I SEE, HE SAYS, PERHAPS, ON TIME:
VISION, VOICE, HYPOTHETICAL NARRATION, AND TEMPORALITY
IN WILLIAM FAULKNER’S FICTION

DISSERATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
The Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

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2003

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ABSTRACT

This study examines four narrative techniques in William Faulkner’s fiction in order to accomplish two things: 1) see what applying contemporary narrative theory to Faulkner can tell us about his narratives; and 2) see how examining Faulkner’s narratives can cause us to revise or extend concepts in narrative theory. In other words, the study establishes a recursive relationship between Faulkner’s fiction and narrative theory, one in which each subject matter can illuminate the other. The four narrative techniques examined include shifts in focalization, shifts in voice, hypothetical narration, and representations of time. Each chapter examines background theory, gives examples of the technique, offers explication of the technique, and analyzes the technique’s effects. The first chapter takes “Barn Burning” as its main example and looks at how to identify shifts in focalization (vision), develops a model of layers of focalization, and investigates their effects. Chapter two focuses on As I Lay Dying and “Old Man” and examines narrative voice, works at defining voice, distinguishes conventional markers of narrative voice from voice features, and explores the effect of narrative voice. The first two chapters in combination work to define the boundary between vision and voice. The third chapter looks at hypothetical narration. Of the three epistemic modes of narration, it is the
uncertain form, and Faulkner makes extensive and innovative use of it particularly in my main example here, *Absalom, Absalom!* The fourth chapter returns to “Barn Burning” and *Absalom, Absalom!* and examines Faulkner’s portrayal of time. The effect of Faulkner’s techniques suggest a temporal understanding similar to that of Henri Bergson: time is non-linear, more experiential than scientific. The conclusion suggests how the four techniques taken together contribute to an understanding of Faulkner’s quite Platonic epistemology: perfect knowledge is ultimately unattainable, yet humanity continues to strive toward it.
To Olivia.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank, first of all, my family, especially my loving, patient, and supportivewife, Olivia. In addition, the encouragement of my mother, Judy, my father, Mick,and my two brothers, Jim and Tom, helped keep me going.

Secondly, I am grateful to my adviser, James Phelan, for his careful reading ofnumerous drafts, thoughtful advice, and continual support.

In addition I would like to thank my other dissertation committee members,Jared Gardner and Jessica Prinz, for their suggestions and encouragement.

Others who helped me along the way include Thomas Cooley and WalterDavis, both of whose ideas continue to guide my efforts even after their retirements.

Thank you also to The Ohio State University for generous financial support.

Finally, I would like to thank God for the many blessings that made thisdissertation possible, especially for the faith that this project would honor and serveHim.
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INTRODUCTION

This study has as its center a two-part question: how does implementing the tools of contemporary narrative theory help us understand in new ways Faulkner’s fiction, particularly his innovative techniques, and how does reading Faulkner’s fiction, paying particular attention to these techniques, help us improve or broaden the reach of contemporary narrative theory? That is, I investigate (a) how a study of Faulkner using narratological tools can help us understand new things about Faulkner and (b) how a study of narratology using Faulkner’s narratives can help us revise and extend contemporary narratology. Consider the questions raised by this small sample of Faulkner’s unusual techniques:

• In the short story “Barn Burning,” while a heterodiegetic narrator tells the story of young Sartoris Snopes and his conflict with his pyromaniacal father, focalization in this short story shifts to the boy 246 times. We should ask, why Faulkner did not chose simply to tell the story from the boy’s perspective? Why utilize a heterodiegetic narrator and then depend so largely upon the perceptions of a character?

• In As I Lay Dying, the novel seems to be “told” (sc. voiced) by 15 different characters over 59 chapters, yet several characters—most notably Darl—seem to
speak in ways that exceed what we would expect from their ages, education, and
cultural background. We should ask, whose voice it is that speaks in these unusual
chapters. In the “Darl” chapters, for example, is this his voice, or is some other
agent speaking?

• In *Absalom, Absalom!* characters and the narrator often prefer not to merely state
the story facts. Often they mitigate what happened, using terms such as “perhaps,”
“maybe,” and “possibly” to predicate story details. We should ask, what
advantages and disadvantages might there be to not telling a story with certainty?

• In “Old Man,” Faulkner often inserts the word “now” into past tense narration,
changes verb forms, disregarding rules of tense, and has multiple narrators at
different times tell the central story but conflates the tellings in a way that they
seem contemporaneous. We should ask, what do these anomalies suggest about
Faulkner’s view of time?

Such questions propel this study forward. These and numerous others will be addressed
in the chapters that follow.

As I answer these questions, this study contributes both to work on Faulkner and
to work on narrative theory. Much has been written, of course, about Faulkner, but
surprisingly little of it has been written from a narratological perspective. Although, as
the subsequent chapters will show, Faulknerians sometimes employ terms of narrative
theory, these critics are far less concerned with the detailed workings of Faulkner’s
techniques than with offering thematic readings of his novels. Consequently, the first
thing I do in each of these chapters is to situate my narratological investigations in
relation to previous research by both Faulknerians and narrative theorists.
Concomitant with analyzing Faulkner’s narratives in terms of previously defined ideas is revising narrative theories in light of Faulkner’s practice. That is, rather than simply applying current theory to Faulkner, I examine how well a given application fits with Faulkner’s practice. Faulkner’s narratives strive to exceed readers’—and theoreticians’—comfort zones. Consequently, I often challenge or modify tenets of contemporary narratology. As noted above, the give and take between Faulkner’s fiction and narrative theory is the recursive modus operandi toward which this study strives.

My study, like virtually any examination of Faulkner’s narrative techniques, is not comprehensive. The four chapters of this dissertation examine just four of the multiple techniques of Faulkner’s fiction. I have chosen these four because they are especially telling about what makes his work distinctive and because I believe that a better understanding of them will lead to better understanding of Faulkner’s larger narrative building blocks, that is, his characters, plots, and themes. The techniques I examine include shifts in focalization, shifts in voice, hypothetical narration, and representations of time.

Chapter one examines shifting focalization (or vision) and how this shifting creates layers of focalization. This chapter draws on work by Gerard Genette, James Phelan, Mieke Bal, and Wayne Booth and develops what I term guidelines for marking layers of focalization. These detailed precepts are the first critical attempt to indicate rhetorical features that mark where “who sees” (Genette, Narrative Discourse 186) changes in narrative discourses. I examine examples from Faulkner’s short story “Barn Burning” and from his novel As I Lay Dying. Following the development of these guidelines, I comment on what we can learn from a narrative by applying these rules. I
examine layers in “Barn Burning,” first looking at what two Faulknerians, Gail Mortimer and Marilyn Claire Ford, notice about layers, and secondly demonstrating how my in-depth analysis helps us understand progression (Phelan, Narrative 90), the conflation of perspectives, and themes in the short story.

Chapter two looks at Genette’s “who speaks” (Narrative Discourse 186), examining when voices shift. I begin with a background on voice from Genette, Phelan, Mikhail Bakhtin, Seymour Chatman, and Richard Aczel, all theorists, and Ben Forkner and Stephen Ross, both Faulknerians. I define narrative voice and suggest distinctions between two types of indicators of narrative voice: conventional markers and features. After offering examples of indicators from Mosquitoes, Sanctuary, The Sound and the Fury, “Old Man,” As I Lay Dying, and Light in August, I closely examine voice in “Old Man” and As I Lay Dying, where I suggest that voice features are the only necessary and sufficient conditions for identifying narrative voice. I also focus on suggesting how a clearer understanding of narrative voice and how the ability to detect its shifts can help in understanding a novel like As I Lay Dying.

Chapter three investigates epistemic stances in focalization within narratives, focusing on what I term hypothetical narration. The theoretical background comes from Genette, Gerald Prince, Phelan, Arlene Young, David Herman, Martin FitzPatrick, and Brian McHale. Previous critics suggest two epistemic stances in narratives: indicative narration and disnarration (Prince “The Disnarrated” 3). I position hypothetical narration between these two. My examples of hypothetical narration are drawn from “Smoke,” Mosquitoes, Light in August, “The Wild Palms,” and Pylon. As a glimpse ahead to the next chapter, I investigate time relationships in hypothetical narration. I also posit an
important axiom of narratology, the *axiom of teller fidelity*. In explicating the five functions of hypothetical narration—which include *fulfilling situational requirements, providing information while maintaining mimesis, revealing character psychology*, and addressing issues of *epistemology* and *ontology*—I focus on *Absalom, Absalom!,* the narrative featuring Faulkner’s most extensive and extravagant hypothetical narration.

Chapter four takes up one of the most talked about topics in Faulkner studies: Faulkner’s representation of time. My list of background sources, therefore, is extensive, including philosophers Henri Bergson and Jean Paul Sartre, narratologist Genette, and Faulkner critics Ruth Vande Kieft, Alan Perlis, Morris Beja, Fran Polek, Frederick Hoffman, Dan Ford, Robert Dale Parker, Carolyn Norman Slaughter, R. Rio-Jelliffe, and James Matlack. I also look at what Faulkner himself said about his handling of time. I examine *layers of time* (compounded with layers of vision and voice), the implementation of what I term *asynchronous discourse times* and *differential focalization settings*, and the *effacement of time*. Besides drawing examples from *Absalom, Absalom!, As I Lay Dying* and “Old Man,” I look extensively at layers in “Barn Burning” and at all four techniques and their effects in chapter six of *Absalom, Absalom!*

The study of these narrative habits in Faulkner’s fiction suggests a number of conclusions. First, it appears that Faulkner implemented novel narrative techniques in his fiction for intentional effects. Although Faulkner did not talk about these techniques in the terms of contemporary narratology, he did talk about their effects. Second, the study sheds new light on Faulkner’s concern with epistemological matters and, in that respect, if we borrow Brian McHale’s distinction between modernism’s dominant concern with epistemology and postmodernism’s dominant concern with ontology (9-11), the study
sheds new light on Faulkner’s modernism. Third, we can see that, while the range of Faulkner studies is extensive, there is still room for what André Bleikasten calls “microanalyses” (217), studies like mine that examine the detailed workings of Faulkner’s narratives. Fourth, we can see that the tools of narrative theory can be successful in their application to texts like Faulkner’s. Narratological theory and its precise terms can help us better understand Faulkner’s narratives. Moreover, places where theory does not quite explain what is happening in Faulkner’s fiction allow his narrative discourses to impel theory to constantly improve.

Finally, I would suggest that we not stop just with Faulkner. Faulkner’s fiction merely provides a fertile locus for investigating ideas applicable to numerous other narratives. We could continue our investigation of focalization, for example, in James Joyce, our examination of voice in Mark Twain, our work with hypothetical narration in Nathaniel Hawthorne, and our exploration of portraying time in Umberto Eco.¹ My work with Faulkner is a beginning; the application of it elsewhere should follow. The narrative theories I expand upon below can help in interpreting these texts, and sophisticated narrative techniques in these texts can help improve narrative theory.

¹ Cf. Joyce’s Ulysses for a great number of shifts of vision (as well as intriguing examples of both conventional markers and features of voice), Twain’s Huckleberry Finn for the development of regional voice features, Hawthorne’s “Young Goodman Brown” for a historically early use of hypothetical narration, and Eco’s The Island of the Day Before for a lengthy narrative that turns on the distortion of the convention of linear time.
CHAPTER 1
LAYERS OF FOCALIZATION

The first narrative technique we will look at is focalization. The term is introduced by Gerard Genette in *Figures II*, but it is better known from his discussion in *Narrative Discourse*. Resisting inherent problems with the term *point of view*, Genette rightly wishes to differentiate between “who sees” in a narrative and “who speaks” (*Narrative Discourse* 186). This chapter will look at “who sees” in a narrative (and chapter two will address “who speaks.”)

In particular, in this chapter I hope to formalize guidelines for marking changes or *shifts of focalization* as I examine Faulkner’s narratives. Then, I shall turn to examining what these marks can teach us about his texts, namely through the application of these guidelines to Faulkner’s short story “Barn Burning.” I hope that: 1) Faulkner’s texts may provide new insights into understanding how focalization shifts in narratives and what these changes can say about narratives; and 2) Faulkner’s texts viewed through the lens of a revised concepts about focalization may provide new insights about the Southern writer’s narratives.
Genette realized that early-twentieth century models of point of view—such as those developed by Percy Lubbock and Georges Blin\(^1\)—were, while widely influential, inherently flawed. The older term, Genette claims (Narrative Discourse 186), confuses “the question who is the character whose point of view orients the narrative perspective? and the very different question who is the narrator?” He simplifies these issues into issues of “who sees?” and “who speaks?” Genette carefully distinguishes the problematic issues in the earlier critics’ model and quite correctly points the way to corrections.

Unfortunately, as critics have pointed out, Genette seems to make a wrong turn.\(^2\) He complicates his simplified model with additional information. To the issue of “who sees” he adds the question of how much those who see know. That is, he groups his types of focalizers not by types of agents who see but by types of agents who see and how much they can see. This adds to his model the term “distance,” a measure of how close the focalizer is to the details of the story (Narrative Discourse 162). James Phelan notes, “Genette proposes a typology not according to the distinction between who sees and who speaks but according to the criterion of how much narrators see and know in relation to characters” (“Why Narrators” 54).

Critics such as James Phelan have, therefore, revised Genette’s model. Momentarily we will look at where Phelan goes with focalization, but let us turn first to an earlier commentary by Mieke Bal. While Bal’s work on focalization is extensive,

\(^1\) Cf. Lubbock’s “centre of vision” (73), The Craft of Fiction, as well as Blin, Stendhal et les problèmes du roman.
her essay “The Narrating and the Focalizing”—where the term focalizer is introduced—is central to this chapter. In this essay Bal takes on the enormous task of examining both Genette’s intermixing of focalization with distance and their connections to who speaks, time, and narrative levels (234). Particularly germane to this chapter is Bal’s discussion of Genette’s concepts of focalization and levels. In short, what Bal develops is a way of analyzing narratives by looking at structures derived from focalization. Bal retains Genette’s idea of “narrative level” (Narrative Discourse 242) and applies it to focalization. Each time one focalizer relinquishes perception to another agent, Bal suggests that the new focalizer is on a different “level of focalization” than the previous (251).

Bal’s application of levels of focalization to movements in perception provides the groundwork for a structural analysis of focalization. She holds that the patterns for a particular narrative’s distribution of focalizers (with respect to levels) can imply things about the individual text and about texts in general.

From these patterns, we can set up a typology of narratives and then characterize a narrative in relation to other narratives. We can also give a detailed account of a narrative and describe its major cruxes, in order to lay bare its narrative originality. By carrying the analysis further, a critic who wants to interpret a particular narrative in depth will be able to study its narrative functioning and take note of any figure that is exceptional in terms of the type of narrative he originally classified his narrative as. After describing the characteristics of a narrative we can formulate its inner rules, the rules that it generally observes and that are peculiar to it. (257)

One main thing that this dissertation chapter will do is continue the work begun by Bal, applying the concept of focalization structure to Faulkner’s “Barn

\[^{2}\] Cf., for example, Mieke Bal, “The Narrating and the Focalizing” (pp. 234-43), and James Phelan, “Why Narrators can be Focalizers—And Why it Matters” (pp. 53-4).
Burning” (just as she applied it to Colette’s La Chatte). But this chapter will not be just an application of Bal’s methodology to Faulkner’s text. More importantly, I hope to demonstrate that Bal’s method can be more efficacious if enhanced by a set of guidelines for determining levels.

Bal carefully lays out hypotheses about focalization (253-6) and—in her work on voice earlier in the essay—studies verbs or “whatever other form the yielding of the floor by the narrator to the character can take” (247), but she does not offer precise guidelines for determining shifts of focalization. She admits it is difficult to determine shifts in focalization and addresses this by examining some borderline cases from La Chatte (252 ff.):

She watched him drink and felt a sudden pang of desire at the sight of his mouth pressing against the rim of the glass. But he felt so weary that he refused to share that pang and merely touched the white fingers with her red nails as they removed his empty tumbler. (Colette 72 qtd. in Bal 252).

Bal examines how and where focalization shifts: “the verb ‘watched’ in the first sentence denotes a change in the level of focalization…In the second sentence, the first level is reinstated…” etc. (252). But Bal does not offer—and I have seen nowhere else—a comprehensive treatment of specific narrative features that mark shifts in levels of focalization. That is, Bal and other narrative theorists have not proposed verbal, syntactical, or global indicators for changing focalization.

Before moving on to deriving these guidelines for marking levels of focalization, we need to address two things. First, I propose changing the terminology a bit. While Bal’s use of the term levels has its merits, I see no need to retain Genette’s
specific denomination. Rather, I prefer to think of focalization as layered. That is, I will refer to *layers of focalization*. Levels, to me, do not imply the multivalency that additional focalization creates. This idea of layering will be more fully addressed below.

Secondly, let us return to Phelan’s response to Genette. He proposes five narrative possibilities combining who sees and who speaks:

1. narrator’s focalization and voice
2. character’s focalization and narrator’s voice
3. character’s focalization and narrator’s voice
4. blends of narrator’s focalization and voice with character’s focalization and voice
5. narrator’s focalization and character’s voice.

(“Why Narrators Can Be Focalizers” 59)

What I would like to highlight here is Phelan’s belief, evident in numbers 1 and 5, that narrators are able to see. Phelan, contrary to Genette, Seymour Chatman, Gerald Prince, and Bal, believes that narrators—just as characters—are able to perceive the events of the story. My work with the guidelines for marking layers of focalization and my interpretation of “Barn Burning” will incorporate Phelan’s belief that narrators can focalize.

### Guidelines for Marking Layers of Focalization

Distinguishing when and where focalization shifts is, indeed, no easy task. First, let us look at a basic example, “John saw Mary.” This is a simple case of shifting focalization, as it is quite clear that: 1) a narrator begins by seeing John (who is

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presumably somewhat proximate to Mary) and 2) John sees the proximate Mary. This yields an additional focalizer beyond the narrator, namely John.

But not all narratives are this simple. As we try to tease apart transitive and intransitive verbs, active and passive voice, and missing or understood nouns, verbs, or prepositional phrases, for example, we feel a greater and greater need for precepts for marking when focalization changes. To fulfill that need, I will now propose a set of guidelines designed for marking layers of focalization. I do not make any claims about these being comprehensive and universal; rather, these are initial precepts based on a limited examination of a handful of Faulkner narratives.

I will begin with a précis and then move to basic principles underlying marking layers of focalization. Next, the majority of this section will focus on specifics—verbal, syntactical, and global indicators—involving identifying shifting layers of focalization. I will comment on reliability in light of these guidelines, and finally I will conclude the chapter with an application of these guidelines to Faulkner’s “Barn Burning,” looking at narrative progression, the conflation of layers of focalization, and theme.

Précis

*Layers of focalization model “who sees” in a narrative. While all stories begin with an agent (extradiegetic or intradiegetic) “seeing” what is happening in the story, frequently these primary agents allow others (characters) to perceive as well. These additional focalizers sometimes allow even other characters to perceive, and so on. Guidelines help to standardize marking where focalization shifts. It is the goal of*
marking shifts in focalization that a better understanding of who is perceiving when in a narrative will contribute to solving other narrative issues related to progression, reliability, character, voice, theme, etc.

Guidelines

Layers of focalization (Lx) are designated by positive integers beginning with one. The opening words of a short story, for example, typically begin on layer one. “The store in which the Justice of the Peace’s court was sitting smelled of cheese” (Faulkner, “Barn Burning” 3). These first words of the story are on the primary layer of focalization (L1) in the story. All shifts away from this primary layer also will be numbered. For example, when young Sartoris Snopes soon sees the food on the shelves in the store (“Barn Burning” 3), his vision will obtain in layer two (L2).

There are an infinite number of possible layers. As a story shifts from one layer to another, there is no limit to the number of layers that can be inhabited by focalizers. While it seems unlikely that most narratives will exceed five or six layers—“Barn Burning” has five—it is quite conceivable that a story could have many more.

Layers of focalization accrete or compile as the integers denoting them increase. I.e., conceptually L1 is below L2, L2 is below L3, and so on. Bal resists what she calls Genette’s “hierarchical inversion,” where subsequent layers are

4 Sometimes features in narratives such as titles form the primary layer of focalization. Cf. As I Lay Dying, where the intradiegetic characters in each chapter (on L2) are layered on top of the (L1) narrator, i.e., there is a latent narrator who subtends each of the titular characters for chapters 1-53. It is this narrator who organizes and distributes the roles of narrating.

5 Cf. Table 1-1(below) for focalization data on “Barn Burning.”
higher than their predecessors. She feels that to demonstrate the dependence of, say, the second layer on the first, the paradigm should be designed to descend for each level. Where Genette posits the term “meta-narrative” for narratives that lie above that which frames it, Bal proposes “hypo-narrative” instead (“The Narrating” 247). My own preference for Genette’s spatial orientation is under the next guideline.

While an agent is perceiving on a layer higher than the first (L_x, where x>1), all subtending focalizers (on L_1…L_{x-1}) are perceiving concomitantly. This is to say that when focalization adds another layer—say, focalization moves from L_1 to L_2—all focalizers on lower-layers are perceiving at the same time. To demonstrate this, let us return to the opening of “Barn Burning:” “The store in which the Justice of the Peace’s court was sitting smelled of cheese. The boy, crouched on his nail keg at the back of the crowded room, knew he smelled cheese…” The narrative begins with the narrator’s focalization—of the store, the court, and the smell of cheese. Soon, however, Sarty’s focalization is added: “The boy…knew he smelled cheese” (3). The first perception of cheese is the narrator’s; the second is the boy’s. But concomitant with the boy being aware of the presence of the odor of cheese is the narrator being aware of the boy being aware of the presence of the odor of cheese. This means that when the narrator turns over focalization to the boy, the sense of the phrase turn over is that readers are most closely in contact with the sensations now befalling the boy instead of the narrator. Close inspection, however, reveals that underlying the boy’s perceptions are still those of the narrator.
To this end, I think that a model of layers is best understood visually. When we indicate that a text begins with L1, adds L2, adds L3, moves back to L2 and then L1, adds L2 again, and so on, I believe we are suggesting that a text adds layers on top of other layers and then removes them. It piles them up and then unpiles them. We can, therefore, visually represent layers of focalization like this:

```
L3            -------                       ------------------                                                                                                     -------
L2      -------------------            -------------------------            ------------                          ------------------------------
L1  ------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------ etc.
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This model still suggests the dependency that Bal wishes to maintain but in a different way. L2 is dependent on L1 in the same way that a house is dependent upon a foundation; L2 could not stand without its underpinning. The same is true for all additional layers, for each depends upon all the subsequent layers.\(^6\)

Of course, while I prefer thinking of layers compiling or “piling up” (and will refer to them in this manner), it does not matter whether we follow Genette’s model, Bal’s, or some other.\(^7\) The point is to see the dependency of additional layers on those having invoked them.

**Focalizers can inhabit multiple layers across the discourse.** A particular character may focalize on L2 in a narrative. That does not mean, however, that she can not appear at some other point in the narrative on a different layer, say L4. In fact, a character may focalize on L2, L4, and theoretically an infinite number of other layers

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\(^7\) We could, for example, just as easily envision layers horizontally, where focalizers move to and from the reader’s position.
across the discourse. Of course, just as a discourse seems likely to consist only of a handful of layers, the number of layers that any character inhabits is likely to be even fewer. Abner Snopes, for example, inhabits four of the five layers of focalization in “Barn Burning.” The next guideline suggests one restriction.

A character may inhabit a layer (Lz) above another layer it inhabits (Lx), but the layers must be at least two removed (Lz ≥ Lx + 2). That is to say that, while characters may focalize on more than one layer at the same time, they may not focalize on adjacent layers at the same time. For example, Abner Snopes focalizes on L2, L3, L4, and L5 throughout “Barn Burning,” but he never focalizes on L3 when he already is focalizing on L2 or L4. This restriction, of course, is tautological, for the invocation of a new layer requires the invocation of a new focalizer; the next layer invoked must be inhabited by someone else.

It is possible, however, that newly-invoked focalizers can call up the perceptions of other focalizers concomitantly perceiving. That is, after a focalizer on L2 turns perception over to a new focalizer on L3, the L3 focalizer may call upon the focalization of the character focalizing on L2. The new perception then will occur on a higher layer, L4. Shortly into “Barn Burning,” for example, this happens. Sarty listens to his father, and his father asks him a question. Within the question that the boy hears is an invocation of his perception on a higher layer. Abner asks (8), “Don’t you know all they wanted was a chance to get at me because they knew I had them beat [my italics]?” Here what Sarty knows is invoked on L4, namely that the men wanted “to
get at” Abner because Abner “had them beat.” The fact that Abner can not invoke the Sarty of L2 but must invoke a new Sarty on L4 implies the next guideline.

**A character can invoke only new focalizers on higher layers.** While characters can *relinquish* focalization to former layers—e.g., from L2 back to L1—they can only invoke new focalization on higher layers—e.g., from L2 to L3. For Abner, who inhabits a variety of layers, to inhabit L3 after L2, the focalization must shift entirely to L1, invoke a L2 focalizer other than Abner, and then invoke him on L3 from L2.

**Only one focalizer can inhabit L1.** Since the first layer of focalization subtends the entire discourse, it does not change. For example, the narrator begins “Barn Burning” on L1 and remains there throughout the entire narrative. He does, of course, invoke a variety of other focalizers on higher layers along the way.

**An infinite number of focalizers can inhabit all layers except L1.** As the L1 narrator can call upon the perceptions of a multitude of characters, there is no end to the number he can invoke. Moreover, there is no end to the number of focalizers each of these characters can invoke, and so on. Of course, there will likely be less than two or three dozen focalizers invoked on all layers in most narratives. For example, the short story “Barn Burning” invokes 19 while *As I Lay Dying* invokes 21.

**Focalizers above L1 are always character focalizers.** While the focalizer on L1 can be either extradiegetic or intradiegetic, all perceivers above L1 must be

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8 For more on direct and indirect discourse, see below.

9 While we use twenty different letters for marking focalization in “Barn Burning,” S, the “undifferentiated sister” is redundant for either X, “sister one,” or Y, “sister two.” See Table 1-1 below.
intradiegetic (characters). The L1 focalizer begins the narrative and is continuous throughout. To reach L2, the L1 focalizer must invoke a different agent, and the very process of invoking another agent places this agent within an intradiegetic layer—ordains the agent as a character. Moreover, each character-focalizer on L2 must invoke other intradiegetic agents—also characters—and so on.

There are specific focalizations on the one hand, and these are the most common. Specific focalizations involve a focalizer perceiving specific objects, scenery, feelings, or memories. For example, in “Barn Burning” Sarty sees his father, “The boy looked at his father” (16), and he smells cheese (3). In As I Lay Dying, Addie looks at Vardaman just before she dies, “She looked at Vardaman” (48), and Dewey Dell smells the turpentine-like smell of the concoction that MacGowan gives her (247). Specific focalizations are often examples of singulative focalizations (see below).

There are generic focalizations on the other hand. These do not indicate specific perceptions. Instead, generic focalizations refer to the types of things that are perceived by individuals. E.g., the narrator of “Barn Burning” tells about what Sarty “liked to do, such as splitting wood…” (16). Generic focalizations are typically examples of iterative focalizations (see below).

While most focalizations are singulative, there are iterative focalizations. A singulative focalization involves the perception of one thing one time. Just before Addie dies (in the example cited above), she looks at Vardaman. This is a one-time perception—a specific focalization at a specific time. Similarly, when Dewey Dell
smells MacGowan’s “medicine,” this is the only time she smells this suspicious compound. Singulative focalizations are especially associated with sense-verbs (see below), whereas iterative focalizations are often (but not exclusively) associated with verbs of preference and remembering (see “Verbs” below). For example, we learn what things, such as splitting wood, Sarty likes to do.10

The above principles provide the groundwork, then, for beginning to mark the shifting layers of focalization within a narrative. What follows are guidelines for inserting the markers for these shifts. These markers have three components.

**Focalization is marked** $xPy$, **where $x$ numerically denotes the layer of focalization,** $P$ **indicates the function or process of perception,** and $y$ **alphabetically denotes the focalizer.** The most important of these is the central $P$, which abbreviates “perception” but could just as easily be substituted for by $F$ for “focalization.” The $P$ designation will separate markings of focalization from those of the following chapter ($xTy$), indications of voice (or telling).11 When we extract a portion of “Barn Burning’s” text—“he [Sarty] could see the grove of oaks” (10)—we can begin marking. First, we know that there are two different perceptions, that of the narrator, who perceives Sarty, and that of Sarty, who “sees” a grove of oaks. Thus, we would begin marking: “$P$ He could see $P$ the grove of oaks.” This indicates where perception shifts.

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10 An example of a sense-verb used iteratively is in *As I Lay Dying*. Cora, Kate, and Eula repeatedly “can hear” Cash working on Addie’s coffin “every time” he picks up certain tools: “We can hear him every time he takes up the adze or the saw” (8).

11 The terms “vision” and “voice” begin with the same initial consonant; hence I have chosen “perception” ($P$) and “telling” ($T$). Also, I prefer $P$ over $F$ because it reminds us that we are talking about all five senses as well as mental processes, whereas focalization—with its roots in optical sciences—tends to make us emphasize vision.
The number that precedes $P$ is $x$, the layer of focalization on which lie the words that follow the $P$ (up to the next marking). In the above example, then, we can add the layers of focalization, 1 for the narrator and 2 for the boy: “$1P$ He could see $2P$ the grove of oaks.” The final designation is $y$, which stands for arbitrarily chosen alphabetic symbols for the characters who perceive on layer $x$. A table for the co-domain (sometimes imprecisely called the range) of $y$ is generated for each narrative. For “Barn Burning,” there are 20 letters used to mark focalizers (see Figure 1 below). The narrator is represented by $N$, and the boy, Sarty, is represented by $B$. Thus, our marked text will look like this: “$1PN$ He could see $2PB$ the grove of oaks.” We can now turn to specific guidelines for when and where to insert $xPy$ markings.

**Marking Layers of Focalization: Verbs**

Verbs are the first place to turn for signs of changing layers of focalization. From the multitude of English verbs, only one type may indicate changing layers of focalization: verbs of perception. Verbs of perception can indicate that someone senses, feels, thinks, or desires. These include common verbs about the five senses as well as words related to functions of the mind such as memory and desire, and all must be transitive. Examples of verbs of perception include *see, smell, touch, taste, hear, feel, think, like, desire, wish, want, remember, recall*, etc. Verbs of perception can indicate that an individual in the narrative senses, feels, thinks, or desires something or that something was sensed, felt, thought, or desired by someone. This, of course,

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12 I reserve “$N$” for the narrator and “$T$” for the narratee.

13 Above we saw that Bal’’s interest in focalization shifts highlighted verbs. Genette’’s approach in *Narrative Discourse* also centers on verbs—e.g., “Mood,” “Voice,” etc.
suggests that there are two forms of verbs of perception, active voice forms and passive voice forms.

Active forms of verbs of perception indicate that someone (a subject) senses, feels, thinks, or desires something (an object). The formula for active forms of verbs includes a subject, a verb, and a direct object and typically occurs in this order: subject + verb + direct object. The subject perceives the direct object, e.g., “He saw his mother” (13). This is the most common construction for shifting focalization. This leads us to say that an active form of a verb of perception signals an additional layer of focalization, and we would mark a focalization shift between “saw” and “his,” “He [Sarty] saw P his mother.” Furthermore, we can say that for active forms of verbs of perception on Lx, the focalized object(s) obtain(s) for Lx+1, rendering our example like this: “IPN He saw 2PB his mother.” We now are prepared to mark any number of similar passages: “IPN He saw 2PB the weathered paintless store” (“Barn Burning” 17), “IPN He could hear 2PB them” (“Barn Burning” 3), and “2PD He [Jewel] finds 3PJ the horse’s nostril’s 2PD and touches 3PD earth” (“As I Lay Dying” 12).

Most often shifts occur after active forms of verbs of perception because the object typically follows the verb; sometimes, however, with inverted word order the sentence’s pattern is changed around (often to direct object + subject + verb): “2PB Hit’s as big as a courthouse IPN he thought quietly” (“Barn Burning” 10), “2PB He would be stronger in the end, IPN he knew” (“Barn Burning” 22), and “2PB the cheese IPN which he knew 2PB he smelled” (“Barn Burning” 3).
Passive forms of verbs of perception *can* indicate that *something* was sensed, felt, thought, or desired *by someone*. The reason I say passive verbs of perception *can* indicate that a subject was sensed, felt, thought, or desired by someone is that the prepositional (by) phrase of perception is grammatically optional. You can say “the train was perceived” just as correctly as you can say “the train was perceived by John,” but the important difference for us is that the first example does not specify who perceives, whereas the second does. The second example includes a prepositional (by) phrase of perception—which links the perceived subject to the perceiving object by means of the preposition *by*. This prepositional phrase indicates by whom the sentence’s (grammatical) subject is perceived. Thus, we can say that a **passive verb of perception with a prepositional (by) phrase of perception**—which links the perceived subject to the perceiving object—signals an additional layer of focalization. Conversely, a **passive transitive verb of perception without a prepositional (by) phrase of perception** does not signal an additional layer of focalization.

There is a group of verbs that look quite like verbs of perception but are not, and they do not signal a shift in the layers of focalization. Examples include *present, show, appear, reveal, uncover, unmask, display, disclose*, and *unveil*. These are verbs of presentation, verbs which describe the presentation of something, often to someone, e.g., “John showed the book to Mary.” While verbs of presentation may seem to suggest that the indirect object (in the case of active forms, and the object of the

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prepositional phrase of attribution in the case of passive forms) is a new focalizer, this is not so. Indeed, the emphasis of verbs of presentation is on the act of presenting, not on the act of perceiving, and therefore we can state that **verbs of presentation do not signal changes in the layers of focalization.** An example of this occurs in “Barn Burning.” The narrator sees that “His father appeared at the door” (13). In this case, Abner does not perceive; he is presented.

Another similar situation involves linking (or copulative) verbs, which do not indicate shifts in layers of focalization. Linking verbs do have the power to convey sensations—e.g., “He [Sarty] was only cold” (“Barn Burning” 25)—but they do not convey strong focalization the way verbs of perception do. The fact that Sarty was chilled conveys the narrator’s perception of a state of affairs as much as, if not more than, it does the boy’s perception of that state of affairs, for we could imagine that the boy could have a lowered body temperature but not notice that he was cold. To this end, linking verbs do not indicate strongly enough that perception occurs, so we therefore can state that **linking verbs do not indicate shifts in layers of focalization.**

Finally, we should distinguish a subset of the verbs of perception: sense-verbs. **Sense-verbs are verbs of perception that involve existential, sensual awareness, the sensing of the here and now through the five senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching.** Sense verbs differ from other verbs of perception—such as remembering, wishing, or wondering—in that their sensations are always immediate and concrete (vs. atemporal and virtual).
Now that we have established which verbs indicate shifts in layers of focalization and have shown how to mark their objects, we must consider what happens when additional verbs of perception occur within the same sentence. In these cases, new verbs of perception immediately indicate returns to lower layers of focalization. Consider the following example. “The boy watched the night fully accomplish, listening to the whippoorwills and the frogs” (“Barn Burning” 20). The sentence begins with a verb of perception followed by its object, the passing of nighttime. Interposing is another verb of perception, “listening.” The layers change like this. First, the narrator sees what the boy was doing—watching. Then we add a layer as we see with the boy—the passing of the night. Then we shift back down a layer for the narrator to perceive something else the boy was doing—listening. Then we add again the layer of the boy’s perception as he hears the birds and amphibians. Accordingly, the passage is marked like this: “$IPN…\text{the boy watched } 2PB \text{ the night fully accomplish, } IPN \text{ listening } 2PB \text{ to the whippoorwills and the frogs.}” We can say, then, that verbs of perception, when occurring within or at the end of an object of perception, indicate a shift to a previously obtaining layer of focalization.

Finally, in examining the role of verbs in marking shifting layers of focalization, it is useful to note that occasionally verbs are left out of narrative discourse (often for stylistic reasons). It makes sense in such cases to interpolate the verb and mark shifts accordingly. For example, in “Barn Burning” we get the following (notice the last four words of this passage): “The rug, hunched, not flung (the boy could tell that even in the darkness) from his father’s shoulder, struck the
angle of wall and floor with a sound unbelievably loud, thunderous, then the foot again [my italics]” (15). Clearly something is missing at the end. As readers we are used to supplying verbs, often unconsciously, in places like this, especially in Faulkner. We might supply “he heard” between “then” and “the foot” to get: “Then he heard the foot again.” 15 We would mark the sentence accordingly. “IPN …then [he heard] 2PB the foot IPN again” (15). Thus, we can say that interpolation of verbs of perception occurs when indicated by syntax and/or context.

Marking Layers of Focalization: Special Cases

In marking shifts in layers of focalization, a number of special cases need to be considered. First of all, we need to look at perceivers and number. So far we have discussed focalizers in the singular. In fact, often we find focalizers consisting of more than one agent. To this end, we may say that focalizers may be singular or collective. Collective focalizers are indicated by plural pronouns such as “we” and “they” (with or without specified antecedents) as well as by compound subjects with active verbs of perception and by “us” and “them” (with or without specified antecedents) in compound objects of prepositional (by) phrases of perception with passive verbs of perception. If the identities of the collective focalizers are known, then they are marked xPa+b+…z. For example, Cora, Kate, and Eula focalize, under a

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15 It might seem more natural at first to simply supply the word came—“Then came the foot again”—But the word “again” is the key here. This refers us to an earlier point in the story where Sarty focalizes the sound of his father’s foot. As Abner and the boy walk toward Major de Spain’s house for the first time, the narrator tells us, “Now he could hear his father’s stiff foot as it came down on the boards with clocklike finality [my italics]” (15). The reference to “the foot again” takes us back to Sarty’s aural sensation, not just one of the narrator’s perceptions.
collective “we,” in *As I Lay Dying*: “We can hear him every time he takes up the adze or the saw” (8). If the individuals are not known, the group is signified by one alphabetic notation. For example, in “Barn Burning” Abner Snopes refers to what the men (G) in the first courtroom perceived: “they knew I had them beat” (8).

We have seen that a focalizer on *Lx* can not change without a shift first to a lower focalization layer. This means that across a narrative discourse, a particular layer (*Lx*) can be inhabited by numerous single or collective focalizers, but for the focalizer to change to a different individual or group, a particular layer of focalization (*Lx*) first must revert to a lower one (*Lx*-1). Thus, near the end of *As I Lay Dying* (“Cora [2]”), Cora turns over focalization first to Addie and then to Darl; for this shift to take place, however, Addie must give up her focalization first. Thus, we get Cora’s perceptions with Addie’s layered on top, Cora’s perceptions, and then Cora’s perceptions with Darl’s layered on top: “Lying there with her head propped up so she could watch Cash building the coffin, It was Darl. He come to the door and stood there, looking at his dying mother” (23-4).

We, however, must qualify the above. **The focalizer on *Lx* can not change without a shift first to a lower focalization layer unless agents are added to or subtracted from an already-focalizing agent**, for sometimes a narrator will add focalizers to or subtract focalizers from those currently focalizing. For example, in *As I Lay Dying* (“Cora [2]”) Cora sees much of the action, but often she shifts from her singular perception to plural perception. “There’s not a woman in this section could
ever bake with Addie Bundren,’ I say. ‘First thing we know she’ll be up and baking again’ (8). She begins by focalizing alone—“I say”—but then invokes the vision of her compatriots—“we know.” Accordingly, we would mark this passage as follows: “

2PO ‘There’s not a woman in this section could ever bake with Addie Bundren,’ I say. ‘First thing we know 2PO+K+E she’ll be up and baking again.” Just the opposite, sometimes narrators drop one or more perceivers from a layer of focalization. For example, the narrator often shifts back and forth between turning over perception to Cora alone and to Cora collectively with Kate and Eula. “2PO+K+E We can hear the saw in the board…2PO Eula turns on the trunk and looks out the window. Her necklace looks real nice with her red hat” (9).

Sometimes focalization changes in a narrative with the result that two layers are added at once. When this happens, **multivalent shifts up are marked aPb-xPy**. In “Barn Burning,” for example, the narrator relinquishes focalization to Mr. Harris, who tells a story about Abner’s loose hogs. Here we get the vision of Mr. Harris as he saw the events, and they are recounted as Sarty hears them.16 “2PB-3PH ‘I told you. The hog got into my corn. I caught it up and sent it back to him’” (3).

On the other hand, **all shifts downward over multiple layers are unmarked** since they are inferable. Thus, while a series of marks indicate shifts up to the fifth layer of focalization in “Barn Burning,” 1PN…2PB-3PH…4PR…5PA, a jump down from L5 to L3 is only marked “3PH” (not “4PR-3PH”) since the “4PR” is inferable

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16 Cf. below guidelines on direct and indirect discourse and on supervening structures.
from the upward indications. “3PH...4PR-5PA ‘Wood and hay kin burn.’ 3PH That
night my barn burned. I got the stock out but I lost the barn” (4).

The previous two guidelines relate to shifts during direct and indirect
discourse. These special cases deserve some attention. I propose the following: **direct and indirect discourses are marked to indicate the layers of perception of the speakers (Lx+1) layered on top of the layers of perception of the agents who hear the speakers (Lx)**. This is based on the reasoning that framed discourses contains separate and distinct focalizations. Consider the section of “Barn Burning” cited above, where Mr. Harris relates the story of Abner’s stray pig. “‘The hog got into my corn. I caught it up and sent it back to him. He had no fence that would hold it. I told him so, warned him. The next time I put the hog in my pen. When he came to get it....’” (3). Mr. Harris’s narrative could be extracted from the entirety of “Barn Burning” to form a separate narrative discourse. If it were its own, stand-alone text, then we would mark it like this: “’IPH The hog got into my corn. I caught it up and sent it back to him. He had no fence that would hold it. I told him so, warned him. The next time I put the hog in my pen. When he came to get it....’” In this extracted case, Mr. Harris’s homodiegetic account would be perceived by him (through remembering).

Logic dictates that when we embed this text within another narrative, Harris’s vision should not be lost. Thus, in “Barn Burning” we have on the first layer the narrator, who tells the story, on the second layer Sarty, who perceives the words being
said by Harris, and on the third layer Harris, who tells about Abner.\(^1\) We should mark this passage accordingly:

1. **IPN** …He [Sarty] could hear them…
2. **2PB-3PH** “The hog got into my corn. I caught it up and sent it back to him. He had no fence that would hold it. I told him so, warned him. The next time I put the hog in my pen. When he came to get it…” (3).

Indirect discourse can be explained similarly. We should imagine extracting the indirectly quoted material and creating another text. Of course we would have to infer exactly what the original words were, but precision with the words here is not important. (The exact words are issues of voice and will be dealt with in the next chapter). Thus, with indirect discourse, we can begin marking accordingly: “2PO Mr. Tull himself admits that 3PV a good breed of cows or hogs pays in the long run” (\textit{As I Lay Dying} 7).

Another special case in marking changing layers of focalization involves second person narration. While many critics add second person narration to first and third person narrations to form a tripartite perspective paradigm, second person narration is different in kind from the first and third varieties.\(^2\) Indeed, second person narration (seemingly poorly-named) \textit{derives} from first or third person narrators, and its uniqueness lies merely in its address to narratees. Second person narrations call upon narratees—what often we as readers become—in the narrations’ addresses to “you.” In some instances what it calls upon are the vicarious \textit{perceptions} of narratees. For

\(^{1}\) Bal in “The Narrating” takes a similar tack with direct discourse (254, 263).

example, in *As I Lay Dying* (2 “Cora”) we read, “You can see that girl’s [Dewey Dell’s] washing and ironing in the pillow-slip, if ironed it ever was” (8). What this sentence invokes is the narratee’s perception of Dewey Dell’s shoddy homemaking skills. We, readers—*qua* narratees—have our visions called upon. Literally, we are told that, as we are voluntarily partaking in the reading process, we can see what Cora also sees: a dirty, wrinkled pillow-slip. To this end, we will reserve “*T*” from our alphabetic signs for designating the narratee (as we reserve “*N*” for the narrator) and designate narratee focalizations by *xPT*. Thus, we would mark the above passage like this: “*2PO You can see 3PT that girl’s washing and ironing in the pillow-slip, 2PO if ironed it ever was.*” We can say, then, that **second person narration, while fundamentally deriving from a homodiegetic or heterodiegetic narrator, can refer to perceptions of the narratee, which are marked *xPT*.**

Another special case in marking layers of focalization involves the subject of chapter four, hypothetical narration. As hypothetical narration will be discussed at length at that point, I only will say two brief things about marking layers of focalization with respect to hypothetical narration. First, **focalization for hypothetical narration is marked by *hxPy* to indicate possible perception.** As hypothetical narration involves not certainty but uncertainty, the “*h*” designation reminds us that what is focalized is only *hypothetically* perceived. Whether the focalized object was

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19 The following paradigm helps illustrate the perception functions of the narratee in parallel with more conventional focalizers:

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\begin{align*}
1PN \text{ John can see } 2PJ \text{ Mary.} & \quad \Rightarrow \quad 1PN \text{ Mary can see } 2PM \text{ John.} \\
1PN \text{ John can see } 2PJ \text{ you.} & \quad \Rightarrow \quad 1PN \text{ You can see } 2PT \text{ John.}
\end{align*}
\]
ever perceived is indeterminate. In “Barn Burning,” the narrator possibly or “apparently” perceives Sarty’s brother “blinking…at nothing” (16). We would mark the passage in this way: “…1PN the older brother leaning now in the stable door, chewing, h1PN blinking slowly and steadily at nothing apparently.”

Secondly, questions are marked as hypothetical. In *As I Lay Dying* (“Jewel [4]”), Jewel sarcastically says that he asked Cash whether he wanted to see Addie in the coffin since he is building it so close to her death bed. “I said Good God do you want to see her in it” (14). We mark this as hypothetical because the question—“Do you want to see her in it?”—implies possible knowledge, for what this is really saying is, “Perhaps you want to see her in it.” (again, see chapter four on questions and hypothetical narration). For another example, take Abner Snopes’s question, “‘Does anybody here claim it was? [i.e., claim that the rug was burned]’” (“Barn Burning” 18). In this case, *Does anybody here claim it was?* is identical to *Perhaps somebody here claims it was.* Thus, we would mark both focalizations as hypothetical: “2PJ I said *h2PJ Good God do you want to see 3PC her in it*” and “2PB-h3PA Does anybody here claim *h4PX it was?’”

Another special case concerning layers of focalization has to do with negatives used with verbs of perception, either negated objects of verbs of perception or negated verbs of perception. In the first case, we get sentences like “He felt no floor under his

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20 Cf. David Herman, “Hypothetical Focalization.”

21 All focalizations layered on top of hypothetical ones are also marked as hypothetical, for these perceptions are perceived through the compilation of layers only hypothetically.
bake feet” (4) and “He [Sarty was]...feeling no blow” (6). In the latter case, we get sentences like “He could not see the table” (“Barn Burning” 3) and “He [Abner] never looked at it [the manure stain on the rug]” (12). To understand what happens in instances of negation with verbs of perception, it is helpful to analyze in general what happens in cases of perception.

Perception can be described using set theory. First, let us suppose we have a narrative discourse, $D$, and let us say that there is a finite set, $A$, which includes all the focalizers in $D$. If we let $D$ be “Barn Burning,” for example, we would say that $A$ would include twenty focalizers, and we will label these elements in $A$ with the letters $a$ through $t$. Next, let us say that there is a finite set, $B$, and it includes all the objects which are able to be perceived in the narrative by any element of $A$. For simplicity, let us say that the number of these objects in our example is 20. In “Barn Burning,” $B$ would include things such as people, furniture, and buildings as well as inner thoughts, desires, and emotions. What we have now, in mathematical terms, is a domain, $A$, and a co-domain (sometimes imprecisely described as a range), $B$.

Further, we can say that there is an image of the mapping from $A$ to $B$ that describes what anybody in $A$ is perceiving in $B$ at a particular point in time, $t$, in $D$. That is, we could draw lines from each element in $A$ and connect these lines with elements in $B$ at $t$. For example, let us say that the boy is element $a$ (in $A$), and let us connect $a$ to 1 (his father), 4 (the judge), and 7 (the shelves of the general store) in $B$ for a particular time, $t$ (say, the opening scene). This means that Sarty ($a$) is perceiving three things (1, 4, 7) in $D$ at $t$. Likewise, we would continue to draw lines between the
other elements of $A$ and the elements of $B$, connecting objects that each focalizer in $A$ is perceiving in $B$ in $D$ at $t$. Thus, each element present (and focalizing) at $t$ in $A$ would connect to a unique subset of $B$. We now have an image of the mapping from $A$ to $B$, and we should notice that not every element in $B$ necessarily has a line connected to it. The entirety of $B$ includes all the objects which are able to be perceived in $D$ at any time $t$ by any element of $A$, while the image of the mapping connects only those that are being perceived by elements of $A$ at $t$. The image of the mapping can be described as both 1) the subset of $B$ that is being perceived by anybody in $A$ and 2) the union of the images of all of the elements of $A$.

We can see the model in operation. In a simple (and imagined) case like “The boy saw his father,” we can positively define Sarty’s perceptions: $a$ in $A$ is mapped to $1$ in $B$. From the variety of things able to be perceived, standard cases with verbs of perception eliminate all the elements in the co-domain except one. The process of elimination is effective, leaving us with an element of $A$ perceiving (connected to) one element of $B$.²²

We can now examine negation. Let us first look at negated objects of perception, which also works through the process of elimination, but the elimination of elements in $B$ is not as complete. When the narrator tells us that Sarty “felt no floor under his bare feet,” we have eliminated a possible element from $B$—in this case, 10 (the bare floor of the store). Accordingly, I would contend that just as we would say that the simple, “normal” case above (“The boy saw his father”) is a case of shifting

²² It is possible for a focalizer to perceive multiple elements of B. Nonetheless, the “normal” process of focalization eliminates at least most of the co-domain.
focalization, so too is this one. First, in both cases we are told that the boy positively perceived (saw, felt). Secondly, in both cases we limit the elements in $B$ for $a$, so that the end result is a reduction in the size of the subset of $B$ in the images of the mapping for element $a$ at $t$.

To put this more generally, before an object of a verb of perception is negated, the possible image of element $a$ includes $n$ elements of $B$. After an object of the verb of perception is negated, the possible image of element $a$ includes (at least) $n-1$ elements of $B$. While the reduction of the possible elements in the image of the mapping is less for negated objects of verbs of perception than it is for standard (positive) cases with verbs of perception, that there is a reduction—along with the fact that a verb of perception is present—to me is significant enough to indicate focalization and, hence, a new layer of focalization. Thus, we can say that negated objects of verbs of perception obtain on a higher layer of focalization ($Lx+1$).

Similarly, we can say that negated verbs of perception indicate higher layer focalization ($Lx+1$). Let us consider one example (mentioned above) from “Barn Burning.” After Abner has tracked manure into the Major de Spain’s house and swung his foot around on the carpet—leaving a long, brown arc on the white rug—the narrator tells us, “His father never looked at it [the stain]” (12). In this case, too, perception occurs on a higher layer—here by Abner on L2—for again the possible image of the mapping for an element in $A$ includes one less object in $B$. We would mark this passage: “$1PN$ His father never looked at $2PA$ it.” Other passages should be marked accordingly, e.g., “$1PN$ He did not even look at $2PA$ her” (12) and “$1PN$ he
did not know 2PB the park nor how high the vine-massed fence might be” (23). In addition, there are a variety of periphrastic constructions that indicate negated verbs of perception, and they are marked as above: “1PN the same hand…flashing from the can toward him too quick for him to follow 2PB it [i.e., he was not able to follow it]” (21) and “2PD…Jewel can almost touch 3PJ him [i.e., the Jewel can not touch him]” (As I Lay Dying 12).

In narratives with multiple layers, other special cases involve a variety of things that signal a shift down one or more layers of perception. Extended metaphors and lengthy descriptions are indicators, for descriptions beyond the mere sensory, often those manifesting reflections on narrative events, tend to move away from immediate character perceptions towards reflections on lower layers. These reflections occur most often for narrators on the first layer. Consider the following example from “Barn Burning.” “Now he could hear his father’s stiff foot as it came down on the boards with clocklike finality, a sound out of all proportion to the displacement of the body it bore and which was not dwarfed either by the white door before it, as though it had attained to a sort of vicious and ravening minimum not to be dwarfed by anything…” (11). Here the issue is who perceived what. The passage begins with the narrator’s observation of Sarty, “Now he could hear.” At this point, we clearly have a shift to exactly what the boy perceived, his father’s “foot;” the real question here, however, is what to do with the adverb, appositive, and relative clauses that follow. First, we must consider who says “as it came down on the boards with clocklike finality.” While Sarty clearly heard the footsteps of his father, there is no clear
indication (notably no verb of perception) indicating that Sarty considered that the footsteps sounded akin to a timepiece. We could understand this the analogy to be derived from Sarty if the text read, “Now he could hear his father’s stiff foot *thinking* that it came down on the boards with clocklike finality,” but it does not. Without direct attribution to Sarty, the thought, we must conclude, belongs to the lower layer focalizer. Here it is the narrator who focalizes the connection between clocks and Abner’s feet.

Similarly there is no direct attribution of the body/sound appositive—“a sound out of all proportion to the displacement of the body it bore”—to the boy. Again, we could be told directly that Sarty thought this. But, as far as we know, this notion is conceived of, i.e., focalized by, the narrator. Additionally, the fact that the sound, the “vicious and ravening minimum,” was not “dwarfed by anything” is not attributed to Sarty’s understanding. Again, the narrator concludes this. This analysis allows us to see that *amplification on the nature of focalized objects (on Lx)*, unless clearly *marked as perceived (often mentally) by the current perceiver, derives from lower layers of focalization (*Ly<Ly*), except from *L1*. We can then mark the above passage accordingly. “*IPN* Now he could hear *2PB* his father’s stiff foot as it came down on the boards *IPN* with clocklike finality, a sound out of all proportion to the displacement of the body it bore and which was not dwarfed either by the white door before it, as though it had attained to a sort of vicious and ravening minimum not to be dwarfed by anything….”
Another thing indicating a shift down a layer is the use of subjective-form relative pronouns. In the sentence, “The boy looked at his father, who still had not spoken or even looked up again, who was now adjusting the logger-head in the hame” (“Barn Burning” 17), clearly a layer of focalization is added when the boy looks at “his father.” But what do we do with the two subordinate clauses begun by the same subject-form relative pronoun? In both cases these are perceptions of the narrator, not of the boy. While Sarty could have heard no words from Abner, could have seen that his father did not look up, and could have known that his father was getting the horse’s straps ready, the discourse does not tell us so. There is no strong indication—namely no verb of perception associated with these actions—that the boy is perceiving. Instead, these are focalized by the narrator. To this end, we may say that subordinate clauses begun by subject-form relative pronouns (who, whoever, which, that, what, and whatever) unless clearly marked as perceived by the perceiver, mark a shift to a lower layer of focalization, except from L1. We may mark this passage accordingly: “IPN The boy looked 2PB at his father, 1PN who still had not spoken or even looked up again, who was now adjusting the logger-head in the hame.”

In addition, subordinating conjunctions such as where, since, and when mark a shift to lower layers of focalization, except from L1. The following is a standard case of perception: “IPN He [Sarty] could smell 2PB coffee from the [adjoining] room” (14). There is more, however, to this sentence: “He could smell

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23 It is possible for object-form relative pronouns to indicate higher layers of focalization, e.g., “…whom John saw.” In this case, the object-form relative pronoun “whom” is one layer higher (Lx+1) than the narration “John saw” (Lx).
coffee from the room *where they would presently eat the cold food remaining from the mid-afternoon meal* [my italics].” Sarty’s perception is of the wafting scent of “coffee.” What, however, do we do with the subordinate clause, *where they would presently eat the cold food remaining from the mid-afternoon meal*? Whose perception is this? Again, it cannot be the boy’s, for he does not see into the future. Instead, it is the perception of the narrator who, in this case, has the ability to foresee a later event. We would mark this and other similar passages accordingly: “*IPN* He could smell *2PB* coffee from the room *1PN* where they would presently eat the cold food remaining from the mid-afternoon meal”; “*IPN* he saw *2PB* a suffused, angry face vanishing…beyond the corner of the house *1PN* where his father and brother were sitting” (13); and “*IPN* the boy…[was] listening to *2PB* the whippoorwills and the frogs, *1PN* when he heard *2PB* his mother’s voice” (20).

Several different uses of adverbs also indicate downward shifts in layers of focalization. First, **adverbs indicating time with verbs of perception mark shifts to lower layers of focalization.** For example, in the sentence, “Jewel watches him [Anse] a moment” (*As I Lay Dying* 16), Jewel focalizes Anse, but what do we do with *a moment*? While Jewel clearly looks at Anse, it is the narrator who perceives that Jewel looks for only an instant. Thus, we would mark the passage as follows: “*2PD* Jewel watches *3PJ* him *2PD* a moment.”

In addition, we should note that **a variety of other adverbs with verbs of perception mark shifts to lower layers of focalization.** For example, in “Barn Burning” Sarty can tell that his father “hunched” the rug onto Major de Spain’s porch
“even in the darkness [my italics]” (15). In this case it is not the boy who focalizes even when it is dark; it is the narrator who perceives that the boy can tell this even without light to see. Such a passage, then, is marked accordingly: “1PN the boy could tell 2PB that 1PN even in the darkness.”

Finally, two special cases involve prepositions, which can also indicate shifts downward. The first, not a rule itself as it is covered under the rule for amplification above, is that prepositions used in explaining an object of focalization, unless clearly marked as deriving from the perceiver, mark shifts to lower layers of focalization. For example, in “Barn Burning” Sarty listened to his father, “the voice harsh like tin and without heat like tin” (8).24 The question here is who perceives that Abner’s voice is similar to tin? It appears to me that the voice is heard by Sarty, while the narrator likens it to the metal. The preposition “like” indicates the shift from the higher layer perception (Sarty’s on L2) to the narrator’s (on L1). The same happens again at the end of the sentence, and we mark it accordingly: “[He could hear] 2PB the voice harsh 1PN like tin and 2PB without heat 1PN like tin.” Some other common prepositions that are used to introduce additional explanations about objects of focalization and that, therefore, indicate shifts downward include by, because of, aside from, despite, except, in addition to, in spite of, like, on account of, and unlike.

Secondly, prepositions introducing phrases about perceiving subjects and their actions are marked on a layer below the objects perceived, except from L1.

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24 I am interpolating “he could hear.” In actuality, the governing verb of perception is the preceding “he could see,” which in focalizing terms often implies “perceives,” the perception in this case aural. Further, following “without heat like tin;” occurs what was heard—direct discourse. That is, following the colon are words, sounds further heard by Sarty.
In *As I Lay Dying*, for example, Jewel’s horse watches his owner. “The horse…[was] watching Jewel over his shoulder in an attitude kittenish and alert” (12). Clearly a higher-layer perception occurs here as the horse sees Jewel, but in doing so, the horse looks “over his [own] shoulder” and looks “in an attitude kittenish and alert” (12). These prepositional phrases obtain on the lower layer (the same layer on which the verb of perception occurs) while the object of perception—in this case Jewel—obtains on a higher layer. The passage, therefore, is marked accordingly: “2PD The horse…[was] watching 3PH Jewel 2PD over his shoulder in an attitude kittenish and alert.”

**Structures Supervening the Guidelines for Marking Layers of Focalization**

While a number of rules guide the marking of layers of focalization, individual narratives have supervening rules or structures that govern the application of the above guidelines. For example, in “Barn Burning” frequent direct quotations occur on what appears to be L2, but I have consistently labeled these as obtaining on L3. The reason for this is that I believe that the *discourse in general* in “Barn Burning” aims to present the experiences of Sarty. That is, one major feature of Faulkner’s short story is the presentation of most of the action and dialogue *as if experienced by Sartoris Snopes*. There are keys, such as the repetition of phrases like Sarty “could hear them” (3), “he could hear” (5), and he was “listening to the voices” (18). These words sometimes indicate exactly what Sarty heard, but more generally they imply that at unstated times Sarty also perceives dialogue. In addition, numerous possessive pronoun references are made to Sarty, for example, “his father” (all pp. except 21 and
25), “his mother” (6, 9, 12-4, 16, 20-2), and “his…sisters” (9) even as Sarty is referred to as “the boy [my italics]” (pp. 3 ff.). These strengthen how much he (Sarty) is the central figure whom the story’s experiences involve. I believe, therefore, that one supervening rule in “Barn Burning” is that whenever there is direct discourse in the short story, Sarty is perceiving.

Another example of a supervening structure occurs in As I Lay Dying (“Cora [2]”), where Addie is in the upper-floor room of the Bundren farm house lying sick in bed. With her are Cora, Tull, Kate, Eula, and Dewey Dell. While much of the section is perceived by Cora alone, we also read: “We can hear the saw in the board [my italics]” (9). Cora broadens her perception to include what others also are hearing. The question here is whom to include in the “we.” By default, we probably would include all those present in the room, but I believe only Cora, Kate, and Eula perceive. The reason for this is that supervening principles in this chapter dictate that Cora’s “we” only includes three people. The principles are:

A. Cora does not like Dewey Dell, as evidenced, e.g., by the disparaging and distancing reference to Dewey Dell’s home keeping: “You can see that girl’s washing and ironing in the pillow-slip, if ironed it ever was” (As I Lay Dying 8).

B. The contexts of Cora’s uses of “we” sometimes restrict the possible referents: e.g., “First thing we know she’ll be up and baking again, and then we won’t have any sale for ours at all” (8). Dewey Dell is not likely to be selling cakes. Addie excelled at baking while Dewey Dell is a poor homemaker.
C. Dewey Dell becomes an object of perception for the subjects included in “we.”

“While we watch she [Dewey Dell] swaps the fan to the other hand without stopping it” (9).

Thus, we would mark this passage: ‘2PO+K+E We can hear the saw in the board.’ In short, we can say that local decisions about marking layers of focalization can only be made in light of global structures obtaining in chapters, sections, and/or entire narratives.

Reliability

The last thing to consider before applying the above guidelines to “Barn Burning” is reliability. Wayne Booth provides us with the most widely accepted definition of reliability, a definition based on a narrator’s deviation from the norms of the implied author. A narrator is “reliable when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say, the implied author’s norms), unreliable when he does not” (158-9). I would suggest that we modify Booth’s definition, first of all, by locating reliability and unreliability in focalization, with our understanding of reliability deriving from a relationship between the focalizer and the implied author. Modifying Booth’s definition, we can say that reliability for focalizers is relative to the distance between the perceptions of the focalizer and the perceptions of the implied author. Focalizers whose perceptions are identical to those of the implied author are reliable; focalizers whose perceptions are different from those of the
implied author are unreliable.\textsuperscript{25} We can also say that the further the distance there is between focalizer perceptions and implied author perceptions, the greater the focalizer’s unreliability.

This revised definition allows us to locate unreliability quite accurately. For example, in “Barn Burning” when Sarty proclaims that his father “was brave!…He was! He was in the war! He was in Colonel Sartor’ cav’ry,” we know that the boy’s perceptions are unreliable, for the narrator tells us immediately afterwards that the boy did not know “that his father had gone to war a private in the fine old European sense, wearing no uniform, admitting the authority of and giving fidelity to no man or army or flag, going to war as Malbrouck himself did: for booty” (24). As we ally the narrator with the implied author, we determine that the young Sarty “misperceives” his father’s past and is, therefore, unreliable.

When unreliability occurs, as in Sarty’s false vision of his father’s heroism, we can say that the unreliable vision provides insight into character while obfuscating story. While we may seem to waste narrative time through unreliability, especially as an author has to contrive a way of presenting accurate focalizations, we have not really wasted any time at all. For the payoff is a better understanding of Sarty as character. We better understand the young boy who is trying to resurrect some respect for his father as he grieves.\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{25} Focalizers who perceive as the implied author would but then tell about the situation or event in a way that deviates from the focalization I would term not unreliable but deceptive. Thus, I distinguish between unreliable focalization and deceptive narration.

\textsuperscript{26} In investigating such unreliability in character narration, Phelan’s discussion of narrator (disclosure) and character functions can be useful in distinguishing when the author sacrifices story information for
Just as Phelan and Mary Patricia Martin hold that “a given narrator can be unreliable in different ways at different points in his or her narration” (“The Lessons” 96), similarly we will say that the reliability of focalizers can vary across a narrative. We will conclude that: on one layer a focalizer may be reliable while on another unreliable; on the same layer at two different points in the discourse a focalizer may be reliable in one instance and unreliable in another; and as a focalizer may appear on multiple layers at the same time, she may be reliable on one layer and unreliable on another.

Layers of Focalization in “Barn Burning”

Now that we have laid out guidelines for marking shifts in layers of focalization, it is time to see how a marked text can help with interpretation. What follows is an analysis of Faulkner’s “Barn Burning,” where I show how marking shifts in focalization and the data collected from marking shifts in layers of focalization can contribute to better understanding a narrative. Before turning to my results, let me first comment on marking the shifts and the collation of the data.

To begin with, I scanned the Collected Stories (1950) version of “Barn Burning” using Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software. Retaining the pagination from Collected Stories, I placed within the text markings for shifts in layers of focalization using the above guidelines. I then used Microsoft Word’s Find function...
to count the number of times shifts occurred. Figure 1 and Figure 2 (below) list focalizers, their alphabetic codes, the layers on which they focalize and in what order, the total number of times I marked shifts up or down for each focalizer, the focalizers by layer, the total number of times I marked shifts up or down on each layer, and the page on which perception first occurs for each focalizer for each layer. From my careful study of who focalizes when and the data I collected from it, I have been able to make a number of observations about Faulkner’s rhetorical effects, namely about progression, about the author’s attempt to conflate two types of focalizers in the narrative, and about his use of focalization patterns in support of three themes: maturation, power and impotence, and the widespread effects of sins.

27 Shifts down are often not marked, thus having an effect on the data. This is not significant, however, since clear patterns have been revealed and would only be amplified by additional downward-shift markings.
\(X^Py\) (\(x\)=Layer of Focalization; \(P\)=Indicates change to a new Layer of Focalization; \(y\)=Focalizer (Perceiver))

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<th>Character(s)</th>
<th>(X) (in order, 5 total)</th>
<th>Total occurrences.*</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>5, 3, 2, 4</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B  “the boy,” Sartoris Snopes</td>
<td>2, 4</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C  Older Brother</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F  Anybody named for Col. Sart.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G  Men (before Justice 1)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H  Mr. Harris</td>
<td>3, 4</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>J  Justice of the Peace 1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L  Mrs. de Spain</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M  Mother, Lennie Snopes</td>
<td>2, 3, 4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N  Narrator</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O  Negro at Major de Spain’s</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P  Major de Spain</td>
<td>3, 4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R  “the strange nigger”</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>S  Undifferentiated Sister</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T  Aunt</td>
<td>3, 4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V  Voice (of child in crowd)</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X  Somebody/Anybody</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y  Sister One</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z  Sister Two (“other sister”)</td>
<td>3</td>
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*(629)*

*Shifts down are not marked and are not included here.*

Figure 1. Focalizers in William Faulkner’s “Barn Burning”
**Layers of Focalization**

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<th># of occur.</th>
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</table>

* Shifts down are not marked and are not included here.

Figure 2. Layers of Focalization in “Barn Burning”
Progression

Marking shifts in focalization, first of all, allows us to see how “Barn Burning” moves forward. Phelan, in analyzing what he terms progression, implements the terms instabilities and tensions to designate conflicts within the story and the discourse, respectively, that impel the reader forward (Narrative 90), and this “logic of forward movement” in “Barn Burning,” indeed, becomes more comprehensible the more we focus on who sees when. At the beginning, Faulkner establishes an instability when the young Sarty literally can not see as well as others due to his size, “He could not see the table where the Justice sat” (3). This negated verb of perception points out one small instability in the short story; more importantly, this instability is a prelude to the major tension revealed next—a value conflict between the immature Sarty and the implied author.

Just as Sarty is unable literally to see as well as others in the story, he also is unable to understand the world around him and thus is unable to make proper value judgments about people in this world, namely about his father. Right after not being able to see “the table where the first Justice sat,” we learn what Sarty does think or focalize: that the Justice—one of two judges who are the paragons of fairness in the story—is his “enemy” (3). As Sarty continues to misperceive, this tension continues to grow in readerly importance: Sarty thinks that he will have to support his father—“I will have to do hit” (4); he persists in thinking that the Justice is his “enemy” (4); he imagines that the de Spain family is “safe” from his father (10); he imagines that his father can not “help but be” as he is (11), but perhaps the payment of the corn in the
fall “*will add up and balance and vanish*” Abner’s incendiary pulsion; he wishes to run away from his father when asked to get the oil to burn Major de Spain’s barn, but he “*can’t*” (21). ²⁸

The heterodiegetic narrator—whom we ally with the implied author—provides a benchmark against which to gauge Sarty’s beliefs or judgments (forms of focalization). This narrator understands and relates to us information that Sarty does not know, and these explanations of Sarty’s father’s actions do not comport well with the supportive position that Sarty takes. For example, Abner stole horses during the Civil War—from both sides—as a “professional horsetrader” (5, 7, 20), and he preserves his “integrity” by burning logs in small measure for survival and barns in full measure for revenge (7-8). In addition to the inferences we make via the narrator’s understanding of Abner, the narrator comes right out and confirms the distance we feel. There are things which the “boy could not have known” (18) as Sarty is, indeed, in possession of the “handicap” of youth (9).

In addition, the glimpses of Abner’s values that Faulkner gives us—through Abner’s focalization contained in his direct discourse—confirm the distance between what we infer to be the implied author’s values (via the narrator) and Sarty’s. In referring to the de Spain house, Abner (focalizes as he) says, “‘Pretty and white, ain’t it?...That’s sweat. Nigger sweat. Maybe it ain’t white enough yet to suit him. Maybe

²⁸ In terms of Phelan and Martin’s axes of unreliability, when Sarty is able to perceive, he is usually reliable along the axes of facts/events and knowledge/perception; his shortcoming tends to be unreliability along the axis of ethics/evaluation. He does not properly interpret what he senses. Put more precisely in terms of focalization, Sarty focalizes well with his senses, but, due to the “handicap” of his immature mind, he does not properly evaluate the data his sense collect. For more on axes of unreliability, cf. Phelan and Martin, “The Lessons of ‘Weymouth’: Homodiegesis, Unreliability, Ethics, and *The Remains of the Day*,” esp. pp. 89-96.
he wants to mix some white sweat with it” (12). Sarty supports his father’s judgments, which are themselves contrary to the implied author’s. Likewise, Faulkner offers us direct access to one of the ignorant sisters’s focalization through her direct discourse comments—“If I thought enough of a rug to have to git hit all the way from France, I wouldn’t keep hit where folks coming in would have to tromp on hit” (13)—also confirming this distance.

Of course, as Faulkner builds the case for the immense distance between Abner’s values and those of both the narrator and the implied author, working in concert is the major instability of the short story: how will Abner strike out against authority in this story—i.e., will he (or when will he) burn the next barn—and how will Sarty react when Abner strikes out? Crucial then to the movement of “Barn Burning” is the coordinated movement of the escalation of this, the story’s major instability, and the resolution of the story’s major tension—the gradual shortening of the distance between Sarty and the implied author. While Abner increasingly strikes out at Major de Spain—first in a small way by spreading “droppings” on the rug (10), secondly by permanently damaging the rug with “scoriations” (14), and thirdly and finally by burning down his barn (23)—Sarty decreasingly differs from what the narrator and implied author see. While Sarty, as cited above, may have wished part way through the narrative to resist his father but believes (focalizes) that he “can’t,” by the end Sarty’s proper focalization is indeed in line with the implied author. He sees the havoc his father wreaks, and his proper perception is revealed in his direct discourse (23): “De Spain!...Where’s… Barn!...Barn!” The instability centered on
Abner is resolved as the tension centered in Sarty is attenuated; Abner’s destruction is finally checked by Sarty’s action, which is based on Sarty’s story-ending reliable focalization.

**Conflation of Layers of Focalization**

Secondly, the data compiled from marking shifts of focalization allows us to examine a significant rhetorical effect that Faulkner attempted to create in “Barn Burning:” the conflation of the benefits of heterodiegetic narration with the benefits of character narration. That is, so much of the focalization in the short story is carried out by both the narrator and Sarty (“the boy”) that they appear to blend. For example, while the narrator focalizes the beginning of “Barn Burning,” notice how frequently Sarty also focalizes.

1PN The store in which the Justice of the Peace’s court was sitting smelled of cheese. The boy, crouched on his nail keg at the back of the crowded room, knew 2PB he smelled cheese, and more: 1PN from where he sat he could see 2PB the ranked shelves close-packed with the solid, squat, dynamic shapes of tin cans…(3).

Indeed, this multivalent perception is typical of the entire narrative, as focalization shifts are marked 237 times for the narrator and 246 for the boy (the two account for more than three quarters of all markings in “Barn Burning”). The result of these perspectival oscillations is that we get visions that derive from seemingly both heterodiegetic focalization and character focalization, and I would suggest that this is brought about to take advantage of the benefits obtaining for heterodiegetic
focalization—extraordinary knowledge and reliability—and character focalization—character access that leads to greater reader empathy.

Critics before me have examined this running together of the third-person and first-person in “Barn Burning.” For example, Gail Mortimer, in discussing teaching Faulkner in “‘Barn Burning’ and The Sound and the Fury as an Introduction to Faulknerian Style and Themes,” looks at “the employment…of a traditional third-person narrator focusing closely on Sarty, interspersed with direct glimpses of his thoughts” as a way of introducing “perceptual and conceptual” issues related to first-person narration (129). Marilyn Claire Ford comes even closer to my work in “Narrative Legerdemain: Evoking Sarty’s Future in ‘Barn Burning.’” She says, “‘Barn Burning’ dramatizes…a ‘doubling’ of perspective—in which an anonymous, omniscient narrator fuses with Sarty Snopes” (527). Yet, none of the critics I surveyed uses a careful study of focalization in showing how Abner and Sarty are made to nearly conflate. For example, while Ford says (527) that Faulkner’s “narrative strategy” involves “an intricate intertwining of diverse levels of consciousness” (sc. focalization, nearly Bal’s “levels of focalization”), she does not go far enough narratologically. While, according to my data, Abner is focalized by multiple agents on four layers within “Barn Burning,” Ford incorrectly believes that “the reader perceives Abner only through the eyes of his son” (530).

To understand further the near-conflation of perspectives, let us look at a couple more examples from “Barn Burning.” Again, watch for the frequent oscillations.
Presently he [Sarty] could see the grove of oaks and cedars and the other flowering trees and shrubs where the house would be, though not the house yet. They walked beside a fence massed with honeysuckle and Cherokee roses and came to a gate swinging open between two brick pillars, and now, beyond a sweep of drive, he saw the house for the first time and at that instant he forgot his father and the terror and despair both, and even when he remembered (who had not stopped) the terror and despair did not return. Because, for all the twelve movings, they had sojourned until now in a poor country, a land of small farms and fields and houses, and he had never seen a house like this before. 

Hit’s big as a courthouse he thought quietly, with a surge of peace and joy whose reason he could not have thought into words, being too young for that: They are safe from him. People whose lives are a part of this peace and dignity are beyond his touch, he no more to them than a buzzing wasp: capable of stinging for a little moment but that’s all; the spell of this peace and dignity rendering even the barns and stable and cribs which belong to it impervious to the puny flames he might contrive… this, the peace and joy, ebbing for an instant as he looked again at the stiff black back, the stiff and implacable limp of the figure… (10).

This excerpt (indeed, the whole paragraph of which it is a part) is an excellent example of intentional perceptive conflation. The perception rapidly oscillates between the narrator alone and Sarty (of course, compiled or layered with the narrator). The net result is that so much of the text is perceived by Sarty that the two focalizers seem to blend into one.

We should examine the conflation of heterodiegetic focalization and character focalization more closely. On the one hand, in the paragraph above we have the objective perceptions of an heterodiegetic narrator who fully sees all the details of the story—that there is a boy who is seeing, that at one point in the story the boy did not see the house yet, exactly when he “forgot his father,” “even when he remembered” him, etc. On the other hand, in the paragraph above we have the subjective view of a character deeply involved in the story world—his actual vision of the oaks and cedars,
his lack of perception of the house at a certain point, his recollections, his exact internal thoughts, etc. The first heterodiegetic position reveals the minutiae of the story world and does so (as is typical) in a reliable way; the second character position allows the reader to feel close to Sarty, as if he were inside him, experiencing the trees and flowering shrubs, thinking about his violent father, and awed by the symbolic stability of Major de Spain’s house. The character position, however, at times is unreliable, e.g., “They are safe from him.”

The effects are repeated throughout the narrative:

…He heard the hooves and saw the linen-clad man on a fine sorrel mare, whom he recognized even before he saw the rolled rug in front of the Negro youth following on a fat bay carriage horse—a suffused, angry face vanishing, still at full gallop, beyond the corner of the house where his father and brother were sitting in the two tilted chairs; and a moment later, almost before he could have put the axe down, he heard the hooves again and watched the sorrel mare go back out of the yard, already galloping again (12-13).

The narrator provides us with story information that Sarty does not know, e.g., that his father and brother were sitting at the very moment Major de Spain rode up to the tenement house, but Sarty’s additional perceptions allow us to hear (“the hooves,” and later “the hooves again”) and see (“the linen-clad man,” “the rolled rug,” and “the sorrel mare”) from within the story. That Faulkner allows character perception in a narrative that is fundamentally perceived heterodiegetically is not unusual; what is unusual is the frequency with which this one character perceives and the repeated shifts in layers of focalization between the narrator and this one character. These frequent oscillations blur who fundamentally perceives. Close inspection shows that only the narrator is on L1, but the perceptions deriving from L2 appear so often that
we begin to feel—as Mortimer expresses—that the story leads us to intradiegesis. In the end, L2 perceptions appear to be as fundamental to the story as L1 perceptions.

An interesting data anomaly helps make the equal stature of L1 and L2 clear. In a typical narrative L2 is inhabited by the greatest number of different focalizers. L3 has the next highest number of focalizers, then L4, then L5, and so on to the uppermost layer.\(^{29}\) We could refer to this as the “Christmas tree rule,” for a graph of the focalizers per level would yield something akin to the shape of a Christmas tree. Thus, within any given narrative, the layer with the least number of focalizers is either exclusively L1 or L1 along with other single-focalizer layers—usually at the uppermost layer(s). In “Barn Burning,” the greatest number of focalizers (13) occurs on L3.\(^{30}\) L4 has nine focalizers, L2 three, L5 two, and L1 one. (See Figure 3.) What the altered pattern in “Barn Burning” shows is that the standard pattern matches that in “Barn Burning” from L3 on.\(^{31}\) Thus, the anomaly occurs below L3, and, indeed, what I am trying to suggest is that how L1 behaves in most narratives is how L1 and L2 behave in “Barn Burning.” The layer(s) below the most-inhabited layer in a narrative is where you should find the fundamental focalizer. In “Barn Burning,” the fundamental focalization is by both the narrator and Sarty. While “Barn Burning” at first appears to violate the Christmas tree rule, \textit{in effect} it does not.

\(^{29}\) I am excluding L1 on this quantitative analysis of layers because L1 can only have one focalizer.

\(^{30}\) The sisters occur independently along with two incidences of an undifferentiated sister. I have not counted the undifferentiated sister separately.

\(^{31}\) The data shows that L2 has more focalizers (3) than L5 (2), but the difference is negligible.
Number of Focalizers per Layer of Focalization in a Typical Narrative (in order from most to least)

L2
L3
L4
L5
...
Lz

Number of Focalizers per Layer of Focalization in “Barn Burning” (in order from most to least)

L3 13*
L4 9
L2 3
L5 2
L1 1

Figure 3. Comparison of Focalizers per Layer: Typical Narrative and “Barn Burning

Another way you can see how L1 is melded with L2 is by examining the perception of direct quotation in “Barn Burning.” Direct quotation is a frequent occurrence and often simply is interposed between longer passage of narrative prose:

…”His mother’s hand touched his shoulder. “Does hit hurt?” she said. “Naw,” he said. “Hit don’t hurt. Lemme be.” “Can’t you wipe some of the blood off before hit dries?” “I’ll wash to-night,” he said. “Lemme be, I tell you.” The wagon went on…. (6-7)

and

…”In the early afternoon the wagon stopped before a paintless two-room house identical almost with the dozen others it had stopped before even in the boy’s ten years, and again, as on the other dozen occasions, his mother and aunt got down and began to unload the wagon, although his two sisters and his father and brother had not moved. “Likely hit ain’t fitten for hawgs,” one of the sisters said. “Nevertheless, fit it will and you’ll hog it and like it,” his father said. 2PB- “Get out of them chairs and help your Ma unload.” The two sisters got down, big, bovine, in a flutter of cheap ribbons… (8-9)
In both cases, the passages before the direct quotations and those immediately following the direct quotations are focalized by the narrator, and in most narratives the direct discourse would be focalized by narrator (and on a higher layer the character speaking). This, however, is not the case in “Barn Burning.” As mentioned above, in several places the narrator tells us that Sarty heard people speaking. For example, in the opening scene, just before the first direct quotation, the narrator realizes that Sarty “could hear them [his father and his father’s enemy if not the justice of the peace and the other men gathered, too]” (3). And later in the narrative, again during the second trial, the narrator perceives that Sarty was “listening to the voices:…” (18). In the second example, the colon is an even stronger indicator, for following it immediately are the directly-quoted proceedings of the second trial.

…listening to the voices:
   “And you claim twenty bushels of corn is too high for the damage you did to the rug?”
   “He brought the rug to me and said he wanted the tracks washed out of it. I washed the tracks out and took the rug back to him.”
   “But you didn’t carry the rug back to him in the same condition it was in before you made the tracks on it.” (18)

To this end, I would argue that all of the direct discourse in “Barn Burning” is perceived by Sarty and that the fact that all the direct discourse is perceived by Sarty compares him with the standard narrator in most other narratives.

Finally, one last structural property that reveals how Faulkner attempts to combine the benefits of an heterodiegetic focalizer with the benefits of a character
focalizer is the perception of Sarty’s internal thoughts. The only character’s thoughts that are perceived are Sarty’s, and the thoughts always occur on L2. For example, in the opening paragraph of the narrative, Sarty is crouched in the back of the makeshift courtroom and thinks about the plaintiff. His thoughts are indicated by italics:

…He could not see the table where the Justice sat and before which his father and his father’s enemy (our enemy he thought in that despair; ourn! mine and hisn both! He’s my father!) stood, but he could hear them, the two of them that is, because his father had said no word yet:…. (3)

Soon Sarty is called upon to testify: “He aims for me to lie, he thought, again with that frantic grief and despair. And I will have to do hit” (4). And later in the short story, when he and Abner approach Major de Spain’s house, he thinks:

They are safe from him. People whose lives are a part of this peace and dignity are beyond his touch, he no more to them than a buzzing wasp: capable of stinging for a little moment but that’s all; the spell of this peace and dignity rendering even the barns and stable and cribs which belong to it impervious to the puny flames he might contrive…. (10)

In such cases, we have direct access to what Sarty is thinking, but this in and of itself is not unusual. Many narratives feature heterodiegetic narrator’s who provide us with glimpses into the minds of characters. What is significant here is that the L1 narrator glimpses inside Sarty’s head only, i.e., no other character’s thoughts are revealed. The net result of reading “Barn Burning,” then, is that we get so much direct access to what Sarty senses and thinks that we begin to feel like the story is fundamentally focalized by him. The majority of focalization time that is normally afforded only to the first layer focalizer is often shared with Sarty on the second. To this end, we have

32 Genette calls this “internal” focalization (Narrative Discourse 189); Bal refers to focalized internal thoughts as “imperceptibles” (“The Narrating” 250).
the frequent benefit of the narrator’s objective view of the story and access to the subjective character perceptions that render us empathic.

There are a few exceptions to the complete conflation of L1 and L2 focalization. First, this theory perhaps would look tidier if only Sarty perceived on L2, but this is not the case. In fact, both his father and his mother perceive on L2, albeit infrequently. A close inspection of when they perceive on L2, however, reveals that Faulkner only allows Abner and Lennie to perceive on L2 in particularly important situations, so that their perceptions there stand out. The first non-Sarty focalization on L2 is by Sarty’s mother: ‘She was crying, though when she saw him she drew her sleeve across her face and began to descend from the wagon. “Get back,” the father said. “He’s hurt. I got to get some water and wash his…[my italics]” (6). Here Lennie perceives on L2 when she “saw” Sarty bleeding after his battle with the one who taunted (5), “Barn Burner!” This emphasizes two things. First, Lennie’s response represents one of the few moments of caring and nurturing that the young boy receives. That Lennie “saw” Sarty is significant because few characters empower Sarty by making him an object of perception. While Sarty often perceives in the narrative, he often goes unnoticed. Secondly, this perception and the ensuing compassion are important in highlighting the opening scene of the Freudian struggle over Lennie’s attention. Abner eventually demands (and gets) his wife’s fealty, but she initially shows her affection towards her son.

Another example of a non-Sarty L2 perception occurs when Abner smears the manure across the de Spains’ carpet.
... He did not even look at her. He just stood stiff in the center of the rug, in his hat, the shaggy iron-gray brows twitching slightly above the pebble-colored eyes as he appeared to examine the house with brief deliberation. Then with the same deliberation he turned; the boy watched him pivot on the good leg and saw the stiff foot drag round the arc of the turning, leaving a final long and fading smear. His father never looked at it, he never once looked down at the rug [my italics] (12).

Here Abner perceives (or does not perceive) several things: Lula de Spain, the house, the smear, and the rug. This is an important scene, for here Abner creates the conflict that brings about the story’s conclusion. Abner’s perception of power (ironically through a negation of perception) and his own signs of defacement are necessary for us to see his character clearly, for it is his attitude that will eventually impel Sarty to forsake his “blood.” Thus, while two other characters perceive on L2, their perceptions on this important layer in “Barn Burning” is not casual. Faulkner only disrupts the conflation of the narrator and Sarty in order to attain other significant ends.

A second untidy aspect to the simple conflation of L1 and L2 focalization is that occasionally Sarty focalizes on L4. For example, Sarty perceives on L2 and L4 when Abner lectures Sarty after he almost told the first justice of the peace that Abner had burned the barn.

[Abner’s voice was] without heat or anger: “You’re getting to be a man. You got to learn. You got to learn to stick to your own blood or you ain’t going to have any blood to stick to you. Do you think either of them, any man there this morning, would? Don’t you know all they wanted was a chance to get at me because they knew I had them beat?” (8)

Here Sarty perceives on L2 as he hears the direct discourse of his father, and he perceives on L4 when his perceptions are invoked in his father’s third layer questions:
“3PA Do you think 4PB either of them…?” and “3PA Don’t you know 4PB all they wanted…?”

Insofar as true L1, heterodiegetic focalizers can not focalize elsewhere, the nature of Sarty’s character focalization is revealed clearly in that he perceives multivalently. This, however, is not a problem, for what Faulkner is trying to achieve is a meld of heterodiegetic narration and character narration. We should not anticipate that the intradiegetic character would not act entirely as one. If so, we would not have the full benefits of melding these two differently-located focalizers.

Themes

Thirdly, the melding of the narrator’s L1 focalization and Sarty’s L2 focalization helps highlight the three themes: Sarty’s maturation; power and impotence; and the effects of sins. First, the patterns revealed by studying layers of focalization in “Barn Burning” supports Faulkner’s theme of maturation. In “Barn Burning,” Sarty grows from a youth to a man, and this theme has been dealt with extensively. For example, while Jane Hiles focuses on Sarty’s limited “insight into the dilemma” in which he finds himself, Phyllis Franklin says that Sarty is “a boy coming of age” (192), and Gayle Wilson discusses Sarty’s movement from “death to life, from darkness to light” (288). Gail Mortimer feels that Faulkner “is particularly interested in the relation between childhood innocence and adult values, in that moment in a child’s life when a choice is made to become a particular kind of human being” (130),
and Marilyn Claire Ford addresses Sarty’s growth and finds that he “denounces his father’s depravity unequivocally” (540).

One major indicator in “Barn Burning” of Sarty’s immaturity is his unreliable focalization. When we look closely, we see that only one character—Sarty on L2—has unreliable perception. For example, in the opening paragraph we see Sarty’s unreliably focalized thoughts. Sarty thinks (3), “our enemy [Mr. Harris]…ourn! mine and hisn both! He’s my father!” While Sarty thinks that Mr. Harris is a foe, we come to realize that the implied author sees it differently. We soon learn that Mr. Harris has been more than fair: he returned Abner’s wandering hog; he on the second occasion held the animal again and gave Abner some fence; he even returned the animal a third time. Likewise, near the end of the short story, Sarty is unreliable. Even as he has chosen to forsake his father, he still seems to hold some stock in an unreliable account of his father’s history (24): “Father. My father, he thought. ‘He was brave!’ he cried suddenly aloud but not loud, no more than a whisper: ‘He was! He was in the war! He was in Colonel Sartoris’ cav’ry!’” The very next sentence—focalized by the narrator this time—reveals what is likely in accord with the implied author notions:

…his father had gone to that war a private in the fine old European sense, wearing no uniform, admitting the authority of and giving fidelity to no man or army or flag, going to war as Malbrouck himself did: for booty—it meant nothing and less than nothing to him if it were enemy booty or his own. (24-5)

The fact that reliability is an issue with Sarty but for no one else has a double effect. The first effect, in terms of the conflation of the narrator as a L1 heterodiegetic focalizer and Sarty as a L2 character focalizer, is that the benefits of both positions are highlighted. The narrator on the one hand, who frequently gives us direct insight into
the implied author’s beliefs, allows us to benefit from his objectivity. We can see Sarty grow only by using the narrator’s reliable perceptions as a benchmark. Sarty, on the other hand, allows us to benefit from his subjective position. We understand the theme of the personal growth only as we empathize first with his naïveté and then with his dawning understanding. Generous access to both focalizers provides the framework and the subject matter for understanding maturation.

The second effect is that Sarty’s unreliability emphasizes both his initial impotence as well as his importance in the story. His lack of knowledge about the world around him sets him apart from the other characters of the story since he is the only unreliable focalizer. This emphasis sets up his final growth, especially since he is the only character to change in “Barn Burning.”

The other focalization structure that supports our understanding of Sarty’s growth is Sarty’s relationship to passages of hypothetical narration. In “Barn Burning,” the marking of shifts in layers of focalization reveals 64 shifts that involve hypothetical narration, and to every case Sarty is somehow connected. For example, part-way through the narrative Sarty realizes that the family is having coffee to drink again, and he reasons that this is “probably [a hypothetical narration indicator] because there was a fire in the hearth [my italics]” (14).

It was dusk; the whippoorwills had already begun. He could smell coffee from the room where they would presently eat the cold food remaining from the

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33 Hypothetical narration involves the telling of a situation or event about which the focalizer is uncertain whether or not it occurred, is occurring, or will occur, and as chapter three will demonstrate, this uncertainty is wholly dependent upon the certainty of focalization. Cf. chapter three, “Hypothetical Narration,” for a full treatment.
mid-afternoon meal, though when he entered the house he realized they were having coffee again probably because there was a fire on the hearth…. (14)

Here is Sarty involved in the uncertain focalization, the thinking of a likely reason for imbibing coffee again. In other places, Sarty is indirectly involved, as is the case when he and Abner are outside Major de Spain’s house. Abner has just smeared manure on the white rug, and he speaks to Sarty: “Maybe it [the house] ain’t white enough yet to suit him. Maybe he wants to mix some white sweat with it” (12). Here, while Abner is uncertain—about what Major de Spain thinks about the whiteness of his house and the possibility of mixing some of his tenant farmers’ sweat with it—Sarty is perceiving the uncertainty, for he is the auditor of this direct discourse.

In the end, we find that Sarty is the only character who is involved in all the passages of hypothetical narration, and this highlights his immaturity. Being young involves uncertainty about the world, a lack of knowledge about the people, situations, and events. With growth will come greater certainty.

Less discussed by critics is the second theme that the patterns of focalization support: power versus impotence. There are a couple exceptions. Elmo Howell, in “Colonel Sartoris Snopes and Faulkner’s Aristocrats” deals with issues of socio-economic power, and Gayle Edward Wilson in “‘Being Pulled Two Ways’: the Nature of Sarty’s Choice in ‘Barn Burning’” discusses Abner’s unconcern for “permanence” and “order” in contrast to Mr. Harris and Major de Spain’s stability (281-2) and the law’s (sc. the two justices of the peace’s) role in maintaining it. In short, in “Barn Burning” Faulkner worked hard to demarcate the “haves” and the “have nots” in his
Southern setting—those who are monied and powerful and those who are poor and impotent.

A quick survey of the characters who focalize in “Barn Burning” will reveal a number of powerful people and a number of impotent people. Of the nineteen characters who focalize, those who wield much power include Mr. Harris, Major de Spain, and the two justices of the peace. On the other hand, those who are powerless include Lennie, the aunt, the two sisters, “the strange nigger,” and the negro at Major de Spain’s. If we take these groups of people and look at several patterns in the focalization data, interesting things appear.

First, if we total the number of focalization shifts indicated for each character across the narrative, we find a significant pattern. Once we remove Abner, Lennie, and Sarty from the list of 18 focalizers, we find that the four figures of power outnumber the eleven left by a ratio of 32 to 26. These eleven are so powerless that they barely see. Secondly, if we look at the characters who focalize on two or more layers, we find that six of them are women or are disenfranchised: Lennie, the aunt, the two sisters, “the strange nigger,” and the negro at Major de Spain’s. These weak characters make up 33% of those focalizing, yet they account for only 29 (7%) of the 392 non-narrator focalization marks. Power grants characters the ability to see.

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34 I am not counting the undifferentiated sister.

35 Some characters are not as easily differentiated. For example, Abner is a male and the head of his household, but he certainly does not wield much power elsewhere. The older brother is not yet a man, yet the epithet “older” shows his superiority over Sarty. And Mrs. de Spain is a woman, yet, married to the Major, she is a powerful lady.

36 Again, I have not counted the undifferentiated sister as a separate focalizer.
Finally, we need to examine the fourth layer of focalization, a place in “Barn Burning” where people focalize because they are being talked about. There, we find three types of people. Least interesting is the generic group of focalizers: anybodies and somebodies. The second group of focalizers includes the family members: Abner, Lennie, Sarty, and the aunt. The third group of focalizers is the most interesting here and includes the rich and empowered along with the poor and powerless: Mr. Harris, Major de Spain, and “the strange nigger.”37 (See Figure 4.) As the fourth-layer focalizers reveal whom people in “Barn Burning” talk about, what we see is that besides discussing the central figures to the story—the Snopes family—the story’s characters also are interested talking about figures with or without money and power. We can see, then, that “Barn Burning” helps illustrate the South’s bifurcated post-war society. There are those who lack power, and part of their symptoms in “Barn Burning” include a lack of vision. On the other hand, there are those who have power, and the powerless in the short story are under their see.

37 Focalization Shift Totals: Generic = 2, Family = 7, Powerful and Powerless = 6. The second and third groups are approximately equal in their shifts in focalization.
Generic Focalizers
   Anybody named for Col. Sartoris
   Somebody/Anybody

Family Focalizers
   Sarty, “the boy”
   Abner Snopes
   Mother, Lennie
   Aunt (of Sarty)

Powerful and Powerless Focalizers
   Mr. Harris
   Major de Spain
   “the strange nigger”

Figure 4. L4 Focalizers in “Barn Burning”

Gail Mortimer summarizes another theme that is supported by patterns of focalization in “Barn Burning”—sins of one generation affecting others. She points out “how irrevocably people are entangled in the history of their families, so that sometimes they seem to have lived through the events of earlier generations” (129). The theme of “entangling” sins is certainly dominant in “Barn Burning,” for it is Abner’s “prodigality with material not his own,” especially as fuel for fires, that affects Sarty. Abner’s violence against others is the “old habit, the old blood which he [Sarty] had not been permitted to choose for himself, which had been bequeathed him willy nilly and which had run for so long...before it came to him” (“Barn Burning” 21).

Focalization helps highlight the effects of Abner’s “old habit” on others. First of all, an examination of the layers of focalization data reveals that only one character in the whole narrative inhabits layers two through five (L2-L5): Abner. In order of
appearance, he focalizes on L5, L3, L2, and L4. He first appears on L5 when Sarty listens to Mr. Harris talk about the hog. Mr. Harris invokes the focalization of “the strange nigger,” who himself invokes the focalization of Abner: “3PH I told him he could have the hog when he paid me a dollar pound fee. That evening a nigger came with the dollar and got the hog. He was a strange nigger. He said, 4PR ‘He say to tell you 5PA wood and hay kin burn.’” (4). Abner appears on L3 most frequently as he focalizes within direct discourse. “1PN His father spoke for the first time, his voice cold and harsh, level, without emphasis: 2PB-3PA ‘I aim to. I don’t figure to stay in a country among people who…’ 1PN he said something unprintable and vile, addressed to no one” (5). The narrator occasionally gives Abner perception on L2, generally a layer reserved for Sarty. For example, he focalizes the manure he has spread on Major de Spain’s carpet. “1PN His father never looked at 2PA it, 1PN he never once looked down at 2PA the rug.” Finally, Abner perceives on L4 when Major de Spain returns the rug to him for cleaning. “2PB-3PP “You must realize 4PA you have ruined that rug” (16).

That Abner focalizes on all character layers suggests how widespread his effects are. On L2 he is focalizer; we see through his eyes as he spreads his violence. On L3, he perceives through Sarty, who sees his father’s “habits” and their deleterious effects. On L4, characters discuss Abner, and through their talking is he invoked as a focalizer. And on L5, Abner is invoked by those who are invoked by those who are heard by Sarty. Abner’s effect spreads far and wide.
Secondly, focalization data reveals that on the fifth layer—a layer inhabited only through multi-referentiality—only two focalizers appear, and Abner is one of them. For him to appear on a layer invoked through four other focalizes suggests that his deeds penetrate deeply into the lives of the story’s characters.

Lastly, it is important to note that Abner’s first appearance as a focalizer in “Barn Burning” occurs on L5. This is his focalization through Harris and “the strange nigger.” For an important character—third after Sarty and the narrator in terms of marked shifts in focalization—this seems like an unusual place to first focalize. Indeed, only 2 of Abner’s 65 focalization shifts are marked on L5. (We would expect him to focalize first on L3 where 55 shifts are marked.) That Abner focalizes on L5 before focalizing elsewhere is intentional. By having him perceive first only through three other character’s focalization’s plus the narrator’s, right away we see how widespread Abner’s effect is on those around him.
CHAPTER 2
SHIFTS IN VOICE

Gerard Genette’s distinction between “who sees” and “who speaks” led in chapter one to an investigation of vision (or focalization). This chapter will take up the second part of Genette’s distinction by looking at narrative voice. I will begin with an overview of previous work on voice—looking at the work by Mikhail Bakhtin, Seymour Chatman, Gerard Genette, James Phelan, Richard Aczel, Ben Forkner, and Stephen Ross—and then propose five progressively-narrowing definitions of voice. Following that, I will discuss what I call indicators of narrative voice within texts, making distinctions between conventional markers (e.g., speech tags and narrative levels) and features (e.g., vocabulary and syntax) of narrative voice. While describing these indicators, I will offer examples from a variety of Faulkner’s texts.

My goal in this chapter is to refine and build on previous work on voice, especially that of Aczel and Ross, showing that, while readers often depend upon conventional markers for differentiation, voice features are the only necessary and sufficient conditions for identifying narrative voice. I hope to prove this through a demonstration of the inadequacy of two specific conventional markers in determining voice in Faulkner’s “Old Man” and *As I Lay Dying*; the inadequacy of conventional
markers will not prove, however, that in each case narrative voices do not exist. Rather, I will show that in these representative cases only voice features will allow readers to distinguish “who speaks.” Finally, I will show how the differentiation of narrative voices using voice features allows us to recognize what I term mixed voicing, a technique Faulkner utilizes at the end of As I Lay Dying not only to provide a meta-commentary on voice but also to enrich our understanding of the novel’s plot, character, theme, etc.

A number of theorist have contributed to the understanding of narrative voice, and what follows is an overview of the ideas of seven representative scholars whose work is related to my own. The first of these, Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, provides linguistic and ideological foundations. As Bakhtin explains in “Discourse in the Novel” (1975), the novel is filled with “social” forces (259)—languages that represent economic, political, theological, philosophical, cultural, and other belief systems. Unlike such literary genres as poetry, which consist of unitary voices working to stabilize language, novels are made up of “heteroglossia” (Bakhtin 263, 329), multiple voices working against unity. Heteroglossic texts incorporate both the “centripetal” (271) forces of authors—their language “oriented toward…signification” (Chatman 167)—and the “centrifugal” forces of characters who engage in dialogue with authority (Bakhtin 272).

Using Bakhtin’s approach, an examination of speech (rec’) within a novel allows critics to see a multitude of specific languages and “verbal-ideological belief systems” that comprise a discourse (311). Examination reveals types of languages,
such as: “generic, professional, class-and-interest-group (the language of the nobleman, the farmer, the merchant, the peasant); tendentious; everyday (the languages of rumour, of society chatter, servants’ language).” Looking for Bakhtin’s heteroglossia reveals the language of the politician in one place, the language of the priest in another, the language of the vendor in another, and so on. You find a “diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized…social dialects, characteristic group behavior, professional jargons, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of the authorities, of various circles and of passing fashions, languages that serve the specific sociopolitical purposes of the day, even of the hour” (262-3). Bakhtin’s eventual end is historical and ideological: he finds that the novel came into being at such a time and in such a way that it uniquely serves as a place where dialogical voices come together in an artistic text (269).

While Bakhtin generally limits his discussion of voice to the novel, he does indicate that his insights may have implications for other genres. Narratologists such as Seymour Chatman continue the discussion of voice, addressing not only novels but also other types of narratives. Chatman, in *Story and Discourse* (1978), not only looks at Bakhtin’s “how [characters] speak” (Bakhtin 315) but also distinguishes their speaking from seeing. Chatman creates a clean demarcation between voice and vision. “Perception, conception, and interest points of view are quite independent of the manner in which they are expressed,” and this manner in which focalization is

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1 Bakhtin refers to the “novel—and those artistic-prose genres that gravitate toward it [my emphasis]” (273).
expressed is voice (154). For Chatman, voice “refers to the speech or other overt means through which events and existents are communicated to the audience” (153).

While Chatman in this section of *Story and Discourse* is interested in deriving principles for determining how present a narrator may be in any given text—divining “advancing degrees of narratorhood” (166)—he reminds us that in examining voice we must focus on “discourse features [his emphasis],” specific properties of the narrative discourse—such as “the self-reference of the narrator by the first person pronoun”—that help us identify specific voices or “discourse styles.”

Gerard Genette, in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (1980), offers some further insight into voice but perhaps not as much as we might anticipate. A survey of Genette’s probing into the “narrating instance” (214) reveals that the verbal analogies guiding his work relate more to grammar than to rhetorical effect. That is, in the chapter “Voice,” issues relate more to syntax—“mode of action of the verb in its relation with the subject” (Vendryès qtd. in Genette 31)—than to features that distinguish one voice from another. Nonetheless, Genette’s discussions of narrative levels (as we saw in the last chapter) and “person” are important for voice. Genette demonstrates that narratives can contain multiple levels on which stories may be told. Identifying the current levels of a narrative and which characters speak on that level can help in differentiating one voice from another. Secondly, Genette addresses questions of “person,” deriving his famous narrator distinctions: “heterodiegetic,” “homodiegetic,” “autodiegetic,” “introdiegetic,” and “extrodiegetic” (243-8). Such “narrative postures” can help in distinguishing who speaks from where.
James Phelan, in *Narrative as Rhetoric* (1996), develops a definition of voice that is broader than either Bakhtin’s or Chatman’s and more rhetorical than Genette’s. Whereas Bakhtin views voice in ideological terms—a component Phelan also emphasizes (44-5)—Chatman limits voice to “stylistic features,” and Genette focuses on syntactic properties related to verbs, Phelan wishes to emphasize how the concept of voice in narratives exceeds the limits of ideology and style. Voice for Phelan goes beyond the boundaries of style—is “transstylistic” (45). Voice is the “fusion of style, tone, and values [Phelan’s emphasis].” There are formal features that help differentiate voices: diction, syntax, and register. There are attitudinal features—towards the narrative’s subject matter or audience (tone). And there are ethical features—values that lie inherent in voice (similar to ideology in Bakhtin). In addition, Phelan points out that the voice of an author can be produced through devices in the “narrator’s language” or through such “nonlinguistic clues as the structure of the action” (46).

Phelan’s definition yields an understanding of voice that is broader than Bakhtin’s and Genette’s in that it incorporates additional textual features beyond the Russian’s concept of double-voicing and is not limited to the Frenchman’s analogy to verbs; furthermore, Phelan’s definition is different in kind from Chatman’s in that, while Chatman would contend that an agent not present in the story—in his case, a narrator—can not speak (a tenet of his “degrees of narratorhood”), Phelan’s definition hinges on the fact that an agent not present in the story—in his case, an author—can

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2 Cf. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist’s “Glossary” in *The Dialogic Imagination*, where “voice “(golos) is defined in terms of consciousness (434).

3 For more on Phelan’s position with respect to Bakhtin, cf. Phelan, Chapter 3 endnote 2 (202).
speak and, when he does, does so without presenting patent discourse features (such as self-referential pronouns). For example, Phelan holds that the voice of Ernest Hemingway intrudes in *A Farewell to Arms* by emerging from Frederic Henry’s ironic, homodiegetic narration. Phelan cites the end of chapter one: “At the start of the winter came the permanent rain and with the rain came the cholera. But it was checked and in the end only seven thousand died of it in the army” (4). The irony here, as Phelan points out, is the short-sighted nature of Henry’s perspective: 1) Henry’s accounting for deaths *limited to the army*; and 2) the diminutive “only” modifying *seven-thousand lost lives* (63-4). Phelan goes further: he holds that this irony is *spoken* by the author. “Hemingway asks his audience to recognize the severe limits of the values expressed in [Henry’s] voice” (64). Such double-voicing allows the character (centrifugally) and the author (centripetally) to speak at the same time. In this case the author speaks through a “gap” in the text (64).

Richard Aczel, in “Hearing Voices in Narrative Texts” (1998), discusses the ontology of narrators. In this comprehensive treatment of narrative voice, Aczel seeks to find what differentiates one voice from another. “Voice—of any kind—can only be perceived as ‘voice-different-from’” (478). He examines conventional approaches to distinguishing voice—including “explicit (grammatical) self-reference, direct reader address, comment, and interpretation” (468)—and he looks at “rhetorical” and “stylistic features” (as Phelan and Chatman do, respectively) such as tone, idiom, diction, “speech-style,” syntax, and lexis (468-9, 490). He suggests that conventional approaches to distinguishing voices are not sufficient, and he posits that only an
examination of rhetoric and style can differentiate among voices. “Narratorial self-mention posits a speaker function, and comment names a subject position, but it is only stylistic expressivity which endows this speaking subject with a recognizable voice” (471). Aczel’s position that linguistic markers are necessary for voice effects is quite contrary to Phelan’s belief that voice may be evident non-linguistically (46).

Aczel concludes that narrating can be described in terms of functions, of which selection, organization, and/or presentation are necessary and self-personification, comment, and/or direct reader/narratee address are optional, while voice can be described in terms of effects, those things demonstrating, as E. L Epstein describes them, “the regard what pays to how” (qtd. in Aczel 493.). That is, narrative voices must be presented through unique linguistic features. According to Aczel, voice addresses questions of “how—that is, on the basis of a dialogue with what analyzable textual procedures—readers are able to construct differently speaking entities from silent, written texts” (495).

Two Faulkner critics also provide us with background on voice. First, Ben Forkner, in “The Titular Voice in Faulkner’s ‘Pantaloon in Black’” (1983), looks at discerning the differences between the voices of the narrator and the deputy sheriff in the third story of Go Down, Moses. Forkner examines voice—which he alternately calls “style” (40 ff.)—highlighting voice features in the two sections of ‘Pantaloon.’ Differentiating voices (Aczel’s “voice-different-from”), Forkner finds that the heterodiegetic narrator is auctorial: “[he] exploits all the literary means he has at his disposal to relate Rider’s life. Its rhythms are the rhythms of written, not spoken,
language. Its allusions to myth, its comparisons and metaphors, all place it firmly within the traditions of literary English” (41). The narrator’s voice, that has access to “dictionaries, other literary works, classical myths, and a historical memory,” gives Rider’s a “larger-than-life dimension” (42), which is “complex” (39). Forkner contraposes this narrator to the deputy who is “public-comic,” depends on “racial stereotypes and conventional behavior,” exhibits language incapable of making “subtle distinctions” (42-3), and is “colloquial, breezy,” and “emphatic” (39). Forkner depends upon specific features of the text to distinguish one voice from another.

Stephen Ross, in *Fiction’s Inexhaustible Voice: Speech and Writing in Faulkner* (1989), combines Forkner’s interest in specific voice features in Faulkner with the technical precision of Aczel in his extensive treatment of voices across the Faulkner corpus. Ross distinguishes four types of voices presented in Faulkner: *phenomenal voice, mimetic voice, psychic voice*, and *oratorical voice*. Below I will summarize in detail these four voice types, from which I later will draw more on the features Ross uses to develop the types than the types themselves.

The first category, phenomenal voice, deals with discourse that refers to voice as object. Phenomenal voice “refers to voice as a depicted event or object within the represented world” (Ross 19). Phenomenal voice only exists when voice itself is “explicitly mentioned in the diegetic discourse as sound, act, gesture, or the power of speech irrespective of the speech’s semantic ‘content.’” An example of a phenomenal voice occurs in *Sanctuary*: “She [Temple] went on down the hall. Behind her she could hear Gowan’s and the man’s voices” (44; 48). The two men’s voices are
phenomenal because they are objects of discussion. We do not hear the voices; instead, we hear narration about the voices. Voice as object is the marker of the phenomenal.

The second type is mimetic voice, which refers to depicting actual speech in a narrative discourse. Mimetic voice “refers to represented speech in fiction, to the illusion that a person…is speaking,” and it “is constituted by those features of a text’s discourse that prompt readers to regard a particular portion of the text’s total discourse as the utterance of an imagined person” (67). “Features” that contribute to this effect include “grammatical forms (such as ‘shifters’) that call attention to the fictive source, time, and place of enunciation; mechanics of written dialogue like punctuation or speech tags; techniques, both conventional and unique to a given author, for transcribing speech into nonstandard writing (phonetic spelling, colloquial phrasing, and the like); and, more broadly, any feature of the discourse governed by a speaker’s identity, such as the word choice in dialogue or narration.” An obvious marker for mimetic voice is the use of quotation marks, and this implementation of direct discourse invokes a conventional “epistemological sanctity, a ‘facticity’” about what is said (71).

Five functions comprise represented or mimetic speech—description, communication, differentiation, identification, and transcription (72)—and Ross’s account of each reveals some of the minutiae that create the effect of voice. Description relates to ways that a discourse explicated how something is said, and indicators include punctuation marks “that imply intonation,” verbs used in speech
tags (e.g., “whispered,” “said,” and “cried”), adverbs modifying speech tags (e.g., “loudly,” “mildly,” and “harshly”), and indirect “accompanying gestures or portrayals of the speaker’s place, attitude, or posture” (74). Communication entails that the represented speech is “heard” or “hearable,” and it is indicated through actual or described responses by characters and by “gestures that imply an audience” (75). Differentiation separates multiple utterances (77), and common methods include “distinct paragraphing,” “speaker identification” (speech tags), and “responses contained in other utterances” (78). Identification involves indicating to whom an utterance belongs, and, besides obvious speech tags, “internal indications such as self-references, style, and the substance of an utterance also identify speakers” (83). Transcription involves representing traits of a character’s speech, often implementing “dialect usage and phonetic spelling” (98).

Psychic voice is the depiction of the inner thoughts of characters. It is the voice “of and in the psyche, the silent voice of thought heard only in the mind and overheard only through fiction’s omniscience” (132). Rather than equating psychic voice with mimetic voice, Ross suggests that the psychic voice “goes beyond speech [Ross’s emphasis]” and therefore is not comprised of the same functions as the mimetic (133). In fact, writers create discourse depicting thought that is intentionally “unlike speech,” and they do this through techniques such as truncated syntax, missing punctuation, and “run-together words” (134). Two of the ways of representing the psychic voice include depicting the “Freudian notions of the layering of the psyche,” where a “geology of the mind” is represented through discourse features such as double quotes, single
quotes, italics (140-1), and by reproducing “in textual features qualities of discourse not expressible in conventional form” using, for example, indications of loudness (143) and italics (145).

Ross’s fourth and final voice, the oratorical, examines the discursive practice (186) of Southern oratory, of which Faulkner’s fiction is replete. As a “cultural discourse,” Southern oratory consists of a set of features assumed by and affirmed by both the speaker and audience. The speaker practices what the culture has already ratified as a legitimate method of discourse thereby affirming both the assumptions underpinning the event and the speaker enacting it (191-7). Southern oratory shapes Faulkner’s texts by giving structure to his narratives and substance to his language. Ross identifies a number of rhetorical devices common to Southern oratory and pervading Faulkner’s narratives, including apposition, repetition, definition, description, anaphora, expeditio, antanogoge, and balanced compounds (199-202).

While phenomenal voice as object is of little interest in this study, mimetic, psychic, and oratorical voices as subjects are germane. Ross’s emphasis on how Faulkner brings about these voice effects—i.e., the techniques he uses to imitate speech, represent thought, and participate in a discursive practice—is helpful as it helps us to distinguish the unique properties of narrative voice.

Before moving to examining a variety of voice issues in specific texts, I would like to offer first a survey of five ways of defining voice. The definitional pentad includes: potential voice, intentional voice, physical voice, corporal voice, and narrative voice. I draw these definitions from a variety of sources.
Potential voice involves the ability or power to express one’s self. Potential voice is often used in the sense of *having a voice in something*, i.e., having power to do or say something in various matters. Potential voice may be derived from the combination of two definitions of *voice* (n.) in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*):

1. “the faculty or power of producing [sound]” (cf. “physical voice” below); and 2. b. “The right or privilege of speaking or voting in a legislative assembly, or of taking part in, or exercising control or influence over, some particular matter; part or share in the control, government, or deciding of something. Chiefly in phr. to have (or bear) one’s voice in.” This use of voice, metonymic for power, is used in sentences such as: “In the 20th century, American minorities gained political voice.” While potential voice is common in contemporary social and political contexts, few literary critics implement potential voice in describing voices in narrative texts. The potential aspect of this first voice leads us to the second definition, intentional voice, which is used by some critics.

Intentional voice relates to the *use of potential voice by one or more people*. Intentional voice is the individual or group manifestation of potential voice with an emphasis less on what is spoken (cp. “physical voice” below) than on the will, desire, or beliefs that motivate the speaking. That is, intentional voice gets at the *motive behind speaking*. In speech act theory, this relates to illocution (or illocutionary acts), the purpose behind the utterance. We may derive our definition of intentional voice from the *OED*: 3. a. “The expressed opinion, judgement, will, or wish of the people, a

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number of persons, a corporate body.” An example of an intentional usage would is:
“For consumers, Ralph Nader is the voice of advocacy.”

Intentional voice is implemented by two critics above, Bakhtin and Phelan. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, translators of The Dialogic Imagination, suggest that in Bakhtin “voice” (golos) is defined in terms of “consciousness” (434). “This is the speaking personality, the speaking consciousness. A voice always has a will or desire behind it.” Bakhtin’s use of voice (golos) can be contrasted with his use of speech (rec’), which Emerson and Holquist describe as “character speech…the manner of speaking specific” to a character (432). In short, ideology, a central tenet of Bakhtin’s reading, entails more than just sound; it implies beliefs. Similarly, Phelan appropriates intentional voice in his reading of Hemingway’s A Farewell to Arms above, as he includes “values” in his definition of voice. As Phelan traces Frederic Henry’s growth throughout the novel, the implementation of intentional voice allows the critic to state that “as Frederic takes on features of Passini’s voice and Catherine’s, he is gradually moving closer to the values of the [author]” (83).

The third type of voice is physical voice, which is simply the generic reference to the sound produced when humans speak. Physical voice might be just as effectively labeled “oral voice.” Again, we may examine the OED: 1. “Sound, or the whole body of sounds, made or produced by the vocal organs of man or animals in their natural action; esp. sound formed in or emitted from the human larynx in speaking, singing, or other utterance; vocal sound as the vehicle of human utterance or expression.” Physical voice is akin to locution (or locutionary acts) in speech act theory, although
in speech act theory speaking can be written as well as oral. An example usage of physical voice is: “Homo sapiens communicates through the use of voice.”5 The illusion of voice in a narrative text proposes to create at least the effect of physical voice. All seven critics above, to a greater or lesser extent, address physical voice (or oral voice) as it is represented in the silent medium of narrative discourse.

The fourth definition of voice is corporal voice, which has to do with the ability not only to hear voice but also to distinguish whose voice it is. That is, the third definition, physical voice, may be used generically to refer to sound produced by humans, but when we want to distinguish one voice from another (say, a child trying to pick out her mother’s voice from several in a room) we are talking about corporal voice. Two definitions from the OED aid us in understanding corporal voice: 6. “In limited sense: The sounds naturally made by a single person or animal in speech or other form of vocal utterance; these sounds regarded as characteristic of the person and as distinguishing him from another or others;” and 6. a. “In usages where this sound is taken to represent the person or being who utters it.” Of course, with respect to narratives we will restrict ourselves (in most cases) to human sounds, and our definition would be more useful if we realize that it is possible to refer not just to individual corporal sounds but also to group corporal sounds. Two examples illustrate the singular and plural senses of corporal voice: “Radio personality Paul Harvey has a distinctive voice;” and “The Republican voice on Capital Hill again called for tax

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5 For another example, cf. Faulkner’s Pulitzer Prize speech, where he concludes that, at the end of the world, “there will still be one more sound: that of his [man’s] puny inexhaustible voice, still talking” (Faulkner qtd. in Gresset 185), although here the voice also could involve potential and/or intentional voices.
cuts.” All of the critics above more or less address differentiable voices; some, however, focus on differentiation more than others (especially Aczel).

The final definition is narrative voice, which concerns the *illusion* itself of physical and corporal voice presented in narrative discourse. Utilizing the *OED* definition 6 (cf. *corporal voice* above), we may say that narrative voice describes the attempt of an author to represent in writing “sounds regarded as characteristic of the person and as distinguishing him from another or others.” That is, narrative voice is *the representation in a narrative discourse of corporal voice*. The term narrative voice generally is used in the limited sphere of academic discourse, especially by narratologists. For example, we are in the realm of narrative voice when we begin to answer Genette’s query “who speaks?” To this question we might respond: “In the first paragraph of William Faulkner’s ‘Barn Burning,’ while the vision shifts between the narrator and Sartoris Snopes, the voice remains that of the narrator.” Each of the critics above is interested in some aspect or another of narrative voice, and it will be my goal to develop in the remainder of this chapter a detailed definition of narrative voice by showing how narrative voices can be differentiated using certain *indicators of narrative voice*.

Indicators of narrative voice can be broken up into two categories: *conventional markers* of narrative voice and *features* of narrative voice. Let us turn to conventional markers first, of which I will identify seven: *narrative levels, quotation marks, paragraphing, tag lines, self reference, narratee address,* and *commentary*. First of all, shifting levels are used often to distinguish one voice from another.
Genette identifies narrative levels as one component of voice. In investigating “distance” (Narrative Discourse 227-37), Genette points out that the telling of a story within another telling of a story places the framed narrative on a different level than the framing one. Thus, being able to identify “intradiegetic” and “extradiegetic” narratives, for example, can allow you to locate voice within a discourse—and begin to address “who speaks.” As Aczel points out, “For Genette, the question of ‘who’ incorporates…‘from where’” (468). While nearly any framed narrative would suffice in demonstrating levels (from Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness to The Thousand and One Nights), let us turn to an example from Faulkner.

In Mosquitoes three characters near the end of the novel—Julius Kaufman, Dawson Fairchild, and Gordon—are talking. Up to this point in the chapter, paragraphing and speech tags (see below) have allowed us to distinguish who speaks in alternating paragraphs, each new paragraph representing a new speaker, but then Fairchild asks Kaufman to tell about their hostess, Patricia Maurier. Thus begins a story:

“The story is, that her people forced her to marry old Maurier. He had been overseer on a big place before the Civil War. He disappeared in ’63, and when the war was over he turned up again riding a horse with a Union Army cavalry saddle and a hundred thousand dollars in uncut Federal notes for a saddle blanket. Lord knows what the amount really was, or how he got it, but it was enough to establish him. Money. You can’t argue against money: you only protest.

“Everybody expected him to splurge about with his money…” (269-70)

This is a good example of the first way of distinguishing “who speaks”—paying attention to narrative levels. The heterodiegetic narrator of the entirety of Mosquitoes yields the floor to the intradiegetic narration of Kaufman: “The story is….” Until we
see an indication otherwise, we assume that we remain within Kaufman’s intradiegetic
telling. Now, admittedly, quotation marks (retained in the citations above) help
distinguish that we are internal to the frame narrative; conventional markers, to be
sure, often work together. Here, punctuation aside, we infer that “who speaks”
continues to be Kaufman because he is continuing his narrative on a level once
removed from the heterodiegetic narrator’s telling.

The second conventional marker of narrative voice is the use of quotation
marks. In his discussion of mimetic voice, Stephen Ross explains the historical usage
of quotation marks, which “until roughly the nineteenth century…were merely citation
marks, employed exclusively for quoting another author’s written words [Ross’s
emphasis]” (Fiction's Inexhaustible Voice 71). He traces the novel and its emphasis on
“objectively’ verifiable” discourse, pointing out that by convention we agree that
words within quotation marks in a narrative are accurate, were “truly recorded.” Hand
in hand with the third conventional marker, paragraphing (Ross 78), quotation marks
can help differentiate speakers. Consider how we are able to follow the different
voices in the following funeral scene in Sanctuary thanks to quotation marks and
paragraphing.

“Come on, folks,” he [the proprietor] shouted, “let’s finish the musical
program. It’s costing us money.”
“Hell with it,” they shouted.
“Costing who money”
“Who cares?”
“Costing who money?”
“Who begrudges it? I’ll pay it. By God, I’ll buy him two funerals.”
“Folks! Folks!” the proprietor shouted. “Don’t you realise there’s a bier in that room?”
“Costing who money?”
“He begrudges Red the money.”
“Who does?”
“Joe does, the cheap son of a bitch.”
“Is somebody here try to insult me——”
“Let’s move the funeral, then. This is not the only place in town.”
“Let’s move Joe.”
“Put the son of a bitch in a coffin. Let’s have two funerals.”
“Put the son of a bitch in a coffin. See how he likes it.” (259-60)

This passage is distinctly different from the one in Mosquitoes. Indeed, each paragraph, each line with its accompanying quotation marks, introduces a new or returns to a previous voice. In some locations, we are told who the speaker is (see speech tags below), but in the majority of this passage, quotation marks and paragraphing help identify the shifts among a variety of voices at the raucous and certainly indecorous funeral.

The fourth conventional marker of narrative voice is the use of tag lines, also called “speech tags” and “speaker identification” by Ross (Fiction’s Inexhaustible Voice 71-2). Tag lines are simply explicit references to who speaks, e.g., “I said,” “she states,” “Paul will cry [transitive use of to cry],” etc. They are the identification tags attached to direct discourse. In the passage from Sanctuary above, while quotation marks and paragraphing are two conventional markers used to indicate different voices, occasionally tag lines help out. At the beginning of the passage, we are told that the proprietor is speaking, “he [the proprietor] shouted.” In the subsequent paragraphs, the voices of a group attending the funeral are identified with “they
shouted,” the proprietor’s voice again is identified with “the proprietor shouted,” and Gene is identified with “Gene said.”

Fifthly, there is the convention of self reference (Ross 83). Aczel terms this “pronominal deixis” (490) and “explicit (grammatical) self-reference” (468), while in Chatman’s nomenclature this is “explicit self-mention” (228). Simply put, self reference is the use (usually) of pronouns within the narrative discourse to help locate the speaker. Consider the effect of the pronoun “I” in the openings of the first three sections of *The Sound and the Fury*.

**Benjy**

Through the fence, between the curling flower spaces, I could see them hitting. (3)

**Quentin**

When the shadow of the sash appeared on the curtains it was between seven and eight oclock and then I was in time again, hearing the watch. (86)

**Jason**

Once a bitch always a bitch, what I say. (206)

While sometimes implemented as speech tags (as in the last Jason example), self-reference frequently occurs unassociated with direct discourse and simply helps position the speaker in relation to the situation or events being narrated.

Genette—whom I intentionally left out of the pedigree of terms at the beginning of this section —discusses “person” (*Narrative Discourse* 243) in his chapter on voice.⁶ There he rightly suggests that all narrators are actually first person but reasonably admits that the “choice…is not between two grammatical forms, but

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⁶ Person (and number), according to the *Little Brown Handbook*, gives us the grammatical (verbal/nominal/pronominal) indication of whether the grammatical subject is speaking, spoken to, or spoken about (302).
between two narrative postures” (244). This takes the discussion of self-reference a step further, for it is not only the mention of “I” in some narratives that can help locate the speaking in the intradiegetic character, but it is the lack of “I” in just as many other narratives that can help locate the speaker outside the story, in the heterodiegetic realm. That is, self-reference, or the lack thereof, conventionally allows readers to distinguish voice according to its position among or separate from the characters from the story’s situations and events. The fourth section of *The Sound and the Fury* is exemplary of the lack of self-reference.

The day dawned bleak and chill, a moving wall of gray light out of the northeast which, instead of dissolving into moisture, seemed to disintegrate into minute and venomous particles, like dust that, when Dilsey opened the door of the cabin and emerged, needled laterally into her flesh, precipitating not so much a moisture as a substance partaking of the quality of thin, not quite congealed oil. She wore a stiff black straw hat perched upon her turban and… (306)

No self-reference (no “I”) immediately suggests, especially after the opening to sections one, two, and three, that this section features a “narrative posture” outside the story.

The sixth conventional marker for narrative voice is address to the narratee. Aczel discusses what he calls “direct reader address” (468), but he does not explain it further; it is not difficult, however, to understand what he means by reader address.

Perhaps the most famous example occurs at the end of *Jane Eyre*, where the heroine exclaims, “Reader, I married him” (Brontë 38). Explicit address to the reader differentiates voices in the texts because *only a finite number of agents are aware of the discourse’s readers*. That is, the number of voicing agents aware of the readership
is typically a small subset (often only one) of the discourse’s total voicing agents. Reader address functions to distinguish voice through elimination: most characters in a narrative will not be associated with the voice behind reader address because they do not have a relationship with the reader (i.e., are not aware of the reader). Put another way, the word “reader” (as in the flesh-and-blood reader) simply is not in the vocabulary of most speakers in any given narrative discourse. I am not aware of reader address occurring in Faulkner.

Aczel’s term of “direct reader address,” however, is not comprehensive enough, for there are other addresses that conventionally mark voices but are not made to readers. These, of course, are addresses to narratees who are not identical with the reader. Consider a well-known example from Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Cask of Amontillado,” where Montresor addresses “you, who so well know the nature of my soul” (274). Here the reader, who never really knows Montresor well—even more so at this point of the story—is not whom Montresor is addressing; the “you” is a person who knows him well. Narratee address occurs in Faulkner’s The Sound and the Fury. The “Jason” section opens with the infamous “Once a bitch always a bitch, what I say” quoted above (206), but look at the next sentence. “I says you’re lucky if her playing out of school is all that worries you.” If you are a reader like me, you are

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7 Notice that there are examples where the word “reader” is not used and a second person pronoun is used instead yet where this narratee is identical with the reader—still examples of reader address. For example, Herman Melville address the reader as “you” in Chapter XXXII, “Cetology,” of Moby Dick. “It is some systematized exhibition of the whale in his broad genera, that I would now fain put before you [my emphasis]” (116). Similarly, Henry James in The Ambassadors addresses the reader as part of those included in the antecedents to the first person plural possessive pronoun. “Those occasions on which Strether was, in association with the exile from Milrose, to see the sacred rage glimmer through would doubtless have their due periodicity; but our friend had meanwhile to find names for many other matters [my emphasis]” (41).
probably not as concerned with Quentin missing school as the narratee Jason invokes, a narratee who supposedly is worried about her actions. That is, as readers we are probably interested in Quentin’s behavior, but we likely do not consider ourselves fortunate because our anxieties are limited to her extracurricular activities.

This points out two things. First, addresses to narratees who are not the same as the flesh-and-blood readers are conventional markers of voice for the same reason that reader address is. There is only a finite set of agents in any narrative who acknowledges the narratee; typically, this set is a small subset (again, often only one) of those voicing agents. These narratee-conscious speakers include the vocabulary and syntax of second person narration in their vocal repertoire. For example, second person pronouns (and their subjective, objective and possessive variants) are part of their vocabulary, and they construct sentences accordingly. Secondly, we can see now that Aczel’s terminology, “direct reader address,” is insufficient, for the convention should be called narratee address, of which reader address is only a part.

The seventh and last conventional marker of narrative voice is commentary, which in Genette’s terminology is a metadiegetic reflection on or “explanation” of the diegesis (Narrative Discourse 232). That is, a narrator will voice his feelings about the story being told. Aczel calls this not only “commentary” simpliciter but also (á la Genette) “metanarrative commentary” (49 0). Chatman explains commentary in a similar way: “speech acts” that go “beyond narrating, describing, or identifying…are best labeled comments [Chatman’s emphasis]” (228). Perhaps the most famous of all commentaries in literature is the opening line of Pride and Prejudice: “It is a truth
universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife” (1). Here the narrator comments on generalities of life and the particulars of the plot to soon unfold. Chatman delineates two types of commentaries, implicit commentary (irony) and explicit commentary (“interpretation, judgment, generalization and ‘self-conscious’ narration,” the last being “comments on the discourse rather than the story” (228)). To Chatman’s self-conscious narration, Aczel adds discourse features such as “stylistic virtuosity, convolutedness, rhetoricity,” which “through their self-consciousness...draw attention to the intrusive presence of the narrator” (470). 8

Commentary appears in Faulkner. One good example occurs in *The Wild Palms* in the “Old Man” story. While I want to focus here on the commentary found in parentheses, I will cite this passage at length in order to contrast this commentary with the different-in-kind explanation set off by dashes.

Once (it was Mississippi, in May, in the flood year 1927) there were two convicts (32). One of them was about twenty-five, tall, lean, flat-stomached, with a sun-burned face and Indian-black hair and pale, china-colored outraged eyes—an outrage directed not at the men who had foiled his crime, not even at the lawyers and judges who had sent him here, but at the writers, the uncorporeal names attached to the stories, the paper novels—the Diamond Dicks and Jesse Jameses and such—whom he believed had led him into his present predicament through their own ignorance and gullibility regarding the medium in which they dealt and took money for, in accepting information on which they placed the stamp of verisimilitude and authenticity (this so much the more criminal since there was no sworn notarised statement attached and hence so much the quicker would the information be accepted by one who expected the same unspoken good faith, demanding, asking, expecting no

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8 Aczel in one place seems to list “interpretation” as a separate conventional marker (468). I think that this is imprecision, for under the discussion of Chatman he does not quibble with including interpretation under commentary, and nowhere else in the essay does he isolate interpretation as a separate convention.
certification, which he extended along with the dime or fifteen cents to pay for it) and retailed for money and which on actual application proved to be impractical and (to the convict) criminally false; there would be times when he would halt his mule and plow in midfurrow (there is no walled penitentiary in Mississippi; it is a cotton plantation which the convicts work under the rifles and shotguns of guards and trusties)... (32).

What we see in the parenthetical commentary is additional information, almost as if given by an editor *ex post facto*. The explanations set off by dashes also might be construed as commentary, but I think not; rather, these are examples of additional information that the narrator—while narrating—decides to add to the discourse. In contradistinction and in Chatman’s words, I think that the parenthetical information “goes beyond narrating, describing, or identifying” necessary to telling the story. What I am suggesting is that an additional voice comes into the narrative—call it the author, a metadiegetic narrator, or a metanarrative narrator—that comments on the discourse being produced by the primary, heterodiegetic narrator of “Old Man.”

Conventionally, then, speaking about the narrative and/or its situation and events identifies a voice. Commentary helps distinguish voices in narratives by isolating, again, those voices which can and do reflect on the situations and events of the story (or on the discourse itself) from the other voices present in the narrative. Chatman emphasizes the effectiveness of commentary in distinguishing voice: “Commentary, since it is gratuitous, conveys the overt narrator’s voice more distinctly than any feature short of self-mention” (228).

Besides conventional markers, the other indicators of narrative voice are voice features. These include *vocabulary, linguistic habits, syntax, poetic devices*, and *formatting*. The first feature of narrative voice, vocabulary, might also be called
lexicon, and Bakhtin refers to this as “lexical elements” (262). Vocabulary includes the speaker’s complete set of meaningful language units, and this includes jargon (“professional jargon” (Bakhtin 262)), words from various registers, foreign words, slang, fashion (Bakhtin 262), archaisms (or Bakhtin’s “languages of generations and age groups”), words from various “–lects” (e.g., dialects, sociolects (Bakhtin’s “social dialects”), econolects, academilects, religiolects, philosophicolects), neologisms, and run-together words (Ross, Fiction’s Inexhaustible Voice 134)—in short, what the narrator of Absalom, Absalom! calls “usage of words” (243).

Voices in Faulkner’s narratives often can be distinguished by studying different vocabularies, and there are a number of ways of quantifying and qualifying speakers’ lexes. First, you can examine the range of words a character or narrator uses; some characters have extended vocabularies, while others have quite limited vocabularies. Hand in hand with vocabulary extension go two other factors: word types and word length. The types of words are many, including compound, Greco-Roman rooted, foreign, jargon, vocation-related, prefixed, and suffixed. Word length, besides using number of letters, can be quantified by syllabification. Finally, some speakers tend to frequent certain words, repeating verbs, pronouns, or certain expletives, say.

Let me illustrate differences in vocabulary in As I Lay Dying by examining the words used by Jewel in his single chapter, Dewey Dell in her four chapters, and Cash in his five chapters. Figures 5, 6, and 7 below detail narrative data for the 59 chapters and 15 titular characters of As I Lay Dying.
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Figure 7. Chapters in Order of Appearance for Characters in *As I Lay Dying*
Jewel’s voice in the fourth chapter of *As I Lay Dying* is marked by limited vocabulary, profanity, misused words, agricultural jargon, and words indicating potentiality. First, a survey of the slightly more than a page of text that is the entirety of Jewel’s single chapter reveals that he utilizes a limited vocabulary, most notably evident in his repetition of words such as “because,” “goddamn,” “she,” “it,” “sawing,” “pa,” and “them” as well as the pairing of “lick” with “less” (“One lick less. One lick less”) and “I” and “said” (“I said…”) (14-5). Secondly, Jewel’s speech includes a high frequency of expletives, including “bastard,” “hell” (15), and three uses of “goddamn” (14-5). Thirdly, as an action-oriented person, Jewel uses many present participles, including “sawing,” “nailing,” “knocking,” “happening,” “rolling,” “picking,” and “throwing” (14-5). Fourthly, hand in hand with present participles, Jewel’s language is peppered with words expressing potentiality—the ability to do or the requirement to do, and these are indicated by verbs and modals such as “got,” “would,” “try,” “can,” and “could.” Fifthly, while all of the rural voices in *As I Lay Dying* feature agricultural jargon, Jewel’s voice is especially replete with such words as “flowers,” “barn,” “dung,” “buzzards,” “roots,” “dug,” and “adze.” Finally, the sixth lexical marker of Jewel’s voice is misappropriation. Jewel misuses words and word forms, including “taken” for “took” in “he [Cash] taken the bread pan and brought it back” (14), “laying” for “lying” in “her hand laying on the quilt” (15), and “laid” for lay and “with” for “when” in “if it had just been me when pa laid sick with

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9 For Jewel as active, cf. Peter Beidler pp. 238-9. I would like to thank Andrea Bethune, one of my students, for pointing out how in chapter one, while Darl walks around the cotton house, Jewel goes through it, an action which emphasize his direct, action-oriented approach to life.
that load of wood fell on him” (15). Jewel’s limited vocabulary, with its emphasis on profanity and motion, emphasizes his active, passionate, yet educationally limited character.

Dewey Dell’s four chapters feature much more narration than Jewel’s one and thus allow even greater differentiation of vocabulary features. Her voice is marked by limited vocabulary, but within this limited vocabulary occur words related to thinking, death, and fertility, obfuscating pronouns and euphemisms (related to her pregnancy), agricultural jargon, and non-standard contraction forms. First, Dewey Dell’s vocabulary is limited, generally evident in her repeated verbs such as to know and to say and particularly evident in her occasional reiterations, “Lafe. Lafe. ‘Lafe.’ Lafe. Lafe.” (62) and “to soon too soon too soon…too soon too soon too soon” (120).

Secondly, Dewey Dell’s lexis includes words indicating introspection and her obsession with pregnancy; these include forms of “to know” (all four chapters), “thinks” (26), “feel” (59), “cry” (60), “remember” (121), and “believe” (122). Hand in hand with such “thoughtful” vocabulary goes Dewey Dell’s frequent use of words related to death, including “skull,” “kill” (27, 121), “die” (27, 28, 59), “died,” “grieve” (59), and “alive” paired with “dead” (61). Of course these word connect to her focus on pregnancy not only as she is the daughter of dying Addie but also as she seeks an abortion.

Vocabulary related to sexuality, fifthly, occurs frequently in Dewey Dell’s chapters, and these words include “sign” [of pregnancy] (58), “nakedness” (61) and “naked” (64, 121, 122), “hips” (63), “secret” (27, 61, 63), “seed” (64), “womb” (121),
and “plow” (122). Continuing with Dewey Dell’s focus on her pregnancy, she often uses words of obfuscation to hide her pregnancy, either from herself or others. The words she uses include pronouns and euphemisms, including “it” in “it wont be me” and “could not help it” (27), “it” paired with “everything” in “[Doc Peabody] could do everything for me, but I know it is there because God gave women a sign when something has happened bad” (58), and the euphemism “clumps” (as she looks down upon her swollen body and the play of light upon it) in “The sky lies flat down the slope, upon the secret clumps [my italics]” (63). Like Jewel, Dewey Dell also uses agricultural terms including “picked,” “row,” “sack” (27), “turkey-buzzard” (28), “seed” (64), “cotton,” and “plow” (122). Lastly, Dewey Dell shows a misuse of language, using non-standard forms of contractions, including “dassent” (26) and “wont” (27). In the end, we can say that the type of words that comprise Dewey Dell’s vocabulary are directly related to her anxious thoughts related to her dying mother and to her own impending motherhood (or to her attempts to abort it).

Cash’s five chapters also offer numerous vocabulary distinctions, including the creation of new words, logic terms, numbers, the jargon of carpentry, and terms from economics. First, the novel’s most creative character uses neologisms, especially run-together words (Ross, Fiction’s Inexhaustible Voice 134), and these include “up-and-down,” “gripping-surface” (82), “that-a-way” (233), “a-tall,” “hand-grip” (259), “duck-shaped,” “half-et” (260), and “curiousest” (237). Secondly, the mathematical Cash uses frequent logical connectives, including “so” and “because” (82). Hand in
hand with this, Cash speaks in numbers, most notably in his “I made it on the bevel” chapter, “Cash [2]”.

I made it on the bevel.
1. There is more surface for the nails to grip.
2. There is twice the gripping-surface to each seam.
3. The water will have to seep into it on a slant. Water moves easiest up and down or straight across… (82-3)

Fourthly, Cash’s avocation dominates his vocabulary as he uses words of carpentry such as “bevel” (82), “nails” (82, 234), “joints” (82), “balance” (96, 233), “build,” “lumber,” “square” (234), and “shovels” (258). Related to this, Cash uses terms of economics, such as “job” (83) and “trade” (233). An examination of Cash’s vocabulary reveals his mathematical nature and his desire to create not only objects from wood but also new words.

To truly differentiate based on vocabulary, of course, it would be necessary to examine all of the voices in As I Lay Dying. This procedure neither would take little time nor would accomplish my goal here, which is to show how to go about differentiating voice in Faulkner’s narratives. From the partial survey of As I Lay Dying, it becomes clear that a passage including frequent expletives is likely to be Jewel’s voice, a passage including frequent references (clear or obfuscated) to sexuality and/or fertility is likely to be Dewey Dell’s voice, and passages including numerous terms from mathematics or carpentry is likely to be Cash’s voice.

Vocabulary is not the only voice feature that helps distinguish one voice from another in Faulkner. Linguistic habits also help differentiate among speakers. I am defining linguistic habits as behavioral speech idiosyncratic to an individual or a
group of speakers. Bakhtin refers to the plural effect as “group behavior” (262).

Linguistic habits are a speaker’s repeated uses of and arrangement of vocabulary: idioms, stock epithets, stock phrases, circumlocutions, euphemisms, and participation in discursive practices. These are what the narrator in Absalom, Absalom! refers to as “turns of phrase” (243). Perhaps the best example from Faulkner of a linguistic habit is Shreve’s epithetical use of “the” with people’s names. Throughout Absalom, Absalom! he refers to characters in this idiosyncratic way, e.g., “the Jim Bond” (173) and “the Aunt Rosa” (175). In The Sound and the Fury, Jason exhibits a different linguistic habit. His involves the idiosyncratic use of the verb to say (including non-standard forms), e.g., in the opening of his third section: “Once a bitch always a bitch, what I say. I says you’re lucky if her playing out of school is all that worries you…And mother says [my emphases]” (206). And linguistic habits abound in As I Lay Dying, where Jewel says “goddamn” so frequently it begins to lose its meaning and where Cora quotes scripture in a way that seems devoid of theological implication. In the midst of speaking she inserts religious idioms, such as “when I lay me down” (23), and religiously idiomatic misquotations, such as the refashioning of Luke 15:7, “There is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner than over a hundred that never sinned” (167). The latter, in its ironic humor, reinforces how Cora’s religious language is habitual rather than situational, for had Cora realized what she was saying, she might have tried to make her allusion more technically accurate (“…one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine who never sinned”).
Syntax is the third voice feature that helps in differentiating one voice from another. Syntax is a speaker’s systematic or logical arrangement of vocabulary and includes grammatical constructions such as sentence types (simple, compound, complex, compound-complex), un-grammatical constructions (such as fragmentation), apposition, punctuation—or missing punctuation (Ross, *Fiction’s Inexhaustible Voice* 134)—mood, grammatical voice, ellipsis, “truncated syntax” (Ross 134) such as anacoluthon, and parenthesis. Finally, syntax often is related to constructions typical of various registers (cf. Bakhtin 262 ff.)

Let us examine different syntaxes, again in *As I Lay Dying*. The voices in *As I Lay Dying* can be differentiated by syntax. Jewel’s voice, for example, features excessive compounding, fragmentation, anacoluthon, unconventional punctuation—including comma omission with subordinate clauses and direct discourse—and conjugation errors.

It’s because he stays out there, right under the window, hammering and sawing on that goddamn box. Where she’s got to see him. Where every breath she draws is full of his knocking and sawing where she can see him saying See. See what a good one I am making for you. I told him to go somewhere else. I said Good God do you want to see her in it. It’s like when he was a little boy and she says if she had some fertilizer he would try to raise some flowers and he taken the bread pan and brought it back from the barn full of dung. (14)

Dewey Dell’s voice features compounding and unorthodox grammar, including fragmentation, incorrect objective pronoun forms, verb conjugation errors, and run-ons.

The first time me and Lafe picked on down the row. Pa dassent sweat because he will catch his death from the sickness so everybody that comes to help us. And Jewel don’t care about anything he is not kin to us in caring, not care-kin. And Cash like sawing the long hot sad yellow days up into planks
and nailing them to something. And pa thinks because neighbors will always treat on another that way because he has always been too busy letting neighbors do for him to find out. (26)

Cash’s voice is a little more difficult to characterize than Jewel’s and Dewey Dell’s because he narrates only briefly in his first three chapters (chapter 18 is the “bevel” list; chapter 22 contains 66 words, most of which is dialogue, and ends with anacoluthon; and chapter 38 contains 24 words and also ends with anacoluthon). His voice is also difficult to characterize because of the changes that occur to his character over the course of the novel. In the “bevel” chapter, for example, his syntax is repetitive—including the iteration of the expletives “there” at the beginning of the first two items, multiple uses of “so” for logical purposes, and multiple sentences beginning with prepositional phrases—fragmented, syllogistic, and comprised of simple and complex sentences. Towards the novel’s end, however, Cash’s narratives grow more lengthy—11 pages for two chapters—and his discourse is not cut short. His discourse is regularized, and his syntax becomes more varied and, in some ways, more sophisticated.

And so pa come back and we went to Peabody’s. While we was there pa said he was going to the barbershop and get a shave. And so that night he said he had some business to tend to, kind of looking away from us while he said it, with his hair combed wet and slicked and smelling sweet with perfume, but I said leave him be; I wouldn’t mind hearing a little more of that music myself. (259)

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10 The only compound sentence that occurs in any of the first three “Cash” chapter occurs within direct discourse in chapter 22.

11 Music is metaphoric for mother.
I hesitated in calling Cash’s syntax sophisticated because right away we see in this passage the use of non-standard verb forms, missing punctuation with in the first compound sentence (although present in the second), and non-standard idiom (and get a shave instead of to get a shave). But here we have all sentence types—simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex—and even the sophisticated use of the semicolon. Cash’s syntactical development runs parallel to his maturation over the course of the narrative and increased position of authority within the Bundren family.\(^{12}\)

The fourth feature that helps in differentiating narrative voices is poetic devices. These include the speaker’s poetic use of vocabulary, speech habits, and syntax. Examples of such poetic devices are onomatopoeia, rhythm, rhyme, musicality, metaphors, images, and anaphora. What we find in Faulkner is that some voices exhibit more and different kinds of poetic devices than others. Let us look at some examples from Light in August, The Sound and the Fury, “Barn Burning,” and As I Lay Dying.

In Light in August, the heterodiegetic narrator’s voice features alliteration, here the repetition of \(n\) and \(s\). “Knowing not grieving knows a thousand savage and lonely streets” (242). Elsewhere, this same narrator utilizes a device popular in oratory, anaphora, the repetition of initial words. “Now the final copper light of afternoon fades; now the street beyond the low maples and the low signboard is prepared and empty” (514). Poetic devices also occur among the voices of characters. One such

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\(^{12}\) Cf. Fran Polek on Cash’s maturation, p.196.
intradiegetic use of this same poetic device, anaphora, occurs in *The Sound and the Fury*. Reverend Shegog repeats throughout his sermon, “Breedren en sistuhn” and variations thereof (340-3).

In “Barn Burning,” rhythm is important to the effect of the heterodiegetic narrator’s voice. As he describes the scrum between Sarty and an unnamed youth who taunted the young Snopes boy with “barn burner” (5), the narrator attempts to represent the passion of the fight through the acceleration of his prose. The effect is fury halted by the guttural *g*’s and the stop (the *t* of “get”) of Abner’s voice at the end of the passage.

Again he could not see, whirling; there was a face in a red haze, moonlike, bigger than the full moon, the owner of it half again his size, he leaping in the red haze toward the face, feeling no blow, feeling no shock when his head struck the earth, scrabbling up and leaping again, feeling no blow this time either and tasting no blood, scrabbling up to see the other boy in full flight and himself already leaping into pursuit as his father’s hand jerked him back, the harsh, cold voice speaking above him: “Go get in the wagon.” (5-6)

In *As I Lay Dying*, poetic devices occur frequently. For example, chapter 17 features sibilance, the alliterative repetition of the *s* sound—“The lantern sits on a stump. Rusted, grease-fouled, its cracked chimney smeared on one side with a soaring smudge of soot” (75)—as well as onomatopoeia. “Cash labors about the trestles, moving back and forth, lifting and placing the planks with long *clattering reverberations* in the dead air as though he were *lifting and dropping* them at the bottom of an invisible well [my emphasis]” (75-6). The words *clattering reverberations* sound like the resonant bangings they describe, and *lifting* simulates
the swishing sound of picking something up while the voiced r followed by stopping p’s in dropping imitates the sound of the tumbling planks.

Formatting is the fifth voice feature that helps in differentiating one voice from another. When we speak in real life, we frequently use slight differences in our volume, pitch, timbre, gestures, body language, and such to convey any number of things. For example, to show excitement we might speak more loudly. To convey thoughts that derive from deep within, we might slow down and speak in a serious tone. To convey different settings (e.g., remembering something from the distant past) we might move our hands to the other side of our body, change our pitch and timbre to reflect reminiscing on the good ol’ days, or tilt our head back a little. Speakers in a narrative text have little recourse to such seemingly infinite techniques, but authors can implement formatting as a way of conveying such nuances. Faulkner certainly does, and the formatting devices he manipulates include typeface styles (e.g., Roman, italics), justification, and single and double quotation marks. These sometimes indicate the origin of the focalization (e.g., spoken versus internal thoughts—Ross’s mimetic voice and psychic voice), mark changes in setting, and help qualify the nature of what is being said. Let us look at some examples from The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying.

In The Sound and the Fury for the voices of both Benjy and Quentin, formatting helps characterize voice. Let us look at an example from Quentin’s chapter. For a sixteen page stretch of the second chapter, Quentin does away with the
convention of indenting each paragraph (as well as conventions of direct discourse and almost all punctuation).

is Benjy still crying
I dont know yes I dont know
poor Benjy
I sat down on the bank the grass was damp a little then I found my shoes wet
get out of that water are you crazy
but she didn’t move her face was a white blur framed out of the blur of the sand by her hair
get out now
she sat up then she rose her skirt flopped against her draining she climbed the bank her clothes flopping sat down
why don’t you wring it out do you want to catch cold
yes
the water sucked and gurgled across the sand spit and on in the dark among…. (172)

The effect of this is the representation of what is going on inside Quentin’s head. That is, as Quentin narrates this portion of his chapter, his voice takes on unusual formatting in an attempt to indicate that what he is saying is not a mere report of what happened but rather is his thinking about what happened.13

In the Benjy section we see a different formatting device, one frequently used by Faulkner. This is alternating between typeface styles. In the Benjy section, this formatting indicates shifts in setting, most notably of time.

His hand come for another piece of cake. Dilsey hit his hand. “Reach it again, and I chop it right off with this here butcher knife.” Dilsey said. “I bet he aint had one piece of it.”

“Yes he is.” Luster said. “He already had twice as much as me. Ask him if he aint.”

13 Adding to the complexity of this passage, of course, is the fact that a good portion of the sixteen-page passage involves direct discourse, but what I am suggesting is that: 1) the direct discourse is still coming to us through Quentin; and 2) the formatting—no conventional indentation—helps indicate the nature of Quentin’s voice which underlies (or reports) this direct discourse—as well as the thoughts which intervene and are the voice of Quentin only.
Reach hit one more time.” Dilsey said. “Just reach it.”

That’s right, Dilsey said. I reckon it’ll be my time to cry next. Reckon Maury going to let me cry on him a while, too.

His name’s Benjy now, Caddy said. How come it is, Dilsey said. He aint wore out the name he was born with yet, is he.

Benjamin came out of the bible, Caddy said. It’s a better name for him than Maury was. (66-7)

Of course, this formatting change is mild compared to what Faulkner originally wished to do, for the author had desired to print The Sound and the Fury using eight different colors to indicate such shifts.\(^\text{14}\)

Two examples from As I Lay Dying also illustrate the function of formatting. The first formatting feature involves the justification used for Cash’s “bevel” list. In real life, when we list things orally, we often have delivery techniques that help in pronouncing our ordered items, including emphasizing the initial numbers, pausing for longer than usual at the end of each list item, and speaking in a different pitch, timber, and tone in order to evoke the propositional nature of our catalogue. In the print medium of narrative discourse, formatting helps effect the same. Consider Cash’s (chapter 18) list, of which the following only reproduces the first three of thirteen items.

I made it on the bevel.

1. There is more surface for the nails to grip.
2. There is twice the gripping-surface to each seam.
3. The water will have to seep into it on a slant. Water moves easiest up and down or straight across… (82-3)

\(^{14}\) In a 1929 letter to editor Ben Wasson, Faulkner wrote that he “[wished] publishing was advanced enough to use colored ink” in The Sound and the Fury (The Sound and the Fury: An Authoritative Text 221).
The three-space indentation, which obtains for the entirety of the list, emphasizes how all thirteen items are subordinate to, or explicative of, that which is above them, “I made it on the bevel.” Secondly, the four space indentation for all additional lines beyond one for each item indicates the continuation of that list item and continues to create the illusion of the appropriate authoritative volume, pitch, and timbre.

Another example of formatting occurs in chapter one, “Darl [1].” At the end of the chapter a second voice is layered on top of that which narrates most of the chapter. The new voice is of the inanimate adze that creates its own unique sound:

I go on to the house, followed by the Chuck. Chuck. Chuck. of the adze. (5)

Here, formatting—the large indentation followed by three onomatopoetic words, each separated by space—sets off the sounds in a way that recreates them, suggesting the deliberate working of the tool.

Before moving on to discussing necessary and sufficient conditions for identifying narrative voice, let us address a specialized aspect of the five features of voice. No discussion of voice would be complete without addressing how tone—often referred to as *tone of voice*—fits into the model. Not a feature itself, tone is an effect of each of the five features. Tone is a describable quality of individual voices, and to describe tone requires speaking of the ways that the five features produce it. Often aggregated from more than one of the features—vocabulary, linguistic habits, syntax, poetic devices, and formatting—tone conveys the focalizer’s attitude toward her
subject matter or audience.\(^{15}\) Let us look at a couple of examples of how combinations of the five features convey tone, one example demonstrating Quentin’s depressed tone in *The Sound and the Fury* and another demonstrating Jewel’s passionate irritation in *As I Lay Dying*.

While the plot of *The Sound and the Fury* makes it clear that Quentin is clinically depressed, a study of his tone reinforces this understanding. Quentin’s vocabulary, in this case, points toward depression by contributing to a depressive tone.

Quentin’s vocabulary includes a high frequency of what I term *grandisyllabic* words—words of three or more syllables, in contrast to those with less than three syllables, which I term *minisyllabic*—as well as a high frequency of Greco-Roman-rooted words, both surely signs of introspection.\(^{16}\) Also, numerous words suggesting

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\(^{15}\) When the speaker and the focalizer are the same, we can reasonably say that tone belongs to both. In cases where the speaker and focalizer are distinct, tone does not represent the attitude of the speaker. This is in contradistinction to both Bakhtin (cp. “Discourse in the Novel” and the translators’ note on meaning of voice (*golos*), “the speaking consciousness...[which] always has a will or desire behind it”(434)) and Phelan (cp. chapters two and three, especially the discussion of “values” on pp. 45 and 83, in *Narrative as Rhetoric*) who believe otherwise. For me, as the words reflect attitudes, values, beliefs, etc., they do so only as they are true reflectors of those attitudes, values, beliefs, etc. *inherent in vision*. That is, the locus of such mental states is in focalization. By the *axiom of teller fidelity*—explained more fully in chapter three—voice, by convention, portrays accurately the feelings, perceptions, beliefs, thoughts, etc. of vision. Further, any given focalization could be represented using a number of different words (vocabulary), phrases (linguistic habits), sentence structures (syntax), aesthetic choices (poetic devices), and layouts (formatting). The devices that a given speaker uses in faithfully representing what was/is/will be focalized are the voice features that can be used to differentiate one voice from another—but the attitudes conveyed by whatever words are those of the focalizer.

Marked cases are those where speakers are *different from* focalizers. For example, in “Darl [1]” in *As I Lay Dying* we read about Cash building a coffin for his and Darl’s mother (4-5). The tone of this passage is quite reserved for such an emotional situation. As I will show in the remainder of this chapter, the voice here is not Darl’s but the heterodiegetic narrator’s. The reserved tone in “Darl [1]” reflects not the heterodiegetic narrator’s emotional state but rather Darl’s emotional state as it is faithfully reflected by the narrator’s voice features (via the axiom of teller fidelity).

\(^{16}\) I surveyed the first five pages of each of the four sections of *The Sound and the Fury*. In the Benjy section, over the first five pages there are only 9 (8 unique) grandisyllabic words. These grandisyllabic words consist only of first names and compound words, suggestive of Benjy’s limited mental capacity. The five page sample of Quentin’s section yields 39 (36 unique) grandisyllabic words. Over half of them are Greco-Roman-rooted words, and nearly half of them are constructed with Greco-Roman
depressive thought—words solipsistic, nihilistic, and lacking vitality—occur throughout his discourse, e.g., “mausoleum” (86), “speculation” (87), “excrement” (87), “shadow” (92), “fighting” (88), “dreadful” (90), and “bones” (90). Secondly, the syntax of Quentin’s voice adds to the effect, as Quentin’s complicated sentence structures suggests searching and brooding. Thirdly, various poetic metaphors of depression—clocks for the passing of time, children for innocence—indicate loss (passing time, the eroding of innocence). Finally, we noted formatting above, where Quentin’s deep thoughts are conveyed by lack of indention. Quentin’s tone is depressive, we know, because the features of vocabulary, syntax, poetic devices, and formatting all point towards thoughtful dejection. Tone, here, conveys the focalizer’s depression with fidelity by means of appropriate voice features.17

We can in a similar way discuss the quite different tone Jewel has in As I Lay Dying. In this narrative, Jewel’s voice is replete with irritation. Jewel (the focalizer) has a passionate and angry view of life, and his voice faithfully represents this attitude.18 Of course, a study of the plot, setting, character, and theme can bring us to the same conclusions about how Jewel views life, but we can reinforce this reading with a study of voice. First, Jewel’s voice reflects his attitude through vocabulary. His lexis, as noted above, is full of mono- and bi-syllabic words, and this choppiness prefixes. Jason’s voice, over the course of the first five pages of his section, produces 16 (10 unique) grandisyllabic words. Four are Greco-Roman-rooted words. And the narrator in the first five pages of the fourth section speaks using 58 (50 unique) grandisyllabic words. Over half of them are Greco-Roman-rooted, and over half are constructed with Greco-Roman prefixes.

17 Of course, this is a standard case, where the focalizer is the same as the speaker.

18 Again, vision and voice are aligned.
suggests his shortness with others. Add to this the preponderance of profanity—by contrast missing in the vocabularies of all the other characters—and Jewel’s words convey impassioned irritation. Moreover, the repetition of Jewel’s word of choice—goddamn—suggests that this emphatic expletive is perhaps beyond mere vocabulary; it appears to be habit. The impassioned use of goddamn reaches a point where it begins to lose meaning in and of itself; instead, the use of goddamn is expressive of Jewel-the-focalizer’s habitual anger. Syntax further conveys the irritation that Jewel is feeling, as Jewel’s simple and often fragmented structures are not those of speculation but those of upset emotions. Finally, the absence of poetic devices and unusual formatting is important, for this absence represents through voice how Jewel’s mind works in focalizing. As he thinks angry thoughts, his voice faithfully reflects his vision, since anger is most often a straight-forward emotion, one not conveyed well through the voice features of metaphor, rhythm, onomatopoeia, and unusual uses of italics, indentation, and spacing. Through features of Jewel’s voice—vocabulary, linguistic habits, syntax, and poetic devices—we can come to understand Jewel’s angry attitude toward the world around him.

Now that we have laid out the conventional markers of narrative voice and the features of narrative voice as well as looking at the multi-feature effect of tone, I would like to turn to questions of necessity and sufficiency in distinguishing narrative voices in Faulkner’s fiction. What I would like to show is that, while readers often depend upon conventional markers to differentiate between voices, what Faulkner demonstrates, particularly in certain of his narratives, is that conventional markers are
neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for distinguishing narrative voice; rather, only voice features are both necessary and sufficient for differentiation.

To be sure, many Faulkner narratives allow readers to depend upon conventional markers. “Smoke,” in Knight’s Gambit, for example, employs narrative levels, tag lines, quotation marks, paragraphing, and grammatical person and number as markers of voice. Consider the following conversation between Virginius Holland and Gavin Stevens:

‘He won’t need to wait for that,’ Virginius said. ‘Half of that land is his.’
‘You just treat it right, as he knows you will,’ Stevens said. ‘Anse don’t need any land.’
‘Yes,’ Virginius said. He looked away. ‘But I wish….’
‘You just treat it right. He knows you’ll do that.’
‘Yes,’ Virginius said. He looked at Stevens again. ‘Well, I reckon I…we both owe you….’ (34).

The short story, first of all, is told here and throughout on the primary layer by an heterodiegetic narrator. It is his voice that introduces the characters who speak in the above dialogue. That is, it is the heterodiegetic narrator, on the primary level, who indicates for us who is speaking on the secondary layers, e.g., “Virginius said” and “Stevens said.” Thus, on second layers, we hear the voices of characters within the story world, here Virginius and Stevens. The narrator’s speech on layer one, in fact, is limited in the above section—though not elsewhere—to the second conventional marker, tag lines. Thirdly, the direct discourse follows conventional paragraphing and usage of quotation marks (although adopting a less standard use of single quotation marks). These two markers (along with meaning) allow us to understand that ‘You just treat it right. He knows you’ll do that’ is spoken by Stevens. Finally, self reference in
this section on the second layer in the speech of Virginius—through the repeated use of “I” and “you” as well as the single use of “we”—helps in establishing the relative positions of the speakers.

Elsewhere we see other conventional markers, such as the use of commentary and interpretation. *Absalom, Absalom!* is filled with voices that fluctuate, intermingle, and blur. From this context quite frequently rises, however, the clarifying voice of the novel’s heterodiegetic narrator. Consider this example, which occurs in the paragraph following one of Shreve’s lengthy orations.

They stared—at one another, their voices (it was Shreve speaking, though save for the slight difference which the intervening degrees of latitude had inculcated in them (differences not in tone or pitch but of turns of phrase and usage of words), it might have been either of them and was in a sense both: both thinking as one, the voice which happened to be speaking the thought only the thinking become audible, vocal; the two of them creating between them, out of the rag tag and bob-ends of old tales and talking, people perhaps had never existed at all anywhere..... (243)

Out of a confusion of voices, the explanatory voice of the novel’s narrator breaks forth. Because of such explanation, we identify the voice of the narrator.

But Faulkner is not content to allow readers to depend upon conventional markers of narrative voice for differentiation. In places his narratives undercut conventional methods of distinction. Let us turn to two examples where the sufficiency of conventional markers of narrative voice is challenged, first in “Old Man” and then in *As I Lay Dying*.

“Old Man” is one of the two stories comprising the ten sections of novel *The Wild Palms*. Within the book, the five chapters of “The Wild Palms” and the five chapters of “Old Man” alternate from beginning to end. “Old Man” begins with what
appears by all conventional indications to be an heterodiegetic narrator’s voice (with, as pointed out above, occasional parenthetical intrusions from implied author).

Once (it was Mississippi, in May, in the flood year 1927) there were two convicts” (32). One of them was about twenty-five, tall, lean, flat-stomached, with a sun-burned face and Indian-black hair and pale, china-colored outraged eyes—an outrage directed not at the men who had foiled his crime, not even at the lawyers and judges who had sent him here, but at the writers, the uncorporeal names attached to the stories, the paper novels—the Diamond Dicks and Jesse Jameses and such—whom he believed had led him into his present predicament through their own ignorance and gullibility regarding the medium in which they dealt and took money for, in accepting information on which they placed the stamp of verisimilitude and authenticity (this so much the more criminal since there was no sworn notarised statement attached and hence so much the quicker would the information be accepted by one who expected the same unspoken good faith, demanding, asking, expecting no certification, which he extended along with the dime or fifteen cents to pay for it) and retailed for money and which on actual application proved to be impractical and (to the convict) criminally false; (32)

On this primary layer, the presence of two conventional markers and the absence of others suggest that this is a heterodiegetic narrator. Fundamentally, this opening to “Old Man” is explanatory, the function of this first section being to interpret or provide commentary on the setting, characters, etc. This is a strong indicator that someone with distance from the story—an heterodiegetic narrator in this case—is speaking to us. Secondly, the absence of I and the presence of them, his, him, he, their, and they offers us some insight into the relationship between the one telling and the ones acting. That is, the constant reference to the story’s agents through third-person pronouns, without any inclusion of a first person pronoun in the telling, suggests that the story is being told from a heterodiegetic position.

As the narrative progressive, other voices are added, such as the blaring announcement at the end of the first chapter for the prisoners to get out of bed and
prepare to assist with flood relief (37): ‘‘Turn out of there!’’ the deputy shouted. He was fully dressed—rubber boots, slicker and shotgun. ‘‘The levee went out at Mound’s Landing an hour ago. Get up and out of it!’’ Among others, in the second chapter we hear the convicts speaking. In one place, they talk with a man who helps the tall convict understand that the strange sound he hears is the Mississippi River.

“What’s that?” the convict said. A negro man squatting before the nearest fire answered him:

“Dat’s him. Dat’s de Ole Man.”

The old man?” the convict said. (65)

All of the additional voices, beyond that of the narrator (and the occasional parenthetical comments of the implied author), occur on the second layer as characters within the heterodiegetic narrator’s story.

Throughout chapter one, chapter two, and part of chapter three the above interpretation of the narrative’s structure seems to obtain, and we learn that: 1) two of the convicts—the tall convict and the plump convict—were released from their chains and sent out onto the flood waters to rescue a woman and an old man; 2) the boat got swept into a bad current and the plump convict grabbed a tree limb, pulled himself up into the tree, and was later rescued, all while the tall convict fell overboard as the boat overturned and was swept away in the raging river; 3) the warden declared the tall convict dead and the governor signed the discharge that stated, “Drowned while trying to save lives in the great flood of nineteen twenty-seven” (70); 4) the tall convict, in fact, recovered himself and the boat, rescued the pregnant woman, and attempted to find the stranded old man and return both individuals and the boat to the authorities.

What is interesting in this story is that in the midst of the apparently heterodiegetic
narration of these events and those that follow, we read the following line: “This is how he told about it seven weeks later, sitting in new bedticking garments, shaved and with his hair cut again, on his bunk in the barracks” (121). Look at the line in context:

…he saw the flotsam ahead of him divide violently and begin to climb upon itself, mounting, and he was sucked through the resulting gap too fast to recognise it as the trestling of a railroad bridge; for a horrible moment the skiff seemed to hang in static indecision before the looming flank of a steamboat as though undecided whether to climb over it or dive under it, then a hard icy wind filled with the smell and taste and sense of wet and boundless desolation blew upon him; the skiff made one long bounding lunge as the convict’s native state, in a final paroxysm, regurgitated him onto the wild bosom of the Father of Waters.

This is how he told about it seven weeks later, sitting in new bedticking garments, shaved and with his hair cut again, on his bunk in the barracks:

During the next three or four hours after the thunder and lightning had spent itself the skiff ran in pitch streaming darkness upon a roiling expanse which, even if he could have seen, apparently had no boundaries…[my emphasis]. (121)

What is confusing here is that up and to this point in the narrative, the reader is confident that a heterodiegetic narrator is telling the events (as well as focalizing the events). The pronoun “this,” combined with the use of the third person pronoun “he” and the absence of and first person pronouns—which we earlier established as identifying a heterodiegetic narrator—seemingly should establish that the narration that precedes, and/or the narration that follows (the direction is ambiguous), has been and will continue to be that of the tall convict as he relates his bizarre story. Yet we have every indication otherwise that what preceded this line was heterodiegetic narration, and what follows this line continues quite the same as the former.

The narrative discourse changes in another way from this point forward. Up to this point in the narrative, additional voices come from the second narrative level
when the narrator recounts what intradiegetic characters said throughout the ordeal. Intervening the narrative, after the crucial “this is how he told it” line, are voices of other convicts as they speak to the tall convict as he is telling the story. That is, the crucial line above is our first indication that what we are reading is not just an heterodiegetic account of a bunch of convicts—especially about a particular tall convict—and the flood of 1927. Instead, what we are reading is in some way a retelling of what the tall convict said once he returned to prison, a retelling by an heterodiegetic narrator who is recounting what the tall convict said. For example, the plump convict interrupts the tall convict’s telling in the following scene:

“Didn’t you pass nobody?” the plump convict said. “No steamboat, nothing?”
“Don’t know,” the tall one said...
“Darkness?” the plump convict said. “I thought you said it was already daylight.”
“Yah,” the tall one said. He was rolling a cigarette, pouring the tobacco carefully from a new sack, into the creased paper. (123)

This reading seems fine, except that we can not forget that in the crucial line I italicized above it was clearly indicated that “this” was “how” he “told it [my emphasis].” That is, we are not given just indirect discourse of what he said; the narrator, rather, tells us that the antecedent to the pronoun “this” is the way it was said, something beyond indirect discourse. And the only thing more representational than indirect discourse is, of course, direct discourse. Further, we should notice the confusing use of the colon that conventionally implies an example will follow. Elsewhere, this punctuation is used conventionally, often preceding actually-said words.
He heard the startled should, “There’s one of them!”, the command, the clash of the equipment, the alarmed cry: “There he goes! There he goes!” (130)

[He was] speaking to no one now any more than the scream of the dying rabbit is addressed to any mortal ear but rather an indictment of all breath and its folly and suffering, its infinite capacity for folly and pain, which seems to be it only immortality: “All in the world I want is just to surrender.” (131)

…the convict and the man with the megaphone in the pilot house talked to each other in alternate puny shouts and roars above the chuffing of the reversed engines:

“What in the hell are you trying to do? Commit suicide?”
“But what is the way to Vicksburg?” (171-2)

The ambiguous, if not outright contradictory, use of the colon in the “this is how he told it” line is repeated in many more places:

A) Telling it, trying to tell it, he could feel again the old unforgettable affronting like an ague fit as he watched the abortive tobacco rain steadily and faintly from between his shaking hands and then the paper itself part with a thin dry snapping report:” (125).

B) And now he tried to tell that too: (130).

C) That’s what he said, told: (180).

And when the colons are used in such places that indicate that what will follow is the actual reporting of what the tall convict said to his fellow prisoners, the pattern follows that of the critical sentence above. For example, in A above, what immediately follows is again heterodiegetic narration of direct discourse.

Telling it, trying to tell it, he could feel again the old unforgettable affronting like an ague fit as he watched the abortive tobacco rain steadily and faintly from between his shaking hands and then the paper itself part with a thin dry snapping report:

“Burn my clothes?” the convict cried. “Burn them?”

“How in the hell do you expect to escape in them billboards?” the man with the shotgun said. He (the convict) tried tell it, tried to explain as he had tried to explain not to the three people on the boat alone but to the entire
circumambience—desolate water and forlorn trees and sky—not for justification… (125)

In B, that heterodiegetic narration continues is suggested by the third-person reflexive pronoun: “And now he tried to tell that too: himself splashing, stumbling, try to run, sobbing and gasping…” (130). And in C, the same third person pronoun, here plural, suggests the same. “That’s what he said, told: So they went on” (180).

The question here is how to understand who is narrating where, and this question can be answered by examining voice features. In short, we have distinctly different voices for the heterodiegetic narrator and the tall convict, and their differences are most noted by two features, vocabulary and syntax.

The narrator’s voice, first of all, uses vocabulary that is wide-ranging and often grandisyllabic. His sophisticated vocabulary includes words such as “verisimilitude,” “conscientious” (33), “paradoxical” (36), “subaquean” (39), “assimilation” (65), “innocent-appearing” (112), “abrogated” (113), “undeviation” (188), “pantomimic” (189), “pneumatic” (238), and so forth. Secondly, the narrator’s syntax is complicated, with sentence types ranging from the simple and compound to the complex and compound-complex, and these include balanced compounds, apposition, varied and complex punctuation, and the use of modals. Consider the movement from simplicity to complexity in the following example of the heterodiegetic narrator’s voice.

He was not trying to out run it. He just knew from experience that when it overtook him, he would have to travel in the same direction it was moving in anyway, whether he wanted to or not, and when it did overtake him, he would begin to move too fast to stop, no matter what places he might come to where he could leave the woman, land her in time. (128).
The narrator is educated and uses standard grammatical conventions. His vocabulary is that of an intellectual, and his syntax is that of a writer. In short, this is the auctorial narrator.

The tall convict has a voice quite the opposite. His vocabulary is limited and simple and his syntax is uncomplicated. Consider a few examples.\(^{19}\)

[to the plump convict] Get in….That water aint going to hurt you. Aint nobody going to make you take a bath. (67)

They never named any Vicksburg across from where I was. (129)

The water was still high. It was running pretty hard still. I never made much speed for the first week or two. After that it got better. (233)

In each case the vocabulary is regional (e.g., “aint nobody”) and minisyllabic, and the syntax involves short sentences, almost exclusively of the simple variety.\(^{20}\)

The end result of this survey is that we find that despite the fact that the narrator over and over tells us that the tall convict said this or said that, these references, unless followed by direct discourse, are never to what the convict said in his own voice. The tall convict is only heard on the occasions when the heterodiegetic narrator reports what he said. In short, conventional markers fail us. We come to expect speech tags, narrative layers, and pronoun person and number to help us identify who speaks, but in “Old Man” they do not. In fact, here Faulkner is following...

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\(^{19}\) All three examples are from direct discourse. I will conclude that the tall convict’s voice is always found in direct discourse within the heterodiegetic narrator’s account.

\(^{20}\) While one might argue that I have defined voice only after deciding who says what, there are locations within the narrative where the heterodiegetic voice I have identified admits that the tall convict left this part out—e.g., “He didn’t tell how he got the skiff singlehanded up the revetment and across the crown and down the opposite sixty foot drop, he just said he went on…” (180). These omissions are clearly in the voice of the heterodiegetic narrator.
his modernist pulsions. While the story itself may be a commentary on gullibility and acceptance, the narrative discourse—that is, the way Faulkner constructs the discourse—is a commentary on our own gullibility and acceptance about narrative voice. In the final pages of the narrative for the tall convict, “inarticulateness, the innate and inherited reluctance for speech, dissolved and he found himself, listened to himself, telling…” (233). Likewise, it is up to Faulkner’s readers to learn to listen to the telling.

In *As I Lay Dying* Faulkner shocks readers with his unconventional novel structure: 59 chapters, each “by” its titular character. I put “by” in scare-quotes because the real challenge of the 59 chapter structure is figuring out the relationship between the 15 characters whose names entitle the chapters and the narrative discourses that subtend them. As a survey of first-time encounters with the novel will confirm, most readers’ initial strategy involves assuming that the character whose name appears at the beginning of the chapter is the one “telling” the chapter, or, to put it more narratologically, the primary vision and primary voice of each chapter is that of the titular character.\(^{21}\) Accordingly, we get Darl’s perspective for nineteen chapters, Vardaman’s for ten, Tull’s for six, Cash’s for five, Dewey Dell’s for four, Cora’s and Anse’s for three each, Peabody’s for two, and Jewel’s, Samson’s, Addie’s, Whitfield’s, Armstid’s, Moseley’s, and MacGowan’s for one each.\(^ {22}\)

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\(^{21}\) My survey is based on teaching *As I Lay Dying* to second-level writing classes at Ashland University, Ashland, Ohio.

\(^{22}\) Again, Figures 5, 6, and 7 for narration data in *As I Lay Dying*. 

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Typically, this reading works well. For example, after reading, say, the first seven chapters of *As I Lay Dying*, we may feel fairly confident that this approach works. Dewey Dell has her own distinctive voice—where conventional markers and voice features coalesce: “Because I said will I or wont I when the sack was half full because I said if the sack is full when we get to the woods it wont be me” (27). Tag lines, simple vocabulary, non-standard grammar are all what we would expect from this adolescent’s narration. Jewel, too, provides narration we would expect. “…I said if you’d just let her alone. Sawing and knocking, and keeping the air always moving so fast on her face that when you’re tired you cant breathe it, and that goddamn adze going One lick less. One lick less” (15). Tag lines, profanity, angry tone…we expect this from the passionate Jewel. Cora’s narration is no different. “I have tried to live right in the sight of God and man, for the honor and comfort of my Christian husband and the love and respect of my Christian children. So that when I lay me down in consciousness of my duty and reward I will be surrounded by loving faces…” (23). Pronoun and number self-reference, Christian vocabulary, and certain linguistic habits (repeating liturgical and Biblical lines) all are to be expected of Cora’s narration.

The “Darl” chapters prove to be an exception, even as the first “Darl” chapters of the book seem consistent with our proposed reading. Let us look at the setup. Conventional markers abound, confirming our proposed reading strategy. Consider self reference in the following example from the novel’s first chapter. “Jewel and I come up from the field, following the path in single file. Although I am fifteen feet ahead of him…” (3). Self reference and relative position to “him” makes this appear to
be normal first person narration. Indeed, pronominal person and number reinforces Darl’s telling as we read *I, my, me, us, he, his,* and *him,* all in the first chapter (3-5). There we also get commentary, such as “a good carpenter, Cash is” (3). Tag lines are added in the next “Darl” chapter, “‘Where’s Jewel?’ pa says…. ‘Down to the barn,’ I say. ‘Harnessing the team’” (10-11). This adds narrative layers, and the second chapter continues with more pronouns that establish the position of the speaker—*I, myself, he, his, she, they, them* (10-3)—as well as commentary—“Water should never be drunk from metal” (11). These conventions continue through “Dar [5].”

Moreover, there is a consistency in the voice features in these “Darl” chapters. First, the vocabulary is wide-ranging (even creative) and often grandisyllabic:

*dilapidation, undulations* (4), *orifice* (11), *earth-free, hiatus* (12), *decorous* (16), *high-blooded* (17), *upslanting* (19), *portentous* (40), *irremediable* (47), *pantomime* (48), *runnel, awry-feathered* (49), *precursor* (50), *penurious* (51), *disarranging,* and *ubiquity* (52). The syntax features varied word order—e.g., inverted word order in “a good carpenter, Cash is” (4)—as well as simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentence types, with a tendency toward the last three.

> The cottonhouse is of rough logs, from between which the chinking has long fallen. Square, with a broken roof set at a single pitch, it leans in empty and shimmering dilapidation in the sunlight, a single broad window in two opposite walls giving onto the approaches of the path. (4)

Dewey Dell rises, heaving to her feet. She looks down at the face. It is like a casting of fading bronze upon the pillow, the hands alone still with any semblance of life: a curled, gnarled inertness; a spent yet alert quality from which weariness, exhaustion, travail has not yet departed, as though they doubted even yet the actuality of rest, guarding with horned and penurious alertness the cessation which they know cannot last. (51)
Also, the narration’s syntax is distinguishable, especially the frequent uses of semicolons.

Then they are rigid, motionless, terrific, the horse back-thrust on stiffened, quivering legs, with lowered head; Jewel with dug heels, shutting off the horse’s wind with one hand, with the other patting the horse’s neck in short strokes myriad and caressing, cursing the horse with obscene ferocity. (12)

In the “Darl” chapters poetic devices are also frequent, especially alliteration, such as the repetition of “t” in “tunneled between the two” (39) and frequent uses of sibilance, the repetition of “s,” e.g., “still staring straight,” “bearing on the flanks in smooth undulations the marks of the adze blade” (4) and “the sound of the saw is steady” (50). Also, onomatopoeia occurs, such as “patting” and “ferocity” in the sentence quoted above (12). Finally, the tone is consistent across “Darl [1]” through “Darl [5],” confident and authoritative.

A careful reader might have noticed in “Darl [1]” through “Darl [5]” a few fissures in our initial reading strategy. Most noticeable is Darl’s direct discourse:

“Down to the barn,” I say. “Harnessing the team.” (11)

“If you’re hitched up,” I say. I say, “Wait.” (16)

“It means three dollars,” I say. (17)

“Jewel,” I say, “do you know that Addie Bundren is going to die?” (39)

The disjunction between the simpler voice of direct discourse and the more complex one dominating “Darl [1]” through “Darl [5]” will soon show up more clearly, but the beginning of chapter 17, “Darl [6],” contains more of the complex voice dominating the first five “Darl” chapters. In this section, we get Darl’s

\[23\] The other exception is one paragraph on p. 39, and I will look at this shortly.
perceptions from afar; he sees what is going on at home while he and Jewel are (broken down) on the road to town. Pronominal person and number continue with reference to others, but self-reference does not occur—as we hear about the goings on at home only. Tag lines with reference to those at home continue, also demonstrating narrative levels.

The voice features are the same as those in “Darl [1]” through “Darl [5].” The vocabulary is still wide-ranging, creative, and grandisyllabic: *grease-fouled, reverberations* (75), *reverberant, impalpable, musing* (76), *vindication* (77), *turgid* (79), and *precautionary* (80.2). The syntax remains complicated, e.g., the absolute phrase “its cracked chimney smeared on one side with a soaring smudge of soot” (75) and the use of semi-colons continues (76, 77, 79, 80.1). Poetic devices such as the sibilance in the line above, “soaring smudge of soot” and onomatopoeia—“reverberant repetition” (76) also persist. 24 Lastly, the tone continues confident and authoritative.

Yet the voice in the next paragraph of chapter 17 (“Darl [6]”) changes dramatically (80.15-81.3). With respect to conventional markers, there is not a significant change. In fact, there is a return to the full gamut of pronominal markers—*I, me, ours, you, yourself, he, theirs*—suggesting relational properties between the one narrating and those about which he is narrating. Tag lines are missing, but this paragraph includes no dialogue.

In a strange room you must empty yourself for sleep. And before you are emptied for sleep, what are you. And when you are emptied for sleep, you

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24 Note how cleverly “reverberant repetition” works. First, the two words are alliterative, repeating the “r” sound; then, the onomatopoeia occurs as the repetition of the alliterative, voiced vowel sounds like continuous shaking.
are not. And when you are filled with sleep, you never were. I don’t know what 
I am. I don’t know if I am or not. Jewel knows he is, because he does not know 
that he does not know whether he is or not. He cannot empty himself for sleep 
because….

As you can see, however, voice features are significantly different. The vocabulary 
becomes limited and completely minisyllabic; the most complicated words are still 
minisyllabic, “unlamped” and “is-not” (80). Syntactically, there are still complicated 
sentences, but sentence formation is based largely on structures of logic—namely, 
conditionals and post hoc ergo propter hoc. Also, non-standard punctuation is 
frequent, with “what are you.” missing a question mark and with the subjective use of 
verbs as nouns, e.g., “the wagon is was” (80.29) and “I am is” (81.3). Poetic devices 
almost disappear,25 and the tone changes to speculative and subjective rather than 
confident and authoritative.

At the end of chapter 17 (‘Darl [6]’) there is little text to the last paragraph: 
“How often have I lain beneath rain on a strange roof, thinking of home” (81.4-81.5). 
This appears to be a return to the voice dominating “Darl [1]” through “Darl [5]” and 
the first section of “Darl [6].” First person, singular pronominal self-reference and 
complicated syntax (an exclamatory sentence) along with a complicated verb form 
(“have lain”) and alliteration (“n” sound in “lain beneath rain on a strange roof”) look 
much like the first voice.

Thus, the analysis of voices in the “Darl” chapters leads us to identify two 
distinct voices. The question is whose voices are these? I would like to suggest, first of

25 While sibilance does occur in “In a strange room you must empty yourself for sleep” (80.15), this 
appears to be accidental, for the rest of the paragraph is notably unpoetic as philosophical discourse 
typically is.
all, that the sophistication of the voice that dominates the “Darl” chapters is beyond the aptitudes we should expect of the character Darl. That is, the wide-ranging vocabulary, the complicated sentences, and the poetic prose are not what we could reasonably anticipate from a rural resident of the early 20th century South, from the typical country characters inhabiting Yoknapatawpha County, for this voice has the traits of a highly-educated, literary person. To this end, the voice we hear during most of the “Darl” chapters I term the *auctorial narrator*. The second voice, of course, is that of Darl, the hyper-sensitive, prescient, and ruminant farmer. It is full of depth but lacks linguistic sophistication—sometimes non-standard and simple, but sometimes exhibiting the protactic complexity of someone capable of simultaneous clairvoyance, prophecy, and cogitation.

The next logical question to ask is why does Faulkner inhabit the “Darl” chapters with a voice so nearly his own? The answer to this question, I believe, first lies in Phelan’s concepts of *character functions* and *telling functions*. Character functions involve the ways characters function as actors in narratives—mimetically, thematically, and synthetically—and telling functions involve the ways that narrators communicate with narratees (“Redundant Telling” 210). With respect to voice in *As

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26 Many would identify this view with Faulkner’s view, but what I am referring to is something more general—an author’s voice, not limited to William Faulkner. At most, it is the voice of Faulkner’s implied author.

27 Cf. Phelan, *Narrative as Rhetoric*, p. 29 on these three “dimensions.”

28 Cf. also *Narrative as Rhetoric*, pp. 112-18 on *telling functions*. The term *narrator functions* in *Narrative as Rhetoric* has been supplanted by *telling function* in Phelan’s later essay “Redundant Telling.” *Narrator functions* becomes a subset, along with *disclosure functions*, of the new category *telling functions*, a category parallel to *character functions.*
*I Lay Dying*, most of the time both functions operate simultaneously. That is, when Cora’s voice relates her portions of the story, Cora is present as a character—mimetically (looking like a real person), thematically (representing, among other things, hypocrisy), and synthetically (existing only, of course, as a construction of a narrative). At the same time, though, Cora is also present as a teller—conveying to her narratees—in this case we are included—what is happening in the story.

Sometimes, however, as Phelan points out, character and telling functions “operate independently” (“Redundant Telling” 210). Sometimes one function outstrips another, and the reasons can be many. In the case of *As I Lay Dying* and the “Darl” chapters, we can see, at least, that the character functions of Darl are supervened by telling functions. To see why Faulkner might have made this rhetorical choice we only need to turn to the *is/was* speech in chapter 17 (80.15-81.3). Here is Darl’s true voice, metaphysical if not demented. While it is possible with great effort to understand most of Darl’s ruminations here as he expresses them, imagine what it would be like if all of Darl’s chapters—approximately one-third of the novel’s chapters—were completely in Darl’s voice. Much of the book would be incomprehensible, and the plot would hardly advance.29

To this end, Faulkner implements the auctorial narrator to convey Darl’s visions in an understandable way. That is, Darl’s thoughts are complex, yet he lacks

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29 When Darl in the last paragraph of chapter 17 reflects on the *is/was* speech—which reflection is conveyed in the auctorial narrator’s voice—he posits that the preceding metaphysical and ontological cogitations are iterative: “How often have I lain beneath rain on a strange roof, thinking of home” (81.4-81.5). We can imagine, therefore, that the *is/was* paragraph is typical of his thoughts.
the sophisticated vocabulary, syntax, etc. to convey these deep thoughts. So the
auctorial narrator puts those thoughts and feelings into words. The surrogate voice
allows us to understand what complexly and simultaneously occurs in Darl’s mind.
The auctorial narrator’s voice betrays a mimetic representation of Darl’s voice, but it:
1) helps convey what is often beyond words for Darl; and 2) aids in moving the plot
along in a way that Darl’s voice is little able to. Telling functions supersede the
mimetic dimension of Darl’s character functions in order for other aspects of the novel
to be foregrounded.

We now need to consider the ramifications this reading has for indicators of
narrative voice. While conventional markers worked in concert with voice features in
identifying voice among the other characters in the first seven chapters of *As I Lay
Dying*, in the “Darl” chapters we see that only voice features allow us to differentiate
narrative voices. And, as we saw in the “Old Man” example above, while in some
narratives we can get by with using conventional markers, in others this will not meet
with success. Put more succinctly, examining *As I Lay Dying* closely helps us to see
that conventional markers are neither necessary nor sufficient for determining
narrative voice, while voice features are both necessary and sufficient for identifying
narrative voice.

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30 Of course, an assumption here is that thought exceeds language.

31 Cf. Carolyn Norman Slaughter in “Fluid Cradle of Events,” who discusses “Faulkner’s penchant for
providing the words for his characters’ inchoate sensibilities” (73).

32 Vardaman and Dewey Dell also exceed their own linguistic abilities, for the auctorial narrator speaks
in places in their chapters. Ross notes how Faulkner “attributes his own ornate rhetoric to the thoughts
of ignorant children” (“Shapes of Time” 33).
Now that we have a grasp of the dipolar voices of chapter 17, we must turn to later “Darl” chapters to continue applying our new reading—especially the most difficult of them, chapter 57, “Darl [19].” Throughout chapters 18-56, we become dependent upon the necessity of voice features in distinguishing when the auctorial narrator is speaking and when Darl is speaking, with Darl actually saying little. Chapter 57, however, makes differentiating voices even more difficult. Consider the following passage, focusing first on the extreme failure of conventional markers.

Darl has gone to Jackson. They put him on the train, laughing, down the long car laughing, the heads turning like the heads of owls when he passed. “What are you laughing at?” I said.

“Yes yes yes yes yes.” (253)

Darl is referred to as if from an heterodiegetic voice, but in the same paragraph he is the antecedent of “I.” Tag lines are confusing, and quotation marks and paragraphing suggest two voices, while we might be inclined to say that all the direct discourse is said by Darl. Pronominal person and number do not help either, as all the conventional markers obfuscate voice. Commentary is present—“They pulled two seats together so Darl could sit by the window to laugh” (254)—but this does little to identify whose comment this is.

All of this confusion with conventional markers should appear normal, if not expected, over the course of As I Lay Dying, the demand for attending to voice features only allowing us to identify individual voices. The problem in chapter 57 is that voice features seem to confound as well. The vocabulary is occasionally wide-ranging and grandisyllabic—*simultaneous*, *imminent*, *interstices* (254)—but is also limited and minisyllabic. The syntax is complicated and utilizes semi-colons in some
places, features of the auctorial narrator, yet, with features of Darl’s voice, has unusual punctuation (“Yes yes yes yes yes”) and highlights logical structures:

One of them sat beside him, the other sat on the seat facing him, riding backward. One of them had to ride backward because the state’s money has a face to each backside and a backside to each face, and they are riding on the state’s money which is incest. (254).

The auctorial narrator’s propensity for poetic devices is mildly present in the alliterative “d,” “n/m,” “t” and “s” repetitions—“There is about it that unmistakable air of definite and imminent departure that trains have, perhaps due to the fact that Dewey Dell and Vardaman on the seat and Cash on a pallet in the wagon bed are eating bananas from a bag” (254)—but this, and the entirety of the chapter, is not the well-wrought poetic prose that earmarked earlier “Darl” chapters. And the tone here is authoritative in some places—“The wagon stands on the square, hitched, the mules motionless….It looks no different from a hundred other wagons there” (254)—while it is also speculative, e.g. (80), “What are you laughing at?”

What we see in chapter 57 is that Faulkner goes one step further with voice, but he does not betray the sufficiency of voice features; rather, voice features allow us to see that Faulkner intentionally mixes two voices here, the voice of the auctorial narrator and the voice of Darl. Bakhtin discusses “double-voiced” discourses, in which “two speakers at the same time” express “simultaneously two different intentions,” but this is not Bakhtin’s double-voicing. In double-voicing the intentions differ but voice features of the speaker are still those only of the speaker (not of the second agent). That is, the voice of the author, according to Bakhtin, comes through the voice of the characters silently.
Heteroglossia…is another’s speech in another’s language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way. Such speech constitutes a special type of double-voiced discourse. It serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author [who literally is not speaking—both my emphasis]. (324) 33

What Bakhtin is getting at is intention, which, according to my definition of voice, must be located in vision; intentions are part of focalization.

Double-voicing is not what happens in chapter 57. Instead, this is what I term mixed voicing. That is, we hear not one distinct voice with another silently behind it but two distinct voices whose features intermingle. The final “Darl” chapter presents a mixed voice, drawing voice features from the auctorial narrator and from Darl. We partially hear the auctorial narrator’s voice, which can convey what Darl does not have the ability to say and which sacrifices mimetic representation in favor of other narrative ends, and Darl’s voice, which is at times incomprehensible but provides some mimesis (at the cost of functional telling). But notice this: we can identify mixed voicing only after we can identify the individual voices that comprise it.

The question is, of course, why Faulkner goes to such effort for this rhetorical effect. The answer seems that chapter 57 is the final gambit in his attempt to fully question issues related to voice. Mixed voicing in chapter 57 emphasizes the necessity and sufficiency of voice features in differentiating voices on the one hand, and on the other hand it reintegrates conventional markers into voicing in a new way. First, the identification of voices (as mixed) in chapter 57 depends upon the close voice inspection in all subsequent “Darl” chapters. Only after learning to discern narrative

33 Cf. also Phelan, Narrative as Rhetoric, p. 46.
voices (based on features) can we see combined or mixed voices in chapter 57. Secondly, once we recognize the mixture of voices in chapter 57, the conventional markers—in the same way they do in most narratives—coincide with the voice being presented, only here it is done in a fantastic way. The voice features act as an aid in identifying the mixed voicing as they themselves point toward it. That is, the conventional markers are mixed up just as the voices themselves are.

Finally, we turn to the effects of an author’s choices concerning narrative voice. One of these, of course, is characterization, a major emphasis of As I Lay Dying’s 59 chapters with their 15 titular characters. Two voices help us to understand Darl as a character. The first voice is that of the initial, dominating auctorial narrator, whose voice characterizes Darl by revealing aspects of his focalization as well as his actions and the situation and events that surround him. Secondly, Darl’s own voice works in two ways: A) it conveys accurately what he is perceiving; and B) the vocabulary, linguistic habits, syntax, poetic devices, and formatting of his own voice—in and of themselves—allow us to characterize him. His philosophical vocabulary and his unusual use of verbs as nouns, for example, demonstrate what a

34 The other reason for mixed voicing in chapter 57, for which this is not the venue for a treatment, is questioning the identity of vision and voice. The initial reading strategy suggested earlier identifies the focalizer with the speaker. The progression of “Darl” chapters takes apart this identity but, in this case, does not re-integrate it here. In all chapters in As I Lay Dying the focalizer is exclusively the titular character.

35 There are the two other places where Darl’s voice comes through. The first is in chapter 10, Darl (4): “It takes two people to make you, and one people to die. That’s how the world is going to end” (39). In this case it appears to be Darl’s voice alone. Mixed voicing, however, occurs in chapter 46, “Darl” (15), where voice features of the auctorial narrator mix with those of Darl:

How do our lives ravel out into the no-wind, no-sound, the wary gestures wearily recapitulant: echoes of old compulsions with no-hand on no-strings: in sunset we fall into furious attitudes, dead gestures of dolls. Cash broke his leg and now the sawdust is running out. He is bleeding to death is Cash. (207)
deep person he is, yet his fairly simple sentences and his frequent use of minisyllabic
words indicate his lack of the formal education/training necessary to express such
deep focalizations. In tandem, then, the two voices work toward characterizing Darl.
When Darl’s linguistic skills do not allow him to fully express the depths of his
thought, the skillful auctorial narrator is able to.

While narrative voice has its effects on the story level, it sometimes reaches
beyond it. Thus, while in the “Darl” chapters of *As I Lay Dying* the narrative voices—
both the auctorial narrator’s and Darl’s—help us understand the confusingly complex
nature of Darl as a character on the diegetic level, these same voices can also convey
something to us on the metadiegetic level. Just as complex thoughts circulate in Darl’s
head, we are confused by the voices that *we experience* while reading the “Darl”
chapters. That is, we feel as confused as Darl is. His hearing so many sounds—while
also, seeing, feeling, tasting, touching, and foreseeing (due, of course, to his
hypersensitivity)—must lead to incredible bombardment of the brain. In short, Darl
has too much sensory input. Similarly, we feel confusion as multiple sensations reach
our minds. We become confused in trying to figure out whose voice is reaching us at
any particular point in the “Darl” chapters. Metadiegetically, then, we identify with
Darl. Darl’s confusion points us to the larger issue at stake for Faulkner: the difficulty
in differentiating voices when reading. Put more narratologically, the “Darl” chapters
force us to examine “who speaks” when in the narrative, force us to recognize the
necessary and sufficient conditions in distinguish between one voice and another.
This metadiegetic effect is recursive. Having become confused with narrative voices through the Darl chapters, having examined how to distinguish one narrative voice from another, and having learned our metadiegetic lesson, we can return to characterizing Darl. We can come back to the story and see that our own feelings are parallel to the overwhelmed feelings Darl must experience. Only after cogitating on and practicing refined techniques of voice distinction can we fully differentiate Darl’s voice from the auctorial narrator’s; imagine what it must be like for Darl, who every second must go through a similarly meticulous process in order to differentiate among his multitude of inputs—not just voice—received constantly. Faulkner aims for our confusion to mimic the operations inside Darl’s head.
CHAPTER 3
HYPOTHETICAL NARRATION

The third narrative technique in William Faulkner’s fiction that I will examine I have termed “hypothetical narration.” In order to explicate this technique, I will offer examples of hypothetical narration from Faulkner’s works while referring to theoretical sources that aid in identifying it, propose five functions hypothetical narration serves, and finally look closely at *Absalom, Absalom!* Faulkner’s fullest implementation of this device.

To begin with, let’s look at a good example of hypothetical narration, a section of “Smoke” from one of the detective stories in *Knight’s Gambit*. To this point in the narrative, we have learned that Old Anse Holland, a farmer, has land, that his older son, Anse, Jr., has left home having been denied an early gift of his portion of the land, and that, after ten years of remaining on the farm alone with his father, Virginius Holland also has left with no land.

We didn’t even know what happened that time when Virginius, who had stuck it out alone for ten years while Young Anse was away, was driven away at last; he didn’t tell it, not even to Granby Dodge, probably. But we knew Old Anse and we knew Virginius, and we could imagine it, about like this:

We watched Old Anse smoldering for about a year after Young Anse took his mules and went back into the hills. Then one day he broke out; maybe
like this, ‘You think that, now your brother is gone, you can just hang around and get it all, don’t you?’

‘I don’t want it all,’ Virginius said. ‘I just want my share.’

‘Ah,’ Old Anse said. ‘You’d like to have it parcelled out right now too, would you? Claim like him it should have been divided up when you and him came of age.‘

‘I’d rather take a little of it and farm it right than to see it all in the shape it’s in now,’ Virginius said, still just, still mild—no man in the county ever saw Virginius lose his temper or even get ruffled, not even when Anselm tired to fight him in the courtroom about that fine.

‘You would, would you?’ Old Anse said. ‘And me that’s kept it working at all, paying the taxes on it, while you and your brother have been putting money by every year, tax-free.’ (6-7)

This passage gives us a preliminary idea of what hypothetical narration is about. While in many ways the passage looks quite like “ordinary” narrative—with description, dialogue, and events—there is one major difference. When we are in the middle of the passage, the action seems real, but when we take the passage in its larger context—the hypothetical status established by the narrator—we realize that perhaps none of what we read about the Hollands’ terminal conversation actually happened. For the account begins with “we didn’t even know” and continues with words like “probably,” “we could imagine,” and “maybe like this.” As these are words not of certainty, but uncertainty, we may say initially that a lack of story certainty is what marks hypothetical narration.

To further understand hypothetical narration, let’s turn to a passage from Faulkner’s second novel, *Mosquitoes*. Near the end, Julius—also referred to as “the Semitic man”—tells how Mrs. Maurier, the host of the yacht excursion that dominates the action of the novel, met Mr. Maurier. Julius begins:

“The story is, that her people forced her to marry old Maurier. He had been overseer on a big place before the Civil War. He disappeared in ’63, and
when the war was over he turned up again riding a horse with a Union Army cavalry saddle and a hundred thousand dollars in uncut Federal notes for a saddle blanket. Lord knows what the amount really was, or how he got it, but it was enough to establish him. Money. You can’t argue against money: you only protest. (269-70)

The beginning paragraph of this narrative looks different from the majority of the tale told by the narrator in “Smoke.” Julius begins with certainty; the character narrator is certain that he has heard a story, the contents of which—while he is not vouchsafing for their veracity—are that Mrs. Maurier was forced to marry a man who had been an overseer on a plantation before the Civil War, that this man disappeared in 1863, and that he returned, reportedly, rich enough to have a saddle blanket made of $100,000 in uncut federal bills.

Observe, however, how Julius begins to change his received story:

“Everybody expected him to splurge about with his money: show up the penniless aristocracy, that sort of thing; work out some of the inhibitions he must have developed during his overseer days. But he didn’t. Perhaps he’d got rid of his inhibitions during his sojourn at the war. Anyway, he failed to live up to character, so people decided that he was a moral coward, that he was off somewhere in a hole with his money, like a rat. And this was the general opinion until a rumor got out about several rather raw land deals in which he was assisted by a Jew named Julius Kauffman who was acquiring a fortune and an unsavory name during those years immediately following General Butler’s assumption of the local purple. (270)

The paragraph begins in a straightforward way—a report of what everybody expected old Maurier to do: splurge, show up the aristocracy. But things begin to change. Julius does not tell us that old Maurier worked out habits he “developed during his overseer days.” Rather, he says that old Maurier worked out habits he “must have developed during his overseer days [my italics].” The implication of this subjunctive is that Julius does not know that these habits developed during his overseer days. Instead, Julius is
inferring this (or making it up). Two sentences later we read “Perhaps he’d got rid of his inhibitions during his sojourn at the war [my italics].” Again, Julius does not say that old Maurier got rid of his inhibitions during the war. Instead, he says that perhaps he got rid them then. Julius appears to be inventing. While Julius claims to tell what “the story is,” what we receive is a report along with alterations—additions, subtractions, and modifications—of Julius’ received account.

Hypothetical narration occurs in a number of other Faulkner narratives. Near the end of *Light in August*, for example, Gavin Stevens uses hypothetical narration when discussing Joe Christmas and his grandparents, Doc and Mrs. Hines:

But I believe that, [Mrs. Hines] having got started physically by the tide of the old man’s [Doc Hines’] insanity and conviction, before she knew it she had been swept away too. So they came here. They got here on the early train, about three oclock Sunday morning. She made no attempt to see Christmas. Perhaps she was watching the old man. But I dont think so. I don’t think that the hoping machine had got started then, either. I don’t think that it ever did start until that baby was born out there this morning, born right in her face, you might say; a boy too. (491-2)

Stevens’ hypothetical markers include “I believe,” “perhaps,” “I don’t think” (three times successively), and “you might say,” and the attorney’s hypothetical narration continues, off and on, for seven pages (pp. 491-496).

All of the examples so far have been of past hypothetical narration, but sometimes present hypothetical narration occurs. An example comes from the fourth chapter of “The Wild Palms” in the novel of the same name. Harry Wilbourne sits on a park bench while his mistress, Charlotte, who has been living with Harry, returns home to her tell her husband that she is dying. Harry, “against his eyelids,” watches
Charlotte’s reunion (161).1 (Notice that the verb “watched” is in the past tense, but the action is in the present for Harry.)

...he watched against his eyelids the cab (it had been told to wait) stopping before the neat and unremarkable though absolutely unimpugnable door and she getting out of the cab in the dark dress carried a full year and better, for three thousand miles and better, in the bag from last spring and mounting the steps. Now the bell, perhaps the same negro maid: “Why, Miss—” (161)

Instead of telling us what possibly did happen, the narrator tells us what possibly is happening. Present hypothetical narration creates story details, but it does not add them to a received account.

Consider another example of present hypothetical narration from “The Wild Palms.” Harry, waiting in the poorly-built summer house, not only can “see” the doctor fetching his revolver from the his house next door, he can even hear him calling the police. (Again, note how the verbs are past tense, but the action is in the present for Harry.)

With a part of his mind he was not using now he could see it: the other [house] neat, tight, brown-stained wind-proof tongue-and-groove hall, the flashlight still burning on the table beside the hurried bag, the thick bulging varicose planted calves as he had first seen them beneath the nightshirt, planted outraged and convinced and unassuageable by anything else but this; he could even hear the voice not raised but risen, a little shrill, unappeasable too, into the telephone: “And a policeman. A policeman. Two if necessary. Do you hear?” (201)

Future hypothetical narration also occurs. In “The Wild Palms,” as the illicit lovers prepare to leave town, Harry predicts to himself that Charles will come onto the train with Charlotte. “He will come in with her…” (53). Future hypothetical narration

1 Martin FitzPatrick, also examining uncertain narration, writes off this scene as “little more than a narrative-stylistic quirk” (27).
also occurs in *Pylon*. For example, in one scene, the reporter has been helping Roger underhandedly procure an airplane for the upcoming air race, and as the reporter stretches out on his office floor to sleep, he envisions Roger returning to sleep with Laverne. “‘Yair,’ he [the reporter] thought, ‘[Laverne is] in bed now, and he [Roger] will come in and she will say *Did you get it?* and he will say *What? Get what? Oh, you mean the ship. Yair, we got it. That’s what we went over there for*’” (213). Like past and present hypothetical narration, future hypothetical narration creates story details, but does not add to a received account.

**Theoretical Background for Hypothetical Narration**

Gerard Genette, in *Narrative Discourse*, reasons that narratives seemingly should have only one method of telling—reporting “facts” (161). He calls this the “indicative” mood. “Since the function of narrative is not to give an order, express a wish, state a condition, etc., but simply to tell a story and therefore to ‘report’ facts (real or fictive), its one mood, or at least its characteristic mood, strictly speaking can be only the indicative.” But Genette recognizes that narratives—like the ones above—are not always straightforward accounts of story. He sees many variations in storytelling, and these variations can often be understood in terms of mood. We can agree with Genette that “there are not only differences between affirming, commanding, wishing, etc., but there are also differences between degrees of affirmation; and that these differences are ordinarily expressed by modal variations.”
For Genette, a narrator may tell “more or less” about a story, and this “distance” from what a story “tells” is called narrative mood (161-2).

While Genette describes indicative narration, Gerald Prince describes something he calls “disnarration,” which also involves certainty, a closeness to the facts of the story (“The Disnarrated” 3). Disnarration, however, pertains to negative certainty and maintains an inverse proximity to story “facts,” for disnarration involves telling not what happened, but telling what did not happen. Prince says, ‘For me, and to put it most generally, terms, phrases, and passages that consider what did not or does not take place…constitute the disnarrated.”

We have, then, two narration types: indicative narration, which involves telling what happened (and we may add what is happening or will happen), and disnarration, which involves telling what did not happen (and we may add what is not happening or will not happen). It is within this framework that I propose we situate hypothetical narration. Hypothetical narration involves telling about things which might have happened in the past, might be happening in the present, or might happen in the future. This type of telling is further removed from the facts of the story than indicative narration and disnarration because it does not imply knowledge of them.

Thus, a storyteller has three mode choices:

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Three Types of Narration

*Indicative Narration*—narration of events which did happen, are happening, or will happen.

*Hypothetical Narration*—narration of events which might have happened, might be happening, or might happen (or might not have happened, might not be happening, or might never happen).

*Disnarration*—narration of events which did not happen, are not happening, or will not happen.

The middle domain of the “hypothetical” has not gone unnoticed. Several scholars have suggested ideas similar to my current research, so before I precisely define what I am calling hypothetical narration, let us turn to the work of Arlene Young, David Herman, and Martin FitzPatrick.

Arlene Young, in exploring indeterminacy in Henry James’ *The Golden Bowl*, makes a partial foray into the ground between indicative narration and disnarration. Young examines “hypothetical discourse,” a method by which an author presents speeches that at first appear to be direct quotations, but later turn out to be “not in fact (or fiction) ever verbalized” (382). For example, in *The Golden Bowl*, Maggie seems to say 226 seemingly-quoted words to Amerigo, yet when she finishes, the narrator adds, “Some such words as those were what didn’t ring out” (310-11). While the passages that Young focuses on are interesting, in terms of modal descriptions these appear to be an anything but hypothetical. What she reveals, instead, are examples of disnarration, where narrators state what characters do not say.
In her discussion of hypothetical discourse, however, Young does refer to James employing what I am calling hypothetical narration. She, however, terms it “speculation,” a process by which a narrator—using conjectural words such as “evidently,” “seeming,” and “would”—produces hypotheses about his or her characters (389-90). Unfortunately, Young does not adequately differentiate between the unfelicitously-named “hypothetical discourse” and her underdeveloped concept of “speculation.”

David Herman’s 1994 article “Hypothetical Focalization” promises more than Young’s in terms of exploring the middle ground between indicative narration and disnarration. Working from Genette, Herman examines “grammatical moods other than the indicative” (232), ultimately pointing to a new way other than mood to distinguish narrative types. Scrutinizing focalization, he suggests that “focalization itself can be redescribed as the narrative transcription of attitudes of seeing, believing, speculating, etc.” (235). In his lengthy treatment he carefully identifies rhetorical features indicating where uncertainty lies in narration, especially examining verbs, adverbs, conditionals, etc.—e.g., “perhaps,” “probably,” and “must have been” (243)—as I did in my Faulkner examples that began this chapter.

One example of hypothetical focalization cited in Herman occurs in Stephen Crane’s “The Open Boat.” There, a hypothetical focalizer perceives “the faces of men” that “must have been gray” if they had been “viewed from a balcony.”

In the wan light the faces of the men must have been gray. Their eyes must have glinted in strange ways as they gazed steadily astern. Viewed from a balcony, the whole thing would, doubtless, have been weirdly picturesque. But the men in the boat had no time to see it, and if they had had leisure, there were
others things to occupy their minds…. The process of the breaking day was unknown to them… It was probably splendid, it was probably glorious, this play of the free sea, wild with lights of emeralds and white and amber. (341)

Herman points out “markers of uncertainty— specifically the locutions ‘must have been,’ ‘would… have been,’ ‘doubtless,’ and ‘probably,’ together with the conditional ‘if they had had leisure’” (243) and then describes the ontological consequences for the “expressed” world and the “reference world.” He states that these marks of uncertainty (in the expressed world) create ambivalence with respect to the reference world. It is to this point that I find Herman’s study useful, especially his attention to rhetoric— markers of uncertainty— and his interest in deeper philosophical issues implied by such markers.

My problems with Herman’s analysis begin with where he places focalization in the example above. First, Herman asserts that “if someone had been there to focalize them the details would have been evident; but since strictly speaking someone wasn’t there, the details simply could not be evident.” My problem here is that someone was present to focalize the scene. The someone was the narrator, who saw that there was wan light and that the men on the boat were gazing astern; thus, these details were evident. ³ Secondly, the fact that some details were not evident— such as the color of the faces or the way their eyes glinted— is not due to the lack of a focalizer being present (for the narrator as we have shown was present to perceive some details). The insufficiently evident nature of some of the details of this maritime

³ On whether narrators can focalize, see Prince, “A Point of View on Point of View or Refocusing Focalization,” Bal, “The Narrating and the Focalizing,” pp. 249 ff, and Phelan, “Why Narrators can be Focalizers— And Why it Matters” (pp. 53–4).
scene is either: 1) due to a lack of knowledge on the part of the narrator; or 2) due to
the narrator’s desire to obfuscate some details of the scene. In the second case, by
creating the rhetorical device of hypothetical focalization—if there had been
somebody above the scene to see it—the isolation of these men is emphasized. This is,
of course, in isolation from other intradiegetic agents but not from the heterodiegetic
narrator.

Hypothetical focalization turns out to be a rhetorical device in Herman’s
“expressed” world, not an ontological consequence of the reference world. Herman
says that the narrative tells both about situations or events that clearly exist in the story
world and about situations or events that clearly do not exist in the story world. “We
can say that the narrative focalizes details that both are and are not part of the
reference world.” First, a minor point: it is not the narrative that focalizes. Agents
focalize, thus we need to locate the focalization in either a character or the narrator.
More importantly, the issues here are not just ones of certainty: what clearly does exist
in the story world and what clearly does not exist in the story world. Instead, the issues
in this passage have to do with certainty and uncertainty. We know for sure that there
is wan light and that the men stared astern, for example, but we do not know for sure
whether there faces were gray in the wan light or whether their eyes glinted in strange
ways as they gazed astern. Unfortunately, Herman’s analysis of uncertainty and
focalization is confusing in places.

Martin FitzPatrick explicates narratives that are “marked by inherent
unknowability” (244). He terms the telling of uncertain events subjunctive narrative,
and for him this subjunctive narratives present “not ‘how things looked’ but ‘how they

must or might have looked’” (244-5). As FitzPatrick investigates how subjunctive

narratives raise questions about the correspondence between story and discourse, he

suggests adding Ross Chamber’s concept of “point” to the traditionally binary model

(FitzPatrick 245). His new “three-termed” model would place point as “an equal

partner with story and discourse,” for the whole purpose of discourse with uncertain

narration is to raise questions not about stories themselves but about how we

understand stories.

FitzPatrick draws his examples of subjunctive narrative from the unlimited

resources of English-language literature and ably theorizes on the narrative type’s

semantic implications. The cost of his broad view and theoretical emphasis, however,
is a limited amount of attention paid to the rhetorical dimension. While FitzPatrick’s

numerous examples are important to understanding uncertain narration, my finite
catalogue of texts will hopefully reveal in more detail defining words, phrases, syntax,
and chronological features related to uncertain narration. Finally, my departure from
FitzPatrick will be most radically demonstrated as I position hypothetical narration in
relation to current narrative types.

Defining Hypothetical Narration

Arlene Young is, of course, correct; there are speculative accounts offered by

narrators—tellings that are marked by their conjectural words and phrases such as

“perhaps,” “maybe,” “probably,” “doubtless,” “must have been,” “would have been,”
etc.—and these are what in the examples above from Faulkner I call hypothetical narration. David Herman is correct in his motivation to find where epistemological attitudes lie in narratives and in his locating these stances in focalization. And Martin FitzPatrick offers insight into the semantic advantages of uncertain narration that counterbalance the loss of story facts. What follows here will hopefully explicate more fully the speculative, the subjunctive, the hypothetical by further examining the rhetorical, epistemological, and ontological details of uncertain narration.

To begin with, let us look at uncertain stories. The question is: where does uncertainty obtain? Beginning at the left side of Seymour Chatman’s model of the “whole narrative-communication situations” (Story and Discourse 151), we should examine authors. We can say that what exists in the story world is wholly dependent upon authors. They create the story world about which a narrative discourse tells. Implied authors are the next most likely suspects. Implied authors, however, are created by readers as their images of actual authors. These implied authors lack no less knowledge than their flesh-and-blood counterparts above, so they too are not the source of uncertainty. Indeed, implied authors are the very agents readers identify as choosing how much knowledge to bestow upon the narrator and characters. This leads us to narrators and characters.

Now on the level of the narrative discourse we are best to examine vision and voice. With respect to the vision and voices of narrators and characters, we can examine vision (focalization) alone due to a narratological axiom I call the axiom of teller fidelity: tellers, by convention, portray accurately the feelings, perceptions,
beliefs, thoughts, etc. of their focalizers. That is, by convention readers can count on voices conveying what is focalized. Put yet another way, there is no epistemological gap between what is focalized and what the teller puts into words. The “feelings, perceptions, beliefs, thoughts, etc.” to which this axiom refers are, of course, those epistemic stances to which Herman alludes, so if the axiom of teller fidelity is true, then we can, as Herman earlier indicated, investigate focalization in questions of certainty or uncertainty in modes of narration. And so we get a definition:

**Hypothetical narration**—the telling of a situation or event about which the focalizer is uncertain whether or not it occurred, is occurring, or will occur.  

Above we examined examples of past, present, and future hypothetical narration. Now that we have a definition of hypothetical narration, we are in a better position to understand what distinguishes these chronological types from each other. Making distinctions among time categories in any mode of narration requires first understanding the relationship between the time of the event focalized and the time of its focalization. Before looking at these relationships for the three chronological categories of hypothetical narration, let us examine an example of the relationship in a standard narrative type, past indicative narration.

Imagine a narrative in which we are told: “The dog jumped.” Let us call the time of the event $e$ and the time of its focalization $f$. What we find in this case of past indicative narration is that the narrator (as focalizer) perceived the dog jumping

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4 Indicative narration, hypothetical narration, and disnarration, are the three epistemological narration types. They are part of the manifest forms of ontological narration, the super-category including epistemological, deontic, and desiderative forms of narration. The ontological is the only category that is not vocalized, forming only ideas in the focalizer or reader’s mind. Deontic narration—that depends on obligation—includes imperative, indifferent, and prohibitive narration; Desiderative—that depends on desire—includes optative, ambivalent, and dreadful narration.
concurrently with the jumping of the dog, or $e$ equals $f$. Additional cases show that for all past indicative narration, this same relationship holds true.

Now, let us re-examine the story of the Hollands from “Smoke” in order to understand the chronological relationship obtaining in past hypothetical narration:

We watched Old Anse smoldering for about a year after Young Anse took his mules and went back into the hills. Then one day he broke out; maybe like this, ‘You think that, now your brother is gone, you can just hang around and get it all, don’t you?’… (6)

In order to determine the relationship between the event time and focalization time, again let us define the time of the event—in this case, what supposedly happened just before Young Anse left—as $e$, and let us define the time of the focalization of this event—in this case, when the narrator focalizes what he imagines happened when Young Anse left—as $f$. In this case, the event supposedly happens before its focalization, or $e$ occurs before $f$. For the words the narrator says convey what the narrator supposes that Old Anse said, and the narrator imagines (or focalizes) these words after the fact, after Young Anse has left, perhaps even as the narrator is in the process of telling.

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5 This example obtains for reliable past indicative narration. For unreliable indicative narration, we would say that the narrator (as focalizer) represents that he perceived the dog jumping concurrently with the jumping of the dog. In both reliable or unreliable past indicative narration, the relationship of $e$ to $f$ is the same.

6 The telling (voice) is separated in time from $e$, where the event is told about at a time after $e$.

7 For past hypothetical narration, the time of the telling (voice) is after $e$ and concurrent with or after $f$. 
To determine the relationship between event time and focalization time in present hypothetical narration, let us examine the “eyelids” scene from “The Wild Palms.”

…he watched against his eyelids the cab (it had been told to wait) stopping before the neat and unremarkable though absolutely unimpugnable door and she getting out of the cab in the dark dress carried a full year and better, for three thousand miles and better, in the bag from last spring and mounting the steps. Now the bell, perhaps the same negro maid: “Why, Miss—“ then nothing, remembering who paid the wages; though probably not since by ordinary; negroes quit an employment following death or division. And now the room… (161)

Here the events—what actually happened for Charlotte while Harry sat on the park bench—occurred, let us say again, at time \( e \). And the focalization of Charlotte’s actions—what Harry supposed happened for Charlotte while he sat on the bench—occurred, let us say again, at time \( f \). While the story is written in the past tense, we can see that, as Harry sat on the park bench, he imagined (or focalized) his version of Charlotte’s activities in the present, or at the same time that Charlotte was doing whatever she was doing. 8 In other words, in this case \( e \) equals \( f \). 9

To determine the relationship between event time and focalization time in future hypothetical narration, let us re-examine the double bedroom scene from Pylon, where the reporter stretches out on his office floor while he envisions Roger going to bed with Laverne: “‘Yair,’ he thought, ‘in bed now, and he will come in and she will

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8 We must remember that the grammar of hypothetical narration does not necessarily indicate the modal time, just as grammatical tense does not always indicate experiential time. The examples of present hypothetical narration above are grammatically past tense. Cf. Suzanne Fleishman, The Future in Thought and Language: Diachronic Evidence from Romance, pp. 7-9, for an introduction to sequence and experience as opposed to grammar and tense.

9 For present hypothetical narration, the time of the telling (voice) is concurrent with or after both \( e \) and \( f \).
say *Did you get it?* and he will say *What? Get what? Oh, you mean the ship. Yair, we got it. That’s what we went over there for***” (213). Again, let us say that the event time is $e$ and the focalization time is $f$. While the story again is told in the past tense, we can see that the reporter—in the situation that was in the present for him—was seeing an event that will happen some time in the future, at some time after $f$, or $e$ occurs after $f$. Additional cases show that for all future hypothetical narration the same relationship holds true.\(^{10}\)

In sum, three principles regarding time in hypothetical narration emerge as past, present, or future in hypothetical narration is determined by the relationship between the time of the narrated situation or event and the time of its focalization. In the case of past hypothetical narration, the time of the situation or event is before the time of its focalization. In the case of present hypothetical narration, the time of the situation or event is concurrent with the time of its focalization. And in future hypothetical narration, the time of the situation or event is after the time of its focalization. See Figure 8 below.

\(^{10}\) For future hypothetical narration, the time of the telling (voice) is after $e$ and concurrent with or after $f$.  

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Having established the conditions necessary for distinguishing past, present, and future hypothetical narration, we finally may suggest what forms these narrations typically take. Past hypothetical narration typically involves changes to received information—adding to, subtracting from, and/or modifying what was transmitted to the focalizer.\textsuperscript{11} The narrative usually contains some part of the received account, but the hypothetical narration and its predecessor are never identical. And, while I have found no examples of ahistorical past hypothetical narration in Faulkner, we could imagine the existence of a past hypothetical narration with no historical connection, a story entirely imagined by its focalizer.

In present hypothetical narration, there is no received information to change. Instead, present hypothetical narration involves a focalizer perceiving what is beyond her power to perceive, the limitations usually being physical, for the focalizer is often geographically distant from the focalized situation or event. And future hypothetical narration is similar to present hypothetical narration in that a focalizer also perceives

\begin{itemize}
\item Past $e$ occurs before $f$
\item Present $e$ occurs concurrently with $f$
\item Future $e$ occurs after $f$
\end{itemize}

$e$—time of event focalized; $f$—time of focalization

\textsuperscript{11} Cf. FitzPatrick on received information, “Indeterminate Ursula” pp. 250 ff.
something beyond her power, in this case, over time, for the focalizer sees something in the future that has not happened yet.\textsuperscript{12}

Before we move on to functions of hypothetical narration in Faulkner’s narratives, let us summarize our definitions:

- **Axiom of Teller Fidelity**—Narrators, by convention, portray accurately the feelings, perceptions, beliefs, thoughts, etc. of the focalizer.

- **Hypothetical Narration**—the telling of a situation or event about which the focalizer is uncertain whether or not it occurred, is occurring, or will occur. Examples include recounting past events by changing received information, narration of contemporaneous events outside a focalizer’s perception, and prophecy. Hypothetical narration is often marked by verbs in the subjunctive mood and words indicating possibility or doubt.

- **Time in Hypothetical Narration**—Past, present, and future in hypothetical narration is determined by the relationship between the time of the narrated situation or event and the time of its focalization. For past hypothetical narration, the time of the situation or event is before the time of its focalization. For present hypothetical narration, the time of the situation or event is concurrent with the time of its focalization. And for future hypothetical narration, the time of the situation or event is after the time of its focalization.

**Functions of Hypothetical Narration**

Hypothetical narration functions five ways in Faulkner’s fiction, including fulfilling situational requirements, providing information while maintaining mimesis, revealing character psychology, and addressing issues of epistemology and ontology.\textsuperscript{13}

The first function of hypothetical narration is the situational, where certain narrative

\textsuperscript{12} We might wonder, then, if all future narration is hypothetical narration. As Uri Margolin pointed out at the 2002 Narrative conference at which the majority of this chapter was presented, it seems possible to have future indicative narration, e.g., when a narrator has extensive knowledge of the reference world, such as in Biblical prophecy. It may be that future hypothetical narration occurs most often with character narrators.

\textsuperscript{13} Of course, hypothetical narration also entertains. In Monk, the narrator is concerned with good storytelling as he takes a sketchy past story and attempts “make something out of it” (39). In Mosquitoes Fairchild supports Julius’s hypothetical narration “for the sake of the story, if nothing else” (271).
situations or genres require hypothetical narration. For example, many detective stories include courtroom scenes—a call for juridical hypothetical narration. This is the case in “Smoke,” where the attorney Gavin Stevens proposes to show a jury how two death-related suits are connected:

So the Foreman asked him point blank:
‘Is it your contention, Gavin, that there is a connection between Mr. Holland’s will and Judge Dukinfield’s murder?’
‘Yes,’ the county attorney said. ‘And I’m going to contend more than that.” (13)

By nature, litigious situations require hypotheses. Hence, narratives within courtrooms often include hypothetical narration. And even if the orators seems to have the inside track on the facts (the facts which the reader of detective stories constantly seeks), the situation itself—lawyers presenting what a court of law initially considers to be mutually possible hypotheses—places the narrative into the hypothetical until the truth (sometimes) is indicatively revealed.

The second way hypothetical narration functions is by providing information in a narrative while maintaining the narrative’s mimetic integrity. A number of times Faulkner provides information about characters and events which are beyond the focalizer’s perception. The scene in the short story “Smoke” where the narrator imagines a parting conversation between Old Anse Holland and his boy Virginius:

We didn’t even know what happened that time when Virginius, who had stuck it out alone for ten years while Young Anse was away, was driven away at last; he didn’t tell it, not even to Granby Dodge, probably. But we knew Old Anse and we knew Virginius, and we could imagine it, about like this:

We watched Old Anse smoldering for about a year after Young Anse took his mules and went back into the hills. Then one day he broke out; maybe
like this, ‘You think that, now your brother is gone, you can just hang around and get it all, don’t you?’…(6 ff.)

As the narrator relates this story, we realize that he was not present to witness the events he narrates. Yet hypothetical narration, in its mimetic capacity, can render a scene outside the focalizer’s perception into a realistic and reliable account. When we finish reading the account of Young Anse’s leave-taking, we have no reason to believe that the narrator’s conjecture is incorrect. The narrative is couched as hypothetical—“we could imagine it, about like this” (6)—and the scene both has mimetic integrity, for realistically a character may imagine events, and provides reliable information, for what he focalizes is in accord with our knowledge of the implied author.\(^\text{14}\)

James Phelan in *Narrative as Rhetoric* examines an effect similar to this in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*. Phelan focuses on Nick Carraway’s account of a conversation that took place in George Wilson’s garage after he, Jordan, and Tom had left the filling station. Phelan wonders how Nick—the novel’s “witness-narrator”—could have presented such a “careful, detailed, and precise” account of a conversation that occurred in their absence (108). Phelan explains that this is an example of what Genette calls *paralepsis*, a character knowing more than he should know (107), and believes that what happens in this section of *Gatsby* is that, by adjusting our concept of mimesis, mimetic integrity is not shattered by Nick’s extraordinary knowledge (110).\(^\text{15}\) That is, Phelan suggests that there are two definitions of mimesis, a narrow one and a broad one. The narrow definition admits to Fitzgerald breaking the illusion


of reality, for narrow mimesis is “based only on imitation-of-the-real.” On the other hand, broad mimesis takes into account “what is needed by the narrative at this point” to represent the real and “looks both to the real and to conventions for imitating it.”

Faulkner’s effect, achieved through hypothetical narration, can be seen in the “eyelids” scene from “The Wild Palms” where Harry perceives Charlotte’s actions, city blocks away, while he sits on a park bench. Other than in the first section of “The Wild Palms,” Harry is the center of consciousness. So, while “what is needed at this point” is insight into the conversation of Charlotte and her husband, mimetically the novel requires that Harry be the focalizer or the focalized.

It turns out that Harry’s vision is so mimetically convincing that, as the scene progresses, we likely forget that we are not receiving a heterodiegetic narrator’s account, and, after we recall that it is Harry’s invention, we still find 1) that it comports with what we have seen in the novel so far and 2) that almost all of it does not conflict with what follows in the narrative. The result is that we are provided with a report of the events outside the focalizer’s perception, yet this report is realistic—for Harry knows Charles and has lived for a year with Charlotte, enabling him to predict their interaction—and, in most respects, reliable—for his focalization is

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17 While it is crucial that we know that Charlotte has requested that Charles not prosecute Harry for bollixing up the abortion and killing Charlotte (in order for us to understand Charles’ motivations as Harry goes on trial at the end of the novel) it is also necessary for mimetic reasons that Harry focalize the scene.

18 The only inaccuracy in what Harry envisions is that he did not think Charlotte would ask her husband to *promise* to help him, but Charles, we subsequently learn from the novel’s narrator, was asked and did promise (227). Cf. Thomas McHaney, *William Faulkner’s The Wild Palms: A Study*, p. 170.
almost entirely in accord with what we would expect from the implied author. Because
the hypothetical narration is situated *qua* hypothetical narration and because the novel
provides a basis for the focalizer to be able to predict what transpires, even Phelan’s
narrow definition of mimesis may obtain for this section of “The Wild Palms,” or, at
least, a narrower level of mimesis is maintained in the novel than in *The Great Gatsby*.

The third function of hypothetical narration is the revealing of character
psychology. At first it might seem that hypothetical narration, due to its uncertain
nature, would be inferior to indicative narration (or disnarration) in revealing aspects
about characters and their psyches, but hypothetical narration that is produced by a
character reveals thoughts and feelings in a first-hand way.

One example of this is the “eyelids” scene in “The Wild Palms.” To see how
Harry’s vision of Charlotte’s actions reveals his psychology, let us consider degrees of
notice. Based on numbers of words, Harry pays more attention to the actions of the
Rittenmeyer children than to the actions of their father, Charles. He focalizes exactly
what Charles and Charlotte say about going to the Mississippi coast but merely
summarizes the husband’s argument for going to a hospital. And he considers few of
Charles’ non-verbal reactions but clearly perceives his laughing and rising when
Charlotte invokes a sense of “justice” (164). These examples allow us to see what
thoughts and emotions are most critical to Harry. In the first case, Harry is sensitive to
his effect on the Rittenmeyer children, but has no patience for the facades that
comprise Charles’ life. Much of Harry’s growth is his learning about sexuality and its
effects—in this case the responsibility to and pain caused by children. In the second case, as Harry focalizes Charles’ exact words more often when they are in conversation with Charlotte than when he is delivering a monologue, we could say that Harry is less concerned with Charles’ preaching (say, about going to a hospital) than in imagining the words that Charlotte will say to defend Harry. Harry imagines that there is a deep love that has developed between Charlotte and himself. In the third case, Harry focalizes Charles laughing and standing up at the mention of justice, because the concept of fairness is a tenuous one, Harry hardly believing that he has been just to Charles.

The revealing of character psychology through characters using hypothetical narration is also evident in the double bedroom scene in *Pylon*—where we receive insight into the motivations of the reporter. “‘Yair,’ he thought, ‘in bed now, and he will come in and she will say Did you get it? and he will say What? Get what? Oh, you mean the ship. Yair, we got it. that’s what we went over there for’” (213). The reporter has arranged for Roger to get the airship, and the newspaper man naively expects as much success here as he does in his maneuvering with Laverne. Yet in this case—from a passage eighteen pages earlier—we have learned that what he envisions is not at all what happens. In cases such as this, the focalization has a kind of reflexive function, one in which the significance of the focalized is entirely in what it reveals.

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19 McHaney, *William Faulkner’s The Wild Palms: A Study*, notes “the voices of children which have served so often as chorus to his [Harry’s] meditations” (95). Harry not only realizes how he has affected the children, he also discovers, as McHaney also points out, that Charlotte’s “children have hurt her because she had to give them up” (133).
about the focalizer. As the novel turns on the growth of the reporter, this passage reveals his naiveté.

Fourthly, hypothetical narration functions epistemologically, for how tales are told reveals how we come to know. Consider the story of the Mauriers from *Mosquitoes*. Julius received a story concerning the meeting of Mr. Maurier and Mrs. Maurier, but this received story did not include all of the details he wants to relate. The epistemological question is: what do the elements he adds—through hypothetical narration—reveal about the way narratives help us come to know? Let us examine a section of Julius’ narrative:

“\[And when the smoke finally cleared somewhat, he had more money than ever rumor could compute and he was the proprietor of that plantation on which he had once been a head servant, and within a decade he was landed gentry. I don’t doubt but that he had dug up some blueblood émigré ancestry. He was a small shrewd man, a cold and violent man; just the sort to have an unimpeachable genealogy. Humorless and shrewd, but I don’t doubt that he sat at times in the halls of his newly adopted fathers, and laughed. \]

“The story is that her father came to New Orleans on a business trip, with a blessing from Washington. She was young, then; probably a background of an exclusive school, and a social future, the taken-for-granted capital letter kind, but all somehow rather precarious—cabbage, and a footman to serve it; a salon in which they sat politely, surrounded by objects, and spoke good French; and bailiff’s men on the veranda and the butcher’s bill in the kitchen—gentility: evening clothes without fresh linen underneath. I imagine he—her father—was pretty near at the end of his rope. Some government appointment, I imagine, brought him south; hijacking privileges with official sanction, you know. (270)"

Hypothetical narration reveals how our minds work in processing narratives (in the translation from discourse to story) in that it shows how we add details to stories to aid in configuration. That is, Julius has adds to his received account of the Mauriers, not just “for the sake of the story,” but also because this is how he is able to
understand the story. Details like “cabbage, and a footman to serve it” and “bailiff’s men on the veranda” are necessary for Julius to tell the story right (showing how refined Mrs. Maurier was), to put into discourse his story of Mrs. Maurier.

Conversely, sometimes hypothetical narration demonstrates how we come to know through a lack of details. That is, while some hypothetical narrations reveal that we require specific details to fully understand a narrative, some show that specificity can be counter-productive. Indeed, sometimes the generic is more illustrative.

Consider an example from *Pylon*. The reporter is explaining to his editor how Roger and Laverne met.

Yair, this day Shumann comes down at whatever town it was in Iowa or Indiana or wherever it was that she was a sophomore in the highschool back before they had the airmail for farmers to quit plowing and look up at; in the highschool at recess, and so maybe that was why she came out without a hat even and got into the front seat of one of those Jennies the army used to sell them for cancelled stamps or whatever it was. And maybe she sent a postcard back from the next cowpasture to the aunt or whoever it was that was expecting her to come home to dinner…. (42)

While this is ironically a reporter’s account, what he heard (or someone before him heard) probably went something like this:

On May 27, 1935, Roger Shumann came down in Clinton, Indiana, where she was a sophomore at Clinton High. She came running out without her blue school coat and jumped into the front seat of the small army surplus airplane. Her family only knew where she went because of a letter sent from Moline, Illinois….

This (indicative) account provides details—like the exact day of her rapture and specific towns involved—but the details are less effective in conveying the point of the story: how a new breed of humans, the mechanical heroes of the air shows,
pervaded the Midwest. Generic references—e.g., using relative pronouns—show how widespread the new way of life was.

Another facet of the epistemological function has to do with scientific hypotheses, for the process of proposing ideas and then testing them is another way we gain knowledge. In *Pylon* Jiggs explains to the reporter how Laverne was raised by her sister and had an affair with her sister’s husband. To this point in the novel, the reporter has been (somewhat unconsciously) trying to attract Laverne. Before Jiggs recounts this history—hypothesizing details of the affair—the reporter is physically well, but as Jiggs continues the reporter takes ill.

…She was an orphan, see; her older sister that was married sent for her to come live with them when her folks died. The sister was about twenty years older than Laverne and the sister’s husband was about six or eight years younger than the sister and Lavern was about fourteen or fifteen; she hadn’t had much fun at home with a couple of old people like her father and mother, and she never had much with her sister neither, being that much younger; yair, I don’t guess the sister had a whole lot of fun either with the kind of guy the husband seemed to be. So when the husband started teaching Laverne how to slip out and meet him and they would drive to some town forty or fifty miles away when the husband was supposed to be at work or something and he would buy her a glass of soda water or maybe stop at a dive where the husband was sure nobody he knowed would see them and dance, I guess she thought that was all the fun there was in the world and that since he would tell her it was all right to twotime the sister that way, that it was all right for her to do the rest of it he wanted. Because he was the big guy, see, the one that paid for what she wore and what she ate. Or maybe she didn’t think it was all right so much as she just thought that that was the way it was—that you was either married and wore down with housework to where your husband was just the guy that twotimed you and you knew it and all you could do about it was nag at him while he was awake and go through his clothes while he was asleep to see if you found any hair pins or letters or rubbers in his pockets, and then cry and moan about him to your younger sister while he was gone; or you were the one that somebody else’s husband was easing out with and that all the choice you had was the dirty dishes to wash against the nickel sodas and a half an hour of dancing to a backalley orchestra in a dive where nobody give his right name and then being wallowed around on the back seat of a car and then go home
and slip in and lie to your sister when it got too close, having the guy mump on you too to save his own face and then make it up by buying you two sodas next time. Or maybe at fifteen she just never saw any way of doing better because for a whole she never even knowed that the guy was holder her down himself, see, that he was hiding her out at the cheap dives not so they would not be recognised but so he would not have any competition from anybody but guys like himself; no young guys for her to see or to see her. Only the competition come; somehow she found out there was sodas that cost more than even a dime and that all the music never had to be played in the back room with the shades down. Or maybe it was just him, because one night she had used him for stalking horse and he hunted her down and the guy she was with this time finally had to beat him up and so he went back home and told her sister on her— (284-5)

At this point, in the middle of Jiggs’ narration, the reporter frantically pours himself a drink, gulps it down, and then rushes toward the window where he vomits. The reporter’s reaction overflows with epistemological implications. Prior to Jigg’s story, the reporter is not aware fully of what he has been doing—namely pursuing an affair formerly with a married woman and now with a widow, which widowhood is due in part to his own hand in Roger’s crash. As the novel concerns the growth of the reporter, here we see that one way that people like the reporter learn is through hypotheses. Each possible explanation Jiggs offers concerning Laverne’s youthful affair brings to light lurid aspects of what the reporter has been seeking, aspects of which the reporter had been—and might wish to have remained—ignorant. The reporter’s new knowledge (of himself) makes him sick.

Epistemological functions of hypothetical narration lead us to the technique’s fifth function—the ontological. Most of the examples and discussions of hypothetical narration have centered on character narration (or some variation thereof). Sometimes, however, hypothetical narration is generated by the narrator himself. For example, in
“The Wild Palms,” the heterodiegetic narrator tells about Harry and Charlotte renting the doctor’s cottage along the coast. This is related using mostly indicative narration, but sometimes hypothetical narration is used.

The first traces of hypothetical narration occur just three pages into the narrative. Initially, the doctor focalizes Harry walking the beach and Charlotte sitting in a beach chair. Harry is seen “walking barefoot along the beach at tide-edge, returning with a faggot of driftwood strapped into a belt, passing the immobile woman in the beach chair with no sign from her, no movement of the head or perhaps even of the eyes” (20-1). What is noticeable here is that while a number of things are certain—e.g., that Charlotte does not move her head—the movement of her eyes is in question. “Perhaps” she did not move them. Since at least the majority of this sentence is focalized by the doctor, however, it is not clear who is uncertain whether Charlotte’s eyes moved. Yet in the next paragraph, as the doctor finds himself watching the two lovers, believing “he was not eavesdropping, not spying,” the narrator says, “perhaps he [the doctor] thought, I will have plenty of time in which to learn just which organ it is she is listening to; they have paid their rent for two weeks” (21). Whose uncertainty is implied by this “perhaps?” Here it is clearly the narrator who is uncertain of what the doctor thought.

In this case we have moved to the most fundamental level for hypothetical narration. Hypothetical narration by the narrator himself reveals how conjectural narration itself can become. As Genette points out, the usual mode of narration is the indicative—which tells what happened in the story world. Hypothetical narration on
the fundamental level of the narrator is at the furthest remove from the story “facts.” The result of narrator-level hypothetical narration is that the more we encounter it, the more the narration loses its connection to story. That is, the more hypothetical a discourse becomes, the harder it is to reconstruct story.

At the point when recovering the story comes into question, we cross over from issues of epistemology to issues of ontology, for we stop asking if we know the story, and begin asking if there is a story to know. Put another way, when hypothetical narration reaches a critical mass, we stop asking how discourse and its connection to story address epistemological issues and begin asking how discourse and its disconnection from story address ontological issues. The fourth function, the epistemological, therefore, leads us into the fifth, the ontological.

Now I would like to turn to *Absalom, Absalom!* in order to: 1) demonstrate the fifth function of hypothetical narration, addressing issues of ontology, in this novel; and 2) examine hypothetical narration as it functions in not just a complete work but also Faulkner’s most thorough implementation of the technique.²⁰

*Absalom, Absalom!*

The narratives we have examined so far give us good examples of hypothetical narration, but *Absalom, Absalom!* offers Faulkner’s fullest use of the technique. Moreover, here we also discover narrator commentaries on the use of this mode.

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²⁰ Indeed, I would contend that *Absalom, Absalom!* features the largest and most complex implementation of hypothetical narration in all of Western literature.
The opening chapter, indeed, the opening paragraphs of *Absalom, Absalom!* function as an exposition of the use of hypothetical narration in the novel. This beginning, however, opens in the indicative, apparently being told by the narrator and focalized by Quentin: “From a little after two oclock until almost sundown of the long still hot weary dead September afternoon they sat…” (3). The indicative then seems to be broken at the end of the first page by successive uses of “would”—“until at last listening would renege and hearing-sense self-confound and the long-dead object of her impotent yet indomitable frustration would appear”—but these turn out to be indicative uses of the modal showing past habit.

We continue reading the opening of chapter one as indicative even when Out of the quiet thunderclap he would abrupt (man-horse-demon) upon a scene peaceful and decorous as a schoolprize water color, faint sulphur-reek still in hair clothes and beard, with grouped behind him his band of wild niggers like beasts half tamed to walk upright like men, in attitudes wild and reposed, and manacled among them the French architect with his air grim, haggard, and tatter-ran. Immobile, bearded and hand palm-lifted the horseman sat; behind him the wild blacks and the captive architect huddled quietly, carrying in bloodless paradox the shovels and picks and axes of peaceful conquest. (4)

This appears to be a continuation of past habit, where the dominating Sutpen, during conversations in Rosa’s house, continually would abrupt forth—a repeated indicative action—upon the imaginations of those listening.

But then we read: “Then in the long unamaze Quentin *seemed* to watch them overrun suddenly the hundred square miles…[my italics].” This sentence would coincide nicely with the reading I have suggested so far if it read, “Then in the long

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21 While it may seem possible that the beginning is focalized by the narrator, cues such as the intrusion of “which Quentin thought” and the description of Miss Coldfield sitting “opposite” Quentin encourage us to assume that Quentin is focalizing.
unamaze Quentin watched [sc. imagined] them overrun suddenly the hundred square miles…. But it doesn’t. It is not that “Quentin watched” Sutpen, the slaves, and the architect overtake the huge tract of land; it is that “Quentin seemed to watch them…[my italics].” The force of this hypothetical marker is important. We have assumed to this point that the focalization has been Quentin’s. That fact that Quentin only seemed to see Sutpen and his band of followers invade the region notifies us that the fundamental vision is not Quentin’s, but the narrator’s, and this narrator does not know with any certainty what Quentin saw.  

Thus, the narrative reveals mere hypothesis about what Quentin saw and continued to see: Sutpen and his band

\[
\text{overrun suddenly the hundred square miles of tranquil and astonished earth and drag house and formal gardens violently out of the soundless Nothing and clap them down like cards on a table beneath the up-palm immobile and pontific, creating the Sutpen’s Hundred. (4) }
\]

As the narrator tells us what Quentin seemed to see, the mere possibility derives from the narrator’s limited knowledge. The narrator has only conjecture as to what Quentin actually is perceiving during his session with Rosa. Indicative narration has given way to hypothetical narration.

The hypotheses continue. Quentin seemed to listen to his own two voices. “Then hearing would reconcile and he would seem to listen to two separate Quentins

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23 It is possible, of course, to read “seemed” indicatively. Perhaps “Quentin seemed to watch” means *Quentin imagined that he saw*: “Quentin imagined that he saw them overrun suddenly the hundred square miles….” This indicative reading is undercut, however, by the next occurrence of *seem*: “he would seem to listen to two separate Quentins.” Here, the two separate Quentins are actually present as mental agents, as present as Quentin himself is.
now…." The two Quentins describe Sutpen in an imagined conversation, again imagined by the narrator.

It seems that this demon—his name was Sutpen—(Colonel Sutpen)—Colonel Sutpen. Who came out of nowhere and without warning upon the land with a band of strange niggers and built a plantation—(Tore violently a plantation, Miss Rosa Coldfield says)—tore violently. And married her sister Ellen and begot a son and a daughter which—(Without gentleness begot, Miss Rosa Coldfield says)—without gentleness. Which should have been the jewels of his pride and the shield and comfort of his old age, only—(Only they destroyed him or something or he destroyed them or something. And died)—and died. Without regret, Miss Rosa Coldfield says—(Save by her) Yes, save by her. (And by Quentin Compson) Yes. And by Quentin Compson. (5)

Of course, the seeming nature of what happens at the beginning of chapter one changes our whole reading, for we had been assuming that Quentin was focalizing. Occasionally Quentin certainly was focalizing—“which Quentin thought of as being flecks of the dead old dried paint itself blown inward from the scaling blinds as wind might have blown them” (3)—but, if the perception of Sutpen overrunning the hundred square miles is hypothetical, I suggest that the preceding perceptions are also governed by the formula: Quentin seemed to perceive x.

The effect of the opening hypothetical narration is tremendous. Our initial glimpse of Sutpen first appears to be an indicative account of Quentin’s vision of him, but the rug is pulled out from under us. We find, much to our discomfort, that this picture of Sutpen is not Quentin’s but the narrator’s, and it is only hypothetical. To this end, the opening to chapter one is exposition-like, highlighting the three biggest discomforts of the book: 1) characters never have clear vision of Sutpen; 2) all vision of Sutpen is hypothetical; 3) narratives, perhaps more often than we realize, are only
hypothetical. The chapter concludes only after we have witnessed hypothetical narration by the narrator, Rosa, and Mr. Compson.

As with chapter one, chapter two opens with indicative narration, “It was a summer of wistaria. The twilight was full of it and of the smell of his father’s cigar as they sat…” (23). But, as the chapter shifts to the Sutpen history and progresses, the text moves from indicative narration to hypothetical narration. It begins in the indicative:

—a Sunday morning in June with the bells ringing peaceful and peremptory and a little cacophonous—the denominations in concord though not in tune—and the ladies and children, and house negroes to carry the parasols and flywhisks, and even a few men (the ladies moving in hops among the miniature broadcloth of little boys and the pantalettes of little girls, in the skirts of the time when ladies did not walk but floated) when the other men sitting with their feet on the railing of the Holston House gallery looked up, and there the stranger was. (23)

In accord with the grammar of the main verb—“and there the stranger was”—the beginning of chapter two is an indicative account focalized by the narrator. The first lexical clue of hypothetical narration crops up 428 words into the chapter: “He had apparently come into town from the south…[my italics]” (25). From here, a multitude of conjectural words—such as “probably,” “apparently,” and “doubtless”—and relative pronouns—such as “someone” and “whatever”—reveal that the focalizer of this passage lacks knowledge. For example, the narrator tells us: “Apparently it was only by sheer geographical hap that Sutpen passed through town at all, pausing only long enough for someone (not General Compson) to look beneath the wagon hood and into a black tunnel filled with still eyeballs and smelling like a wolfden” (26-7).
Conversely, the specific details that the limited narrator provides also point to hypothetical narration. Given his hear-say sources, the narrator is giving us more information that we should feel him able.

...as General Compson told his son, Quentin’s father, while the negroes were working Sutpen never raised his voice at them, that instead he led them, caught them at the psychological instant by example, by some ascendancy of forbearance rather than by brute fear. Without dismounting (usually Sutpen did not even greet them with as much as a nod, apparently as unaware of their presence as if they had been idle shades) they would sit in a curious quiet clump as though for mutual protection and watch his mansion rise, carried plank by plank and brick by brick out of the swamp where the clay and timber waited—the bearded white man and the twenty black ones and all stark naked beneath the croaching and pervading mud. (27-8)

The narrator provides too many details, ones that could not have been part of the oral heritage (e.g., Sutpen never nodding and the slaves sitting in a quiet clump watching planks and bricks emerge). Recall that hypothetical narration involves the making-up of parts of the narrative. The narrator uses what remains from his sparse sources to make a good story.

The second half of chapter two is further proof that the first half is hypothetical. Mr. Compson tells (pp. 33-45) part of the Sutpen story (in direct quotation). His account is hypothetical, for inserted throughout his narrative are words of conjecture—such as “perhaps,” “doubtless,” and “it seems”—indicating that he also is making things up as he goes.

So he stopped again doubtless and looked from face to face again, doubtless memorising the new faces, without any haste, with still the beard to hide whatever his mouth might have shown. But he seems to have said nothing at all this time. (35)
Moreover, if you consider that the narrator’s account in the first half of chapter two is purportedly based on oral accounts like Mr. Compson’s, that makes it one generation removed from Mr. Compson’s account. Therefore, if Mr. Compson’s account is extensively hypothetical narration, how much more must the narrator’s account be hypothetical, which is predicated with words of conjecture, how distant from the “facts” the first half must be.

Chapter three, from beginning to end, is nearly a direct continuation of Mr. Compson’s narration—except for the fact that Quentin becomes a more active interlocutor and the formatting changes from a conventional representation of direct discourse to a Faulknerian version of it:

If he threw her over, I wouldn’t think she would want to tell anybody about it
Quentin said.

Ah Mr Compson said again After Mr. Coldfield died…. (46)

And Mr. Compson’s narration continues in the hypothetical:

Perhaps she saw in her father’s death, in the resulting necessity upon her as not only an orphan but a pauper, to turn to her next of kin for food and shelter and protection—and this kin the niece whom she had been asked to save—; perhaps she saw…. (47-8)

Faulkner’s new representation of direct discourse helps to conflate Mr. Compson’s telling with that of the narrator at the beginning of the previous chapter.24

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24 Chapter three continues the project, begun in chapter one and continued in chapter two, of breaking down commonplaces of narration. While chapters one and two confound focalization, chapter three plays with voice. In chapter two, the transition on p. 33 to direct quotation causes us to evaluate whether the first narrative voice (pp. 22-32) is actually the same as the second (pp. 33-45). Close examination reveals that it is not. Chapter three prima facie looks like the beginning of chapter two—conjecture about Sutpen not in direct discourse. We seem to be getting direct discourse, but Faulkner substitutes according to the following guidelines:

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<th>Conventional Narration</th>
<th>Chapter Three</th>
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<td>Standard Font for narrator</td>
<td>Italics for narrator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quotation marks setting off direct quotation (DQ)</td>
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result of this legerdemain is that we begin to see that in *Absalom, Absalom!* two things hold true: 1) those who tell of Sutpen (or history in general) sound similar; and 2) those who tell of Sutpen (or, again, history in general) tend to involve themselves in hypothetical narration.

Chapter four illustrates “slippage” that can occur with hypothetical narration.

The opening paragraph of the chapter begins in the indicative but appears to become hypothetical.

It was still not dark enough for Quentin to start, not yet dark enough to suit Miss Coldfield at least, even discounting the twelve miles out there and the twelve miles back. Quentin knew that. He could almost see her, waiting in one of the dark, airless rooms in the little grim house’s impregnable solitude. She would have no light burning because she would be out of the house soon….She would be wearing already the black bonnet with jet sequins; he knew that: and a shawl, sitting there in the augmenting and defunctive twilight; she would have even now in her hand or on her lap the reticule with all the keys, entrance closet and cupboard, that the house possessed which she was about to desert for perhaps six hours; and a parasol, an umbrella too, he thought, thinking how she would be impervious to weather and season since although he had not spoken a hundred words to her in his life before this afternoon, he did know that she had never before tonight quitted that house after sundown save on Sundays and Wednesdays for prayer meeting, in the entire forty-three years probably. (70)

The paragraph appears to be mostly an indicative account of what Quentin predicted about Rosa…until the last sentence. There, the indicative is mitigated: some or all of what he knew is predicated with “probably.” This is an example of slippage that
occurs with hypothetical narration, where a text appears to be reporting the facts and then is undercut with hypothetical markers. Quentin seems certain that “she would be wearing already the black bonnet with jet sequins,” so certain, in fact, that “he knew [my italics].” Two sentences later, however, “knew” has been downgraded to “thought,” and, just when the certainty of “he did know” returns, it is undermined by the terminal “probably.” Discovering hypothetical narration is not always easy and requires both minute inspection and global reading. While in places this passage seems to have certain focalization, the larger passage indicates that Quentin’s vision is epistemically tenuous.

Chapter four also features good examples of progressive hypothetical narration, the movement in narration from more certain focalization to less certain focalization. Examine the verbs of knowing in Mr. Compson’s description of Henry’s thinking:

“He [Henry] must have known that it [asking Bon not to marry Judith] would be vain, even then, on that Christmas eve, not to speak of what he learned, saw with his own eyes in New Orleans. He may even have known Bon that well by then, who had not changed until than and so would in all probability not change later [my italics];” (72)

Notice how the passage moves from “must have known” to “may even have known,” the former being more epistemically solid than the latter. Another example of progressive hypothetical narration is in Mr. Compson’s description of Bon receiving his officer rank:

“[Bon] received a lieutenancy before the company entered its first engagement even. I don’t think he wanted it; I can even imagine him trying to avoid it, refuse it [my italics].” (98)
Notice how the verbs move from certainty (“received”), to consideration (“don’t think”), to imagination (“can imagine”). Progressive hypothetical narration seems to be more common in Faulkner’s narratives than regressive hypothetical narration, the movement in narration from less certain focalization to more certain focalization.

Another interesting feature of chapter four is the effect produced by numerous narration types. When Bon has his only opportunity to speak directly to us—in his one extant letter—he says practically nothing. What is narratologically interesting about this is how he says so little. The letter uses sparse indicative narration and much disnarration, hypothetical narration (in the second person section), and denarration. Bon says practically nothing substantive because he limits his use of indicative narration, which has the greatest ability to convey thoughts and feelings. Moreover, we should note, since Bon-as-author lacks dynamism—something the countless tales told in Absalom, Absalom! contend repeatedly he has—how much more we should regard the novel’s many narrations about Bon as hypothetical.

Chapter five of Absalom, Absalom! contains much of the novel’s indicative narration and again plays with our expectations about focalization. The majority of the chapter is Rosa’s narration of: 1) the scene after Bon’s death when Wash Jones rides with her to Sutpen’s Hundred (where she tries to pass Clytie and then Judith to see Bon); 2) her sexual desires for a) Bon, whom she never saw but claims to have spied upon, and b) Sutpen; 3) the period when Clytie, Judith, and she lived together at

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25 For more on denarration, cf. Brian Richardson, “Denarration in Fiction: Erasing the Story in Beckett and Others.”
Sutpen’s Hundred during the war; and 4) the Sutpen insult that ended her engagement and drove her from Sutpen’s Hundred.

Within Rosa’s lengthy narration are her first-hand accounts of what actually happened to her, yet interspersed among her indicative narrations lie many sections of hypothetical narration. For example, when she enters the Sutpen house to see Bon’s body, Clytie and Judith eventually stop her from visiting the corpse. That, however, does not discourage her from describing the body “which [she] believed [she] had come to find…:—that bedroom long-closed and musty, that sheetless bed (that nuptial couch of love and grief) with the pale and bloody corpse in its patched and weathered gray crimsoning the bare mattress, the bowed and unwived widow kneeling beside it…” (110). Elsewhere she describes Bon as she apparently spies on him (119) even though in her whole life she never saw him. In fact, her non-indicative narration proceeds ad absurdum, turning into denarration when she says that she has seen his footprint “save for this obliterating rake” (119).

At the end of the chapter we learn something about the purposes of hypothetical narration through a focalization trick. As Rosa recounts her personal history, she addresses it to a “you”—clearly Quentin, who is in her office that September afternoon. By convention we expect that he is the narratee, the one hearing what she is saying. Moreover, we assume that, because Quentin is the only character present, the report we have been getting was focalized by him. Yet at the chapter’s end the narrator tells us otherwise:

Quentin was not listening, because there was also something which he too could not pass—that door, the running feet on the stairs beyond it almost a
continuation of the faint shot, the two women, the negress and the white girl in her underthings...pausing, looking at the door, the yellowed creamy mass of old intricate satin and lace spread careful on the bed and then caught swiftly up by the white girl and held before her as the door crashed in and the brother stood there, hatless, with his shaggy bayonet-trimmed hair, his gaunt worn unshaven face, his patched and faded gray tunic, the pistol still hanging against his flank: the two of them, brother and sister...speaking to one another in short brief staccato sentences...” (139)

We must recall that what Quentin could not pass was something in Rosa’s narration at the beginning of the chapter, where Rosa told about how little she knew except about a “shot” and then Henry climbing the steps of the Sutpen house to tell his sister that he had killed her fiancé:

And how I traversed those same twelve miles...knowing nothing, able to learn nothing save this: a shot heard, faint and far away and even direction and source indeterminate, by two women, two young women alone in a rotting house where no man’s footstep had sounded in two years—a shot, then an interval of aghast surmise above the cloth and needles which engaged them, then feet, in the hall and then on the stairs, running, hurrying, the feet of a man: and Judith with just time to snatch up the unfinished dress and hold it before her as the door burst open upon her brother, the wild murderer whom she had not seen in four years and whom she believed to be...a thousand miles away: and then the two of them, the two accursed children on whom the first blow of their devil’s heritage had but that moment fallen, looking at one another across the up-raised and unfinished wedding dress. (108)

Thus, when the narrator tells us, “Quentin was not listening,” what we thought had been coming to us through Quentin’s focalization as narratee has not. In fact, Rosa’s words have been focalized either by the narrator or by Rosa herself. Moreover, we realize that it is not that she stops talking as much as it is that her words are no longer recorded after the narrator’s voice interrupts to report on Quentin’s aural inattention.

Quentin, then, is in his own little world, mesmerized by the assignation of Henry and Judith, brother and sister. Quentin’s relationship with his own sister,
Caddy, (in *The Sound and the Fury*) has revealed how unlike Henry he is. Quentin is unable to eliminate Caddy’s lover to save her integrity (while Henry was able to).

Quentin psychologically can not move past the scene where Henry admits to his sister that he has killed her lover. In fact, Quentin’s distractions are expressed as hypothetical narration in an imagined dialogue between Henry and Judith.

   Now you can't marry him.
   Why can't I marry him?
   Because he’s dead.
   Dead?
   Yes. I killed him. (139-40)

Thus, the stories being told (by Rosa) and imagined (by Quentin) reveal two purposes for hypothetical narration, both related to impotence: Rosa expresses her impotence while Quentin learns his.

In chapter six we also get the first direct character commentary on hypothetical narration. It might have struck us as odd that, when Shreve proposed that Sutpen had “crystal tapestries” and “Wedgwood chairs,” Quentin confirmed it: “‘Yes,’ Quentin said” (145-6). To understand this we can examine Quentin’s comment at the end of the vision of the gravestones moving through the battle scenes of the Civil War. After Quentin sees the tombstones traveling through Gettysburg and “bog and morass” (154), he believes “he could see it; he might even have been there. Then he thought

*No. If I had been there I could not have seen it this plain*” (155). In this character commentary on hypothetical narration, Quentin reveals an important narratological principle: *hypothetical narration is one way of getting at truth.* Many and different stories can still reveal meaning. A story of chairs that Sutpen brought back—whether
denominated as Louis XIV or the ridiculous porcelain variety—will still imply wealth, and an account of the gravestones being carted through the South—whether accurately recorded by an army historian or hypothesized by Quentin—will still imply the epic nature of Sutpen’s design. The difference is that sometimes contexts call for accuracy and other times for exaggeration.26

Also interesting in this gravestone section is Mr. Compson’s demand for hypothetical narration. In chapter seven we will learn that the narrator believes hypothetical narration is “that best of ratiocination” (225), and here Mr. Compson wishes Quentin to answer his own question about who paid for the other three tombstones using such reasoning. “Think,” he commands (155). This rational demand is, of course, only fifty percent of hypothetical narration; the other half is creatively filling in details through invention.

Chapter seven is comprised greatly of hypothetical narration by Quentin as he tells the story of Sutpen—learned by his grandfather when seeking the fleeing architect (and passed on to Quentin probably via Mr. Compson)—from early childhood in Virginia and North Carolina to the West Indies and Mississippi. Quentin’s hypothetical narration is an extremely good example of this narration type, for it includes much information that is at least second-hand.

…because [Sutpen] just thought that some people were spawned in one place and some in another, some spawned rich (lucky, he may have called it: or maybe he called lucky, rich) and some not, and that (so he told Grandfather) the men themselves had little to do with the choosing and less of the regret because (he told Grandfather this too) it had never once occurred to him that

26 Cf. the epistemological function above.
any man should take any such blind accident as that as authority or warrant to look down at others, any others…. (180).

Yet the story is so detailed that it appears Quentin knows it. Quentin, in fact, seems to know so much that he proffers direct quotations of what Sutpen told his grandfather (and perhaps his grandfather told Mr. Compson, and perhaps Mr. Compson told Quentin).

[Sutpen] told Grandfather how he had put his first wife aside like eleventh and twelfth century kings did: ‘I found that she was not and could never be, through no fault of her own, adjunctive or incremental to the design which I had in mind, so I provided for her and put her aside.’ —telling Grandfather in that same tone while they sat on the log waiting for the niggers to come back with the other guests and the whiskey: ‘So I went to the West Indies. I had had some schooling during a part of one winter, enough to have learned something about them, to realise that they would be most suitable to the expediency of my requirements.’ (194)

Obviously, this is too much detail for Quentin to know, and we realize that this, too, has been made up.

Moreover, the hypothetical nature of much of the novel’s preceding narrative is pointed out in chapter seven after Shreve asks Quentin why Mr. Compson had held that the “trouble between Henry and Bon was the octoroon woman” when the issue was incest (214). Quentin indicates that even his father had not known, until after that September night, an important detail about Sutpen’s history [Bon’s black heritage—not revealed until chapter eight]. It was Quentin who told Shreve about Bon’s black ancestry after talking with Rosa and visiting the Sutpen house. The revelation of this detail at this point in the narrative demonstrates how distant from the “facts” has been Mr. Compson’s narration, not to mention those of others.
Also in chapter seven is an interesting shift in perspective. Shreve interrupts Quentin, and Quentin insists, “Wait, I tell you!…I am telling” (222). Following this is what appears to be a continuation of Quentin’s story, yet it is not set off with quotation marks. It is not until two pages later that we realize that the narrator has just given us what Quentin would have said if it had not been Shreve’s chance to “play a while now” (224). As if this is not complex enough, within this disnarration lies a shift from what Quentin would have said himself to direct quotation of his father saying (or having said) what Quentin apparently would have said himself. Interestingly, this shift—like others in the novel—goes almost unnoticed because Quentin has already identified himself with his father (210), and twelve pages later Quentin realizes that his father’s voice will live on with Quentin’s “friends and acquaintances.” In short, it does not matter who narrates the Sutpen story; it is always the same.

The eighth chapter of *Absalom, Absalom!* presents even more extravagant hypothetical narration than chapter six. Almost all of the narration is Shreve’s, with the exception of places where Shreve is conflated with Quentin. As Shreve (re-)creates the history of the Sutpen family, he introduces elements which apparently have never been heard before, e.g., the lawyer and his bookkeeping:

…to check up about the money would be the lawyer and he (Bon) probably learned that the first thing: that he could go to his mother and hold the lawyer’s feet to the fire anytime, like the millionaire horse has only to come in one time with a little extra sweat on him, and tomorrow he will have a new jock. Sure, that’s who it would be: the lawyer, that lawyer with his private mad female millionaire to farm, who probably wasn’t interested enough in the money to see whether the checks had any other writing on them when she signed

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27 This passage contains hypothetical narration, and is also an example of Young’s “hypothetical discourse.” Notice that on one level hypothetical narration occurs, but on a higher level it is trumped by the frame of disnarration.
them…that lawyer who maybe had the secret drawer in the secret safe and the secret paper in it, maybe a chart with colored pins stuck into it like generals have in campaigns, and all the notations in code: *Today he finished robbing a drunken Indian of a hundred miles of virgin land, val. 25,000. At 2:31 today came up out of swamp with final plank for house. val in conj. with land 40,000. 7:52 p.m. today married. Bigamy threat val. minus nil. unless quick buyer. Not probable. Doubtless conjoined with wife same day. Say 1 year and then with maybe the date and the hour too: Son. Intrinsic val. possible though not probable forced sale of house & land plus val. crop minus child’s one quarter…. (240-1)*

Not only do we get the most extraordinary examples of past hypothetical narration in chapter eight, but also we get the majority of the narrator commentary on the production of hypothetical narration. The narrator, after the introduction of the lawyer, says that Quentin and Shreve are “creating between them, out of the rag-tag and bob-ends of old tales and talking, people who perhaps had never existed at all anywhere” (243). During the account of Sutpen’s first wife talking to Bon and Henry in New Orleans the narrator interrupts to explain that “Shreve had invented” her, yet this creation was “probably true enough” (268). In fact, the narrator adds, Shreve and Quentin “invented” the first-wife’s description, “which was likewise probably true enough.” And on the same page we learn that “[Quentin] and Shreve believed—and were probably right in this too—that the octoroon and the child would have been to Henry only something else about Bon to be…aped.”

The narrator commentary repeats something Quentin earlier discovered: hypothetical narration is one way of getting at truth. Quentin and Shreve spin an incredible, if not ridiculous, tale in chapter eight. Not intending to depict historical facts, however, their exaggerated account does end up sounding like an allegory, a depiction of southern tragedy. Their narrative as history is too ridiculous to actually fit
any specific situation or event, but their narrative as allegory is too true not to fit a multitude of southern tragedies—tragedies of arrogance, of greed, of ignorance, and so on.

Rules of notice should have indicated at the beginning of the book (7), should indicate in the middle setting change (142), and will indicate in the very last words of the novel (303) that people are influenced by Southern struggles. The actors in this influential past are those the narrator refers to as “shadows:”

The two of them creating between them, out of the rag-tag and bob-ends of old tales and talking, people who perhaps had never existed at all anywhere, who, shadows, were shadows not of flesh and blood which had lived and died but shadows in turn of what were (to one of them at least, to Shreve) shades too…. (243)

This is, of course, a nod to Plato. In the cave allegory, the shadow is cast from τὸ ἐτίδος, the form that lies behind the object. As we read Absalom, Absalom!, we sit in a cave, watching a wall, and see Sutpen emerge.

In chapter eight of Absalom, Absalom! we begin to see clearly the fifth function of hypothetical narration—ontological questioning. In this chapter the narrator admits what we have suspected: he is not exactly sure himself what happened in the Sutpen story. Quentin and Shreve, he says, discuss “people who perhaps had never existed [my italics].” It is one thing if characters create internal uncertainty. Just instances of character ignorance, the reader can still be certain that the characters know only part of the story while remaining assured that the narrator knows the rest. But the move to uncertainty on the part of the narrator is another thing. The reader is left wondering if anyone knows what happened.
Brian McHale believes that the movement from the modern to the post-modern involves a shift from questions of epistemology to questions of ontology (9-11). When *Absalom, Absalom!* ends, there remain questions of epistemology—e.g., whether Henry truly adored Bon or whether Rosa was attracted to Sutpen—but there are likely more pressing ontological questions—whether there was a lawyer or whether Bon was really black. More importantly, by the end of chapter eight we begin to wonder in places if an actual story can be recovered from the discourse?

While the hypothetical narration of *Absalom, Absalom!* leads us down a path that not only is incredible in places but also often approaches uncertainty, this does not bother the characters. For to them, remember, hypothetical narration is a means to an end, and this end is a better comprehension of what it means to live with the heritage of the South. Only by struggling with his culture—and in this case the battle is met in narration—can Quentin (along with Shreve) begin to decide whether he loves or hates the South. And so while the story details in places are uncertain, the meaning of the discourse is not: the South’s legacy will impinge upon generations removed in both space and time.

The final chapter of *Absalom, Absalom!* is a coda. It closes the book by returning to issues discussed at the beginning. The plot is resolved as we learn the conclusion to the September visit with Rosa. More importantly, we revisit for the last time the two most important themes of the book: the tragedies of the South and the role of hypothetical narration in understanding them. As the tale of Sutpen—the archetype of the southern tragedy—comes to a close, Shreve creates his last and the
most extravagant hypothetical narration of the book—his racial prophecy. Shreve decides that “the Jim Bonds are going to conquer the western hemisphere…and so in a few thousand years, I who regard you will also have sprung from the loins of African kings” (302). In one way, this is Shreve poking fun at the monster that he and Quentin have created—hypothetical narration of behemoth proportions—but in another way, Shreve uses the preposterous nature of his hypothetical narration for irony: the subtext points out how racist he and Quentin have become.

This chapter-by-chapter analysis of *Absalom, Absalom!* helps us to see that the real payoffs for hypothetical narration involve issues of epistemology and ontology. While hypothetical narration can be interesting in situational contexts, in providing information and mimesis, and in revealing character psychology, the narrative technique excels on abstruse philosophical levels.

The extensive use of hypothetical narration in *Absalom, Absalom!* in the end reveals something about the nature of stories. While, in day to day textual analyses, we may depend upon the strictures of classical narratology’s story/discourse distinction, hypothetical narration *Absalom, Absalom!* shows us that it may be the case that in fiction actually there may be no such thing as story. Instead, there is *truth*, toward which the desire for stories point. That is, perhaps all quests for story are quests for explanatory myths, myths that contain truths about life. Thus, *Absalom, Absalom!* is not about Sutpen, the War, or some other historical character or event; rather, what the focalizers of *Absalom, Absalom!* see and the voices in the novel tell concerns meta-
stories—myths—that discourses can only try to explain through their quest for lower-order (and never real) stories.

Hypothetical narration, Absalom, Absalom! reveals, can allow fiction to move beyond the level of good storytelling. The accurate and artful conveying of story details can not in and of itself convey truths necessary for living. Invention, subtraction, and alteration represent ways that focalizers can convey (through voices of the discourse) what lies behind each story idea. Faulkner’s allusion to Plato is not casual. Truth is ultimately out of reach, but human pulsions never allow us to cease from attempting to grasp full enlightenment.

The details of the Sutpen story, the intricacies of the legacies he left behind, indeed, ontological questions of blackness and even existence, are not the central issues of Absalom, Absalom! when all is said and done; instead, understanding that behind the tragedies of the South lie deeper truths—about, for example, race and love—is the purpose of Faulkner using hypothetical narration in this novel.
CHAPTER 4
PORTRAYAL OF TIME

This chapter examines narrative techniques used by William Faulkner in representing time. Critics have suggested that an interest in temporality is implicit in Southern modernism, 1 and Faulknerians and theorists have spent much energy looking at Faulkner’s view of temporality. The beginning of this chapter offers a survey of criticism that focuses on Faulkner and time; what follows is my own interpretation through examining a handful of Faulkner’s narrative techniques. I will begin looking at three common critical approaches: a) connecting Faulkner to Romantic writers (specifically, John Keats) and their attempt to freeze time in and through writing; b) examining Faulkner’s characters and their relationship to time; and c) explicating Faulkner’s experiential understanding of time. In most of these studies, critics draw connections between the French philosopher Henri Bergson’s philosophical writings on time and Faulkner’s narratives. I will examine this as well as review Faulkner’s own comments on time, where he admits his debt to Bergson.

1 Simone Vauthier states, “A concern with time…has been a salient feature of much modern Southern writing” (3). Vauthier connects this interest to the similar interest of the Romantics (5).
After this survey, I will turn to my own examination of Faulkner’s representation of time. Many critics proffer generalizations about Faulkner’s understanding of time, but few focus on the details comprising it. The bulk of this chapter will focus on four narrative techniques Faulkner uses to portray time. Building on work from the previous three chapters, the techniques that I will examine include: 1) layers of time, especially as compounded with layers of vision and voice; 2) the implementation of what I term asynchronous discourse times; 3) characters focalizing situations or events outside of their present time, one facet of what I term differential focalization settings; and 4) the effacement of time. I will conclude the chapter by examining all four of these techniques at work in a chapter of Absalom, Absalom!

**Critics on Faulkner and Time**

One aspect of time critics examine in Faulkner is the relationship between artists and time. These “Grecian Urn” critics, as I call them, continue developing the early-offered idea of Jean Paul Sartre—suspension—which explains how Faulkner’s narratives seem to have “arrested motion in time” (227). Critics interested in timelessness and art show how the Southern writer’s narratives either represent immortality for the author or are themselves artistic objects for immortality. Ruth Vande Kieft, for example, finds that Absalom, Absalom! “may serve as a comprehensive symbol of [Faulkner’s] relationship to time as an artist. It reveals not only his obsession with time, but his battle against the oblivion which threatens all human achievement” (1100). Accordingly, works like Absalom, Absalom! are intended
to last as long as Sutpen’s design was. Alan Perlis also addresses the artist’s freezing of
time as he looks at *As I Lay Dying*. He sees Darl as an artist-figure who catches “action
in the tension of stopped-time” (104). Both critics link Faulkner to John Keats, whose
poetry often seeks immortality, like that of an object such as a Grecian urn or an
Ozymandian monument. Perlis sums this up, saying that Faulkner “is an idealist in the
manner of a Keats or a Wallace Stevens, who ponder the paradoxical nature of a
conception that embodies action and the passing of time in the rigid and timeless
structure of an art form.”

Other critics focus on Faulkner’s central characters and their relationship to
time. Morris Beja, for example, finds that for a character in Faulkner “to have true
moments of illumination” he must possess a universal “degree of sensibility” and have a
connection to history (133). Inspired characters must “have some sort of orientation
toward the past.” Beja’s example characters include Joe Christmas and Gail Hightower
from *Light in August* and Quentin and Shreve from *Absalom, Absalom!* In a way
similar to Beja, Fran Polek suggests that “successful” characters in Faulkner’s works
adopt a non-linear view of time. They “accept a natural, circular, cognitive time
pattern” (193). They see time as “circular in the sense of its basic relationship to natural
rhythms: days, months, seasons, years, and epochs” (194). Polek suggests that this
perspective determines identity, which “is structured by the belief that all time (past
through memory and future through anticipation) is contained in “now.” He finds that
the circular pattern of time allows values to remain constant, and memory and
anticipation give humans free will. In addition, circularity creates commonality. The
other perspective, that of “a mechanical or linear cognitive time pattern” is evidenced, Polek says, “by a preoccupation with mechanical time symbols such as clocks and calendars” (193-4). Another critic, Dan Ford, offers a useful perspective on Faulkner characters and their relationship to time: “Characters who sense duration—a feeling for time based upon the fluidity of reality—are often central figures in [Faulkner’s] novels” (14).

A third group of critics focuses on the general issue of time throughout Faulkner’s oeuvre, and they find that for Faulkner time is known through experience. Jean Paul Sartre notices that Faulkner seemed to represent time not as separate parts—past, present, and future—but as unified. Everything, for Faulkner, is in the present. “As for Faulkner’s concept of the present, it is not a circumscribed or sharply defined point between past and future. His present is irrational in its essence; it is an event, monstrous and incomprehensible, which comes upon us like a thief—comes upon us and disappears. Beyond this present, there is nothing, since the future does not exist” (226). Sartre, like Polek above, is one of many critics who comment on the American author’s non-linear representation of time.

Numerous other critics focus on non-linearity (though some only examine the past and its relation to the present, disregarding the future). Frederick Hoffman sees a unity in Faulkner’s idea of time. “One almost never sees the present as a pure or separate time; it is infused with the past, it has meaning only in terms of it, and its complex nature results from the fusion of the two” (26). Moving into the mind, Hoffman proposes that for Faulkner time is psychological rather than historical. In this
context Hoffman lays out five time periods that figure into Faulkner’s narratives—A. Edenic past (no historical time); B. Actual Past (1699-1960); C. Major Event (Civil War, 1861-65); D. Recent Past (to 1920); and E. Present (1920 +)—and suggests that characters think about these time periods not linearly, like history; rather, Faulkner’s characters shift from period to period as they experience the world around them and try to understand it. Time functions “largely in the consciousness of his characters…from this major event [Civil War] through the Recent Past (D) to the Present (E)… shifting back and forth between C and E” (25).

Other critics echo the evaluations of Sartre and Hoffman. Vande Kieft talks about “the presentness of the past” (1104), and Ford posits that Faulkner’s sense of time is based on memory and is, therefore, not “sequential” (11). Ford suggests that Faulkner’s understanding of the past is “qualitative,” and this affects how Faulkner structures his narratives. According to Ford, for Faulkner “all experience endures in man’s consciousness,” and this memory “informs” structure, as bits and pieces accrete over the course of each discourse (9). Stephen Ross, after a detailed study of verb tenses and how Faulkner carefully uses “tense to portray consciousness” instead of using tense to portray “temporal order” (“Shapes” 36), suggests that “Faulkner felt free to step out of the regular progression of past-present-future, not believing it necessary to represent time as linear sequence” (39). And Parker reconsiders earlier work by Cleanth Brooks.

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2 Cp. R. W. Franklin, who, in “Narrative Management in As I Lay Dying” (1967), asserts that Faulkner’s “narrative management” in As I Lay Dying is “faulty” (65). This prior study is based on verb tense differences.

re-thinking Brooks’s analysis of a number of “discrepancies” (Parker 191) in *Absalom, Absalom!* including ones of chronology, and proposes that Faulkner intentionally left “errors”—obfuscated hints at his implied author’s “pose” (195)—in order to show time as experience. That is, an ideal representation of time would be wholly linear—this…then this…then this…and so on—and therefore not human; instead, time as experienced by people is imperfect.

Among these generalists a great number refer to Henri Bergson freely, claiming that Faulkner drew heavily from the Frenchman’s ideas. ⁴ James Hutchinson, for example, cites how Bergson “anticipated” ideas about the past within the present (96), and Ford says, “Like Bergson, Faulkner was convinced that all experience endures in man’s consciousness. Memory is a subsisting *was*. The past is ever-present” (9). Ross, referring to the connection between Faulkner and Bergson, adds, “Bergson’s conception of ‘pure duration,’ not linear, mechanical time…guides Faulkner’s choices and experiments in *As I Lay Dying*” (“Shapes of Time” 730).

**Bergson on Time**

Indeed, the idea of non-linear time was promulgated by the French philosopher shortly before Faulkner began publishing. In his writings, Bergson theorizes much about temporality. In *Creative Evolution*, for example, Bergson examines ancient and modern thought in order to understand the contemporary view of time. He finds that while the ancients studied concepts, modernists study laws (325-33). He suggests,

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⁴ Henri Bergson, 1859-1941.
therefore, that modern scientists fragment the world to understand how laws apply to it and that these scientists do this in order to be able to use the resources of the world.

Moreover, he suggests that for scientists to be able to make predictions about the world—the step necessary for utilizing it—the introduction of time is necessary (334). Unfortunately, this causes modern science to segment time disinterestedly—to segment temporality in a way that it becomes cut off from the way people naturally experience it. Discrete junctures in physical processes are examined—such as plotting a projectile’s arc over time—with the goal of predicting change, but this is done without an eye to what the Frenchman, like the ancients, refers to as “flux” (337). The modern view embraces determinism and ignores the flux’s creative element—*becoming*. Yet, since future is creation, for Bergson “real time, regarded as a flux, or, in other words, as the very mobility of being, escapes the hold of scientific knowledge” (337).

Within this framework Bergson introduces his concept of duration (*la durée*)—time in the sense of change. For Bergson the past and the future are contained in the present—the present moment being comprehensive. “There is a succession of states, each of which announces that which follows and contains that which precedes it. They can, properly speaking, only be said to form multiple states when I have already passed them and turn back to observe their track. Whilst I was experiencing them they were so solidly organized, so profoundly animated with a common life, that I could not have said where any one of them finished or where another commenced. In reality no one of them begins or ends, but all extend into each other” (*Metaphysics* 25). Generally, then, Bergson’s point across his works about time is this: time is a rational explanation of
something that can only be understood through intuition. “Pure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself live, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states” (Time 100).

Faulkner on Time

The critics, however, are not the only ones to see the connections between Faulkner and Bergson; Faulkner himself was quite aware of the similarity between his own writings and Bergson’s. In an interview with Loic Bouvard, for example, Faulkner said that he agreed “pretty much with Bergson’s theory of the fluidity of time. There is only the present moment, in which I include both the past and the future, and that is eternity” (70). And in other places Faulkner reinforces ways in which his view of time comports with the French thinker’s. In an interview with Jean Stein vanden Heuvel, Faulkner refers to his “own theory” about time, holding “that time is a fluid condition which has no existence except in the momentary avatars of individual people” (255).5

Of course, we should be careful of Faulkner’s autobiographical statements, as these often were intended to effect poses of authority; rather, we are much better to turn to Faulkner’s narratives themselves in order to determine Faulkner’s understanding of temporality. What follows in the entirety of this chapter is a detailed analysis of a handful of Faulkner novels and a short story, in which I seek to uncover Faulkner’s narrative techniques for depicting time. With the exception of a short list of critics, few

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5 In “Barn Burning” Faulkner’s narrator refers to time as “the fluid world” (5).
scholars have examined narrative representation of time in great detail. Eventually I shall make claims about Faulkner and his understanding of time, but I hope to avoid the error of generalization by fully substantiating my temporal claims. To provide a firm foundation for my reading of Faulkner and time, I will now turn to the following narrative techniques Faulkner uses in portraying time: layers of time; asynchronous discourse times; differential focalization settings; and effacement of time.

**Layers of Time**

The first narrative technique Faulkner uses to portray time involves layering, a technique much like what we saw with vision and voice in chapters one and two. The central text for my investigation of time layering will be “Barn Burning,” where we will examine how the discourse jumps around from story time to story time. At the beginning of “Barn Burning,” for example, the discourse focuses on the events in a general store at the turn of the century, but the narrator quickly turns his attention elsewhere. Soon we read about a stray pig and an ensuing argument, which leads to Abner Snopes allegedly burning down Mr. Harris’s barn. While the discourse places these events in this order—first the general store, then the pig/barn burning—in the story the pig/barn burning incident occurs before the court session. In fact, the court session is called to settle the Harris’s claim against Abner for the alleged barn burning.

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6 Two examples of detailed analyses included, bad and good, respectively, are R. W. Franklin’s “Narrative Management in *As I Lay Dying*” and Stephen Ross’s response to Franklin, “Shapes of Time and Consciousness in *As I Lay Dying*."

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If we continue reading the discourse, we find that it is consistently disjointed—the discourse ranging non-sequentially to and from different periods of the story.

Examining these time shifts in the discourse, I propose, can help us understand Faulkner’s view of time, but, first, to discuss temporal movements within narrative discourses with precision will require developing both a precise way of identifying when shifts occur and a clear method for describing them. Gerard Genette, in Narrative Discourse, provides a basis for both. In his first chapter on order, Genette discusses time in narratives. There, he discusses just what happens in “Barn Burning,” when discourses move back and forth in their presentation of story time. He refers to these shifts as anachronies—“all forms of discordance between the two temporal orders of story and narrative” (40). That is, when a discourse at any point breaks from the next successive story element, an anachrony occurs. Genette describes two types of anachronies. The first is prolepsis, “any narrative maneuver that consists of narrating or evoking in advance an event that will take place later.” This is also known as a flashforward. The second is analepsis, “any evocation after the fact of an event that took place earlier than the point in the story where we are at any given moment.” This is also known as a flashback.

Furthermore, Genette identifies three types of prolepses and three types of analepses: external, internal, and mixed. To understand these terms, it is first necessary to posit a “first narrative,” the first temporal level we reach in whatever text (or section) we are investigating (Genette, Narrative Discourse 48). Put more simply, the first narrative refers to the (time of the) story being told when the discourse begins. Thus,
external prolepses occur completely after the time of the first narrative. That is, an external flashforward begins and ends—covers a time period—completely after the last event of the work’s first narrative. Similarly, internal prolepses occur completely within the time period of the first narrative. And, mixed prolepses cross from inside the period of the first narrative to end somewhere outside the first narrative. External, internal, and mixed analepses are defined likewise but reciprocally (Genette 49).

From these concepts, Genette develops a system of representation which allows us, after identifying specific points of anachronic shifts, to show the story’s order in the discourse. If we look at the beginning discourse of “Barn Burning,” we find that it begins with the story of the court session in the general store. “The store in which the Justice of the Peace’s court was sitting smelled of cheese. The boy, crouched on his nail keg…” (3). (This comprises the first narrative.) Time then shifts as Mr. Harris relates the earlier story of Abner Snopes’s peripatetic pig and pyromania.

‘I told you. The hog got into my corn. I caught it up and sent it back to him. He had no fence that would hold it. I told him so, warned him. The next time I put the hog in my pen. When he came to get it I gave him enough wire to patch up his pen. The next time…” (3). (This comprises the first narrative.) Time then shifts as Mr. Harris relates the earlier story of Abner Snopes’s peripatetic pig and pyromania.

Then, the discourse returns to the court session. “‘Get that boy up here. He knows.’ For a moment the boy thought too that the man meant his older brother…” (4). According to Genette, each different, successive story time is labeled alphabetically. Thus, “Barn Burning’s” first three discourse sections cover periods A B C. Next, Genette adds time

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7 Cf. Genette’s chapter in *Narrative Discourse* on “Order,” specifically pp. 35-47.

8 This introductory model is intended only to represent the first three time periods. Soon I will expand the model to cover all time periods in “Barn Burning.”
designations which are based on story order. If we examine these first three sections of “Barn Burning” there are two distinct times, the time of the court session and the time of the pig/barn burning incident. Since the pig/barn burning incident occurs first, it is labeled “1,” and the later court session is labeled “2.” Genette’s model now looks like this: A2-B1-C2. Furthermore, we can identify the nesting of anachronies in this model by placing brackets/parentheses around prolepses and analepses. Thus, Genette’s complete description of the first three sections of “Barn Burning” looks like this: A2[B1]C2.9

Genette’s seminal work gives us a way both to identify and to describe shifts in time in narratives. Indeed, this approach allows us to identify 24 layers of time in “Barn Burning.”10 There is the first narrative—Sarty’s experiences from the first courtroom scene to his final flight—twelve periods before this, and eleven periods after this. For example, in one place the narrator explains Abner’s limp, from a wound “where a Confederate provost’s man’s musket ball had taken him in the heel on a stolen horse thirty years ago” (5). This is time \( d \). In another place, the narrator refers to an axe “which his mother and aunt had earned, or saved money somehow, to present him with at Christmas” (16-7). This is \( i \). The Harris barn incident, not voiced by the narrator but by Harris, is time \( j \).

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9 Genette’s system is developed in *Narrative Discourse* before he discusses mixed and internal anachronies. His model appears to represent only external anachronies.

10 My count of 24 layers includes only mixed and external anachronies. Below I will add internal anachronies to our discussion.
Other times occur after the first narrative. For example, the Judge refers to when Abner will “come to the commissary” (16), sometime within, say, the next month, time \( n \). The narrator points to a time twenty years in the future. “Later, twenty years later, he was to tell himself ‘If I had said they wanted only truth, justice, he would have hit me again’” (8). This is time \( t \). And the narrator refers how Abner in “later years would cause his descendants to over-run the engine before putting a motor car into motion, striking and reining back in the same movement” (6). This is time \( w \). (For a full account of the 24 time periods, see Figure 9 below.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Alph. Code</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>(perhaps all) time before m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>Europe since the Middle Ages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>time of 18th century ballad “Malbrouck Has Gone to War”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>30 years before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>time before m—back approx. 30 years (to Abner’s birth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>time before older brother’s birth (approx. 11-16 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>approx. 10-15 years before m (1861-65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>h</td>
<td>time before m—up to 10 years (up to Sarty’s birth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>last Christmas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>Harris hog/barn incident (prob. a few months before m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>time before m—one week and before (up to Sarty’s birth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>time before Monday night (up to Sarty’s birth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>barn burning story (general store to dark woods)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Abner comes to the commissary (approx. &lt; 1 month)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>short term future up to 6 months from m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>time up to 8 months from m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>q</td>
<td>8 months from m (corn picking in October)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>5-10 years after m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>10-20 years after m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>exactly 20 years after m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>u</td>
<td>the rest of Abner’s life after m (perhaps 35 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>v</td>
<td>the rest of Sarty’s life after m (perhaps 55 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>w</td>
<td>time of Abner’s descendants (approx. 20-50 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>all time after m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9. Times in “Barn Burning”


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11 This is charted from the beginning of the narration to page 9, line 9. Genette also adds markers above and below—“A” and “P” markings with brackets—to indicate what sections are encompassed in analepses and prolepses. (Cf. Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, p. 41).
anachronies, for 89 time shifts in the discourse, and it ends with CC12. My question is: does this help us understand how Faulkner layers time? The short answer is yes, and at this point we could move on to examining how the model developed by Genette can help us understand Faulkner’s view of time. I would propose, however, that improving the model for representing time shifts will help us better understand Faulkner’s representation of temporality. Let us, therefore, turn to improvements first.

The sketch above of what Genette’s model would look like for Faulkner’s short story “Barn Burning”—cumbersome to say the least—suggests how incomprehensible such an approach would be for a novel. I propose that we try using a graph that can present the data produced by Genette’s theoretical terminology in a better and more comprehensible way. We can graph our data by plotting story times over the unfolding of the discourse. That is, we first indicate the nearest thing to discourse time we can get—pages or even line numbers—along the $x$ axis\(^\text{12}\) and then plot the story times described at each discourse time on the $y$ axis.\(^\text{13}\) In creating the graph, vertical bars of varying width for each story time period (i.e., A B C…) would be drawn above the discourse page index.\(^\text{14}\) Using this method, a graph can represent visually all of

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\(^{12}\) Page numbers, it appears to me, are the most consistent discourse increment, but there are other ways to index discourse time. For example, the $x$ axis could represent average reading time. Measurements of eye movement, brain activity, etc. could show the average time required to read each paragraph, sentence, even word. If not overkill, the enormous time required to accumulate this data seemingly would provide only negligible advantages over page numbers.

\(^{13}\) In many cases the story times will not be drawn to linear proportions due to limitations of printing. Some texts might cover hundreds or thousands of years—perhaps even referring to infinite periods—yet focus on only a few days or even hours of story time. To graph, say, one reference to the world before computers and numerous events over a few days in 2002 requires graphs that are disproportional if less precise or logarithmic, exponential, etc. if more precise.

\(^{14}\) I have plotted each time period (A, B, C, etc.) with a vertical bar or in cases of only brief mentions of the story time, what looks like a line. While I realize that each of these plottings should be lines and that
Faulkner’s external and even his mixed anachronies. Figure 10 below describes all time shifts within “Barn Burning.” As the graph shows, the first narrative ($m$) is constantly interrupted by other times. And, while the graph makes it clear that $m$ is not only the first narrative but also the main story—what I am informally calling the ‘focus’ of the discourse—it also makes it clear that the many other story times ($a$-$l$ and $n$-$x$) are important and presented quite unsequentially.

these lines should have slopes indicating the advancement of story time with discourse time, I prefer to have the chart indicate merely which discourse time unit the story time is within, mostly for reasons of simplification. A chart similar to Figure 10 could be produced indicating slope, but it would require: 1) extremely intricate analysis to determine the slope of each line at each moment and 2) a much larger and more precise medium of representation. The returns of such efforts would seem negligible.
Another advantage of graphing time shifts is that graphing depicts *events* and *periods*. By *events* I mean points in time with no extension or duration, and by *periods* I mean stretches of time with extension or duration. For example, in “Barn Burning” time *i* represents an event: when Sarty received his “half-size axe” last Christmas (16). This happened at a discrete and finite point in time, and it is represented by no vertical extension. On the other hand, time *h* represents all of Sarty’s life, during which he has seen those same “niggard” blazes (7) and watched the family move from home to home (7). Sarty’s life extends over much time, or put differently, is comprised of infinitely many points in time between his birth and death. The boy’s life is represented by vertical extension because it stretches out over story time. To this end, graphing the story time data of “Barn Burning” not only indicates that 24 different events and periods are present but also shows the length of story time that each of these 24 covers.

Similarly, graphing also depicts the length of discourse time each of these story periods is discussed. That is, the horizontal width of each line or bar suggests whether the discourse spends a little or a lot of time discussing that particular story time. Genette’s model does not represent either form of temporal extension; thus, our new way of describing time shifts exceeds Genette’s model in that it allows us to see the narratives in simple, two-dimensional ways and represent both story and discourse duration.15

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15 While graphing does not make nested narratives as obvious, an examination of the shifts can still reveal this. These are still visible by following closely where each shift occurs, as on p. 16 where the order is *heupnoum*:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\{h\} \text{ “It cost a hundred dollars.} \\
&\{e\} \text{ But you never had a hundred dollars.} \\
&\{u\} \text{ You never will.} \\
&\{p\} \text{ So I’m going to charge you twenty bushels of corn against your crop. I’ll add it in your contract} \\
&\{n\} \text{ and} \\
&\{o\} \text{ when you come to the commissary you can sign it.} \\
&\{o\} \text{ That won’t keep Mrs. de Spain quiet but} \\
&\{u\} \text{ maybe it will teach you to wipe your feet off before you enter her house again.”} \\
&\{m\} \text{ 1PN Then he was gone…}
\end{align*}
\]
Our graphical model reveals something about the way Faulkner views time. As we look at our “Barn Burning” graph, we see several things about Faulkner’s handling of time. First, Faulkner does not tell his story sequentially but instead prefers to jump around in time. Secondly, Faulkner has a main story to tell—in the case of “Barn Burning” one that occurred over a central time—but the time of the first narrative is in no way the only time important to the narrative. To this end, critics often refer to Faulkner’s use of multiple times using terms such as layers or planes of time, and they have commented on the major effect of this technique: the tendency to blur time distinctions (Slaughter 74, Rio-Jelliffe 102, Matlack 333). They point out how, by interweaving flashbacks and flashforwards (prolepses and analepses), Faulkner is able to erase “the distinction between now and not now” (Matlack 333). Faulkner “recasts old formulas, like the flashback, and fabricates flashforwards and time layerings” (Rio-Jelliffe 102) as the Southern writer “ranges non-sequentially over the past” (Dan Ford 9) and present.

While these critics have noticed layering, none has gone so far as to study the extensive nature of layering and its effect or exactly how layering’s effect is achieved. I would suggest that the precise application of Genette’s terms and the improved graphical representation of the derived data helps with both. The above approach allows us to see the vast temporal stretches covered by Faulkner’s layers of time. Moreover, our graph efficiently shows not just layers but also the frequency of shifts. In the case of “Barn Burning,” there are 89.
The net effect of our graphing is to see that *so many and so frequent shifts tend to blur the story’s time*. This data in hand, we can see clearly how Faulkner gives us the main story of Sarty’s maturation, but this story is inextricably blended with events past and future. Seeing the equivocal references to 11 time periods before the main story and 11 periods after the main story—all frequently intermixed with the main story—better substantiates what Slaughter calls “entanglement.” And the effect of the frequent shifts, of the layering of time, is confusion—confusion that leads us to wonder, as Slaughter does (74): “When is the story?” While there is clearly a “main story,” this is not the whole picture. The whole picture, is, in fact, one created many years before and many years after the events depicted in the central story, \( m \). Faulkner wishes to show how what happened in the past and what will happen in the future are inextricably bound in what is presently happening. The present contains the past and the future. Faulkner narratives, therefore, tend to be as universal as they tend to be panchronic—i.e., a story appeals to so many people, in so many places partially due to the way it covers so much time.\(^{16}\)

We should not stop our analysis of layers of time with the Genette-derived graph, for we should examine an additional layering of time in “Barn Burning” that neither Genette’s alphanumeric coding nor my graph represents: internal anachronies (internal to the first narrative). An inspection of “Barn Burning” reveals that within the entirety of time \( m \) occur 38 internal analepses and 8 internal prolepses. For example, an internal analepsis occurs only seven paragraphs into the narrative. In the first paragraph,\(^{16}\)

\[^{16}\text{Depending on how we read the incidents related to times “a” and “x,” we have represented periods infinitely before “m” and infinitely after “m.”}\]
Sarty feels “despair and grief” (3). Six paragraphs later we read, “He aims for me to lie, he thought, again with that frantic grief and despair” (4). Here the reference to thinking “again” carries us back six paragraphs, and looking back we realize that the grief/despair in paragraph one and in paragraph seven are within the stretch of time encompassed by the \( m \), the first narrative. Sometimes, such internal analepses are even doubled, as when Sarty and Abner approach Major de Spain’s house for the first time. Sarty, following his father, “looked again at the stiff black back [of his father]” (10). Again proleptically throws us back from our present position in the story to two previous points in \( m \) when Abner’s back is perceived by Sarty: the retreat from the session of the first court (5) and when on the same day his father takes him up the starlit road to strike and then lecture him (8).

Similarly, prolepses occurs internal to \( m \). The prolepses are as simple as the narrator telling about the bed “where his father would later lie” (14) or more complexly at the end of the narrative, where the dawning day and its effects on the matured Sarty are frequently interwoven. “The slow constellations wheeled on. It would be dawn and then sun-up after a while and he would be hungry. But that would be tomorrow and now he was only cold, and walking would cure that. His breathing was easier now…” (25). Again, like the external/mixed anachronies above, this type of internal prolepsis blends the layers of time even within the main narrative \( m \). As readers, we not only must

\[17 \text{ Cf. John Irwin, Doubling and Incest/Repetition and Revenge, for an extensive treatment of doublings in Absalom, Absalom!}.\]

\[18 \text{ Indeed, the last paragraph of “Barn Burning” is likely as good an example of internal prolepses as will be found in literature.}\]
struggle with 24 layers of time outside the main narrative, we are faced with the destabilizing movement back and forth within the main narrative itself.¹⁹

These internal analepses and prolepses—along with the internal components of mixed anachronies, we should say—function like layers of time within layers of time. That is, they compound the effect created by external and mixed anachronies by adding layers upon layers within the discourse’s treatment of the main story. Internal anachronies bring the past and future into the present in perhaps the strongest way. Material that we might have considered to be merely in the story’s present we are forced to consider as already completed or soon to happen. That is, internal anachronies force us to recognize the precision the linear view of time implies—everything is either past or present unless it is happening right now—by making us realize that, for example, the mere mention of “again” invokes what may have just happened, the emphasis on the past tense. The careful displacement of main story events into past and present forces us into an uncomfortable spot, for as readers we feel a presentness of the story. This discomfort, intentional by Faulkner, reveals the liability of viewing time as linear. The “present” story is, in fact, quite present for us, even in its anachronic incidents.

As if time layers are not enough to show how the present contains the past and the future, we must realize that the layering of time in Faulkner works in concert with the layerings of vision and voice, two techniques we examined in chapters one and two.

¹⁹ While I have not included a model representing the variety of internal time level shifts, it is not hard to imagine using the above approach of Graph 4-1 to model the internal anachronies of I. We would end up with another graph showing, page by page, the jumps forward and backward within the main narrative.
Numerous critics, we should note, have noticed this compounding—even in “Barn Burning.” Rio-Jelliffe finds that Faulkner “interweaves two points of view and voices or styles” and connects this to the interweaving of time (102). Rio-Jelliffe says, “Faulkner’s primary strategy in “Barn Burning” is to counterpoint the contrary views and voices of the bewildered child and the knowledgeable man he becomes…”(103). And Mortimer identifies “narrative shifts…between Sarty’s interior reactions and level of comprehension and the perspective of the omniscient narrator” (128), while Marilyn Claire Ford adds time (through maturation) to this, saying that “Barn Burning” is textured “with a multiple narrative presence: the narrator; the young, traumatized Sarty; and the mature Sarty” (527).

Again, these surveys have headed in the right direction but they, too, lack narratologically precise data. Utilizing data from chapter one above, that there are 19 focalizers in “Barn Burning,” we can ask now, what happens here if we combine the layering of time with the layering of focalization? That is, what happens if we plot those 19 perceivers onto the 24 time periods?

What we find, first, is that 19 of the 24 times are perceived by more than one focalizer: the time of the main story, \( m \), is perceived by 24 focalizers; \( j \) is perceived by five; \( p \) is perceived by four; \( e, f, h, n, o, q \), and \( u \) are perceived by three; and \( a, b, g, l, r, s, t, v, \) and \( x \) are perceived by two. (Just \( c, d, i, k, \) and \( w \) are perceived by one.) Looking at the data in terms of focalizers, we find that those who perceive on multiple time

---

20 While I have marked 20 different focalizers, one is subsumed under another since “one of the sisters” (9) is later subsumed under either “the first [sister]” or “the second [sister]” (13).
layers include: the narrator on all 24 layers of time, the boy on 17, Major de Spain on 7, Abner on 4, and Mr. Harris and “somebody/anybody” on 2 each. See Figure 11 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Layers</th>
<th>Focalizers (see Figures 1 &amp; 9 for abbreviations)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td>N,X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td>N,B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
<td>N,B,P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
<td>N,B,A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td>N,B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
<td>N,B,P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j</td>
<td>1,2,3,4,5</td>
<td>N,B,H,R,A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td>N,A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
<td>N,B,P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
<td>N,B,P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
<td>N,B,A,P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
<td>N,B,K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td>N,B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td>N,B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td>N,B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
<td>N,B,P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td>N,B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td>N,B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Time m has only 18 focalizers, since S is subsumed under Y or Z.

Figure 11. Time, Layers, and Focalization in “Barn Burning”

Since each focalizer is unique—from a different family, from a different place, and of a different age—when we overlay all of the focalizers onto the 24 layers of time, we see two things. First, we see that the understanding that the past and future conflate into the present reaches the reader through the narrative’s agents. That is, we derive an
understanding of temporality by seeing this understanding played out by the characters and through the narrator as the focalizers in the short story are the ones who experience the layering of time. It is from their lives—perceiving at different times—that the story comes to us. For example, in “Barn Burning” perception shifts to Sarty over 250 times, and these perceptions derive from 17 distinct periods of time. For example, Sarty sees: the “time before the birth of the older brother even when he had been a professional horsetrader” (19-20), time $f$; the approximately eight months until harvest during which Abner will be charged “twenty bushels of corn” (16), time $p$; and “forever and always” (17), time $x$. When we contemplate temporality based on our reading of “Barn Burning,” we see that the characters are understood through their development over the duration of multiple times. That is, Sarty is what he is because he is made up of what has happened, is happening, or will (or “might”$^{22}$) happen during these 17 time periods.

Secondly, that a great number of layers of time are perceived by multiple focalizers suggest something that we are going to see more clearly emphasized below as I treat Faulkner’s second technique for portraying temporality, asynchronous discourse times: Faulkner posits that people perceive time differently. That is, Faulkner’s unification of time through layering—all moments contained in the present—is taken one step further through multiple focalizers. Once we see that there is only one time, the present, we then must see that this one present time is something individual, not universal. That is, time is experiential. Each of the characters experiences unified time

$^{21}$ The number of time periods would be higher if we included internal anachronies.

$^{22}$ Cf. “Barn Burning” p. 7 for what “might” happen when Sarty is “older” and “older still.”
in his own way. To see fully how Faulkner emphasizes this concept, however, we must wait until the second technique on time below. Before turning to this, however, we must examine one more compounding, the addition of voice layers to the layers of time and focalization.

Based on the principles from chapter two above, we find that there are 16 voices in “Barn Burning.” 23 We have the voice of the narrator who dominates the text from the beginning, and we have 1) the interior monologues of Sarty (distinguished by some of the italics—“our enemy…ourn! Mine and hisn both! He’s my father!”(1630)) and 2) many examples of direct discourse of characters. Thus, our list of voices include the narrator, Sarty, two Justices of the Peace, Mr. Harris, Abner, an anonymous child’s voice, the mother, Sarty twenty years later, Sarty’s two sisters, Major de Spain’s servant, Lula de Spain, Major de Spain, the brother, and the aunt. For example, Lula de Spain asks Abner to go away after staining her rug with horse manure (12): “‘Will you please go away?’ she said in a shaking voice. ‘Major de Spain is not at home. Will you please go away?’” Lennie, Sarty’s mother, screams when Abner decides to burn down Major de Spain’s barn (20): “Abner! No! No! Oh, God. Oh, God. Abner!” And Sarty’s unnamed brother suggests how to keep Sarty from telling Major de Spain about their conflagration plans: “Better tie him up to the bedpost” (22).

When we combine voice with time, we find that 15 voices speak from or about 24 different times. Again, we need to ask what effect adding 15 voices to 24 times has. Plotting the voices over the time layers, we find that five voices speak from or about

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23 The undifferentiated sister (S) is subsumed under either sister one (Y) and sister two (Z).
multiple time layers: the narrator from or about 17 times, Major de Spain 8, Sarty 7, the second Justice of the Peace 2, and Mr. Harris 2. See Figure 12 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voice</th>
<th>Time Periods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Abner</td>
<td>(1) m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Boy (Sarty)</td>
<td>(8) e, g, j, m, o, q, t, v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Older brother</td>
<td>(1) m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H Harris</td>
<td>(2) j, m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J Justice of the Peace 1</td>
<td>(1) m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K Justice of the Peace 2</td>
<td>(2) m, q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L Lula de Spain</td>
<td>(1) m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Mother, Lennie Snopes</td>
<td>(1) m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N Narrator</td>
<td>(17) a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, k, l, m, r, s, t, u, w</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O Negro at Major de Spain’s</td>
<td>(1) m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P Major de Spain</td>
<td>(7) e, k, m, n, o, p, q, u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S Undifferentiated Sister</td>
<td>(1) m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T Aunt</td>
<td>(1) m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V Voice (of child in crowd)</td>
<td>(1) m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y Sister One</td>
<td>(1) m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z Sister Two</td>
<td>(1) m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 12. Voices and Time in “Barn Burning”

The addition of 15 voices to the 24 time layers again suggests the presentness of the past and future. The multitude of voices that come from outside the present but congregate in the present break down the traditional barriers of time. We experience all voices in the here and now of the story, in the here and now of reading.

Now we can fully combine our narrative analysis. We have 24 layers of time (along with 46 cases of internal anachrony), 19 focalizers, and 15 voices. The combinations of these narrative components are blinding. The result is that we lose sight of narrative time, narrative vision, and narrative voice. The complex nexus of time,
vision, and voice challenges us to find a way to understand story time, for we must try to reconstruct what happened out of a vast number of chronologically-discontiguous events—comprised of numerous times, visions, and voices. Only by understanding that sequence is less important than experience and that the individual is more important than the universal can we comprehend Faulkner’s narrative. “Barn Burning,” like so many other Faulkner narratives, implements multiple layering techniques to represent the human view of time. Non-linear, psychological, and individual, Faulkner’s time does not extend into the past and the future in a theoretical way; rather, time is a way of expressing what is always present for each individual through experience.

Asynchronous Discourse Times

The second narrative technique that helps us understand Faulkner’s view of time is the implementation of what I call asynchronous discourse times. A good example of asynchronous discourse times occurs in chapter five of Absalom, Absalom! Chapter five, from the first page through the middle of the last (pp. 107-39), is entirely in italics, indicating that the entirety of this section is direct narration by Rosa to her narratee, Quentin. A shift to Roman-style font on the last page helps indicate this. Thus readers are allowed to hear exactly what Rosa was saying to Quentin. We “listen in” as Rosa, over the 32 page span, recounts the scene after Bon’s death, explains her sexual desires (for Bon and then Sutpen), tells of the period when Clytie, Judith, and she lived together, and refers to the Sutpen insult that drove her from her engagement to Sutpen.
The following passage, which predictably ends with no conclusion, is typical of her prolix account.

Now you will ask me why I stayed there. I could say, I do not know, could give ten thousand paltry reasons, all untrue, and be believed:—that I stayed for food, who could have combed ditch-banks and weed-beds, mad and worked a garden as well at my own home in town as here, not to speak of neighbors, friends whose alms I might have accepted, since necessity has a way of obliterating from our conduct various delicate scruples regarding honor and pride; that I stayed for shelter, who had a roof of my own in fee simple now indeed; or that I stayed for company… (123).

What is interesting here in terms of time has to do with the discontinuity between what we as readers hear Rosa say and what Quentin actually heard, for when we reach the chapter’s last page—where Rosa does not stop, but rather her words simply are no longer recorded—the interrupting narrator (in Roman-style font) offers us a surprise: “Quentin was not listening” (139).

Quentin was not listening, because there was also something which he too could not pass—that door, the running feet on the stairs beyond it almost a continuation of the faint shot, the two women, the negress and the white girl in her underthings…pausing, looking at the door, the yellowed creamy mass of old intricate satin and lace spread careful on the bed and then caught swiftly up by the white girl and held before her as the door crashed in and the brother stood there, hatless, with his shaggy bayonet-trimmed hair, his gaunt worn unshaven face, his patched and faded gray tunic, the pistol still hanging against his flank: the two of them, brother and sister…speaking to one another in short brief staccato sentences.…

Backtracking to what Quentin could not pass in Rosa’s narration, we reach where Rosa told about Henry’s death. She tells how little she knew except that there was a “shot” and then Henry climbed the steps of the Sutpen house to tell his sister that he had killed her fiancé:

And how I traversed those same twelve miles…knowing nothing, able to learn nothing save this: a shot heard, faint and far away and even direction and
source indeterminate, by two women, two young women alone in a rotting house where no man’s footstep had sounded in two years—a shot, then an interval of aghast surmise above the cloth and needles which engaged them, then feet, in the hall and then on the stairs, running, hurrying, the feet of a man: and Judith with just time to snatch up the unfinished dress and hold it before her as the door burst open upon her brother, the wild murderer whom she had not seen in four years and whom she believed to be...a thousand miles away: and then the two of them, the two accursed children on whom the first blow of their devil’s heritage had but that moment fallen, looking at one another across the up-raised and unfinished wedding dress. (108)

The unbelievable thing is that this is 31 pages back! Rosa’s lengthy account to Quentin consumed much narrative time. Her story must have taken a long time to tell—likely even longer than it takes us to read it silently. If we were to use a stopwatch to time an oral reading of Rosa’s talking—from Rosa’s account of the fraternal ascension and confession to just before the narrator’s revelation that Quentin had not been listening—it would take perhaps 20 to 30 minutes. Yet Quentin was not listening. Quentin apparently was doing something else. Quentin was likely consumed by the weight of what happened—that Henry was able to kill his sister’s lover while Quentin had been unable to do the same to his sister’s lover (in The Sound and the Fury)—and therefore lost track of time. We could suppose that time seemed to pass more quickly for him than for Rosa during this period, but, of course, an argument that the torture of considering another brother who could do what he himself could not do might have made the time that Rosa prolixly talked seem even longer than it did for Rosa. Nonetheless, based on our own experiences with time, we can suppose that Quentin sensed that the time between pages 108 and 139 passed differently than it did for Rosa.

It is the narrative itself—the discourse, not the story—that produces this effect, for only by creating a lengthy discourse for Rosa, which consumes much reading time,
does it allow us to experience Rosa’s time and then infer Quentin’s time. The pattern is:  
1. present a discourse that implies a sense of how long it took for the passing of a given  
interval of story time; 2. present in the same work additional discourse that creates an  
alternative sense of the passing of the same interval of story time. The conjunction of  
the two apparently unaligned or asynchronous times produces what I am calling  
asynchronous discourse times. In such cases Faulkner’s discourse presents story time—  
quite linear—as it was felt or experienced by the characters. Faulkner shows that for  
individuals, time is not merely the ticking of a clock, the marking of time in intervals of  
60 seconds, 60 minutes, or 24 hours, but rather an experience, something felt differently  
by different people. In the example above, asynchronous discourse times show how  
Rosa’s temporal experience while she narrates is different from Quentin’s temporal  
experience while he is (or is not) listening.24

I will return to another example of asynchronous discourse times in my  
treatment of chapter six of Absalom, Absalom! at the end of this chapter, where I will  
undertake a cumulative reading of Faulkner’s time-portraying techniques.

**Differential Focalization Settings**

The third technique William Faulkner implements for portraying time is the use  
of what I term differential focalization settings. Focalization settings include two  
components: 1) the setting, or the time and place, of the focalized situation or event; and

24 Of course, we could make this observation during any narrative by simply suggesting that time t must  
be passing more quickly for character x than for character y for reason z, and we would likely be right.  
My point is this: Faulkner’s has intentionally highlighted the difference here.
2) the setting, or the time and place, of the focalizer during focalization. The components of focalization settings are often one and the same. For example, in the opening of *As I Lay Dying* (“Darl [1]”), Darl perceives himself walking through a cotton field *as he is walking through the cotton field*. In this case the *time* and *place* of the focalized event (Darl presently walking through a cotton field) are the same as the time and the place of the focalization of the event (Darl presently perceiving himself presently walking through the cotton field). Conventionally the components of focalization settings align, making this the unmarked case, but sometimes the components of focalization settings differ. It is also possible for the places to be the same and for the times to differ or for both to differ. Perception where times, places, or both times and places do not align contains *differential focalization settings*.

Faulkner’s use of differential focalization settings in “Darl [5]” can help us understand how the author views time. The chapter opens with Darl focalizing Addie in her bedroom as she dies. Darl sees Addie, Pa, Dewey Dell, and Vardaman in the Bundren bedroom, and he sees Cash outside the window working on the coffin. Shortly into the scene he sees Addie die (48.24). Darl, however, is not there. He and Jewel are taking a load of wood to town. Thus, Darl’s focalization of Addie’s death contains differential focalization settings. What Darl perceives is in a different location than where he is during perception (while the times are the same).

An example of chronologically differential focalization settings occurs mid-way through the chapter. Again visualizing from the road, Darl sees Dewey Dell meet Doc Peabody on the Bundren porch. In this case, we have an occurrence of doubly-
differential focalization settings. Not only are the events perceived from a different location, but also there is a separation in time. For the distant conversation that Darl perceives between Peabody and Dewey Dell also *will occur in the future*. It might seem as if this scene should occur at the same time Darl is perceiving it, for Dewey Dell has just left the room and could have reached the porch already; future tense verbs, however, indicate otherwise. When the focalization occurs, she has not yet reached the porch. “*She will go out where Peabody is... he will say...*” So both the times and places of the focalization settings differ.

We can see here Faulkner’s view of time, or, stated a bit more precisely, the implementation of differential focalization settings in “Darl [5]” shows how one of Faulkner’s characters understands time. Darl’s focalization settings include two times (both present and future). Darl’s hypersensitivity allows him to perceive from remote locations both present and future times. This shows how for Darl time is not conventional. Time, for Darl, is not past, present, and future, but instead it is immediate, constantly pressing upon him.

Moreover, we can extend this idea to all focalization settings that differ chronologically. After considering why Faulkner has Darl focalize what is clearly temporally beyond his perception, we begin to see that much more conventional situations of differential focalization settings have implications for understanding time.

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25 Recall that the axiom of teller fidelity posits that tellers, by convention, portray accurately the feelings, perceptions, beliefs, thoughts, etc. of the focalizer. This would include senses of time—whether what is focalized happened in the past, is presently happening, or will happen in the future.

Notice also that part way through this paragraph the time of perception may shift. After Peabody talks, the present participles—“*...and she looking at him, saying...*”—may indicate that the time of the focalized event has caught up with the time of its focalization.
When characters focalize through remembering, they emphasize the presentness of the past. In recollection, what happens in “Darl [5]” happens in reverse. In Darl’s prophecy of the Dewey Dell/Doc Peabody tête-à-tête, the future is imminently present, but in conventional recollection, the past is also imminently present. For example, in *Absalom, Absalom!* when Rosa remembers how Sutpen “spoke the bald outrageous words [that he and Rosa should conceive and then get married only if the baby is a boy]” (136), she focalizes at a time different than when it occurred. She focalizes a past event in the present through remembering, and the past, therefore, becomes one with the present. In both the *As I Lay Dying* example and the *Absalom, Absalom!* example, we see that time is an issue of mind. In terms of experience the past and future become part of the present.  

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26 We can create a matrix of differential focalization settings, indicating which combinations are more common and less remarkable and which ones are less common and more remarkable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>t</em>, Sit/Event</th>
<th><em>t</em>, Focalization</th>
<th><em>Locus</em> Sit/Event</th>
<th><em>Locus</em> Focalization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>Past</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>Past</td>
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* Combinations that are less common and more remarkable are in italics.
Effacement of Time

In *The Wild Palms*, the alternating sections of “Old Man” exhibit the fourth of Faulkner’s narrative techniques for representing his view of time—the effacement of time. In “Old Man” Faulkner once again depicts non-linear time as he attempts to make different story times and different discourse times appear to be the same time. Faulkner seems to tell his story in two ways. To begin with—over the course of the first two and a half sections of “Old Man”—the story details come to us from the focalization and voice of the heterodiegetic narrator. That is, the story of the tall convict is told from the focalization and voice of a narrator outside the story world. A heterodiegetic narrator observed and now recounts the adventures of the tall convict upon the flooded river.

Partway into the third section of “Old Man,” the heterodiegetic narrator informs us that the tall convict had been telling the same story that he himself (the narrator) is telling us. The narrator says, “This is how he told it seven weeks later, sitting in new bedticking garments, shaved and with his hair cut again, on his bunk in the barracks:” (121). Here we learn that a third time period exists: when the tall convict told his story to the other convicts. (This comes as a surprise to us insofar as we had not been told prior to this that the tall convict has returned to prison.) Yet none of what the narrator tells us after the colon—or before the colon—is how the tall convict told it. We can identify the complex and sophisticated voice features of the narrator and the simple and unsophisticated voice features of the tall convict, and what we have been hearing—and what we will continue to hear—comes from the narrator. Yet we may begin to believe that almost all of the narrator’s information derives from the tall convict’s telling “seven
weeks after his return to prison” as he told about it to his fellow inmates. That is, over the course of the previous two and one half sections we may have believed that the narrator’s knowledge was first-hand—obtained through his direct observation of the story world during the tall convict’s river adventure—but the revelation that the tall convict had been telling his fellow inmates positions the narrator, it appears, one step removed. That is, the narrator’s account seems to be coming indirectly, through his observation of what the tall convict recounted after experiencing his adventure. I have hedged my description of what happens here—“appears” and “seems to be coming”—because, in fact, further reading reveals that the narrator does not derive all his information from the tall convict’s telling, for the narrator adds details that the convict did not include in his account. For example, the narrator talks about the tall convict hauling the boat up the embankment even though, the narrator says, the tall convict “didn’t tell how he got the skiff singlehanded up the revetment” (180). Nonetheless, we can not help but feel that the story at least partially derives from the tall convict’s penitentiary telling.

Whatever the case is for the source of the narrator’s knowledge, the fact that the tall convict has told and that the narrator is telling about the same thing sets up a tripartite time table: (1) at the earliest time period the convict began his journey upon the Mississippi River, rescued the pregnant woman, continued his adventures down the river and then back up the river, and turned himself in to the authorities—all while the heterodiegetic narrator perceived these events; (2) more recent than this (seven weeks later), the convict sat in prison recounting the events from time (1)—all while the
heterodiegetic narrator perceived the tall convict’s telling; and (3) in the present time of
the narrative discourse, the heterodiegetic narrator relates his account of what happened
during time (1) and time (2).

We should take notice of Faulkner’s unconventional move here. Typical
heterodiegetic narration does not include time (2), for conventionally the narrator would
simply observe the story’s situations and events when they happened and then report
them later. But the inclusion of the middle period here has dramatic effects for
portraying Faulkner’s understanding of time. To see this we need to recognize that the
inclusion of time (2) in “Old Man” produces, in fact, a second story and a second
narrative discourse. The two stories are: (a) the story of the convict on the water; and
(b) the story of the convict telling about (a). The two narrative discourses are: (I) the tall
convict telling about (a); and (II) the heterodiegetic narrator telling about (a) and (b).

The first move Faulkner makes is to try to make time (3) appear
contemporaneous with time (2), effacing any differences between the two. To see this,
let us turn to examining verb tenses. Initially, the narrator tells us (in discourse I) that
the tall convict related his story (discourse II) in the past. The narrator establishes this
time frame via a simple past tense verb: the tall convict “told” (121.13). Then, however,
that which the narrator places after the colon—a punctuation mark we would expect by
convention to indicate that what follows are the words of the convict (discourse I) as
uttered in time (2)—is a continuation of the narrator’s account (discourse II) in time (3).
This is Faulkner’s first move in trying to efface the time differences between times (1)
and (2). Furthermore, these deceptive indications—that the narrator will turn the telling
over to the tall convict, that the narrator will move the discourse from his present, time (3) account (discourse II) to the past, time (2) account of the convict (discourse I)—
persist frequently throughout the entirety of “Old Man.” Not only are we led to believe that both speakers—the tall convict and the heterodiegetic narrator—are creating nearly identical discourses, but also we are encouraged to accept an effacement of any time differential between their two tellings.

Moreover, along with the effacement of differences between time (2) and time (3), Faulkner works on effacing differences between time (1) and time (3). The most frequent way that the narrator contemporizes these time periods is by using “now” instead of “then” when referring to time (1), i.e., when referring to the convict’s experiences on the river. For example, at 127.7, the narrator says that “now” the tall convict “gave up.” Technically speaking, now should be replaced by then, for it is not now, in time (3), the immediate narrative discourse present, that the tall convict gives up; rather, when the tall convict “gave up,” it was then, in time (1), during the tall convict’s adventures on the river. This fairly conventional storyteller’s technique—of moving the story into the present of the discourse using now—is Faulkner’s second time-effacing technique, and, like the first one above, is repeated often, e.g., “He was in a basin now” (129); “she was now crying” (166); “and now it was night” (196).

Faulkner further implements his now-displacement technique by returning to erase distinctions between time (2) and time (3). Swapping now for then again, the narrator places the past time of the tall convict’s telling (discourse I) in the present of the narrator’s telling (discourse II). “And now when he told this…” (131.14). This
suggests that the tall convict’s telling—which is described again and again by the narrator using the simple past tense verb, “told”—is somehow present.

Finally, Faulkner redoubles his chronologically effacing efforts in passages like the following, where he displaces verb forms in order to contradict time distinctions implicit in orthodox syntax. Examine the time aspect of the verbs in the following passage, one that at first appears to be a section of sloppy writing. (I have italicized the verbs.)

…He told how the skiff fled on—
[intervening directly quoted conversation between the tall convict and his fellow inmates during time (2)]
…—the skiff to be moving still rapidly up a winding corridor bordered by drowned trees which the convict recognised again to be a river running again in the direction that, until two days ago, had been upstream. He was not exactly warned through instinct that this one, like that of two days ago, was in reverse. He would not say that he now believed himself to be in the same river, though he would not have been surprised to find that he did believe this, existing now, as he did [exist] and had [existed] and apparently was to continue [to exist] for an unnamed period, in a state in which he was toy and pawn on a vicious an inflammable geography. He merely realised that he was in a river again, with all the subsequent inferences of a comprehensible, even if not familiar, portion of the earth’s surface. Now he believed that all he had to do would be to paddle far enough and he would come to something horizontal and above water even if not dry and perhaps even populated; and, if fast enough, in time, and that his only other crying urgency was to refrain from looking at the [pregnant] woman….. (123)

If we examine the verbs here, we notice several things. First of all, as the account of the present (time 3) narrator is of a past event (time 1), we would expect past tense verbs, and for the most part this is what we find. The majority of the verbs are simple past tense (active and passive), e.g., (active) told, fled, recognised, believed, etc. and (passive) was warned. And there are, as would be expected, other tenses indicating time in relation to these past tense forms, e.g., the perfect had been (indicating time in
relation to the simple past tense *recognised*, i.e., two days prior to the narrative’s time \( t \), the convict *had been* in a different location).

But there are some irregularities here. The first occurs after the intervening conversation at time (2). The account picks up with the awkward “—the skiff *to be* moving.” The question is, how does the infinitive *to be* fit in? To understand this, we need to consider the conventional use of dashes with interruptions. Dashes, in such cases, allow us to go back to the sentence prior to the interruption and pick up where we left off. Here, we go to the text prior to the intervening direct discourse, to “He told how the skiff fled on—.” But doing so does not clarify things. Conventionally, such dashes allow the previous syntax to be continued upon recommencement, with the syntax operating as if no interruption had occurred, or at least with what follows the second dash picking up words, such as the subject and/or verb, that govern the construction. But here the conjunction of “He told how the skiff fled on…the skiff to be moving” makes little sense.

To figure out what Faulkner is doing here requires us to recall the author’s frequent objectification of forms of *to be* (e.g., the *is/was* section of “Darl [6]”). Like his contemporary E. E. Cummings, Faulkner commented on time by removing verbs from their orthodox usage.\(^27\) In a way similar to the Greek and Latin use of the articular infinitive—which carries with it no sense of time—Faulkner here changes his syntax from a construction of past tense verbs to a construction of *no tense verbs*. Rather than writing “the skiff was moving,” Faulkner writes “the skiff to be moving.” This

\(^{27}\) For an example of Cumming’s syntactical displacement of verbs, cf. “anyone lived in a pretty how town.”
construction does not imply that the skiff moved at a specific time; instead, it merely implies that the skiff moved. Time is effaced.

Faulkner does not continue using timeless infinitives; rather, he works on effacing time in additional ways. The narrator returns to the simple past tense (recognised) and throws in the aforementioned past perfect (“until two days ago, had been upstream [my italics]”) to clarify the changes in the river’s direction plotted over time. The next sentence features a (passive voice) simple past tense verb (was warned), and the following one contains what appears to be a continuation of past tense verbs—with the addition of a modal of intention, “He would not say that he….” But this sentence contains in its subordinate clause of concession an active past perfect verb with a parallel modal of intention. Close inspection reveals that the main clause should agree here in form with the subordinate, but it does not. The sentence reads “He would not say that he…believed himself to be in the same river, though he would not have been surprised to find that he did believe this,” but it should read “He would not have said that he…believed himself to be in the same river, though he would not have been surprised to find that he had been believing this.” Again, the temporal movement of the verbs is from past toward present, even when orthodox grammar forbids it. In Faulkner times outside of the present always aggregate in the present.

Finally, filling in the section of this sentence that I have elided, we see Faulkner returning to his now/then trick. The main clause begins, “He would not say that he now believed…[my italics].” Again, Faulkner chooses to substitute now for what should be then; and again Faulkner is trying to efface time periods. But here not only is Faulkner
interested in effacing differences between time (1) and time (3), he also works more panchronically. The dissolution of chronological syntax begins to efface time distinctions entirely. Faulkner works toward disassembling grammatical distinctions of past, present, and future. Everything becomes simply is. Thus, this passage contains all three time periods: time (1) through the story of the river adventures; time (2) through both the intervening actual conversation (not quoted above) and the inclusion of the tall convict’s account insofar as it is a source of information for the narrator’s knowledge of the events of time (1); and time (3) through the narrator’s telling about times (1) and (2). Times (1), (2), and (3) loose their chronological relationship—a relationship based on differences—just as the verbs loose their chronological relationship—a relationship based on precise syntax. All times are the same, another way of saying that the past and future are actually present.

Furthermore, the emphasis I am placing on time issues in this passage is underlined by an allusion and a reference to time. The first occurs immediately after the above example. The tall convict believed that he was existing as “toy and pawn on a vicious and inflammable geography.” The allusion to time is with respect to when he existed as a toy and pawn—he was “existing now, as he did [exist] and had [existed] and apparently was to continue [to exist] for an unnamed period.” Besides invoking all three time periods here, Faulkner goes a step further, as soon he explicitly mentions “time” (123.31) when the tall convict realizes that if he does not get the pregnant woman off his boat soon, she will begin delivery.
The point of all of this is that Faulkner uses a variety of methods to conflate all three time periods: time (1), when the action occurred on the river; time (2), when the tall convict told about time (1) “seven weeks later” after returning to prison; and time (3), when the narrator tells about time (1) and, after the middle of chapter 3, time (2). The times of the stories (the rescue and survival action on the river and the storytelling action in the prison) and the times of the narrative discourses (the mostly unheard tall convict in the prison and the dominating heterodiegetic narrator) all blend together. Through Faulkner’s techniques the story present becomes the narrative present, within which we find all time.

Demonstration in Chapter Six of Absalom, Absalom!

I would like to turn now to chapter six of Absalom, Absalom!, where Faulkner implements all four techniques in one chapter—layering of time, asynchronous discourse time, differential focalization settings, and the effacement of time. In order to demonstrate how the four temporal techniques operate here, I would like to provide an overview of what happens—narratologically speaking—in chapter six. By my lights, this is the most difficult chapter in the Faulkner corpus. Few critics look at this chapter in detail, and no critic has sufficiently explicated the intricate narratological machinations of this chapter.²⁸

To explain how chapter six works, I would like to introduce the concept of tacks. In places it is not sufficient to describe Absalom, Absalom! using just the terms

²⁸ For one study that begins to explore this chapter but still leaves much room for work, cf. James Matlack “The Voices of Time: Narrative Structure in Absalom, Absalom!”
vision and voice, for sometimes the same combination of focalization and speaking convey the story but they do so using *significantly different approaches*. Indeed, to best describe some narrative discourses, it is necessary to identify tacks, an approach to storytelling that is a lot like sailing. You may have the same captain and the same boat, but the two of them do not reach a destination by merely following a consistently straight line. Rather, the captain will head in one direction for a while. Then he will change his tack and head in another direction. Further, he will turn the boat and head another direction, and so on. The narrative equivalent I call *tacks* ($K_x$), after the nautical term for “an approach, esp. one of a series of changing approaches.”

It is the accumulation of these approaches by the same pilot and the same boat—in combination with the varying factors of wind direction, wind speed, wave height, wave period, etc.—that describes the course of a successful journey. Some narratives may take the motor boat approach—telling the story in a consistent way from beginning to end, but chapter six definitely changes tacks with dizzying frequency. A heterodiegetic narrator traverses the entirety of the chapter, but whether to distribute the responsibilities of additional vision and voicing, to whom, how much, and how often changes as much as a sailboat tacking in an unpredictable wind.

Below I will examine—in a tack-by-tack approach—the narration in chapter six of *Absalom, Absalom!* wherein characters and a narrator all try their hands at telling the

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story of Thomas Sutpen and his legacy. The six tacks in chapter six are summarized in Figure 13.

K1 The heterodiegetic narrator’s account of the situation and events in the dorm room—without acknowledging that Shreve is talking about the same things he (the narrator) is.

K2 The heterodiegetic narrator inserting the actual text of Mr. Compson’s letter in order to show more fully what he (the narrator) began in K1—without acknowledging that Shreve is talking about what the letter says.

K3 The heterodiegetic narrator acknowledging that Shreve is talking about what the narrator and the letter are talking about by directly quoting Shreve as he talks about what he (the narrator) began telling about using K1 and K2.

K4 The heterodiegetic narrator directly quoting Quentin’s thoughts in order to show what (a) Shreve, having been acknowledged, is saying and (b) he (the narrator) began telling about using K1 and K2.

K5 The heterodiegetic narrator substituting a previously-told story for what (a) Shreve, having been acknowledged, is saying and (b) he (the narrator) began telling about using K1 and K2.

K6 The heterodiegetic narrator double-substituting—substituting Quentin’s thoughts for the already-substitutional, previously-told story of K5—in order to show what (a) Shreve, having been acknowledged, is saying and (b) he (the narrator) began telling about using K1 and K2.

Figure 13. Tacks (Kx) in Chapter Six of Absalom, Absalom!

141.1-141.10 (K1) Objective account of Quentin, Shreve, and Mr. Compson’s letter and the memories the letter evoked: The second half of the book begins with the account of Quentin and Shreve, the two Harvard roommates, sitting up late on a mid-January night with Mr. Compson’s letter, postmarked January 10, 1910, before them.

That is, the narrator begins to tell the story of Thomas Sutpen’s legacy by objectively

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30 For simplicity I will refer to tacks in Absalom, Absalom! as originating from the flesh-and-blood author, William Faulkner. While it would be most accurate to refer to the implied author as the origin of tacks, since I believe the difference between the implied author of Absalom, Absalom! and Faulkner himself is negligible if at all, I simply will refer to Faulkner.
describing the remembrances Mr. Compson’s letter has brought to the Harvard dorm room—remembrances of that previous September’s night when Quentin talked with his father before escorting Miss Rosa to the Sutpen house to see who had been living there secretly for four years.

141.11-142.6 (K2) *First half of Mr. Compson’s Letter notifying Quentin of Miss Rosa’s death*: Faulkner goes from the simple retelling of evoked memories by the heterodiegetic narrator to the (narrator’s) insertion of the first half of Mr. Compson’s letter verbatim. (The letter is completed at the end of the book. 31) The letter acts as a catalyst, having encouraged (we soon find out) Shreve to (re)construct: (a) specifically, the Sutpen legacy; and (b) generally, why people live in the South (or perhaps better put, what keeps people living in the South). 32

142.8 (K1) *Brief account of the attenuating effect of the letter*: Faulkner returns to the simple approach of the narrator’s account of the memories evoked by Mr. Compson’s letter. This lasts for only eight words.

142.8-142.16 (K3) *Shreve corrected by Quentin and the common query to Quentin about the South*: Up to this point we do not know that parallel to the narrator’s account of the South’s attenuation to the Harvard room via Mr. Compson’s letter to Quentin is Shreve’s story-world telling or (re)creation of the Sutpen story in the Harvard dorm room (with the assistance of Quentin, who has presumably told much of the story to Shreve before). The narrator, demonstrating that Shreve is telling much the

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31 Matlack suggests that the rest of chapters 6-9 is an interlinear gloss on the letter (337).

32 The double implication here is intentional: 1) what *keeps them alive* in the South; and 2) why the live *in the South*.
same story that he (the narrator) began with tacks 1 and 2, initiates the third tack. This commences a narrative technique that will comprise almost the entire chapter. Just as the narrator yields the floor to Shreve here, so too will he allow a variety of visions and voices to appear on additional layers throughout much of the chapter as the narrator attempts to get at the story being told in the Harvard room in a variety of ways (to be explicated further, below).

Here, Shreve (once again) has misidentified Rosa as a relative of Quentin. The interruption is Quentin correcting him. This leads to Shreve’s concern with Rosa: “what did she die for?”, a question identified with what everyone has been asking Quentin since he came north: “Why do they [Southerners] live at all.” While Matlack suggests that Shreve’s question is answered in chapters 6-9, I posit, one step further, that the general question is answered. Matlack says Rosa keeps on living until she has no one to hate; I suggest that Southerners keep on living because they have objects of hatred: other races, Northerners, themselves and their tragic legacy, all of which is keenly held in their memories.

142.16-143.30 (K1) Continued Southern remembrances evoked by the letter:
The narrator returns to the initial approach, accounting for what the letter brought with it, remembrances of: Quentin’s obsession with Henry telling his sister he killed her fiancé; the buggy ride to the Sutpen house; the wind’s hypothetical warning; and Quentin’s desire to find nothing at the house. This time, while we read K1, we are aware that what the narrator is telling us is the same as or similar to (if not derived from) what Shreve (and Quentin) is saying.
143.31-147.32 (K3) *Direct discourse of Shreve (re)creating Sutpen’s quest for a male heir*: The tack taken in the first parenthetical interruption is recommenced here, quoting mostly Shreve—with occasional one word affirmations by Quentin—as Shreve describes the successive attempts made by Sutpen to produce a male heir. Like the first parenthetical passage, this gives the reader direct access to what was discussed in the Harvard dorm room. Based on my re-insertion of the end parenthesis at 152.29 in the “Corrected Text” (see note on 152.29 below), this parenthetical section lasts for the entirety of the chapter. That is, all of the text that follows the parenthesis at 143.31 (up and to the end parenthesis at 175.17) is the narrator showing Shreve’s (hypothetical) narration that took place in mid-January in the Harvard dorm room.

147.32 (K4) *Quentin thinking that Shreve sounds like Mr. Compson*: Faulkner gives the narrator another way of telling about the Sutpen legacy, i.e., the effect of Sutpen upon others. This new way is access not just to what was said about Sutpen but also what characters think as a result. The five italicized words here introduce Quentin’s thoughts. Here, he thinks that Shreve sounds just like his (Quentin’s) father.

147.32-148.2 (K1) *Brief description of Quentin and Shreve’s appearances and Quentin’s sensations*: Faulkner has the narrator return to the simple, objective account that began the chapter, but now K1 is buried in the lengthy parenthetical section, where the readers are fully cognizant that the narrator’s account is parallel to Shreve’s (and Quentin’s). Here, we get a description of (a) the characters’ appearances and (b) the September sensations befalling Quentin (via the letter)—the cigar and wisteria odors and the flashing of fireflies.
148.2-148.4 (K4) Quentin continues identifying Shreve with Mr. Compson:

Faulkner returns to implementing the narrator’s report of Quentin’s (italicized) thoughts as Quentin realizes that Shreve—as he (re)creates the Sutpen story—sounds much like his father (Mr. Compson). Quentin adds that Shreve would be identical to his father if his father had known what Shreve now knows. (Shreve has new information that Quentin learned on the September visit with Rosa to the Sutpen house.) This qualifier lets the reader know new information should be revealed in the second half of the novel, i.e., it creates an epistemological tension in the narrative.\(^{33}\)

148.4 (K1) Thought tag that Quentin is thinking: Faulkner returns to the first approach for one word, as the narrator tells us that Quentin had been and will continue to be thinking the preceding and, more specifically, the following (italicized) words.

148.4-150.30 (K4) Quentin thinking about Jones killing Sutpen while Shreve is telling the same: The narrator returns to his fourth tack—telling what Quentin is thinking in italics—while providing the reader with additional evidence about what this tack entails. Quentin seems to continue the account of Sutpen’s male heir quest (while turning in a new direction). He focuses on Jones killing Sutpen for rejecting his granddaughter, Millie, because she did not produce Sutpen a son. Midway through this thought (continued in 150.32-152.24 below) interceding Roman-style affirmations—i.e., repeated “Yes” responses, direct discourse by Quentin—indicate that, just as the narrator in the first tack relates approximately what Shreve is saying, here Quentin is

thinking about Jones killing Sutpen at the same time that Shreve actually is saying it. That is, this passage represents *Quentin thinking what Shreve is telling*.

150.31 (K3) *Direct discourse as Quentin responds to Shreve who is (re)creating Sutpen’s quest for a male heir*: Returning from Quentin’s thoughts which represents Shreve’s telling about Sutpen’s quest for a male heir to the actual dialogue Quentin’s thoughts represent, Faulkner inserts only Quentin’s affirmation, identified by a speech tag. This is in Roman-style font.

150.32-152.24 (K4) *Continuation of Quentin thinking about Jones killing Sutpen while Shreve is telling the same*: Returning to italics, Faulkner returns to direct access to Quentin thinking what Shreve is talking.

152.24-152.29 (K3) *Shreve asks about the tombstones*: While we continue to have access to what is going on in the Harvard dorm room—in the previous case the thoughts were those of Quentin—Faulkner has the narrator withdraw from reporting Quentin’s thoughts and insert a parenthetical interruption: Shreve’s direct discourse question about Quentin’s hunting visit to the Sutpen graveyard. The fact that the train of thought continues from Quentin’s thinking about “money for a tombstone” to Shreve’s question about tombstones indicates that Quentin’s thoughts, indeed, have been moving closely parallel to Shreve’s dorm room narration.34

152.29-154.14 (K5) *Account of the hunting trip visit to the Sutpen graveyard*: While Shreve continues talking in the dorm room, Faulkner has the narrator represent

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34 I have re-inserted an end parenthesis into the “corrected text” here after the quotation mark after *ditch* and before *and* (152.29), a return to the punctuation that appears both in the typescript setting copy of *Absalom, Absalom!* (248) and in the 1936 first edition (187).
what Shreve is saying by reporting, much in direct discourse, the previously-told story of Quentin and his father examining the gravestones. (This tale presumably was told earlier to Shreve by Quentin.) That is, the narrator substitutes his version of the previously-told story of the graveyard visit for Shreve’s re-telling of the same story. A three way identity exists among: (1) what Shreve actually said in the dorm room in mid-January; (2) what Quentin told Shreve prior to (1); and (3) the narrator’s account of what happened in the story Quentin told Shreve prior to (1).

154.14-155.8 (K6) Quentin seems to see the couple’s tombstones transported during the war: Faulkner has the narrator describes what Quentin is thinking—not directly and italicized as before—but indirectly. Quentin imagines the two tombstones that Sutpen ordered from Italy being transported through the coastal blockade and across the South (in place of much needed supplies), but when Quentin “sees” the vignette is unclear. The time of focalization is ambiguous. We must assume that the narrator knows when Quentin actually thought that “he could see” the tombstone travels, knows when Quentin thought that “he might even have been there,” present with the “ragged and starving troops” as the tombstones supplanted needed food and other supplies, yet the narrator’s voice intentionally obfuscates when this perception occurred. The possible times are two-fold: 1. when Quentin and Mr. Compson ponder the graves while hunting; or 2. while Shreve re-tells the story in the Harvard dorm, mid-January 1910. Of course, these choices are not mutually exclusive, for Quentin might have focalized this on both occasions, the second time doubling the first.35

35 Cf. John Irwin’s Doubling and Incest/Repetition and Revenge for an extensive treatment of other doubling in Absalom, Absalom!
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155.9-157.32 (K5) Paying for and placing the gravestones and Charles

Etienne’s graveyard visit: Shreve continues talking in the dorm room, and Faulkner has
the narrator return to the fifth tack, to representing what Shreve is saying by having the
narrator report, again much in direct discourse, the previously-told story of Quentin and
his father examining the gravestones (the tale told earlier by Quentin to Shreve.) This
installment includes the account of Charles Etienne Saint-Valery Bon’s visit to the
graveyard (reportedly observed by Quentin’s grandfather, although the account of the
graveyard visit is via Mr. Compson’s inference, i.e., via his hypothetical narration).

157.32-157.33 (K6) Quentin thinking about Judith and listening too long to Mr.
Compson and the legacy of the South: Faulkner has the narrator return to describing
what Quentin is thinking (but directly, in italics), repeating the chronologically
obfuscating gesture in 154.14-155.8. That is, again the italicized thoughts have no clear
time of focalization. They might have been thought: 1) when, as a child, Quentin and
his father pondered the graves; 2) when he retold the story to Shreve in the months prior
to the mid-January night in 1910; 3) while Shreve is retelling the story on that cold mid-
January night in 1910.

157.34-168.5 (K5) Mr. Compson’s continued account of Charles Etienne, youth
to adulthood: The narrator returns to representing what Shreve is saying in the dorm
room by substituting the previously-told story of Quentin and his father visiting the
Sutpen graveyard. In direct discourse, with no speech tags or explicating by the
narrator, Mr. Compson tells about Charles Etienne Saint-Valery Bon’s childhood and
adulthood, when he became pusillanimous, married a tough black woman, and, by arrangement, settled in cabin on the Sutpen estate.

168.5-168.16 (K6) Quentin’s recollection of Charles Etienne’s conversation with Judith about Jim Bond: In the midst of the narrator’s recounting of the previously-told story of Charles Etienne’s (and his wife and child’s) settling on the Sutpen estate (which is substituted for Shreve’s retelling of the same), parenthetically inserted are Quentin’s thoughts (mostly quoted directly in italics): (a) his recollection of Mr. Compson’s account; and (b) his ruminations on the threesome’s settlement in the Sutpen cabin. Quentin moves from an explanation of Judith’s acceptance of them, “because there was love [her love for Charles Bon, Charles Etienne’s father],” to the letter (expressing this love) that Judith gave to Quentin’s grandmother, a letter likened to Mr. Compson’s letter presently lying open on the dorm room table.

Notice that Quentin repeats that he has had to listen to this story (surrogately the tragic story of the South) “too much” and that Shreve sounds “almost exactly like father” This substantiates the positions that this section represents in a variety of ways what Shreve is saying in the dorm room in mid-January 1910.

This section is and is not a clarification of the sixth tack. On the one hand, it establishes that the chronologically ambiguous focalizations, in fact, occurred on the mid-January night because what Quentin saw is identified with his concurrent perception of Mr. Compson’s letter, which was “open upon the open text book on the table before him,” but, on the other hand, just because this italicized section is established as occurring in the dorm room as Shreve is talking does not mean that the
ambiguity could not still obtain for the previous examples. At least this verifies that the other K6 thoughts at least should be associated with the mid-January night.

168.16-170.17 (K5) Continuation of Mr. Compson’s account of Charles Etienne settling in cabin and his and Judith’s deaths from yellow fever: The narrator again returns to representing what Shreve is saying in the dorm room by substituting the previously-told story of Quentin and his father talking in the Sutpen graveyard. The narrator focuses on Judith’s final act of compassion: taking care of Charles Etienne when he contracted yellow fever. Judith herself then contracted the disease and died before Charles Etienne. Mr. Compson’s directly-quoted, straightforward account continues the narrator’s fifth tack of telling what Shreve was telling in the dorm room on the cold mid-January night in 1910 by substituting his (the narrator’s) account of Mr. Compson’s telling for Shreve’s telling at Cambridge in mid-January 1910.

While Mr. Compson accounts for the acquisition of the gravestones, Quentin responds twice with “Oh” (156), similar to the “Yes” responses he gives to Shreve (144-50). The “Oh” at 170.17 is the last part of the narrator’s account of Quentin and Mr. Compson visiting the graves, yet the similarity of the single-syllable responses and the juxtaposition of Quentin saying “Oh” with Quentin thinking “Yes” (170.17) suggests that during the Shreve’s retelling (represented by the narrator’s account of what Quentin and Mr. Compson said) the “Oh” responses are identical to Quentin’s “Yes” responses in the dorm room.

While Quentin recounted this story to Shreve at some earlier time, it is possible that this earlier telling occurred within a few days or even hours before the cold night in the dorm room (that is focus of this chapter 6).
The narrator tells what Quentin thinks in the dorm room about Judith’s tombstone: The narrator returns to reporting what Quentin is thinking while Shreve is speaking in the Harvard dorm room; here, however, Quentin focalizes, while the narrator gives voice to Quentin’s thoughts. That is, we have gone back to something like the previous, lengthy report of Quentin’s thoughts (from 148.4 to 152.24)—not those buried in the recollected account of Quentin and Mr. Compson visiting the graveyard, but those occurring only simultaneous to Shreve’s mid-January (re)constructing of the Sutpen story—but here Quentin’s ruminations are in his own (internal) voice (although at the beginning of the section most of the thoughts, except for a few italicized words, are expressed in the voice of the narrator).

The time of this focalization is unambiguous. Quentin is remembering the things Shreve is saying, and his recollection is couched in verb forms that indicate that his recalling is occurring in the dorm room. For example, the past perfects at 170.18, Quentin “had looked at the fifth grave and [had] thought,” indicate that he is recalling what happened on that distant past hunting trip. (While from 170.22 on the participles, which, to remain consistent with the past perfect verb forms above, should be past perfect participles—e.g., “having thought”—are present participles—e.g., “thinking”—but these are presumably historical present participles).

Quentin ends by commenting on how he “didn’t need to listen then”—i.e., he did not need to listen to his father telling parts of the Sutpen story during their visit to the graveyard—because the legacies of the South apparently permeate the lives of Southerners. They fill one’s memory effortlessly. Worse yet, Quentin has to listen to it
“all over again” because—he states it again—now Shreve (who is (re)creating the same story in the dorm room in mid-January) “sounds just like Father.”

The colon after “Father” begins a shift in what Quentin thinks about. Shreve continues talking in the dorm room, but Quentin instead thinks about what Shreve is saying in terms of his father’s voice. The voice features are diagnostic. What Quentin hears is similar to Mr. Compson’s speech earlier (156.9 ff.): the vocabulary is similar (e.g., “Beautiful lives—women,” “divorced from…reality”/“Beautiful lives—women,” “they draw …from…unreality”); the punctuation, representing speech techniques, is similar (e.g., both using hyphens); the sentences in both sections are protactic; and the tone in the two places conveys sarcasm.\(^{37}\) Thus, inside his head, Quentin’s thoughts are formulated using Mr. Compson’s voice features.

The voice that Quentin did not need to listen to but “had to hear” stays with him, and the ongoing story now involves Rosa’s later days, when she “commanded” Judge Benbow to pay for a gravestone for Judith (Benbow also continued paying for Rosa’s upkeep until her death). Quentin’s father-like internal thought does not formally end (i.e., a case of anacoluthon, there is no period after 172.21) because what we are accessing here are Quentin’s thoughts and Quentin was not listening. It is both that the voice just keeps going and that Quentin, through not listening, does not know where his father’s speeches started or ended.

Following the anacoluthon at 172.21, Shreve’s voice features dominate Quentin’s mind now—consider, e.g., the vocabulary (“the Jim Bond”) besides the

\(^{37}\) And the next paragraph attributes the narration to Mr. Compson, to what “[Quentin’s] father was saying [in the previous paragraph]” (172).
conventional indicators such as “you” and “your” (172.22 & 172.25) that refer to Shreve’s dorm room narratee—as Quentin thinks (internally in terms derived from Shreve’s voice) what Shreve is actually relating: his (Shreve’s) realization that Quentin did not need to listen because he “knew it all already, had learned, absorbed it already without the medium of speech somehow from having been born and living beside it [the legacy of Sutpen, which is correlative to the legacy of the South].” That is, Quentin thinks about how Shreve realizes that each time the story is told to Quentin, Quentin does not really listen at all; each telling merely sets in motion “the resonant strings of remembering.” The metaphor here is quite classical, recalling both the Aeolian harp and Platonic forms (i.e., the stories are individuations of to eidos, different instantiations of the same form: the tragic story of the South). Put another way, stories are recognized by Quentin’s mind for their unity, not for their individualities. This section, too, ends in anacoluthon—an indication again that stories of the South ongoingly permeate the minds of Southerners.

The previous section (recalling the previously-told account of Quentin and Mr. Compson’s graveyard visit) and this one (access to two absorbed voices that represent Shreve’s actual telling) mark the chapter’s highest complexity in representing what Shreve is saying in the dorm room. In the next section, we begin to pull out of this complexity as we return to Shreve’s actual words. That is, we move from Shreve’s talking in the dorm room as modulated by or imagined by Quentin to, in the next section, Shreve’s directly-accessible voice as we return to direct quotation of Shreve’s voice (and Quentin’s directly quoted responses).
Shreve finishes the story of the night Mr. Compson, Quentin, and Luster approached the Sutpen cemetery: Shreve, directly quoted, concludes his re-telling of the visit to the Sutpen cemetery. Shreve discusses Jim Bond and wonders why Quentin accompanied Rosa the previous September to the Sutpen house when everyone who might be expected to live there was dead (except Henry who “had gone so far he hadn’t even left a grave”). Quentin’s typical “Yes” response befuddles Shreve—who has concluded that there could have been no one hiding in the house and thus asks, “and there was?” The end parenthesis at 170.16 ends the chapter and ends the second long parenthetical interruption begun at 143.31, having begun with K3 and ending with K3.

Having examined chapter six of *Absalom, Absalom!* tack-by-tack, we can now turn to investigating how Faulkner represents time in this labyrinthine section. First of all, just as layers of time are not difficult to find in nearly any Faulkner work, so too are they easy to locate in chapter six. The layers of time cover not only from Thomas Sutpen’s life to the present but also other times outside these approximately 100 years. For example, the novel ends with Shreve’s reference to what will happen far into the future. “And so in a few thousand years, I who regard you will also have sprung from the loins of African kings” (302).

One effect of the multiple layers of time in *Absalom, Absalom!* is that—just like in “Barn Burning”—identifying when the story took place is impossible. In fact, what we find is that the story did not take place at any one time. The story is taking place.

What happened and what will happen are all involved in what is happening: the
continual (re)telling of Sutpen’s legacy or, more generally, the legacy of the South.

There is no past and future separate from here-and-now (re)tellings.

I have taken the time and effort to explicate the entirety of chapter six—namely through my examination of six tacks—in order to highlight the number of focalizers and the number of voices that inhabit this section of the novel. The multitude of layers of vision and the multitude of layers of voice emphasize what we have examined about time in Faulkner so far: story times shift around so much that they create the typical temporal confusion. The frequent relocation of who is understanding what adds to: 1) the effacing of time; and 2) our perception of how time is not universal but individual. Multiple visions and multiple voices—which we have seen shift with dizzying frequency and confounding complexity in chapter six via tacks—create a decentralized story time. Moreover, as the various tacks make clear that the Sutpen story inhabits different people in different ways—e.g., for Quentin the Sutpen legacy hinges on his own failure with Dalton Ames while for Shreve it hinges on understanding what it means to live in the South—this causes the widespread story time to be located in no one individual. That is, Faulkner’s implementation of tacks in chapter six—his approaching the story from one direction (visions, voices), then approaching the story from another direction (visions, voices), and so on—creates a meta-commentary on time. Absalom, Absalom! teaches us that time is not scientifically simple. Time is not just infinitely layered; it is also infinitely layered in every self.

As well as layering time, Faulkner also utilizes asynchronous discourse times. Above we saw how this technique plays an important role in chapter five of Absalom,
*Absalom!*; it continues to in chapter six in two different ways. In the first, doubled case, the asynchronous discourse times are similar to chapter five—Quentin is not listening; in the second, the asynchronous discourse times are tied up in the narrative technique of tacks.

First of all, in chapter six we see that ongoing tale of Thomas Sutpen continues to have an impact on Quentin. While Sutpen is deceased, his influence is very much alive. Twice in the chapter we learn that, while Sutpen’s story is being told, Quentin again is not listening. In the first case, the narrator reports to us that Quentin had “walked out of his father’s talking” having “not been listening” (142). Shreve reinforces Quentin’s inattention near the end of the chapter. Mr. Compson was speaking, “but you were not listening” (172). Here Faulkner emphasizes different experiences of time as we have just listened to lengthy tales and must now realize that Quentin again was not paying attention. To this end, we may infer again that the time that we experienced during our reading of Mr. Compson’s story—even more, if we imagine how long it would have taken for him to actually speak these stories—is quite different than it is for Quentin whose mind is elsewhere. That is, based on our own experience with letting our minds wander while others speak, we can imagine that time passed differently for the two characters.

The second use of asynchronous discourse times is different from those in chapters five and six. Above I have laid out the six tacks implemented in chapter six, all of which suggest one important primitive for the chapter: the narrator’s account is similar to (if not derivative from) what Shreve (and Quentin) said in the dorm room in

38 Recall from above that while Rosa talked for 31 pp. in chapter five, Quentin “was not listening” (139).
mid-January. If we notice the way we experience the discourse of the narrator’s first
tack (where he sees and tells the story himself) and the subsequent tacks (where other
characters see and/or tell) which get at Shreve’s account, we find that our sense of time
reading the narrator’s account versus the others’ is different. The narrator’s discourse
almost certainly moves at a pace different from the way we experience Shreve’s
discourse—although both get at the same story. The heterodiegetic narrator relates
details efficiently, while Quentin and Shreve work together (or do not work together,
e.g., Shreve’s constant reference to Miss Rosa as Quentin’s relative and Quentin’s too-
patient corrections) inventing as they go. These unaligned times frames—based on the
narrator’s efficiency and the roommates’ inefficiency—demonstrate one discourse
suggesting two experiences of time.

Besides the layering of time and asynchronous discourse times in chapter six,
Faulkner also implements differential focalization settings. The first example of this
occurs from 154.14 to 155.8, where Quentin pictures the starving troops transporting
the two Sutpen gravestones (in lieu of much-needed supplies). “It seemed to Quentin
that he could actually see them: the ragged and starving troops without shoes…speaking
of the stones as ‘Colonel’ and ‘Mrs Colonel’” (154). Quentin concludes, “he could see it
[the troops transporting the stones]; he might even have been there. Then he thought.
No. If I had been there I could not have seen it this plain” (155). Certainly this is an
example of recalling the past in the present, and this emphasizes Faulkner’s view of
psychological, non-linear time. But in and of itself, such focalization is not unusual. As
suggested above, most literature contains countless occasions when characters think about the past.

More extraordinary here is the uncertainty of the *difference* in the focalization settings, for the time of Quentin’s perception—his imagining the starved troops moving the grave markers—is ambiguous. On the one hand, Quentin may have seemed “to see” this when he was a youth, when he and his father visited the Sutpen cemetery; on the other hand, Quentin may have perceived this while in the Harvard dorm room. Remember, it seems as though concurrent with the heterodiegetic narrator’s telling is Shreve’s telling (in the dorm room that mid-January night). Quentin may be envisioning the wartime scene while Shreve is talking. Thus, this is no typical case of past recollection that should hardly gain much notice. Instead, here the differential focalization settings work in concert with the effacement of time.

In two more places differential focalization settings occur. The second case is quite similar to the gravestone campaign and is quite brief. In less than two lines of parenthetical insertion, we see Quentin thinking. “…Judith (*who, not bereaved, did not need to mourn* Quentin thought, thinking *Yes, I have had to listen too long*) who…” (157). Again, it is not too remarkable that Quentin is recalling history about Judith—this chapter includes numerous recollections. What is significant here is the repetition of ambiguity. Quentin may be recalling this either when he and his father visited the cemetery or while Shreve is talking in the dorm room. Again, the differential focalization settings lead to eliminating the distinctions of past and present.
The last case of notable differential focalization settings in chapter six occurs toward the end, when Quentin focalizes (in italics) the scene between Judith and Charles Etienne. Judith performs her final act of compassion: taking care of Charles Etienne when he contracted yellow fever. In this case, unlike the previous two, the time of Quentin’s focalization is certain. Quentin is seeing this dorm room as Shreve is talking, for “He (Quentin) could see it, as plainly as he saw the [letter] open upon the open text book on the table before him” (168). So in this case the ambiguity is not important, but the immediacy of the passage is. To understand this immediacy, we need to consider the complexity of substitution occurring here.

In this compassionate scene, substitutions abound. Shreve has been telling about Judith and Charles Etienne, yet the narrator has been substituting his own account of the previously told tale for what Shreve was actually saying. Here the narrator substitutes Quentin’s thoughts—earmarked by italics—for the previously-told tale, which again is substituting for what Shreve is saying. The access directly to Quentin’s thoughts, rather than to his previous telling, or even further removed, Shreve’s telling, allows us to see the immediacy of the past in Quentin’s present thoughts. That is, inside Quentin’s head we see how time is not comprised of past, present, and future; rather, in the human mind time coalesces as immediate, constantly informing the present moment.

Thus we have seen that asynchronous discourse times have worked in concert with the effacement of time. In chapter six, ambiguity of focalization is emphasized. What the uncertainty about the time of perception points out is similar to what we saw above with “Old Man.” Faulkner intentionally has ambiguated the time of perception to
show that thinking of discrete, individual, unique times for every situation or event that happened, is happening, or will happen is wrong-minded; rather, we should realize that the past lives with us over and over. The fact that we can not tell when Quentin focalized these events is just what Faulkner wanted. In fact, all Faulkner wants us to know is that Quentin focalized them. The when is unimportant—Quentin always focalizes them. This is, of course, Faulkner’s point. This is why Quentin keeps repeating that he has had to listen too long (even though ironically he is not listening). The past is always with him. We can add more: an understanding of the ever-present legacy of the South is what Shreve and the other Cambridge residents continue to try to comprehend.

Faulkner, I believe, did not desire to out-Herod Bergson philosophically. It was not Faulkner’s aim to write another and different treatise on man and his relationship to time. Instead, it is fair to say simply that Faulkner agreed with Bergson’s temporal principles—something we have seen that Faulkner himself clearly stated. But stating this is not enough. I hope that my survey of time in Faulkner has shown that not only can we make direct connections between this Southern writer and a French thinker—particularly with respect to a non-linear view of time—but also it is possible to take apart Faulkner’s texts in order to see the specific narrative techniques that depict an experiential understanding of temporality.
CONCLUSION

I began this project with a two-part question. I wondered both how the tools of contemporary narrative theory could help us understand Faulkner’s fiction in new ways and how Faulkner’s fiction could help us refine concepts in contemporary narrative theory. Indeed, the close narratological examinations above have improved our understanding of Faulkner’s fiction, and delving into Faulkner’s narratives with a keen eye on narratology has improved our theory.

Our work with vision in chapter one gave us a better understanding of when vision shifts in Faulkner’s narratives, and this contributed to a better understanding of focalization. Concomitant with these discoveries, we have seen how a better understanding of layers of focalization can improve our interpretations of Faulkner’s works. Our study of voice has revealed more fully the many speakers in Faulkner’s narratives, and this polyvocality has helped us better understand how to distinguish among not only types of voices but also individual voices. We also have seen both where the demarcation between vision and voice lies and the ways in which voice is dependent upon focalization.

Our study of epistemic stances in Faulkner both has allowed us to position a third term—hypothetical narration—in the paradigm of narrative modes and has
helped us better understand why Faulkner uses this unusual form of narration. Investigating Faulkner’s most extravagant use of hypothetical narration has revealed the innovative way that Faulkner attempts to portray the legacy of the South in *Absalom, Absalom!* This investigation pushed narrative theory into the realms of epistemology and ontology, discovering that sometimes we can only know part of the story and that sometimes we may wonder if a story even exists at all. Finally, our foray into the much-discussed topic of time in Faulkner has yielded additional fruit. We discovered specific techniques Faulkner implements in portraying non-linear time (experiential time), and we saw how the terms of narrative theory can be expanded to more fully describe the way authors handle temporality.

One step back from these chapter studies uncovers something more: these four narrative techniques reveal Faulkner’s extreme interest in epistemology. The investigations in chapter one focused on Faulkner’s shifting of focalization. In one sentence one agent is focalizing or “knowing,” and in the next sentence it is another. Move ahead shortly, and “who sees” is likely to shift again. Faulkner’s interest in shifting focalization reveals his interest in who knows what. Put a different way, the multiple visions in Faulkner’s narratives illuminates how Faulkner feels that stories are best understood when they are derived from multiple viewpoints.

The above chapters have alluded to Faulkner’s nods to Plato, particularly with the author’s use of terminology allusive to the cave allegory. While we cannot carte blanche call Faulkner a Platonist, his tendencies are clear: perfect knowledge is ultimately unattainable. Nonetheless we keep on striving. To this end, the use of a
variety of focalizers is necessary because no one focalizer is able to see the whole story picture. Moreover, as Parker pointed out in his work on the “Chronology” and “Genealogy” in *Absalom, Absalom!*, Faulkner often eschews his own authority in favor of presenting stories from a variety of knowing agents. Thus, for Faulkner, one focalizer can get at story, but two can do better. Add a third perspective, and you will likely get even closer to the story...add a fourth, even closer, and so on. This principle, we could say, proceeds asymptotically toward complete knowledge—of course, without ever reaching it.

In chapter two, Faulkner’s frequently shifting voices highlighted the relationship between vision and voice. By learning how to differentiate voice, we realized an important narratological primitive: the axiom of teller fidelity. This emphasized the dependence of voice upon focalization, the dependence in narratives of speaking upon knowing. The implementation of multiple voices—i.e., varying voice features which indicate different speakers—emphasizes Faulkner’s multi-perspectival pulsion. Presenting stories that are spoken by different people emphasizes the need for different viewpoints. That is, even though the axiom of teller fidelity eliminates knowledge from speech, in the mimetic illusion of narrative discourse the use of multiple voices reinforces the effect of multiple visions.

Chapter three, indeed, turns on questions of knowledge. Again we investigated focalization, but here it centered not on what the focalizer knows or does not know but on what the focalizer is uncertain of knowing. Our Platonic reading is further emphasized by much of Faulkner’s hypothetical narration. That is, most of the
hypothetical narration in Faulkner’s narratives occurs intradiegetically, and this emphasizes how characters—symbolic of people in real life—can not know everything. Characters have only partial knowledge. Even in the case of heterodiegetic narration, the fact that Faulkner imbues his discourses with narrators who do not seem to know admits the same: we can never wholly know.

Finally, chapter four proposed to look at how Faulkner represents time. What we found is that he is quite concerned with representing time as we experience it. That is, Faulkner is interested in portraying time in a way that shows how we come to know it. Time is not conceptually linear; rather, it is experientially always present. How we arrive at a knowledge of time, not the concept itself, is foregrounded. While this technique does tend to move our discussions into metaphysical and psychological realms, it still speaks to Faulkner’s epistemology. While the world may be organized from above according to formal principles (sc. Platonic forms), this does not describe how we experience it. The world befalls us not with a perfect understanding of linear time—laid out like train tracks with chronological markers all along the way; rather, time befalls us as happenings in our lives that interrelate with others. Our imperfect minds connect situations and events in our lives (and those of the past and those imagined to come), but we never attain a clear picture. Faulkner’s emphasis on time as experienced brings us to epistemology, leaving us as close to Plato epistemologically as to Bergson metaphysically.

Yet, while human knowledge is limited, people can see the world around them and can express how they understand it. Moreover, explanations of the world as it
befalls our senses and our minds is most often improved through community. By working together, we can approach understanding and begin to explain, if not the world, at least stories about it. Faulkner recognized that deep within each of us is a thirst for understanding as well as a desire to express what we know—the roots of Faulkner’s “inexhaustible voice.”

While I hope that the concepts I have examined here will help readers of any number of other Faulkner narratives, I also hope that these ideas are even more portable. Issues of vision and voice abound elsewhere, and distinguishing what comprises perspective in narratives by other authors would be beneficial. Vision and voice shift frequently, for example, in Katherine Anne Porter’s “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall,” and I would hope that my work on identifying shifts in vision and shifts in voice can aid in interpreting such discourse features as the ironies deriving from the vision and voice of Porter’s title character.

I further hope the ideas above are universal enough that they can reach beyond American literature. My work on hypothetical narration may aid in understanding, for example, the absurd narration found in Franz Kafka, such as in *The Trial*, where the story opens with uncertainty. Even further, I hope that my work can carry beyond fictional narrative discourses. I would hope that my work on time could help explain other forms of discourse. For example, the above ideas about representing time could

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1 Cf. Faulkner’s Pulitzer Prize speech, where he concludes that, at the end of the world, “there will still be one more sound: that of his [man’s] puny inexhaustible voice, still talking” (Faulkner qtd. in Gresset 185).

2 Shifts in vision and voice, creating a variety of combinations of the two, produce the effect of Granny’s ambiguous lucidity.

3 “Someone must have been telling lies about Joseph K…[my italics]” (1).
help in understanding narrative poems concerned with time, such as E. E. Cummings’ “anyone lived in a pretty how town,” where verb forms and textual patterns portray the speaker’s understanding of temporality.

In all of the cases above—whether with narrative discourses by Faulkner or others—a recursive approach needs to be emphasized. My research suggests that when we approach innovative narratives, theory in hand, both our understanding of narrative texts and our understand of theory stand a good chance of being improved.
LIST OF REFERENCES


