



Artistic time in Wiliam Faulkner`s works

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Abstract: *William Faulkner's writing often explores complex temporal structures that challenge linear perceptions of time, reflecting both psychological depth and cultural history in the American South. His technique of "artistic time" involves a fluid manipulation of chronology, memory, and perception, creating a fragmented yet holistic view of his characters' experiences. This paper examines how Faulkner's use of non-linear time serves as a narrative strategy to convey the fractured nature of individual and collective identities. By analyzing works such as The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying, and Absalom, Absalom!, we investigate how Faulkner's temporal manipulations reveal the influence of past traumas on the present and shape the characters' understanding of self and society. Through this exploration, Faulkner's concept of time emerges as both a thematic concern and a stylistic choice that reinforces his critique of traditional Southern ideologies.*

Keywords: *William Faulkner, artistic time, non-linear narrative, American South, memory, temporality, trauma, modernism.*

Introduction: William Faulkner's narratives are renowned for their innovative temporal structures that defy the conventional chronological sequence, a hallmark of his modernist style. His works probe into the psyche of individuals, communities, and the American South as a whole, exploring the implications of memory, trauma, and history on present consciousness. Faulkner's manipulation of time often described as "artistic" or alternative temporality illustrates a subjective experience that diverges from the objective measurement of time, emphasizing psychological rather than physical continuity. This article aims to dissect the implications of Faulkner's



alternative temporalities on his characters, thematic development, and critique of Southern ideologies.

Artistic Time: An Overview of Faulkner's Temporal Technique

In Faulkner's universe, time is rarely linear or consistent. Instead, it is fractured, cyclical, and multi-layered, reflecting a modernist approach to narrative. Faulkner challenges the constraints of chronological narration through the use of multiple perspectives, stream of consciousness, and fragmented chronology, inviting readers into a temporal experience that is inherently unstable and subjective.

This artistic temporal structure appears prominently in *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), where Faulkner employs multiple narrative perspectives, each with its own unique sense of time. The character Benjy, who perceives events without understanding chronology, illustrates an extreme form of artistic time. Through his perspective, time becomes fluid and cyclical, capturing the psychological effects of trauma and loss on his consciousness.

Non-linear Temporalities in The Sound and the Fury

In *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner's portrayal of time as a series of fragmented memories enables him to delve into the complexities of the Compson family's tragic history. Each section of the novel is told from a different perspective, with the narrative skipping between past and present. This disjointed timeline reflects the psychological states of the characters, particularly Benjy and Quentin, whose relationships with the past profoundly affect their present realities.

Quentin Compson's obsession with family honor and his sister's purity is another example of Faulkner's exploration of artistic time. Quentin's present reality is permeated by the weight of familial expectations and traditions, ultimately leading to his mental breakdown. Faulkner's fragmented time structure enables readers to



experience Quentin's inner turmoil as he grapples with a past that refuses to be resolved.

Time and Memory in As I Lay Dying

Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* (1930) similarly employs an alternative temporal structure, using multiple narrative voices to depict the Bundren family's journey to bury their mother, Addie. In this novel, Faulkner's use of time underscores the conflict between memory and reality. Each character has a distinct perception of time, shaped by their personal histories and traumas. Faulkner contrasts these individual temporal experiences to reveal the disintegration of family unity and the erosion of shared identity.

The novel's non-linear temporal structure amplifies the emotional weight of the journey, as each family member's recollections and intentions intersect in a disjointed, chaotic manner. Through this narrative device, Faulkner illustrates the power of memory in shaping reality, portraying the Bundrens as individuals isolated by their personal histories and yet bound by their shared trauma.

Temporal Fragmentation in Absalom, Absalom!

Absalom, Absalom! (1936) represents one of Faulkner's most complex explorations of alternative temporality. The story of Thomas Sutpen's tragic rise and fall is recounted by multiple narrators, each bringing their own interpretation of events and thereby creating a temporal puzzle. Faulkner's manipulation of time in this novel is particularly effective in conveying the haunting presence of the past on the present and future generations.

Through a layered narrative structure, Faulkner examines how Southern history, particularly the legacy of slavery and familial conflicts, shapes contemporary identities. Characters like Quentin and Shreve struggle to piece together Sutpen's story,



embodying the difficulty of understanding a past that is distorted by personal biases and cultural prejudices. In doing so, Faulkner uses artistic time to critique the South's persistent attachment to its history, which ultimately becomes a barrier to progress.

Conclusion: William Faulkner's use of artistic time is a defining characteristic of his narrative style, allowing him to explore the psychological and cultural impact of history on his characters and the American South. Through fragmented and non-linear temporalities, Faulkner challenges readers to confront the ways in which the past permeates the present, revealing the cyclical nature of trauma, memory, and tradition. Faulkner's alternative temporal structures not only serve as a thematic device but also as a critique of the South's inability to reconcile with its history, emphasizing the enduring influence of past transgressions on contemporary consciousness. Faulkner's work ultimately suggests that to move forward, both individuals and communities must confront and recontextualize the narratives that shape their identities.

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