Faulkner's Assembly of Memories into History: Narrative Networks in Multiple Times[1]

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In *Absalom, Absalom!* William Faulkner develops a processual model for how multivocal narrative history and time can emerge from conversation among heterogeneous subjective voices, both living and dead. Four social processes of memory assembly are involved: individual memories, changing perspectives, symmetry, and resonance. Iterated stories about characters in the past construct layered identities for narrators in the present by synchronizing them into multiple time registers: phenomenological time, episodic time, narrative time, epistemological time, projective time, and historical time. Different selves within the same person, Faulkner implies, emerge from these six ways of remembering, which brains and conversations throw up.

INTRODUCTION

Human identities are more than sociological cross-tabs. They are trajectories through time—that is, they are biographies. Seen as the superposition of trajectories, a social collectivity is like a dance: individuals bobbing, weaving, and interacting among each other in temporal patterns. Social order is a living flow that reproduces, not a building "structure," static and dead (Abbott 2001, 2016; Sewell 2005).

Padgett and Powell (2012) operationalized this metaphor in multiple-network terms as autocatalysis—that is, as a set of nodes and transformations that reconstruct themselves through time in the face of continuous turnover in the set's parts. This is the chemistry definition of life.[2] The concept is especially useful (in conjunction with that of multiple networks) for investigating the challenging question of "speciation" or the emergence and reproduction of novelty in history.

For social science purposes, Padgett and Powell (2012, p. 10) distinguished three domains of potential application: (a) production autocatalysis, for the emergence of production and exchange in economies,[3] (b) biographical autocatalysis, for the emergence of social networks and organizations,[4] and (c) linguistic autocatalysis for the emergence of symbols and language. In their book, Padgett and Powell left "linguistic autocatalysis" as a promissory note for future research. This article is an attempt to deliver on that promissory note.

Seen dynamically, "social structure" is a set of trajectories and movements through space-time. That is, it is synonymous with "history."[5] But the starting problem for all analysts (and observers) is that "history" in the singular does not exist—just as unitary "social structure" is a fantasy. All histories and social structures are compositions and layerings of multiple biographical paths and social networks, which interact in time without completely controlling each other. Temporal paths cross numerous cross-sectional networks, and evolving networks are the remembered traces of many temporal paths.

After accepting this issue of temporality, the next problem for analysts (and observers) becomes that reified space-time, through which biographies and social networks move, also does not preexist—it emerges out of interaction among the objects and energies that move within it, like in Einstein's general relativity theory. In the case of human beings, "space-time" is the set of cognitive categories and dimensions through which people perceive their own movement and interaction. Like the biographies and social networks they are classifying, cultural interpretations are never singular. Linguistic autocatalysis, in the conceptualization of Padgett and Powell (2012), is not homogeneous "shared consensus." It is the set of multiple interpretations and perspectives that nonetheless reproduce through communication. Multivocality is not some quirk of Cosimo de' Medici (Padgett and Ansell 1993); it is generic to the emergence of "culture" itself.

[2] See Padgett and Powell (2012, chap. 2), for a review of the chemistry literature on origins of life, where the autocatalysis idea (and formal models thereof) originated.

[3] See Padgett and Powell (2012, chap. 3) for an agent-based formalization of production autocatalysis—i.e., the emergence of markets.

[4] Most of the case applications in Padgett and Powell (2012) focused on organizational emergence through biographical autocatalysis.

[5] The distinction lies more in the perspective of the analyst than in ontological reality itself.

This article turns to William Faulkner for one processual model of how social space-time (and thereby history) can be constructed out of a heterogeneous mélange of subjective memories, points of views, and voices. In particular, it focuses on one brilliant example of narrative reconstruction, by multiple narrators, of intersecting biographies—William Faulkner's ([1936] 1990) best novel, *Absalom, Absalom!*, set in the Civil War and post–Civil War American South. In that novel, Faulkner's post–Civil War narrators try to reconstruct the puzzling histories and biographies of their intertwined pre–Civil War and Civil War ancestors, in order to comprehend themselves and their own fates. I treat Faulkner as a deeply insightful experiment in how to assemble heterogeneous subjective memories into multivocal collective history.

Faulkner is gripping especially to American readers because his finger was squarely on the pulse of the most traumatic event in American history: namely, slavery and the Civil War. Faulkner presented this (his own) history subjectively from the perspective of his Southern characters and narrators, not objectively from the allegedly omniscient perspective of outsiders like us. Faulkner developed an interpretation of Southern history that emphasized how deeply race was cross-cut by family. Antebellum Southern racism, according to sociologist Faulkner, was doomed by internal contradiction, because it drove Southern slavery families—which were unequal ensembles of white and black—to self-immolate.

From the perspective of linguistic autocatalysis, William Faulkner is relevant for the topic of assembling memories because he was a modernist, like Proust, Joyce, Mann, and Woolf.[6] That is, Faulkner the writer eschewed the global perspective of omniscient narrator, preferring instead to let his narrative about the Sutpen family unfold through the various streams-of-consciousness voices of his multiple narrators. There is not just one "history of the Sutpen family" told in *Absalom, Absalom!*, but many. The core stylistic problematic, indeed the obsession, for Faulkner was how the diverse multiple perspectives of his narrators and characters do or do not blend together to make a collective ensemble, which at minimum is gripping to narrators and which at maximum is true—in the sense that an elegant multiperspectival account emerges from the composition of partial perspectives, consistent with all known facts about the behaviors of characters in the story.

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[6] According to Bakhtin ([1963] 1984), Dostoevsky was also a modernist. Sartre ([1939] 1955) was the one who anointed Faulkner into this pantheon. Sartre's view of time in Faulkner was this: "Faulkner's vision of the world can be compared to that of a man sitting in an open car and looking backwards. At every moment, formless shadows, flickerings, faint tremblings and patches of light rise up on either side of him, and only afterwards, when he has a little perspective, do they become trees and men and cars" (p. 87). Consistent with this Sartre interpretation, Faulkner himself claimed to be an admirer of Bergson ([1896] 2002), but Cleanth Brooks (1978, p. 255) doubts that Faulkner had read Bergson very carefully—more a case of coincidence than influence.

My narrative-network analysis of *Absalom, Absalom!* will demonstrate that Faulkner brilliantly achieved this synthesis of his streams-of-consciousness voices into multiperspectival history, even though he resolutely refused to explain that synthesis to readers (and maybe even to himself). Like many myths, *Absalom, Absalom!* is convincing at a subliminal level to appropriate audiences, even while confusing at the surface level of a first reading.

History (of various sorts) is always constructed through conversation, but for modernist Faulkner "conversation" was complex not only because it was communication among multiple perspectives but also because it was communication among multiple times. In his best work, Faulkner developed his stories in multiple time registers simultaneously, making him a more important theorist of time and causality than philosophers and sociologists recognize.

Inside of *Absalom, Absalom!* itself, Faulkner operated in three time registers. First, there is stream of consciousness, or phenomenological time—namely, action in the present among Faulkner's living characters or narrators,[7] as experienced in their minds. Second, there is episodic time—namely, communication between the living and the dead through memories or flashbacks or what Faulkner called "thought transfers."[8] Third, there is narrative time—namely, narrators' reconstructions of the causal flow of how past characters sequentially influenced each other.

As if three time registers were not enough, Faulkner the author juggled two more times,[9] which connected *Absalom, Absalom!* to its contexts. Epistemological time is the sequence through which (the implied) Faulkner and his readers jointly discover the *Absalom* narrators' reconstruction of past characters. And intertextual or projected time is how Faulkner intercalated his various novels together. Assembling memories into history, Faulkner shows, is not only a process of assembling multiple perspectives; it is also a process of synchronizing multiple times.

Figure 1 outlines the argument and structure of this article. In parallel to production autocatalyis, where living hypercycles emerge out of reproduction of products and skills, in linguistic autocatalysis—at least of the storytelling variant explored here—collective narrative time emerges from expe-

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[7] In *Absalom, Absalom!* Faulkner applied "experiential present" to two historical times: the time of narrators talking among themselves in 1909–10, through the medium of direct speaking, and the time of characters talking among themselves in 1865, through the medium of narrators' minds.

[8] Most of us no doubt would relabel Faulkner's "thought transfers" less viscerally as "deeply empathetic identification between narrators and characters." But spirit possession or channeling among peoples' minds was part of Faulkner's point.

[9] Faulkner the writer is very well aware of the sixth (standard) time of historical dates, but it is remarkable how little he mentions these explicitly in *Absalom, Absalom!* (Really just in one graveyard scene.) Dates are mentioned more overtly in his other novels.

(a) Production Autocatalysis

Random products & skills   self-organize through   Hypercycles (= life)

reproduction into
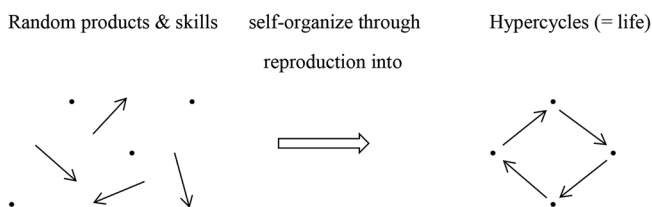
(b) Linguistic Autocatalysis (one type of)

Stream of consciousness   organized by conversations   Narrative time
                             among observers and
                             narrators into

Random actions

& memories

Mechanisms: 1. Individual memory

2. Changing perspectives

3. Compositionality → Symmetry → Cognitive Space

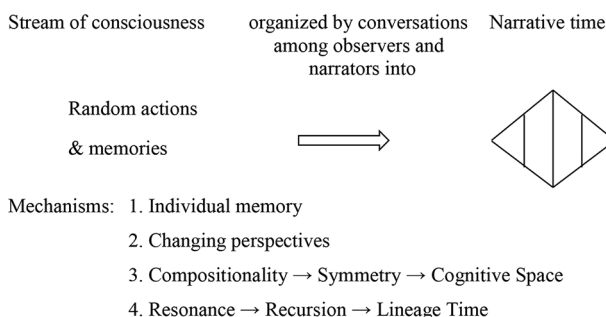4. Resonance → Recursion → Lineage Time

FIG. 1.—Autocatalysis

riential streams of consciousness through iterated conversations among observers and narrators, both living and dead. In these conversations, four assembly mechanisms are employed: Observers use (1) verbalization (either in speech or in the mind) of individual memories and (2) changing perspectives from self to alters. And narrators use (3) compositionality → symmetry to construct cognitive space, and (4) resonance → recursion to induce ordinal time. Through these assembly procedures, Faulkner implies, social space and time emerge out of interaction among characters and narrators. Einstein likewise argued that physical space-time emerges from interaction among mass/energy objects. Faulkner's conversations, spoken and mental, are analogous to Einstein's gravity waves.

NARRATIVE NETWORKS

This article uses the methodology of narrative networks to analyze Faulkner's assembly of memories, so this literature review will focus on that. Relevant other literatures—ranging from narratology to language to social networks to Southern literature to Southern slavery to the philosophy of history

to collective memory to neurological research—are virtually unbounded, and so will be accessed only *en passant* as required.[10]

The methodology of conceptualizing and measuring narratives as networks has been used in three different ways in the academic literature: history as narrative networks, identity as narrative networks, and literature as narrative networks.[11] My analysis of Faulkner obviously is the third approach, but my questions about assembling memories emerge from the second approach. I review here only the historically oriented subset of the narrative-network literature.[12]

History as Narrative Networks

Abbott (2001, 2016), Sewell (2005), Wagner-Pacifici (2010), and Ermakoff (2015) have been the pioneers in espousing an "eventful temporality" in sociology. The core question in this approach is how to conceptualize contingency as causality. Abbott and coauthors (Abbott and Forrest 1986; Abbott and Hrycak 1990), Abell (1987, 2004), Griffin (1993), and especially Roberto Franzosi (1998, 2004, 2010*a*, 2010*b*; Franzosi, De Fazio, and Vicari 2012; Franzosi, Ji, and Zhang 2013) have developed formal narrative-network methods to operationalize and to investigate the epistemological question of historical causality.

Following Sahlins (1985), Sewell defines "events" macroscopically as "sequences of occurrences that result in transformations of structures" (2005, p. 227). Citing the empirical studies of Traugott (1985), Kimeldorf (1988), and Mann (1986), Sewell's preferred mechanism of contingency is not agency but conjuncture (2005, pp. 100–123). Like Mann, my own chapters in Padgett and Powell (2012) on medieval Tuscany, Renaissance Florence, early modern Amsterdam, 19th-century Germany, and 20th-century Soviet Union and China proceed in this same "conjuncture (plus feedback) of multiple social networks" spirit.[13]

From the perspective of collective entities like professions, Abbott (2001) conceptualized the issue of historical contingency as trajectories plus turn-

[10] A sampling of the huge literature on Faulkner himself is presented in the footnotes to the Faulkner analysis below.

[11] There is also an interesting fourth way, not reviewed here: organizations as narrative networks. Pentland and Feldman (2007) conceptualize organizational routines as branching flow charts of possible performances. This usage follows the intellectual legacy of March and Simon (1958), but is also consistent with Fararo and Skvoretz (1984).

[12] This leaves to one side the ethnographically oriented literature reviewed by Polletta et al. (2011).

[13] Mere conjuncture alone—without switching thereby from negative to positive feedback—is not sufficient to generate transformation or tipping. Indeed, more often than not, negative feedback creates resilience, which is the repair of perturbations (Padgett and Powell 2012, chaps. 1, 3).

ing points. Within regimes, trajectories are common sequences or "careers" of development.[14] Across regimes, turning points are switches in developmental sequence, driven by competitive (or synergistic) interactions among linked ecologies. From the perspective of the higher-order ecological systems themselves, Abbott more recently (2016) has conceptualized historical contingency as lineage. Both Sewell and Abbott share a macroscopic definition of "historical event," microcomponents within being labeled occurrences or happenings.

Technical work in this tradition has defined "event" more narrowly as action—more specifically as a sentence that contains action, physical or otherwise. A narrative in this linguistic approach is a set of causally interrelated events/actions among actors that leads to an outcome (an "ending"). This is story among characters, but with narrators excluded.

Abell (1987) described narrative formally through algebras. His empirical application was to a business policy debate. Axelrod (1976) provided a technically less sophisticated but historically more interesting application of graph theory to foreign policy debates, including the one between Hitler and Chamberlain at Munich.

Griffin (1993) operationalized narrative through Heise's (1989) event-structure analysis, which diagrams causally necessary sequences of (analyst extracted) action sentences in stories. Griffin's application was to a detailed narrative report of one lynching in Mississippi in 1930. "Historical contingency" in Griffin's explanation of lynching was the discretionary intervention (or not) by a sheriff.

Franzosi (1998, 2004, 2010*a*, 2010*b*; Franzosi, De Fazio, and Vicari 2012; Franzosi, Ji, and Zhang 2013) offers by far the best-developed formal modeling of narrative in sociology. He stands out among those reviewed here in his self-conscious effort to ground narrative networks in linguistic narratology. Initiated as a postdoc in Charles Tilly's University of Michigan research project of studying historical collective action through newspapers, Franzosi's own formalizations of newspaper reports have focused on Italian fascism and strikes (2004, 2010*a*, 2010*b*) and on lynching in Georgia (Franzosi, De Fazio, and Vicari 2012; Franzosi, Ji, and Zhang 2013).

Action sentences contain subjects, verbs, and objects. This means that narrative networks can be aggregated from text either through representing verbs/actions (= micro "events") as nodes, linked through imputed causal implication, or through representing subjects/actors as nodes, linked through sequential actions. Abell (1987) and Griffin (1993) (and Bearman in the next

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[14] Repeating "objective" social sequences observed in within-regime trajectories is similar to regulated fetal development in biological species, although Abbott himself never explores such analogies. Abbott (2001, p. 20) explicitly abjured the subjectivist interpretation, taken here, of narrative as retrospective reconstruction by memory. But he subsequently has withdrawn his earlier opposition (2016, pp. 6–7).

tradition) take the first approach to network representation. Franzosi and me in this article (and Moretti [2013] in the third tradition) take the second approach to representation.[15] For Franzosi, this choice was motivated by his core methodological question: Where is the actor in variable-oriented statistical research? Events-as-nodes highlight the formal sequencing of actions, while backgrounding the actors who produced those actions.

Identity as Narrative Networks

The first tradition in narrative networks takes the perspective of the historian—namely, narratives are potential causal explanations of things that really have happened in the world.[16] The analytic focus is on the story characters, not on the narrators of those stories. The second approach in sociology to narrative networks focuses on expressing and/or constructing personal identities. Narration itself moves to the fore. Paul McLean (1998, 2007) and Peter Bearman (Bearman, Faris, and Moody 1999; Bearman and Stovel 2000) represent the historically oriented branch of this approach.[17] Bearman, like me, follows in the intellectual footsteps of Harrison White. Along with Tammy Smith (2006), this article adds assembly of memory to White's intellectual lineage.

For White (1992, 2008, pp. 10–12), "identity" had four distinct meanings: (a) "getting footing," which I interpret to mean behaviors or practices that reproduce in a setting, (b) "face," which I interpret to mean perceived role, (c) "switching," which is the relocation and reattribution of the first type of identity into different settings, and (d) "stories," which are post hoc accounts of interrelated sets and sequences of switchings.[18] White's emphasis on "stories" is seen by the social-network community as opening the structuralist door to culture, but actually narrative is an underdeveloped theme in

[15] For pictures of Franzosi narrative networks, see Franzosi (2004, pp. 101–8, 2010*a*, p. 122; 2010*b*, p. 608), Franzosi, De Fazio, and Vicari (2012, pp. 12–13), and Franzosi, Ji, and Zhang (2013, pp. 14–16). For short texts, like newspaper reports (Franzosi) or folk stories (Propp) or life stories (Bearman), either approach to aggregation is feasible. For long texts like novels, however, detailed networks of actions are infeasible to represent because of the volume and heterogeneity of actions contained in those texts.

[16] Abbott (1992) has called this "narrative positivism," proudly including himself in this category. The later Abbott (2016) of lyrical sociology is something else again.

[17] Shuman (1986) is an interesting exemplar of a different ethnographic branch. Polletta et al. (2011) provide a broad overview.

[18] Brubaker and Cooper (2000) have criticized the proliferation of linguistic meanings of the overused word "identity"—from psychological identification to deconstructionist attributions. White is guilty in this respect, but he is hardly alone. Tilly (2002, pp. 10–11) wryly notes that the *American Heritage Dictionary* offers six contradictory definitions for identity. Hardly a concept, in other words, that without emendation has scientific clarity. White is more self-conscious and aware of the term's multiple meanings than are others.

White's book. The more innovative insight was "switching," where multiple perspectives are telescoped into each other, without the sequential ordering and coherence that narrative implies.

Tilly (2002) developed White's "stories into identities" theme more consistently than did White himself.[19] In Tilly's relational realism, "Rather than living inside human bodies, true identities invariably live in ties among persons. (More generally, they live in relations among social sites, but 'persons' will do for present purposes.)" (2002, p. 48). "Seen from behind the backs of raconteurs, most of social life consists of interpersonal transactions whose consequences the participants can neither foresee nor control. Yet, after the fact, participants in complex social transactions seal them with stories. Those stories portray the participants as acting with deliberation and foresight" (Tilly 2002, p. x). Thus narratives, in the White-Tilly approach, are post hoc fictions, constructing "vocabularies of motive" attributions, in the language of C. Wright Mills (1940). Identities, in White's fourth sense of stories, retrospectively make a disorderly world appear to participants to be more orderly and predictable than it is.

McLean (1998, 2007) studied identity construction—in the sense of presentation of self—through patronage letters in Renaissance Florence. In addition to his humanistic close readings of 1,100 of these short texts, McLean used multidimensional scaling to trace the cultural evolution, over 150 years, of the co-occurrence of relationally and rhetorically freighted words through which Florentines constructed their interactional stories to and requests of each another.

Bearman and Stovel (2000) used events-as-nodes methodology to translate into a narrative network one of the six autobiographical life histories presented in Abel (1938) about "how I became a Nazi." Abel's life histories (600 total) were produced in 1934 for a prize contest that Abel organized, with Nazi party cooperation. Bearman and Stovel's interest was not in the content of these life stories but in their form.[20]

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[19] In this article I am trying to do the same.

[20] The main substantive finding in their case study was a disjuncture between a densely interconnected "becoming" topology in the first half of this life story, before conversion, and a fragmented "being" topology in the second half of the story, after conversion. Their psychologically oriented conclusion was that autobiographical narrativity breaks down under totalizing "master identities" like Nazis. More cases need to be analyzed, however, before this interpretation can be sustained. The life history they analyzed was that of a 23-year-old boy whose postconversion "being" life consisted in traveling around organizing events. In contrast, another of Abel's life histories—that of a 48-year-old S.S. member—appears highly narrated throughout, down to self-consciousness (textually underlined in subheadings) of three successive lives. That autobiography ended with a chilling climax: "*The fourth life*. 'S.S. man, your honor is loyalty!'" (Abel 1938, p. 262). This does not necessarily contradict Bearman and Stovel's (2000) conclusion, but the two autobiographical stories are not alike. Hopefully someone will continue to work on this fantastic database (see Merkl [1975] for a statistical treatment).

Bearman et al. (1999) similarly translated into events-as-nodes narrative networks 14 of the 29 life stories reported in Myrdal (1965) about local history of the Chinese Revolution in one village. Very innovatively, Bearman et al. pooled these 14 accounts, solicited by Myrdal, of the "same" village history into a collective narrative-network representation, by merging the accounts' event nodes. This is equivalent to what I call "common knowledge" below. High overlap in content existed in that Chinese village for the same reason that it exists in Faulkner's fictional Mississippi village: not only was village history objectively the same, but also there were years of conversations among villagers that preceded the recording of their oral stories into written narratives.

Of all the articles in this literature review of narrative networks, Tammy Smith (2006) is the one asking questions about narrative processes of constructing collective memory. Smith investigated the compelling case of competing Italian-Istrian and Croatian-Istrian narratives of post–World War II persecutions, and the emergence of a "compromise" narrative within the combined Istrian immigrant community in New York City. For peace to ensue between the immigrant subgroups, Italian-Istrian historical narratives had to be transformed from Italian versus Slav to Istrian versus non-Istrian and Croatian-Istrian narratives from fascist versus communist to Istrian versus non-Istrian. Smith demonstrated that this transformation was achieved through reconceptualizing the details of shared "boundary concepts"—in particular, that of *rimasti*, their Italian and Croatian cousins who had remained in Croatia. Smith cannot trace the conversational process through which this occurred among immigrant narrators, but her contribution of operationalizing and formalizing "collective identity" as "collective memory" is valuable.

In the context of the White-Tilly tradition, Faulkner offers one (no doubt not the only) explicit account of conversational mechanisms, among both living and dead, through which multiple streams of consciousness can be assembled into collective memory by narrators.

Literature as Narrative Networks

Franco Moretti is the trailblazer in this final, and very recent, third research tradition of "digital humanities." In *Distant Reading* Moretti (2013) represented Hamlet as a series of conversation networks among the characters in that Shakespeare play.[21] His central purpose was to identify three overlapping "character spaces" of egocentric ties surrounding Hamlet, Claudius, and Horatio—thereby not only to show the brokerage position of Hamlet

[21] He also plotted *Macbeth* and *King Lear* for comparison, without engaging in analysis of them.

between Claudius and Horatio, but also to show the asymmetry between the dense (but closed) court clique of Claudius and the externally oriented (and open) star cluster of Horatio. I doubt that these social-network diagrams taught Shakespeare scholars anything that they did not already know,[22] but the formalization of Hamlet as narrative network allowed Moretti to perform counterfactual exercises, to illustrate how the play would have unfolded differently in the absence of various characters.

Other examples of narrative networks of literature include Elston, Dames, and McKeown (2001) on Jane Austin, Newman and Girvan (2003) on *Les misérables*, Rydberg-Cox (2011) on Greek drama, and Agarwal et al. (2012) on *Alice in Wonderland*. These examples only illustrated the network technique, without engaging in any literary analysis.

Graham Sack (2006) went further, in terms of network analysis, even than Moretti in his unpublished social-network analysis of *Bleak House*. He showed (a) that this Dickens novel was dominated by weak ties, not by strong ties among its characters—a sociological effort by Dickens to reflect newly urbanized society,[23] and (b) that unlike Granovetter's weak ties, Dickens's weak ties were topologically dense—an alleged political attempt by Dickens to demonstrate a purpose for the welfare state. Sack thereby tried to root Dickens's novel in the social context of its production.

In the context of this digital-humanities tradition, the contribution of this article's narrative-network analysis of Faulkner is its integration of networks of narrators with networks of characters. According to Faulkner, the intertwined narrative networks of characters and narrators coconstructed each other, according to the mechanism of thought transfer (or deep empathy).

NARRATIVE-NETWORK DATABASE OF *ABSALOM, ABSALOM!*

I decomposed *Absalom, Absalom!* into over 500 actions and interactions among the characters in that novel. Characters and narrators constitute the nodes in my narrative networks; actions and interactions comprise the ties.[24] The content of these actions and interactions in the database consisted of long quotations from the novel. From these quotations about interactions, I highlighted kinship relations and rejection or killing actions, because those dramatically are central to this particular novel. In addition to the characters performing and receiving them, for each action or interac-

[22] Greenblatt (2001) has written a book about remembrance in *Hamlet*, which suggests that the ghost of Hamlet's father functioned for Hamlet's memory in ways not dissimilar to Faulkner's thought transfers for Quentin Compson's memory.

[23] Rachel Cohen (2004) portrays the evolution of American literary authors similarly as re-linking of weak ties.

[24] To repeat, in the narrative-networks literature this procedure is most similar to that of Franco Moretti on *Hamlet*.

tion "observation," I also coded (a) the narrator and listener of the reported action, (b) the place and "time" (however indicated) of the characters' actions, (c) the place and "time" of narrator reports, and (d) my classification of "scenes" of closely related actions, based on textual propinquity. I also recorded (e) narrators' interpretations of characters' motivations, if those were indicated explicitly in the text.

In addition to this primary data set of the novel itself, I created two supplementary data sets: (1) A data set of italicized text, since that was Faulkner's textual method for indicating streams-of-consciousness thoughts occurring *in media res* inside the minds of his characters and narrators. Especially interesting are thought-transfer projections from one character or narrator into another:[25] that is, empathetic identifications by some narrators with particular other characters or narrators, and (2) classification of scenes by narrators. Faulkner's modernist procedure was to tell the same scene over and over again from multiple narrator perspectives. These two supplementary data sets kept bookkeeping account of these multiperspectival retellings.

NARRATIVE CONSTRUCTION OF TIME

Before turning to how modernist Faulkner complicated it, it will be helpful to specify as a baseline what is meant by the "narrative construction of time," especially in the literary genre of the novel. Faulkner actually juggled many times in *Absalom, Absalom!*, but narrative time was the definition of "understanding" that Faulkner's narrators were struggling to achieve.

As everyone since Aristotle knows, narrative plots take the general format of beginning → middle → end, where "beginning" sets up and defines the characters, "middle" provides some complication for the characters, and "end" resolves the complication, often (though not always) by some transformation in the characters. Ricoeur (1985) calls this [old] concordance → discordance → [new] concordance.[26] To this basic definition of a (traditional) story, the novel adds explicit or implicit narrators, who are telling the story. Points of view are always latent in characters' treatment of each other, but the novel's addition of narrators offers readers mental platforms within the

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[25] Faulkner explained his "thought transference" narrative technique to the editor (Ben Wasson) of *The Sound and the Fury* in early summer, 1929: "Thought transference is subjective; i.e., in Ben's mind and not in the reader's eye. I think italics are necessary to establish for the reader Benjy's confusion; that unbroken-surfaced confusion of an idiot which is outwardly a dynamic and logical coherence. . . . I purposely used italics for both actual scenes and remembered scenes for the reason, not to indicate the different dates of happenings, but merely to permit the reader to anticipate a thought-transference, letting the recollection postulate its own date" (Blotner 1977, pp. 44–45).

[26] Labov (1972, p. 363) elaborates this (maybe overelaborates this?) into Abstract → Orientation → Complicating Action → Evaluation → Result or Resolution → Coda.

novel for them to experiment with different points of view on the characters themselves. Constructing multiple perspectives on the same action is more viable in the genre of a novel than it is when narratives are God given, like in an epic (Bakhtin [1941] 1981).

Figure 2 draws out the implications of this for the narrative construction of time in *Absalom, Absalom!* Along the bottom of the diagram is listed the number of pages in *Absalom* devoted to the various episodes.[27]

A brief synopsis of the *Absalom* story, as told in narrative time, is as follows: Thomas Sutpen emerged out of "poor white trash" in West Virginia to become an antebellum Mississippi cotton plantation owner, through means of two misadventures. In the "boy story," Sutpen as a teenager was disrespected by a Virginia plantation gentleman's rotund black house slave, who despised Sutpen's poor-white background. In Haiti as a young man, racist Sutpen was "tricked" into marrying an octoroon,[28] from whom he flew in disgust. Upon arriving in Mississippi to try again to construct himself, Sutpen successfully established his "Mississippi design" of a proper Southern slave family, which consisted of the combination of "aristocratic" white wife and children, with black house slaves and miscegeny.

The complicating "love triangle" in this story was debonair Charles Bon, the offspring of Sutpen's rejected Haiti union, who reappeared to captivate Sutpen's white children, Henry and Judith, and Sutpen's wife, Ellen—to the point of all three desiring marriage between Judith and Charles Bon. Racist Sutpen of course refused to comply, without wanting to reveal his hidden Haiti past. The core puzzle in the novel is why Henry, who loved Charles Bon, after four years of fighting with him side-by-side in the Civil War turned around and killed him on the doorstep of the mansion, once Henry and Bon returned together to Mississippi for Bon to marry Judith, as all three of them desired.

In September 1909, 44 years after the Civil War events in question, Rosa Coldfield, Ellen's sister, and Mr. Compson, Quentin's father, tell Quentin the primary narrator as much as they know (which is imperfect) about this family's history. A few months later, in January 1910 at Harvard, Quentin and his Canadian roommate, Shreve, try to fill in the missing pieces after Quentin receives a letter from his father that Henry, Sutpen's long-missing white son, and Clytie, Sutpen's "black" (i.e., mixed-race) daughter had just killed themselves in a fire at the old Sutpen mansion, in response to an unwanted visitation by Rosa. We know not from *Absalom* but from *The Sound and the Fury* (Faulkner [1929] 1984), published eight years before *Absalom*,

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[27] The seeming "undercount" of pages in the Haiti episode will be rectified and explained at the end of this article, once Clytie's silent perspective is added.

[28] That is, to a one-eighth-black daughter of a Haiti plantation owner, who appeared to Sutpen at first to be Spanish.

FIG. 2.—Narrative construction of time

Primary Protagonist: **Thomas Sutpen**

Primary Narrator: **Quentin Compson**

boy story — Haiti — Mississippi "design" — "love" triangle — Sutpen death & female lives — fire — Harvard

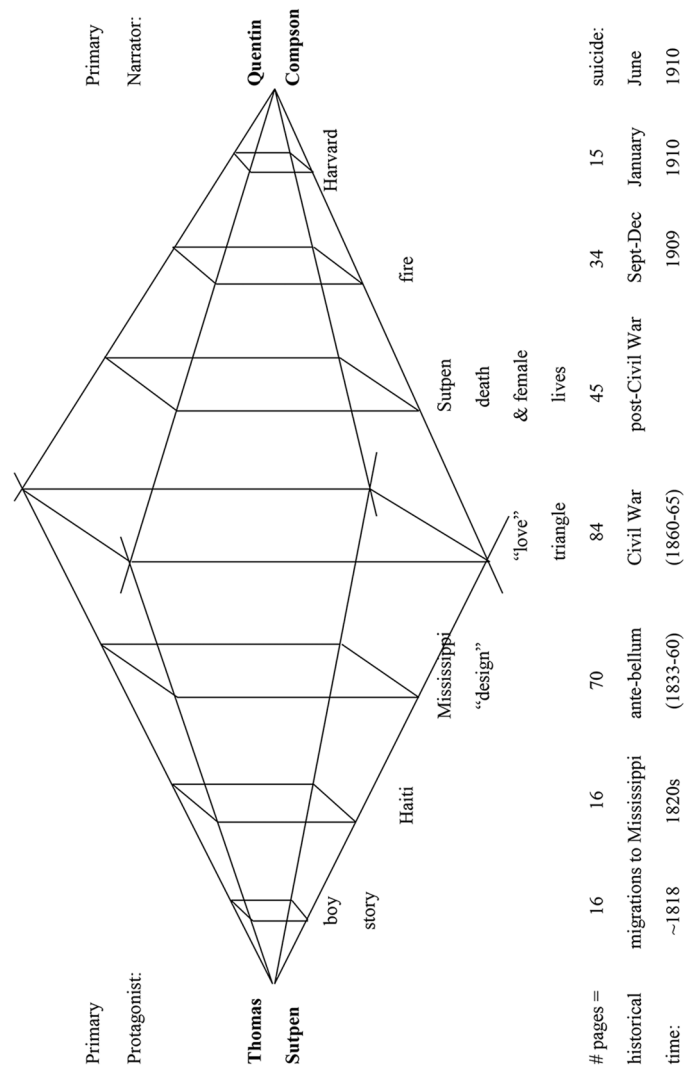| # pages =	16	16	70	84	45	34	15	
historical	migrations to Mississippi		ante-bellum	Civil War	post-Civil War	Sept-Dec	January	suicide:
time:	~1818	1820s	(1833-60)	(1860-65)		1909	1910	June 1910

that Quentin Compson, the primary narrator of *Absalom, Absalom!*, committed suicide in June 1910.

The reason why narratives are more satisfying when they have an "end" or "closure" (Smith 1968) is that there is a reader (or a listener) at the terminus of the narrative chain. Without resolution, narratives do not help readers (or listeners) to think about Quentin, slavery, the South, or themselves.[29] Readers will interpret stories from their own perspective in any event (Iser 1978), but when novels add explicit or implicit narrators, narratives offer to readers the chance empathetically to play at being an "other" (Mead [1934] 1977; Ricoeur 1984, 2004). Narrative "time" has to end to give readers an imaginary "present" into which to project themselves.

Conversely time has to begin to provide some baseline against which to measure change. Narratives construct time, even time as grand as the American Civil War, on the model of a human biography. That is precisely why they are so satisfying and meaningful to readers or listeners. As such, narratives construct the double perspective diagrammed in figure 2. History as a set of purportedly related events simultaneously is perceived backward as a temporally ordered scenes leading up to now, and it is seen forward as the causal consequence of past scenes or events. Narratives imagine time as if looking through a receding series of windows, each window painted with a scene. Readers are presumed to possess the visual capacity to alter focal length in order to see each individual scene separately.

Viewed as beginning and end together, narrative time is the superposition of the time-backward perspective of the primary narrator with the time-forward perspective of the primary character or protagonist. Figure 3 illustrates how such a superposition can emerge from a concatenation of (remembered) biographies into (remembered) lineages.

Taking off from a few insightful remarks by Mary Douglas (1986, pp. 72–74), imagine descent first from the perspective of genes. All people have mothers and fathers, and mothers and fathers, and mothers and fathers, and then back down again. There are no families or groups or ethnicities with boundaries from the genetic point of view—only gradients and clusters, with everyone being connected with everyone, through paths of various lengths.

Looked at from the point of view of an ego in the present, a "family" is a V-shaped cone of ancestors, receding back into past generations as far as the eye can see. Multiple perspectives of people looking backward can be represented as overlapping such temporal cones. If people in the present are eliminated—death, exile, suppression, genocide, whatever—their cones of living memory become effaced from the self-consciousness of the collectivity.

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[29] In historiography, this is the difference between a finished history and a chronicle, which stops (and maybe also begins) *in medias res* (see Green [1972] for the case of Florence).
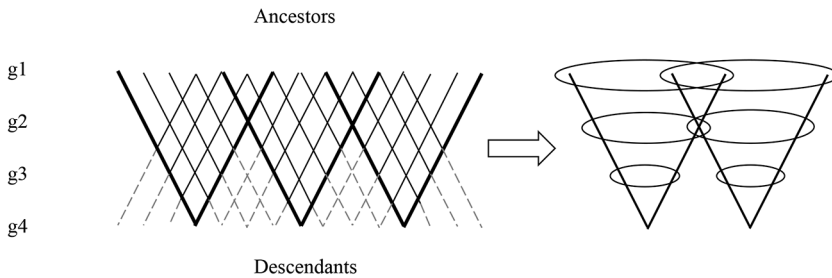
1. Genetic reality

as subjectively perceived:

Ancestors

g1

g2

g3

g4

Descendants
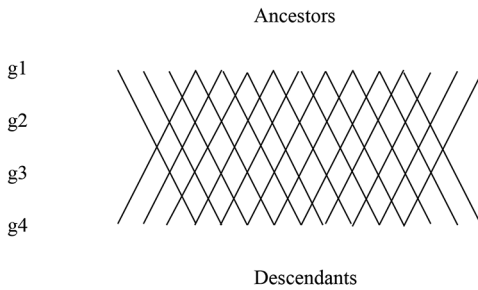
2. Egocentric perspective of Self

as subjectively perceived:

Ancestors

g1

g2

g3

g4

Descendants

3. Lineage perspective of Ancestor

as subjectively perceived:

Ancestors

g1

g2

g3

g4

Descendants
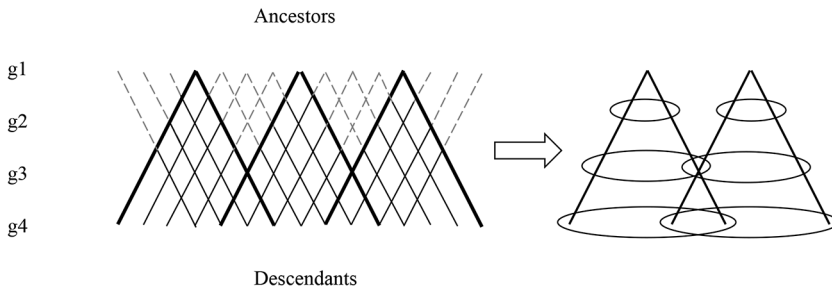
FIG. 3.—Writing history as lineage (an extension of Mary Douglas). Notation: g1, g2, g3, g4 are lineage generations. Generations are analogous to temporal slices in narrative, ordinally arrayed to be contemporaneous. Ovals are episodes or scenes within time slices.

"Lineage," in the sense of genealogical descent trees, is the reverse perspective of a focal ancestor looking forward in time, down through his/her ever expanding generations of offspring. A "family" with boundaries is coordination among some set of people in the present about which common ancestor they all descended from. As focus on some target ancestors proceeds, collateral other untargeted ancestors become forgotten. This is

4. Narrative histories as biographies   **as subjectively perceived:**

= the fusion of 2 + 3:

Ancestors

g1

g2

g3

g4

Descendants
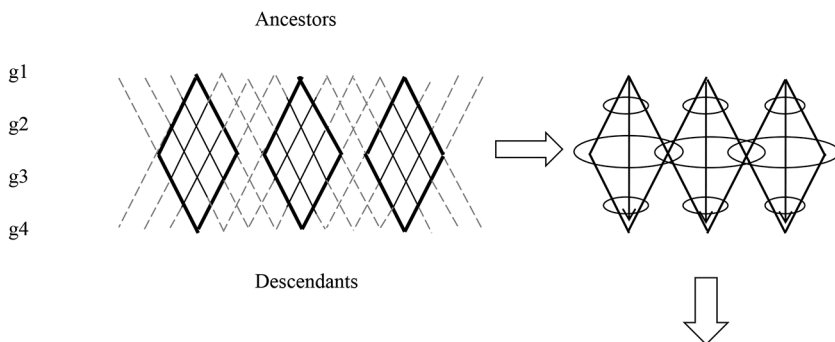
5. Aggregating biographies into subplots   **as subjectively perceived:**

reconstructed
past

Ancestors

g1

g2

g3

g4

Descendants

implied future
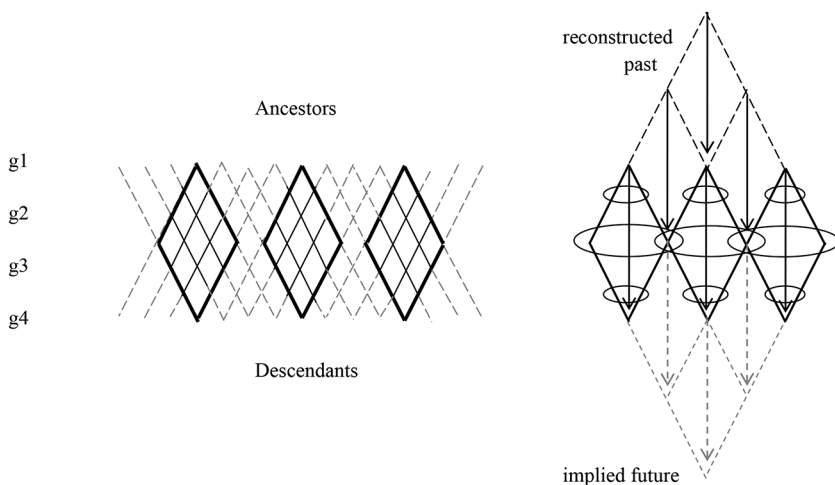
FIG. 3.—(*Continued*)

what I take to mean "the social construction of family through writing history"—namely, not a fabrication of descent, but rather a highly selective recollection of the exceedingly complex underlying genetic "truth."

As people in the present converse among themselves, looking for shared points of reference to understand each other, they zoom in on overlap between their respective temporal cones of memory. Convergence on common ancestors (or other fixed points) in the past thereby emerges naturally (even subliminally) out of conversation in the present. How extensive and broad

this convergence is—and conversely how extensive and broad forgetting is—depends on the network structure of who is conversing with whom.

A limit to convergence is how far back into the past conversationalists' memories extend. If temporal memory is short or if social/genetic distance is large, ancestors must be discovered (or invented) beyond the direct mental access of participants. Faulkner suggests that this problem can be solved not by talking with the living, but by talking with the dead. Faulkner's thought-transfer idea is that people in the present can deeply empathize with people in the past, using cognitive skills not so different from readers identifying with characters in a novel. By viewing the past from successive trial "alter ego" perspectives, puzzled people in the present can extend and deepen their comprehension of their pasts, in the manner illustrated in panel 5 of figure 3. As is the case in shorter-range comparisons of direct-access memories, this longer-range assembly of history need not be fabrication. Indeed it is not if empathy is not cynical. Rather "social construction of history" in the long range as well as in the short range is a highly selective search through "truth" as best as one imperfectly understands it. The paradox is that one cannot foreground a focus of vision without simultaneously backgrounding a depth of darkness. Humans cannot apprehend genetic or historical flow in all of their complexity. Hence point of view or perspective is the foundation of cognition.[30]

The goal of this article is not just to analyze the operation of narrative time—and hence "history"—but to explore Faulkner's account of how that emerges out of participants' memories. Modernist Faulkner never presumes narrative time to be omniscient. Rather he treated that as the hard-earned and well-deserved accomplishment of his narrators in their conversations and flashbacks. Narrative time was only one of the five times that Faulkner juggled in *Absalom, Absalom!*, the other four being phenomenological time (stream of consciousness), episodic time, epistemological time, and intertextual or projection time.

The protestations of his own modernist self-projection notwithstanding, was William Faulkner himself a unitary author, who unfolded *Absalom* according to a brilliant preconceived design? Or was Faulkner himself, as his writing style suggests, a conversation among his narrators? No certain answer to attributional questions like these is possible, but I am inclined to take Faulkner at his word that he was the latter. Collateral evidence for this second interpretation is this: (a) *Absalom, Absalom!* went through numerous drafts, separated by many years (Langford 1971). The overall conception

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[30] Herbert Simon (1967) said that we simplify in order to become rational. Faulkner might have substituted the word "sane" for "rational." White's (1992, 2008) and Tilly's (2002) perspective on "stories," which obfuscate as well as reveal, is similar.

and design of *Absalom* evolved substantially over this extended rewrite period.[31] (b) Faulkner's general approach to writing, not just in *Absalom* but in most of his novels, was first to draft and even publish in magazines standalone stories, and then to try to reassemble those into subplots of integrated novels.[32] Often, especially in his mid-career, this second-stage integration succeeded brilliantly (*Absalom*, *The Sound and the Fury*, *Light in August*), but later in his life it did not (*Go Down, Moses*; Faulkner [1942] 1994).[33] (c) Faulkner shows his primary narrator Quentin's mind to explode with thought transfers from stories and characters of his past. There is no reason not to suppose that the mind of Faulkner, a lifelong resident of a small Mississippi Delta town drenched in stories and memories of the Lost Cause, was like his primary narrator (and alter ego) Quentin in this respect.

Thus one should not presume coherence in Faulkner or in his creation *Absalom, Absalom!* unless demonstrated explicitly, especially since we readers and observers are powerfully built to attribute coherence, especially to people, whether it is there or not (Mills 1940).

INDIVIDUAL MEMORIES

As already mentioned in the introduction, there are four mechanisms that Faulkner's *Absalom* narrators use in their conversations to assemble narra-

[31] In a Q&A with University of Virginia students in 1957, many years after writing *Absalom*, Faulkner himself remembered: "Q. Sir, along that same line, you mentioned at the English Club that you had to lay aside *Absalom* at one point, to resume it later on. . . . A. I can't say just where it was I had to put it down, that I decided that I didn't know enough at that time, maybe, or my feeling toward it wasn't passionate enough or pure enough, but I don't remember at what point I put it down. Though when I took it up again I almost rewrote the whole thing. I think that what I put down were inchoate fragments that wouldn't coalesce and then when I took it up again, as I remember, I rewrote it" (Hobson 2003, p. 285).

[32] In the same Q&A Faulkner also said: "Q. In another class you stated that you seldom have the plot of your novels worked out before you begin to write, but that they simply develop from a character or incident. I was wondering if you remember what character or what incident caused you to write *Absalom, Absalom!* A. Sutpen. Q. You thought of that character and then— A. Yes, the idea of a man who wanted sons and got sons who destroyed him. The other characters I had to get out of [the] attic to tell the story of Sutpen" (Hobson 2003, p. 284).

[33] See Singal (1997, 256–83). This is not to say that *Go Down Moses* is not brilliant at the level of its insightful and empathetic stories—especially those that empathize deeply with Faulkner's black characters. Examples of the latter include Rider and Lucas Beauchamp in *Go Down Moses*, Joe Christmas in *Light in August*, Nancy in "That Evening Sun," and Dilthey in *The Sound and the Fury*. There are "black" or mulatto characters galore in *Absalom, Absalom!*, but unlike his other novels Faulkner never writes chapters explicitly from their perspective, even though they figure centrally in that narrative. I argue below at the end of this article, however, that in the last chapter of *Absalom* silent Clytie comes belatedly to be crucial to Quentin's composite perspective.

tive time—individual memories, changing perspectives, symmetry, and resonance.

Within an ordinal time frame, an individual's memory works like the mental trajectory in figure 4. A person in the present (TIME 3) projects him/herself back to another person in the past (TIME 1) and then tries to derive a sequence of actions and interactions flowing from that past person, which have affected the self (or other person of interest) in the present. In the case of contemporaneous memory, the "person in the present" is ego, the thinker or imaginer. In the case of a novel, the "person in the present" could be a character or narrator with whom the reader identifies. In Faulkner's modernist novels, multiple narrators are thinking or imagining in parallel about characters and other narrators, all trying to derive overlapping causal chains back to themselves.

Autocatalysis in any individual's memory are mental trajectory cycles in time that reproduce—that is, the person's memory returns over and over again to the same target person or persons of interest from the past and to the same causal paths linking them to the one doing the remembering. These are the little egocentric diamonds in the fourth panel of figure 3. Of course in reality many people have affected any person, through many possible causal paths. But iterating individual memory builds more and less heavily used paths (and bushes of paths), not unlike pheromone trail systems in ants (Bechtel and Abrahamsen [1991] 2002). The more deeply autocatalysis in the brain builds well organized memory systems, the less widely explored is the remaining unexcavated social space-time.[34]
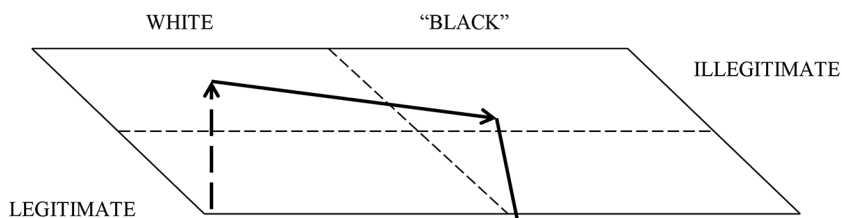
Individual memories, in other words, are built through selective attention and reattention (and their corollary, forgetting). At the psychological level of a single memory or narrator, low constraints on selectivity of attended facts tends to produce self-fulfilling fantasies about history that merely ratify navel-gazing preconceptions of identity. If a brain was talking only to itself, its perceived world would be a Rorschach blot. It could not distinguish between change in the world and change in the categories of its perception of that world.[35] Social triangulation is what keeps brains from navel gazing (see Padgett 2011). History becomes "real" to the extent that it is constrained by facts observed by more than one.[36]

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[34] March (1991) called this "exploration versus exploitation."

[35] Postmodernists like Derrida and Hayden White (1987) sometimes seem to think that history is nothing more than this.

[36] This is not to say, of course, that "real" means "singular." More than one interpretation may fit the same facts. Statisticians call this "the identification problem." Like it or not, complicated histories, even scientifically well-grounded ones, are beset with identification problems. Writers of fiction, like Faulkner, are of course quite happy with such "problems."

TIME 1

WHITE   "BLACK"

ILLEGITIMATE

LEGITIMATE

TIME 2

WHITE   "BLACK"

ILLEGITIMATE

LEGITIMATE

TIME 3

WHITE   "BLACK"

ILLEGITIMATE

LEGITIMATE
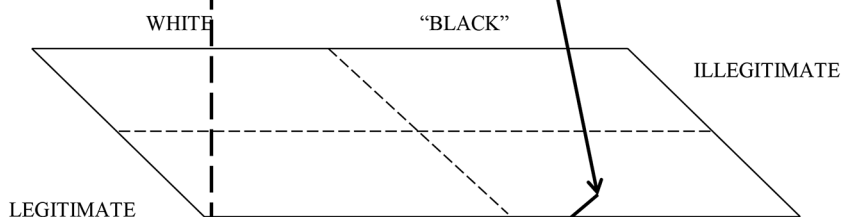
F<small>IG</small>. 4.—Trajectories in individual memory

In cyclic trajectories like figure 4, biographies are memory paths coming down from the past to the present. And identities are memory paths going back from the present to the past. If there is more than one target person in the past with whom one identifies, and/or more than one recalled causal

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path through which one has been influenced, then people with memory have multiple biographies and multiple identities.

Why do people bother with memory? To figure the way forward.[37] Another corollary of autocatalysis in individual memory is that multiple recollections about biographical pasts construct multiple "yous" in the present. To figure the way forward entails figuring out which past got you here.[38]
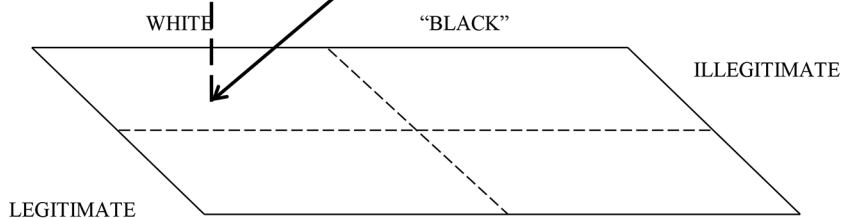
The mechanics of how all this works, however, depends on the architecture of time through which memory paths are traced. If ordinal time layers are telescoped or collapsed into one endless "present," then memory becomes an associational process of searching through past episodes and associations as if they were all now. In his earlier novel *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner wrote a famous chapter about Benji, an "idiot" with no sense of time but with an acute and prescient memory of past events into which he free associated in response to stimuli in his current perception. Benji's associational memory, to which Faulkner showed great respect, was a logic of emotions, not a logic of causality or temporal sequence. Rosa is a narrator in *Absalom* who operates often in phenomenological time—not because she is an idiot, but because her "hysterical" emotions are frequently raw and frayed.[39]

In between the extremes of narrative and phenomenological memory, episodic memory is when segmented layers of scenes can be recalled, but the intertemporal tissue of "causality" connecting those scenes is thin. People's memories flit from one scene to another, as in phenomenological memory, but they reason coherently within the cross-sectional assemblies of interacting past characters thereby brought to mind, as in narrative memory. Mr. Compson is a narrator in *Absalom* who operates primarily in episodic time. He tries hard to understand, but he is missing key interstitial pieces.[40]

How does Faulkner himself say all this? Since the whole point of modernist Faulkner was rarely to speak in his own voice, the best way of presenting his thought is through the voices of his narrators. Faulkner's and my work-

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[37] At a social level higher than the individual, the answer is even deeper: memory locks in complementarities that evolution has discovered.

[38] Padgett and McLean (2006, p. 1547) put it like this: "Goals are our cognitive perceptions of the paths we are on."

[39] Structurally Rosa's hysteria is in turn linked to the fact that Rosa is both character and narrator. As narrator, she searches for temporal understanding, like everybody else. But as character, Rosa repeatedly is thrust into the flow of actual and remembered presents. Quentin gains much of his own access to the Sutpen past through Rosa's "hysterical" channeling.

[40] Yet another intermediate mathematical possibility would be a partial order—namely, a loosely structured "lineage" where "generations" do not align into "simultaneous" ranks. Mr. Compson actually is probably more like this than purely episodic time.

ing assumption is that time emerges through concatenation of memories. The research question for understanding history then becomes How do memories assemble multiple pasts in order to make ensembles of trajectories through multiple presents?

The narrators of *Absalom, Absalom!* offer five hypotheses about how this can be done.

1. *Phenomenological time = dreaming*. For example, Rosa in Quentin's mind as merged streams of consciousness:

Henry to emerge and say, "Why, it's Rosa, Aunt Rosa. Wake up, Rosa; wake up"?— I, the dreamer clinging yet to the dream as the patient clings to the last thin unbearable ecstatic instant of agony in order to sharpen the savor of the pain's surcease, waking into the reality, the more than reality, not to the unchanged and unaltered old time but into a time altered to fit the dream which, conjunctive with the dreamer, becomes immolated and apotheosized. (*Absalom*, p. 113; italics in original)

2. *Episodic time = flashes of memory*. For example, Mr. Compson as speaker of stories:

We see dimly the people, the people in whose living blood and seed we ourselves lay dormant and waiting, in this shadowy attenuation of time possessing now heroic proportions. . . . Yes, Judith, Bon, Henry, Sutpen: all of them. They are all there, yet something is missing: they are like a chemical formula exhumed along with the letters from that forgotten chest, carefully, the paper old and faded and falling to pieces, the writing faded, almost indecipherable, yet meaningful, familiar in shape and sense, the name and presence of volatile and sentient forces; you bring them together in the proportions called for, but nothing happens; you reread, tedious and intent, poring, making sure that you have forgotten nothing, made no miscalculation; you bring them together again and again nothing happens: just the words, the symbols, the shapes themselves, showy inscrutable and serene, against the turgid background of a horrible and bloody mischancing of human affairs. (*Absalom*, p. 80)

3a. *Narrative time $_A$ = fatalism (perspective of insider)*. For example, Quentin as sounding board or resonance among characters:

Maybe nothing ever happens once and is finished Maybe happen is never once but like ripples maybe on water after the pebble sinks, the ripples moving on, spreading, the pool attached by a narrow umbilical water-cord to the next pool which the first pool feeds, has fed, did feed, let this second pool contain a different temperature of water, a different molecularity of having seen, felt, remembered, reflect in a different tone the infinite unchanging sky, it doesn't matter: that pebble's watery echo whose fall it did not even see moves across its surface too at the original ripple-space, to the old ineradicable rhythm thinking Yes we are both Father. Or maybe Father and I are both Shreve, maybe it took Father and me both to make Shreve or Shreve and me both to make Father or maybe Thomas Sutpen to make all of us. (*Absalom*, p. 210; italics in original)

3b. *Narrative time $_B$ = theater (perspective of outsider)*. For example, Shreve as bard of the South:

Jesus, the South is fine, isn't it. It's better than the theatre, isn't it. It's better than Ben Hur, isn't it. No wonder you have to come away now and then, isn't it. (*Absalom*, p. 176)

4. *Epistemological time = interpretation*. This is, for example, Faulkner commenting on Quentin commenting on Rosa:

It (the talking, the telling) seemed (to him, to Quentin) to partake of that logic- and reason-flouting quality of a dream which the sleeper knows must have occurred, stillborn and complete, in a second, yet the very quality upon which it must depend to move the dreamer (the verisimilitude) to credulity—horror or pleasure or amazement—depends as completely upon a formal recognition of and acceptance of elapsed and yet-elapsing time as music or a printed page. (*Absalom*, p. 15)

Because the epistemological view of time was written (barely) in the rare voice of the author, while the other quotations were written exclusively in the voices of *Absalom*'s narrators, I interpret Faulkner to be saying that he uses Quentin's epistemological voice of aesthetics to transform Mr. Compson's episodic voice of nihilism into Quentin's narrative voice of fatalism, otherwise known as causality or understanding. As Quentin-the-narrator's own ripple metaphor suggests, aesthetics for Faulkner is like resonance in the brain.

I have not yet mentioned the obvious sense of time—namely, metric historical dates. But that is because Faulkner hardly ever inserts these into the text. Metric times, like dates, impose stringent continuity assumptions—indeed linear continuity assumptions—onto ordinal rankings. Not just "before" and "after," but "how much before" and "how much after" according to some fixed numerical scale. It is doubtful that the human mind, unaided by external institutional props, spontaneously thinks in metric time (Bergson [1896] 2002), but obviously we can learn, especially when schedules force us to do so (Zerubavel 1981).

Faulkner eschewed historical dates, but ordering by metric time is a temporal procedure that a historian or impatient reader, like myself, needs to construct a mental perch of "omniscient" clarity, above the fray of Faulkner's own participatory mélange of multiple perspectives. It was not completely straightforward for me to reconstruct those dates. Instead of dates, Faulkner mostly tagged time indirectly—for example, "5 years ago," "20 years old," "Henry ten years younger than Bon," and so on. Despite the headaches that keeping straight all those relativistic time tags must have caused him, Faulkner made very few mistakes.[41] This indicates that Faulkner knew perfectly

[41] Parker (1986) makes a big deal about dating errors that he found, but Cleanth Brooks (1963, pp. 424–26) is more on target in dismissing those few errors as oversights in edit-

TABLE 1
TIMES AND BRAINS AS MULTIPLE NETWORKS

Times	Brain Systems
Projection to present (action)	Emotional memory (limbic system: amygdala)
Phenomenological time ("stream of consciousness")	Procedural memory (cerebellum and striatum)
Episodic time (scenes/subplots)	Episodic memory (hippocampus)
Epistemological time (investigation/search)	Declarative memory (frontal cortex)
Narrative time (attributed causality)	Socially constructed memory (sets of brains in conversation)
Historical time (dates)	Calendars (institutional registration)

NOTE.—Faulkner and neuroscience both suggest that human memory, in which cognitive and social interpenetrate, is resonance among these multiple networks of communication and temporal navigation. Memories and times interact and reverberate differently in varying settings.

well the objective dates of his various scenes; he just chose not to reveal those to the reader. Presumably his modernist purpose was to force the reader to see the story through the eyes of his characters and narrators, not from the comfort of his armchair.

This Faulkner perspective on multiple times and memories is remarkably consistent with contemporary neuroscience research on memory in the brain.[42] Table 1 presents the almost current state of neuroscience knowledge about human memory, as summarized by Eichenbaum and Cohen (2004). Eichenbaum and Cohen emphasized that there are multiple memory systems in the brain, which operate in parallel: (a) episodic memory circuits, which pass through the hippocampus,[43] (b) emotional memory cir-

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ing. I am more impressed, having gone through the data set, by the very high percentage of temporal cross-references that Faulkner got right.

[42] An emphasis on the overlay of multiple times in history was also central to the career of Braudel ([1966] 1972) and his Annals school, although Braudel operated at more vast, centuries-long time frequencies than did Faulkner.

[43] In lower-order animals like insects, the hippocampus evolved for purposes of spatial navigation. Humans appear to have refunctionalized the inherited brain circuitry of spatial navigation for their new purpose of temporal navigation. Both spatial and temporary navigation tasks involve assembling disparate items, both from perception and from memory, into relationally ordered images or scenes. There is debate in the insect literature about whether "relationally ordered" spatial images means metric "cognitive maps" (O'Keefe and Nadel 1978; Gallistel 1990) or less demanding network topologies (Eichenbaum and Cohen 2004).

cuits,[44] which pass through the hormonal limbic system, especially the amygdala, (c) procedural memory circuits (see Michael Cohen [2007] on Dewey), which pass through motor-skill centers like the cerebellum and the striatum, and (d) highest-order frontal cortex circuits, which are not yet well understood. The brain, in other words, processes numerous conceptions of time concurrently, through overlapping neural circuits (i.e., multiple networks) within itself.

Following the leads of Mead (1977), Hutchins (1994), and Clark (1997, 2008) as well as Faulkner, I supplement in table 1 Eichenbaum and Cohen's (2004) list of neural networks of memory with linguistic networks of conversation between human brains, in order to include society in an expanded definition of mind. Autocatalysis of memory is a distributed process, across both brains and talk. Memory, both brain research and Faulkner reveal, is not a static "thing"—either a story or a warehouse—but rather a set of dynamic cognitive processes for assembling unfolding trajectories in times. The goal of this article is to discover the procedures that Faulkner claims to assemble memory at the conversational level of analysis. The "self", to the extent that any singular one emerges, is a synthetic dialogue among the multiple perspectives of biography/identity that individual and social memories throw up (Mead 1977).

CHANGING PERSPECTIVES

What do conversations do for individual memories? In episodic memory in the brain, scenes array characters in relation to each other, at given points of perceived "simultaneous" time. The problem for individualistic episodic memories operating in a social vacuum is that different narrators have different images of the "same" scenes. Without mutual accommodation, conversation between such narrators degenerates into a Tower of Babel.[45] A subplot is a joint cobbling together of remembered scenes into temporal sequence and attributed causal linkage. Parsing scenes and characters into mutually intelligible subsequences, which allegedly link characters and events causally through time, is one narrative device for discovering clustering and consistencies in narrators' pooled memories. Conversation is a joint assembly process, in which pieces of narrators' distinctive memories are banged and shoehorned together into some semblance of sequential coherence—not shared understanding necessarily, but enough of a Tinker-

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[44] Damasio (1994, 1999) in particular has emphasized that emotions trigger reason into action. He opened his *Descartes' Error* with the clinical case of Phineas Gage, who because of an industrial accident to his brain no longer had affect. Phineas reasoned endlessly about dinner options, but could never bring himself to choose.

[45] Wittgenstein discusses this as a "language game" transition from private to public languages (Kripke 1982).

TABLE 2
Changing Perspectives: The Core Technique in Assembling Memories

Procedure	Action	Psychological Mechanisms
1. Attention	Pay more attention to some narrative-network points and lines and less to others	Emotions (like deaths and murders in *Absalom*) and forgetting
2. Movement of focal point	As eye moves around space (physical or temporal), objects appear to move relative to each other; as eye moves in and out, objects appear larger and smaller	Empathy or identification with characters or narrators in story
3. Filling in new data	Perspective of others adds new dots and lines to existing narrative network	"Thought transfers" (= access to memory of person identified with)
4. Puzzles	Previous logical/causal gaps resolved, but new ones created	Iterate 1–4 until symmetry, which induces abstract cognitive space

Note.—Four procedures are involved in "taking another's perspective."

toy overlap that conversation can proceed.[46] Without the construction, at least temporarily on the fly, of a scaffold of overlapping history, conversational partners have no linguistic hooks upon which to stitch themselves together.

At the micro level of psychology, table 2 describes the four cognitive procedures involved in "taking another's perspective." First, one must notice or attend to someone or something of interest. In *Absalom*, narrators' attention is driven by the strong emotions in them induced by their ancestors' murders and suicides. Second, one must alter one's mental focal point, to identify with characters or narrators of interest. Empathy drives psychological identification. Third, one sees the world through the eyes of the new focal point, thereby collecting new information. According to Faulkner, the mechanism here is flashbacks or thought transfers from empathizee to empathizer. And fourth, new information solves old puzzles about causal sequence and creates new ones. Assuming motivation to find explanation because of some trouble in narrator's own biography,[47] these procedures are iterated until cognitive symmetry and resonance (described in the next sections) are found to induce understanding sufficient to explain to narrators how characters (and narrators) got to where they are.

If people are self-motivated or trained enough, they can change perspectives on their own, through imagination in their minds. More typically, changing perspectives is induced through conversation, where people need

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[46] Actually the mechanics of conversation itself forces thought into linear sequences (Gibson 2005).

[47] As for trouble in biography, Heidegger said somewhere that "consciousness is when things go wrong."

to understand where the other is coming from in order to comprehend what they saying. Words need grounding or framing in linguistic and physical context in order to index their ambiguous or multiple potential referents (Wittgenstein, Grice, Goffman). People switch perspectives as a function of whom they are talking to, but also as a function of whom they are talking about.

Once multiple times are introduced, iterating a changing of perspectives across people composes individualistic identities-as-memory-path-trajectories into nested layering.[48] Before I illustrate these multiple times for *Absalom, Absalom!*, let me first introduce in figure 5 the focalization model of Dutch narratologist Mieke Bal (2006, p. 14), which describes almost perfectly the layered perspectival structure of *Absalom, Absalom!*

Bal's model itself is reproduced in the left column of figure 5, except that I add an intertextuality layer at the bottom, because of Faulkner's obvious awareness of his previously written *The Sound and the Fury* (which he never mentions or even alludes to in *Absalom*). In the middle column, I apply her model to *Absalom*'s characters and narrators. It fits Faulkner perfectly. In the right column, I correlate the resulting layers of perspective with the multiple times and memories already discussed. The result is five "Quentins": $Quentin_1$ the *Absalom* character who acts, $Quentin_2$ the "focalizer" (Bal's label) who observes from a point of view, $Quentin_3$ the narrator who composes the multiple perspectives of others (including his own), $Quentin_4$ the investigator who decides next where to compose, and $Quentin_5$ in *The Sound and the Fury*, who acts, observes, and composes with an entirely different set of alters, at roughly the same historical time as *Absalom*'s narration. Bal's model of multiple perspectives in a novel is similar to the four levels of identity in Harrison White (1992).[49] In figure 5, with a question mark I equate

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[48] The mathematical connection between nested hierarchies and multiple times was first introduced into the social sciences by Herbert Simon in his famous article, "The Architecture of Complexity" (1969, pp. 84–118). Simon showed that hierarchies, in their physics definition as nesting of modules, coordinate multiple times because of "separation of time scales." When energy frequencies are not segregated into discrete quantized layers, they interfere with their own propagation. Hence, physical systems that do not "separate their times scales" self-destruct and do not stick around long enough for us to observe them. (A gripping book of pictures of the universe at various time scales— shifting from grey fuzz on most pages into spectacular order in other pages at only discretely quantized energy frequencies of interaction—was shown to me by Michael Cohen when I was a graduate student, but unfortunately I cannot remember the citation.) Elsewhere, I (Padgett 1981) developed Simon's physics conception of hierarchy into a formal stochastic-process model of federal budgeting.

[49] The correlation with White's multiple "identities" is as follows: (1) White's identity as "getting footing" is like the Quentin who acts. (2) White's identity as "face" is like the Quentin who observes (and is observed). (4) White's identities as "stories" is like the Quentin who composes. White's remaining identity as "switching" can be interpreted in different ways within the extended Bal scheme: (3a) switching or changing focalizer perspec-

Quentin$_4$ to us, the reader, because Quentin on his Harvard bed is watching his own mind go by, like a movie, and because Faulkner arranges his chapters to have Quentin discover new information at exactly the same page sequence as we ourselves read.[50]

In figure 6, I use Bal's model to describe the compositions of perspectives that Faulkner used to make his various Quentin identities in *Absalom*—not that I claim that Faulkner was as self-consciously mathematical as I make him appear to be here. Symmetry and resonance did matter to Faulkner, I claim. The general forms of these equations of identity formation through composing perspectives were the result, not the processual cause, of that. Aesthetics guided narrators' and investigators' perceptions of the changing perspectives involved in Quentin's conversations with the living and the dead.[51] Indeed the two roles of narrator and investigator are themselves induced by aesthetics.

The narrative-network details of what is being summarized in the equations in table 3 are presented in the appendix. The six narrative networks in that appendix present *Absalom, Absalom!* in epistemological time—that is, in the sequence through which both Quentin and us readers gradually learn about Sutpen history.

In the first five chapters of *Absalom, Absalom!*, Quentin primarily is a sponge. In September 1909 in chapter 1, Rosa talked to Quentin in the afternoon in her dark Mississippi house about Thomas Sutpen, in preparation for their midnight trip together to the old Sutpen mansion in chapter 9. Later that day, Mr. Compson, Quentin's father, talks to Quentin extensively about Sutpen in chapters 2 through 4, on the porch of their own Mississippi home. In chapter 5, Rosa continues her conversation with Quentin, but this time not as a separate person but as a voice within Quentin's mind.[52] At this point in the novel, Quentin's perspective as a focalizer of Sutpen is the simple summation of the perspectives of Rosa and Mr. Compson.

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tives, and (3b) switching or changing action sets of alters. Switching settings (3b) is closer to what White actually meant, but switching perspectives (3a) is closer to what Faulkner concentrates on within *Absalom*. Switching settings for Faulkner is switching novels.

[50] Faulkner thereby tried to induce in us a psychological identification with Quentin the investigator. To the extent that this literary device works, there is no need for a question mark in fig. 5.

[51] One question that arises in future application of this Bal model is whether the rest of us care about symmetry and resonance as much as did Faulkner. Insofar as compositionality and recursion are the logical bases of syntax (Chomsky), the causal influence of symmetry and resonance may lie not so much in the motivation of humans as in structure of language itself. A second deep source of influence may be electrical resonance in neural circuits within the brain. Can we even see pattern without symmetry and resonance to guide us? (See also Young 1982.)

[52] This is indicated by the chapter being entirely in italics.

Mieke Bal's focalization model:

AUTHOR

Application to *Absalom, Absalom!*:

FAULKNER

Multiple times:

all of below

Mieke Bal's focalization model	Application to *Absalom, Absalom!* (FAULKNER)	Multiple times
1. narrator (assembler of points of view)	QUENTIN$_3$ (as sounding board)	Narrative time
2. focalizer (points of view)	ROSA$_2$ & Mr Compson$_2$ (speakers)	Episodic time
3. actor/character → DIRECT DISCOURSE	SUTPEN → OTHERS$_1$	Phenomenological time
ACTION → 4. actor/character	ROSA$_1$ & → QUENTIN$_1$ (as characters)	("stream of consciousness")
5. spectator/observer	QUENTIN$_2$ (as thought transfers)	Episodic time
6. explicit or implicit reader	SHREVE (as outside bard)	Narrative time
READER	US (= QUENTIN$_4$?)	Epistemological time
[I add:] OTHER TEXTS	QUENTIN$_5$ (in *Sound and Fury*)	Projection to present

(vertical labels along left margin: **narrative text**; inner box labels: **story**, **fabula**)

FIG. 5.—Narrative layers of identity: story telling in multiple times

1. Quentin as *Absalom* character in 1909 (e.g., trip to Sutpen mansion)

$$\mathbf{Q}_{1,t}$$

2. Quentin as focalizer (= point of view)

$$\mathbf{Q}_2 \text{ perspective}_t = \text{Rosa perspective}_t + \text{Mr Compson perspective}_t$$

$$+ \text{Q}_1 \text{ observations}_t$$

3. Quentin as narrator (= collective sounding board)

$$\mathbf{Q}_3 \text{ perspective}_\tau = (\text{Shreve}_t \upsilon \text{ Q}_{3,t}) \bullet (\text{Q}_2 \text{ perspective}_t$$

$$+ \text{ thought transfers}_t)_\epsilon$$

4. Quentin as investigator (= reader)

$$\mathbf{Q}_4 \text{ perspective}_t = \text{unresolved causal gaps in Q}_3 \text{ perspective}_\tau$$

5. Quentin as suicidal character in previously written *The Sound and the Fury*

$$\mathbf{Q}_5 \text{ perspective}_T = (\text{Clytie}_T \upsilon \text{ Rosa}_T) \bullet (\text{Q}_3 \text{ perspective}_T$$

$$+ \text{ Clytie perspective}_T)$$

Notation:	+	=	addition of perspectives
	$\mathbf{f} \bullet (\mathbf{x})$ =		perspective of $\mathbf{f}$ applied to $\mathbf{x}$
	υ	=	union or merger
	t	=	$\leq$ page number (i.e., cumulative pages) in book
	T	=	end of book
	ε	=	epistemological/investigation re-sequencing
	τ	=	narrative time

FIG. 6.—Composition of Quentins

There were three subsets to that preliminary aggregation, however: (a), the pooled facts known jointly by Rosa and Mr. Compson, what I call "common knowledge,"[53] and (b) Rosa's and (c) Mr. Compson's unique con-

[53] I recognize that game theory has a more restricted definition of this term—not just shared knowledge, but also shared knowledge that others know the same knowledge. In *Absalom, Absalom!* there certainly is pooled knowledge, but not much mutual comprehension about what others know. A game theorist might say that narrativity is precisely an attempt to construct "common knowledge" in their sense of the word. The problem with their sense of the word is that they insist on homogeneous consensus, without rec-

tributions are thereby isolated.[54] Common knowledge was accepted by Quentin and Shreve without question. Rosa's and Mr. Compson's unique contributions, however, were motivated by their own biases and obsessions, hence required subsequent verification.

Chapters 6–9 take place in January 1910, with Quentin lying on his Harvard bed talking with his roommate, Shreve, after Quentin has just received a letter from his father, informing him of Rosa's death. Quentin feverishly flashes back in his mind to the Sutpen story that he learned four months before, struggling to make sense of it and of the himself that it represents: (c) first in chapter 6, via memories of old conversations and episodes in his youth; (d) second in chapter 7, through thought-transfer voices from the dead—General Compson (Quentin's grandfather), Thomas Sutpen, Judith, Charles Bon, Wash Jones, and most of all Henry; until (e) third in chapter 8, Quentin and Shreve progressively merge their minds to relive together Henry's murder of Charles Bon and the fateful buildup to that. During the second half of the book, Quentin and Shreve and then Quentin/Shreve fitfully try to order the Sutpen family episodes, described by many people, into an understandable narrative time.

In the final chapter (chap. 9), Quentin relives his own late night visit with Rosa in September 1909, where Quentin suddenly encountered old Henry on his deathbed, who had returned secretly from self-exile to the old Sutpen mansion to die. Then (f) Quentin relives in his imagination Rosa's second visit in December 1909, this time with a sheriff—the arrival of which triggers Clytie to burn the mansion, killing both herself and her half-brother Henry. This fire, I believe, channeled Quentin into empathy with the silent Clytie, who communicated with Quentin not so much through speech as through touch. I interpret chapter 9 as collapsing the narrative time that Quentin and Shreve had just constructed into a wave of emotion in the present—thereby projecting Quentin out of *Absalom* and into *The Sound and the Fury*, toward his future suicide in June 1910.

Quentin, in summary, first listened to multiple stream-of-consciousness voices from both the present and the past; then he (with Shreve) painfully constructed a beautiful narrative understanding of the Sutpen family history; then he collapsed back into a higher-order and more knowledgeable stream of consciousness, which mentally relived multiperspectival history in the present, not from a distance but *in medias res*.

What were these various perspectives that Quentin assembled in his conversations and in his mind—thereby to construct his own layered selves? In figures 7–10, I diagram the content of what Quentin's various conversations

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ognizing the heterogeneous multivocality at the heart of Faulkner's enterprise. (I thank Massimo Warglien for insisting on this clarification.)

[54] By "unique," I mean that Rosa knows things that Mr. Compson does not, and vice versa.

Rosa's Narrative Perspective (as spoken through Quentin's mind)

Primary
Protagonist:

**Thomas
Sutpen**

Primary
Narrator:

Quentin
Compson

Harvard

fire

Sutpen
death
& female
lives

"love"
triangle

Mississippi
"design"

Haiti

boy
story

migrations to Mississippi

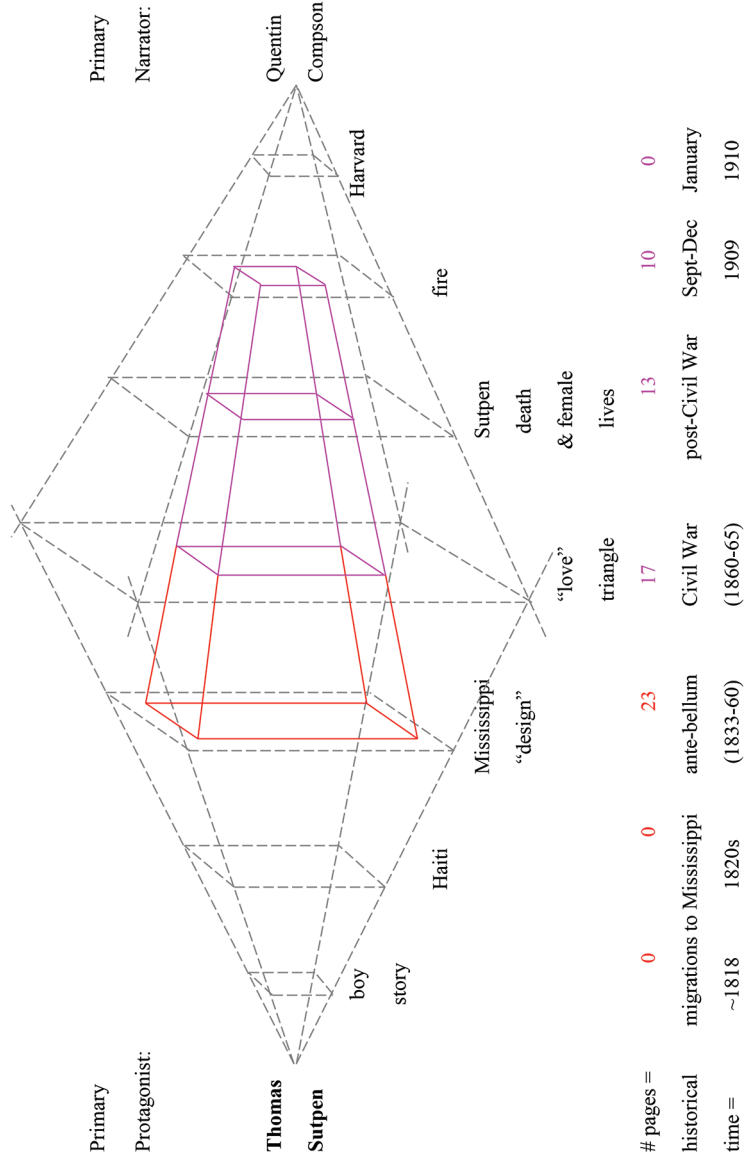| # pages =	0	0	23	17	13	10	0
historical	migrations to Mississippi		ante-bellum	Civil War	post-Civil War	Sept-Dec	January
time =	~1818	1820s	(1833-60)	(1860-65)		1909	1910

Fig. 7.—Rosa's narrative perspective (as spoken through Quentin's mind)

and thoughts were about, in terms of the volume of page numbers in *Absalom* devoted to focalizers speaking about Sutpen episodes. Figure 7 diagrams Rosa's perspective. Figure 8 diagrams Mr. Compson's perspective. Figure 9 diagrams Quentin's own perspective, with and without Shreve. And figure 10 diagrams Clytie's presumed "eternal" perspective, about which she never directly spoke. These were the perspectives being combined into Quentin's various identities, through the perspective-composition equations in figure 6.

Figure 11 presents the color and network-tie visualization scheme required to understand the aggregated figures 7–10 and 12–15 in the text, and also all the disaggregated narrative networks in the appendix.

SYMMETRY

What makes for a satisfying answer? How did Quentin and Shreve know when they were making progress toward understanding the Sutpen family, and thereby the history of the antebellum South?

The appendix's narrative networks in epistemological time can be aggregated by story (i.e., by Sutpen characters) as well as by perspective (i.e., by *Absalom* narrators). Figures 12–15 (below) present underlying data identical to that in figures 7–10, but from the point of view of the content of the Sutpen story that *Absalom* narrators were talking about. Figure 12 presents the Sutpen story in timeless cross-sectional fashion—like a social network analyst usually portrays and analyzes data (e.g., Padgett and Ansell, 1993, pp. 1276–77). Figure 13 inserts historical dates onto the various subplots, in order to add temporal depth, but from an exogenous and "omniscient" point of view. In contrast to these objectivist approaches, figure 14 presents how story characters are related to narrators, through conversations and thought transfers. And figure 15 presents the epistemological time of chapter sequence, through which the Sutpen story unfolded to Quentin and the reader. Figures 7–10 demonstrate what episodes various narrators were thinking about; figures 12–15 show the content of what they were seeing in those episodes.

Aggregating respectively by perspective and by story is a type of duality (Breiger 1974, 2000; Mohr and Duquenne 1997; Mische and Pattison 2000). A core methodological point of this article is to show, in the case of Faulkner at least, that constructing history and constructing identity are flip sides of the same combinatorial process of assembling memories. A different way of saying this is that epistemological time is how narrative time is made. And narrative time simultaneously sorts episodes into subplots, and thence into history, and streams of consciousness into perspectives, and thence into identities.

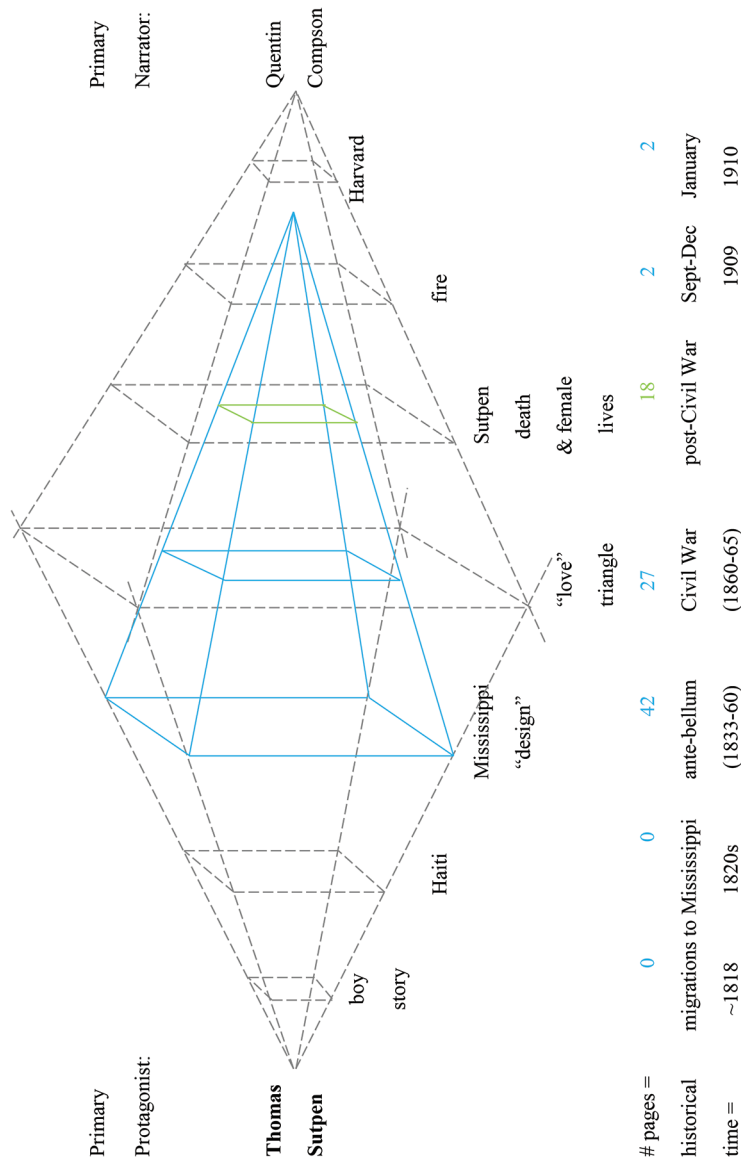Mr. Compson's Narrative Perspective (as told to Quentin as young boy)

Primary Protagonist:							Primary Narrator:

Thomas Sutpen — boy story / Haiti / Mississippi "design" / "love" triangle / Sutpen death & female lives / fire / Harvard — Quentin Compson

# pages =	0	0	42	27	18	2	2
historical	migrations to Mississippi	ante-bellum	Civil War	post-Civil War	Sept-Dec	January
time =	~1818	1820s	(1833-60)	(1860-65)	1909	1910

Fig. 8.—Mr. Compson's narrative perspective (as told to Quentin as a young boy)

440

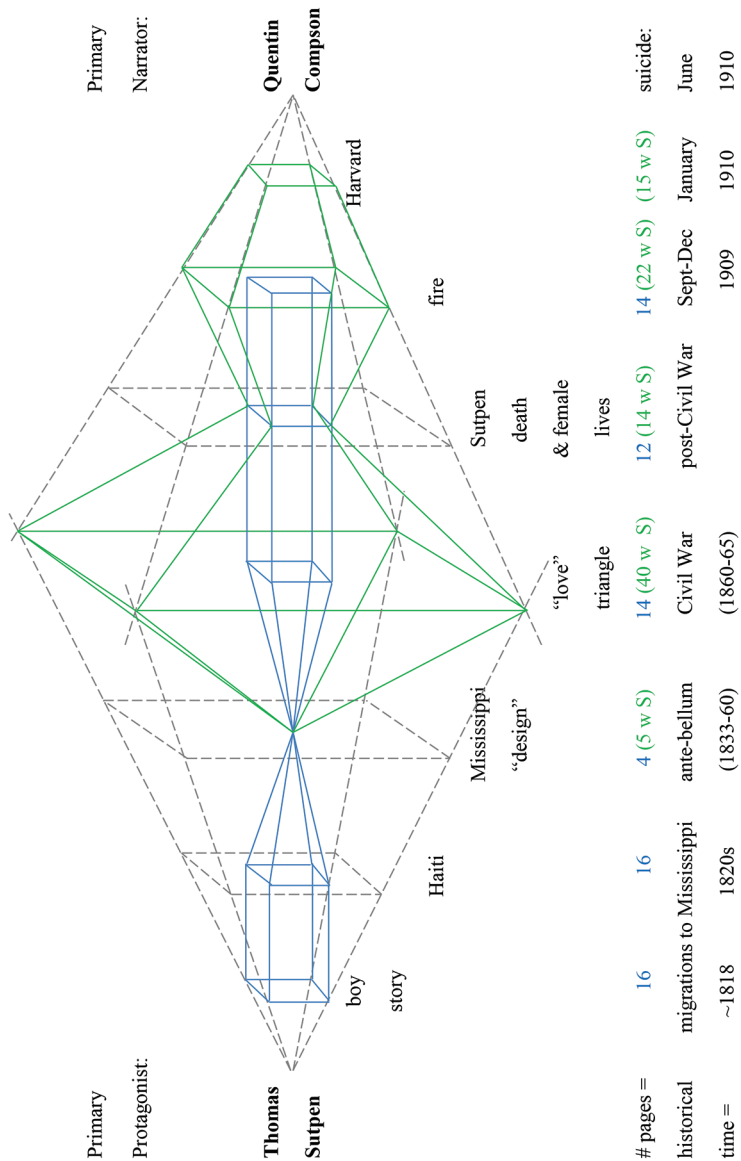# Quentin's own Narrative Perspective, with and without Shreve

Primary Protagonist: **Thomas Sutpen**

Primary Narrator: **Quentin Compson**

boy story — Haiti — Mississippi "design" — "love" triangle — Sutpen death & female lives — fire — Harvard

# pages =	16	16	4 (5 w S)	14 (40 w S)	12 (14 w S)	14 (22 w S)	(15 w S)	suicide:
historical	migrations to Mississippi		ante-bellum	Civil War	post-Civil War	Sept-Dec	January	June
time =	~1818	1820s	(1833-60)	(1860-65)		1909	1910	1910

FIG. 9.—Quentin's own narrative perspective, with and without Shreve

Clytie's Silent Perspective

Primary
Narrator:

Quentin
Compson

Primary
Protagonist:

**Thomas
Sutpen**

	boy story	Haiti	Mississippi "design"	"love" triangle	Sutpen death & female lives	Harvard	fire

# pages =	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
historical	migrations to Mississippi	ante-bellum	Civil War	post-Civil War	Sept-Dec	January
time =	~1818	1820s	(1833-60)	(1860-65)	1909	1910
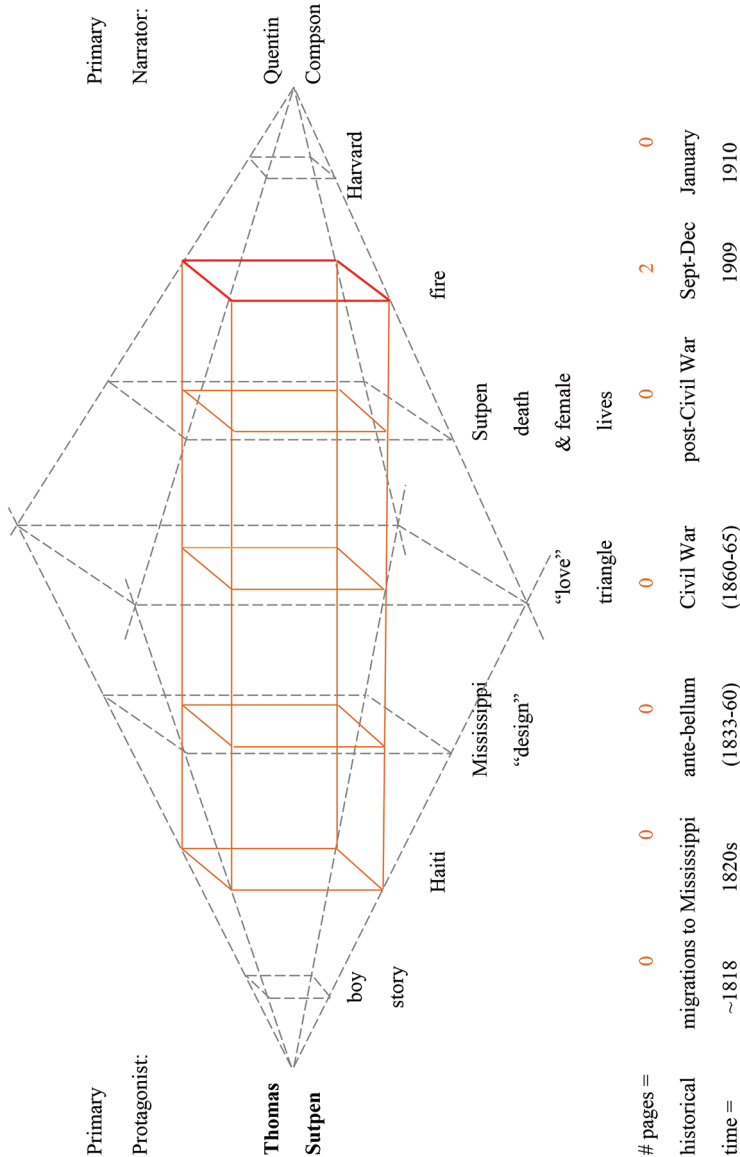
F𝐈G. 10.—Clytie's silent perspective

Types of ties:

————————	kinship ties
– – – – – – –	other interactions among characters
--------------→	conversations among narrators
– · — · — · — · →	"thought transfers"

Color of ties = narrators:

-------------→	Rosa
-------------→	Mr Compson
-------------→	Quentin
-------------→	Shreve
— · — · — · — · →	Quentin and Shreve (merged)
— · — · — · — · →	Henry and Thomas Sutpen
— · — · — · — · →	Rosa
— · — · — · — · →	Judith
— · — · — · — · →	Clytie

Actions:
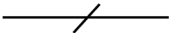
——————/——————	Rejection
——————//——————	Killing

Fig. 11.—Coding scheme for narrative networks

It is standard in postmodern theories (see, e.g., Hayden White 1987) to emphasize how "history" is no more than a biased projection of identity, and in hegemony theories (like Antonio Gramsci) to emphasize that "identity" is manufactured by those who control the writing of history. The problem with both of these established approaches is their one-way causality: they ignore the endogenous emergence of language through conversational feedback (and resonance) among multiple points of view. Homogeneous "consensus" is not what resilient language or culture is primarily about. Nor is its obverse: cacophony. The coordination trick in culture is to construct mutual intelligibility out of diverse perspectives. Cognitive mapping,

WHITE   "BLACK"

ILLEGITIMATE   Wash Jones

infant daughter   Clytie

Millie   slaves from Haiti

father Coldfield   Thomas   French sugar plantation

Sutpen

Rosa Coldfield

Ellen Coldfield   Haiti wife   lawyer

Judith   Charles Bon   octoroon

LEGITIMATE   Henry   C. Etienne

General Compson

Mr Compson   Quentin   Shreve   Jim Bond

FIG. 12.—Absalom character network

through social space-time, of different perspectives' relationship with each other is what is required, not the effacement (or the glorification) of difference.

No reader of *Absalom, Absalom!* needs the summary narrative-network diagram of figure 12 to know that the core social issues discussed in that novel are race and family. Thomas Sutpen's clear, indeed obsessional purpose in life was to construct, out of the wilderness, what he called "the design"—namely, a Mississippi slave plantation, complete with a patrilineal family of "aristocratic" white sons to carry it on. The complication, indeed the contradiction for Faulkner, was that antebellum Mississippi plantation

WHITE   "BLACK"

ILLEGITIMATE

Wash Jones

infant daughter   Clytie

d. 1869

Millie   slaves from Haiti

1833-1860s

b. 1808

father Coldfield — — — — — — Thomas — — — — — — French sugar plantation

Sutpen   1820s

Rosa Coldfield   1838

Ellen Coldfield   Haiti wife — — — — — lawyer

1870s-1880s   1840s-1863   1840s-1860

Judith   Charles Bon — — octoroon

1860-1865

1909

Henry

LEGITIMATE   C. Etienne

1834

General Compson

1909   1909   1910   1909

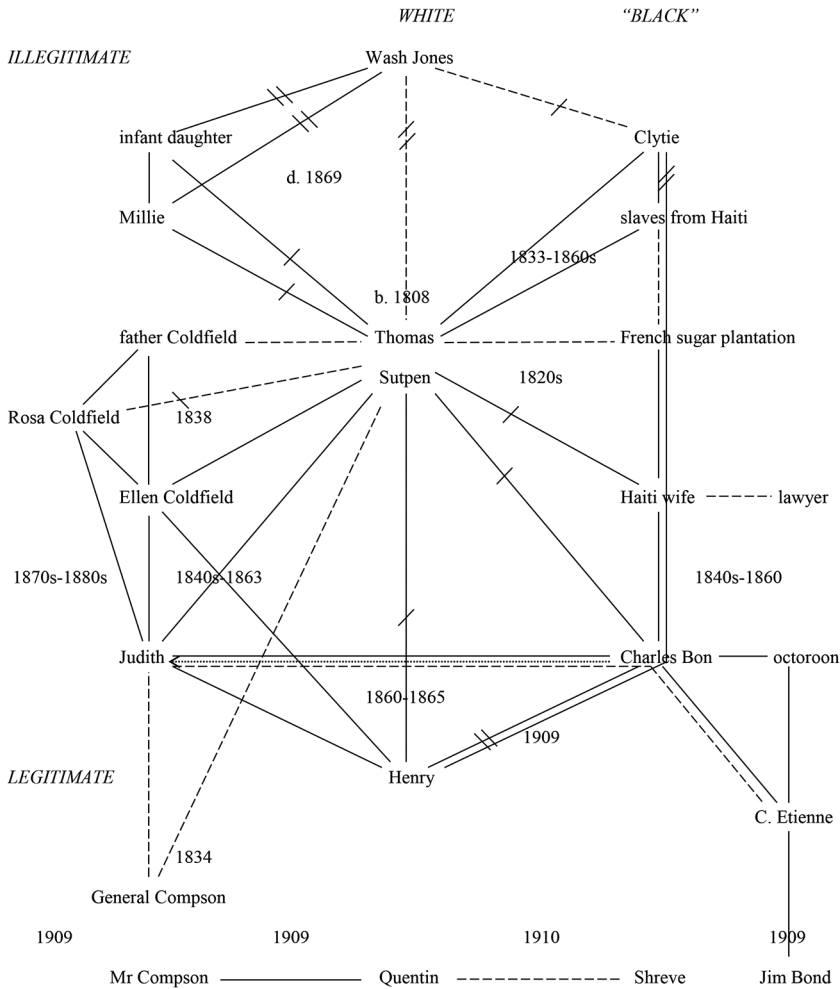Mr Compson ——————— Quentin — — — — — — — Shreve   Jim Bond

Fɪɢ. 13.—Historical dates (reconstructed)

families were not exclusively white. Miscegeny with female black slaves was pervasive; hence mulatto children were also pervasive. Far from necessarily rejected, such mixed-race (or even pure black) offspring could be folded into "house slaves"[55]—namely functioning components of the domestic white family—as long as legitimacy and equality were denied. In *Absalom, Absalom!*, Clytie is such a mixed-race daughter.

[55] Or after the Civil War, into "mammies." Faulkner himself clearly had a sincere soft spot in his heart for Caroline Barr, his own black surrogate mother or "mammy" (Sensibar 2009). Sensibar does not recoil from calling this love.
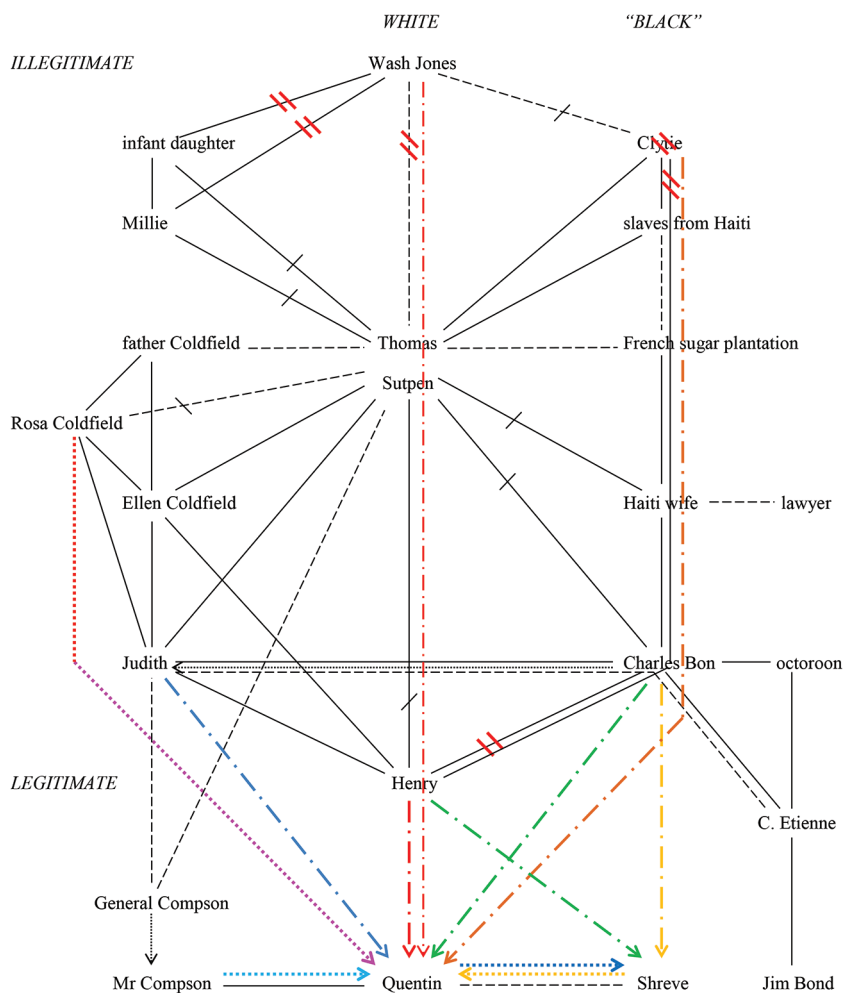
FIG. 14.—Characters + narrators

The plot complication in *Absalom, Absalom!* is that, earlier in his life, Sutpen had been in Haiti, where he had been "tricked" into legally marrying an "octoroon"[56] daughter of a French sugar plantation owner, whose life he had saved in a Haiti slave revolt. Sutpen's son from that previous but subsequently renounced marriage,[57] Charles Bon, arrived at Sutpen's plantation as Henry's guest, after having moved with his mother to New Orleans

[56] That is, one-eighth black.

[57] Bon himself therefore was one-sixteenth black—in other words, hardly recognizable as such except to the most hard-core racists like Sutpen himself.

WHITE   "BLACK"

ILLEGITIMATE   Wash Jones

infant daughter   Clytie

chap. 6

Millie   slaves from Haiti

chaps. 1-5

chap. 7

father Coldfield _ _ _ _ _ _ Thomas _ _ _ _ _ _ French sugar plantation

Sutpen   chap. 7

Rosa Coldfield   chaps. 1-5

Ellen Coldfield   Haiti wife _ _ _ _ _ lawyer

chap. 7

chap. 5   chaps. 1-5   chap. 8

Judith   Charles Bon _ _ _ _ octoroon

chaps. 1-5

chap. 8   chap. 9   chap. 6

LEGITIMATE   Henry

C. Etienne

chap. 7

General Compson

chaps. 1, 5, 6   chaps. 2-4, 6   chaps. 6, 7, 8   chap. 9

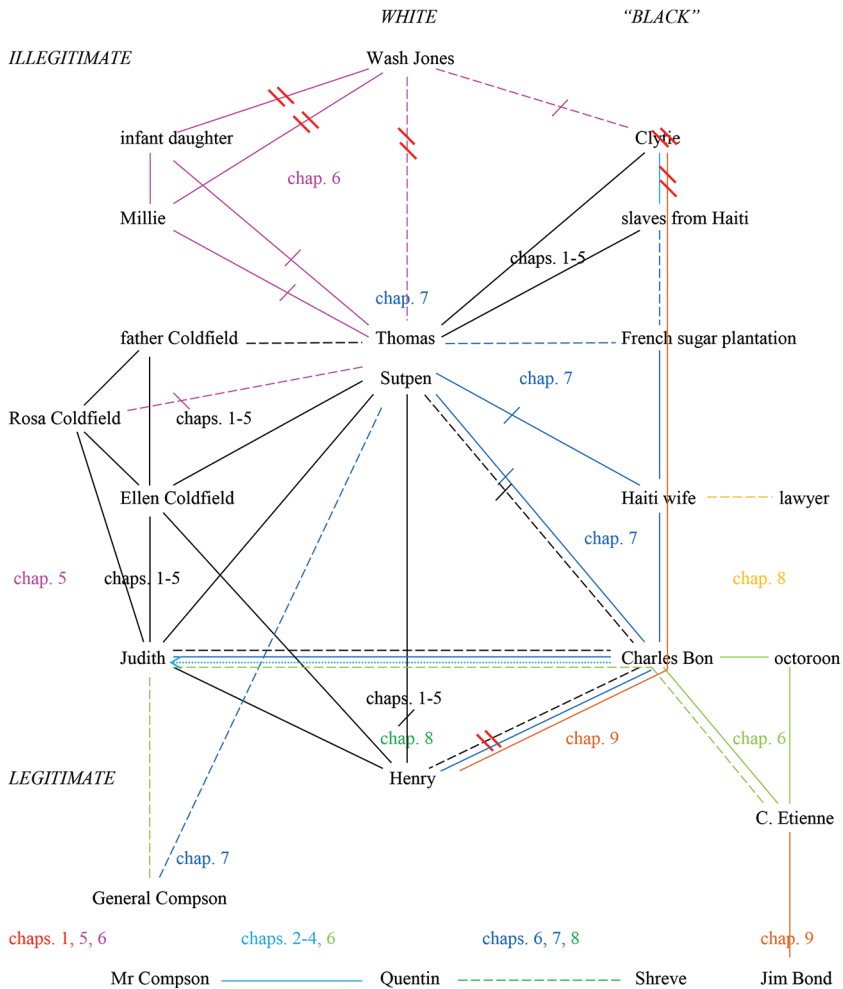Mr Compson ——————— Quentin _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ Shreve   Jim Bond

Fig. 15.—Epistemological time

and then befriending Sutpen's white son Henry as roommate at the University of Mississippi. Almost immediately upon arrival at the plantation, Thomas Sutpen's wife Ellen tried to arrange a marriage between the debonair visitor and their daughter Judith.

At first Henry enthusiastically agreed with this marriage between his sister and his best friend; indeed he renounced his inheritance from his father when his father tried to block it. But as Henry gradually learned about the lineage of his best friend, he waffled for four years while Henry and Bon gallantly fought side-by-side during the Civil War. Henry saved Bon's life dur-

ing the war, but when Bon returned with Henry after the war to marry Judith, Henry shockingly turned around at the gate to the Sutpen mansion and killed his closest friend (indeed half-brother) Bon. The central puzzle in the novel is this: Why did Henry kill Charles Bon—race or incest?

Figure 14 adds the conversational network of *Absalom* narrators to the time-aggregated narrative network of *Absalom* characters. Namely, who told to whom in 1909–10 the old Civil War story of the star-crossed Sutpen family? What is notable about Faulkner's modernist "stream of consciousness" style is that "narrators" for Faulkner include not only conversations among those living in 1909–10, including some (Rosa, Clytie, and Henry) who were very old, but also thought transfers between narrators and characters who were dead. We would call this deep empathy between narrators and those characters with whom they identified. But Faulkner portrays this more viscerally as voices from the past speaking into narrators' thoughts.

Figure 14 shows many narrators speaking,[58] but almost all of them "speaking" to Quentin.[59] Quentin's mind is a collective sounding board for all the many narrators' stories to resonate and blend into the finished story product of figures 12 and 13, the collective history of the Sutpen family. In this sense of a sounding board, Faulkner suggests that Quentin Compson is the actual author of *Absalom, Absalom!* and the family-oriented history of the American South it describes.[60] Figure 15 labels the finished story of figure 12 according to the epistemological sequence at which chapters appear to Quentin and to us.

The narrator Rosa's perspective is that of the bitter, jilted third "wife." Rosa was Ellen's younger sister, always the silent observer on the margins of the growing Sutpen family, until Ellen's death during the Civil War when all of the men were away. Rosa knew everything about the Sutpen family in Mississippi, including Sutpen's relationship with his slaves and Sutpen's death.[61] But Rosa knew nothing about Sutpen's past—his boy-story social origins as a hick and his early adulthood in Haiti. In particular, Rosa did not know that Charles Bon was Sutpen's son, or even that he was "black." As a result, she is clueless about why Henry and his father had their falling out or why Henry killed Charles Bon.

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[58] Narrators are "focalizers" in the terminology of Bal.

[59] The black dotted line is one old letter from Bon to Judith that Mr. Compson possessed, the only "hard" archival data available to narrators in the book.

[60] Of course this is an authorial pose. Knowing how heavily Faulkner drank, however, makes me wonder how much of a pose this was. Faulkner may well have perceived himself, like Quentin, as channeling the thoughts and memories of the many Southern characters, white and black, who surrounded him his whole life.

[61] This included not just miscegenation with his female slaves, but staged naked battles between Sutpen and his male slaves, which Sutpen used to dominate them. Rosa was horrified by this "dark side" of Sutpen, as was Henry, but not Judith.

What Rosa does know with a vengeance is that after the war, Sutpen came back and wanted Rosa to take the place of her dead sister Ellen, in order to produce for him more sons. Despite the devastation of the war, the social position of an impoverished aristocratic Southern lady appealed to Rosa, but Sutpen proposed only to marry Rosa *after* she produced for him a son, like a breeding mare. A proper Southern lady, Rosa was horrified by this proposition, and withdrew to her house (where her father had died in the attic during the war) to live alone for 43 subsequent years. She was frustrated that Sutpen had died (murdered by poor-white-trash Wash Jones) before she could exact her revenge. To Rosa, Sutpen was Satan incarnate—violent, coarse, evil, and worst of all, no gentleman. The intensity of her hatred, however, dulled her curiosity about him: evil incarnate was a good enough explanation for Rosa of everything that Sutpen did. Even patient Quentin sometimes had a hard time distinguishing facts from vitriol in Rosa's accounts. On the other hand, Rosa's emotion took Quentin back to the experiential present in the past like no other narrator.

Mr. Compson, Quentin's father, on the other hand, was a classically educated but jaundiced "aristocrat," resigned to Southern defeat, inclined to interpret everything, including himself, as decadence. More rational and analytic than Rosa, Mr. Compson knew much about local history, including stories that his father, General Compson, had told him as a child. In particular, Mr. Compson knew from his father about Sutpen's past—the boy story and the renounced Haiti marriage. But he did not know that Charles Bon was the offspring of that earlier marriage.

Mr. Compson was especially curious about Charles Bon, the mystery man of the Sutpen story. Because of a locket that Bon possessed when he was murdered by Henry, Mr. Compson knew about Bon's New Orleans family—another "octoroon" wife and one-sixteenth-"black" child. Thus Mr. Compson interpreted the surprising rejection by Henry of Bon's marriage to his sister as due to bigamy.[62] Mr. Compson himself wistfully was preoccupied with cultural and morality differences between cosmopolitan New Orleans, from where Bon hailed and which Mr. Compson admired, and puritanical rural Mississippi, in which Henry and he were stuck. This led Mr. Compson toward fanciful projections about Charles Bon, about whom he actually knew little.

Shreve, Quentin's Harvard roommate, also was drawn toward fanciful speculations about the "mystery man" Charles Bon—in Shreve's case preferring hypotheses about Bon's alleged psychological need for recognition by his father. Shreve's main interest in Quentin's exotic storytelling was as a game.[63] A Canadian outsider, Shreve knew nothing about the Ameri-

[62] But even Mr. Compson does not find his own explanation altogether satisfying.
[63] See quotation above from Shreve about Ben Hur.

can South, much less about the Sutpen family. Thus all the unique "facts" that Shreve contributed are implausible and unreliable.[64] The interest for us in this unreliable narrator is his conversational impact as alter-ego on the structuring of Quentin's own sounding-board memory.

In figure 9 (and in the appendix), I also present Quentin's own perspective on the Sutpen story, which includes input not only from the live narrators just mentioned, but also from characters long dead, via thought transfer. In Quentin's special case, "perspective" is an overwhelming cacophony of multiple voices, resounding within his exploding mind.

How did the cacophony of voices and changing perspectives in figure 14 sort themselves out in Quentin's sounding-board mind into the beautiful narrative network of figure 12? And also thereby, via duality, into the layers of identity in figure 5? The answer is symmetry and resonance. In the quotation cited above, Faulkner himself phrased this answer as follows: "Verisimilitude . . . depends as completely upon a formal recognition of and acceptance of elapsed and yet-elapsing time as music or a printed page" (*Absalom*, p. 15). I illustrate symmetry (of page) in this section and resonance (of music) in the next section.

Symmetry produces cognitive space—in this case the spatial layout of {(white/"black") $\times$ (legitimate/illegitimate)}—through the logical operation of compositionality.[65] Compositionality is turning lists of objects into a cross-classification of features, as in a matrix. "Cognitive space" is the set of features that makes this cross-classification complete, with no empty cells.

For the case of *Absalom, Absalom!*, the operation of compositionality is illustrated in figure 16. In the case of Thomas Sutpen, his list of nuclear family objects are his four "wives" or sleeping partners—first, the scorned Haiti wife (the mother of Charles Bon); second, the miscegenous slave, whom Sutpen brought with him from Haiti to Mississippi (the mother of Clytie); third, Ellen Coldfield, the legal white Mississippi wife (the mother of Henry and Judith and the sister of Rosa); and finally, Wash Jones's daughter Millie (the mother of an infant girl), whom Sutpen took up with after the devastating Civil War, during which Ellen had died. For observers (both native focalizers and outsider narrators), these four nuclear families compose easily into a cognitive social cross-classification of race and class, as is shown in figure 16. Why so easy? Well this was the Old South, of course, not some figment of their imaginations.

The epistemological issue that drives search into cross-classification is that Quentin and other narrators originally do not know equal amounts

[64] Such as the Haiti mother's alleged scheming with her lawyer for revenge on Sutpen. Of course there is no objective standard upon which to evaluate "reliability" in fiction. But the internal Faulknerian standard I use here is "how many narrators repeat (some version of) the account?"

[65] "Legitimate" here means "legalized by marriage," not "morally acceptable."

{(x,a), (x,b), (y,a), (y,b)} →

	x	y
a	(x,a)	(y,a)
b	(x,b)	(y,b)
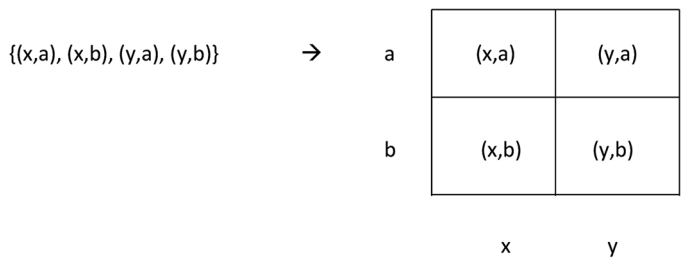
Thomas Sutpen's four nuclear families:

A. Pooled Data: {(Haiti wife → Charles Bon), (Haiti slave → Clytie),
(Ellen → Henry, Judith), (Millie → infant girl)}

B. Composition in cognitive space: x   y

		x	y
a		Ellen ↓ Henry, Judith	Haiti wife ↓ Charles Bon
b		Millie ↓ infant girl	Haiti slave ↓ Clytie

C. Composition in social space:

|	WHITE	'BLACK'
UPPER CLASS	aristocracy	cosmopolitan
LOWER CLASS	poor white trash	miscegeny

Fig. 16.—Compositionality: constructing cognitive space

about all of the four Sutpen nuclear families. Gaps in their knowledge—identified through crosstab—constitute potential puzzles that narrators may need to fill in (Bernaerts et al. 2013). Gaps turn into puzzles to the extent that observers sense causal interactions among the cells. In a narrative-time context, "causal interaction" means perceived motivations of characters. In *Absalom, Absalom!*, narrators (including ourselves as readers) are constantly asking the question: Why did characters do what they did? And frequently they/we do not know. But the answer for one cell often will be found in information hidden in other cells. Narrators and observers presume characters to be cross-network unitary actors, even though they have

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WHITE   *"BLACK"*

ILLEGITIMATE / LOW CLASS
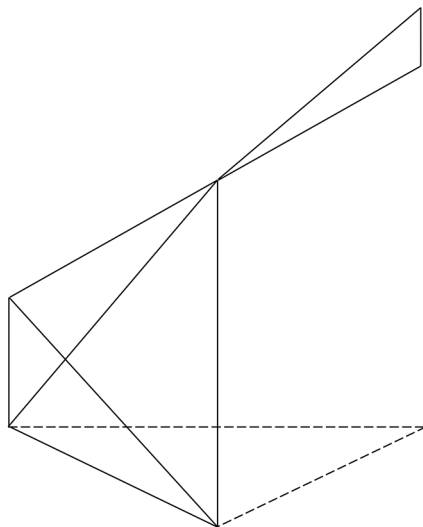
LEGITIMATE / HIGH CLASS

Fɪɢ. 17.—Common knowledge asymmetry: Mississippi 'design'

parcellized perceptions of those characters. As C. Wright Mills, Harrison White, and Charles Tilly have all argued, for whatever reason people like to interpret the world (accurately or not) through vocabularies of motive.[66]

Figures 17–20 demonstrate the epistemological sequence through which cognitive space was constructed from *Absalom* narrators' (in particular Quentin's and Quentin/Shreve's) search for symmetry, in order to answer motivational puzzles. These are narrative networks, except that character names are suppressed, in order better to concentrate on form.[67] Figure 17

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[66] I personally think Bal is closer to the layered multiple-identity/multiple-time truth about human motivation. People are not actually unitary at all, as our Enlightenment projections demand.

[67] A focus on the formal qualities of literature was characteristic of New Criticism (e.g., Brooks [1947] 1975), which has gone out of fashion. Some literature scholars (e.g., Levine 2015) are trying to bring that focus on form back, without the political conservatism of the original.

is Sutpen's Mississippi 'design'—namely, the combination of a (pseudo)aristocratic white family with miscegeny with black female slaves. This is also common knowledge, publically observed by all Mississippi townsmen, including Rosa and Mr. Compson. A Mississippi 'design' certainly was no cognitive problem for Thomas Sutpen himself: he liked it that way and indeed regarded it as the sign of having achieved the status of a true gentleman. But this becomes asymmetry from the perspective of compositionality, once glitches or impure "monsters" (Douglas 1966) appear on the scene, in the form of Charles Bon. One solution, Thomas Sutpen's, is to try to kill the monster. Another solution, Quentin's, is to try to understand the monster.

Figure 18 illustrates Quentin's lateral-symmetry reconstruction of Sutpen's hidden "black" Haiti family, to parallel Sutpen's public white Mississippi family, as one critical step in Quentin's solving the puzzle of why Henry murdered Charles Bon. The C and S dots in the figure refer to the fact that this lateral symmetry was generated by adding thought-transfer information from General Compson and then by processing that new information with Shreve.
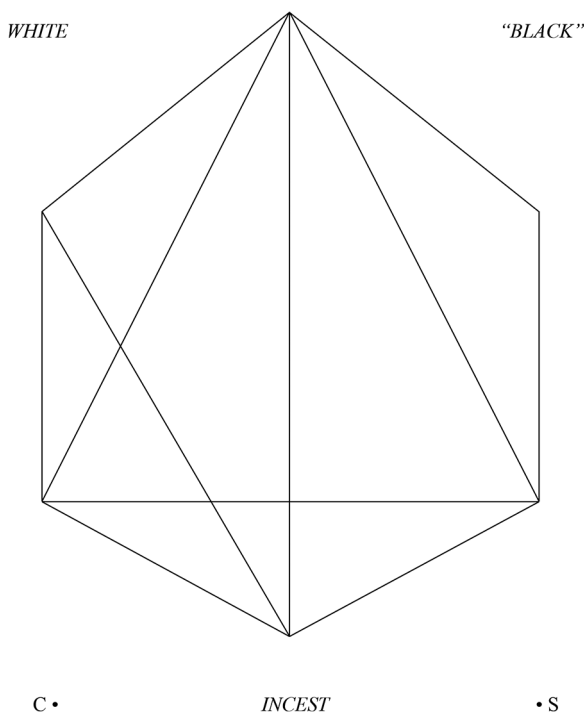

FIG. 18.—Lateral symmetry: adding General Compson thought transfers

Lateral symmetry emerged in part from thought transfer from long-dead General Compson, Quentin's grandfather. On his dreamy Harvard bed, Quentin's mind recalled talk of his father long ago about a liquor-fueled conversation that Mr. Compson's father, General Compson, had had with Thomas Sutpen even longer ago. In that conversation, dating before the Civil War, Sutpen revealed to General Compson important pieces of his hitherto obscure biography: First his "boy story" of emerging from West Virginia as a scraggly hillbilly kid, only to be insulted by the fat black house slave of a Virginia plantation owner, whom young Thomas Sutpen considered killing, only to decide to become him instead. And second his "Haiti story" about being rewarded by a French sugar plantation owner with a wife for helping that owner to suppress a slave revolt. Once Sutpen renounced that wife because she was an octoroon, he took 12 Haiti slaves with him to Mississippi, as consolation prize. There in Mississippi, Sutpen swindled land from Indians and personally built his mansion, by sleeping with his Haiti slaves in the mud and by hand-to-hand fighting naked with them at night, for macho entertainment and for skin-to-skin personal domination.

This biography alone does not imply that Charles Bon was the offspring of that Haiti union, but Quentin and Shreve together relived heated conversations between Henry Sutpen and his father, which made that connection. Lateral symmetry does not resolve the key question of why Henry killed Bon, but it sharpens the puzzle into two competing hypotheses: (a) Henry killed Bon because of family—namely, incest between Bon and his sister (Quentin's obsessive issue in *The Sound and the Fury* [Irwin 1975])—or (b) Henry killed Bon because of race—namely, Bon's cross-race marriage being legitimized (Thomas Sutpen's obsessive issue).[68]

The second cognitive-space dimension of social class emerges from the reflection symmetry diagrammed in figure 19. The R dot on the figure refers to the fact that this extra information about Wash Jones and his murder of Sutpen after the Civil War came originally from thought transfer with Rosa.

Despite her marginality as a character, Rosa's subplot has high saliency in the novel, because of the emotionality of Rosa as narrator. Once Rosa rejected Sutpen's ungentlemanly proposal to be his breeding mare, Sutpen was driven by his "design" to find a new mare, since his only legitimate son Henry had renounced him and then fled after murdering Bon. Rosa's contradiction was between the aristocratic Southern lady that she aspired to be (her past) and the poor white trash that Sutpen treated her as (her deteriorated current reality).

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[68] Of course it is possible to put the two hypotheses together into an interaction effect: Henry and Bon had complicated love-triangle issues of their own, but Sutpen's pincer grip of racism sent voltage through that dyad.

WHITE   "BLACK"

ILLEGITIMATE / LOW CLASS
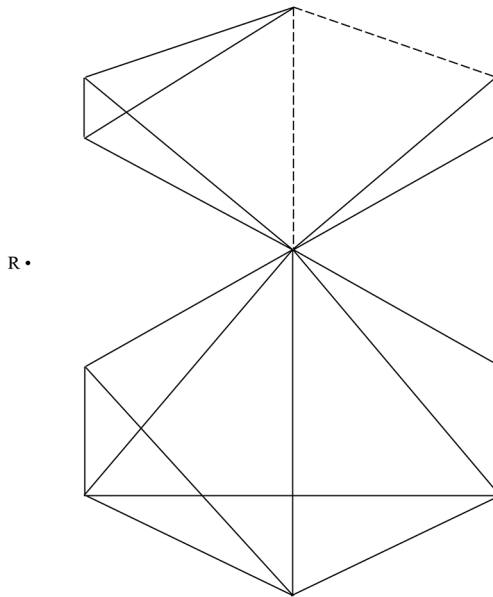
LEGITIMATE / HIGH CLASS

Fɪɢ. 19.—Reflection symmetry: Rosa's perspective attached

Rosa's rejection of Sutpen's proposal drove Sutpen to find a true poor white trash girl to sleep with—Millie, the granddaughter of Wash Jones, Sutpen's worshipful handyman, who lived in a hunting camp at the edge of Sutpen's plantation. Unfortunately Millie produced a girl, not a boy, in the horse stable where had Sutpen put her. Outraged not by the sex but by the horse stable, Wash Jones impulsively killed Sutpen with a scythe. Before being killed himself by a posse, whom he marched out to embrace, Wash Jones in a spasm of horror also killed Millie, his own granddaughter, and her Sutpen baby, in the horse stable.

Symbolically this gruesome finale to the Sutpen saga mimics the initiating boy story, but with young Thomas Sutpen's decision reversed. Namely, Wash Jones, the poor white trash outcast, at the end decided to kill the plantation owner instead of to become him, as young Sutpen had chosen. Sutpen at the beginning of his life came back to obliterate Sutpen at the end of his life. A sequence of contradictions—first between races and then between classes—channel into each other. If the criterion of elegance in plot is inter-

locking subplots—namely, interlocking complications or contradictions—then gothic *Absalom, Absalom!* certainly qualifies as gruesomely elegant.

Figure 20 decomposes the reflexive symmetry of Faulkner's plot into four interlocking sociological modules of family embedded within it. Sleeping and producing offspring with blacks (octoroon or slave) is miscegeny. Sleeping and producing offspring with upper-class whites is aristocracy. Together these constituted racist Sutpen's Mississippi 'design.' Henry, Judith, and Charles Bon were a cosmopolitan love triangle, threatening to the Mississippi design both because of race (Thomas Sutpen's perspective) and because of cosmopolitanism (Mr. Compson's perspective). Cross-class sleeping and producing children with poor white trash led to Wash Jones's revenge in Sutpen's murder. Sociologists like to think of these as four distinct family "systems." One possible difference between Faulkner's and our own perspective is that for Faulkner, these sociological modules are not autonomous, with boundaries. They are interlocked and interpenetrating through parts in common, like multiple networks (Padgett and McLean 2006, p. 1469). How the complementary modules themselves evolve—both in historical time and in narrative time—depend critically upon their interlock (Padgett and Powell 2012).
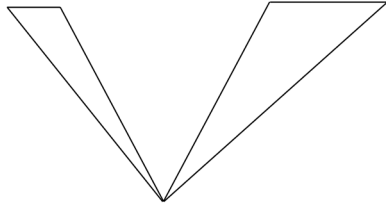
RESONANCE

So much for the cognitive space dimensions of narrative space-time. Now what about the ordinal time dimension of narrative space-time? As highlighted in the Quentin quotation above, resonance in Faulkner's view is like ripples from others in the past passing through you in the present. What scientifically might such a literary insight mean?

In figure 21 I highlight important triads in the *Absalom* narrative—that is, intense, small-scale interactions observed in each of the primary episodes in the book. With the exception of the boy-story first triad,[69] these triads are all unbalanced, in the sense of balance theory (Heider 1946; Taylor 1970). Namely, the horizontal bases of these triangles are affectively negative relationships, while the two sides of the triangles are both affectively positive relationships. According to balance theory, there is structural tension in such unbalanced triads—not just because of the presence of negative affect in one of the dyads, but because the other two dyads pressure the negative dyad to become positive (which it may not want to do). At very least, there is cross-pressure, like between Henry and Charles Bon.

Of course any large network, narrative or otherwise, is more than a pile of triads. But small egocentric networks like these bring macro networks

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[69] While stable from the perspective of balance theory, this first triad is unstable in the sense that Thomas Sutpen does not accept the outcast position that the Virginia plantation system assigns to him.

T1. Haiti miscegeny
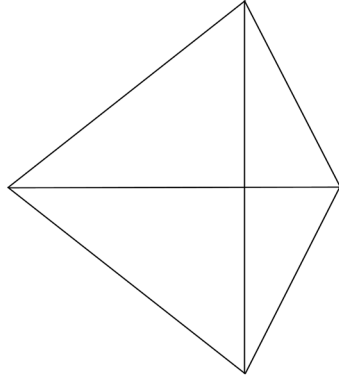
T2. Mississippi aristocracy

T3. Cosmopolitan love triangle

T4. Poor white trash revenge
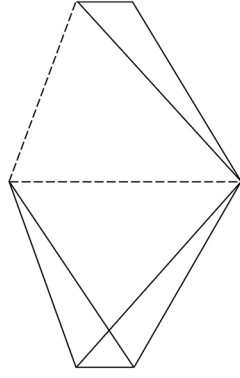
FIG. 20.—Decomposition of symmetry into sociological modules

Boy story:　　　　　　　　Virginia plantation owner

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　--　　　　　　　+

　　　　　　Thomas Sutpen　　　　　　--　　　　　House slave

Haiti:　　　　　　　　　　Haiti plantation owner

　　　　　　　　　　　　　+　　　　　　　　+

　　　　　　Thomas Sutpen　　　　　　--　　　　　Haiti wife

Mississippi design:　　　　　Thomas Sutpen

　　　　　　　　　　　　+　　　　　　　　+

　　　　　　　Ellen　　　　　　　--　　　　　Haiti slave

Love triangle:　　Henry　　　　　+/--　　　　　Charles Bon

　　　　　　　　　　+　　　　　　　　　+

　　　　　　　　　　　　　Judith

Females after Civil War:

　　　　　　　　Rosa　　　　　--　　　　　Clytie

　　　　　　　　　+　　　　　　　　+

　　　　　　　　　　　Judith

Fire:　　　　　　Rosa　　　　　--　　　　　Clytie/Henry

　　　　　　　　　+　　　　　　　　+

　　　　　　　　　　　Quentin
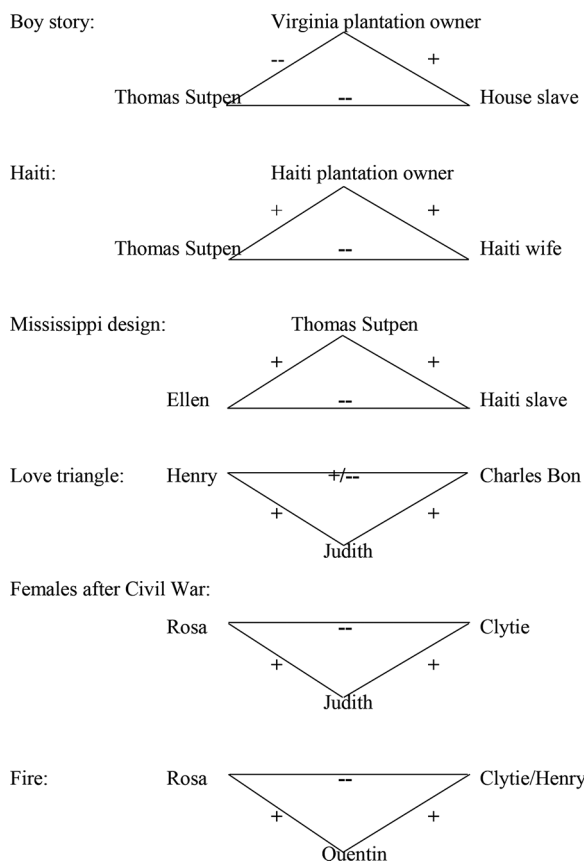
FIG. 21.—Resonance among episodes

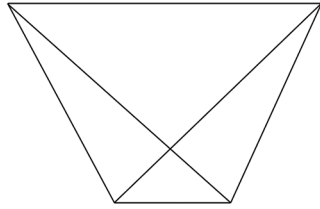down to the human scale of interaction and emotion, to which readers and narrators can relate. The interactional story these *Absalom* triads repeatedly tell is one of intense emotional cross-pressure.

Ordinal time at the narrative level derives in general from the recursion (or "lineage") principles described in figure 3, but also more specifically in this *Absalom, Absalom!* novel from inversion or progression in the sequence of these triads: not just boring "history repeats itself" over and over again, in other words, but the pivot position in these interaction triads shifts from Thomas Sutpen himself early on to Judith, his daughter, once Thomas Sutpen is challenged and dies. This inversion from male Thomas Sutpen to female Judith Sutpen as the broker of problematic interaction induces directionality, not just cyclicity, into recursion. Thomas the father is Satan in

Fɪɢ. 22.—Recursion/inversion: constructing temporal space

Absalom, while Judith the daughter is Jesus. A ray of hope appears out of the smoldering dust of Civil War defeat after Sutpen dies.

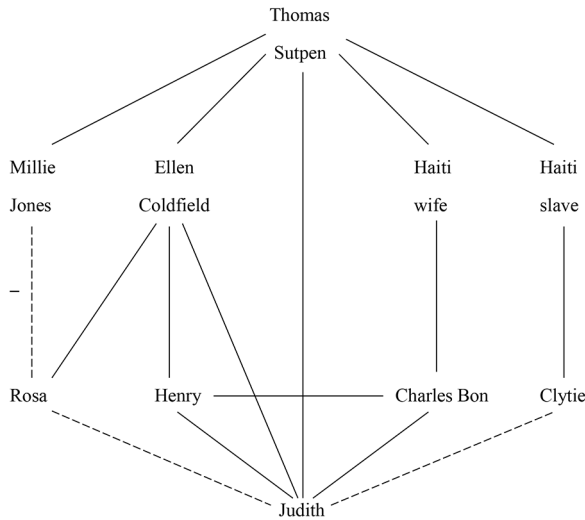Racist slaveholder Thomas Sutpen wanted to keep white and "black" rigidly unequal through personal dominance, not through segregation in physical space. Judith, in contrast, wanted both sides to love one another. She loved Charles Bon and yearned to marry him, in spite of what Henry had told her about Bon. She equally loved her brother and wanted Henry and Bon to remain best friends. Henry's murder of Bon split Judith emotionally in half. During the war when all men were away, Judith formed a functioning (even if struggling) female household with Rosa and Clytie, even though racist Rosa despised Clytie, who reminded Rosa of the breakdown in domination. Not only that, but after Henry had killed Bon, Judith sent Clytie to New Orleans to fetch the orphaned son that Charles Bon had conceived with his own octoroon wife,[70] whose face was enshrined in the locket Bon had around his neck when Bon died. With Clytie's help, Judith raised Bon's Charles Etienne as her own, until the stepson's yellow fever killed them both while Judith was nursing him.

Assembling the unbalanced triads in figure 21 together into lineage descent yields the "temporal space" of figure 22, in which these two Civil War generations—that of Thomas and that of Henry and Judith—confronted each other across generational time. These two generations of Sutpens were dominated by men and women, respectively. Recursion plus inversion is what I take Faulkner's ripple resonance to mean—not simple repetition, but rather

[70] Bon's New Orleans marriage was "bigamy" according to Mr. Compson.

beautiful Romantic-style tension, contradiction, and attempted release, which reproduces across time.

HISTORY

Yes, Faulkner would agree with many historians that slavery in the antebellum South was doomed by internal contradiction. But unlike contemporary historians, Faulkner does not look to slave resistance or to political economy or to political culture to find that internal contradiction.[71] For Faulkner, like Genovese (1976) from another point of view, the fault line is what slavery did to Southern families. As a historian, I take Faulkner to be making four interesting and provocative claims: (1) Even among whites, there were four Southern family systems (fig. 20), two legitimate and two not. (2) These family "systems" were deeply interpenetrated structurally through multiple-network sharing of parts (fig. 19). (3) These family systems were also bound together emotionally through personal and gendered relations of sentiment (fig. 22). (4) "Structural contradiction" worked itself out in intimate interpersonal relationships (fig. 21).

The primary interest in this article, however, is not Faulkner as historian of the South; it is Faulkner as modernist writer. From that point of view, the more important question is what does Faulkner say about "history" itself?

I conclude that Faulkner assembled all of the multiple perspectives in *Absalom, Absalom!* into the composite ensemble in figure 23. The narrative-time achievement of Quentin$_3$ and Shreve was certainly the synthetic part of Faulkner's overall vision of history, but this was not the totality of how he thought Southern "history" worked. Faulkner's full vision of "history" was one of multiples times in synchrony, not narrative time alone.[72] History is multivocal, not because it is resolved, even into aesthetics, but because it subsumes all important participants' perspectives, not into consensus, but into alignment—at least enough that conversation becomes possible. Narrative time is important because it is a synchronization device, through which phenomenological time, episodic time, epistemological time, and projection time all "speak" to each other. Narrative time was not functionally "designed" to do this. Rather this happened because speaking was the process from which narrative time emerged in the first place.

The narrative-time achievement of Quentin and Shreve appears in figure 23 as the diamond. The subset of events subsumed within that dia-

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[71] The literature on the American Civil War is far too vast to try to survey. Let me just gesture at a couple of my favorites: James Oakes (1990) for the [legal consequences of] slave resistance argument, Richard Bensel (1990) for the political economy analysis, and Eric Foner ([1970] 1995) for the political culture argument.

[72] In this regard, Faulkner anticipates Braudel (1972).
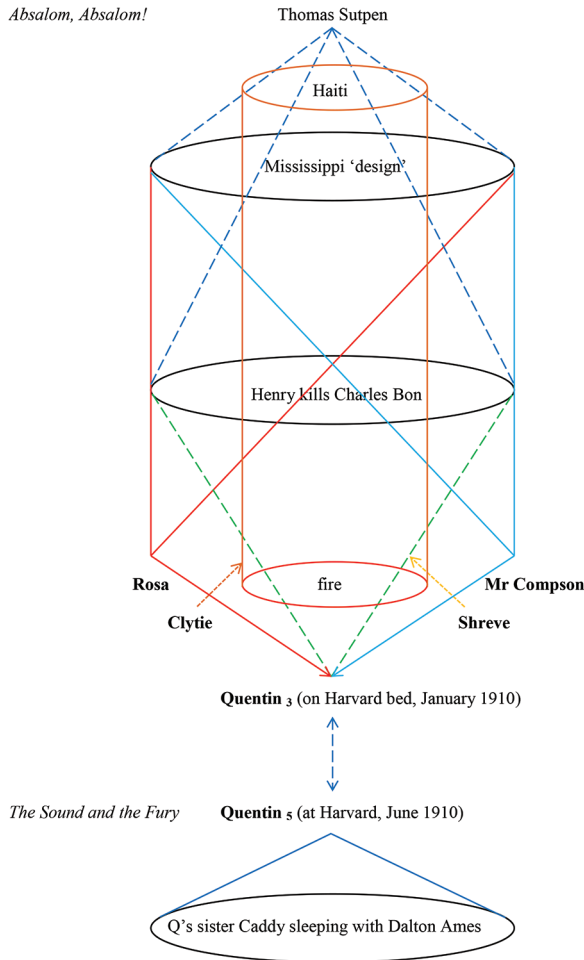
FIG. 23.—Putting multiple perspectives together in history

mond, Quentin/Shreve claim, "explains" the tragic development of the Sutpen family. But the rawer egocentric perspectives of Rosa and Mr. Compson, who do not comprehend the early history of Thomas Sutpen, also appear in figure 23—Rosa in red, Mr. Compson in light blue. Their perspectives were not elegant narrative-time diamonds, but rather temporal cones looking backward in episodic time, replete with their own obsessions and biases. Rosa's and Mr. Compson's perceptions only extended as far as the Mississippi 'design,' when Thomas Sutpen first showed up, out of nowhere, onto the local Mississippi scene.

Phenomenological times are the cacophonous thought-transfer memories and voices, living and dead, that besieged Quentin$_2$'s feverish mind, while Quentin$_3$ composed narrative time. Epistemological time is Quentin$_4$ and us as readers watching in chapter and page sequence as the facts of the *Absalom* characters and narrators unfold before our eyes.

At the very end of the book in chapter 9, however, it is Clytie's silent "voice" that finally comes to the fore. As illustrated by the brown cylinder in figure 23, Clytie is the only one alive in 1909–10 who has living-memory access to the deep history of Haiti, through her dead mother, the never-named female slave concubine of Thomas Sutpen. As such, Clytie has a deeper sense of Sutpen history than anyone else, which she never reveals. Perhaps Clytie possessed a "hidden transcript" (Schmidtberger 1982; Scott 1990) of counternarrative about the Sutpen family, with whom she lived every hour of her life,[73] but neither Quentin$_4$ nor we ever know what that is. Quentin senses Clytie's knowledge to be "eternal," which I visualize in figure 23 as a nondevelopmental cylinder, in contrast to an egocentric backward-looking cone or a logical narrative diamond. It is Quentin's belated awareness of Clytie's deep but hidden knowledge that makes himself understand at the end of the book that the beautiful and elegant explanation that he and Shreve had so painfully constructed really only scratches the surface of comprehension. Instead of leaping up with Enlightenment pride, Quentin$_1$ in January 1910 slinks back into his Harvard bed in a cold sweat.

What was the trigger for Quentin's apperception of Clytie's "perspective"? The two Rosa visits to the Sutpen mansion (Parker 1974), described in chapter 9—namely, Rosa's first visit along with Quentin in September 1909, when Quentin$_1$ met Henry on his deathbed and exchanged a few cryptic words,[74] and Rosa's second visit, relived in Quentin$_2$'s mind after receiving his father's letter, when Clytie burned herself and Henry to death in December 1909. In the first visit, Clytie touched him on the arm with "don't go up there, marster Quentin." In the second visit, Quentin saw "Sutpen faces" on Clytie and James Bond, the hitherto never mentioned mad young son of Charles Etienne, Bon's New Orleans son. "Sutpen faces" on both Clytie and James Bond genetically verified to Quentin that Charles Bon was indeed Sutpen's "black" son, just as Thomas Sutpen's old thought-transfer argument to Henry had claimed. These direct sensory signals from Clytie to

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[73] The exception is the brief trip to New Orleans, to fetch Charles Etienne. There she met Charles Bon's also unnamed octoroon wife, who accompanied Clytie back to Mississippi, to see the grave of Bon and to mourn at his grave with Clytie and Judith.

[74] The sum total of the deathbed conversation between Quentin and Henry is this: "*And you are—? Henry Sutpen. And you have been—? Four years. And you came home—? To die. Yes. To die? Yes. To die. And you have been here—? Four years. And you are—? Henry Sutpen.*". . . (*Absalom*, p. 298).

Quentin changed his perspective yet again, not in the usual linguistic way but rather viscerally through touch and sight.

What was the content of these telepathic messages from Clytie? Rosa killed Clytie, who killed Henry, who killed Charles Bon. There were no love triangle complications between Rosa and Clytie as there had been between Henry and Charles Bon. Rosa despised her demon Sutpen, but she herself contained nothing but racist hatred and class frustration, just like her demon.

Figure 24 diagrams the identity projection that Quentin$_5$ computes for himself out of this history that he (and Shreve and Rosa and Mr. Compson and Clytie and . . .) had made. Mentally Quentin identifies both with Henry
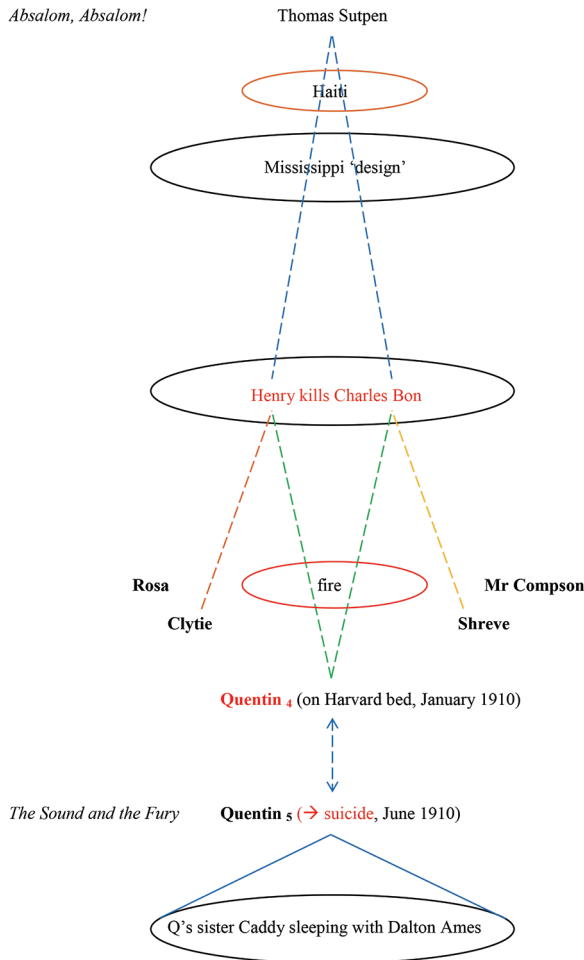
Fɪɢ. 24.—Computing action through history

and with Charles Bon. Emotionally he is Judith, yearning to bring both sides together. But contrary to Judith's (and Quentin's) deepest desires, Henry in fact had killed Charles Bon, thereby tearing Judith (and Quentin) in half. Clytie and Henry too were killed, by Rosa, because of what Rosa's demon Thomas Sutpen had channeled in her. In Clytie's fire, Clytie loudly proclaimed by her action, more than her words: racism trumps love, and Jesus is dead.

This, according to Faulkner, is how identity is computed out of history. Not just through narrative history alone, but through resonance among histories or times. *"Yes we are both Father. Or maybe Father and I are both Shreve, maybe it took Father and me both to make Shreve or Shreve and*
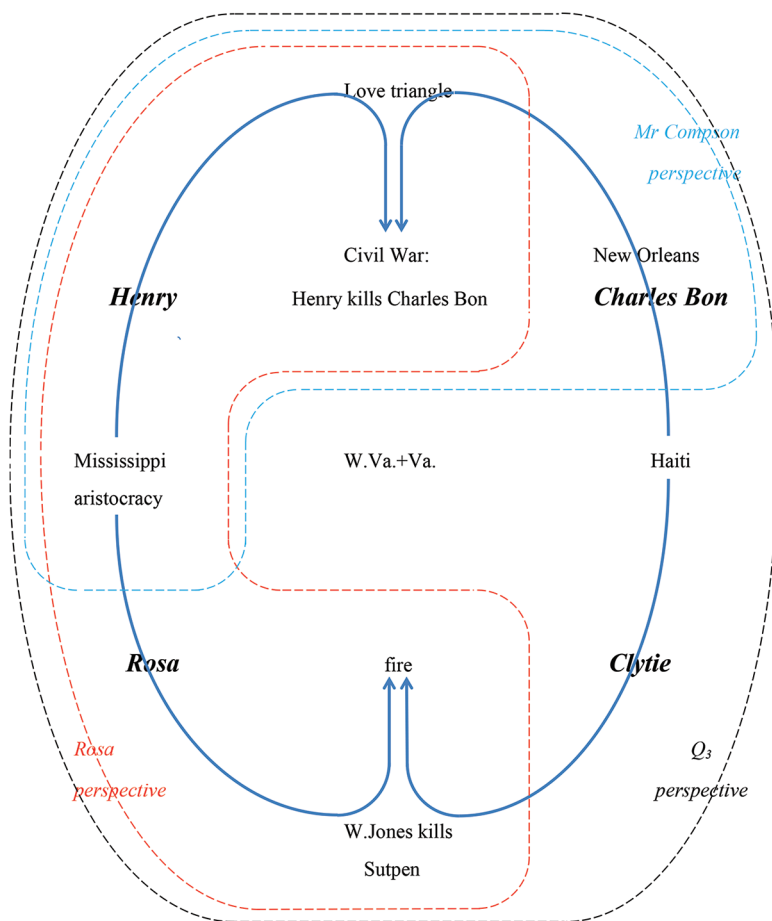
Fig. 25.—Perceiving history in collapsed time (Quentin's death vision)

me both to make Father or maybe Thomas Sutpen to make all of us" (*Absalom*, p. 210).

I conclude my analysis of *Absalom, Absalom!* with the subjective vision of Southern history that I believe that Quentin$_5$ saw at his Harvard suicide in *The Sound and the Fury*. Figure 25 is figure 24 viewed looking up, from the perspective of lying on one's back at the bottom of figure 24. History and collective identity are the same, just assembled memories viewed from the outside or from the inside. In Quentin's "historical" figure 24, time stretches backward into the past. However, in Quentin's "stream of consciousness" figure 25, time has been telescoped and collapsed into a single experiential present, where all past scenes are seen at once. This extreme foreshortening of time happened emotionally to Quentin because of the shock of the news of Clytie's recent fire and of the statement Clytie made thereby. According to Faulkner's (and Bal's and White's) model of layered identities, projection of history into action occurs not through rational calculations about the future but through telescoping times of the past.[75]

What does Quentin see in his apocalyptic vision? A fatal dance of biographies: (a) males (Henry and Charles Bon) emerging from Mississippi and Haiti respectively, only to meet and self-immolate in murder; and (b) counterpart females (Rosa and Clytie) likewise emerging from Mississippi and Haiti, only to meet and self-immolate in fire. Both biographical dances enter the Thomas Sutpen consuming throat of Southern slavery. In the previous novel, *The Sound and the Fury*, Quentin$_1$ was obsessed with incest with his sister Caddy. But in *Absalom, Absalom!*, Quentin$_4$ the feverish reader is staring, along with Faulkner and us, into a historical black hole in the present. The resonance of present time (*The Sound and the Fury*) with past time (*Absalom, Absalom!*) points Quentin$_4$, the reader, to Quentin$_5$'s own projected trajectory of horror and suicide.

CONCLUSION

My assumption in this article has been this: Time emerges for individuals through memories. Time emerges for collectivities through concatenations of memories.

Social dances of individuals through time are coordinated not just top-down through institutions, but interactively by intertwining peoples' pasts

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[75] In a series of scientific books about the psychology of choice, Damasio (1994, 1999) likewise has made a powerful, and in his case biologically grounded, argument for not decoupling our understanding of reason from emotion, as the Enlightenment mistakenly taught us to do. Faulkner's own famous way of saying this was this: "The past is never dead. It's not even past" (Faulkner 1951, p. 80).

in their presents. Social networks are autocatalytic cycles of actions (Padgett, McMahan and Zhong 2012), but they are also reproducing trajectories of interlinked memories (White 1992, 2008).

Memories differ not just because people have different experiences stored in their brains. That warehouse metaphor gives insufficient credit to the activism of our brains. Brains possess multiple memory systems—that is, multiple neuronal circuits, which wend across anatomical sections of the brain.[76] In each of these overlapping circuits, memory is an assembly process, cobbling together images, emotions, skills, and sometimes even logic.

Biologically, this is why a single person has multiple experiences of time: time can be organized as topological associations, as sets of scenes, as ordinal lineages, as metric spaces, and/or as investigation searches. These alternate sequences of time are different assembly procedures, which our multiple neural networks apply even to the same set of facts. As Faulkner understood rather profoundly, single individuals are not really single to begin with.

If a brain was talking only to itself, its perceived world would be a Rorschach blot. It could not distinguish between change in the world and change in the categories of its perception of that world. Social triangulation is what keeps brains from navel gazing (see Padgett 2011). History becomes "real" to the extent that it is constrained by facts observed by more than one.

In my narrative-network analysis of the family-oriented version of Southern history presented in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, I have distinguished among six temporal sequences—or times—in which Faulkner told the "same" history. Namely (1) the phenomenological time of experience, (2) the episodic time of points of view, (3) the narrative time of subplots, (4) the epistemological time of Quentin's and the reader's investigations, and (5) the intertextual time of projection from narrative to another. The most obvious, (6) metric dates, Faulkner did not use much but was perfectly aware of. These multiple times were not different stories, since the set of elements in all of these time registers was identical. Parsing sets into different temporal sequences, however, linguistically suggests different understandings of causality.

Viewed as phenomenological time, *Absalom, Absalom!* is confusing cacophony. Viewed as points of view, *Absalom, Absalom!* is emotional empathy. Viewed as narrative time, *Absalom, Absalom!* is social contradiction and drama. Viewed as epistemology, *Absalom, Absalom!* is modernism. Viewed as metric time, *Absalom, Absalom!* is a historical analysis of Southern slavery. Viewed as intertextual time (or "switching" in White's [1992,

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[76] Eichenbaum and Cohen (2004) say there are four of them: declarative episodic, procedural, emotional, and "higher order," whatever that poorly understood last one means.

2008] language), *Absalom, Absalom!* is projection into action, in this case suicide.

Which of these interpretations is correct? I conclude from his method that Faulkner believed that all six of his times were six truths, all of which are equally valid. Faulkner refused to choose his own identity: was he a southerner or a modernist, an analyst of history or a spinner of yarns, confused or a prescient thought transfer from the past? According to Faulkner, multivocality arises not because truth does not exist, but because all six truths are different re-presentations of the same truth. His job was to tell all versions of the truth, simultaneously.

How can this be? Symmetry and resonance. Through art,[77] multiple perspectives become not identical but aligned.[78] In linear perspective in painting, for example, one can see the same scene from different vantage points. Perceptions vary, but through symmetries one understands how one perception is mapped into another through movement. Abstraction is deeper than Cartesian space. It is mathematical transposition of alternate orderings into each other. William Faulkner did with narrative time what Leon Battista Alberti ([1435] 1991) did with visual space and what Albert Einstein did with physical space-time.

But our brains got there first intuitively, through resonance in neural circuits, before any of those artists formalized our intuitions. Collective conversation extends this resonance of distributed memories even further than our brains—into compositional representations, including language itself. This allows us to talk not just to each other but also back to ourselves.

[77] In "art" I include science. Scientists understand well, I think, the aesthetic side of what they are doing.

[78] This is an extension of the argument in Griswold (1987) that cultural power = ambiguity + coherence. Also see her methodological point: "Thus, while it may be assumed that virtually any cultural work will be interpreted somewhat differently by different social groups and that these different interpretations will reward sociological analysis, the most powerful works will generate the most abundant and complex patterns of responses and hence will provide the richest data for the social scientist as well as for the humanist" (p. 1113).

APPENDIX

Epistemological Sequence of Discovery of Episodes

WHITE   *"BLACK"*

ILLEGITIMATE   Wash Jones

infant daughter   Clytie

Millie   slaves from Haiti

father Coldfield Thomas   French sugar plantation
                  Sutpen

Rosa Coldfield

Ellen Coldfield   Haiti wife   lawyer

Judith   Charles Bon   octoroon

LEGITIMATE   Henry
                                                   C. Etienne

General Compson

Mr Compson   Quentin ₂   Shreve   Jim Bond

Rosa perspective: Chaps. 1   Rosa persp.: Chap. 5   Mr Compson persp.: Chaps. 2, 3, 4   Shreve persp: Chap 6.

Fɪɢ. A1.—Common knowledge

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WHITE   *"BLACK"*

ILLEGITIMATE

Wash Jones

infant daughter   Clytie

Millie   slaves from Haiti

father Coldfield   Thomas   French sugar plantation

Sutpen

Rosa Coldfield

Ellen Coldfield   Haiti wife   lawyer

Judith   Charles Bon   octoroon

LEGITIMATE   Henry

C. Etienne

General Compson

Mr Compson   Quentin $_2$ Shreve   Jim Bond

Rosa thought transfers: Chap. 6

FIG. A2.—Rosa additions

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WHITE   *"BLACK"*

ILLEGITIMATE   Wash Jones

infant daughter   Clytie

Millie   slaves from Haiti

father Coldfield   Thomas Sutpen   French sugar plantation

Rosa Coldfield

Ellen Coldfield   Haiti wife   lawyer

Judith   Charles Bon   octoroon

LEGITIMATE   Henry   C. Etienne

General Compson

Mr Compson   Quentin $_2$ Shreve   Jim Bond

Mr Compson speaking: Chap. 4   Mr Compson thought transfers: Chap. 6

F<small>IG</small>. A3.—Mr. Compson additions

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WHITE   *"BLACK"*

ILLEGITIMATE

infant daughter   Wash Jones   Clytie

boy TS ─ ─ ╱─ ─ *"balloon-faced n—"*

Millie   slaves from Haiti

Virginia plantation

father Coldfield   Thomas ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ French sugar plantation

Rosa Coldfield   Sutpen

Ellen Coldfield   Haiti wife   lawyer

Judith   Charles Bon   octoroon

LEGITIMATE   Henry

C. Etienne

General Compson

Mr Compson   Quentin ₃ ┄┄┄┄┄▷ Shreve   Jim Bond

Chapter 7 (part): General Compson thought transfer to Quentin
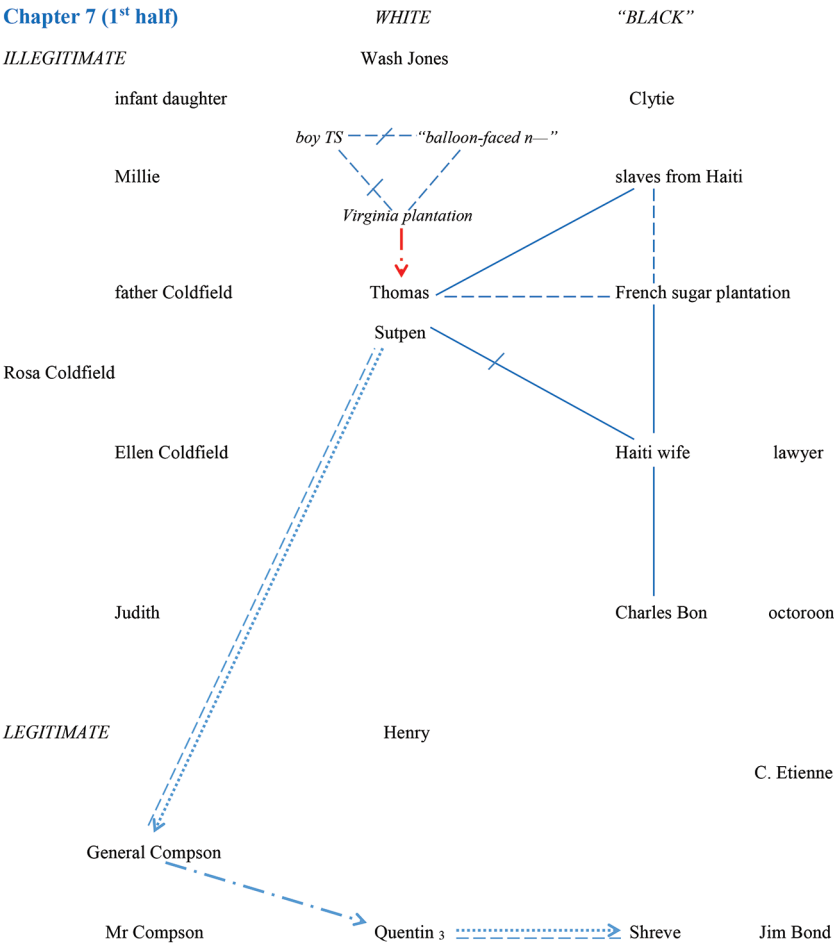
Fɪɢ. A4.—General Compson stories

WHITE   "BLACK"

ILLEGITIMATE   Wash Jones

infant daughter   Clytie

Millie   slaves from Haiti

father Coldfield   Thomas   French sugar plantation
                        Sutpen

Rosa Coldfield

Ellen Coldfield   Haiti wife — — — lawyer

Judith   Charles Bon   octoroon

LEGITIMATE   Henry

                                                            C. Etienne

General Compson

Mr Compson   Quentin 3   Shreve   Jim Bond
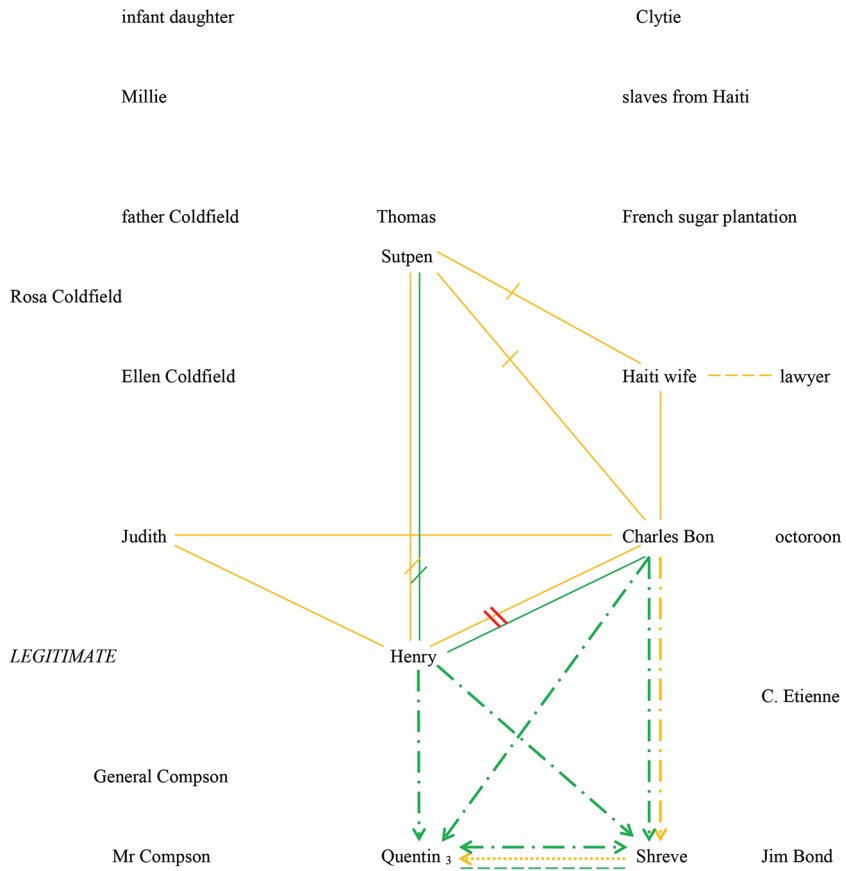
FIG. A5.—Shreve and Quentin merger

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Rosa's & Clytie's trips to Sutpen mansion ➔ burning alive   *"BLACK"*

ILLEGITIMATE   Wash Jones

infant daughter   Clytie

Millie   slaves from Haiti

father Coldfield   Thomas   French sugar plantation

Sutpen

Rosa Coldfield

Ellen Coldfield   Haiti wife   lawyer

Judith   Charles Bon   octoroon

LEGITIMATE   Henry

C. Etienne

General Compson

Mr Compson   Quentin ₁ ------ Shreve ----- Jim Bond

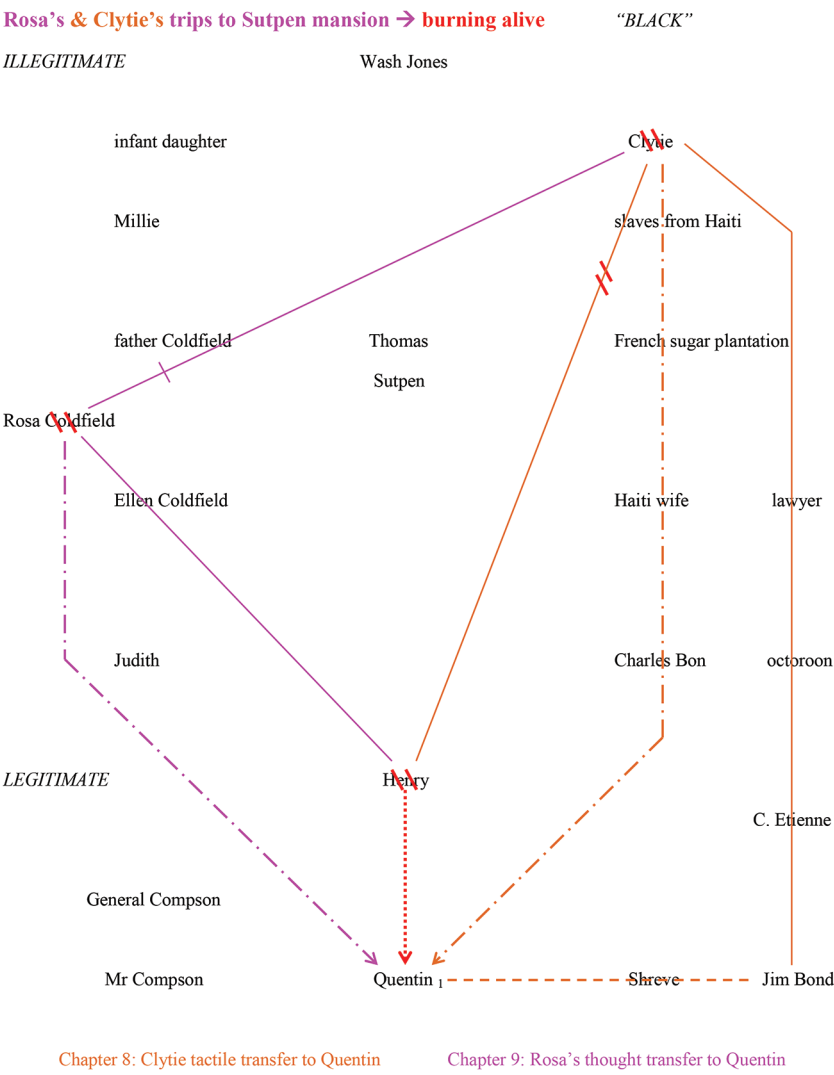Chapter 8: Clytie tactile transfer to Quentin   Chapter 9: Rosa's thought transfer to Quentin

Fɪɢ. A6.—Rosa and Clytie's trips to Sutpen mansion

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