

4-15-2005

Postmodern Narrativity in *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Memento*: Examining Telling Similarities in the Techniques of William Faulkner and Christopher Nolan

Jessica Jain Williams
University of South Florida

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd>

 Part of the [American Studies Commons](#)

Scholar Commons Citation

Williams, Jessica Jain, "Postmodern Narrativity in *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Memento*: Examining Telling Similarities in the Techniques of William Faulkner and Christopher Nolan" (2005). *Graduate Theses and Dissertations*.
<https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd/917>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact scholarcommons@usf.edu.

Postmodern Narrativity in *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Memento*: Examining Telling Similarities
in the Techniques of William Faulkner and Christopher Nolan

by

Jessica Jain Williams

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
Of the requirements for the degree of:
Master of Arts
Department of English
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Florida

Major Professor: Debra Jacobs, Ph.D.
Elizabeth Metzger, Ph.D.
Lawrence Broer, Ph.D.

Date of Approval:
April 15, 2005

Keywords: Faulkner, narratology, postmodernism, modernism, rhetorical narratology

© Copyright 2005, Jessica Jain Williams

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Chapter One: Postmodern Understanding of Narrativity	1
Chapter Two: <i>Absalom</i> and Narrative	7
Chapter Three: <i>Absalom</i> and <i>Memento</i>	20
Works Cited	29
Bibliography	32

Postmodern Narrativity in *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Memento*: Examining Telling Similarities
in the Techniques of William Faulkner and Christopher Nolan

Jessica Williams

ABSTRACT

This paper argues that narrative techniques in *Absalom, Absalom!* demonstrate Faulkner's anticipation of postmodern thought and style. Similar techniques in Christopher Nolan's film *Memento* serve to highlight how both writer and director confound the notion of "master narrative" by disrupting chronology and raising questions about the reliability of the narrators in each work. Nolan orders all events of the film in reverse while threading chronologically ordered events throughout to tell the story of Lenny's murder investigation. Faulkner likewise uses "dischronology," such as flashbacks to tell the story of Thomas Sutpen. Both Faulkner and Nolan provide key information through questionable narrators at strategic times to manipulate reader's/viewer's thoughts and opinions about specific characters. Nolan and Faulkner use several narrators, none of whom witnessed all events, to tell the stories of each work. A close examination of these similar narrative techniques creates a parallel between two otherwise unrelated works. More importantly, such an examination shows that although Faulkner was a modernist writer, his work *Absalom, Absalom!* anticipated a postmodern era.

To provide additional support for the argument that *Absalom, Absalom!* anticipates a postmodernist understanding of Narrativity, this paper will offer a perspective that incorporates ideas of postmodern thought and narratological studies from Seymour Chatman,

Gerald Prince, and Julia Kristeva. It will also draw from ideas of such Faulknerian scholars as Donald Kartiganer, Michael Millgate, and David Minter. Against the backdrop such scholarship provides a comparison of the narrative techniques of *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Memento* enhances the postmodernist understanding of historical “truth” as necessarily partial, fragmented, and subjective.

Chapter One

Postmodern Understanding of Narrativity

Miss Rosa calls Judith a “widow before she’s a bride.” General Compson tells his son that Sutpen had a “design.” Henry Sutpen kills his best friend, Charles Bon. Charles Bon is supposed to marry Henry’s sister, Judith. Sutpen had a son before his life with Ellen. Charles Bon has a child with an “octoroon mistress.” Miss Rosa tells Quentin her story. Forty some years later, Quentin Compson tells the whole story to his college roommate, Shreve.

To anyone reading William Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!*, these facts seem confusing and even sometimes irrational. Each of the five (and arguably six) narrators—Quentin, Rosa, Mr. Compson, General Compson, the limited-omniscient narrator, and, if you count him, Thomas Sutpen, each tell a different perspective, and sometimes-variant version of one man’s story and his desire to create an empire. The novel begins when Quentin visits Rosa Coldfield at her request; she wants Quentin to record the story and write it down for future telling. We later learn that this encounter is not actually the “present,” but a flashback to an earlier time.

For the reader, many facts and pieces of Sutpen’s story revealed may fail to make sense until later explained, and even then there remains doubt about accuracy and completeness of the story. According to Herberden Ryan, “there is no ‘straight’ telling of the story; instead the reader must follow each narrator as he or she goes back in the past. Inevitably the most crucial moments of the story involve crossing thresholds, and the threshold between narrated events (past) and the narration of them (present) is perhaps the

most basic” (295). This “crossing” requires a very close interaction with text. The technique shows that Faulkner “grasped the revisionary implications of his art” (Morris 152). Though Faulkner was a writer of the modernist genre, his work in *Absalom* demonstrates his anticipation of a postmodern genre that broke from the traditions of his time and presents his efforts to “think historically in an age that believes it has forgotten how to do so” (Kodat 184).

It is Faulkner’s attempt to “think historically” in *Absalom* that leaves us as readers often floundering to know what is true, what is real, and what is just one character’s version of the story. According to David Levine, “historical error is inevitable, but every narrator must venture an explanation, and almost every human explanation has some value that persists even after the interpretation” (qtd. in Kuyk 30). It is the attempt to explain, however, which compels the reader to investigate the narrative itself. Indeed, such questioning is crucial to arriving at a meaningful understanding of narrative. According to narratology scholar Gerald Prince, “identifying, examining, or reexamining various aspects of narrative in order to define or redefine them, reconfigure them, reorder them, and eliminate possible incoherences among them” (“Surveying” 10). All of these tasks should be at work when examining a narrative text. I would like to argue that due to the questionable narrators (not “narrative” since I will be using Gerald Prince’s definition of *narrative*¹ as the basis for my argument), Faulkner’s narration “seems to have succeeded more in concealing than in revealing Sutpen’s design” and thus the reader’s understanding of Sutpen and his motives

¹ “Narrative. The recounting (as product, process, object, and act, structure and structuration) of one or more real or fictitious events communicated by one, two, or several (more or less overt) narrators to one, two, or several (more or less overt) narratees” (Prince *A Dictionary* 58). It can be agreed that *Absalom, Absalom!* is in fact a narrative.

(Kuyk 28). Even further, it is a postmodern attempt “to deal with the roots of the South’s historical neurosis” (Reed 146).

It may be important to qualify my use of the term narration when referring to Faulkner himself; when I refer to Faulkner I separate him from the “implied author”² and the multiple narrators that exist within the story. I must label Faulkner the “real author” who was the creative force behind the narrative. Because Chatman argues that “the real author retires from the text as soon as the book is printed and sold...yet the principles of invention and intent *remain* in the text,” I use the term “implied author” to refer to “the source of the narrative text’s whole structure of meaning—not only of its assertion and denotation but also of its implication, connotation, and ideological nexus” (Chatman 75). Since Rosa, Mr. Compson, Quentin, Shreve, General Compson, third-person limited narrator, and some would say Sutpen tell the story of Thomas Sutpen, we have to take into account all of these versions of the story to understand meaning, but because we cannot know exactly Faulkner’s intentions and ideology, we must use these narrators to understand the text. While I recognize this can be problematic since “the meaning of a text is necessarily and forever subject to interpretation,” I nonetheless have to draw lines for my interpretation of the text for the purposes of this paper (75).

Thus, referring back to my original argument, Faulkner is the real author who constructed this narrative in such a way that readers whether implied or real are often left questioning the text to find meaning, subjective or not. Ultimately, Sutpen’s story is not clearly revealed, and as readers we must uncover the significance of such a story. My

² Chatman’s definition of the implied author as the “agency within the narrative fiction itself which guides any reading of it” (*Coming* 74)

interpretation, along with many others, is one which supports the notion that Faulkner's intent (and quite probably the intent of the implied author) was to uncover the truth about a history of the South that many didn't want to deal with—real or fictional—and did so in a manner that pushed him beyond the realm of modern fiction into unknown territory of postmodernism.

In order to make such a claim, it may be helpful to have a clear and stable understanding of postmodern thinking, which may be difficult to achieve since a major premise of postmodernism is in itself unstable. Stuart Sim's defines postmodernism in *Routledge Critical Dictionary of Postmodern Thought* as "a skeptical attitude to many of the principles and assumptions that have underpinned Western thought and social life for the last few centuries." My approach to this "postmodern/modern novel" is as a modern novel that challenges and even at times rejects the "modern desire to 'forget' history" and is instead an attempt at "engagement with history" (Kodat 195-6).

Rhetorically speaking, *Absalom* is Faulkner's attempt to reconcile the past with the present. According to rhetorical narratologist, David Richter's, "the narrative is from the outset an act of communication between author and reader" (qtd. in Kearns 6). It is with this understanding of "rhetorical narratology" that I would like to approach *Absalom* in hopes of revealing a little more clearly what it is Faulkner is communicating to his readers with his narrators. Sims' definition of the term postmodernism will function to show that Faulkner's work challenges basic universal expectations and "grand narratives" with his unreliable narrators and irregular order of information. In Chapter Three I have chosen a postmodern film, *Memento*, to act as a sort of analog to *Absalom* since both employ similar narrative

techniques to achieve similar goals and potentially make similar statements about human nature. They call into question the chronological cohesion that readers may expect with a narrative. According to Michael Kearns, a narratologist who incorporates speech-act theory into his examination of narrative, even though readers don't always expect a narrative to be exactly chronological, they "still expect to experience, retrospectively, a cohesion and purpose in narrative that our individual lives lack" (126). He goes on to say that readers expect to have an ending or a resolution to the beginning (126), but since *Absalom* appears to deny any expectations or offer a solution, and makes the journey to the end a difficult one, it makes sense to say *Absalom* challenges the standards of the modern novel. I will discuss later the lack of solution and what role the narrative plays in this "problem," but I feel it should be at the very least mentioned when discussing the narrative structure of the novel and the film both. It is the lack of cohesion or appearance thereof that makes both works unsettling to the reader/viewer.

Chapter two addresses the narrative of the novel and how it reveals/conceals the story of Thomas Sutpen. In chapter three I discuss the novel in conjunction with Nolan's film, *Memento*, and how the two correlate in both narrative technique and purpose. In both chapters I will use narratology and narrative theory as a backdrop to my argument. Seymour Chatman's theory on narrative structure in film and fiction will be especially important in chapter three. Most importantly, I will use the text of the novel itself to demonstrate how the narrators expose the history of Faulkner's south and how the dis-chronological narrative is essentially the heart and purpose of the novel. Because the text is the best source for information about the story of Thomas Sutpen and the characters who tell it, it will be central

to my argument. Ultimately, all of this will come together to demonstrate the kind of masterful technique Faulkner employs to uncover his South and make his comment about the history that is often dismissed. It is Faulkner's ability to turn on its side the traditional forms of narrative structure, to slowly reveal through numerous narrative voices the story of a man who attempted to build his own empire without regard for others and without the consideration of consequences, and to leave readers questioning the narrative itself that make Faulkner's narrative a postmodern/modern masterpiece.

Chapter Two

Absalom and Narrative

Our first encounter in *Absalom, Absalom!* is with Miss Rosa Coldfield, the elderly virgin who most likely derives a “large portion of her resentment of Sutpen...from her own sexual frustration” (Ragan 20). The reader is provided subtle clues that help determine how they should interpret Miss Rosa. To further complicate the reliability of Miss Rosa’s account, Quentin’s inability to listen completely and carefully serves to alter his understanding of pieces of the puzzle he later tries to put together. Throughout the first chapter of the novel, Miss Rosa corrects Quentin’s interpretation of the story and edits each fact as he tells it. This is also when Quentin begins to assign motives to characters (21-22). Most confusing for the reader, however, may be the fact that most of the story is told from a third-person limited perspective, in which Miss Rosa and Quentin’s thoughts are revealed through dialogue, italics, and at other times just third-person narration. Throughout, readers are provided the opinions and thoughts of Quentin and Rosa, oftentimes not knowing the background information. But these two are not the only characters to interject their opinions and observations. Mr. Compson, Quentin’s father, adds to the narrative when the second chapter jumps ahead from the meeting with Miss Rosa to the days before Quentin leaves for college. Mr. Compson intimates what destroyed Sutpen has the ability to destroy them all, no matter what their names be, making a quest for the truth even more compulsive. As Faulknerian scholar Dirk Kuyk acknowledges, we are forced to “build narratives colored by our own assumptions, desires, antipathies, and aesthetic preferences. And so we readers have our own

designs...imposed by characters, narrators, readers, and...Faulkner himself" (Kuyk 29). Ultimately, this sort of fusion of narrative voices and "hopping" from narrator to narrator complicates the facts. Additionally, because several of the eyewitnesses are now dead, it can never be determined just how accurate each version of the story is. It is often difficult to "separate the layer of the characters' designs from the layer of the narrators' designs" (Kuyk 29). We as readers hear the story of the architect hunt as it is told to Shreve, by Quentin, who was told by his father, who heard from his father, General Compson, who heard from Sutpen. We are so detached from the action in this instance we cannot be sure of anything regarding truth, especially since Quentin's telling reveals that perhaps Grandfather Compson was telling Sutpen's story through anecdote: "and then he stopped telling it. He just stopped, Grandfather said, flat and final like that, like that was all there was, all there could be to it, all of it that made good listening from one man to another over whiskey at night. Maybe it was" (Faulkner 255). It is like a legend passed down through oral tradition, in which it is not necessary to know the real man or even if he was real at all—what matters is the story and what it means today.

Straying from the norm of suspense and revelation in the novel Faulkner complicates things further:

Narrative intensity, textual density, and suspense mechanisms ought to underline crises or lead up to revelations—here they seem to heighten what leads up to crises or anticlimactically, to draw out what leads away from them. What we expect to take a lot of time takes very little, and what we expect will just go bang, goes on and on.

The book's rhythm refuses to be dramatic; indeed, it is almost insistently antidramatic and anticlimactic. (Reed 149)

We are continually frustrated and never know when to expect resolution. But according to Joseph Reed, "it is not the figure in the carpet, but the process of weaving and knotting that is both essence and subject;" it is "not about what happened but about arriving at or understanding what happened." If this is true, it is more important that we look at the narrative than what *exactly* it reveals. Close examination should lead us to Faulkner's "narrative about narrative" (146-7). A break from convention as mentioned above is evident throughout the novel. Particularly in Chapter 5 when we seem to have reached a climax in Sutpen's death and Rosa's exit from the household, we expect some sort of resolution but are instead interrupted by Quentin's inability to focus on Rosa's telling of her version of the story. Ironically, it is Rosa's long-winded, "suspense-omission" that leaves us as readers in the dark all along (150). Her belief that Quentin already knows the major events of the story leaves the reader at a loss through much of the novel, but Faulkner is sure to include pages of extensive, potentially useless, details. These details only seem meaningless or useless if we believe our goal to be one of solution. Rosa is particularly adept at telling the story, making it interesting, exciting, and just persuasive enough that she convinces Quentin to go with her to Sutpen's Hundred (Kuyk 81). This is just an instance of her melodramatic technique as teller. But according to Dirk Kuyk, she cannot be simply written off as melodramatic; she instead floats among several narrative genres, one being the Gothic tradition (81):

Her voice would not cease, it would just vanish. There would be the dim coffin-smelling gloom sweet and oversweet with the twice-bloomed wistaria against the

outer wall by the savage quiet September sun impacted distilled and hyperdistilled...and the voice not ceasing but vanishing into and then out of the long intervals like a stream, a trickle running from patch to patch of dried sand” (8).

Though much of the Gothic tradition comes from the third-person narrative it can be found throughout the novel, woven in so as to be almost undetectable, Reed argues, “the narrative is frustrating only so long as one assumes that a deep understanding of Thomas Sutpen lies at the end of the road,” but if instead we accept the confusions, “they support and enhance the process” (150-151). Rosa continually blurs the line and teaches us and perhaps Quentin, “the participant is not necessarily the best narrator” (163). Supporting what Kearns argues about the rhetorical stability/instability of the narrative and the need for readers to have a cohesive narrative, Reed argues it is the narrative itself that is the focus; Faulkner’s goal is not focused on solution, “but rather at understanding of the telling, the hearing, the narrative, the fiction itself” (151). The telling and hearing in this story is as much for the reader as it is for the characters.

Miss Rosa may be the first character we meet, but Faulkner presents Sutpen and his “design” for the telling at the very outset of the novel, though it is not clear through Rosa’s narration. As we read on we learn very quickly that Faulkner makes a practice of blurring the line between teller and tale (Romine 164). In fact we as readers are placed within the story of Sutpen much the same way Quentin is learning and hypothesizing as he hears the story from others. In effect, we are “receiving the information and its stylistic texturing *along with* the character(s) to whom it is directed” (Romine 164 my emphasis). And if the goal is in the telling, not in the solution, then Faulkner succeeds. David Minter argues, “Faulkner places

the story in a larger interpretive framework by presenting it as a tale that has been told by others to Mr. Compson, then by Mr. Compson and Miss Rosa Coldfield to Quentin Compson, and then by Quentin to his college friend Shreve McCannon” who further speculates and hypothesizes in order to try to understand “the South” (Minter 28). It is Sutpen’s own desires to fulfill his design that “are undermined by his determination to replicate himself which we see not only in...his rejection, on the basis of race, of Charles Bon as an acceptable son” but also in his “assumption that only a son can be his proper heir,” ultimately leaving him inaccessible to anyone (28). He is almost inaccessible to himself in a sense. “In the direct narrative sense, *Absalom, Absalom!* is Sutpen’s story: it is he who dominates the action...Yet Sutpen long dead, is reflected in such varied and usually violent shapes in so many different minds that he assumes an air of portentousness and mystery which...makes him unknowable” (Millgate 45). When Quentin reports General Compson’s version of Sutpen telling his story, the General comments on the way in which Sutpen has distanced himself from the story, as if he is himself the third-person narrator of his own story. “He was not bragging about something he had done; he was just telling a story about something a man named Thomas Sutpen had experienced, which would still have been the same story if the man had had no name at all, if it had been told by any man or no man over whiskey that night” (247). Sutpen is like a third-person narrator, detached, and in a “faintly forensic anecdotal manner apparently just as he remembered it” (250). He is not the only one who leaves the readers with more questions unanswered.

Mr. Compson, Quentin’s father, conveys information to Quentin, and thus the reader, that was intimated through his father years ago. The dilemma, in seeing and knowing the

truth about Sutpen's story and Charles death, is that the truth is buried beneath the bias of others as well as time. Like the game of telephone, details may get lost in the retelling. Mr. Compson's narrative, according to Reed "is undertaken for the wrong reasons: he wants the fiction to fit his rather tired philosophical bromides so that he can feel superior not only to the story but to the men and women who originally enacted the events which form it" (163). Despite his ability to fill in the gaps from Rosa's narrative, he only makes more that need filling (163). Mr. Compson spends much of his narrative speculating and guessing as to what really happened and why. He is no better than Shreve in this sense. "He has nothing to lose because he is never directly involved" (162). Ironically, much of what Mr. Compson tells came from his father and many other unnamed narrators; so many that "a myriad of observations and analyses enable the townspeople to form and test their inferences about their neighbors in general and the Sutpens in particular. Out of that process arises what is called common knowledge, the set of information, assumptions, and beliefs that the community takes to be true" (Kuyk 32). It is this common knowledge that is the foundation on which much of Mr. Compson's narrative is based, as we see in his explanations of Rosa to Quentin, "your grandfather was the nearest thing to a friend Sutpen ever had... and she probably believes that Sutpen may have told your grandfather something about himself and her...so maybe she considers you partly responsible for what happened to her and her family through him" (12-3); or when he details what everyone in town thought, "the town believed, not at the upset of the marriage...that's what Miss Rosa heard. Nobody knows what she thought. The town believed that Henry's actions...doubtless Sutpen's and Judith's behavior..." (79); most of what we learn from him is planted firmly in common knowledge

and speculation. He does it again when he demonstrates his sense of morality over Sutpen, “I have always liked to believe that he intended to name Clytie, Cassandra, prompted by some pure dramatic economy not only to beget but to designate the presiding auger of his own disaster, and that he just got the name wrong though a mistake natural in a man who must have almost taught himself to read” (62). Mr. Compson makes a practice of inferring information rather than gathering the actual facts; he does this throughout the several chapters in which he narrates:

‘he must have said to himself, must have said when he closed the library door for the last time behind himself

what else could he have hoped to find in New Orleans, if not the truth?

I can imagine him in the library that Christmas eve

He must have known that it would be in vain

he may even have known Bon that well by then

he must have known

I don’t think she ever expected

doubtless he refused’ (90-91).

Mr. Compson makes a practice of speculating as to the real “facts” about Sutpen, Henry, Judith, and Bon. No matter how it happens, the distance Mr. Compson has from the actual events forces him to infer what he can about the story. Kuyk believes the inference in the novel becomes “‘ratiocination,’ an almost mathematical working-out of consequences” (33). At times ridiculed, at others commended, this ratiocination is prevalent throughout the novel even the third-person narrator identifies it:

It was just the protective coloring of levity behind which the youthful shame of being moved hid itself...the reason for Quentin's sullen bemusement, the flipness, the strained clowning: the two of them...dedicated to that best of ratiocination which after all was a good deal like Sutpen's morality and Miss Coldfield's demonizing—this room not only dedicated to it but set aside for it and suitable so since it would be here above any other place that it (the logic and the morality) could do the least amount of harm” (280)

And:

since it was not the talking alone which did it, performed and accomplished the overpassing, but some happy marriage of speaking and hearing wherein each before the demand, the requirement, forgave condoned and forgot the faulting of the other—faultings both in the creating of this shade whom they discussed (rather, existed in) and in the hearing and sifting and discarding the false and conserving what seemed true, or fit the preconceived—in order to overpass to love, where there might be paradox and inconsistency” (316).

Shreve and Quentin may be the guilty parties in this example, but Mr. Compson is not excused from such practices: “incredible. It just does not explain” (100). But we really begin to see the kind of ratiocination in Quentin and Shreve as they attempt to “construct a coherent and convincing narrative out of personal experiences, witnesses' reports, and common knowledge” (Kuyk 33). Years of not knowing the truth compels the boys to speculate on how and why Sutpen formulated his plan and ultimately why it failed.

Quentin is seeking to clarify his past and his South through the many versions of Sutpen's story. A man who acted without regard to other human beings, Sutpen was a symbol of the South, an example of the past that created Quentin. It is Sutpen, and his "design," after all, that are at the center of all this telling, and yet we only know his story as told to Quentin and Mr. Compson by General Compson, and even further speculation about the missing facts from Quentin and Shreve; Quentin is missing key elements of the story and each narrator has their own bias when telling the story of Thomas Sutpen, as we learned with Rosa. However, it is argued that despite the many narrators telling the tale, the fact that they all come together unifies the work (Kuyk 61). It does not however, negate the fact that Quentin and Shreve "move freely between fact and analogy and from one analogy to an analogy for it. They believe more firmly in their metaphors than they do the characters" (Reed 154).

Shreve is particularly guilty of blurring the line between fact and speculation. Shreve is so focused on getting a juicy story that explains the South the way he already thinks it is that he doesn't really even ask Quentin—he commands: "'You mean she was no kin to you? Then what did she die for?' and that not Shreve's first time, nobody's first time in Cambridge since September: *Tell about the South. What's it like there. What do they do there. Why do they live there. Why do they live at all*" (174). They all wanted to know, but Shreve thought he already did. Notice he doesn't ask what it's like—he states "what's it like there." Shreve "expects a story that will confirm his notions" (Kuyk 88). The interesting thing about Shreve is that he doesn't stop there. Late in the book he describes his own imaginings 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'" (217). It is his need to hear some dramatic version of the South that prevents him from even seeing the "tragic irony of Thomas Sutpen" (Kuyk 89). But as Kuyk argues, it is Shreve's expectations that prevent him from seeing the story of Sutpen and "consequently he looks farther into the family's history and tries to discover or create there the kind of story he wants. That effort meshes well...with Quentin's own aims" (89). Quentin and Shreve are too concerned with Sutpen's children and why they did what they did to realize the magnitude of Sutpen himself. In chapter six, Shreve tries to tell the story himself, but when Quentin suggests he might give the answer to everything in one instant, Shreve doesn't want to ruin the chance to tell the story himself, "'Wait then,' Shreve said. 'For God's sake wait'" (216).

Chapter seven offers Quentin's version of Sutpen's plan, but it does so in third-person narration with insight into Quentin's tone and attitude toward the whole story. Quentin is "brooding, almost sullen...his voice level, curious, a little dreamy yet still with that overtone of sullen bemusement, of smoldering outrage" so much so that Shreve "watched him with thoughtful and intent curiosity" (218). Quentin becomes rapt in his own musings of which we are not really a part. Even the narrator seems to speculate as to Quentin's motives, "Quentin did not answer this either; again he might not have heard, talking in that curious repressed calm voice as though to the table before him of the book upon it or the letter upon the book or his hands on either side of the book" (218). It is also in this chapter that we learn much about Sutpen's past and his upbringing that played a vital role in bringing him to his design. After pages and pages of telling Sutpen's story, Quentin "had not moved, not even to raise his head from its attitude of brooding bemusement upon the open letter which lay on the open

textbook, his hands lying on the table before him on either side of the book and the letter, one half of which slanted upward from the transverse crease without support” (238). He is almost in a trance. And as he continues, the narration is interjected with Grandfather’s narration of Sutpen’s narration to him. At this point Quentin even seems to acknowledge the problem of so many narrators, ““And I reckon Grandfather was saying ‘Wait for God’s sake wait’ about like you are, until he finally did stop and back up and start over again with at least some regard for cause and effect even if none for logical sequence and continuity”” (247). And it is finally in this chapter that Quentin alludes to the fact that he might finally “get it,” that he sees how he can be linked to Sutpen, and Bon, and Henry, and Judith, even if he didn’t see it all first hand:

Yes. Maybe we are both Father. 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...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 (261-2).

“Sutpen may have been the pebble that fell” (Kuyk 92). It is through this analogy that Quentin realizes his connection to the Sutpens, but it is also how he isolates himself from

them. Shreve tries forcing Quentin to tell the story, but when that happens, Quentin tries to regain control, “‘Wait... Wait I tell you!’ Quentin said... ‘I am telling’” (277).

Quentin’s identity is closely wrapped up in the history of this one man and his heirs because of his relationship to the history of the past as a whole. Sutpen’s life may well be a condensed version of the rise and fall of the mythical South—a South that tried to fool itself into believing a society that degrades human beings in the name of aristocracy is destined for greatness. Quentin has to know the truth in order to understand that aspect of his unstable identity. For Quentin, it is the burden of having heard so many stories and remembering so many voices that, while still a young man, he has become ‘a barracks filled with stubborn back-looking ghosts’” (Minter 31). Quentin can’t seem to let go of those ghosts and even whether listening to Miss Rosa, “Quentin was not listening because there was also something which he could not pass” (172) when listening to Rosa tell her version of the events; or to Shreve giving mechanical answers, not even really hearing him either: “‘Yes,’ Quentin said. *He sounds just like father* he thought, glancing (his face quiet, reposed, curiously almost sullen) for a moment” (181). In this chapter alone we have Shreve, Quentin, Mr. Compson, and third-person limited narrating to us the story. Quentin’s instability is most clear in this chapter and others in which Shreve hypothesizes the events of Sutpen and his children. Decidedly, it is Quentin’s attempt at understanding Sutpen and the South that challenges “principles and assumptions that have underpinned Western thought and social life for the last few centuries” as Sims recognizes in his *Dictionary of Postmodern Thought*. That perhaps *Absalom, Absalom!* was Faulkner’s backward-looking, forward-looking text—meaning questionable narrators and the histories they uncover actually look forward to a

postmodern way of thinking and remembering the past. Through Quentin's instability, Rosa's bias, Shreve's misconceptions, Mr. Compson's prejudices, General Compson's anecdotes, and the townspeople's common knowledge, we can never really learn the truth about Sutpen's design.

But in true Faulknerian tradition, and in accordance with Joseph Reed's beliefs, Faulkner doesn't make it about finding a solution, but rather weaving together the details of a sordid past. In the following chapter I use the recent film *Memento* to act as a mirror that allows us to reflect on *Absalom* in a more visual context. Though the stories are not the same, the direction in the film allows us to make a comparison and possibly glean more insight into the goal of narrative structure in Faulkner's modern novel. As I will explain, Quentin and *Memento's* main character, Lenny, share many similar qualities and problems. They both suffer from a past that haunts them and an inability to know if they are being provided the whole truth. They are both forced to confront the past and it is not always a positive experience, as we have already learned with Quentin.

Chapter Three

Absalom and Memento

As a reflection of *Absalom*, Christopher Nolan's film, *Memento*, provides viewers with information about the main character, Lenny, played by Guy Pearce, through several questionable characters. What makes this film unique is its direction. The first scene of the movie, one in which a man is shot and killed, is completely in reverse, as if it is rewinding in slow motion. The next is in black and white, with the shooter (Lenny) sitting up in bed asking himself where he is.³ Initially, like in *Absalom*, viewers do not understand what has happened, nor do they know what role each character plays until well into the plot. What makes Nolan's film so interesting is that each scene ends where the previous one began, with black & white scenes cut in between each color scene that follow a standard forward chronology. This probably sounds fairly confusing, but it's not over yet. What is more, the use of a camera to change perspective is also part of the equation that adds to the confusion. As Seymour Chatman notes in *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, "though it may move, that camera must shoot from some single position. This position need not coincide with the perceptual point of view of any character. The whole movie may pass before us in pure visual objectivity, the camera identified in no way with any character" (159). The way the "narrative" becomes further complicated in film is that it may use visual and auditory senses to manipulate point of view (158) and therefore the characters can be particularly helpful or problematic, depending on the situation. In film the use of editing can

³ Chronology in relation to the shooting is unknown at that point in the film.

allow a director to cut from frame to frame and manipulate the vantage point from which the viewer sees the events unfold. We may see the perceptual or literal point of view, the view through a character's eyes, or conceptual point of view, being like a third-person narrator, seeing things through the lens and not a particular character (Chatman *Story* 152). These points of view may be considered subjective or objective respectively. Chatman argues that "an analogous sliding change of viewpoint sometimes occurs in modernist verbal narratives; in *Mrs. Dalloway*, a perception may shift from one character to another or to the narrator's report even within the bounds of a single sentence" (*Story* 161). It is this analogous change that we see throughout *Absalom* that makes it much like a film in that way. In chapter six we go from Shreve to third-person limited to Quentin speaking, to Quentin thinking, to Shreve speaking, and back to Quentin speaking. Quentin's thoughts are filled with revelations and speculations about what was said and what everything means.

Like *Absalom*, *Memento*'s central character tries to uncover the truth about a murderous past. In *Absalom* Quentin uncovers what he thinks is the truth about the death of Charles Bon and numerous other characters; he tries to exorcise the demons of his South. Lenny, in *Memento*, wants to avenge the rape and murder of his wife. In order to complicate matters, both stories contain unreliable narrators and hearsay, and Nolan's main character has a brain injury that prevents him from making new memories; therefore, he can trust no one.

With the use of unreliable and biased narrators, both the novel and the film call into question the stability of the subject. Using Stuart Sim's to define the subject in *Dictionary of Postmodern Thought*, Quentin and Lenny are unable to be the "rational, unified, powerful and controlling being[s]" of traditional Western thought. In contrast to Humanism,

postmodernism “has rejected the notion of the individual, or ‘subject,’” as a “privileged being” at the core of “cultural process.” Lenny and Quentin are the subjects, but each “is a fragmented being who has no essential core of identity.” In accordance with a postmodernist understanding of the subject (in contrast to “self”), each is to be regarded as a process in a continual state of dissolution rather than a fixed identity of self that endures unchanged over time.” Both men spend the duration of their stories calling into question all of the standards and “truths” they know and discover (“Subject”). Wesley Morris contends that Faulkner knew “that narrative has subjects, that narrative is historical, and that narrative merges art with ethics, even politics, as it represents something outside of the text,” arguing that the subject is a historical subject that produces stories (143). Quentin and Lenny are the historical subjects through whom we learn the stories, for whom they are told, and in whom we find relevance. But because their stories and portions of the stories they learn come from other narrators, they become unstable. Furthermore, the stories they tell, and the ethical and moral consequences of each history, call into question the grand narratives of “truth” about human behavior.

Lenny’s identity, since he has no new memories and can trust no one, is never stable and he is continually trying to put together the pieces of his wife’s murder. Teddy, Natalie, the police reports, and even the hotel desk clerk are manipulative, and neither Lenny nor the viewers knows who is telling the truth. Repeatedly throughout the film Lenny asks himself, “Where am I?” Essentially he no longer has an identity. In the third scene of the film, even Teddy tells Lenny he doesn’t know who he is, “not who you’ve become.” Because of his disorder, he has learned how to cope, but he has also learned some hard lessons. He tells

Teddy that memories can be distorted, ““they’re just an interpretation; they’re not a record, and they’re irrelevant if you have the facts.”” Unfortunately for Lenny, characters that are revealed to be untrustworthy are the source of his facts. There are missing pages from the police report; Teddy suggests that Natalie will betray him for her own good; Natalie tells Lenny that she will help him—she has lost someone, too. Who can Lenny trust? How does he know what’s true and what’s a lie? With every piece of the story that comes together, Lenny is closer to solving his wife’s murder. But Lenny is obsessed with finding the man who has raped and murdered his wife, so obsessed that he tattoos the “facts” of his investigation on his body. In fact, his wife and the memories he has with her are all he can remember. He burns her things hoping to forget, but as he states while he watches her personal effects burn, he “can’t remember to forget [her].” Lenny’s inability to make new memories forces him to stay in the past. He cannot escape from his past because every aspect of his identity is tied to his life before the attack. Quentin, on the other hand, attempts to erase an aspect of his identity as he uncovers and explains a violent and racist past.

As a southerner, Quentin is mortified at the history of the South; he has tried to escape to New England, but cannot. According to Melvin Backman, “The burden of [the South’s] history lay heavy upon Quentin Compson. Torn by loyalty and guilt by the desire to defend and the need to expiate, by the desire to suppress and the need to confess, he could only cry out against his burden. And this is how the novel ends—with the sins of the past unexpiated and the dilemma of the present irresolvable” (75). The grand narratives of the South and its justification for its behavior are no longer enough for Quentin, and he calls into question the explanations of the past.

Lenny *only* questions. He spends the duration of the film doubting everyone and everything except for himself and his handwriting. The very nature of his existence has become a question; he has destroyed all grand narratives and constructs his own with the existence of his tattoos, Polaroids, and post-it notes. He tells Natalie that for him, memory of his past before the attack is all he has to go on. He tells her, ““There are things you know for sure, like objects and sounds. Certainties are the kind of memory you take for granted. I can remember so much—the feel of the world, and her. She’s gone, and the present is trivia which I scribble down.””. Lenny no longer has any authority because he cannot trust anyone or anything. In fact, his imperative that he trust only his own handwriting is even arguable because what he writes is often determined by what others tell him.

For Quentin, the reality of his life and the truth of the past never ends. Quentin sees it in the telling of Sutpen’s story over and over:

Am I going to have to have to hear it all again he thought I am going to have to hear it all over again I am already hearing it all over again I am listening to it all over again I shall have to never listen to anything else but this again forever so apparently not only a man never outlives his father but not even his friends and acquaintances do (277).

Quentin begins to see the tendency of the repetition and interconnectedness of the past. He imagines that his father is much like Sutpen. He fears that in the future, “*maybe it took...Thomas Sutpen to make all of us*” (277). He understands that the story is told and retold. Each teller experiences Sutpen in a different way and each interprets the story

differently. Equally, Lenny's story is told and retold; every person he encounters is brand new—living every moment over and over—allowing him to reinterpret the facts differently. Joseph Reed argues that this repetition is present in *Absalom* “to expose us to a sequence of narrators using the same raw material” and that the “ordering logic behind this series of jumps, disjunctions, and revisiting is that of the necessity of *withholding information for timed revelation*,” all suggesting “layers of knowledge, of understanding, of meaning” (my emphasis 148), pushing him through a modern novel into the postmodern “engagement with history” (Kodat 194). Like Lenny, Quentin “creates” his own version of the truth as best he can, temporary though it may be. Significantly, both Quentin and Lenny respond the same way when “truth” is finally disclosed. They both experience revulsion. It has been their engagement with their respective histories throughout the novel and the film that constructs their identities, but it is also their engagement that ultimately incites feelings of revulsion in themselves and the past that constructs them.

Julia Kristeva's term, “abject” is helpful to explain what happens to Lenny and Quentin. She argues that “the ‘abject’ constitutes anything that is excluded from the symbolic order,” but in order to be placed in such a position, the “subject must repress that which reminds it of its own material nature by categorizing it as unclean or disgusting” (“Abjection” *The Routledge Critical Dictionary of Postmodern Thought*). Both Lenny and Quentin are the subjects who reject aspects of themselves when they reject the truth. Quentin wishes to reject the parts of him that are tied to the horror of the South. Lenny gets revenge on Teddy when he learns the truth about his wife's death. It is this rejection of the truth and self constructed as a part of that truth that gets to the root of postmodern thought. Because

postmodernism challenges the thoughts and beliefs that “underpin Western thought” and those beliefs play a role in the construction of self for Lenny and Quentin, we can see that Faulkner and Nolan understand the power of rejection, not only of self but of the horrific past that constructs them.

Quentin struggles to accept the truth about the South and becomes physically sick when he thinks about the actions of his family, Sutpen, and even southern society. He moves to New England for school, attempts to retell the story, but the readers are never sure how much is fact and how much is Quentin’s explanation for Sutpen and the South. Shreve and Quentin have “differing reactions...to the tale they reconstruct (or create),” and frequent intrusions by the narrative voice throughout the novel’s second movement underline the pain that hearing the story causes the young Southerner” (Ragan 89). Even the last words of the novel leave us in a quandary, since it is not entirely clear how Quentin feels. “‘I don’t hate it,’ Quentin said, quickly, at once, immediately; ‘I don’t hate it,’ he said. *I don’t hate it* he thought, panting in the cold air, the iron New England dark; *I don’t. I don’t! I don’t hate it! I don’t hate it!*” (378). Scholars have debated over and over whether Quentin truly does not hate the South or whether he is trying to convince himself as he says and thinks it to himself.

Lenny, as we learn at the very end of this backward film, intentionally frames Teddy, a police officer, so that he will turn out to be the man Lenny must kill to avenge his wife’s death. The end of the film is the beginning of Lenny’s search for his wife’s killer. What viewers learn in the end is that *Lenny* is his wife’s killer; his inability to make new memories allows him to inject his wife with insulin over and over until she goes into a diabetic coma and dies. This information is not as important as the fact that Lenny’s anger at hearing the

truth from Teddy makes him lash out and frame Teddy. Lenny reviles the thought that he is the reason his wife is dead, just as Quentin reviles that his heritage is founded on racism, hatred, fear, and lies. Kristeva explains that when the subject “is forced to recognize this, the resultant action is one of extreme repulsion,” the ‘act of abjection’ (“Abjection”). Quentin and Lenny likewise experience this revulsion and both have violent physical reactions to the truth.

The instability of the subject, the rejection of aspects of self, and the challenging of basic belief systems are basic notions of postmodernism; and therefore help to demonstrate how each of these works might function as postmodern pieces. Film is especially useful in offering a postmodern perspective when the revelation of truth can be reserved and controlled in so many different ways. *Memento* may be an obvious choice when discussing postmodern film, but perhaps it is the use of this film to reflect an anticipation of postmodernism in Faulkner’s work that makes it all the more interesting. I keep coming back to the narration as a tool for accomplishing this task. Nolan’s direction of the film controls what information we are provided, how we are provided it, and through whom it is provided. As the writer, Faulkner controls the information we receive, through whom we receive it, and when we receive it. While it is easy to dismiss Faulkner as a modernist writer and be done with it, we cannot ignore his genius use of questionable narrators and mystification of “master narratives” in the various versions of the Sutpen story.

While Faulkner’s work may have been fragmented and raw in the modern tradition, it is the attempts to question the “truth” about Sutpen and the South that propel this novel into the postmodern arena. Thus, it seems obvious that the great modern writer William Faulkner

was perhaps even greater because of his ability to understand that a story that rejects modern thought and constructs, allows meaning to come through the readers, has a complicated and often confusing narrative structure, and creates a sense of horror at the truths of human nature make for a postmodern work of genius. Faulkner's use of these techniques successfully makes for an artistic display unlike the modernist work of his time; his unstable subjects, unreliable narrators, and unquestionable abjection of the truth make for a postmodern/modern novel ahead of its time.

Works Cited

- Backman, Melvin. "Absalom, Absalom!" *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Absalom, Absalom!: Collections of Critical Essays*. Ed. Arnold Goldman. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1971. 59-75.
- Chatman, Seymour. *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990.
- . *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1978.
- Faulkner, William. *Absalom, Absalom!* New York: Modern Library, 1964.
- Kartiganer, Donald M. *The Fragile Thread: The Meaning of Form in Faulkner's Novels*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1979.
- Kearns, Michael. *Rhetorical Narratology*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999.
- Kindt, Tom and Hans-Harald Müller, eds. *What is Narratology?: Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter Press, 2003.
- Kinney, Arthur F. *Faulkner's Narrative Poetics: Style as Vision*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1978.
- Kodat, Catherine Gunther. "A Postmodern *Absalom, Absalom!*, A Modern *Beloved*: The Dialectic of Form." *Unflinching Gaze: Morrison and Faulkner Re-envisioned*. Eds. Carol Kolmerton, Stephen Ross, and Judith Bryant Wittenberg. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997. 181-198.
- <<http://www.netlibrary.com.proxy.usf.edu/nlreader.dll>>.

- Kristeva, Julia. "Abjection." *The Routledge Critical Dictionary of Postmodern Thought*. Ed. Stuart Sim. New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Kuyk, Dirk Jr. *Sutpen's Design: Interpreting Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990.
- Lockyer, Judith. *Ordered by Words: Language and Narration in the Novels of William Faulkner*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991.
- Millgate, Michael. "Absalom, Absalom!" *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Absalom, Absalom!: A Collection of Essays*. Ed. Arnold Goldman. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1971. 42-58.
- Minter, David. *Faulkner's Questioning Narratives: Fiction of his Major Phase, 1929-42*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001.
- Morris, Wesley. "Recovering the Teller in the Tale: An Unfinished Project." *Faulkner and the Artist: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1993*. Jackson: University of MS Press, 1994. 141-160.
- Nolan, Christopher, dir. *Memento*. Perf. Guy Pearce, Carrie-Anne Moss, and Joe Pantoliano. New Market, 2001.
- "Postmodernism." *The Routledge Critical Dictionary of Postmodern Thought*. Ed. Stuart Sim. New York: Routledge, 1998.
- "Postmodernity." *The Routledge Critical Dictionary of Postmodern Thought*. Ed. Stuart Sim. New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Prince, Gerald. "Surveying Narratology." *What is Narratology?: Questions and Answers*

- Regarding the Status of a Theory*. Eds. Tom Kindt and Hans-Harald Müller. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter Press, 2003. 1-16.
- Ragan, David Paul. *William Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!: A Critical Study*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1987.
- Reed, Joseph. *Faulkner's Narrative*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973.
- Romine, Scott. *The Narrative Forms of Southern Community*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999.
- Ryan, Herberden W. "Behind Closed Doors: The Unknowable and the Unknowing in *Absalom, Absalom!*" *Mississippi Quarterly*. 45.3 (1992) 295-312.
- "Subject." *The Routledge Critical Dictionary of Postmodern Thought*. Ed. Stuart Sim. New York: Routledge, 1998.

Bibliography

- Ahearn, Edward J. *Marx and Modern Fiction*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.
- Baldwin, Doug. "Putting Images into Words: Elements of the 'cinematic' in William Faulkner's Prose." *The Faulkner Journal*. 16.1 (2000/2001): 35-64.
- Brooks, Peter. "Incredulous Narration: *Absalom, Absalom!*" *Comparative Literature*. 34 (1982): 247-68.
- Cornils, Anja and Wilhelm Schernus. "On the Relationship between the Theory of the Novel, Narrative Theory, and Narratology." *What is Narratology?: Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory*. Eds. Tom Kindt and Hans-Harald Müller. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter Press, 2003. 137-174.
- Cullick, Jonathan S. "'I had a design': Sutpen as Narrator in *Absalom, Absalom!*" *The Southern Literary Journal*. 28.2 (1996): 48-58
- Donnelly, Colleen E. "Compelled to Believe: Historiography and Truth in *Absalom, Absalom!*" *Style*. 25.1 (1991): 104-122.
- Fowler, Doreen. "Reading the Absences: Race and Narration in Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*" *Faulkner at 100 Retrospect and Prospect: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1998*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1998. 132-139.
- Gibson, Andrew. *Postmodernity, Ethics and the Novel: From Leavis to Levinas*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Hamblin, Robert W. "'Longer than Anything': Faulkner's 'Grand Design' in *Absalom,*

- Absalom!*” *Faulkner and the Artist: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1993*. Eds. Donald M. Kartiganer and Ann J. Abadie. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1994. 269-293.
- Harrington, Evans, and Ann J Abadie, eds. *Faulkner, Modernism, and Film: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1978*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1979.
- Hill, Val and Peter Every. “Postmodernism and the Cinema.” *The Routledge Critical Dictionary of Postmodern Thought*. Ed. Stuart Sim. New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Hönnighausen, Lothar. “Faulkner, the Role-Player.” *Faulkner at 100 Retrospect and Prospect: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1997*. Eds. Donald Kartiganer and Ann J. Abadie. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1998. 12-17.
- Holton, Robert. *Jarring Witnesses: Modern Fiction and the Representation of History*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994.
- Jannidis, Fotis. “Narratology and the Narrative.” *What is Narratology?: Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory*. Eds. Tom Kindt and Hans-Harald Müller. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter Press, 2003. 35-54.
- Kenner, Hugh. “Faulkner and the Avant-Garde.” *Faulkner, Modernism, and Film: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1978*. Eds. Evans Harrington and Ann J. Abadie. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1979. 182-196.
- Kyhan, Lee. “Narration as Tragic Experience in Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!*” *Journal of English Language and Literature (Seoul)*. 40 (1994): 743-54.
- Morris, Wesley. “Recovering the Teller in the Tale: An Unfinished Project.” *Faulkner and the Artist: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1993*. Jackson: University of Mississippi

- Press, 1994. 141-160.
- Pearce, Richard. *The Politics of Narration: James Joyce, William Faulkner, and Virginia Woolf*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991.
- Rogers, Franklin R. *Occidental Ideographs: Image, Sequence, and Literary History*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1991.
- Ryan, Herberden W. "Behind Closed Doors: The Unknowable and the Unknowing in *Absalom, Absalom!*" *The Mississippi Quarterly*. 45.3 (1992): 295-311.
- Spiegel, Alan. *Fiction and the Camera Eye: Visual Consciousness in Film and the Modern Novel*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976.
- Stanzel, F.K. *A Theory of Narrative*. Trans Charlotte Goedsche. London: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- Tubrett, Dion. "So Where Are You?: On *Memento*, Memory, and the Sincerity of Self-Deception." *CineAction*. Summer (2001): 2-10.
- van Peer, Willie and Seymour Chatman, eds. *New Perspectives on Narrative Perspective*. New York: SUNY Press, 2001.
- Young, Thomas Daniel. "Narration as Creative Art: The Role of Quentin Compson in *Absalom, Absalom!*" *Faulkner, Modernism, and Film: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1978*. Eds. Evans Harrington and Ann J. Abadie. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1979. 82-102.