FROM POETRY TO PROSE:

THE METAMORPHOSIS OF FAULKNER'S ART

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Because of Faulkner's great productivity as a writer and the proliferation of Faulkner scholarship which has appeared in the last decade, this study has required both the pursual and perusal of a great many primary and secondary sources. For their assistance in the former of these tasks, I should like to express my appreciation to the staff of the Oklahoma State University library, and to the Tulsa University library for making available The Marble Faun and other rare Faulkner editions.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

William Faulkner began his literary career as a poet, with the publication of The Marble Faun in 1924. The book was a failure; it sold only about fifty of the original one thousand copies which were printed under the patronage of his friend, Phil Stone.[1] Thirty years later, as a Nobel and Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist, Faulkner was still calling himself a "failed poet" and regretfully saying,

> I've often thought that I wrote the novels because I found I couldn't write the poetry, that maybe I wanted to be a poet, maybe I think of myself as a poet, and I failed at that, I couldn't write poetry, so I did the next best thing.[2]

The entire body of Faulkner's verse seems to have been written between the summer of 1919, when he completed The Marble Faun, and some time before 1933, when a final volume, A Green Bough, was published. During this period he wrote for publication the two volumes mentioned above as well as twenty five single poems (see Appendix B, p.108, for a com-

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[1]John Faulkner, My Brother Bill (New York, 1963), p. 153.

[2]Faulkner in the University: Class Conferences at the University of Virginia 1957-1958, ed. Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner (Charlottesville, Virginia, 1959), p. 4.

plete listing).

The critical reception of this poetry must have seemed discouragingly consistent to Faulkner. A week after "Une Ballade des Femmes Perdues" appeared in The Mississippian, that same paper published a parody of it, signed "J". This anonymous parodist also produced pieces ridiculing "Naiad's Song" and "Fantouches" (the parody was titled "Who-touches"). A month later, in a letter to the editor, "J" wrote,

> Mr. Editor, wouldn't this be a fine university if all of us were to wear sailor collars, monkey hats, and brilliant pantaloons; if we would "mose" along the street by aid of a walking prop; and, ye gods forbid, if we should while away our time singing of lascivious knees, smiling lute strings, and voluptuous toes? Wouldn't that be just too grand?[3]

Later parodies by other writers appeared. Another caricature of "Une Ballade des Femmes Perdues" was titled "Une Ballade d'une Vache Perdue", and "Clair de Lune" appeared as "Cane de Looney". As a final blow, Faulkner was blackballed by a campus literary society.

Thus was Faulkner's earliest poetry received. A Green Bough, which contains his final attempts at verse-making, hardly faired better. This volume, unlike the rest of his poetry, was published after he was well established as a novelist. The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying, Sanctuary,

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[3]Carvel Collins, ed., William Faulkner: Early Prose and Poetry (Boston, 1962), p. 14.

and Light in August had all won critical acclaim, and Faulkner was much in demand as a short-story writer. All that these facts seemed to serve, though, was to get A Green Bough reviewed in several popular publications, an attention that The Marble Faun never received.

William Rose Benét, in Saturday Review of Literature, devoted most of his discussion of A Green Bough to showing all the different poets that Faulkner may have imitated. He climaxes this impressive list by saying,

> A most mixed exhibit! I have tried not to be hypercritical. It is taken for granted that Mr. Faulkner is no mere gifted amateur as a writer of prose--and yet that is just what he seems to be when it comes to poetry. He does not truly know his way about. His hand is still prentice. He almost seems to be precocious, peculiarly enough, rather than accomplished. There are gleams. There should be. But where is the impressively original and strikingly integrated personality? Not in this book.[4]

Peter Munro Jack in the New York Times Book Review was kinder, recognizing a spirit of affirmation that gave the poetry eloquence. However, he devoted much energy to adding to Benet's compendium of influences, though he acknowledged that out of the patchwork of borrowings the reader could hear Faulkner himself speak occasionally.[5] Morris Schappes criticized A Green Bough for the absence in it of pressing so-

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[4]William Rose Benét, Saturday Review of Literature, IX (1933), 565.

[5]Peter Munro Jack, New York Times Book Review, May 14, 1933, p. 2.

cial issues; he noted that in no poem had Faulkner come to grips with the problem of the "proletariat of Mississippi."[6] Only Eda Lou Walton of the New York Herald Tribune Books gave A Green Bough an entirely favorable, if perhaps unrealistic, judgment. She wrote that,

> If William Faulkner had not been interested in becoming an important novelist and short-story writer, it seems most probable that he would hold rank as one of the better minor poets of this period.[7]

It would be impossible to say whether or not Miss Walton was influenced by Faulkner's reputation when she wrote her appraisal, for she does not come to grips with the poetry itself.

Whether or not Faulkner's poetry is really as immature and imitative as the majority of the critics regarded it, we could logically expect them to fail to appreciate much of his verse, for he was deliberately out of step with what was then fashionable in poetry. Following a short-lived infatuation with contemporary poets, which he described as being like joining an "emotional BPOE," Faulkner began to look back to earlier schools of poetry, particularly the French Symbolistes and the English Romantics. He scorned the "yelping pack" of contemporary poets (led by Carl Sandburg and Vachel Lindsay), calling them "so many puppets fumbling in the

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[6]Morris U. Schappes, "Faulkner as a Poet," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, October, 1933, p. 50.

[7]Eda Lou Walton, New York Herald Tribune Books, April 30, 1933, p. 2.

windy darkness." He expressed a strong conviction that the great poetry of the future would return to formal rhymes and conventional forms, and he discovered that Keats, Shelley and Shakespeare possessed "that beautiful awareness, so sure of its own power that it is not necessary to create the illusion of force by frenzy and motion," that he tried to emulate in his own best verse.[8]

It is easy to see this admiration for traditional poetic forms reflected in Faulkner's verse. The Marble Faun is written in rhyming couplets of iambic tetrameter, and of his sixty-four other poems, only ten lack conventional rhyme and meter. Fourteen of his extant poems are sonnets, and the remaining forty-one use primarily iambic meter with varying line lengths and rhyme schemes. Faulkner was likewise tied to the past in diction and imagery; his poems abound in classical allusions, and he employed many grammatical inversions and archaic phrases.

For a poet to repudiate the more experimental and avant garde of his contemporaries is not unusual; in the case of Faulkner it becomes so only when we consider that while he was a traditional poet, he was probably the most original and iconoclastic novelist of his generation. This would suggest that he made a sharp distinction between the methods of poetry and prose; and by his own word he also distin-

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[8]William Faulkner, "Verse Old and Nascent," reprinted in Collins, pp. 116-117.

guished between the matter of the two genres. In a discussion at Nagano, he said,

> . . .the poet deals with something which is so pure and so esoteric that you cannot say he is English or Japanese--he deals in something that is universal. That's the distinction I make between the prose writer and the poet, the novelist and the poet--that the poet deals in something universal, while the novelist deals in his own tradition.[9]

Even though Faulkner drew a line between the scopes of poetry and prose, with the one universal and the other more personal, and even though he clung to traditional techniques and forms in poetry while establishing new precedents in the novel, there is still a definite overlapping of the two art forms in his work. This is not to say that his poetry is often prosaic, but that an outstanding feature of his prose is the strong poetic quality that colors his diction and imagery. In addition, there is an easily evidenced thematic continuity between his poetry and prose.

Therefore I hope to show how an examination of certain of Faulkner's poems can give us greater insight into his prose. Some of his major themes appear in highly condensed form in his verse, and many of the techniques in handling diction and imagery in his poetry he later turned to enriching his prose style.

The most important quality that Faulkner's poetry and prose seem to have in common, and it is one that pervades

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[9]Faulkner at Nagano, ed. Robert A. Jelliffe (Tokyo, 1956), p. 16.

not only his themes but also his style, is extreme tension.[10] In the case of theme, this quality is most often manifested in a central character who is trapped, even to the point of being rendered incapable of positive action, in a highly tensional situation where equal but opposite forces are acting upon him. Closely linked with this thematic situation is the "frozen time" imagery--those images which "paralyze movement but intensify the moment.[11] Another aspect of his imagery which can be described as tensional is his use of the French Symbolistes' technique of synesthetic imagery. Faulkner's diction, too, is highly tensional by virtue of his liberal use of such devices as oxymoron.

In investigating the scholarship on Faulkner's poetry preparatory to this study, I found that most current critics seem to share Irving Howe's opinion that the poetry

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[10]Throughout this study, I shall be using the term "tension" in much the same sense that Robert Penn Warren uses it in his essay, "Pure and Impure Poetry"(Robert Penn Warren, Selected Essays /New York, 1958/, pp. 3-31). To Warren, tension involves "resistances at various levels." He says,

> There is the difference between the rhythm of poetry and the rhythm of speech. . .between the formality of the rhythm and the informality of the language; between the particular and the general, the concrete and the abstract; between the elements of even the simplest metaphor; between the beautiful and the ugly; between ideas; between the elements involved in irony; between prosaisisms and poeticisms. . ."(p. 27).

While Warren's discussion is limited to poetry, his concept of tension seems equally applicable to prose.

[11]V.S. Pritchett, "Time Frozen," Partisan Review, XXI (1954), 559.

has "met with deserved neglect."[12] I found only three discussions of it outside of the early reviews mentioned previously. Harry Runyan has compiled an excellent bibliography of Faulkner's poetry, but deals with the poetry itself briefly and rather superficially.[13] George Garrett shows respect for Faulkner's poetic efforts, especially The Marble Faun, though he considers them failures. He points out Faulkner's indebtedness to the French Symbolistes, and assesses his use of Symboliste techniques as one of the strongest aspects of his verse.[14] Most appreciative of Faulkner's verse, and most helpful in this study, was an unpublished dissertation by Harold Edward Richardson. Richardson has done a thorough analysis of Faulkner's poems, and related them thematically to events in his life. He has extended his analysis to include Faulkner's first two novels, Soldiers' Pay and Sartoris, and shows some similarities in style and theme between these two works and his poems.[15]

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[12]Irving Howe, William Faulkner: A Critical Study (New York, 1962), p. 15.

[13]Harry Runyan, "Faulkner's Poetry," Faulkner Studies, III(1954), 23-29.

[14]George P. Garrett, Jr., "An Examination of the Poetry of William Faulkner," The Princeton University Library Chronicle, XVIII(1957), 124-135.

[15]Harold Edward Richardson, William Faulkner: From Past to Self-Discovery--A Study of His Life and Work Through Sartoris, (1929), (unpub. dissertation, University of Southern California, 1963).

In selecting individual works which seemed to have the most to offer this discussion, I found it easy to eliminate many of the lighter, more topical university poems as well as the most obtrusively imitative of the later verse. I excluded all the novels after Go Down, Moses because thematic focus seems to have shifted away from the major motifs of the poetry as he got farther away from it in time. Stylistically, the complexity of Faulkner's syntax increased with time,[16] causing it to resemble his style in the poetry less. Still further limitation of the material was based on the fact that while I have found almost all of Faulkner's work to be imbued with the tensional quality I have described, the poems and novels which show the most parallelism in the particulars of meaning and language can best illustrate it.

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[16] Compare a noted French translator of Faulkner, Maurice Coindreau, in "On Translating Faulkner," The Princeton University Library Chronicle, XVIII(1957), 112.

CHAPTER II

THEME

Faulkner's poetry and prose are not of consistent quality, principally because his poetry does not show any of the strong regional influence that is so significant in his novels, nor does it contain the element of humor that enhances his prose. He believed that these things should not be included in poetry, but should be relegated to prose fiction. When he defined the realm of the poet as "universal," and the realm of the novelist as "his own traditions" (see p. 6), Faulkner seems to have meant, judging from his own work, that the poet must deal with generalities, while the novelist can properly employ more particular details of action, character and setting. Therefore, though the mood of much of his poetry is essentially pastoral or homely, the setting is not characteristically Southern; and though the past looms large in his poetry, it is not a past whose focal point is the Civil War.

In spite of these important differences, there is a basic motif that helps to govern theme in many of the poems as well as the novels. This common motif is the dilemma of an individual caught between two irreconcilable, if not

opposite, elements. The most frequently recurrent of these pairs of elements are past-present, and permanence-mutability. In some cases these are resolved into the more personal life-death antitheses. These pairs are interrelated, for he frequently identifies past or death with permanence, and the present or life with mutability.

The poem "Cathay"[1] is a condensed statement of Faulkner's attitude toward these pairs of conditions. Thematically, it is an extension of The Marble Faun, which was actually written earlier; but its relative brevity makes it an advantageous starting point.

The situation in "Cathay" is this: the sensitive observer-poet is able, and even obligated, to create a vision of hope out of a spiritually reconstructed, but still impalpable, glorious past. This poet-dreamer is juxtapositional to his less perceptive contemporaries, the "Wanderers with faces sharp as spears"(l. 10) who have lost contact with the truth and grandeur embodied in the past. Thus, the poet is barred from total participation in his present, because he is too sensitive to accept its emptiness, and he cannot participate in the past because of his position in time. He can only stand isolated, staring "Through the spawn of lesser destinies"(l. 15) upon the golden past.

The position of the poet in "Cathay" is essentially the

[1]This poem can be found in Collins, p. 41.

same that we will later see occupied by such figures as Gail Hightower in Light in August, Quentin Compson in Absalom, Absalom! and Ike McCaslin in Go Down, Moses. H.E. Richardson has also argued that Faulkner identified himself with this situation, that Cathay is analogous to the South before the Civil War, and the unfeeling wanderers with their flocks to the "red neck" or "Snopes" element in the South today.[2]

Another closely related idea which seems secondary in this poem, but which we shall see assume great importance in The Marble Faun and later works, is a peculiar attitude toward the mutability of worldly things. The lines,

> . . .So is it! who sows
> The seed of Fame, makes the grain for Death to reap
> (ll. 8-9)

when considered in context, suggest that the speaker is unwilling to commit himself entirely to life because it is not a permanent condition; it seems that the value of the past lies very much in the facts that it partakes of both life and death, and that it does not change.

The central figure in The Marble Faun is the poet of "Cathay" carried to the logical extreme. He is not merely alienated from the present by his sensiblities, but is actually barred from participation in it physically. The two chief critics of Faulkner's poetry have differing views

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[2]Richardson, pp. 106-107.

of the nature of the Faun's bondage. Richardson, on the one hand, seems to feel that the fact of the central figure's being "marble bound" is a necessary adjunct to the awareness of the mutability of things that Faulkner wished to express through this character, while allowing the character to maintain distance and objectivity. The result is a figure caught between two worlds, past and ever-changing present, and not a part of either.[3] Garrett, on the other hand, believes that the Faun's bondage is self-imposed, for he is the "prisoner of interior powers which isolate him from the quick unthinking vitality of the idealized pastoral scene."[4] This isolation is a result of "Knowledge, a sense of identity and loss, the memory of the dreamy past and a sense of the recurrence and repetition of things, good and evil."[5]

I believe that a combination of these views is more accurate than either one taken separately. The poem is too coherent to allow us to safely assume that the use of the statue is merely a device to emphasize theme, or that the "statue-ness" of the Faun is just a manifestation of his personality.

Like the poet of "Cathay," the Faun rejects the present. He has two reasons for doing so: first, he feels alienated

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[3]Richardson, p. 86.

[4]Garrett, p. 125.

[5]Ibid., p. 126.

from it because he is acutely aware that he is set apart from the mutable world by his own relative permanence; second, like the poet in "Cathay," he cannot accept its inferiority to the past. Passages which express the Faun's unhappiness with the present and his own relation to it give the poem what Runyan calls "an ever-present sense of futility."[6] These melancholy passages are interwoven with large portions of highly sensual nature description with strong carpe diem overtones. This gives the collection a contrapuntal structure which creates further tension while emphasizing theme.

Illustrative of this interweaving of moods are the first three poems in the collection. After the introductory, "If I were free," the Faun proceeds,

> . . .then I would go
> Where the first chill spring winds blow
> Wrapping a light shocked mountain's brow
> With shrilling tongues, and swirling now
> And fiery upward flaming, leap
> From craggy teeth above each deep
> Cold and wet with silence. Here
> I fly before the streaming year
> Along the fierce cold mountain tops
> To which the sky runs down and stops;
> And with the old moon watching me
> Leaping and shouting joyously. . .(I, 1-12)[7]

and continues thus exuberantly for seven stanzas. The last

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[6]Runyan, p. 26.

[7]William Faulkner, The Marble Faun (Boston, 1924). Hereafter cited by the abbreviation MF. Since editions of this poem are not readily available, I shall note passages from it by poem number and line, as they are numbered in Appendix A of this text.

stanza in II offers a change in mood with a picture of Pan[8] piping mournfully for "other springs as cold and sad/As this" (II, 44-45). This stanza is followed by III, which is also melancholy in mood, and further defines the Faun's plight, ending with a longing for the death which he can never know. And so throughout the poem follows this cyclical pattern of exhileration, dejection, and despair.

As was mentioned earlier, the Faun's opposition to the present is the result not only of his awareness of the mutability of all worldly things, but, as in "Cathay," of the shortcomings of mankind. This is best illustrated in XV, which follows a section in which the Faun finds comfort and peace in the clean coldness of a winter's night. The glade is suddenly invaded by revelers (probably celebrating the Roman Faunalia, which falls on December 5):

> Dancers in a blatant crowd
> To brass horns horrible and loud (XV, 13-14).

Man is portrayed as an ". . .unclean, heated thing/ Debauching the unarmed spring" (XV, 17-18), who is totally alien to the idealized pastoral scene.

This cycle of the Faun's exultation in the beauty of nature followed by his sadness for its imperfections and at the same time, his sadness for his inability to be part of

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[8]Throughout, the Faun identifies his own plight with both Pan's, as in this passage, and the moon's. That the moon is also plagued by her knowledge of the impermanence of nature is best exhibited in IX, 18-21.

it, continues throughout and the end of the poem offers no resolution of the problem:[9]

> Ah, how all this calls to me
> Who marble-bound must ever be
> While turn unchangingly the years.
> My heart is full, yet sheds no tears
> To cool my burning carven eyes
> Bent to the unchanging skies:
> I would be sad with changing year,
> Instead, a sad, bound prisoner,
> For though about me seasons go
> My heart knows only winter snow (Epilogue, 24-32).

This, then, is the Faun's dilemma: he is an effigy of man, yet he abhors man. He desires the ability to participate in the vital world about him, but participation would end in the death which makes him so unhappy to observe. And at the same time he longs for this death which would end his futile quest for the reason which governs it.

The theme of The Marble Faun is re-stated in very similar terms and even in some of the same language in VII of A Green Bough. The setting is pastoral, as in The Marble Faun, but without the suggestion of classical landscape. The peaceful rustic setting contrasts sharply with the image of Death as the watchman watching over it in the night.

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[9]The Faun's failure to achieve a synthesis of his problem is interesting in light of a statement made by Walter Slatoff concerning some of Faulkner's novels:

> In short, the endings seem designed not to interpret or integrate but to leave the various elements of the story in much the same suspension in which they were offered, and to leave the reader with a high degree of emotional tension.

("The Edge of Order: The Pattern of Faulkner's Rhetoric," Twentieth Century Literature, October, 1957, p. 121.)

Here, too, the moon (along with the earth) represents permanence, the unchanging but weary observer of man's endlessly repeating pageant of life and death.

The similarity in the language between this poem and The Marble Faun is evident in the following passage:

> The world is still, for she is old
> And many's the bead of life she's told.
> Her gossip there, the watching moon
> Views hill and stream and wave and dune
> And many's the fair one she's seen wither:
> They pass and pass, she cares not whither (VII, 15-20)[10]

A point is made of the outcast or outlaw's cursing the moon for casting her light upon him. This could be taken to mean that he is an outcast in the same sense that the protagonists of "Cathay" or The Marble Faun are outcasts or alien to their society, and that he regrets or resents the knowledge of his own ephemerality, which is symbolized by the moon. Whether or not this is the case, there is still a high degree of tension in the structure of the poem between the calm, pastoral landscape of the first half and the stilled violence of thievery and lynching in the second half, with the moon serving as a link between the two parts.

The realization that the Faun experiences, that even if he were able to participate in the physical world about him, he would be dissatisfied with its transience, recurs in

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[10] William Faulkner, A Green Bough (New York, 1933). Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text by the abbreviation GB, and poem and line number. Compare this passage with MF, IX, 18-21.

"Clair de Lune," which was published only months after "Cathay." "Clair de Lune" is Faulkner's translation of a poem of the same name by the French Symboliste poet Paul Verlaine. Unlike most of Faulkner's other attempts at translation, "Clair de Lune" is very close to the original. Most of the deviations seem to be for the sake of preserving the original ABAB rhyme scheme. One exception, however, is found in line 7, the key line of the poem, and brings the theme closer to Faulkner's other works than the original is. The poem is an extended metaphor comparing the soul of the person to whom it is addressed (presumably a young woman) to a garden where masqueraders sing "Of conqueror love and life opportune"(l. 6)[11] Verlaine's line 7 reads, "Ils n'ont pas l'air de croire á leur bonheur";[12] Faulkner has translated this to "Yet seem to doubt their joyous revelry." The negative of "croire" becomes the more forceful, direct "to doubt" and "bonheur" the more extravagant "joyous revelry." What Faulkner has gained by taking the liberty of using more forceful language here is an increase in the contrast between ostensible confidence and gaiety, and hidden futility and sadness. This also heightens the tension inherent in the image of a mask which expresses an emotion contrary to

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[11]William Faulkner, "Clair de Lune," The Mississippian, March 3, 1920, p. 6. Reprinted in Collins, p. 58.

[12]Paul Verlaine, "Clair de lune," An Anthology of French Poetry from Nerval to Valéry in English Translation with French Originals, ed. Angel Flores (New York, 1958), p. 89.

the wearer's.

Three other poems in A Green Bough besides VII are greatly concerned with man's struggle between life and death. The first poem in the collection is written after the manner of T.S. Eliot and is like a poetic version of Soldiers' Pay. The conflict lies within the central figure who, like Donald Mahon, is dead to the world outside but cannot die within himself. Both characters are living only in the memory of that day in the past when each faced death (each in aerial combat in World War I) and yet did not die. Each is living in the tomb of his own body, as is emphasized in the lines,

> They bend their heads toward me as one head.
> --Old man--they say--How did you die?
>
> I--I am not dead.
>
> I hear their voices as from a great distance--Not
> dead
> He's not dead, poor chap; he didn't die--(I, 94-98).

Likewise, Mahon's father in Soldiers' Pay regards a photograph of his still-living son and thinks, "(This was Donald, my son. He is dead)."[13] Each, having tasted of death, is ruined for living; yet neither can loose his only hold on life, the "trophy he had reft from Time and Space"(SP, p. 203). Both the figure in the poem and Donald Mahon continue to be acted upon by their environment and the people around

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[13]William Faulkner, Soldiers' Pay (Signet Edition, New York, 1951), p. 177. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text by the abbreviation SP and page number.

them, but they are not capable of reacting. Their special knowledge of death binds them to inaction as it does the Marble Faun.

Poem XVI is a dialogue between youth and death, where once again we find a character disillusioned with life because of its transience. Like "Clair de Lune," this poem utilizes the image of the young masquerader acting out the part of "star, and sun, and moon, and laughter"(GB XVI, 12). A sudden knowledge of death leaves the cocky youth stripped bare and "'gibbering at /his/ own face in a mirror'"(GB XVI, 20). Death is here portrayed as all-wise and peace-bestowing, as opposed to life, which is a sham.

The last of the three poems (X) bears a very close relationship to Faulkner's prose because he actually versified it from prose.[14] Here the central figure is "caught between his two horizons"(GB X, 19). These two horizons are equated with, first of all, the character's physical horizons, for he stands at the crest of a hill. But beyond this, the horizon that lies behind him also signifies his present life compounded of day after day of labor that is only for the sake of survival and therefore without inherent value. The horizon that lies before him is his immediate

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[14]A short sketch in The Mississippian, March 10, 1922, pp. 1-2 entitled "The Hill" very closely resembles this poem both in the situation and language. "The Hill" has been reprinted in Collins, pp. 90-92.

future, and beyond that, death. The contrast between the two, life and death, is further emphasized in the lines, "Forgotten his father, Death; Derision/ His mother, forgotten by her at last"(GB X, 11-12), where the word derision recalls the attitude expressed in the previous poems of the futility and meaninglessness of life--of life mocking anyone who would take it seriously. The vantage of the central figure, "between his two horizons," lies outside of time and space--"Beyond all oceaned Time's cold greenish bar"(GB X, 14). He is rendered immobile, "--A terrific figure on an urn--"(GB X, 18) by virtue of his being caught between the extremes of existence, just as surely as the Marble Faun is.

We see then, reiterating the original proposition concerning theme in Faulkner's poetry, that many of the poems are built around two components between which extreme tension exists. The tension created by the juxtaposition of these opposites often acts upon a central figure who is thereby faced with an option for action which, in William James' terms could be called "genuine," yet which nevertheless permits no real choice or solution.

Turning to Faulkner's novels, we find this same situation repeated in a number of instances. Most frequently, a character is so preoccupied with the past that he cannot act in the context of the present; yet his position in time also prevents him from acting in the context of the past.

He is totally ineffectual--or "impotent," as was the Marble Faun.

In the novels, this preoccupation with the past is usually part of a search for identity.[15] Faulkner's first fictional hero, Donald Mahon, is an example of the individual involved in this tensional situation (see discussion above, pp. 18-19). Melvin Backman cites Bayard Sartoris as a character for whom this dilemma emerges as a struggle between will to live and will to die, thus imparting to Sartoris a sort of "subterranean tension."[16]

Further manifestations of this tension, which have not been explicitly noted previously, can be found in the Reverand Gail Hightower in Light in August, Quentin Compson in Absalom, Absalom! and in a slightly different sense, Isaac McCaslin in Go Down, Moses. The attitude toward time of the first of these characters is different from that which is found elsewhere in Faulkner's novels. Harry M. Campbell has observed that Faulkner's novels are frequently characterized by a creative merging of past and present.[17] This is true

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[15]Richardson, p. 86 ff. names "struggle to identity" as a main theme in Faulkner's poetry, as well.

[16]Melvin Backman, "Faulkner's Sick Heroes: Bayard Sartoris and Quentin Compson," Modern Fiction Studies, II (1956), 97. Also of interest is Backman's observation that the Quentin section of The Sound and the Fury is split between past and present, creating structural tension.

[17]Harry Modean Campbell, "Structural Devices in the Works of Faulkner," Perspectives, III(1950), 209.

for Gail Hightower in that he attempts to live the past in present time. It is true for Quentin Compson in that he is attempting to define the present in terms of the past. It is not true, however, in the conventional sense of time's being a continuum with past flowing into present, or each instant of present becoming past in a measured, orderly sequence. For neither Hightower nor Quentin is "past" five minutes ago, a year ago, or even ten years ago. "Past" is separated from present by an insurmountable barrier, and its scope is quite small relative to what is conventionally thought of as past. As in "Cathay," past is a segment of time that is set apart from present by the intervening "spawn of lesser destinies."

The Reverand Hightower is incapable of positive action because of his refusal to identify with the present, and his inability to recapture the past. The list of his failures spells his biography: failure as a husband, failure as a minister, failure even as the art teacher, Christmas card painter, and photograph developer which he styled himself after being rejected by his church. His greatest failure, at least in the context of the novel, is in not being capable of providing refuge for the doomed Joe Christmas. Hightower is likewise isolated from the world about him--the community.[18] His own realization of the dilemma that

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[18]See Robert D. Jacobs, "Faulkner and the Tragedy of Isolation," Southern Renascence: The Literature of the Modern South, ed. L.D. Rubin and R.D. Jacobs (Baltimore, 1953) pp. 170-91.

has negated his life can be found in his reflection that,

> ". . .I know that for fifty years I have not even been clay: I have been a single instant of darkness in which a horse galloped and a gun crashed. And if I am my dead grandfather on the instant of his death, then my wife, his grandson's wife. . .the debaucher and murderer of my grandson's wife, since I could neither let my grandson /Hightower himself/ live or die. . . ."[19]

Hightower has striven to repudiate life in order to become part of the past ("I have bought my ghost, even though I did pay for it with my life"/p. 429/). Quentin Compson, too, is obsessed, even haunted, by his own personal tradition. Early in Absalom, Absalom! he is described in such a way that the dualism of his personality is revealed--the Quentin who is trying to escape from the past, and the Quentin who is hopelessly involved with it.

> Then hearing would reconcile and he would seem to listen to two separate Quentins now--the Quentin Compson preparing for Harvard in the South, the deep South dead since 1865 and peopled with garrulous outraged baffled ghosts. . .and the Quentin Compson who was still too young to deserve to be a ghost, but nevertheless having to be one for all that, since he was born and bred in the deep South. . . .[20]

There is this difference between Quentin and Hightower, though: Quentin is making an anguished attempt to become

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[19]William Faulkner, Light in August, (Modern Library Edition, New York, 1950), p. 430. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text by the abbreviation LIA and page number.

[20]William Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! (Modern Library Edition, New York, 1951), p. 9. Hereafter cited in the text by the abbreviation AA and page number.

reconciled to the past, and thereby free himself from it; Hightower is trying to capture it. But the results are essentially the same--each is inextricably bound to it, and hence not wholly committed to his life in the present.

Isaac McCaslin in "The Bear" is engaged with the past in a somewhat different fashion than Quentin or Hightower. These latter two are static figures looking back at the past, like the poet in "Cathay." Ike, however, is being swept along against his will in a progression of time that is leaving behind the past, and with it all that he values and identifies himself with. His past is not embodied in the larger-than-life heroes of several generations before his time, as was Quentin's and Hightower's; it is a distant past that flourished before man brought the concept of ownership to the land, thereby cursing it, and there are remnants of his past to be found in all times. His past is one in which man was in harmony with nature, not seeking dominion over it. This vanishing state of integrity, to Ike, was truth--his definition of truth being this: "Truth is one. . .It covers all things which touch the heart--honor and pride and pity and justice and courage and love."[21]

His desire to recapture and hold forever this state of "truth" is expressed in his discussion with his cousin Mc-

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[21]William Faulkner, "The Bear," reprinted in The Portable Faulkner, ed. Malcolm Cowley (New York, 1954), p. 330.

Caslin when he reads from Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn":

> "She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
> Forever wilt thou love and she be fair."

He wishes to retrieve the past which embodies his concept of truth, and assume a static relationship with it--so he could "never approach any nearer and never have to get any further away"(p. 330). His inability to achieve this desire, like the failure of the other characters we have discussed to embrace either of the extremes of the conflict they are involved in, is attested to in the short story "Delta Autumn."

Another particularly interesting aspect of the conflict Faulkner felt between the past and present that can be observed in his writing is his frequent mention of the opposition of "Is" and "Was." In an interview he once said, "There is no such thing as _was_--only _is_. If _was_ existed, there would be no grief or sorrow.[22] Later he reiterated, "There is no such thing really as was because the past is. It is part of every man, every woman, every moment."[23] This idea finds voice in his poetry in _A Green Bough_, XXVI:

> Still, and look down, look down:
> Thy curious withdrawn hand
> Unprobes, now spirit and sense unblend, undrown,
> Knit by a word and sundered by a tense
> Like this: Is: Was: and Not. . . .(ll. 1-5)

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[22]Stein, p. 82.

[23]_Faulkner in the University_, p. 84.

He further explores this curious relationship in Absalom, Absalom! when Judith is thinking of a tombstone: "'. . .the block of stone can't be is because it never can become was because it can't ever die or perish. . .'"(AA, 127), and later, as Quentin says, ". . .what WAS is one thing, and now it is not because it is dead, it died in 1861, and therefore what IS. . .is something else again because it was not even alive then"(AA, 131). Any obscurity or seeming contradictions in these comments are secondary to the fact that Faulkner did consider past and present two completely discrete conditions, whether one of them existed or not. That he set past and present in conflict with one another, though, does not necessarily imply that he thought they were equal and opposite concepts. On the contrary, Faulkner apparently adheres to Henri Bergson's philosophy of time. In an interview in 1958, he admitted that he was familiar with Bergson and agreed with his ideas about time.[24] And his remarks quoted above seem entirely consistent with this passage from "Creative Evolution":

> . . .our duration is not merely one instant replacing another; if it were, there would never be anything but the present--no prolonging of the past into the actual, no evolution, no concrete duration. Duration is the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advan-

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[24]Loïc Bouvard, "Conversation with William Faulkner," Modern Fiction Studies, V (1959-1960), 363.

> ces. . .In its entirety, probably, it follows us at every instant; all that we have felt, thought and willed from our earliest infancy is there, leaning over the present which is about to join it. . .What are we. . .if not the condensation of the history that we have lived from our birth--nay, even before our birth. . .?[25]

The theme of conflict between permanence and mutability, per se, is not found in Faulkner's novels to the extent that it is in his poetry. Instead, this conflict is usually broken down in the novels to the life-death dichotomy. One reason for this might be that the novels are focused on realistic rather than purely symbolic characters. Faulkner strove to make the characters in his novels "stand up on their hind legs and cast a shadow," whereas the poetic figures (particularly the Marble Faun) are essentially abstractions. And whereas an abstraction like the Marble Faun could be confronted with problems of permanence and mutability--to accept his own permanence would be a living option for him--a very mortal Bayard Sartoris, for example, could express his rejection or acceptance of the conditions of existence only by accepting or rejecting

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[25]Henri Bergson, "Creative Evolution," trans. Arthur Mitchell in Selections from Bergson, ed. H.A. Larrabee (New York, 1949), pp. 60-61. An interesting and more specific correspondence between Faulkner's treatment of time and Bergson's is the similarity between Darl's musing in As I Lay Dying (p. 492), "If you could just ravel out into time. That would be nice. It would be nice if you could just ravel out into time," or Jason in The Sound and the Fury (p. 327), ". . .with his invisible life ravelled out about him like a wornout sock," and Bergson's statement in "An Introduction to Metaphysics" (Selections from Bergson, p. 6), that "This inner life may be compared to the unrolling of a coil. . . ."

his own life.

The death of his twin brother John in the novel Sartoris teaches Bayard Sartoris that life is not permanent, and so what he had had as a child, "a sort of frank spontaneity, warm and ready and generous"[26] becomes "bleak defiance" as he challenges again and again the life which he had learned to place no confidence in. His ultimate death, actually suicide, seems to stem not so much from despair as from defiance or a sense of protest against life. Like the Marble Faun, he has a will to die--not because he feels he has failed, but because he feels life has failed him; so he wants no part of it.

Thus through an examination of problems which some of Faulkner's poetic characters hold in common with certain characters from the novels, we can begin to see thematic continuity between the two genres. Of course, our comparisons have necessarily been generalized. The conflicts under discussion are by no means the only ones which govern Faulkner's work, nor are they the only ones which motivate any single character. Particularly the characters in the novels, like any realistic figures, are too complex to be explained in terms of any one pair of conflicting elements. But by pointing out some themes in the poems which have reasonable counterparts in the prose, I have

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[26]William Faulkner, Sartoris (New York, 1929), p. 298.

hoped to suggest both the quality and quantity of thematic tension which pervades all of Faulkner's literary works.

CHAPTER III

STYLE

The most frequently noted characteristic of Faulkner's prose style, excepting the obscurity of his syntax, is its strong poetic quality. As Richard Roth has said, Faulkner has "recalled prose to poetic norms."[1] Many critics have dealt with his prose in this way, even approaching it from such specially poetic standpoints as rhythm and use of alliteration. Accepting the poetic in Faulknerian prose as generally recognized, we find that this quality is manifested not only in imagery, which we shall examine in a separate chapter, but also in a number of aspects of diction. Furthermore, Faulkner's prose not only resembles poetry in general, but it resembles his own poetry in particular. And it often does so in such a way that we are immediately reminded of the quality of tension that was originally proposed as a prominent feature of all of Faulkner's writing.

The simplest sort of parallels which can be drawn be-

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[1]Russell Roth, "The Centaur and the Pear Tree," Western Review, XVI (1952), 201.

tween Faulkner's prose and poetry are those instances in which he merely borrowed lines or even whole passages from a poem and transposed them, with a minimum of changes, into a prose context. Consider the following:

Soldiers' Pay (p. 158)	A Green Bough, XVII
"'For a moment, an aeon, I pause plunging above the narrow precipice of thy breast' and on and on and on. Do you know how falcons make love? They embrace at an enormous height and fall locked, beak to beak, plunging: an unbearable ecstasy."	o atthis for a moment an aeon i pause plunging above the narrow precipice of thy breast what before thy white precipice the eagle sharp in the sunlight and cleaving his long blue ecstasy. . .

There are numerous briefer examples, such as "Gaunt Orion swinging by his knees" in A Green Bough, III becoming ". . .Orion swinging head downward by his knees" in Mosquitoes[2] or

> If there be grief, then let it be but rain,
> And this but silver grief for grieving's sake

in "My Epitaph" (GB, XLIV, 1-2) changed to ". . .rain grew soft as the grief of a young girl grieving for the sake of grief" in Soldiers' Pay (p. 197).

The majority of the correspondences that can be found, though, are not so direct; however, they certainly hold more significance in the over-all view of Faulkner's art than

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[2]William Faulkner, Mosquitoes (second Dell edition, New York, 1962), p. 193.

these incidental self-borrowings. In examining the different aspects of style which show continuity from the poetry to the prose, we find that some are not really intrinsically tensional, but they enhance the tension which has already been established by the context. Among these are Faulkner's special, select vocabulary which he often uses to emphasize or heighten theme; coined or synthesized words; changes in the grammatical function of words by inflection and syntax and the use of archaic expressions and sentence patterns. Faulkner also employs stylistic devices which are inherently tensional, such as the repeated use of a cluster of words that denote tension or stasis; the unconventional construction of negative forms for many verbs and nouns; the preponderance of synesthetic metaphors; and the extensive use of oxymoron. The best way to approach the first of the groups of techniques is simply to cite examples that would be familiar to any reader of Faulkner's novels, and compare them with similar occurences in the poetry.

Faulkner's marked preference for certain words has received a good deal of attention, and a fair share of negative criticism. Conrad Aiken, for example, has said,

> It is easy to make fun of Mr. Faulkner's obsessions for particular words, or his indifference or violence to them, or the parrot-like mytacism (for it is really like a stammer) with which he will go on repeating such favorites as "myriad, source-

less, impalpable, outrageous, risible, profound. . . .[3] It would be difficult to resist the impulse to add to this list other favorites such as insatiate, bitter, extravagant, sudden, irrevocable, violent, terrific, spent, amaze, lambent and impotent. A number of these are equally common in the poetry--bitter, myriad, maze or amaze, implacable, rage or outrage, impotent and terrific, to name but a few. The poetry, though, has a special vocabulary of its own, as the prose does. Many of the words seem to be chosen for their sound, after the manner of Poe: thrilling, shrill, liquid, languid, lax, shivering, quivering, shimmering, shudder, stilly, and even stillily.

Rather than being just an annoying mannerism, this frequent repetition of certain words functions very usefully, especially in the novels, in relating style to theme. According to Warren Beck, Faulkner's repetitions "seem to intend adumbration of the tale's [or in this case poem's, too] whole significance and tone."[4] A simple illustration of this is Absalom, Absalom! where various forms of the words amazed and astonished are used with such great frequency, especially to describe characters who are not consciously amazed or astonished by happenings which are not obviously

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[3]Conrad Aiken, "William Faulkner: The Novel as Form," Atlantic Monthly CLCXV(1939), 651.

[4]Warren Beck, "William Faulkner's Style," American Prefaces, VI(1941), 196.

amazing or astonishing, that it gives the entire narration a vague but pervasive tinge of bewilderment. This sense of perplexity is reinforced within the reader as it becomes clear that an important conflict in the novel is between Thomas Sutpen's complete confidence in his ability to guide his own destiny, and his equally complete, and uncomprehending, failure to do so. Reason tells Sutpen that certain actions should be followed by certain results. He never quite understands the failure of these results to materialize. The two narrators are also permanently astonished--Miss Rosa, at Sutpen's outrageous proposition, Quentin at the South and his inability to define his attitude toward it.

Aside from their relationship to theme, Faulkner's "special" words begin to take on new, exclusively Faulknerian connotations from having been used so many times in related contexts. Sometimes the meanings which words assume hardly resemble the conventional denotation, and the result is a private vocabulary to fit Faulkner's private world. Instead of the words' communicating an idea or situation to the reader, the idea or situation lends new meaning to the words.

The effect of cumulative meaning that is thus achieved can be illustrated by examining a typical Faulkner word, myriad, in various contexts. Funk and Wagnall's New Standard Dictionary of the English Language defines the noun

myriad as ten thousand things, or an indefinitely large number of things. As an adjective it means "consisting of a very large but indefinite number." Faulkner's use of the word, both as adjective and noun, is sometimes conventional, as in such phrases from his novels as "the flash and glitter of myriad carriage wheels," "a myriad bees vascillated," or "intervals filled with the myriad voices;" or in A Green Bough, "While he, with myriad cherubim. . . ." On the other hand, prose phrases like "the hushed myriad life of night things," "the grass was ankle-deep, myriad," "her myriad and sunken face," or "the myriad air," and /thou (singular)7 dost myriad lie" from A Green Bough XXVI, desert the conventional definition and leave the reader groping with a new connotation that seems to have something to do with "teeming"--not with actual life, but in the way a Van Gogh haystack or sunflower is "teeming." Then when the reader encounters the same word a page or even a paragraph later, his recollection of previous usage will still color this new occurence of the word, regardless of the context.

In addition to this unconventional use of conventional words, Faulkner makes his vocabulary distinctive by compounding, by sheer invention of words, and by changing the grammatical function of words syntactically or with added inflections. His compounds in the poetry usually function as adjectives, and are composed of a noun or

adjective plus a past or present participle. Compounding is especially well-suited for poetry because of the effect of compression that it achieves; and Faulkner takes full advantage of it in such phrases as "she, musicfleshed," "faintleaved willow screen," "aircarved cumulae," "dim-dissolving music," "bronzehard fame," "duskfilled sails," and "doveslippered eyes." All of these examples are drawn from A Green Bough; there are few instances of compounding in the earlier poetry.

All of Faulkner's prose contains examples of such compounds; it would be unnecessarily difficult to catalogue them all. A few examples should show the imagination with which he synthesizes words, and the greater range of patterns than can be found in the poetry: man-horse-demon, womanshenegro, pinkwomansmelling, miasmal-distillant, pollenwroiled, cinderstrewnpacked, childtrebling, manvoice, dryscented.[5] In addition to the economy and precision that are effected by these compounds, there is tension produced in the yoking together of words which do not have a conventional relationship. Some of these compounds, especially the ones in the poetry, have further resistance between their components because of the synesthesia--the contradictory sense perceptions--that they describe. Musicfleshed

[5]See Florence Leaver, "Faulkner: The Word as Principle and Power," South Atlantic Quarterly, Autumn, 1958, pp. 464-467, for additional examples.

is typical of this sort.

A few words are fanciful creations that bear only enough resemblance to a standard word to be elusively suggestive of its meaning. Examples of this are "nepenthelene," which resembles "nepenthe" or "nephilinite," "unsunder," as a noun denoting the quality of a virgin's thighs, and "convolvulae," a noun denoting the quality of hills. Like Poe, Faulkner seems to have coined these words for their sound value and imprecise suggestiveness rather than their direct communicative power. In using these words, as in using the unusual compounds noted above, Faulkner seems to be following the advice of his mentor, Paul Verlaine, who directed a friend in "Art poétique,"

> Il faut aussi que tu n'ailles point
> Choisir tes mots sans quelque méprise:
> Rien de plus cher que la chanson grise
> Où l'Indécis au Précis se joint.[6]

In "these slender moons' unsunder I would break"(GB XLIII, 5), for example, the prefix un- instead of the usual a- saves the line from a too-pat iambic rhythm, as well as increases alliteration in the line. "Unsunder" is immeasurably more appropriate than "inviolability," which closely approximates its meaning but is more readily recognized. If the conventional "asunder" had been used with its usual adverbial function, the line would have been

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[6] An Anthology of French Poetry, p. 348.

only an ordinary inversion instead of the mind-stopping expression that is necessary to emphasize the inception of violent action in the poem.

Faulkner plays havoc with the conventional grammatical functions of words, both in his poetry and prose. In the poetry we find him creating verbs from nouns: "to magic him," "a plateau wombing cunningly," "man may bread him /self/," "where was laked the constant blue," "requiemed down the sea," "thou came and brided me," and "fragments vortex together." Less frequently he creates adjectives from nouns("musiced leaves" or "stars in choired processional"), nouns from adjectives("the serene of living"), and adverbs from nouns("momently").

Here again the technique is so familiar in Faulkner's prose that the examples which can be drawn from the first few pages of Absalom, Absalom! are sufficient to suggest both their quality and frequency. In the first chapter we find abrupt and repercussed used as verbs, reposed as an adjective, and unforgiving and amaze as nouns. Again, this is a freedom which often allows for originality of expression without sacrificing precision of meaning. The conventional alternatives to "he would abrupt upon a scene" (AA, p. 8), for example, are either trite or lack the intended emphasis.

As was pointed out earlier, the devices that have been discussed thus far are not especially tensionaly in them-

selves. However, in context they often heighten or punctuate the tension that has already been created by jarring the reader's attention. Two other devices that accomplish much the same thing in the prose, though they are largely taken for granted in the poetry, are archaisms and grammatical inversion. Words like blent, shoon, bruit, and minion are unusual, but not particularly startling, when encountered in a poetic context. But these same words and other rare, obsolete or archaic ones, such as durance, darkling, smore, vagrom, and virago, certainly command attention in the prose passages. Likewise, inverted sentence patterns are a traditional convention in poetry, and Faulkner's poems, especially The Marble Faun and others which deal with subjects from antiquity, abound in them. But his prose, too, contains countless grammatical inversions that are archaic or sometimes Biblical in tone. For example, "It mused. . .with that quality peaceful and now harmless and not even very attentive. . ."(AA, p. 13); or ". . .those days formal and funeral. . ."(AA, p. 64).

Even more relevant to this study than the stylistic features mentioned above are those which actually help create tension. Two of these are simply subdivisions of qualities already mentioned--the cluster of static or tensional words which is an important part of Faulkner's special vocabulary, and a rather large group of words that consists of positive roots plus negative prefixes or

suffixes. Two other tensional devices account for a large measure of what is usually thought of as "Faulkner-esque" style--the profusion of synesthetic metaphors, and extensive use of oxymorons, not only in simple figures of speech, but more broadly in what Walter Slatoff calls "psychological oxymorons."[7]

Karl Zink has pointed out that the idea of stasis, arrest, or frozen-ness, found to be a significant part of Faulkner's themes in the last chapter, is projected in his style by a special vocabulary of words which connote this quality. Zink's lengthy listing of these words includes "motionless, arrested, frozen, carven, suspended, immovable, immobile, immune, soporific, tideless, vacant of progress, slow and terrific, terrifically motionless, spent and frantic, retrograde."[8] To this we could add enthralled, marbled, reluctant, and rooted, which are also common in the prose, but even preponderant in the poetry--especially The Marble Faun.

Faulkner's unusual negatives, or "negative ultimates," as Florence Leaver has named them,[9] are decidedly tensional.

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[7]Walter J. Slatoff, "The Edge of Order: The Pattern of Faulkner's Rhetoric," Twentieth Century Literature, III (1958), 111.

[8]Karl E. Zink, "Flux and the Frozen Moment: The Imagery of Stasis in Faulkner's Prose," PMLA, LXXI (1956), 286.

[9]Leaver, p. 200.

A strongly positive verb or noun is paired with the prefix un- or the suffix -less, or sometimes compounded with not to produce a word which gives nearly equal weight to what is meant and what is not meant, with the actual idea or object denoted by the word left suspended somewhere in between the two, unexpressed. This gives rise to words in his poems like unreft, unsistered, unawake, unmouthed, uncleaving, and unprop. This effect is often stressed by piling up several of these negatives, thus: "and from a cup unlipped, undreamt, unguessed;" "unebbing windless tides of trees;" or "thy curious withdrawn hand unprobes, now spirit and sense unblend, undrown." In the novels, words like unregret, undefeat, unamaze, unvolition, un-unasleep, unorganism, notpeople, notlanguage, nothusband, and nomotion are commonplace. Curiously enough, though, these are not equivalent to the opposites of the root word. Unasleep, for example, certainly does not carry the same force that awake would. The tension created by the juxtaposition of the active verb and the negative particle leaves the product of the combination somewhere in between the two extremes. Unasleep would scarcely differ from unawake. Leaver emphasizes the importance of these "negative ultimates" in relation to theme because they create an ". . . overpowering negative intensity which traps the characters, boxing them in their own ignorance, impotence or

bafflement in an incomprehensible world. . . ."[10] While this is not always the case with these words, it is often true that the verbs especially accentuate the forced passivity of the characters who are their subjects.

Both Garrett and Richardson have pointed out that in many ways Faulkner tried to emulate the poetry of the French Symbolistes.[11] We know that Faulkner was an admirer of Symboliste verse because of his efforts in translating Verlaine, and his borrowings from Mallarmé and La Forgue.[12] The most evident Symboliste technique that he took for his own is synesthetic imagery. The immanence of this phenomenon in both his poetry and prose would warrant a brief definition and examination of how it was used by his models before pointing out the part that it plays in his work.

Edmund Wilson and Joseph Chiari both indicate that one of the principal aims of the Symbolistes was to "approximate the indefiniteness of music."[13] This preoccupation

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[10]Ibid., pp. 202-203.

[11]Garrett, p. 124, and Richardson, pp. 79-80.

[12]Note the similarity between Faulkner's "The Faun" and "L'Apres-midi d'un Faune" and Mallarmé's "L'apres-midi d'un faune." Also Faulkner's use (with slight changes) of the line from La Forgue's "Complainte de cette bonne lune," "Là, voyons, mam'zell' la Lune/ Ne gardons pas ainsi rancune," in both "Fantoches" and Soldiers' Pay, p. 93.

[13]Edmund Wilson, Axel's Castle: A Study of the Imaginative Literature of 1870-1930 (New York, 1931), p. 13.

with music led them to strive for the "suggestive, indefinite, vague, emotive states favorable to rebirth of poetic experience."[14] One way in which they achieved this sought-for imprecision was by using synesthetic metaphors--that is, metaphors which confuse the perceptions of the different senses. Thus we have, from Baudelaire's famous "Correspondances":

> Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent
> Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité,
> Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté,
> Les parfums, les coleurs, et les sons se répondent.
>
> Il est des parfums frais comme des chairs d'enfants
> Doux comme les hautbois, vet comme les prairies,
> --Et d'autres, corrompus, riches et triomphants,
>
> Ayant l'expansion des choses infinies,
> Comme l'ambre, le musc, le benjoin et l'encens,
> Qui chantent les transports de l'esprit et des sens.[15]

The Marble Faun abounds with these "colors, scents, sounds" corresponding. Consider such phrases as, "cold and wet with silence," which mingles touch with hearing; "a sudden /flute/ strain, silver and shrill/ as narrow water," or "the sun a soundless pattern weaves," which appeal to sight, hearing, and possibly touch; or the sensual ambiguity of "thin and cold and hot as flame." Typical in A Green Bough are such phrases as "spears of sunlight," "moaning hands," "green night" and "green hurt." Faulk-

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[14]Joseph Chiari, Symbolisme from Poe to Mallarmé: The Growth of a Myth (London, 1956), p. 57.

[15]An Anthology of French Poetry, p. 298. Italics added.

ner's earliest novels make even more extravagant use of synesthesia in many similes and metaphors. In Soldiers' Pay can be found phrases like, "The lights were shimmering birds on motionless golden wings, bell notes in arrested flight"(SP, p. 17); "towns like bubbles of ghostly sound beaded on a steel wire"(SP, p. 19); "her voice was rough, like a tangle of golden wires"(SP, p. 50); "a violet silence soft as milk"(SP, p. 114); and perhaps most uninhibited of all, "and stars were golden unicorns neighing unheard through blue meadows, spurning them with hooves sharp and scintillant as ice"(SP, p. 135). The later novels employ synesthesia with considerably more restraint, but use it nevertheless frequently in phrases like "iron flame" and "iron impregnable dark" in Absalom, Absalom! More than just creating the suggestive imprecision the Symbolistes strove for, these synesthetic images create tension by conjuring up sensations that cannot be identified with any of the so-called discrete senses, that remain elusively felt, yet unidentified.

The final characteristic of Faulkner's style that I wish to discuss here, and one which is central to the tensional quality of his style, is his use of the oxymoron. As Slatoff has said,

> . . .Faulkner frequently seems willing and even anxious to leave his reader with suspensions which are not resolvable in rational terms. . .The essential purpose and effect of most of Faulkner's oxymorons, I believe, is not to force the reader

> to grasp a reality or unity beneath an apparent contradiction but to leave him with the tension of the contradiction itself.[16]

Slatoff's very thorough treatment of this phenomenon in Faulkner's prose leaves little to do but cite a few illustrative examples from the prose and show how this device is also important in the poetry. One rather large group of oxymorons express motion and immobility simultaneously, and therefore make particularly relevant examples. In Absalom, Absalom! we find "I motionless in the attitude and action of running, she rigid in that furious immobility"(AA, p. 140); "women enthroned and immobile passing rapidly across the vision"(AA, p. 110); or the often-noted description of Lena Grove in Light in August--"she advanced. . .like something moving forever and without progress across an urn"(LIA, p. 6). All of these motion-freezing figures of speech recall the dilemma of the Marble Faun, whose imaginative adventures are oxymoronically opposed to his being marble-bound. Oxymoron is not used as frequently in the poetry as in the prose, though it is nevertheless a prominent feature of the poems, where it usually takes the more conventional, and more conveniently manageable, form of a pair of apparently contradictory terms. We find pairs of words like "soundless din," "shimmering still," "chanting silence," "unheard

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[16]Slatoff, p. 110.

sound," and "quiet thunder" throughout the poetry, but they are most prevalent in the last volume. The unresolved paradoxes which all these phrases present, beside having interior tension, promote a sort of vague suggestiveness similar to that which the synesthetic images do. In an expression like "chanting silence," for instance, we know that the actual condition is silence, and "chanting" is only a qualifier; yet the sensation that we receive from the phrase is neither silence nor sound, nor can it otherwise be accurately defined in direct terms.

The preceding discussion does not pretend to account for Faulkner's style, especially his prose style. It does not touch upon his equally praised and damned sentence structures (that Zink even refuses to call by the name of sentence, labelling them "prose patterns" instead), the passionate, sustained lyricism of many set pieces, the highly evocative, almost metaphysical analogies, the straightforward, terse narrative, the delicate exploiting of levels of dialect. What the discussion has accomplished, I believe, is to show how, as in theme, Faulkner's prose developed along a continuum with his poetry, rather than separately from it.

CHAPTER IV

SYMBOLISM

Faulkner's analytical turn of mind has given rise to a profusion of imagery in his prose, and as in his themes and diction, this imagery bears a strong resemblance to that of his poetry. His imagery covers a wide range of types: there is the synesthetic imagery discussed in the last chapter, the picturesque pastoral imagery *à la* Gray, the nature images which seem to derive from the later English Romantics, the startling, almost metaphysical analogies and swollen emotional expressions that are frequently associated with the decadents, and the highly sensual Swinburnian images. These sometimes contradictory elements blend in the earlier poems and novels to produce an overly-charged, unrestrained effect, as in the following passage from *The Marble Faun*:

> While sunset lingers in the trees
> Its subtle gold-shot tapestries,
> The sky is velvet overhead
> Where petalled stars are canopied
> Like sequins in a spreading train
> . . . . . .
> On every hill battalioned trees
> March skyward on unbending knees,
> And like a spider on a veil
> Climbs the moon. A nightingale

> Lost in the trees against the sky,
> Loudly repeats its jewelled cry(MF VII, 24-39),

or a comparable prose passage from Soldiers' Pay:

> . . .the reddened edge of the /sun's/ disc was sliced like a cheese by the wistaria-covered lattice wall and the neutral buds were a pale agitation against the dead afternoon. Soon the evening star would be there above the poplar tip, perplexing it immaculate and ineffable, and the poplar was vain as a girl darkly in an arrested passionate ecstasy. Half of the moon was a coin broken palely near the zenith and at the end of the lawn the first fireflies were like lazily blown sparks from cool fires(SP, p. 198).

The personification of the poplar tree in the second of these passages is a stereotyped device that appears again and again in Faulkner's poetry as well as prose, as in "A Poplar,"[1]

> . . .you lift your pliant supplicating arms as though
> To draw clouds from the sky to hide your slenderness.
>
> You are a young girl
> Trembling in the throes of ecstatic modesty,
> A white objective girl
> Whose clothing has been forcibly taken away from her.

Or again in The Marble Faun,

> The poplars look beyond the wall
> With bending hair, and to me call,
> Curving shivering hands to me
> Whispering what they can see (MF IV, 1-4).

All of these passages are typical of the tone of Faulkner's earliest prose and poetry; the imagery of both A Green Bough and the novels after Sartoris are somewhat more refined, but effect is essentially the same.

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[1]Collins, p. 60.

Of more positive value than these questionable excesses are a group of images which, by virtue of their repeated use and special relevance to theme, transcend picture-making and achieve symbolic significance.[2] Among these are a number which are contingent upon the quality of tension which we have found to be characteristic of Faulkner's works. One cluster of images has its roots in The Marble Faun. The faun image itself often appears, especially in Soldiers' Pay; both the satyr and centaur are also prominent in later works. The statue is another important image, frequently occurring in the form of a tableau vivant. The idea of frozen figures from antiquity suggested by the Marble Faun is also expressed in the image of a Grecian urn with its painted frieze. Three other images which function symbolically and emphasize tension are the mirror, shadow, and corridor.

Faulkner's "antique" images, the faun, urn and statue, all have several different but overlapping functions. They produce an effect of suspended time. The last two also suggest frozen or suspended motion. And they contrast the golden past with the shabby present, creating an effect of comic irony in some contexts. The faun or satyr image is

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[2]Throughout the remainder of this chapter the terms "image" and "symbol" will be used interchangeably since the images under consideration do evoke intellectual and sensual responses simultaneously.

central to three of Faulkner's poems beside The Marble Faun--"L'Apres-midi d'un Faune," "The Faun," and A Green Bough XLI, and appears in one other. It is an inherently tensional image because of the animal-human dichotomy it can intimate. Sometimes (as in The Marble Faun) Faulkner seems to intend a figure like the Faun of Praxitiles, which possesses a minimum of bestial characteristics; this is appropriate in this case, because the Marble Faun's desires are more spiritual than physical. On the other hand, A Green Bough XLI connotes the conventional satyr, replete with cloven hoofs; and this, too, is appropriate, for his desires are lecherous. In his novels, Faulkner uses this image in all of the three ways mentioned above. Three very different characters are described as fauns, but the application of this description to each is based on one quality they have in common. In a photograph of Donald Mahon before he receives his war scars, Margaret Powers sees "the passionate, serene alertness of a faun"(SP, p. 58). Januarius Jones likewise sees this faunlike quality in the picture(SP, p. 48). In Mosquitoes, Gordon's face is "like a silver faun's face"(p. 125). It is doubtlessly no accident that this particular image is employed in both novels to describe the character who is the most thoroughly detached from the present. In addition to symbolizing their alienation from the present, this image also serves to suggest these characters' closeness to nature, and subsequent rejection of

or alienation from society. The intimacy with nature that the faun image brings to mind is given an ironic twist in The Hamlet, where Ike Snopes, a "natural" in the most pejorative sense of the word, is portrayed with a ". . .back-looking face with its hanging mouth and pointed faun's ears. . . ."[3]

We are recalled again and again to the satyr image by Faulkner's characterization of Januarius Jones. Upon first encountering him, we are told that his "face was a round mirror before which fauns and nymphs might have wantoned when the world was young"(SP, p. 41). Later we see "Jones, like a fat satyr, leaping after [Emmy]" (SP, p. 198), and his goatlike qualities are emphasized by such descriptions as his yellow eyes being "warm and clear as urine"(SP, p. 157) and his stare "bold and contemplative, obscene as a goat's"(SP, p. 155). These descriptions emphasize the comic incongruity of both the goat-man fusion, and the contrast between the figure from classic mythology and the decadent, lustful Jones. The image is again employed with humorous irony in The Hamlet to describe the "sylvan, Pan-hallowed retreat" where Jody Varner periodically makes love to the "middle-fortyish wife of one of his tenants" without even removing his hat (Hamlet, p. 142). Thus the levels of tension that are

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[3]William Faulkner, The Hamlet (Modern Library, New York, 1956), p. 87. Hereafter cited as Hamlet in the text.

produced by this image, either singly or in various combinations, are animal-human, natural-social, overtly sexual-impotent (or at least epicene), and past-present.

The faun and urn images appear together in A Green Bough X, showing the close relationship between the two:

> Nymph and Faun in this dusk might riot
> Beyond all oceaned Time's cold greenish bar
> To shrilling pipes, to cymbals hissing
> Beneath a single icy star
>
> Where he, to his own compulsion
> --A terrific figure on an urn--
> Is caught between his two horizons,
> Forgetting that he can't return (GB X, 13-20).

This is a rather direct expression of the time and motion suspension that these images usually imply.

We can see the urn image at work in Faulkner's prose at the beginning of Light in August, where Lena Grove is described as advancing "in identical and anonymous and deliberate wagons as though through a succession of creak-wheeled and limpeared avatars, like something moving forever and without progress across an urn" (LIA, p. 6). There is a quite possibly intentional relationship between Faulkner's use of this image and Keats' in "Ode on a Grecian Urn." We know of Faulkner's admiration of Keats,[4] and for this ode in particular by his use of it in "The Bear," and his suggestion that "'Ode on a Grecian Urn' is worth any

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[4]See page 5 of this study.

number of old ladies."[5] As in Keats' ode, Faulkner's image is imbued with "the beauty, the significance and the eternality of art. . .contrasted with the transitoriness, the meaninglessness, and the unpoetic nature of of actual life."[6] Furthermore, Faulkner's image does not petrify time, but holds it in delicate suspension, as Keats' does: "A slight acceleration of slow time would put the apparently static urn in the flowing current of change; and a slight tug would wholly remove from time the apparently energetic figures of the frieze."[7] Faulkner sometimes likens objects in nature to figures on a frieze to suggest remoteness and suspension of time and motion, as in Soldiers' Pay, ". . .the poplars themselves in slim, vague green were poised and vain as girls in a frieze" (SP, p. 43) or ". . .poplars like an eternal frieze giving way upon vistas fallow and fecund" (SP, p. 122).[8] A pair of struggling figures takes on this static quality in As I Lay Dying: "They are like two figures in a Greek frieze, isolated out of all reality by the red glare."[9]

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[5]Stein, p. 68.

[6]Kenneth Muir, ed., John Keats: A Reassessment (Liverpool, 1958), p. 69.

[7]Earl Reeves Wasserman, The Finer Tone: Keats' Major Poems (Baltimore, 1953), p. 18.

[8]This figure is also employed in GB I, 19.

[9]William Faulkner, As I Lay Dying (with The Sound and the Fury, New York, 1946), p. 500.

The urn shape alone is used to symbolize absolute coherence or harmony, as when Faulkner described the completely successful novel: "It's not the sum of a lot of scribbling, it's one perfect book, you see. It's one single urn or shape that you want to do."[10] In Light in August, Joe Christmas' disillusionment with his own idealized concept of woman is expressed in similar terms:

> In the notseeing and hardknowing as though in a cave he seemed to see a diminishing row of suavely shaped urns in moonlight, blanched. Each one was cracked and from each crack there issued something liquid, death colored, and foul. He touched a tree, leaning his propped arms against it, seeing the ranked and moonlit urns. He vomited (LIA, p. 165).

Gail Hightower, too, objectifies the life he wishes to create for himself as "intact and on all sides complete and inviolable, like a classic and serene vase"(LIA, p. 419).

From these last two instances it becomes clear that in conjunction with suspension of time and space, the urn is also meant to symbolize something which is too perfect and idealized to be real. Joe Christmas is revolted when first the boys of the neighborhood, and then his first lover tell him about the menses, because this makes him suddenly aware of the mammalian aspects of women, and thus of sexual experience, which he had always regarded idealistically because of his remoteness from them. Thus the urn, which had represented woman, is damaged; and the flaw is all the

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[10] Faulkner in the University, p. 65.

more repulsive because of the original perfection of the thing that it has ruined. Gail Hightower's life, too, has the perfection of a classic urn only as long as he is able to exclude everything from it except that single instant when the man into whom he had projected himself had been as pure and courageous as Hightower wished he were. The past instant was perhaps real; Hightower's life was not.

These urn images, so strongly suggestive of Keats' ode, illustrate Jean-Paul Sartre's observation that one of the most important qualities of Faulkner's writing is l'enforcement, suspension--a kind of arrested motion in time.[11] This quality is reinforced by recurrent use of the statue or tableau image which is so relevant to theme in The Marble Faun. The effect of this image can be vividly felt in passages such as the following:

> . . .the beast the plow and the man integrated in one foundationed into the frozen wave of their furrow tremendous with effort yet at the same time vacant with progress, ponderable immovable and immobile like groups of wrestling statuary set against the land's immensity. . .the man the mule and the wooden plow which coupled them furious and terrifically against nothing.[12]

Similarly in Light in August Joe Christmas looks quietly, at the climax of a scene filled with furious action, at

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[11]Jean-Paul Sartre, "Time in Faulkner: The Sound and the Fury," La Nouvelle Revue Francaise, June and July, 1939. Reprinted in Hoffman and Vickery, pp. 225-232.

[12]William Faulkner, Intruder in the Dust (New York, 1948), p. 147.

". . .two men, and the blond woman still as immobile and completely finished and surfaced as a cast statue" (LIA, p. 190). Prior to this scene, he and the horse he is riding are pictured as ". . .an equestrian statue strayed from its pedestal and come to rest in an attitude of ultimate exhaustion" (LIA, p. 183). More than just isolating and freezing each moment of the past as one critic feels the historian in Faulkner drives his to do,[13] these statue images force the reader to a realization of the extreme tension in each instant that is presented. The figures of the tableaux are no more meant to convey the feeling of lifeless stone than the Marble Faun is; they possess tremendous energies balanced in isostasy. This is especially evident in the first of the three examples, where the oxymoronic phrases ("tremendous with effort yet at the same time vacant of progress") reinforce the static quality of the image.[14]

Statues also figure importantly as symbols in both Sartoris and The Sound and the Fury. The figure of old Colonel Sartoris in the family cemetery plot, and the statue of the Confederate soldier which dominates the town square in The Sound and the Fury, are mute embodiments of

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[13]Pritchett, p. 557.

[14]See Zink for a classification and analysis of Faulkner's static imagery.

of past grandeur, everpresent reminders of lost glory. The fact that they are monuments to something dead forces a sense of the irredeemability of the past, as in "Cathay."

Of the other three symbols which Faulkner uses extensively in his poetry and prose, the mirror and the shadow function similarly in many contexts, underlining intrapersonal tensions and conflicts, and symbolizing a search for identity. Lawrance Thompson sees no essential distinction between these two images as they are used in The Sound and the Fury, the novel where they are most prominent. Thompson demonstrates how the mirror device reflects "various kinds of correspondences, antitheses, parallelisms, analogues--even as a means of illuminating certain thematic concerns throughout the total action."[15] There is often a stylistic similarity between Faulkner's use of these images in the poetry and prose, as in the following passage from Benjy's section in The Sound and the Fury:

> There was a fire. It was rising and falling on the walls. There was another fire in the mirror. . . Her hair was on the pillow. The fire didn't reach it, but it shone on her hand, where her rings were jumping.[16]

Compare this with a similar description in A Green Bough II:

> Laxly reclining, he watches the firelight going

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[15]Lawrance Thompson, "Mirror Analogues in The Sound and the Fury," English Institute Essays, 1952 (New York, 1953), p. 83.

[16]William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (with As I Lay Dying, New York, 1946), p. 80. Hereafter abbreviated TS,TF.

> Across the ceiling, down the farther wall
> In cumulate waves, a golden river flowing
> Above them both down yawning dark to fall
> Like music dying down a monstrous brain.
> Laxly reclining, he sees her sitting there
> With firelight like a hand laid on her hair (GB II, 1-7).

The mirror image is often used to symbolize a character's "struggle to identity." In The Marble Faun, the faun, Pan and various nymphs and other woodland creatures throughout brood upon their own images reflected in a pool--the faun, seeking for "things I know, yet cannot know" (MF Prologue, 32). The central figure of A Green Bough XVI, by a sudden foreknowledge of his ultimate destiny--death--has been robbed of a raison d'etre and left "gibbering at /his/ own face in a mirror" (GB XVI, 20). This in turn in reminiscent of Quentin in The Sound and the Fury; one of his last acts before committing the ultimately irrational act of suicide is to look at himself in the mirror (TS,TF, p. 197). A mirror appears again as an ineffectual agent of self-knowledge, with a touch of pathos, as Charles Etienne de Saint Velery Bon's broken mirror which is found beneath his mattress--

> . . .and who to know what hours of amazed and tearless grief he might have spent before it, examining himself in the delicate and outgrown tatters in which he perhaps could not even remember himself, with quiet and incredulous incomprehension (AA, p. 199).

The use of the mirror symbol with these extremely introspective characters recalls the Narcissus legend, but with

a difference. Whereas Narcissus was enamoured of his reflection, Faulkner's characters are bewildered by theirs because they are looking for something more essential than their physical image. Narcissus died of unsatisfied longing for his physical self, but the tragedy of Faulkner's characters whose gazes turn inward upon themselves is their failure to find an identity behind the physical self that they know all too well.

Aside from frequently observing himself in the mirror, Quentin in The Sound and the Fury is also quite preoccupied with another image of himself--his shadow. Thompson observes that Quentin equates his shadow with his physical self, as opposed to his real self, his consciousness.[17] This opposition between body and mind is carried to the extreme by Quentin's wishing that he could drown the shadow: ". . .my shadow leaning flat upon the water, so easily had I tricked it that it would not quit me. At least fifty feet it was, and if I only had something to blot it into the water, holding it until it was drowned. . ." (TS,TF, p. 109). The purpose of his suicide is to destroy this foe, his shadow, which represents the body he despises.

The mirrors in The Marble Faun are naturally still woodland pools that reflect the images of those who come there to drink or bathe. This same situation has interesting

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[17]Thompson, p. 90.

implications in The Hamlet, when Ike Snopes leads the cow that he has eloped with to a still pool he has fashioned:

> He cleaned it out and scooped a basin for it which now at each retrun of light stood full and clear and leaf by leaf repeating until they lean and interrupt the green reflections and with their own drinking faces break each mirroring, each face to its own shattered image wedded and annealed (Hamlet, pp. 185-186).

The pool is reflecting more than Ike's physical image--it is reflecting his psychological image as well, fragmented and without coherence. Later in this same passage, Faulkner lyrically ruminates upon the quiddity of this quiet woodland pool:

> Again his /Ike's/ head interrupts, then replaces as once more he breaks with drinking the reversed drinking of his drowned and faded image. It is the well of days, the still and insatiable aperture of earth. It holds in tranquil paradox of suspended precipitation dawn, noon, and sunset; yesterday, today, and tomorrow--star spawn and hieroglyph, the fierce white dying rose, then gradual and invincible speeding up to and into slack-flood's coronal of nympholept noon. Then ebb's afternoon, until at last the morning, noon, and afternoon flow back, drain the sky and creep leaf by voiceless leaf and twig and branch and trunk, descending, gathering frond by frond among the grass, still creeping downward in drowsy insect murmurs, until at last the complete all of light gathers about that still and tender mouth in one last expiring inhalation (Hamlet, pp. 188-189).

The word "interrupts" at the first of the passage seems important because it emphasizes the difference between the depthlessness of the mirror reflecting its natural environment, its ability to hold and distill all of time and life, as opposed to the shallow, often mocking image it

casts back of the individual who interposes himself or "breaks between" it and the natural environment.

The last of the group of tensional symbols which Faulkner uses in both his poetry and prose, the corridor, is one which has not received previous notice. Yet it appears to some degree in most of his novels, and in five poems beside The Marble Faun. It is most often used to symbolize a person's life, carrying the suggestion of a Calvinistic belief in predetermined destiny or at least of a fate which offers no options for action. The lines from A Green Bough II,

> As through a corridor rushing with harsh rain
> He walks his life, and reaching the end
> He turns it as one turns a wall (GB II, 51-53)

foreshadow the description of Rosa Coldfield's childhood in Absalom, Absalom!

> "I was fourteen then, fourteen in years if they could have been called years while in that unpaced corridor which I called childhood, which was not living but rather some projection of the lightless womb itself. . ." (AA, p. 144).

Joanna Burden, too, sees "her whole past life, the starved years, like a gray tunnel, at the far and irrevocable end of which, as unfading as a reproach, her naked breast. . . ached as though in agony, virgin and crucified. . ." (LIA, p. 231). That these two women's lives were sheltered to the point of being comparable to the prenatal confinement and protection of a foetus helps account for their un-

developed sexuality; and it is significant that they were confined, not so much by overly-protective parents, as by their strongly Calvinistic backgrounds.

Joe Christmas' earliest memory of childhood is the orphanage corridor--". . .a corridor in a big long garbled cold echoing building. . .where he lurked alone . . .like a shadow, small even for five years, sober and quiet as a shadow"(LIA, p. 104). As a grown man, an escaping murderer, he travels a road that is not less confining than a corridor because it is first lined with the homes of white people, where he cannot belong, and later by the cabins of Freedman Town which seem to close in and stifle him. In this street,

> . . .he contrived somehow to look more lonely than a lone telephone pole in the middle of a desert. In the wide, empty, shadowbrooded streets he looked like a phantom, a spirit, strayed out of its own world, and lost (LIA, p. 99).

He is clearly walking the fine line between two worlds--white and Negro-- and cannot identify himself with either because he does not know who he is.

The implacability of fate implied by the corridor symbol is emphatically defined in this description of the situation of the young octoroon women in New Orleans who, like Joe Christmas, have no racial identity.

> . . .--a corridor of doomed and tragic flower faces walled between the grim duenna row of old women and the elegant shapes of young men trim predatory and (at the moment) goatlike. . ." (AA, p. 112).

Sometimes the corridor symbol is used simply to signify a feeling of alienation and a longing for something which is not defined even to him who longs. This is especially true in A Green Bough XX.

> Here he stands, while eternal evening falls
> And it is like a dream between gray walls
> Slowly falling, slowly falling
> Between two walls of gray and topless stone,
> Between two walls with silence on them grown.
> . . . . . .
> Here he stands, without the gate of stone
> Between two walls with silence on them grown,
> And littered leaves of silence on the floor;
> Here in a solemn silver of ruined springs
> Among the smooth green buds, before the door,
> He stands and sings.

This sense of vague discontent and isolation, rather adolescent in tone, is reminiscent of The Marble Faun, where the image can also be found. In poem XI Pan's melancholy yearning flute strain

> . . .flames the shadows' subtleties
> Through endless labyrinthine walls
> Of sounding corridors and halls
> Where sound and silence soundless keep
> Their slumbrous noon.

Several references are made to the garden's confining walls which frame the faun's narrow world. This is suggestive of the use of the corridor image in "The Bear," describing the train to Hoke's ". . .running with its same illusion of frantic rapidity between the same twin walls of impenetrable and impervious woods. . ."(p. 153). In all cases the physical barriers of the corridor image represent some non-physical barriers which restrict or confine the actions

or even the existence of the individual involved.

A review of the six images that have been examined in this chapter reminds us that the conflicts between past and present, and permanence and mutability, are suggested by all three of Faulkner's antique images, especially the faun and the urn. The problem of the intrapersonal conflicts which prevent various characters from successfully reconciling themselves to these paradoxical conditions of existence are accentuated by the mirror and shadow images; and the inability to act which results from this failure in adjustment is symbolized by both statue and corridor. Thus each image is a compressed objectification of one or more of the major thematic conflicts that are found in Faulkner's poetry and prose.

CHAPTER V

CONCERNING FAULKNER'S FAILURE AS A POET

We have seen, then, the most important of the numerous correspondences between Faulkner's poetry and prose. There are countless others--incidental images like faint sounding horns and young men chewing their bitter thumbs all the way from The Double Dealer in 1925 to The Town in 1957, turns of phrasing, and rhetorical devices like the frequent use of asyndeton and polysendeton--which compound the effect of continuity between the two genres but do not contribute materially to any pervasive pattern. A large measure of this continuity is to be expected, and would be expected in the works of any man who wrote prose and poetry simultaneously. Similarities, both philosophical and stylistic, can be traced in the works of other novelist-poets such as Herman Melville, Edgar Allan Poe, and Robert Penn Warren, to use as examples men who are more or less part or partakers of Faulkner's literary or historical tradition. It is important to realize, however, that in the case of Faulkner, the poetry invades the prose, and not vice-versa. If this were not true, perhaps there

would not be such a great disparity in quality between the two genres.

The reason Faulkner was able to utilize his poetry to enrich his prose, yet not turn his virtuosity as a novelist toward gaining the success as a poet that he desired, goes back again to his concept of the separate and distinct natures of prose and poetry.[1] He felt that the novelist had absolute freedom in his choice of materials and methods. He liked to consider the novelist a craftsman, like a carpenter, who was free to use any materials and tools at hand. This would include anything from his own knowledge or experience, and even from other writers, as he indicated when he said,

> I think the writer, as I said before, is completely amoral. He takes whatever he needs, wherever he needs, and he does that openly and honestly because he himself hopes that what he does will be good enough so that after him people will take from him, and they are welcome to take from him. . . .[2]

Faulkner's concept of poetry and the poet's limitations, on the other hand, was quite different. His only direct public statements, aside from the one cited earlier, are variations on this comment he made in 1962:

> . . .every writer wishes to reduce the sum of all experience, of all the passion and beauty of being alive, into something that will live after him. If he's the first-rate poet, he tries to do

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[1]See p. 6 of this study.

[2]Faulkner in the University, pp. 20-21.

> it in a quatrain. If he's not the first-rate poet, then he tries to do it in ten pages--he's the short-story writer. If he can't be a short-story writer, then he resorts to eighty thousand words and becomes a third-stage novelist. But he is trying to reduce the passion and beauty that he saw of being alive into something concrete that can be held in the hand, and he fails, and he tries again.[3]

We can learn much more of a specific nature from an interesting conversation that takes place in his novel of 1927, Mosquitoes. Probably his worst novel, Mosquitoes does contain an interesting debate over some of Faulkner's own poetry which he has disguised as the work of one of the female characters in the novel,Eva Wiseman. Dawson Fairchild (obviously modelled after Faulkner himself), is gallantly championing the poetry, while the Semitic man and Mrs. Wiseman's brother are more or less skeptical of its worth. When the Semitic man flippantly calls the first poem under discussion (GB XXVII) "a sort of cocktail of words," Mrs. Wiseman retorts, "Only fools require ideas in verse"(p. 204). Fairchild then muses,

> "Yes. . .infatuation with words. . .That's when you hammer out good poetry, great poetry. A kind of singing rhythm in the world that you get into without knowing it, like a swimmer gets into a current. . ."(p. 205).

After reading part of another poem (GB IV), Fairchild continues in this vein:

> "It's a kind of childlike faith in the efficacy of

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[3]Faulkner at West Point, ed. Joseph L. Fant and Robert Ashley (New York, 1964), p. 78.

> words, you see, a kind of belief that circumstance somehow will invest the veriest platitude with magic. And, darn it, it does happen at times, let it be historically or grammatically incorrect or physically impossible: let it even be trite: there comes a time when it will be invested with something not of this life, this world, at all. It's a kind of fire, you know. . ."(p. 207).

Fairchild's criticism of contemporary poetry also tells us something of what Faulkner thought poetry should be.

> "The trouble with modern verse is, that to comprehend it you must have recently passed through an emotional experience identical with that through which the poet himself has recently passed. The poetry of modern poets is like a pair of shoes that only those whose feet are shaped like the cobbler's, can wear; while the old boys turned out shoes that anybody who can walk at all can wear--. . .Like overshoes. . .But then, I ain't disparaging. Perhaps the few that the shoes fit can go a lot farther than a whole herd of people shod alike could go"(p. 207).

Fairchild reads a last poem (GB XXXVIII) just after he and the Semitic man have agreed that "A book is the writer's secret life, the dark twin of man: You can't reconcile them" (p. 208). He then reads the title, "Hermaphroditus," and offers this further comment on modern poetry:

> "It's a kind of dark perversion. Like a fire that don't need any fuel, that lives on its own heat. I mean, all modern verse is a kind of perversion. Like the day for healthy poetry is over and done with, that modern people were not born to write poetry any more"(pp. 208-209).

Interestingly enough, Faulkner is pronouncing the failure of his poetry long before the critics had a chance to do so; the appearance of these poems in Mosquitoes predates their publication as poems as such by five to seven years

(See Appendix B for exact dates).

From all these incidental comments, we can extrapolate at least a considerable part of Faulkner's theory of poetry. First, he believed that poetry must be universal; by universal he apparently meant that poetry must describe "the passion and beauty of being alive" in terms that are as readily understood by people of all places and times as in the historical and social context in which it is written. He must have thought that to do this the poet would have to exclude any elements that would identify the work with a particular time or place. In his own words,

> . . .the problems which the poet writes about which are worth writing about. . .are the problems of the human heart which have nothing to do with what race you belong to, what color you are--they're the anguishes, the passions, of love, of hope, of the capacity, the doom of the fragile web of flesh and bone and mostly water of which we are in articulation, must suffer, stuck together by a little electricity and a world of mostly coincidence, that we can endure it all.[4]

His readers might protest that this is what his novels are concerned with, too; but his novels discuss these universal problems in terms of their application to a particular set of characters or events.

Second, the chief quality of poetry which determines its superiority over other forms of artistic communication is compression. Unlike Poe, who felt that a poem should not

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[4]Ibid., pp. 52-53.

be too short at the risk of becoming epigrammatic, Faulkner believed that the poet ". . .would like to say it in one word if he could. . . ."[5] On the other hand, his first poem, The Marble Faun, contains 808 lines; so perhaps in stressing conpression and seemingly stressing brevity, part of his meaning was what most any poet would agree with--that each word, each line, should carry more weight of meaning or emotion than it denotes. Still, he undoubtedly thought that the most compact way a truth could be expressed was the best way.

Third, and this aligns Faulkner with Poe and the Symbolistes, poetry need not, perhaps even should not, contain ideas. This similarity should be qualified, however; Poe said that the chief end of poetry should be pleasure, not truth; Faulkner thought that poetry should aim at the expression of truth, but do so in a way that was pleasurable and not didactic. The preceding examination of Faulkner's style (Chapter III) has revealed that he concurred with Poe at least to a degree, in his belief that poetry should strive for

> . . .an indefinite instead of a definite pleasure, being a poem only so far as this object is attained: romance presenting perceptible images with definite, poetry with indefinite sensation. . . .[6]

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[5]Ibid., p. 106.

[6]Edgar Allan Poe, "Letter to B---," The Works of Edgar Allan Poe (New York, n.d.), X, 149.

We can conclude, then that Faulkner's theory of poetry was largely a theory of exclusion. When he gave his definition of poetry as ". . .some moving passionate moment of the human condition distilled to its absolute essence,"[7] he chose the word "distill" well, for he does indeed seem to believe that writing poetry is a process of extraction. His poetry attempts to be what Robert Penn Warren calls "pure" poetry--that is, poetry which tries to be pure by "excluding, more or less rigidly, certain elements which might qualify or contradict its original impulse."[8] Warren insists, however, that successful pure poetry could not be good poetry, because ". . .a poem, to be good, must earn itself. It is a motion toward a point of rest, but if it is not a resisted motion, it is a motion of no consequence."[9]

Thus the limitations that Faulkner placed on his poetry and the great freedom he allowed himself as a novelist, emerge as important reasons for his failure with the former and success as the latter. Garrett suggests this when he summarizes the implications of Faulkner's position on poetry:

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[7]Faulkner in the University, p. 202.

[8]Warren, p. 16.

[9]Warren, p. 27

> Poetry is communication of spiritual beauty; its virtues are restraint, formality, power in disguise, not dramatized. A poetry complementing this point of view would tend to avoid the light, the occasional, and to a degree, the colloquial; it would tend to be exclusive. Faulkner's concept of the use of poetry is a lofty one, and in a sense, an inhibiting one for the poet. For the full sweep and play of imagination and perhaps most important, for the free introduction of humor, Faulkner would necessarily, if regretfully, depend on prose.[10]

This attitude precludes in the poetry much of the textural richness and depth of meaning which is allowed in the prose. Paradoxically, Faulkner's insistence that poetry should have universal application narrowed its scope for him and deprived him of the freedom to use some of the very techniques which give his prose their universality. A brief review of some of the similarities that have been found between the poetry and prose, and an indication of the place that they hold in the respective genres will demonstrate this.

First of all, we found that several pairs of antithetical elements (particularly past-present and permanence-mutability) provide thematic tension in both the poetry and prose. The interplay of these conflicting components practically accounts for theme in most of Faulkner's poetry. All action or reflection is entrusted to nebulous fauns, Pans and Pierrots, rather than more particularized characters or the poet himself. The net result is vagueness,

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[10]Garrett, pp. 128-129.

not universality. In the novels, on the other hand, the two conflicts mentioned above are subordinate to the broader conflict of "the human heart in conflict with itself," which can include such subordinate tensions as racial, historical and political conflicts. And by investing the demonstration of of this basic conflict in a broad range of highly particularized, credible characters, Faulkner enables his readers to sense its abiding immediacy and universal relevance. By letting his themes be delineated by realistic characters, he does not limit their relevance to those characters alone, but rather makes them more readily applicable to real people everywhere (witness Faulkner's popularity in Europe and even Asia).

Garrett has asserted that the failure of Faulkner's verse, particularly The Marble Faun, is ultimately a failure of verbal texture; he feels that Faulkner depended too much on conventional poetic language.[11] Yet the very techniques that give his verse its conventional, stylized quality--the archaisms, inversion, often unremarkable but profuse figures of speech--seem fresher and more distinctive in the prose context. They lend texture to the prose because they are so often in sharp contrast to its decidedly unpoetic subject matter or its more conventionally prosaic qualities. An example of this is the ironically

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[11] Ibid., p. 127.

bombastic metaphor which Faulkner uses in The Hamlet to describe Jody Varner carrying his sister to school on the back of his horse:

> He had a vision of himself transporting not only across the village's horizon but across the embracing proscenium of the entire inhabited world like the sun itself, a kaleidoscopic convolution of mammalian elipses (Hamlet, p. 100).

A less humorous but not less unexpected effect is achieved a few pages earlier by the juxtaposition of colloquial dialect and lyrical nature description:

> Only thank God men have done learned how to forget quick what they aint brave enough to try to cure, he told himself, walking on. The empty road shimmered with mirage, the pollen-wroiled chiaroscuro of spring (Hamlet, p. 88).

Faulkner uses a free hand in placing poetic passages in contexts where the effect is other than this humorous irony, too. Often his nature descriptions become highly lyrical, but with this advantage over the descriptive passages of his poetry: in the prose he is taking places or scenes which are real to the reader and "universalizing" them or raising them to cosmic proportions with his language;[12] in the poetry, he is trying to do the same thing for scenes which were vague and indistinct to begin with, which only only results in compounded vagueness. Faulkner's characters,

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[12]See Campbell, "Structural Devices in the Works of Faulkner," for a discussion of Faulkner's various techniques of elevating his realism.

too, frequently think in highly poetic language. It is usually the characters who are the least sophisticated or have the least conventionally rational mind who have the most lyrical consciousnesses (Darl in As I Lay Dying, for example). No matter how Faulkner uses poetry in his novels, though, it is always in contrast to its prosaic context, whereas in his poems the style and tone are essentially unrelieved.

So it is that Faulkner's poetry, which was based on an imperfect concept, cannot stand alone; the poetry whose failure he so often regretted takes its place as a highly effective component of his remarkable prose style.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

Faulkner's career as a writer was still young when his own judgement and critical censure led him to abandon his dream of being a poet. Yet he had been so gripped by the idea that even in the year of his death he was still voicing regret for his failure. His lasting conviction that the best way to communicate truth is through poetry, together with the fact that the periods during which he wrote his prose and poetry overlapped, resulted in similarities in theme, style and symbolism between the two genres.

Most of the elements the prose and poetry share produce an effect of tension either by their relation to the context or by an interior conflict. We have found that Faulkner's themes often pit such opposing forces against each other as the past and present, or life and death. A common situation in the poetry is a central figure, like the Marble Faun in the poem of that name, trapped between irreconcilable conditions of existence, such as permanence and mutability, and past and present. This situation is matched in his prose, where the same basic conflicts are

expressed in more concrete terms through characters like Quentin Compson, the Reverend Gail Hightower, and Isaac McCaslin. Faulkner's unconventional treatment of time is evident in both his prose and poetry. Like Bergson, he believed that instead of being a series of discrete points juxtaposed on a homogeneous medium, time is a fusion of heterogeneous instants in a constant process of becoming; that is, each instant of the present becomes part of this matrix of the past as it is happening. The immediacy which this theory attributes to the past becomes the basis for much of the conflict in the novels, and to a lesser degree in the poetry.

Also, there are several stylistic features which are common to both the prose and poetry. There is an unusual frequency of some words which he obviously favored; among these are a large number, like immobile, frozen, and static, which connote forced stasis. Faulkner liked to make new units of expression by compounding or altering familiar words. His adoption of this technique which such writers as James Joyce and e.e. cummings had popularized earlier resulted in oddities such as neufcentvingtsomethingorother (an extreme example) and added to the compression of communication which he valued so highly. He also added negative particles to many nouns and verbs, and this created tension by suggesting negated action, in expression like unamaze, nomotion, and notrunning. Faulkner's admiration for many poets of the

past--notably Shakespeare and the late Romantics--led to an archaic flavor in his own poetry, produced by frequent inversions and obsolete or archaic words and phrases. Archaisms are not limited to his poetry, though; his prose is shot through with the same sort of inversions and expressions, as well as countless rhetorical devices which are more common to Victorian and pre-Victorian prose than to modern fiction. The French Symbolistes of the nineteenth century also had a pronounced effect on Faulkner's style. The most obvious feature he borrowed from them and used widely in both his prose and poetry is synesthetic imagery. This imagery creates tension by causing competition between the senses, and is used even more widely in his early novels than in his poetry. Faulkner's most obtrusively tensional technique in both his prose and poetry, though, is his pronounced use of oxymoron.

A number of symbols are shared by Faulkner's poetry and prose. Two--the faun and the statue--appear first in his earliest published book, The Marble Faun. The faun image functions both seriously and ironically in his prose works to imply the contrast between the ideal past and real present, or between the animal and human qualities of a character. The statue is very important as the basis for much of the "frozen" imagery of "imagery of stasis" which has received much critical consideration. Another object which functions symbolically is the Grecian urn, which is sug-

gestive of Keats' ode. Faulkner uses the urn symbol in much the same way that Keats did; it reinforces his philosophy of time by representing the eternality of the past and the duration of ideal moments in time. He also uses the urn as a symbol of perfection. The mirror and shadow are both used to symbolize interior tension or struggle in a character. They are often a tool for introspection, affording a usually-inadequate reflection in which the character might seek his identity. In some cases, particularly in Quentin in The Sound and the Fury, the shadow represents lack of coherence between the physical and inner or emotional aspects of a character. A final tensional symbol is the corridor, whose walls usually represent some non-physical but nevertheless impenetrable forces that allow a character only one course and destination in life.

Even though the poetry and prose have much in common, there is one extremely important difference: the poetry is almost consistently bad, while the prose is an often masterful success. At least a partial explanation for this lies in Faulkner's basic attitudes toward poetry and prose. His theory of poetry was a theory of exclusion--exclusion of intellectual concepts, exclusion of particulars of characterization and setting, exclusion of humor. By eliminating all the elements which he felt were not sympathetic with the nature of poetry, he deliberately made his poetry sterile. His prose, on the other hand, is all-inclusive. He refused

to disqualify any technique or subject from a proper place in the novel. So it is his novels, not his poems, that best present "the sum of all experience, of all the passion and beauty of being alive;" and rather than being a "failed poet," as he feared, Faulkner could better be described as a failed versifier.

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APPENDIX A

THE MARBLE FAUN*

Prologue

I

The poplar trees sway to and fro
That through this gray old garden go,
Like slender girls with nodding heads,
Whispering above the beds
Of tall tufted hollyhocks
Of purple asters and of phlox;
Caught in the daisies' dreaming gold
Recklessly scattered wealth untold
About their slender graceful feet
Like poised dancers, lithe and fleet.
The candled flames of roses here
Gutter gold in this still air,
And clouds glide down the western sky
To watch this sun-drenched revery,
While the poplars' shining crests
Lightly brush their silvered breasts,
Dreaming not of winter snows
That soon will shake their maiden rows.

II

The days dream by, golden white,
About the fountain's silver light
That lifts and shivers in the breeze
Gracefully slim as are the trees;
Then shakes down its glistered hair
Upon the still pool's mirrored, fair
Flecked face.
Why am I sad? I?
Why am I not content? The sky

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*William Faulkner, The Marble Faun (Boston, 1924). Roman numerals designating poem divisions have been added, as well as line numbers in the right margin and page numbers from the original in the left margin.

Warms me and yet I cannot break
My marble bonds. That quick keen snake
Is free to come and go, while I
Am prisoner to dream and sigh
For things I know, yet cannot know,
'Twixt sky above and earth below.
The spreading earth calls to my feet
Of orchards bright with fruits to eat,
Of hills and streams on either hand;
Of sleep at night on moon-blanched sand;
The whole world breathes and calls to me
Who marble-bound must ever be.

I

13 If I were free, then I would go
Where the first chill spring winds blow,
Wrapping a light shocked mountain's brow
With shrilling tongues, and swirling now
And fiery upward flaming, leap
From craggy teeth above each deep
Cold and wet with silence. Here
I fly before the streaming year
Along the fierce cold mountain tops
To which the sky runs down and stops;
And with the old moon watching me
Leaping and shouting joyously
Along each crouching dark abyss
Through which waters rush and hiss,
I whirl the echoes west and east
To hover each copse where lurks the beast,
Silence, till they shatter back
Across the ravine's smoky crack.

Here Pan's sharp hoofed feet have pressed
His message on the chilly crest,
Saying--Follow where I lead,
For all the world springs to my reed
Woven up and woven down,
Thrilling all the sky and ground.
14 With shivering heat and quivering cold;
To pierce and burst the swollen mold;
Shrilling in each waiting brake:
Come, ye living, stir and wake!

As the tumbling sunlight falls
Spouting down the craggy walls
To hiss upon the frozen rocks
That dot the hills in crouching flocks,

So I plunge in some deep vale
Where first violets, shy and pale,
Appear, and spring with tear-stained cheeks
Peeps at me from the neighboring brakes,
Gathering her torn draperies up
For flight if I cast my eyes up.
Swallows dart and skimming fly
Like arrows painted on the sky,
And the twanging of the string
Is the faint high quick crying
That they, downward shooting, spin
Through the soundless swelling din.
Dogwood shines through thin trees there
Like jewels in a woman's hair;
A sudden brook hurries along
Singing its reverted song,
Flashing in white frothed shocks
About upstanding polished rocks;
Slender shoots draw sharp and clear
And white withes shake as though in fear
Upon the quick streams' melted snow
That seems to dance rather than flow.

Then on every hand awakes
From the dim and silent brakes
The breathing of the growing things,
The living silence of all springs
To come and that have gone before;
And upon a woodland floor
I watch the sylvans dance till dawn
While the brooding spring looks on.
The spring is quick with child, and sad;
And in her dampened hair sits clad
Watching the immortal dance
To the world's throbbing dissonance
That Pan's watchful shrill pipes blow
Of the fiery days that go
Like wine across the world; then high:
His pipes weave magic on the sky
Shrill with joy and pain of birth
Of another spring on earth.

II

HARK! a sound comes from the brake
And I glide nearer like a snake
To peer into its leafy deeps
Where like a child the spring still sleeps.
Upon a chill rock gray and old

Where the willows' simple fold
Falls, an unstirred curtain, Pan--
As he sat since the world began--
Stays and broods upon the scene
Beside a hushéd pool where lean
His own face and the bending sky
In shivering soundless amity.

Pan sighs, and raises to his lips
His pipes, down which his finger-tips
Wander lovingly; then low
And clearly simple does he blow
A single thin clear melody
That pauses, spreading liquidly,
While the world stands sharp and mute
Waiting for his magic flute.
A sudden strain, silver and shrill
As narrow water down a hill,
Splashes rippling as though drawn
In shattered quicksilver on
The willow curtain, and through which
It wanders without halt or hitch
Into silent meadows; when
It pauses, breathing, and again
Climbs as though to reach the sky
Like the soaring silver cry
Of some bird. A note picks out,
A silver moth that whirrs about
A single rose, then settles low
On the sorrowful who go
Along a willowed green-stained pool
To lie and sleep within its cool
Virginity.
Ah, the world
About which mankind's dreams are furled
Like a cocoon, thin and cold,
And yet that is never old!
Earth's heart burns with winter snows
As fond and tremulous Pan blows
For other springs as cold and sad
As this; and sitting garment-clad
In sadness with dry stricken eyes
Bent to the unchanging skies,
Pan sighs and broods upon the scene
Beside this hushed pool where lean
His own face and the bending sky
In shivering, soundless amity.

III

ALL the air is gray with rain
Above the shaken fields of grain,
Cherry orchards moveless drip
Listening to their blossoms slip
Quietly from wet black boughs.
There a soaking broad-thatched house
Steams contemplatively. I
Sit beneath the weeping sky
Crouched about the mountains' rim
Drawing her loose hair over them.

My eyes, peace-filled by falling rain,
Brood upon the steamy plain,
Crouched beneath a dripping tree
Where strong and damp rise up to me
The odors of the bursting mold
Upon the earth's slow-breathing old
Breast; of acorns swelling tight
To thrust green shoots into the light
As shade for me in years to come
When my eyes grow dim and I am dumb
With sun-soaked age and lack of strength
Of things that have lived out the length
Of life; and when the nameless pain
To fuller live and know again
No more will send me over earth
Puzzling about the worth
Of this and that, nor crying "Hence!"
At my unseeking impotence
To have about my eyes close-furled
All the beauty in the world.
But content to watch by day
The dancing light's unthinking play
Ruffling the pool. Then I'll be
Beneath the roses, sleepily
Soaking in the sun-drenched air
Without wish or will or care,
With my softened fading eyes
Shackled to the curving skies.

IV

The poplars look beyond the wall
With bending hair, and to me call,
Curving shivering hands to me
Whispering what they can see:
Of a dim and silent way

Through a valley white with May
On either hand gossiping beeches
Stir against the lilac reaches
Half of earth and half of sky;
There the aspens quakingly
Gather in excited bands,
The dappled birches' fluttering hands
Cast their swift and silver light
Through the glade spun greenish white.

So alone I follow on
Where slowly piping Pan has gone
To draw the quiet browsing flocks,
While a blackbird calls and knocks
At noon across the dusty downs
In quivering peace, until Pan sounds
His piping gently to the bird,
And saving this no sound is heard.

21 Now the blackbirds' gold wired throats
Spill their long cool mellow notes;
In solemn flocks slowly wheeling
Intricately, without revealing
Their desires, as on blue space
They thread and cross like folds of lace
Woven black; then shrilling go
Like shutters swinging to and fro.

V

22 ON the downs beyond the trees
Loved by the thrilling breeze,
While the blackbird calls and knocks
Go the shepherds with their flocks.
It is noon, and the air
Is shimmering still, for nowhere
Is there a sound. The sky, half waked,
Between the world rim's far spread dikes
And the trees, from which there strikes
The flute notes that I, listening, hear
Liquidly falling on my ear:

"Come quietly, Faun, to my call;
Come, come, the noon will cool and pass
That now lies edgelessly in thrall
Upon the ripened sun-stilled grass.

"There is no sound in all the land,
There is no breath in all the skies;

Here Warmth and Peace go hand in hand
'Neath Silence's inverted eyes.

23 "My call, spreading endlessly,
My mellow call pulses and knocks;
Come, Faun, and solemnly
Float Shoulderward you autumned locks.

"Let your fingers, languorous,
Slightly curl, palm upward rest,
The silent noon waits over us,
The feathers stir not on his breast.

"There is no sound nor shrill of pipe,
Your feet are noiseless on the ground;
The earth is full and stillily ripe.
In all the land there is no sound.

"There is a great God who sees all
And in my throat bestows this boon:
To ripple the silence with my call
When the world sleeps and it is noon."

When I hear the blackbirds' song
Piercing cool and mellowly long,
I pause to hear, nor do I breathe
As the dusty gorse and heath
Breathe not, for their magic call
Holds all the pausing earth in thrall
At noon; then I know the skies
Move not, but halt in reveries
24 Of golden-veiled and misty blue;
Then the blackbirds wheeling through
By Pan guarded in the skies,
Piercing the earth with remorseless eyes
Are burned scraps of paper cast
On a like quiet, deep and vast.

VI

25 UPON a wood's dim shaded edge
Stands a dusty hawthorn hedge
Beside a road from which I pass
To cool my feet in deep rich grass.
I pause to listen to the song
Of a brook spilling along
Behind a patchy willow screen
Whose lazy evening shadows lean
Their scattered gold upon a glade
Through which the staring daisies wade.

And the resilient poplar trees,
Slowly turning in the breeze,
Flash their facets to the sun,
Swaying in slow unison.
Here quietude folds a spell
Within a stilly shadowed dell
Wherein I rest, and through the leaves
The sun a soundless pattern weaves
Upon the floor. The leafy glade
Is pensive in the dappled shade,
While the startled sunlight drips
From beech and alder fingertips,
And birches springing suddenly
Erect in silence sleepily
26 Clinging to their slender limbs,
Whitening them as shadow dims.

As I lie here my fancy goes
To where a quiet oak bestows
Its shadow on a dreaming scene
Over which the broad boughs lean
A canopy. The brook's a stream
On which long still days lie and dream,
And where the lusty summer walks--
Around his head are lilac stalks--
In the shade beneath the trees
To let the cool stream fold his knees;
While I lie in the leafy shade
Until the nymphs troop down the glade.
Their limbs that in the spring were white
Are now burned golden by sunlight.
They near the marge, and there they meet
Inverted selves stretched at their feet;
And they kneel languorously there
To comb and braid their short blown hair
Before they slip into the pool--
Warm gold in silver liquid cool.

Evening turns and sunlight falls
In flecks between the leafed walls,
Like golden butterflies whose wings
Slowly pulse and beat. Slow sings
27 The stream in a lower key
Murmuring down quietly
Between its solemn purple stone
With cooling ivy overgrown.
Sunset strains the western sky;
Night comes soon, and now I
Follow toward the evening star.
A sheep bell tinkles faint and far,
Then drips in silence as the sheep

Move like clouds across the deep
Still dusky meadows wet with dew.
I stretch and roll and draw through
The fresh sweet grass, and the air
Is softer than my own soft hair.
I lift up my eyes; the green
West is a lake on which has been
Cast a single lily.--See!
In meadows stretching over me
Are humming stars as thick as bees,
And in the reaching inky trees
Sweep the sky. I lie and hear
The voices of the fecund year,
While the dark grows dim and deep,
And I glide into dreamless sleep.

VII

28 CAWING rooks in tangled flight
Come crowding home against the night.
And all other wings are still
Except rooks tumbling down the hill
Upon the solemn ivied walls;
The horns of sunset slowly sound
Between the waiting sky and ground;
The cedars painted on the sky
Hide the sun slow flamingly
Repeated level on the lake,
Smooth and still and without shake,
Until the swans' inverted grace
Wreathes in thought its placid face
With spreading lines like opening fans
Moved by white and languid hands.

Now the vesper song of bells
Beneath the evening flows and swells,
And the twilight's silver throat
Slowly repeats each resonant note:
The dying day gives those who sorrow
A boon no king can give: a morrow.

29 The westering sun has climbed the wall
And silently we watch night fall
While sunset lingers in the trees
Its subtle gold-shot tapestries.
The sky is velvet overhead,
Where petalled stars are canopied
Like sequins in a spreading train
Without fold or break or strain.

A cool wind whispers by the heads
Of flowers dreaming in their beds
Like convent girls, filling their sleep
With strange dreams from the outer deep.
On every hill battalioned trees
March skyward on unmoving knees,
And like a spider on a veil
Climbs the moon. A nightingale,
Lost in the trees against the sky,
Loudly repeats its jewelled cry.

VIII

I AM sad, nor yet can I,
For all my questing, reason why;
And now as night falls I will go
Where two breezes joining flow
Above a stream whose gleamless deeps
Caressingly sing the while it sleeps
Upon sands powdered by the moon.
And there I'll lie to hear it croon
In fondling a wayward star
Fallen from the shoreless far
Sky, while winds in misty stream,
Laughing and weeping in a dream,
Whisper of an orchard's trees
That, shaken by the aimless breeze,
Let their blossoms fade and slip
Soberly, as lip to lip
The touch the misty grasses fanned
To ripples by the breeze.
Here stand
The clustered lilacs faint as cries
Against the silken-breasted skies;
They nod and sway, and slow as rain
Their slowly falling petals stain
The grass as through them breezes stray,
Smoothing them in silver play.
And we, the marbles in the glade,
Dreaming in the leafy shade
Are saddened, for we know that all
Things save us must fade and fall,
And the moon that sits there in the skies
Draws her hair across her eyes:
She sees the blossoms blow and die,
Soberly and quietly,
Till spring breaks in the waiting glade
And the first thin branched shade
Falls 'thwart them, and the swallows' cry
Calls down from the stirring sky,

Thin and cold and hot as flame
Where spring is nothing but a name.

The stream flows calmly without sound
In the darkness gathered round;
Trembling to the vagrant breeze
About me stand the inky trees
Peopled by some bird's loud cries,
Until it seems as if the skies
Had shaken down their blossomed stars
Seeking among the trees' dim bars,
Crying aloud, each for its mate,
About the old earth, insensate,
Seemingly, to their white woe,
But their sorrow does she know
32 And her breast, unkempt and dim,
Throbs her sorrow out to them.
The dying day gives all who sorrow
The boon no king may give: a morrow.

IX

33 THE ringéd moon sits eerily
Like a mad woman in the sky
Dropping flat hands to caress
The far world's shaggy flanks and breast
Plunging white hands in the glade
Elbow deep in leafy shade
Where birds sleep in each silent brake
Silverly, there to wake
The quivering loud nightingales
Whose cries like scattered silver sails
Spread across the azure sea.
Her hands also caress me:
My keen heart also does she dare;
While turning always through the skies
Her white feet mirrored in my eyes
Weave a snare about my brain
Unbreakable by surge or strain,
For the moon is mad, for she is old,
And many's the bead of a life she's told
And many's the fair one she's seen wither:
They pass, they pass, and know not whither.
The hushéd earth, so calm, so old,
Dreams beneath its heath and wold--
34 And heavy scent from thorny hedge
Paused and snowy on the edge
Of some dark ravine, from where
Mists as soft and thick as hair
Float silver in the moon.

Stars sweep down--or are they stars?--
Against the pines' dark etched bars.
Along a brooding moon-wet hill
Dogwood shine so cool and still,
Like hands that, palm up, rigid lie
In invocation to the sky
As they spread there, frozen white,
Upon the velvet of the night.

X

35 THE world is still. How still it is! 1
About my avid stretching ears
The earth is pulseless in the dim
Silence that flows into them
And forms behind my eyes, until 5
My head is full; I feel it spill
Like water down my breast. The world
A muted violin where are curled
Pan's fingers, waits, supine and cold
And bound soundlessly in fold 10
On fold of blind calm rock
Edgeless in the moonlight's shock.
Until the hand that grasps the bow
Descends; then grave and strong and low
It rises to his waiting ears. 15
The music of all passing years
Flows over him and down his breast
Of ice and gold, as in the west
Sunsets flame, and all dawns burn
Eastwardly, and calm skies turn 20
Always about his frozen head;
Peace for living, peace for dead.

And the hand that draws the bow
Stops not, as grave and strong and low
36 About his cloudy head it curls 25
The endless sorrow of all worlds,
The while he bends dry stricken eyes
Above the throngs; perhaps he sighs
For all the full world watching him
As seasons change from bright to dim. 30

And my eyes too are cool with tears
For the stately marching years,
For old earth dumb and strong and sad
With life so willy-nilly clad,
And mute and impotent like me 35
Who marble bound must ever be;
And my carven eyes embrace

The dark world's dumbly dreaming face,
For my crooked limbs have pressed
Her all-wise pain softened breast
Until my hungry heart is full
Of aching bliss unbearable.

XI

37 THE hills are resonant with soft humming;
It is a breeze that pauses, strumming
On the golden-wired stars
The deep full music to which was
The song of life through ages sung;
And soundlessly, there weaves among
The chords a star, a falling rose
That only this high garden grows;
A falling hand with beauty dumb
Stricken by the hands that strum
The sky, is gone: yet still I see
This hand swiftly and soundlessly
Sliding now across my eyes
As it then slid down the skies.

Soft the breeze, a steady flame
Cooled by the forest whence it came,
Slipping across the dappled lea
To climb the dim walls of the sea;
To comb the wave-ponies' manes back
Where the water shivers black
With quiet depth and solitude
And licks the caverned sky. The wood
Stirs to a faint far mystic tone:
38 The reed of Pan who, all alone
In some rock-chilled silver dell,
Thins the song of Philomel
Sad in her dark dim echoed bower
Watching the moon in ether stilled
Who, with her broad face humped and hilled
In sleep, dreams naked there.

Clear and sad sounds Pan's thin strain,
Dims in mystery, grows again;
Mirrors the light limbs falling, dying,
Soothes night voices calling, crying,
Stills the winds' far seeking tone
Where the fallow springs have died and grown;
Hushes the nightbirds' jewelled cries
And flames the shadows' subtleties
Through endless labyrinthine walls
Of sounding corridors and halls

Where sound and silence soundless keep
Their slumbrous noon. Sweet be their sleep.

XII

ALL day I run before the wind,
Keen and blue and without end,
Like a fox before the hounds
Across the mellow sun-shot downs
That smell like crispened warm fresh bread
And the sky stretched overhead
Has drawn across its face a veil
Of gold and purple. My limbs fail
And I plunge panting down to rest
Upon earth's sharp and burning breast.
I lie flat, and feel its cold
Beating heart that's never old,
And yet has felt the ages pass
Above its heather, trees and grass.
The azure veils fall from the sky
And on the world's rim shimmering lie,
While the bluely flashing sea
Pulses through infinitely.

Up! Away! Now I will go
To some orchard's golden row
Of bursting mellow pears and sweet
Berries and dusky grapes to eat.
I singing crush them to my lips
Staining cheek and fingertips,
Then fill my hands, I know not why,
And off again along the sky
Down through the trees, beside the stream
Veiled too, and golden as a dream,
To lie once more in some warm glade
Deep walled by the purple shade
My fruits beside, and so I lie
In thin sun sifting from the sky
Like a cloak to cover me:
I sink in sleep resistlessly
While the sun slides smoothly down
The west, and green dusk closes round
My glade that the sun filled up
As gold wine stands within a cup.

XIII

41 NOW silent autumn fires the trees
To slow flame, and calmly sees
The changing days burn down the skies
Reflected in her quiet eyes,
While about her as she kneels
Crouch the heavy-fruited fields
Along whose borders poplars run
Burnished by the waning sun.
Vineyards struggle up the hill
Toward the sky, dusty and still,
Thick with heavy purple grapes
And golden bursting fruits whose shapes
Are full and hot with sun. Here each
Slow exploding oak and beech
Blaze up about her dreaming knees,
Flickering at her draperies.
Each covert, a blaze of light
Upon horizon blueish white
Is a torch, the pines are bronze
And stiffly stretch their sculptured fronds
Wherein their shadows change to green,
Then to purple in the deeps
Where the waiting winter sleeps.

42 The moon is mad, and dimly burns,
And with her prying fingers turns
Inside out thicket and copse
Curiously, and then she stops,
Staring about her, and the down
Grows sharp in sadness gathering round,
Powdering each darkling rock
And the hunched grain in shock
On shocks in solemn rows;
And after each a shadow goes
Staring skyward, listening
Into the silence glistening
With watching stars that, sharp and sad,
Ring the solemn staring mad
Moon; and winds in monotone
Brood where shaken grain had grown
In bloomless fields that raise their bare
Breasts against the dying year.

And yet I do not move, for I
Am sad beneath this autumn sky,
For I am sudden blind and chill
Here beneath my frosty hill,
And I cry moonward in stiff pain
Unheeded, for the moon again

43 Stares blandly, while beneath her eyes
The silent world blazes and dies,
And leaves slip down and cover me
With sorrow and desire to be--
While the world waits, cold and sere--
Like it, dead with the dying year.

XIV

44 THE world stands without move or sound
In this white silence gathered round
It like a god. It is so still
That earth lies without wish or will
To breathe. My garden, stark and white,
Sits soundless in the falling light
Of lifting bush and sudden hedge
Ice bound and ghostly on the edge
Of my world, curtained by the snow
Drifting, sifting; fast, now slow;
Falling endlessly from skies
Calm and gray, some far god's eyes.

The soundless quiet flakes slide past
Like teardrops on a sheet of glass,
Ah, there is some god above
Whose tears of pity, pain and love
Slowly freeze and brimming slow
Upon my chilled and marbled woe;
The pool, sealed now by ice and snow,
Is dreaming quietly below,
Within its jewelled eye keeping
The mirrored skies it knew in spring.

45 How soft the snow upon my face!
And delicate cold! I can find grace
In its endless quiescence
For my enthralled impotence:
Solace from a pitying breast
Bringing quietude and rest
To dull my eyes; and sifting slow
Upon the waiting earth below
Fold veil on veil of peacefulness
Like wings to still and keep and bless.

XV

46 WHY cannot we always be
Left steeped in this immensity
Of softly stirring peaceful gray

That follows on the dying day?
Here I can drug my prisoned woe
In the night wind's sigh and flow,
But now we, who would dream at night,
Are awakened by the light
Of paper lanterns, in whose glow
Fantastically to and fro
Pass, in loud extravagance
And reft of grace, yet called a dance,
Dancers in a blatant crowd
To brass horns horrible and loud.

The blaring beats on gustily
From every side. Must I see
Always this unclean heated thing
Debauching the unarmed spring
While my back I cannot turn,
Nor may not shut these eyes that burn?
The poplars shake and sway with fright
Uncontrollable, the night
Powerless in ruthless grasp
Lifts hidden hands as though to clasp
47 In invocation for surcease,
The flying stars.
Once there was peace
Calm handed where the roses blow
And hyacinths, straight row on row;
And hushed among the trees. What!
Has my poor marble heart forgot
This surging noise in dreams of peace
That it once thought could never cease
Nor pale? Still the blaring falls
Crashing between my garden walls
Gustily about my ears
And my eyes, uncooled by tears,
Are drawn as my stone heart is drawn,
Until the east bleeds in the dawn
And the clean face of the day
Drives them slinkingly away.

XVI

48 DAYS and nights into years weave
A net to blind and to deceive
Me, yet my full heart yearns
As the world about me turns
For things I know, yet cannot know,
'Twixt sky above and earth below.
All day I watch the sunlight spill
Inward, driving out the chill

That night had laid here fold on fold
Between these walls, till they would hold
No more. With half-closed eyes I see
Peace and quiet liquidly
Steeping the walls and cloaking them
With warmth and silence soaking them;
They do not know, nor care to know,
Why evening waters sigh in flow;
Why about the pole star turn
Stars that flare and freeze and burn;
Nor why the seasons, springward wheeling,
Set the bells of living pealing.
They sorrow not that they are dumb:
For they would not a god become.
. . .I am sun-steeped, until I
Am all sun, and liquidly
49 I leave my pedestal and flow
Quietly along each row,
Breathing in their fragrant breath
And that of the earth beneath.
Time may now unheeded pass:
I am the life that warms the grass--
Or does the earth warm me? I know
Not, nor do I care to know.
I am with the flowers one,
Now that is my bondage done;
And in the earth I shall sleep
To never wake, to never weep
For things I know, yet cannot know,
'Twixt sky above and earth below,
For Pan's understanding eyes
Quietly bless me from the skies,
Giving me, who knew his sorrow,
The gift of sleep to be my morrow.

EPILOGUE

50 May walks in this garden, fair
As a girl veiled in her hair
And decked in tender green and gold;
And yet my marble heart is cold
Within these walls where people pass
Across the close-clipped emerald grass
To stare at me with stupid eyes
Or stand in noisy ecstasies
Before my marble, while the breeze
That whispers in the shivering trees
Sings of quiet hill and plain,
Of vales where softly broods the rain,
Of orchards whose pink flaunted trees,

Gold flecked by myriad humming bees,
Enclose a roof-thatched faded gray,
Like a giant hive. Away
To brilliant pines upon the sea
Where waves linger silkenly
Upon the shelving sand, and sedge
Rustling gray along the edge
Of dunes that rise against the sky
Where painted sea-gulls wheel and fly.
Ah, how all this calls to me
Who marble-bound must ever be
While turn unchangingly the years.
My heart is full, yet sheds no tears
To cool my burning carven eyes
Bent to the unchanging skies:
I would be sad with changing year,
Instead, a sad, bound prisoner,
For though about me seasons go
My heart knows only winter snow.

April, May, June, 1919

APPENDIX B

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Education: Attended grade schools in Miami and Shawnee, Oklahoma; graduated from Wewoka High School, Wewoka, Oklahoma, in 1959; attended Christian College, Columbia, Missouri, in 1959-1960; received the Bachelor of Arts degree from Oklahoma State University, with a major in English, in May, 1963; completed requirements for the Master of Arts degree in May, 1966.

Professional Experience: Graduate teaching assistant in English at Oklahoma State University in 1963-1965; member of Sigma Tau Delta English fraternity and Phi Kappa Phi honor society.