



## A Canadian Perspective on the American South: Shreve Mccannon and the Construction of History in Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*

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### Abstract

*This paper examines William Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom! (1936) through the lens of Shreve McCannon, Quentin Compson's Canadian roommate at Harvard, arguing that Shreve's outsider perspective, rooted in Canada's historical role as an abolitionist refuge and moral counterpoint to American slavery, serves as a transformative force in the novel's construction of Southern history. As a detached Northern rationalist unencumbered by regional loyalties or emotional inheritance, Shreve contrasts sharply with Quentin's traumatic entanglement in the South's racial legacy, enabling a critical interrogation of the Sutpen saga that Southern narrators cannot achieve alone. Through their collaborative reconstruction of Thomas Sutpen's story, particularly in revealing Charles Bon's mixed-race ancestry as the tragic core, Shreve's probing questions and logical speculations compel confrontation with repressed racial truths and mythic distortions that sustain Southern identity. The analysis finds that Faulkner strategically deploys Shreve's Canadian viewpoint to transform the narrative into a hemispheric dialogue on historical reckoning, demonstrating that authentic engagement with a traumatic past requires the tense interplay of insider emotion and outsider detachment. Ultimately, Shreve functions as a narrative solvent, dissolving biased Southern mythologies and illustrating the collective, dialogic labour necessary for confronting racial violence and historical guilt. This reading highlights the novel's modernist epistemology while contributing to Faulkner studies by foregrounding the under-examined transnational significance of Canada as a symbolic space of moral clarity and continental contrast.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*Absalom, Absalom!* is a 1936 novel by William Faulkner that is monumental and complex as a work of American literature, both in its original narrative structure and in its unremitting confrontation with the haunts of Southern history, race, and identity (Moore, 2025). Fundamentally, the novel attempts to dissect the very definition of the past, specifically the sordid history of the post-Civil War American South, by illustrating how its characters are encumbered by the past and by the cultural ballast of a moribund, racially divided society (Wagner-Martin, 2015). The central mystery of the story is the character of Colonel Thomas Sutpen, a man whose ambition and downfall are shaped by four contradictory narrative versions, the most desperate and biased means of preserving and explaining history. This influential work is discussed in this paper in the context of one of the most crucial characters Quentin Compson has at Harvard University: Shreve McCannon, a Canadian roommate. The character Shreve introduces into the narrative represents the generational shift in the story, turning it into a secular Southern Gothic tragedy rather than a local tragedy (Cawley, 2017).

Faulkner employs the multi-layered narrative technique in *Absalom, Absalom!* Unlike his preceding works, where the text is rendered in such a way that the perspectives are crossed to make only one familiar text (Faulkner, 1986). Instead, the novel provides a disjointed reality in which there is a multiplicity of voices, such as Mr Compson, Miss Rosa Coldfield, Quentin Compson, and finally Shreve McCannon, that only present a partial truth, influenced by one or more prejudices, loyalties, and imaginations (Coughlan, 1954). This method allows one to make a more complex evaluation of Colonel Sutpen, who, at the moment of the narration, is gone and can only be recapitulated in the mad efforts of the characters to make a coherent story about it (Al-Gobaei, 2010). The narrators are engrossed in the story; Quentin and Shreve are so empathetic toward Henry Sutpen and Charles Bon that they are always merged in a way neither is, yet both are. Nevertheless, other Southern narrators, Sutpen's son, his sister-in-law, and Quentin are all implicated in activities that are similar to what happened in real life at this time, but Shreve, the outsider, is not. He gets into the narration in another world, in a free territory, in a symbolic den of freedom (Blotner, 2010).

This other world is Canada, which, in the context of American history, symbolises the rationality of the North and a deep historical contrast to the American South. To comprehend the significant role of Shreve, it is also necessary to situate the novel in a richer historical context, namely the US Civil War (1861-1865). The Canadian history with slavery and race is the opposite of that in the United States: In Canada, slavery was prohibited, whereas in the U.S., it was accepted (Azzi, 2015). Canada was highly instrumental in the Underground Railroad, where it was a refuge for thousands of escaped slaves and offered them a ray of hope to actually obtain freedom, a legacy that placed the country in a moral dilemma against the United States. Such opposites were solidified by figures such as Martin Luther King Jr., who asserted the historical importance of Canada, naming it the North Star in the quest for freedom (Hobson, 2003). This historical disengagement and ethical stance is allegorically written into Shreve himself, who is described as the Child of Blizzards and of Cold in the Tomblake Room at Harvard, versus Quentin, in turn, as the Southerner, the Fragile Child of Rain and Steamy Heat.

Shreve McCannon, a Canadian educated at Harvard, is therefore the correct strategic choice made by Faulkner. His character illustrates how Northerners, or more correctly, people who are not directly and emotionally under the influence of the South, view the region as exotic and dysfunctional (Davis, 2003). Faulkner can succeed twice by introducing the Canadian interpretation and by establishing a contextual geography for his story and situating the traumatic history of the South within a continental context (Boyagoda, 2015). Shreve, having no sectional loyalties or regional biases in the Civil War, makes him the perfect objective listener and, most importantly, a participant in narration who can face Quentin and history, which he embodies. He is the counter to Quentin's emotional bondage and a northern rationality needed to interpret and assemble the Sutpen saga.

The novel is set in Harvard, a conscious decision, as it is a metonym for the North and a symbol of abolitionism, a fact also supported by Canada through the Underground Railroad (Donaldson, 1999). This atmosphere literally alienates Quentin from his Mississippi homeland and places him within an arena where his Southernness is doubted and tested. Having the responsibility of supporting Sutpen's narrative, Quentin is an outsider in Massachusetts, neither a southerner nor a northerner, yet at once in the South's past and the North's present (Chavers, 2013). The story twist, which commences in Chapter VI, underlines the active role of Shreve and the equality in the making of history. He confronts Quentin at once, demanding that he explain the nature of the South: tell about the South. What's it like there? What do they do there? Why do they live there? Why do they live at all?

This research is methodologically qualitative, interpretive, text-based, and close-reading. This analysis is conducted iteratively, through reading, reflection, and interpretation of the narrative strategies used by Faulkner to identify how historical meaning arises from the dialogue between Quentin Compson and Shreve McCannon. Based on the narratological principles of polyphony, dialogism, and focalisation, the work situates Shreve's voice within a larger theoretical context, in which the aspect of cultural distance allows the writer to view with a certain interpretive clarity. This analytical prism is also reinforced by hemispheric and transnational approaches, which help clarify the symbolic applicability of the Canadian identity of Shreve and place the handling of Southern history in the novel in a broader North American context. The novel itself supplements critical scholarship in narrative theory, Southern studies, and Faulkner criticism.

The paper continues by reviewing the existing scholarship on *Absalom, Absalom!* with a specific focus on the studies of narrative voice, regional memory, and outsiders. It proceeds to identify the theoretical basis for reading Shreve as a catalyst in the narrative and as a cultural opposing force to Quentin. The main argument is that Shreve is involved in the process of rewriting the Sutpen narrative, which complicates the historical understanding of the South, given the outsider status of the former. Additionally, the novel's dialogic nature complicates the lines between memory and the past. The paper will wrap up by reviewing what I have learned from this interpretive inquiry and pondering the larger implications of Shreve's transnational outlook for Faulkner studies and Southern literature.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The novel *Absalom, Absalom!* by William Faulkner has been the subject of extensive scholarly analysis, with several critics citing it as one of the most complex explorations of Southern history, race, and unreliable narration in American literature. The novel's non-linear structure and mosaic of voices have always been at the centre of discussions of the nature of historical truth and the cultural trauma of the American South (Entzminger, 2006). The presented literature review gathers the most significant academic interpretations that have been applied to the scope of the current research of the Canadian interlocutor and co-creator of the narrative, Shreve McCannon, exploring the essential discourses of historiography in Faulkner, the theory of the narrative multiplicity, and the symbolic significance of the North-South divide in the novel.

One of the key themes in Faulkner criticism is the novel's engagement with the South's racial and historical heritage. Critics like Cleanth Brooks, Olga Vickery, and Richard H. King have noted that Faulkner was obsessed with the mythologised memory of the antebellum South and its breakdown (Hobson, 2003). According to scholars, the Sutpen saga is a small world representation of the entire social breakdown caused by slavery, miscegenation, and a strict caste system. In this discussion, the role of narrative is equivalent to that of history as such: torn apart, hard to grasp, full of racial guilt (Maine, 1985). Faulkner does not offer a single, authoritative past, as many critics have claimed; rather, history is historiographed through the prejudices, traumas, and speculations of his narrators' imaginations. This view of history as a discourse, rather than an objective record, is key to comprehending Shreve's position as an outsider who seeks to find his way within the Southern past and rebuild it (Long, 2014).

Faulkner's use of multiple narrators has attracted significant attention in narrative theory and Faulkner studies. According to critics, including John T. Irwin and Michael Millgate, the novel's form, its complex stratification of voices, is an expression of the impossibility of reaching an unmediated past. All three, Quentin, Rosa, and Mr Compson, are immersed in the cultural, emotional, and ideological baggage of the South, and their versions of the story of Sutpen are figures of burdened retrievals (MacDonnell, 2014). Conventional interpretations have seen Shreve as an antithesis to Quentin: a detached, disinterested figure who can question

Southern mythology through the lens of his Northern rationality with evidentness. But more recent scholarship, including that of Deborah Clarke and Thadious Davis, questions the notion of Shreve as a neutral (Trefzer & Abadie, 2014). These critics claim that Shreve does not stand above it but becomes increasingly involved during imaginative reconstruction as he turns into an outsider and becomes a creative, active part of the retelling of Southern history.

Much academic literature has also explored this symbolic geography of *Absalom, Absalom!*, especially in its comparison of the American South with the North. Being a Northern intellectual institution, Harvard is an antidote to the rotting plantation world of Mississippi (Lind, 1981). Critics like Eric Sundquist, Jay Watson, and Patricia Yaeger believe that the North is not a contrasting area but a conceptual place of critical distance, rational inquiry, and moral judgment of slavery. In this frame of interpretation, the Canadian identity of Shreve has received comparatively less attention from scholars, though it has become increasingly prominent. On the historical level, Canada is significantly linked to abolitionism, refuge, and the Underground Railroad (Watson & Thomas, 2023). This national symbolism not only makes Shreve a Northerner but a symbol of a nation that was essentially anti-racist in its principles, which were the guiding force of the world Sutpen lived in. Although this aspect was not previously noted by commentators, recent postcolonial and hemispheric American studies critics highlight the significance of the Canadian presence as a counter-history to the American South, which is explicitly reflected in the interpretive prism through which Shreve recreates Sutpen's story (Urgo & Abadie, 2023).

In addition, researchers have examined the psychological aspects of Quentin and Shreve's collaborative narration. Emotional entrapment in Southern history has been a popular topic on Quentin's part, and several critics have seen his eventual breakdown and subsequent suicide in *The Sound and the Fury* as a symbolic impossibility of the South to come to terms with its history (Miller, 2005). Shreve, on the other hand, is a symbol of movement, dissociation, and strong criticism. But when the two couple their imaginations together in Chapter VI, critics like Noel Polk and Donald Kartiganer allege that there is no insider/outsider distinction anymore. The deconstruction of Charles Bon's racial identity is made a collective storytelling process, in which Shreve provides the analytical distance that Quentin lacks (Kartiganer, 2000). This joint reconstruction, commonly referred to as a sort of marriage of minds, has been construed as Faulkner, commenting on how the outside needs to view the problem of regional trauma—a theme that is echoed in the current study.

Lastly, Faulkner's race work is also a body of literature that cannot be ignored in this analysis. As noted by Toni Morrison, Kenneth Warren, and Barbara Ladd, the revelation of Charles Bon's mixed racial background is the novel's ethical focus (Blotner, 2010). This disclosure reveals the racial fears of the South, which were deep-rooted, and the vulnerability of its social structure. Importantly, it is Shreve who demands that the processes of these racial relations be accurately scrutinised and who leads Quentin to the peak understanding of race as the engine of the Sutpen tragedy. According to the critics like Ring (2017), the focus of racial logic by Shreve can be attributed to his intellectual education and also to his national identity as a Canadian, who symbolically is no longer a part of the history of slavery in America, but who is very conscious of its effects.

### **3. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **3.1. Shreve McCannon the Narrative Outsider**

Shreve McCannon comes to *Absalom, Absalom!* as a character whose geographical, historical, and moral distance from the American South radically alters the novel's terrain. As a Canadian figure within Harvard, Shreve is not only the one who is not part of the cultural memory that



unites the Southern narrators, but also the one who is not part of the inherited code of emotions that defines Quentin Compson's interpretative dilemmas (Quilford, 2016). Faulkner's prominence of Shreve's narrative is not accidental: the outsider perspective is needed to question the history otherwise shut off by the closed circuit of Southern consciousness. The distance Shreve experiences liberates him from the pressing imposition of memory and historical guilt that weighs so heavily on Quentin, and the absence of emotional commitments enables him to raise questions that disorient Quentin in his implicit loyalties. His questions, including his blunt request to tell him about the South, serve as a rhetorical interruption that reveals the South's contradictory nature. By making Shreve the alien whose vision is not clouded by nostalgia or local trauma, Faulkner illustrates that historical recreation must have a point of view that is not constrained by the attempt to comprehend.

Moreover, Shreve's outsider status should be read in the context of the hemisphere subtly invoked in the novel. The fact that Canada figures in the history of American abolitionists as a geographical haven for fugitive slaves places Shreve in a moral and symbolic distance from the South in its long tradition of racial oppression. His being the child of cold highlights this symbolic difference; he is a representation of the North, not only the American North but the furthest part of the continent, a culturally coded space that is rational, orderly, and morally detached. This symbolic geography guides Shreve's treatment of Sutpen's narrative. He does not receive the trauma; he deconstructs it. He is not saddened over the South; he analyzes it. In such a manner, Shreve is put in the textual position of the interpretative sanity that never seems to belong to the Southern characters, and his alien status allows him to express the racial truths that Southern narrators either suppress or manipulate.

### **3.2. Interactive Reconstruction: Shreve and Quentin as Co-Narrators**

The partnership of Shreve and Quentin constitutes the most crucial narrative episode of the novel, especially in the further narration of the life of Charles Bon in Chapters VI through XV. This collaborative rebuilding is necessary because it shows how Faulkner thinks of history as a dialogic process rather than a fixed narrative (Towner, 2008). The two young men, one a Southern descendant of an agonising heritage, the other a Northern outsider, together create, recreate, and remake the Sutpen story. Their telling develops into an intellectual partnership, where they mix speculation, memory, inference, and imaginative empathy to cobble together the pieces of a tale that each of the preceding tellers was unable to articulate.

A strange narrative familiarity characterises this narrative closeness. The problem that has disturbed critics of Shreve and Quentin is that they have a habit of blending voices, speaking in a manner that disorients the boundaries between self and other. Faulkner employs this combination to make the notion that history must be interpreted collaboratively more dramatic. Quentin gives the emotional and regional recollection; Shreve the logical and detached thought, and they accomplish something in the way of balance in the interpretation, as neither could do alone. Their relationship becomes a prototype for how to rebuild their oppressed past, particularly their racial secrets and miscegenation. The racial truths that the South has always been hiding under the carpet are brought out through the bold assumptions of Shreve, who, on many occasions, tends to be more insightful than the wavering resolutions of Quentin. Shreve challenges Quentin to accept the bloody racial logic on which the Sutpen heritage rests by revealing the secret truth of Charles Bon's black ancestry.

There is also the collaborative approach, which shows how Faulkner narratively criticised the South for its propensity to mythify itself. Southern storytellers such as Rosa Coldfield and Mr Compson manipulate history through their emotional partiality, bitterness, or regional ideology, whereas Shreve and Quentin, in their dialogic collaboration, seek to discover a history grounded in analytical thought and moral cognisance. This partnership indicates that

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Faulkner does not view historical truth as given knowledge but rather as a configuration created through the dialogue among space, time, and cultural identities. The Canadian and the Southerner, collaborating in an academic institution of the North, prove to be the most fruitful historians of the novel. Racial and ethnic differences and conflicts mark life in a free society; therefore, to support his argument, the author employs his own race to justify the presence of racial disparities within society. Table 1 summarises the novel's multilayered narrative voices and positions Shreve's Canadian perspective within the broader process of historical reconstruction.

**Table 1. Narrative Layers and Historical Reconstruction in *Absalom, Absalom!***

Narrative Layer / Voice	Temporal Position	Function in Constructing History	Relevance to Shreve's Canadian Perspective
Rosa Coldfield's Narrative	1909	Personal grievance; emotional, subjective memory	Provides the first biased version; contrasts with Shreve's detached analysis
Mr Compson's Narrative	Early 20th century.	Attempts rational explanation; retains Southern nostalgia	Highlights the cultural distance between North and South
Quentin Compson's Narrative	1909	Internal conflict: struggles between Southern idealism and disillusionment	Serves as a bridge between Southern memory and Shreve's scepticism
Shreve McCannon's Reconstruction	1909 (in Harvard)	Critical questioning; reconstruction through logic and detachment	Central framing device showing outsider reinterpretation
Joint Quentin–Shreve Interpretation	1909	Collaborative historical imagining	Demonstrates interplay between insider trauma and outsider rationality

### 3.3. Race, Memory, and the Uncovering of the Repressed

Race and ethnic differences and conflicts characterise life in a free society; hence, to prove his point, the author uses his own race to explain racial disparities in society. Among the most valuable contributions Shreve made to the narrative genre is his ability to address the racial realities Southern characters do not want to acknowledge. The Sutpen narrative is essentially a racial narrative: a narrative of miscegenation, of the horror of racial mixing and the taboo of Black ancestry in a slaveholding society, and the agricultural practices of racial exclusion. The Southern narrators cannot directly face these facts. Their narratives are fragmented, disjunctive, and emotionally protective, indicating the cultural inability of the South to explain its own racial past. The intervention by Shreve is thus critical. Being born in a country where the practice of slavery was abolished long ago and where the ideals of abolitionist movements were used to draw the national myths, Shreve is not emotionally threatened by the reference to race. His inability to share some racial patterns means that he can discern where Quentin is merely able to feel them in agonising silence. Table 2 contrasts key thematic orientations between the American South (as represented by Quentin and other Southern narrators) and Canada (as defined by Shreve), clarifying how national/hemispheric difference shapes interpretive stance.

**Table 2. Canada-American South Thematic Contrast**

Theme	The American South (Quentin's Context)	Canada (Shreve's Context)	Relevance to Narrative Interpretation
Historical Memory	Burdened, traumatic, inherited; tied to slavery and Civil War	Detached, less emotionally invested	Highlights the way Shreve can objectively question Southern myths
Identity Formation	Rooted in regional pride and ancestral legacy	National identity shaped by multiculturalism and distance from Southern history	Allows Shreve to interpret characters without inherited bias

Approach to Storytelling	Oral, dramatic, emotionally charged	Analytical, logical, interrogative	Creates tension and contrast in interpretive style
Relationship to Race	Historically central; tied to guilt, denial, and legacy	Less central in early 20th-century Canadian self-conception	Enables Shreve to expose racial contradictions that Quentin cannot articulate
View of the Past	Inescapable, cyclical, traumatic	Distant, observed rather than lived	Explains why Shreve reconstructs history with clarity and boldness

It is Shreve who insists on Charles Bon's racial identity as a crucial explanatory key to the story. Whenever Shreve brings a racial dimension to the Sutpen saga, Quentin opposes, stumbles, or withdraws into emotional unease. This clash highlights a conflict on a larger cultural level between a society that seeks to deny the reality of race and an external voice that can analyse it. Shreve's incessant questioning, rational conclusions, and wild speculations slowly drive Quentin to a point of realisation. In this interpretive dialogue, Quentin is left with no choice but to acknowledge the racial violence of his region, even though the realisation shatters him emotionally.

Shreve turns out to be the agent of dramatising the conflict between historical memory and historical truth in Faulkner's work. The South recalls selectively, nostalgically, and mythically; Shreve re-creates analytically, critically, and racially. This distinction is not only personal but also structural, as societies built on racial hierarchies find it challenging to tell their own histories. This interpretation by Shreve is the mechanism by which Faulkner brings the racial secrets of the Sutpen dynasty into the light of storytelling.

### 3.4. Discussion

The foregoing analysis illuminates the multifaceted ideological and narrative function of Shreve McCannon in *Absalom, Absalom!*, revealing how Faulkner strategically deploys his Canadian outsider status to destabilize Southern monopolies on historical narration. By positioning Shreve within a symbolic geography of moral distance rooted in Canada's historical role as abolitionist refuge and continental counterpoint to American slavery Faulkner not only critiques the South's self-mythologizing tendencies but also models a broader epistemology of historical understanding: one that requires the uncomfortable interplay of emotional inheritance and critical detachment (Azzi, 2015; Hobson, 2003; Winks, 1998).

A key implication of this reading is the novel's implicit argument that regional trauma cannot be adequately processed from within the affected culture alone. Shreve's interventions expose the ideological scaffolding that sustains Southern narratives, yet Faulkner refuses to valorize pure objectivity. Shreve's analytical incisiveness, unburdened by nostalgia or guilt, risks emotional sterility, while Quentin's visceral entanglement threatens interpretive paralysis (Miller, 2005; Watson, 2000). Their dialogic synthesis suggests that historical truth emerges not from solitary authority but from contested negotiation, a process Faulkner enacts structurally through the blurring of their voices into an almost fused consciousness, often described by critics as a "marriage of minds" (Kartiganer, 2000; Towner, 2008). This negotiated quality underscores the novel's modernist skepticism toward totalizing histories, aligning *Absalom, Absalom!* with contemporaneous philosophical debates about memory, subjectivity, and collective reckoning, while also prefiguring later narratological theories of polyphony and dialogism.

Furthermore, the Canadian dimension introduces a subtle hemispheric critique that complicates traditional North-South binaries in Faulkner scholarship. By extending the "Northern" gaze

beyond the United States to include Canada, Faulkner situates Southern exceptionalism within a larger North American moral landscape, implicitly questioning the innocence of neighbouring nations while highlighting shared continental legacies of race and refuge (Boyagoda, 2015; Urgo & Abadie, 2023). This transnational framing not only enriches readings of the novel's symbolic geography, where Harvard serves as a metonym for intellectual detachment, but also anticipates later postcolonial and hemispheric approaches to American literature, offering a corrective to regionally insular readings of Yoknapatawpha that dominate much earlier criticism (Trefzer & Abadie, 2014; Ring, 2017). In this light, Shreve's presence subtly challenges the exceptionalism of both Southern defensiveness and Northern moral superiority, suggesting that continental histories of race and freedom are inextricably linked rather than oppositional.

Ultimately, Shreve functions less as a revolutionary figure than as a catalyst for epistemological unease. His presence forces recognition that all historical reconstruction, however rigorous or collaborative, remains conjectural, shaped by the limits of evidence and the contingencies of perspective (Skei, 2013; Long, 2014). Faulkner thus uses Shreve to dramatize both the necessity and the impossibility of fully confronting a violent past, leaving readers in the same productive discomfort that afflicts Quentin: aware of racial truths yet unable to escape their human cost (Blotner, 2010). This discomfort extends beyond the characters to implicate the reader in the ongoing labour of interpretation, reinforcing the novel's enduring power as a meditation on the ethical demands of historical memory in a racially fractured society.

### **3.5. Limitations of the Study**

This study has some limitations, as with any interpretive literary research study. Even though its findings are based not on empirical data but on textual analysis, and since interpretation is subjective, alternative interpretations remain valid and justified. In the study, English scholarship is also primarily utilised, which indeed runs the risk of omitting international insights into Faulkner's work and the hemispheric significance of Canada. Moreover, although the historical context is kept in mind, the work does not attempt to recreate Faulkner's personal intentions or psychological motivations, as it falls outside the boundaries of modern literary methodology. Lastly, the analytical emphasis on Shreve McCannon inevitably comes at the expense of other main characters, such as Rosa Coldfield, Henry Sutpen, Judith Sutpen, and Charles Bon. These figures, as discussed, refer to Shreve's interpretive role; a broader character analysis is outside the scope of the proposed research. However, these limitations do not contradict the study's purpose; they clarify its focus and make the analysis coherent, well-directed, and methodologically sound.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

This study has argued that Shreve McCannon serves as a transformative force in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, functioning not merely as Quentin Compson's roommate and interlocutor but as a critical outsider whose Canadian perspective provides the moral, geographical, and emotional distance essential for interrogating the South's entrenched myths of history, race, and identity. By situating Shreve within Canada's historical legacy as an abolitionist haven and symbolic antithesis to American slavery, Faulkner transforms the act of narration into a continental dialogue that exposes the racial anxieties and repressive mechanisms at the heart of the Sutpen saga. The collaborative reconstruction undertaken by Shreve and Quentin illustrates Faulkner's central insight: historical truth is neither inherited nor discovered in isolation but negotiated through the tense interplay of insider trauma and outsider rationality. Shreve's probing questions and bold speculations compel acknowledgment of the repressed racial essence of the story, an acknowledgment that Southern narrators evade



and that Quentin can only bear at great personal cost. In this way, the novel insists that the South's past remains unintelligible to itself without an external, morally unencumbered voice capable of naming what regional culture cannot.

This analysis contributes to Faulkner studies by foregrounding the hitherto under-examined hemispheric significance of Shreve's Canadian identity, moving beyond conventional North-South oppositions to reveal a broader North American framework for understanding regional memory and racial reckoning. It demonstrates how Faulkner anticipates transnational approaches to Southern literature, using continental contrast to critique both Southern exceptionalism and Northern self-regard. Ultimately, *Absalom, Absalom!* emerges not only as a monumental exploration of the American South's haunted legacy but as a profound meditation on the collective, dialogic labour required to confront any society's traumatic history.

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