, returning the past time when they were a little boy and little girl. As Toming said that:

"More importantly, Quentin internally argues with father's nihilism. He speaks to his 'Father,' Mr. Compson as if he were the Father in Heaven. The irony is obvious since Mr. Compson, like the demi-god Silenus in Greek mythology, believes only in the nothingness in life. To argue against his Father and to be with Caddy forever, Quentin, based on the Christian belief in an afterlife, creates a story that his "wake" (death) as his "wedding" with Caddy. Thus, doubly ironically, his disagreement with his Father's nihilism leads him to the nihilism of Christianity" (Toming 352).

Because of no way to stop time, Quentin determined to die with Caddy together, trying to save her and the honor of the family. Quentin's imagination of committing incest with Caddy is a ritual redemption for the honor and his self. His section begins his listening to the ticking of his grandfather's watch that his father gave him so that he would not remember the time, but forget it. He desires to stop time even to return to the past days when his sister Caddy was pure. While all these desires cannot be realized, finally, he chooses to commit suicide to stop time.

I bathed and shaved. The water made my finger smart a little, so I painted it again. I put on my new suit and put my watch on and packed the other suit and the accessories and my razor and brushes in my handbag, and wrapped the trunk key into a sheet of paper and put it in an envelope and addressed it to Father, and wrote the two notes and sealed them. (*SF* 81)

Quentin determined to leave everything in good order. His death shall be no mess which is a kind of purity for him at least in his imagination.

Quentin's sensitivity makes him refuse to accept his sister's impurity. "Thus, he persuades himself and attempts to persuade Caddy that her 'infidelities' were not committed of her own free will but forced upon her" (Bleikasten 172-173). Even his mood reached a kind of crazy state:

do you love him
 her hand came out I didn't move it fumbled down my arm and she held my hand flat
 against her chest her heart thudding
 No no
 Did he make you then he made you do it let him he was stronger than you and he tomor-
 row I'll kill him I swear I will father needn't know until afterward and then you and me
 nobody need ever know we can take my school money we can cancel my matriculation
 Caddy you hate him don't you don't you
 She moved my hand up against her throat her heart was hammering there (SF 150-151)

Here, the text without punctuation displays Quentin's agitated emotion for her sister's loss of virginity. As an artist-like person, Quentin constantly reflects himself and his surrounding world. Quentin looks at himself as it was in a mirror of another inner self which forms this monologue, a unique dialogue, like Bakhtin says "His consciousness of self-lives by its unfinalizability and its indeterminacy. The author constructs not a character, nor a type, nor a temperament he constructs no objectified image of the hero at all, but rather the hero's discourse about himself and his world" (Bakhtin 53). And from Quentin's point of view, the reader can know more about this family where is full of coldness and distress. And his thoughtfulness and sensitivity in humanity and his concern for family honor have been displayed clearly.

1.3. Caddy's Love and Courage: Zero Narration

When discovering her pregnancy, the parents quickly marry Caddy to a banker, Herbert Head who promises Caddy's brother Jason a job. However, after realizing Caddy's pregnancy with another man, Herbert immediately divorces her and rejects Jason's job offer. Thus, Jason always holds hatred to Caddy for the loss of the promised job for him which later, in the scene of meeting between Jason and Caddy, Caddy has lost her usual rebellion instead of much obeying to Jason, as Polk says that "The Caddy presented by Jason is unfamiliar. No longer the bold child or the brazen adolescent, ... Even the practical Caddy who 'has to marry someone' has ceased to exist when she stammers and pleads with Jason to let her see her daughter" (Polk 45). All these images of Caddy are displayed by others' voices. She leaves her "mark" through her brothers' memory, though she is reduced to silence in the structure of the novel. In the four sections, Caddy is always the center of each story-teller and from whom "we recognize her in Benjy's hammering bellow, in Quentin's deafening, misogynistic rant, and in the endorsement on the checks that her daughter may not view and that her mother destroys. Represented entirely through male memory, Caddy as a mother is given textual status primarily in Jason's account" (Polk 37).

What Caddy is seeking is recognized female identity and independence, social attention to female voice, and control over her own life. In doing all these, she liberates herself first from the traditional values on women's sex bondage. Caddy takes her step to gain female identity with more and more difficult and is finally submerged by adverse criti-

cism. But she is to some extent a winner: all the Compson brothers have no offspring, Caddy's daughter, Miss Quentin inherits her mother's fearlessness and keeps up Caddy's rebellion. Faulkner once said of Benjy that "the only thing that held him into any sort of reality, into the world at all, was the trust that he had for his sister, that he knew that she loved him and would defend him, and so she was the whole world to him, and these things were flashes that were reflected on her as in a mirror" (qtd. Gwynn and Blotner 63-4). But Benjy can react to different kinds of things, whether a movement, an object or a sound such as hearing the golfers shout "Caddie". When he found Caddy's fiancé, he just cried and pulled Caddy's dress.

"Hush, Benjy," Caddy said.

"Why, Benjy," Caddy said. "Aren't you going to let me stay here and talk to Charlie a while."

Charlie came and put his hands on Caddy and I cried more, I cried loud (SF 47).

We can see Benjy's reaction to Caddy when he saw her fiancé, Charlie. For Benjy, Caddy is pure and he is not willing to lose her purity by this man. Though his language is crying while it can express his feelings well and meanwhile makes Caddy understand. If people treat Benjy kindly, they are morally good, and so is the opposite. In this way, the passive character of Benjy becomes the most active moral guide for the reader's response to other characters.

Caddy is a source of warmth and vitality. Faulkner himself saw Caddy as "the beautiful one, she was my heart's darling." And she is associated with the masculine virtues of daring and strength which Quentin so admires in his sister. Further, Caddy through Benjy's associations of love and tenderness with the flames in the fireplace and the reflection of light in the mirror. When she is about to leave the family as Herbert's wife, her major concern is still for the well-being of Quentin, Benjy, and their father. Caddy lived in a family that lacks parental love; however, she was full of love, especially for her little brother Benjy.

1.4. Dilsey's Loyalty: An Omniscient Narrator

In the loveless Compson family, the black servant Dilsey is kind and sympathy to others, becoming a spiritual pillar for the whole family. And she is the only one who understands the Compson family well and knows the reason leading to falling of it: "I've seed de first en de last" (SF 297). Her heart is filled with the innocent and honorable benevolence. Opposite to Jason's selfishness, cruelty, and coldness, she is, moreover, one of Faulkner's favorite characters, and was highly thought of by her creator. "Dilsey is one of my favorite characters because she is brave, courageous, generous, gentle, and honest" (*The Paris Review Foundation* No.12). On Benjy's birthday, she would manage to get a birthday cake for him from her pocket, when the Compson family has already been bankrupt. When the breadwinner and household master, Jason, taunts Quentin, she always stands up and offers the little girl maternal affection and protection.

Her way of treating people depends on her consciousness and principles. In the whole Compson family, Dilsey is the only one who has a clear and healthy mind. Whatever happens, she keeps calm, offers some quick solution, and moves forward. Even when Jason calls her an old half-dead nigger, she does not refute, complain, or cry as Mrs. Compson always does. She is wise enough to see through everything and she is tolerant enough to bear everything. Throughout the novel, Dilsey always offers maternal love to whoever needs it in the family. She is tender and loving towards Quentin, Caddy, and

Jason. The detailed attention which Faulkner pays to Dilsey's spiritual uplifting in the last section of the novel reminds us that despite all its anguish and pain, she still holds love and belief in life.

2. The "Evils" of Humanity

Meanwhile, in contrast with the morals of humanity, the evils of humanity are displayed as cruelty, revenge, selfishness, coldness, and indifference as such. Jason, Mr. Compson, and Mrs. Compson are the representatives in this novel.

2.1. Jason's Cruelty: Jason's Voice

The same as the first two sections telling the story of Caddy from the two brothers' point of view, the third section is from another brother's perspective to tell it. Thus, through such a dialogic discourse can each story find itself in intimate contact with someone else's story. As Bakhtin says that "the very construction of the novel, the author speaks not about a character, but with him. Only a dialogic and participatory orientation takes another person's discourse seriously and is capable of approaching it both as a semantic position and as another point of view" (Bakhtin 63-64). Because the first two sections are the stories told by the idiot, Benjy, and the over sensitive Quentin who both are not normal in spirit and Faulkner thought it is not clear enough, thus the third section arranged is Jason's story.

Jason has been one of Faulkner's nastiest characters, and he certainly reveals his conceit, hypocrisy, and lust for power. Caddy's marriage to Herbert is identified in Jason's mind with the fall of the family and his disinheritance, and young Quentin is a living reminder of her sin. "Once a bitch, always a bitch" (SF 180), He allows Caddy a glimpse of her daughter, burning the circus tickets before Luster's eyes— are balanced by the rarely glimpsed despair which afflicts Jason just as it did his brother Quentin:

"Whatever I do, it's your fault," she says. "if I'm bad, it's because I had to be. You made me. I wish I was dead. I wish we were all dead." Then a door slammed.
 "That's the first sensible thing she ever said," I say (SF 260).
 "Once a bitch always a bitch, for her..." (SF 206).

"Another voice is heard now, harsh, petulant, sardonic; a hysterically self-assertive speaking voice[...]He is in his petty provincial way an implacable man-hater, and in like fashion, too, he takes the role of the satirist, venting his rancor in floods of invective and sarcasm and exposing human folly with merciless eloquence" (Bleikasten 105-106). To Faulkner, Jason represented, in his own words, "complete evil," he added: "He's the most vicious character, in my opinion, I ever thought of" (*The Paris Review Foundation* No.12). Jason, however, is a very disturbing and cruel villain. He cheats and steals from his own family, and, driven by a bitter spirit of revenge, he is without a single shred of decent feeling. He uses cold and calculating logic as an excuse for his heartless behavior. All these crazy things he did just show his cruelty to his families. When Caddy wants to see her daughter, she begged him with money:

"I'll give you a hundred," she says. "Will you?"
 "Just a minute," I say. "And just like I say. I wouldn't have her know it for a thousand dollars."
 "Yes," she says. "Just like you say do it. Just so I see her a minute. I won't beg or do anything. I'll go right on away."
 "Give me the money," I say.

[...]

I could see her running after us through the back window (*SF* 203-205).

He only loves himself and concerns his benefit, thus, he is indifferent to others unless there something involving money. In Jason's monologue, what Jason feels for Caddy is hatred for his loss of the job in a bank resulted from Caddy's misconduct. The child she had to leave him as a hostage has therefore become "the symbol of the lost job itself" (*SF* 355) and it is on his niece that he will take out his hatred.

Jason devises an ingenious scheme to steal the money Caddy sends to support her daughter Miss Quentin's upbringing, indeed, "For Jason, Miss Quentin is simply a commodity in the system that he controls: "I never promise a woman anything nor let her know what I'm going to give her. That's the only way to manage them" (*SF* 193). He extorts money from his gullible mother; ... he sells Caddy the right to glimpse her daughter for one hundred dollars; and he torments little Quentin, withholding money and letters from her mother" (Polk 47). Thus, without a mother's love and living in a cold family, Miss Quentin grows up unhappily in the atmosphere of coldness and cruelty which his unpleasant character creates.

When little Quentin steals his money, which should have belonged to her, Jason becomes crazy and running for her. On the way to chasing her, he met a sheriff:

"What do you aim to do with that girl, if you catch them?"

"Nothing," Jason said. "Not anything." I wouldn't lay my hand on her. The bitch that cost me a job, the one chance I ever had to get ahead, that killed my father and is shortening my mother's life every day and made my name a laughing stock in the town. I won't do anything to her," he said. "Not anything" (*SF* 304)

As Bleikasten says that Jason senses "treachery and thievery everywhere, suspects everyone and regards the whole world as his personal enemy" (Bleikasten 110). Even to his own families, he has only the coldness and orders for them. He con-tempted Dilsey and lowered her as a fool, when he asked the key from her, he cried that "Give me the key, you old fool!" (*SF* 281) When looking for little Quentin, he asked a man whether his niece was there, he felt the man was lying, "He said they were not here. I thought he was lying" (*SF* 312). For Jason, there is no trust and belief between each other and his mind is full of hatred and suspects to the world which he uses his cruelty to resist. As Bleikasten argues that "Of [the] four children he is undeniably the one most like her in his mean-spirited egoism, his imperturbable smugness, and his petit-bourgeois concern for propriety" (Bleikasten 109). The third section lively produces a greedy and cruel figure of Jason.

2.2. Mrs. Compson's Indifference: Others' Voices

Mrs. Compson, as a mother, cannot understand Caddy's solicitous wish to see her daughter, instead of driving her out of town and forbidding her name to be mentioned in the house. Had Quentin not been deprived of maternal love, his life might have taken a different course: "If I have could say, Mother. Mother" (*SF* 108), or again "if I'd just had a mother so I could say Mother Mother" (*SF* 197). And the same poignant sense of abandonment is revealed by Quentin's remembrance of the picture in the story:

When I was little there was a picture in one of our books, a dark place into which a single weak ray of light came slanting upon two faces lifted out of the shadows. ... I'd have to turn back to it until the dungeon was Mother herself she and Father upward into weak light holding hands and we lost somewhere below even them without even a ray of light (*SF* 198).

Quentin's projection of the family situation onto this scene of darkness and confinement is eloquent evidence of parental neglect. The cold, egotistical Mrs. Compson has become a lightless prison-womb to her children, keeping them captive, as securely as she would have by possessive love, through what she denied them. Or, to borrow another of Quentin's metaphors, she poisoned them once and for all: "Done in Mother's mind though. Finished. Finished. Then we were all poisoned" (SF 116).

"You'd better do as he says," Mrs. Compson said. "He's head of the house now. It's his right to require us to respect his wishes. I try to do it, and if I can, you can too." Mrs. Compson said to Dilsey" (SF 278). Mrs. Compson considered Jason as her only child and the head of this declining family and she was blind to Jason's cruelty. After Caddy losing her chastity, she secretly married her to a banker regardless of Caddy's own emotion and, when the marriage was broken, she drove her out and ordered the whole family never to mention her name. All these displayed the corruption of humanity within the Compson family. This loveless and repressed family dooms the children abnormal who are like four specters on this wasteland-like environment.

2.3. Mr. Compson's Irresponsibility: Others' Voices

As the head of the whole family, Mr. Compson does not take his due responsibility for his children. He is a weak nihilistic alcoholic, whose pessimism pervades Quentin's part of the story, "because no battle is ever won [he said]. They are not even fought. The field only reveals to man his folly and despair, victory is an illusion of philosophers and fools" (SF 76). This greatly strengthens his son's despair of ultimate failure which leads to his committing suicide finally. When Caddy is divorced by her husband, he rejected to take her back home. Besides, Quentin's monologue echoes with Mr. Compson's cynical remarks on women, and for all his protests and denials he has come to acknowledge the bitter truth that "women are never virgins" (SF 116)

Because women so mysterious Father said. The delicate equilibrium of periodical filth between two moons is balanced. Moons he said full and yellow as harvest moons her hips thighs. Outside of them always but. Yellow. Feet soles with walking like. Then know that some man that all those mysterious and imperious concealed. With all that inside of them shapes an outward suavity waiting for a flabbily filed getting the odor of honeysuckle all mixed up. (SF 128)

We can see his father's contempt attitude toward women and his carelessness for his children. When Caddy is pregnant, he does not give her warmth and help but disown with her, whose carelessness and coldness to Caddy lead to her later complete deprivation. When Quentin facing problems, Mr. Compson does not give good advice but spreads his distress and despair to his son, "Father will be dead in a year they say if he doesn't stop drinking and he won't stop he can't stop since I since last summer and then they'll send Benjy to Jackson ..." (SF 124), whose knowledge does not help him to find a way out. Above all, Mr. Compson's wisdom is knowledge of death, not of life which just affects Quentin to fall into despair, too.

As for Jason, he holds the hatred to his father and when the father dies, he takes the place of him. Through each figure's voice, we can see the image of an irresponsible father. The voices in *The Sound and the Fury* are miscellaneous which sometimes are double direction and sometimes are the secret soliloquy of one's own. Faulkner endows his figures full freedom and independence to form the dialogic text and he acts a role of

observer or recorder to represent their complex humanity. Dong Xiaoying views that the relationship of dialogue is the relationship of agreement and objection, affirmation, and supplement, asking and answering in two different subjects' discourse. (Dong Xiaoying 46) in another word, in a dialogic novel, the author is not in the position of "God", which gifts fully independent voices opposite -center position.

3. The Exploration of Humanity

The Bakhtinian dialogic theory explains a multi-perspective, multi-valued world and dialogue is the essence of humankind's existence. Its meaning is far beyond the literary theory itself. Dialogue in literary texts is featured as independent, un-finalized, and polyphonic. As to humanity in terms of polyphonic, it is complex which synthesizes sense, sensibility, desire, imagination, and will. Humanity concretely displays such as kindness, honesty, justice, tolerance, and sympathy in morals, and cruelty, deception, selfishness, revenge, and greed in evils. Thus, human beings integrate divine and devil.

3.1. The Complexity of Humanity

In *The Sound and the Fury*, Caddy is the typical one who realizes her free will and never loses the ability to love others. The light of humanity is embodied in her fully. Jason, loses his free will and is servile to money-worship, as a result, he loses his freedom and the ability to love, becoming cruel and revengeful to others. Likewise, Mr. Compson and Mrs. Compson both lose their love and their responsibility for their children, and humanity has fallen from them. Also, this concrete humanity fell and the abstract one got the superiority which could drive people to over pursue the material richness, becoming much snobbish and selfish. Perhaps, people like Jason, Mr. Compson, and Mrs. Compson were not aware of their loss of humanity. They do not know what should love, hate, respect, and contempt and humanity is fluid and can be distorted for the situation of society at any time. It is worthy to note that Quentin is the most complex character and his mind is full of struggle. As an intellect and artist-like character, he cannot get rid of the restraint of the past value and finally he escapes from reality through committing suicide. However, Quentin does not lose his love ability and keeps sensitive to the outside world, who is like a philosopher observing and meditating his surroundings. This character owns timidity and ambition, honesty and deception, nobility, and shame on which displays Faulkner's deep exploration of the complicity of humanity.

The multi-perspective in *The Sound and the Fury* has broken through the framework of the story itself. Faulkner is full of sympathy for Caddy who is created as the center of the whole novel. The four sections all relate the same story on Caddy and each one shows a different aspect of her and the narrator's humanity. Therefore, after reading the text, always, many aspects of humanity are left on the reader's mind. It involves innocence, sensibility, love, loyalty and cruelty, revenge, greed, and indifference, etc. On the eternal humanity, what the author wants to note is that humanity is a gifted duality which integrates the images of angel and devil. The author speaks highly of human virtues, such as Benjy's innocence, Quentin's sensitivity and philosophical thinking, Caddy's consideration for Benjy and her encouragement, and Dilesey's genuine loyalty to the whole family. Likewise, he also reveals Jason's coldness and cruelty, Mr. Compson's irresponsibility, and Mrs. Compson's indifference to her children which all expresses his critique for the evils of humanity.

3.2. The Reasons for the Declination of Humanity

The complex humanity corresponds to the dialogic narratives of this novel. In structure, the four perspectives form a great dialogue, where each voice is open and argues with others. As Bakhtin says that “they hear each other constantly, call back and forth to each other, and are reflected in one another” (Bakhtin 75). In this polyphonic novel, the four different views together contribute to the displaying of complex humanity.

3.2.1. The Loss of the Ideal

Against the background of the influence of the north industrial civilization, the traditional south is gradually becoming the commercial modern south. Morality begins to decline and the relationship between people becomes cold and indifferent. The old lifestyle and social customs have gone away which leads to the disintegration of the system of the existential value, the money-worship and direct dealing with money put the southern people to the verge of collapsing which leads to the distorted and alienated humanity. Faulkner uses the disorder of the time to tell the decline of the Compson family, which is in line with each character, that is, Benjy, an idiot, has no sense of time; Quentin lives in the past and desires to stop the time and Mr. Compson falls into nihilism. For them, clocks and watches only make their lives confused, and their heart panic. Thus, Faulkner does not use the order of time in this novel, but destroys the time order and focus on the humanity of its characters. “Dialogism argues that time/ space relation of any particular text will always be perceived in the context of a larger set of time/space relations that obtain in the social and historical environment in which it is read” (Holquist 141), through four section-narratives, we see the corruption running in the Compson family.

3.2.2. The Pursuit of Utilitarianism

The Civil War destroyed many once-great Southern families economically, socially, and psychologically. The northern capitalist industrial power and its value impact the south deeply, which disintegrates the agriculture society and begins its modern progress. Then, there is the conflict between the new and the old values. Faulkner deeply explores the humanity of modern society. *The Sound and the Fury* reflects the history burden of the Old South society spirit heredity and the distorted humanity in the process of pursuing material richness and Quentin and Jason are both typical representatives of the two social situations. The novel displays the development of materialistic civilization and the crisis of spirit civilization, and the falling of humanity, the conflict of the human being's mind, and the relationship between human beings, etc.

Conclusion

In *The Sound and the Fury* Faulkner tells the decline of the Compson family four times from different voices in four sections. Both the exhibition of various humanities and the form of narrative constitute a dialogic novel. Whenever someone else's “truth” is presented in each novel, it is introduced without fail into the dialogic field of vision of all the other major characters of the novel. Dialogue has penetrated inside every word, provoking in it a battle and the interruption of one voice by another. Faulkner describes the different humanity of people there and the present paper attempts a detailed discussion

on the morals and evils of humanity and analyzes the reasons for the complication of humanity. From his process of producing *The Sound and the Fury* and in its characterization, we can observe Faulkner's dialogic devices for engaging humanity.

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Notes

- ¹ The American south includes the southeastern states and the southern states along the Gulf of Mexico. It is a region of extravagant color, of luxuriant foliage and bloom, and scorching sunlight. Its pace is slow and its rhythm of social motion is passive rather than active. <http://thesis.lib.pku.edu.cn>
- ² Heteroglossia, the condition of being located external to other-languagedness, the condition of containing many separate and different worlds. (Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*: EDITOR'S PREFACE xxxiii)
- ³ The hero knows that all these definitions, prejudiced as well as objective, rest in his hands and he cannot finalize them precisely. His consciousness of self lives by its unfinalizability, by its unclosedness and its indeterminacy. (Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*: 53)
- ⁴ *The Sound and the Fury*, the followings will be abbreviated as *SF*.

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