Keats's Urn and the Arrested Image in Faulkner

by

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Abstract

Faulkner repeatedly returns to Keats's urn as an expression of immortality based on a paradoxical relation between changelessness and temporal motion. The arrested motion, along with a suggestion of beauty held in inner contemplation, is repeatedly refigured in Faulkner's work as an aesthetic idealization of the process of art.[1] The moment of motion is halted, effectively grounding the image as a stationary effigy. Faulkner's premise is that constant motion and change inherently dominate the human perspective, but the achievement of art is that it is made in a vacuum of silence; a "relish in power caught momentarily in repose," (Bate, 510). It is through the urn-like imagery of stasis that the roles of art and transience can become reversed just as Old Ben from "The Bear" achieves immortality while the "unravish'd bride" of Keats's urn (as Narcissa) becomes married with child. Faulkner once dryly remarked that, "If a writer has to rob his mother, he will not hesitate; the 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' is worth any number of old ladies."[2]Faulkner's adaptation of Keats's ode throughout his work demonstrates how much he really meant that.

In the first chapter, I explore Faulkner's developing ideas of stasis in his early poem "The Marble Faun." Faulkner's versification is categorized by Cleanth Brooks as "late Romantic [or] Decadent verse."[3] The poem is largely derivative of Keats's ode and reveals a repositioning of the ode as emblematic of the placement of art outside the human experience. The second chapter will explore Faulkner's first major effort in his Yoknapatawpha County saga, Flags in the Dust. I will show how Keats's ode is presented in the novel in terms of idealities and torment in the characters Bayard Sartoris, and Horace and Narcissa Benbow. These three character s are characterized by distinct forms of stasis ranging from the Romantic inscribing of Horace's ideals upon the his sister as an urn, to consuming past of Bayard. In the final chapter, I will examine Faulkner's canonical short story "The Bear" in terms of stasis specific to Isaac McCaslin and the mythical environment of his youth. The Bear, the forest, and the South, are points of emphasis originating in the stasis of Isaac McCaslin and his inability to cope with the changes of his environment. Through these texts, Faulkner adopts and redefines Keats's urn into a subtextual questioning of man's role in relation to art. Faulkner uses the imagery of the suspended urn and the freize of figures to both embody and frustrate his characters' ideals in his fiction, reconsidering the value of motion as Keats did in his ode.

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[1] Hilayne E Cavanaugh, Faulkner, Stasis, and Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Nebraska, 1977), 21. Hereafter cited in text.

[2] William Faulkner, "Interview 1956," The Paris Interviews, II ed. Phillip Gourevitch. Picador, 2007.

[3] Cleanth Brooks, William Faulkner: Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 2. Hereafter cited in the text.

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Short Titles

MM: Adams, Richard P. Faulkner: Myth and Motion. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1968.

FD: Faulkner, William. Flags in the Dust. New York: Random House,1973.

GDM: Faulkner, William. Go Down, Moses. New York: Modern Library, 1970.

MF: Faulkner, William. "The Marble Faun," The Marble Faun and A Green Bough. New York: Random House, 1960.

GU: Keats, John. "Ode on a Grecian Urn."

Introduction:

In his essay "Verse Old and Nascent: A Pilgrimage," a young William Faulkner recounted his first impression of John Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn":

> I read "Thou still unravished bride of quietness" and found a still water withal strong and potent, quiet with its own strength, and satisfying as bread. That beautiful awareness, so sure of its own power that it is not necessary to create the illusion of force by frenzy and motion... .[1]

The admiration Faulkner felt for Keats's ode greatly affected his development as a writer and continued to influence him throughout the trajectory of his career. By exploring the correlations between Keats's ode and Faulkner's "The Marble Faun," Flags in the Dust, and "The Bear," my study will show how Faulkner uses urn-like imagery to construct a view of life as congruent with art. Specifically, I will look to Faulkner's use of stilled-motion imagery from Keats's ode as a discourse on the limitations and potentialities of art framed by the perspective of both the artist and observer. My thesis will begin by explicating Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn," specifically focusing on images that suggest both stillness and momentum.[2] After a close reading of Keats's ode, paying particular attention to areas Faulkner emphasized, I will discuss Faulkner's relationship to Keats. Using a few key secondary sources and Faulkner's own words, I will define the terminology used in this thesis.

In the first chapter, I explore Faulkner's developing ideas of stasis in his early poem "The Marble Faun." Faulkner's versification is categorized by Cleanth Brooks as

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[1] William Faulkner, "Verse Old and Nascent," The Double-Dealer Magazine 7 (June: 1925), 131.

[2] See Appendix for Keats's Ode. Hereafter cited in the text with the prefix "GU."

"late Romantic [or] Decadent verse."[3] Though largely derivative of Keats's ode, the poem reveals an awareness of the ode as emblematic of the placement of art outside the human experience. Faulkner repositions the ode by giving voice to the urn (as the marble faun) instead of the observer. The second chapter will explore Faulkner's first major effort in his Yoknapatawpha County saga, Flags in the Dust. I will show how Keats's ode is presented in the novel in terms of idealities and torment in the characters Bayard Sartoris, and Horace and Narcissa Benbow. These three character s are characterized by distinct forms of stasis: the Romantic inscribing of Horace's ideals upon the his sister as an urn, the non-self of Narcissa's serenity, to the consuming past of Bayard. In the final chapter, I will examine Faulkner's canonical short story "The Bear" in terms of stasis specific to Isaac McCaslin and the mythical environment of his youth. The Bear, the forest, and the South, are points of emphasis originating in the stasis of Isaac McCaslin and his inability to cope with the changes of his environment. Through these texts, Faulkner adopts and redefines Keats's urn into a subtextual questioning of man's role in relation to art in the process of time. Faulkner uses the imagery of the suspended urn and the frieze figures to both embody and frustrate his characters' ideals in his fiction, reconsidering the value of motion as Keats did in his ode.

"Ode on a Grecian Urn" reflects on the limitations of the human temporal form compared to the enduring power of art to represent mortality as a way of achieving immortality. Helen Vendler sees the urn as "an experiment about art in terms of pure,

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[3] Cleanth Brooks, William Faulkner: Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 2. Hereafter cited in the text.

'artificial,' representational rituality extended in [...] a self-limiting frieze."[4] The self-limiting "frieze" of Keats's urn is both an image of humanity preserved, as well as a higher form of experience continually sustained as if frozen.

In the opening two lines, Keats introduces us to an object existing in a quiet peace. Though a "bride," the urn is expressly "unravish'd" either as a sign of its virginal nature or of a more general, unsullied characteristic of the urn. W.J. Bate illuminates Keats opening lines:

> For the actual parentage of the urn was the forgotten artist working with marble. It was only afterwards left to be the "foster-child of silence and slow time," though it has taken on the character of its foster-parents: it has lasted so long, and depicts a world now dead. Throughout that long fostering it has become pledged as a "bride of quietness." But this virginal bride is "still unravish'd," either by the infidelity of speaking or by the marriage consummation with "quietness" itself. [In a footnote: "Still," as an adverb intensifies the possibility that it may yet be "ravish'd."] [5]

Bate's suggestion that the urn remains pure by refraining from speaking is important as it both devalues and empowers the Romantic imagination, effectively speaking or imagining for the object, as opposed to letting the urn speak for itself. The urn is necessarily a product of antiquity and is positioned by Keats as female as compared to the male artist, a motif repeated in Faulkner's work.

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[4] Helen Vendler, The Odes of John Keats (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1983), 116. Hereafter cited in the text.
[5] Walter Jackson Bate, John Keats (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963), 511. Hereafter cited in the text.

The next two lines carry a sense of Keats's submissive awe at the power of its storytelling. The "Sylvan historian" carries both a mythological or pastoral sense as well as a more concrete tribute to the urn. Keats sees the urn expressing the life depicted on it "more sweetly" than he can express with his poetry, because the urn has spent an eternity quietly watching human activity. Its appearance as a historian is reflective of its own eternality- becoming a lasting testament to itself.

In the remaining half of the stanza, Keats plies the urn with questions increasing in their fervor. Keats seems bent on finding out the ghosts of the urn's history. At first hinting at types ("deities/mortals," "Tempe/Arcady"), he then indulges his imagination even more by picturing "mad pursuit" and orgiastic celebration. Though he is now less subservient to the urn's "sweeter tale," the suggestion of myth and of paradox characterize Keats's speculation.

In the second stanza, Keats returns to praising the urn's silence, championing the "unheard" melodies over the ones heard by "the sensual ear." Followed by an eternal youth in spring, the ode begins to take the definite shape of stillness. The youth cannot leave, and the trees will not "be bare." The songs require the imagination of either the artist or spectator to fulfill their perfection. In the last half of the stanza, the picture of the courting lovers, unable to realize their "goal," is like Francesca and Paolo from Dante's Inferno in their estrangement. But Keats's placating closure nearly makes up for the loss as their images cannot "fade" though the lovers are without the bliss they seek. The last line promises eternal love and beauty, though at the tragic cost of perpetual separation. The lovers on the urn are usually used in Faulkner's strongest evocation of "ultimate

peace [and] immunity from the destructive march of time," through the denial of a dynamic reality.[6]

The heavy repetition of "happy," six times in the next stanza, lends an overly euphoric tone as Keats revisits the characters of the piper, trees, and lovers from the previous stanzas. In the last three lines, Keats distinguishes a difference in the urn's "passion" as it is "far above" mortal life. Continuing, the overjoyed beginning of the stanza crashes into utter disappointment at the non-reality of the bliss depicted. The realization of such joy cannot be folded back into life, and the speaker cannot release the image from its remote isolation.

The second-to-last stanza has Keats seeing, perhaps like the lovers in the trees, a depiction of a "sacrifice" furthering the urn's evocation of a bygone age. Keats's attention wanders to a town decidedly not pictured on the urn due to its changing scenery ranging from a "little town by the river" to a town in the mountains. Nonetheless, Keats presents a strange, saddening prospect of the town's (eternal) desertion while the townsfolk attend the sacrifice.

The fifth and final stanza describes a dizzying array of doubt-producing images contradictorily followed with praising sentiments on its everlasting form. Keats returns to speaking to the urn as a whole, complete with its "marble" personas and forest imagery. Yet these people are now "overwrought" and the "happy boughs" are just "branches and trodden weed," as Keats seems intent on letting the reader sort out the conflicting messages. The silent images of arrested motion have teased the speaker "out of thought" yet the urn can only signify a "Cold Pastoral" as it is resistant to the ravages of time. The

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[6]Joan S. Korenman, "Faulkner's Grecian Urn," Southern Literary Journal 7 (1974: Fall), 5. Hereafter cited in the text.

problematic ending "'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,-that is all/ Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know," has garnered much discussion as to the identity of the speaker.[7] Perhaps one of the few indicators we have to Keats's intentions is in his letter to Benjamin Bailey: "What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth-whether it existed before or not-for I have the same Idea of all our Passions as of Love they are all in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty."[8] Helen Vendler comments on the last stanza as follows:

> not mythologically or historically identifiable figures acting out some known (if lost) legend, but rather what would nowadays be called a universal or archetypal "Truth"- in this instance, the truth of the unity of Love, Beauty, and Art, symbolized by the classic icon of a lover courting a maiden to music. The archetype is idealized- that is to say, it represents a human fantasy: that the lover will forever love, and the beloved be forever fair, and their courtship give rise to, and be accompanied by, an eternally refreshed art, "songs forever new." [...] If not in life, at least in the truthful allegorical representation of our idealism... (Vendler, 116-117)

The equation of Truth and Beauty is problematic especially to Faulkner's Horace Benbow and Isaac McCaslin, who are misled in believing that the poem insists that art is life, when, in fact, the ode should remain a perfect testament of why it is not.

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[7] For further discussion of this problematic ending see: E. Douka Kabitoglou, "Adapting Philosophy to Literature: The Case of John Keats," Studies in Philology 89 (University of North Carolina Press, Winter: 1992), 115-136.

[8] John Keats, Selected Letters ed. Robert Gittings (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2002), 36.

Establishing an important precedent for Faulkner's use of arrested motion, Keats's poetry has been often characterized as ekphrasis, a "literary evocation of spatial art, [used as] an umbrella term that subsumes various forms of rendering the visual object into words."[9] Keats's ode is "perhaps the greatest ekphrastic poem, is also one of the most profound studies of the relation between art and poetry from the perspective of absence, or rather of two absences: of sound and of movement. These two limitations of the visual medium are here reversed into its triumph. It is, however, a double-edged triumph, deeply marred by exclusion."[10]

Faulkner's work is filled with countless instances of ekphrastic images of active movement in "silent arrested motion, forever beyond the reach of time."[11] These attempts at description try "not only to arrest a fleeting moment but also to reinforce existing truths and create new realities."[12] This aesthetic motif of Faulkner's is distilled in Keats's figures of the "Bold Lover" and his beloved, forever encapsulated in the moment of their courtship. The pictures on the urn are the tangible ideal of perfection in mortal life where love is "ever warm and still to be enjoy'd, / For ever panting, and for ever young." Yet the lovers' existence outside of time confines them eternally in possession of the fleeting moment of happiness.

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[9] Tamar Yacobi, "Pictorial Models and Narrative Ekphrasis," Poetics Today 16 (Fall: 1995), 600.
[10] Shimon Sandbank, "Poetic Speech and the Silence of Art," Comparitive Literature 46 (Summer: 1994), 235.
[11] Carvel Collins, ed., William Faulkner: Early Prose and Poetry (Boston: Little, Brown, 1962), 39.
[12] Thomas Rankin, "The Ephemeral Instant: William Faulkner and the Photographic Image," In Faulkner and the Artist eds. Donald M. Kartiganer and Ann J. Abadie. (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1996), 296.

Faulkner repeatedly returns to Keats's urn as an expression of immortality based on a paradoxical relation between changelessness and temporal motion. Richard Adams offers insight into Faulkner's fascination with stasis as a condition of being:

> If we conceive of motion as a stream (an image often used by Faulkner) we find that its power cannot be felt by someone moving with it, or in it, as living people normally do. If, however, some object, or better if some person, can be made to stand still against its flow, the result will be a dramatic and possibly disastrous manifestation of its energy. [13]

The arrested motion, along with a suggestion of beauty held in inner contemplation, is repeatedly refigured in Faulkner's work as an aesthetic idealization of the process of art.[14] The moment of motion is halted, effectively grounding the image as a stationary effigy. Using this Keatsian stasis Faulkner pushes the imagination of the observer to the forefront, as with Keats's meditations on the Grecian urn.

> The aim of every artist is to arrest motion, which is life, by artificial means and hold it fixed so that 100 years later, when a stranger looks at it, it moves again since it is life. Since man is mortal the only immortality possible for him is to leave something behind him that is immortal since it will always move.[15]

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[13] Richard Adams, Faulkner: Myth and Motion (Princeton: Princeton University, 1968), 4. Hereafter cited with the prefix "MM."

[14] Hilayne E Cavanaugh, Faulkner, Stasis, and Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" Diss. (University of Nebraska, 1977), 21. Hereafter cited in text.

[15] William Faulkner with Jean Stein, Lion in the Garden: Interviews with William Faulkner ed. James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate (New York: Random House, 1968), 239.

Faulkner's premise is that constant motion and change inherently dominate the human perspective, but the achievement of art is that it is made in a vacuum of silence; a "relish in power caught momentarily in repose" (Bate, 510). It is through the urn-like imagery of stasis that the roles of art and transience can become reversed just as Old Ben from "The Bear" achieves immortality while the "unravish'd bride" of Keats's urn (as Narcissa) becomes married with child. Faulkner once dryly remarked that, "If a writer has to rob his mother, he will not hesitate; the 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' is worth any number of old ladies."[16]Faulkner's adaptation of Keats's ode throughout his work demonstrates how much he really meant that.

[16] William Faulkner, "Interview 1956," The Paris Interviews, II ed. Phillip Gourevitch. (New York: Picador), 2007.

Chapter 1

The Marble Faun: Faulkner's Beginning with Keats

One of Faulkner's first literary efforts was the joint publication of two poems in a book titled The Marble Faun and A Green Bough. While the poetry is relatively inchoate and lackluster, it provides a snapshot of the writer's development from its beginning stages. In particular, "The Marble Faun" is an important text that links Faulkner's fascination with arrested motion with the Romantic movement, specifically Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn." Faulkner's poem "embodies polarities and antinomies to be found again in all of Faulkner's later texts," including the paradigm of "stasis versus motion."[1] The poem reveals an intertextual relationship with Keats's ode as Faulkner's repositioning of the Grecian urn is emblematic of the paradoxical immortality and lifelessness of art.

The poetry in "The Marble Faun" is unremarkable and characterized by an "often disastrous awkwardness of style," (MM, 20). Edmund Brown, the publisher, felt "that it is not really a very good book of poetry [...] At the time we certainly had no intimation that Faulkner would become a really important novelist."[2] Even Phil Stone, who was a longtime friend and mentor of Faulkner during this period, surprisingly echoes this sentiment in his preface in a near apologetic tone saying that the book was only "the poems of youth" and, as a result, have "the defects of youth- youth's impatience,

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[1] André Bleikasten, The Ink of Melancholy: Faulkner's Novels, from The Sound and the Fury to Light in August (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 6.
[2] William Faulkner, William Faulkner's First Book The Marble Faun Fifty Years Later ed. William Boozer (Memphis: The Pigeon Roost Press, 1975), 4.

unsophistication and immaturity" (MF, 6). The verse is plagued by a lack of continuity while the allusions do not offer much more than a confusing mix of derivative echoes ranging from contemporary poets like T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound to the Romantic poetry of Keats and Shelley. Cleanth Brooks reasons that until Faulkner was able to break free from the confining presence of his literary predecessors, his writing remained "empty and sterile."[3]

Faulkner abandoned poetry soon after "The Marble Faun" was published and later reflected in an interview:

> I'm a failed poet. Maybe every novelist wants to write poetry first, finds he can't and then tries the short story which is the most demanding form after poetry. And failing at that, only then does he take up novel writing. [4]

Faulkner's remark somewhat playfully critiques, what Bleikasten terms, the "languid poses of his immature romanticism." [5] But even in his more mature prose Faulkner's writing retains a distinctly poetic bent. Bleikasten posits that Faulkner would "not have conceived of his vocation as a writer in the way he did, and perhaps would not even have become a writer" if he had not discovered Romanticism and specifically how it substitutes art for reality.[6] While Faulkner saw his early endeavors in poetry as "failures," his ongoing fascination with poetry remained throughout his career providing a wellspring of ideas that shaped Faulkner's development.

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[3] Cleanth Brooks, William Faulkner: Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 18. Hereafter cited in the text.
[4] Lion in the Garden, 238.
[5] André Bleikasten, "For/Against an Ideological Reading of Faulkner's Novels" in Faulkner and Idealism: Perspectives from Paris (Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1983), 31.
[6] Bleikasten, 31.

In "Verse Old and Nascent: A Pilgrimage" Faulkner revisited his initial exploration of the British poetic canon, and asked at the end of the essay:

> Is there nowhere among us a Keats in embryo, someone who will tune his lute to the beauty of the world? [...] Time changes us, but Time's self does not change. Here is the same air, the same sunlight in which Shelley dreamed of golden men and women immortal in a silver world and in which young John Keats wrote "Endymion" [...]. Is not there among us someone who can write something beautiful and passionate and sad instead of saddening?[7]

"The Marble Faun" is, in a way, Faulkner's attempt to answer this question and embody the virtues he sees in the Romantic tradition. In this chapter, I will argue that Faulkner's admiration for Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" figures as a dominating force behind his initial stabs at poetry and later informs key moments in his fiction as well. "The Marble Faun," though inauspicious, connects Faulkner's fascination with Keats's ode and the power of arrested imagery to a more metaphysical discourse on the human experience of time as contrasted with the relative permanence of art. As Keats creates a visual incarnation of the urn through words á la "ut pictura poesis," Faulkner recreates Keats's ode in the "silent form" of his character of the marble faun (GU, 44).

The speaker of "The Marble Faun" is a statue of a faun in a garden that experiences the ever-changing seasons yet cannot change himself. Encased in marble, Faulkner's marble faun recalls the follower of Pan in Roman mythology that has characteristics of both human and animal. Faulkner's speaker represents a classical form

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[7] William Faulkner, "Verse Old and Nascent: A Pilgrimage," The Double Dealer Magazine 7 (June, 1925), 131.

of beauty and immortality in its form as a statue, but also as an ideal of youth (as a young deer) as a permanent state. Like the figures on the urn in Keats's ode, the faun in the garden is eternally suspended in a static existence. By placing the faun against the motion of time's passage, Faulkner considers the stasis of art through the eyes and voice of the artifact.

The faun is similar to the urn: they are both works of art valued for their antiquity as well as the ancient (or mythological) history they have come to represent. Also reminiscent of Keats's urn is the sculpture form of the faun that gives an impression of life halted in mid-motion. By transcending death, the faun is externally symbolic of ultimate good, truth, and beauty eliding together for a perfect union of the ideals with which art is traditionally associated.[8] The faun's inadequacies cause him to romanticize his own present state because he cannot endure his own reality. Though sympathetically presented by Faulkner, the faun inevitably fails to become absorbed into the temporal bliss around him. The faun's predicament suggests a link between the artist (as Faulkner envisioned) and the ultimate failure of artistic representation. Because the work of art is unchangeably fixed, it cannot capture the ephemeral quality of reality. While Joan Korenman states that this sympathy for the faun "arises from the mixed feelings which [Faulkner], like Keats, regarded the passage of time," it is important to remember that the faun is a product of art, as well as the artist (Korenman, 5).

However, the faun differs from the urn's presence in Keats's ode; he is bitterly aware of his inability to participate in the life he observes and rues his condition:

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[8] Joseph Blotner, "Continuity and Change," In Faulkner and Idealism: Perspectives from Paris ed. Michel Gresset and Patrick Samway (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1983), 16.

Why am I sad? I?

Why am I not content? The sky

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 [9]

The faun is like Keats's lovers depicted on the urn but imbued with a youthful consciousness that longs to break free from his encasement. As Keats desires "a Life of Sensation rather than of Thoughts," the faun's despair is rooted in his half-ness: restricted from the sensual enjoyments of mortal existence while cursed with an awareness of his incapacity.[10] The enjambed couplets underscore the faun's life-as-death paradoxical condition as the fluidity of the singsong rhyme scheme is disrupted by the severed formation of the phrases. The fractured phrasing forces an awkwardness in its delivery punctuated by the insistent end and internal rhyming of the "i" sound. The repeated "I" of the faun's lament perhaps signifies the faun's differentiation between his mobile environment (those outside of the "I") and his static nature.

Through the seasonal changes, the faun grows embittered and dissatisfied with his immobile form that cannot interact with the life around him in the garden. The faun hears Pan's lute calling him to "Come, ye living, stir and wake!" (MF, 14). The faun desires to follow Pan but still is restricted to his "marble-bound" state (MF, 12). He cannot

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[9] William Faulkner, The Marble Faun and A Green Bough (New York: Random House, 1965), 12. Hereafter cited in the text with the prefix "MF".

[10] John Keats, Selected Letters ed. Robert Gittings (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2002), 36.

experience fulfillment because of his disconnect with reality. So he imagines himself relinquishing his immortal state and becoming part of his natural surroundings. The marble faun sees his world through a pathetic fallacy, inscribing his desires and frustrations onto the sensory world around him. The flux of the seasons has instead become "silent" and "unchanging," a projection of his dissatisfaction with his stasis. His suspended state is portrayed in a predominately negative light, as opposed to Keats's ambivalence toward the urn's "Cold Pastoral" that portrays ultimate bliss forever kept from complete fruition (GU, 45).

Faulkner does not seem to offer much redemption for the faun, suggesting that the faun's contentment (or lack thereof) is contingent on its temporality, whereas the faun is condemned to the fleshless eternity of his existence. Yet he identifies with his environment, as he perceives a world-weary moon trapped against continuous time.

> 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. (MF, 33)

The faun imagines the moon forever surveying a world perpetually changing and in motion but ignorant of its impermanence. The moon exhibits the faun's fear of permanence, relegated as an immobile observer to the changing climes of human reality. Like the "Sylvan historian" of Keats's urn unaffected through the generations, the moon (as well as the faun) bears witness to the passage of time only because it is outside of time, and likewise, outside of life (GU, 3). The faun is acutely aware that he has traded

the possibility of bliss and joy for immortality as he jealously regards "the sylvans danc[ing] till dawn," (MF, 15).

Unlike the urn, Faulkner's marble faun is emphatically not a "bride of quietness," as the faun's thoughts are not created by the observer (or reader) as is the case for Keats's urn (MF, 1). At times, the faun observes his surroundings as if it were a landscape reduced to a silent painting. The faun is now Keats gazing at the urn discovering "a silence in art which is not only numinous [...] but also infinitely sad," (Sandbank, 236). The faun imagines the rising melody of Pan breaking the stillness of the faun's world:

> '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.
> [...]
> To ripple the silence with my call
> When the world sleeps and it is noon.' (MF, 23).

The silence of the garden suggests a kind of still life reinforced by imagery of water that is repeatedly described as "hushed," "stilled," or frozen "snow" (MF, 51). The poem takes place in a "slow Time" that signals a correlation between the faun's incontrovertible nature and a form of static peace (GU, 2). Coincidentally, the violence prevalent in Faulkner's later work is curiously absent from the marble faun's environment, which I believe is in accordance with Faulkner's claim that life without

motion is not life. [11] The faun's "quietness" is only possible because he is without motion and, therefore, dead to the form of change that is violence (MF, 25).

The faun experiences the peace of quietude like a lethargic "spell" cast over everything in the garden as the sun's "soundless pattern" roves about the leaves on the forest floor (MF, 25).

> The world is still. How still it is!
>
> About my avid stretching ears
>
> The earth is pulseless in the dim
>
> Silence that flows into them (MF, 35)

The only movement is the flowing of silence paradoxically "dim." Contrastingly, "dim" scans and sounds similar to "din" suggesting a cacophonous void enveloping the "pulseless" earth. The faun's reference to the "them" of the passage is doubtlessly his ears, though Faulkner's versification makes this difficult to ascertain. This is, in part, because attention veers away from the personification of the "avid" ears toward an encroaching silence that is somehow lessening in its auditory magnitude while progressively enveloping the natural environment.

The songs of "The Marble Faun" make up the greater part of the sensory descriptions in the faun's narration. Pan's lute calls to the faun, the sylvans sway in an erotic dance, while the brook sings a "reverted song" (MF, 14). Yet these songs are not directly present to the reader, but manifested as if they were distant recollections or even the faun's imaginings. As "the world stands sharp and mute/ Waiting for [Pan's] magic

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[11] For further discussion on the development of violence in Faulkner's work see: Lenore Daniels, "William Faulkner: Sacrifice and Chivalry in Southern Culture" (Diss.: Loyola University of Chicago, 1996).

flute," the songs are seemingly curtained off from both the narration and the faun (MF, 16). The faun's anticipation of the songs is equated with a promise of unimpeded motion in the yet to be heard melody.

The "unheard" songs of Keats's ode are only heard by the "more endear'd" imagination, making them sound even "sweeter" (GU, 11-13). But in Faulkner's poem, the faun's imagination works against him to produce a vision of his liberation that grows increasingly intolerable. Faulkner substitutes the unheard beauty of the piper's melodies on the urn with a false provocation that only exacerbates the faun's torment. Whereas Keats's ode stresses the urn's perfection over the transience of reality, in "[Faulkner's poem] it is the inferiority of art to life that is stressed-'wild ecstasy' that has become frozen into a 'cold pastoral,' the unaging faun who has been turned into inanimate marble" (Brooks, 5).

"The Marble Faun" effectively becomes a tale of the Grecian urn re-imagined from the urn's point of view. Faulkner places the faun like Keats's "marble men and maidens overwrought,/ With forest branches and the trodden weed" in a way that confirms Keats's disillusion with the urn that is precluded from life by its resistance to change (GU, 42-43).

> If we conceive of motion as a stream (an image often used by Faulkner) we find that its power cannot be felt by someone moving with it, or in it, as living people normally do. If, however, some object, or better if some person, can be made to stand still against its flow, the result will be a dramatic and possibly disastrous manifestation of its energy. (MM, 4)

Faulkner dramatically exaggerates sensorial motion of the environment through the anthropomorphic faun only capable of observing it. This effect of the immobile form standing against the "stream" of change characterizes Faulkner's marble faun but also shows up in human characters like Addie Bundren from As I Lay Dying. Though still alive, Addie's deathly illness has restricted her reality to the window where she detachedly views her oldest son Cash building a casket for her. Addie's strange awareness of her encroaching death isolates her from the living. Whereas Addie by either her illness or by an inflexible pride rejects the temporal world, the faun's form is intrinsically setup in opposition to change. The conditions of both the faun and Addie encapsulate "some moving, passionate moment of the human condition distilled to its absolute essence," though Addie is given the promise of eventual death whereas the faun is condemned to his eternal station.[12]

The poem is loosely guided by changing seasons over the course of a year ending in the second spring. As the still life of art only mimics reality, the faun realizes the impossible distance between his changeless form and the "breathing of the growing things" (MF, 15). Yet the faun experiences the warming sunshine of the second spring with a renewed hope:

> I leave my pedestal and flow
>
> [...]
>
> I am the life that warms the grass—
>
> Or does the earth warm me? I know

[12] William Faulkner, William Faulkner's First Book The Marble Faun Fifty Years Later ed. William Boozer (Memphis: The Pigeon Roost Press, 1975), 4.

Not, nor do I care to know.

I am with the flowers one,

Now that is my bondage done;

And in 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. (MF, 49)

The faun's coveted "gift of sleep" is to recede into the unconsciousness of his surroundings. The faun hopes he will be relieved of the knowledge of things he "cannot know" that condemns him to desire impossibilities arousing Pan's sympathy. Faulkner could have been suggesting that Pan was going to transform the faun into a plant, tree, or flower as Pan had done in the past. In an interesting sequence, the faun declares he is a source of "life," but immediately doubts this claim as he wonders if perhaps *he* is dependent on the grass for life. We can interpret this shift as signifying an underlying dialogue concerning the relationship between art and the life it aspires to represent. If the faun is responsible for the warmth of life, art remains sovereign through the "waste" of generations as it gives life to Beauty and Truth. In contrast, if the faun is dependent on the grass for life then perhaps the life of art is not only dependant on the observer but the imagination that observes it.

As the faun wakes to the bustling activity of early summer, he realizes the impossibility of his release:

> 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. (MF, 50-51)

The skies that once promised the blessing of rain, giving life (and motion) to the faun are still barren. Appropriately, the faun can only "know" the frozen water as it reflects the stasis of his experience. The end of the poem is emblematic of a shift from the faun's youthful belief in his eventual transcendence, to his disillusionment with his inflexible circumstances. The faun's doomed state is not representative of the axiom of "Beauty is truth, truth beauty," and instead sees his existence as an indefinite imprisonment without redemption (GU, 49). The celebrated timelessness of Keats's urn refigures into a symbol of futility. The faun, seen as an artifact of lasting beauty, is ironically prevented from experiencing beauty at all, as Sandbank points out: "Art's exclusion of movement and time becomes timelessness, in the sense of eternity. Impotence becomes power" (Sandbank, 236).

Yet the faun knows all along what Keats gradually reveals in "Ode on a Grecian Urn," which is that "[h]uman experience, with all its limitations, finally offers a warmth and vitality that permanence and stasis cannot match" (Korenman, 4). The derivative nature of "The Marble Faun" is firmly ensconced in the literary antecedent in Keats's ode. The presence of Keats's ode in "The Marble Faun" is used to question not only the relationship art has with the observer but also participates with Keats's ode as if it were an ageless urn in itself. Faulkner imagines the ode from the urn's point of view showing that though the faun has an enduring form of beauty, it is not the beauty of human experience because it cannot be changed, lost, or corrupted. The faun is fated to be only the hollow representation of life, only in motion in the observer's imagination.

Chapter 2

The Suspended Lives of Narcissa, Horace, and Bayard: Keats and Flags in the Dust

Originally completed by early 1927 though only published in its entirety in 1973, Flags in the Dust is Faulkner's first extended foray into the world of Yoknapatawpha County. In Flags in the Dust, he began "giving rein to his romantic imagination while he used the lore both of the South and his own family, employing the second, in a way, as emblematic of the first."[1] In recreating his own "postage stamp of soil," Faulkner's preoccupation with the stasis of Keats's ode becomes a thematic frame for the oft-brutal landscape of Yoknapatawpha. The realist description of the rural South is contradictorily mixed with instances of romanticized stasis reminiscent of Keats's ode, as Brooks explains: "Faulkner... began as a romantic, and a romantic he remained to the end, though a reformed or foiled or chastened romantic." [2] In this chapter, I will examine how Faulkner utilizes urn-like imagery to show two distinct (yet equally incapacitating) types of stasis: the undying past of the Sartoris family and the static idealities of both Horace and Narcissa.

Horace Benbow, the lawyer given to poetic flights of "wild fantastic futility," is fixated upon the urn's ideals of Truth and Beauty (FD, 152). Horace's flights are characterized by a wish to escape his entrenched reality as his reveries take him "to the

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[1] Joseph Blotner, Faulkner: A Biography Vol. 1 (New York: Random House, 1974), 531.
[2] Cleanth Brooks, William Faulkner: Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 51. Hereafter cited in the text.

ultimate roof of things, where unicorns filled the neighing air with galloping, or grazed or lay supine in latent and golden-hooved repose" (FD, 187). Horace cannot accept his own existence and instead aspires toward two impossible ideals: "[the first being] a world of stasis, where Beauty and Truth reign forever; [the second], a world of Nature where he may find contentment in oblivion."[3]

Perhaps Horace's escapism can be partially explained as a reflex to the violence he (indirectly) experienced in the Great War at his non-combative position in the YMCA. When Narcissa picks Horace up at the train station, Horace perceives the peaceful stasis of his surroundings as if the town was deserted:

> [...]a gracious and benign peace, steadfast as a windless afternoon in a world without motion or sound. Horace looked about him and drew a long breath.
>
> "Perhaps this is the reason for wars," he said. "The meaning of peace." (FD, 151)

Horace envisions "the meaning of peace" as a resistance to change as well as a form of beauty. Horace becomes an imperfect "Keatsian romantic" as he creates an impossible illusion of perfection instead of the mutable inconsistencies of reality (Hodgin, 647). Horace mythologizes his world, to the point that he effectively creates an urn-like "flowery tale" where his ideals detach him from reality (GU, 4).

In his return from the war, Horace strives to achieve what he considers peace: "[o]ld unchanging days; unwinged, perhaps, but undisastrous, too," (FD, 156). Horace's

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[3] Katherine C. Hodgin, "Horace Benbow and Bayard Sartoris: Two Romantic Figures in Faulkner's Flags in the Dust," American Literature 50 (January: 1979), 649-650. Hereafter cited in the text.

ideal of static peace corroborates Keats's initial description of the urn's quality of "Silence and slow Time" (GU, 2; Korenman, 6). His description of his day-to-day life is emblematic of the arrested peace he desires:

> Here, amid the mellow benignance of these walls [at his office], was a perfect life, a life accomplishing itself placidly in a region remote from time and into which the world's noises came only from afar and with only that glamorous remote significance of a parade passing along a street far away, with interferences of brass and tinsel fading beyond far walls, into the changeless sky. (FD, 163)

Ironically, the changeless sky that haunted Faulkner's marble faun, now provides a sense of security against the mutable and violent world Horace wishes to escape. Whereas Faulkner's earlier poem is an account of the narrator's struggles against his timeless immobility, Flags in the Dust features a central character (in Horace) that shuns motion for a hazy absolute that is, ultimately, void of life. Horace's description of the noises of the world only reaching his static world "from afar" suggesting an urn-like imperviousness that "shalt remain, in midst of other woe" (GU, 47). The distant "interferences of brass and tinsel" pass through Horace's walled-life resistant to the dynamic forces of humanity that alternately extinguish and renew.

While the above passage details Horace's withdrawal from the activities of life, Horace's formulation that life can escape the process of motion by "accomplishing itself placidly," is perplexing. How can life, defined by Faulkner by its constant motion and change, render itself lifeless? One way to interpret this passage is to contextualize it with an earlier remark by Horace regarding a life of static peace, "You dont see it, feel it, save

with perspective" (FD, 156). Perhaps there *is* motion in Horace's idyllic lifestyle, but it is minute and only discerned in hindsight. After his ill-founded marriage to Belle Mitchell, Horace acknowledges the loss of his happier "cage" of his former life with Narcissa (FD, 244). Though Horace claims only to desire a "quiet and dull peace," it is peace only achieved through a self-effacement of both the physical and mental realms (FD, 164). While Narcissa probably comes the closest to attaining this inhuman peace (like marble faun), her nonexistent relationship with Bayard proves to be more desirable.

In his newly discovered passion for glass blowing, Horace's idealities beckon to Keats's urn again, producing:

> ... one almost perfect vase of clear amber, larger, more richly and chastely serene and which he kept always on his night table and called by his sister's name in the intervals of apostrophizing both of them impartially in his moments of rhapsody over the realization of the meaning of peace and the unblemished attainment of it, as Thou still unravished bride of quietude. (FD, 162)

The connection between Horace's sister, the vase, and his cherished peace are explicitly tied together through "Ode on a Grecian Urn." Horace juxtaposes Keats's initial description of the urn with his sister, creating a model of feminine perfection: virginal, pure, and silently submissive. Horace's peace is a peace exemplified by soundlessness; for Horace, the perfect "bride of quietude" is the silent (or perhaps thoughtless) companion to his static reverie.

Narcissa is a maternal figure to her older brother and their intimate relationship resumes immediately after his return from the war. Yet her persona is also somewhat of a

blank slate for Horace's poetic fancy, as he renders Narcissa into the epitome of the "ideal of feminine virtue" (Cavanaugh, 36). Narcissa's name underscores the narcissistic attitude that we see prevalent throughout Flags in the Dust, most apparent in Horace's reconstruction of his sister's identity as a figure of virtuous maternity.

In this sense, Horace becomes "the figure of the male artist creating the perfect, beloved, implicitly feminine work of art," replacing the real Narcissa with a dream of perfection.[4] Horace's identification of his sister through a vase evokes an analogy Faulkner used to explain his impetus behind creating Caddy Compson, the central figure of The Sound and the Fury:

> I said to myself, "Now I can make myself a vase like that which the old Roman kept at his bedside and wore the rim slowly away with kissing it. So I, who never had a sister and was fated to lose my daughter in infancy, set out to make myself a beautiful and tragic little girl."[5]

Like Horace, who associates his amber vase on his night table with his sister, Faulkner sees his creation of Caddy Compson as comparable to an adored piece of artistry. In this instance, we could presume that Faulkner is ventriloquizing something of his own aesthetic approach through his character Horace. Horace's deliberate connection between his sister and the Grecian urn reveals Faulkner's own intense association of Keats's ode with the creation of his characters. Caddy is not only the product of the artist's imagination, but is left without a voice of her own to signify her own independence.

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[4] For a discussion that views the urn-like imagery as a marginalization of femininity see: Susan V. Donaldson, "Cracked Urns: Faulkner, Gender, and Art in the South," In Faulkner and the Artist eds. Donald M. Kartiganer and Ann J. Abadie (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996), 71. Hereafter cited in the text.

[5] Blotner, Faulkner: A Biography Vol. 1, 570.

Similar to Quentin's near-incestuous obsession with his sister Caddy, Horace both deifies and constricts Narcissa by approaching her as if she is outside the bounds of time. Bleikasten notes that to Horace, Narcissa is "a kind of animated Grecian urn."[6] Taken altogether, the relationships that Quentin and Horace have with their sisters are remarkably similar to Faulkner's creation of his "heart's darling," Caddy Compson, as they respond to a perceived loss by generating an image of femininity. [7]

Narcissa is repeatedly described in terms of her "serenity" not only in Horace's words but also in nearly every appearance in the narrative. Her "fond serene detachment" seems to be indelible to her presence in the narrative (FD, 158). To Horace, who addresses his sister as "O Serene," her serenity is also representative of her everlasting virginal purity (FD, 159). Even after Narcissa is married to Bayard Sartoris and with child, Horace still writes to her as "thou still unravish'd bride of quietude," as if the quietude that she emanates has preserved her virginal purity from violation like a quasi-Madonna figure (FD, 341). Her preserved virginity is perpetuated "either by the infidelity of speaking or by the marriage consummation with 'quietness' itself" (Bate, 511). Narcissa, doubling as both the urn and the virginal bride, resonates more as a symbol of chaste piety than a flesh and blood female with sexual desires. If we conceive of Narcissa purely through the "silent form" of the Grecian urn, it is suggested that Narcissa (like the urn) cannot think for herself, but only exists as a muse-like stimulus for the artist's imagination (GU, 44). Through the lens of the urn, Horace's idyllic projection of Narcissa is essentially the sum of her existence, without which she is not even alive.

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[6] Bleikasten, "For/Against an Ideological Reading of Faulkner's Novels," 38.
[7] Frederick L. Gwynn & Joseph Blotner, eds., Faulkner in the University (Charlottesville: Univ. of Virginia Press, 1959), 6.

Bayard Sartoris, unused to Narcissa's impenetrable coldness, even pleads with her to simply be "human for once" (FD, 231). It is as if Narcissa has remade herself in the image of the purity that her brother has idealized. Similarly, Narcissa fulfills her brother's need for a maternal presence and seems to aspire to nothing else until Horace's presence recedes from her life after his marriage.

Narcissa and Horace's relationship fails when she learns of his liaison with the married Belle. Yet even then, Narcissa embraces the role of maternal purity as she is astounded her brother would be have such a "dirty" woman (FD, 190). Ironically, Horace concurs with Narcissa's condemnation of Belle's "backstairs nature" (FD, 242). He continues his relationship with the married-Belle as well as a clandestine affair with her sister, Joan. Even though Horace feels "unclean" when he thinks of his sister, he nevertheless chooses to indulge his physical needs against the outcry of his moral ideals (FD, 297). While Horace is at times in raptures with the "tideless sea [of Narcissa's] constant serene affection," his choices betray the ineffectuality of Narcissa's serene artifice (FD, 149).Horace's hypocrisy "has directly encouraged Narcissa to think of herself as the idea, pure, and inviolate vessel of chastity, the ideal of the Southern belle pushed to its extreme" (Cavanaugh, 48).

Horace's values split him between a desire for a numbing "peace" and a woman whose chaste beauty is sacred and above earthly desires. But he succumbs to the sensuality of Belle, who "envelop[es] him like a rich and fatal drug, like a motionless and cloying sea in which he watched himself drown" (FD, 243). Still water imagery is paradoxically connected to Belle as well as Narcissa, as Belle's lethal pull is stronger than his sister's abstract absolutes. Belle's detachment "from the dust and the heat and

the blood" of reality is similar to Horace's perception to Narcissa (FD, 162). But Belle is not associated with virginity or purity, but rather a sexuality that seems to Horace a "petulant Death" (FD, 162).

Narcissa does little to break away from Horace's (or even the narrator's) unrealistic idealizations, as she claims before her marriage to "hate all men" (FD, 150). Save for a few instances, Narcissa's inner thoughts are perpetually hidden from the reader and it seems that her serenity entails a lack of thought in general. Horace sees her, not as an equal but a form of unthinking stability that "filled the room with that constant untroubling serenity of hers in which his spirit drowsed like a swimmer on a tideless summer sea" (FD, 161). Faulkner's frequent use of still water imagery in this novel is reminiscent of "The Marble Faun" in that it denotes halted time, but it also reflects negatively on Narcissa, as if her only role in life is to provide a form of stability for Horace (Korenman, 7).

Developing this theme of dependence, Ron Buchanan argues that Horace's "impersonal view" of Narcissa forced her into an adult role of the mother that has "superseded any opportunity-and need or desire-for personal, physical sexuality."[8] While Narcissa's mothering of Horace has smothered her own sexual development, it is difficult to blame Horace for desiring a mother figure even if it is his much younger sister. Horace undoubtedly positions his sister as an impossible figure absent of earthly desires that effectively stunts Narcissa's entrance into the adult world. Donaldson takes this criticism to a further degree, finding fault not with Horace but with Faulkner:

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[8] Ron Buchanan, "'I Want You to Be Human': The Potential Sexuality of Narcissa Benbow," Mississippi Quarterly 41 (Summer: 1988), 452. Hereafter cited in the text.

> [for] creating art implicitly defining the artist as male and the object of artistic desire and creation as female. And nowhere was this demarcation between male artist and female object of art more apparently discernible than in Faulkner's obsessive use of urns, vases, and images of containment to define not just woman but art in general. For Faulkner, urns suggested the possibility of containing and confining women within the realm of a rigorously masculine art. (Donaldson, 51)

Donaldson interprets the disembodied characterization of Narcissa as symptomatic of Faulkner's "notion of masculinity" that was principally based on the "containment of woman" (Donaldson, 70). Faulkner engenders the urn (emblematic of art) as female and the artist male. Thus, Horace's ideal of Narcissa is equated with an urn implying a form of perfection but ignores the person behind the idealization. Though Narcissa seems to adopt Horace's construction, she is expressively not the progenitor of the idealization.

Another instance in Faulkner's work emblematizing the urn as a feminine ideal is in Light in August when Joe Christmas is horrified to discover the reality of feminine sexuality in the form of Bobbi's menstrual cycle:

> [Joe saw] a diminishing row of suavely shaped urns in moonlight, blanched. And not one was perfect. Each one was cracked and from each crack there issued something liquid, deathcolored, and foul. He touched a tree, leaning his propped arms against it, seeing the ranked and moonlit urns. He vomited. [9]

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[9] William Faulkner, Light in August (New York: Random House, 1990), 187.

Joe perceives his physical relationship with Bobbi demeaned by her active sexuality even though she is a prostitute. Ironically, if the women (as the urns) were perfect, they would not be having sex as it violates the (dual) standards of gender propriety. The circumstances of women's sexual lives had been shrouded to Joe and replaced with an extension of the idealized form of the pure female. The social façade of femininity is symbolized in the male-created urns that celebrate an unrealistic version of the female that has deluded Joe. Horace's approximation of Narcissa as Keats's Grecian urn is at best a pretty lie that conceals Narcissa's true self, and at worst is a rapacious revision of Narcissa that fools even herself.

While I, at times, find Donaldson's critique harsh, the importance Donaldson places on Faulkner's urn-like imagery obviously bear out something of my own argument. In particular, the idea of the Grecian urn as a form of confinement corresponds to the "Bold Lover" pictured on the urn, which, incidentally, describes the crisis of the marble faun exactly (GU, 17). Donaldson's general point that the urn-like imagery is indicative of Faulkner's concept of "art in general" resonates in Horace's excitement in first seeing the Italian urns and vases during the war:

> And the things themselves! Like preserved flowers, you know. Macabre and inviolate; purged and purified as bronze, yet fragile as soap bubbles. Sound of pipes crystallized.... (FD, 152)

Horace's rhapsody over the vases is analogous to his perception of Narcissa. Though Belle is not "inviolate," one can interpret her remove from the world of change also like that of a vase. Perhaps only Belle's sister, Joan steps away from this crippling characterization, as she dispassionately uses Horace for the physical pleasures he seeks in

her sister. Joan is not dependant on Horace and, tellingly, is not characterized like the other woman. Instead, Horace is awed and frightened by her aggressive nature.

Like Joe Christmas, Horace cannot merge his ideal female form with any form of active sexuality. Horace chooses Belle not in spite of her dull and selfish tendencies, but because of them, as Horace deludes himself into believing that women cannot be both sensual and good. Because of his inability to comprehend the reality outside of his imagination, Horace condemns himself to the disastrous marriage with Belle, becoming one of Faulkner's "completely defeated characters" (MM, 13). Adams explicates Horace's desire for stasis as a form of self-destruction:

> They try to find something unchanging to stand on, motionless in the midst of change. But motion sweeps them on so relentlessly that their only escape is one or another kind of suicide. They are not vital sprits crushed by the inert weight of matter. On the contrary, they are desperate because a living world keeps forcing them into action in spite of their desire for security, peace, and stasis. They are crushed because they are trying not to move, and because, by Faulkner's logic, the only way to be motionless is to be dead. (MM, 12-13)

While Narcissa and Horace are characterized by a stasis of serenity, peace, and transcendental beauty, Bayard Sartoris evokes an altogether dissimilar stasis in which reality is consumed by the past. Faulkner "separates the obsession with the past from the desire for stasis, affixing one characteristic to the Sartoris family and the other to Horace" (Korenman, 9). Diametrically opposed to Horace's and Narcissa's reverie of "slow-time"

and peace, Bayard's stasis is a "brutal tale, without beginning, and crassly and uselessly violent," of a past he cannot come to terms with (FD, 238).

Bayard is haunted by the death of his twin-brother, John, who died in combat during the Great War. The brothers, both fighter pilots, were engaged in combat when John's plane burst into flames "like the gay flapping of an orange pennon," and John was forced to jump out (FD, 315). Bayard recalls, "Then he thumbed his nose at me like he always was doing and flipped his hand at the Hun and kicked his machine out of the way and jumped" (FD, 239). The exact details of the incident are unclear but the result was that Bayard was not able to locate his brother after he jumped.[10] After his brother's death, Bayard returns to the quiet, country life of his home outside of Jefferson where he blazes a path of self-destruction in his effort to cope with the traumatic experiences in the war.

The devastating loss of his twin, coupled with his guilt at his perceived failure to rescue John, has reduced Bayard to a shell of "frozen despair" (FD, 275). The effigy of his brother leaping out of his plane dominates Bayard's thoughts as the painful event recurs continuously in his mind. Faulkner's construction of Bayard destabilizes the bliss of the lovers on the urn, "For ever panting, and for ever young," substituting their joyful anticipation for an unending torment that cannot subside (GU, 27). As a result, Bayard "seeks-death, a relief from the agonizing guilt he bears" (Hodgin, 651). Bayard's inner

[10] The story does not specify whether John was using a parachute at the time. Though the U.S. military did not routinely issue parachutes to the pilots of WWI, Faulkner's description of Bayard's search for his brother as he fell from the aircraft suggests that possibility.

affliction seems to agitate even the scenery that Faulkner presents around him, as he seems innately linked to a bleak violence that seems to shroud his physical features.[11]

Bayard's stasis hardly contains any semblance of peace or repose. Yet, the purest moment of ataraxis in the narrative attached to Bayard is after he has suffered a head injury from being thrown from an unbroken stallion. He flees town and drinks moonshine with Hub and Suratt:

> The rising slope of ground behind them hid the barn and the house, and the three of them squatted in a small bowl of peacefulness remote from the world and its rumors, filled with the cool unceasing breathing of the spring and a seeping of sunlight among the elders and willows like a thinly diffused wine. On the surface of the spring the sky lay reflected, stippled with windless beech leaves. (FD, 125)

It is striking that both Horace and Bayard's peaceful settings are typified by their distance from auditory "interference[s]," with Horace's dim sounds of a parade and Bayard's woods isolated from society's "rumors." In both scenes, the silence of civilization reveals a "more endear'd" sound of "no tone," that is replaced, in Bayard's case, by the sole "breathing of the spring" (GU, 14). Once again, we see Faulkner's evocation of peaceful stasis connected with a still body of water, in this instance reflecting a changeless sky. Faulkner slows the movement of the spring so it can reflect the dusk "seeping" amongst the windless trees. But the surface of tranquility is tinged with a latent aggression in the men's rebellious action of drinking despite the laws forbidding liquor, as well as Bayard's disregarded injury that lends an air of risk to the atmosphere as well. Bayard's

[11] Description of Bayard is scant and every visual of Bayard is marked by a hostility that overwhelms Faulkner's representation of him, as well as perhaps Bayard himself.

injury questions how much Bayard's peace is contingent upon being bucked from the stallion earlier. It is doubtful that Bayard would be in the situation if he had not hurt his head, but Bayard's attempt to ride the untamed stallion could be a form of romantic heroism, perhaps to make himself "worthy of his brother's memory" (Hodgin, 651). Another possibility is that the pain from the accident draws Bayard away from his fixated memory of his brother's death and into the present. The peace experienced with the men could then be Bayard unconsciously being momentarily relieved from his mental burden.

But simply being hurt does not necessarily lead to the rare occasion of peace for Bayard. In another moment of arrested time, after being pulled from his debilitating car wreck, he is placed in a slow-moving carriage where time seemingly stops. Instead of the static peace in the earlier passage, the pain of Bayard's injury exponentially increases the mental pain of his brother's death.

> At times it seemed to him that they were travelling backward, that they would crawl terrifically past the same tree or telephone post time after time; and it seemed to him that the three of them and the rattling wagon and the two beasts were caught in a ceaseless and senseless treadmill, a motion without progress, forever and to no escape. (FD, 202)

Bayard's exterior life after the war belie the non-motion of his interior. Like the abandoned "little town" Keats imagines, Bayard is "desolate" and incapable of experiencing the life he knew before (GU, 35, 40). Like Bayard's earlier peace in the words, there are two other (relatively anonymous) characters with Bayard, but now the bucolic stillness is exchanged for a frantic impotence that borders on madness. Bayard's lengthy journey toward home is an astonishing hell where the horses, as "beasts," pull a

rickety wagon that ricochets pain throughout Bayard's broken body at every bump along an endless road.

Because of the injuries sustained in the car accident, Bayard is forced into a lengthy convalescence while he is cared for by his great-Aunt Jenny as well as Narcissa. Though Narcissa senses Bayard's "moody, leashed violence" even in his debilitated state, she begins to read to Bayard at his bedside with regularity (FD, 230). But Narcissa continually experiences trepidation with Bayard's caustic mannerisms and inner violence, disturbing "that serene constancy [Narcissa] clung [to] so fiercely" (FD, 136). The arrested stasis of Narcissa and Bayard are polarities unable to coexist. Thus, Bayard in his ceaseless agony cannot comprehend Narcissa's detached quietude.

However, their relationship flourishes, albeit at an incremental pace. Bayard becomes the sole outlet for the maternal instinct Narcissa identifies herself through, as Horace has just deserted her for Belle. Even though there is hardly any meaningful interaction between the two, Bayard "seems to win Narcissa's affection almost by default," due to Narcissa's lack of a male presence in her life outside of Horace (Buchanan, 453). At most, their relationship is the product of a temporary impasse, when Bayard's "helpless immobility" becomes similar in its appearance to Narcissa's static peace (FD, 230).

Bayard, while explaining the circumstances of John's death, loses control of his dormant aggression and grasps Narcissa's wrist so hard she could "feel the bones turn in it like a loose garment" (FD, 239). Narcissa, though horrified, accepts his subsequent awkward attempts at an apology as the "twilight, foster-dam of quietude and peace, filled the fading room" (FD, 241). Once again, Bayard's peace is only realized after a moment

of intense violence. We are not even sure if Bayard experiences the peace, or if he is simply conceding to Narcissa's serene placidity like his promise to never again drive fast. Their moment of peace is still tainted by Bayard's hostile actions even if he is capable of allowing himself some respite. Faulkner seems insistent on coupling quietude with doubt as we are constantly forced to reconcile these moments of peace with subverting reminders of its impossibility.

The marriage of Bayard and Narcissa is omitted from the narrative as Faulkner avoids any possible indicators of courtship. Instead, the narrative reveals the newlyweds' discordance as Bayard is unresponsive to Narcissa, leaving her for the "bleak and lonely heights" of his strangling memories (FD, 275). There is a sense of desperation in Narcissa's efforts to reach Bayard if only through the sensuality that Horace chose over her. But Bayard's kiss is "cold," tasting of "fatality and doom," as both Horace and Narcissa associate their sexual partners with a form of death. Interestingly, the text does not specify whose death is being foretold, though in Narcissa's case, it seems to imply Bayard's approaching demise (FD, 276). Their relationship is consistently portrayed as a non-relationship, which further emphasizes the rare moments of tenderness they experience when falling asleep:

> But when he was still, she would touch him and speak his name in the darkness beside him, and turn to him warm and soft with sleep. And they would lie so, holding each other in the darkness and the temporary abeyance of his despair and the isolation of that doom he could not escape. (FD, 276).

Narcissa returns to the stillness of Bayard's body as the only possible way to connect with her husband. Their embrace is not an expression of love as much as it is an "abeyance" of Bayard's self-fulfilling nightmare. But even asleep, Bayard still resides in his "bronze mask [...] with the violence still slumbering" (FD, 232). Bayard's immobility creates a statuesque figure like that of the marble faun forced to endure an eternity of pain with no hope for death. Faulkner redefines the Keatsian urn through Bayard, as a form of doom that invites "incomprehensible nightmares" instead of playful imaginings (FD, 314).

When talking to Rafe McCallum about the his time in the war, Bayard describes a world "[n]ot of combat, but rather of a life peopled by young men like fallen angels, and of a meteoric violence like that of fallen angels, beyond heaven or hell and partaking of both: doomed immortality and immortal doom" (FD, 133). Evocative of Satan's rebellion from John Milton's Paradise Lost, the Milton reference is particularly revealing as Keats, in his study of the epic poem became fascinated by what he termed "stationing." [12] Keats defined stationing as a visualized "gesture caught in a suspended, significant moment" (Goslee, 205). Similar to Keats's ekphrasis (which is like Faulkner's arrested motion), the reference to Satan's rebellion provides further stimulus in the backdrop of the antebellum South, still clinging to the vestiges of its honor having lost the Civil War.

Both Bayard and Horace, "for all that they are antitheses, are both 'romantics,'" (Brooks, 167). Yet Narcissa remains the site of Horace's feeble attempts to romanticize

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[12] Nancy M. Goslee, "'Under a Cloud in Prospect': Keats, Milton, and Stationing," Philological Quarterly 53 (Spring: 1974), 205. For further reading see: Nancy M. Goslee, Uriel's Eye: Miltonic Stationing and Statuary in Blake, Keats, and Shelley (University: University of Alabama Press, 1985).

his life, and is the only person present in the novel to have any kind of attachment with the impenetrable Bayard. While both of the men destroy themselves through their suspension of reality, Narcissa endures well enough to generate offspring. Narcissa does not necessarily break through her static perception of reality; she simply has not succumbed to it by the end of the book.

Chapter 3

The Urn's Idealities in "The Bear"

Perhaps the most compelling intertextual relationship between Keats's ode and Faulkner's work is in his short story "The Bear." Published in 1942 in a collection of short stories titled Go Down, Moses, "The Bear" is a hunting story that traces the protagonist, Isaac McCaslin, from his "baptism" into the mythical wilderness, to his renunciation of his inheritance in his adulthood.[1] The majority of "The Bear" is set during Isaac's youth and is framed by the overpowering presence of Old Ben: a large, menacing bear that had "loomed in [Isaac's] dreams since before he could remember."[2] Isaac endeavors to envision the bear as a deathless myth, as if the mortal animal could be transfigured into the changeless realm of the Grecian urn. In a similar fashion, Isaac retreats from the world of change and attempts to embody the ideals of the Grecian, a feat alternately presented as both heroic and cowardly. Unlike the characters studied earlier, Faulkner does not portray Isaac in an overtly negative light, instead choosing an ambivalence closer to Keats's interaction with the urn. Faulkner positions Keats's ode as a form of refuge against the brutalities of society contrasted with the dangers of the urn's ideals to delude and ignore reality altogether. In "The Bear," we see Keats's ode

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[1] Irving Howe, "The Relationship Between Part IV and the Rest of the Bear," In Bear, Man, and God: Seven Approaches to William Faulkner's 'The Bear' ed. Francis Utley (New York: Random House, 1964), 350.

[2] William Faulkner, "The Bear," Go Down, Moses (New York: Modern Library, 1970), 200. All other references to this edition cited with the prefix "GDM."

functioning in extremes, leading Isaac to denounce the institution of slavery though he compromises his ability to cope with the constant flux of life.

The story of "The Bear" (as published in Go Down, Moses) is told in five parts with the first two sections dealing with Isaac's initiation into the woods of Old Ben. Isaac's elders have been trying to bring down Old Ben for so many years that their hunting trips have become a rite of passage for boys upon reaching the age of ten. The woods, called Big Bottom, are described by Isaac as being "[b]igger and older than any recorded document" (GDM, 191). The trees depicted on the urn that resist seasonal changes in their perpetual spring, are present in "The Bear," though now the woods are trying resist their own destruction: "being constantly and punily gnawed at by men with plows and axes who feared it because it was wilderness" (GDM, 193). The description of the woods of Isaac's youth is like a double-exposed image, as the elements of the natural environment are imprinted by the indelible myths of "deities or mortals" that inhabit Isaac's imagination (GU, 6). As Bart Welling remarks, "Faulkner's texts regularly get in the way, interposing [the] intertextual networks of tradition, production, and meaning" upon the landscape of the disappearing wilderness.[3] These intertextual networks are specifically a Romantic characteristic, as the imagination imposes a secondary reality on the world around it. Isaac's thoughts are projected (or displaced) onto not only the woods but the society of people around him to the point that he cannot discern reality at all.

As an orphan, Isaac's childhood forms a strong attachment to the woods, as he reflects "... the deathless and immemorial phases of the mother who had shaped him if any had toward the man he almost was, mother and father both to the old man born of a

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[3]Bart H. Welling, "A Meeting with Old Ben: Seeing and Writing Nature in Faulkner's Go Down, Moses," The Mississippi Quarterly 55 (Fall: 2002), 463.

Negro slave and a Chickasaw chief who had been his spirit's father if any had, whom he had revered and harkened to and loved and lost and grieved" (GDM, 326). The "old man" Isaac refers to is Sam Fathers, the mentor who teaches Isaac the rules and techniques of the "ancient and unremitted contest" of hunting (GDM, 191). Sam paints Isaac's face with the blood of his first buck, signifying the boy's rite of passage into the world of hunting. Isaac recalls this scene in "The Old People" with "the buck still and forever leaped, the shaking gun-barrels coming constantly and forever steady at last, crashing, and still out of his instant of immortality the buck sprang, forever immortal."[4] Similar to Bayard's image of his brother right before his death, Isaac remembers the buck perpetually leaping an instance before he is shot. Both Bayard and Isaac memorialize pivotal experiences in their lives, but Isaac is not defined by any single instance of suspended memory as he seems to be more generally fixated upon the romanticized world of "the dogs and the bear and deer juxtaposed and reliefed against" the unending ritual of the hunt (GDM, 191).

Pervading throughout the beginning sections of the narrative is the arrested presence of the bear:

> an anachronism indomitable and invincible out of an old dead time, a phantom, epitome and apotheosis of the old wild life which the little puny humans swarmed and hacked at in a fury of abhorrence and fear like pygmies about the ankles of a drowsing elephant;-the old bear, solitary, indomitable, and alone; widowered childless and absolved of mortality-old Priam reft of his old wife and outlived all his sons. (GDM, 193-194)

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[4] William Faulkner, "The Old People," Go Down, Moses (New York: Modern Library, 1970), 178.

The ekphrastic visual of the god-like Old Ben towering over the anonymous multitudes produces an arrested figure that is both tragic and heroic in its proportions. In Faulkner's presentation, the bear is "caught forever like art, and the art moves as if alive" (Gelfant, 47). The passage can be seen almost like a prose retelling of Keats's ode, though modified to a more violent and unforgiving reality complete with ancient spirits, ideals of archaic brutality, men forever swarming (though futilely), and King Priam prevailing even amid his desolation. The "unravish'd bride of quietness" is evoked in the brutal but majestic form of the bear, as Isaac glorifies the bear into becoming an artifice separate from its transitory existence, as Bruce Danner explains,

> Ike ultimately fails to grasp that there are two bears which he has mistaken for a single entity. The Bear that is "true" is unassailable and timeless, like the imaginary figures upon the urn. Within this truth, in an incorruptible "other" space, minutes can be interminable and death can almost be immortalized like a statue or a monument. Both Ike and Sam mistake Old Ben for that immortal image.[5]

The bear recalls Keats's nightingale, having attained a "virtual immortality [because it does] not know that [it] will ever die-only through lacking the human being's memory and imagination" (Brooks, 6). Whereas the nightingale's immortality is sourced in their inexhaustible song, the "solitary" figure of the bear seems to rebel against the changing forces of time and extinction. By using the urn (symbolizing art's disconnect from time) as a foundation to the bear, the bear's failed attempt at transcendence suggests a link to

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[5] Bruce Danner, "Epic Tears: The Dislocation of Meaning in Faulkner's 'The Bear,'" The Mississippi Quarterly 59 (Winter: 2006), 289. Hereafter cited in the text.

both the destruction of the natural environment as well as the failure of the South in the Civil War. The bear's supposed timelessness reveals Isaac's illusory belief that reality is capable of attaining the ideals that art represents, forgetting that these idealities can only be expressed through a medium outside the realm of time and human attainment. Isaac inscribes the natural phenomena of his woods as a perpetual, timeless place that is undefiled by man and death. By creating an interior realm where art and human experience are united, Isaac retreats to his woods as a superior mode of existence to the fallen depravities of civilization. But Isaac's isolation from society causes him to disassociate with "historical time" as his actions "take on a fusing and dreamlike quality which merges past and present."[6] The boy is immersed into the myth of the woods, to the point where he is afforded the rarest of opportunities: an encounter with Old Ben. It happens one day as the boy follows the bear's mangled prints through the woods when

> the wilderness coalesced. It rushed, soundless, and solidified [...] Then he saw the bear. It did not emerge, appear: it was just there, immobile, fixed in the green and windless noon's hot dappling, [....] Then it moved. It crossed the glad without haste, walking for an instant in to the sun's full glare and out of it, and stopped again and looked back at him across one should. Then it was gone. It didn't walk into the woods. It faded, sank back into the wilderness without motion .... (GDM, 209)

The "miraculous epiphany" of Isaac's first encounter with the bear is characterized by a still violence amplifying the bear's power, possibly even more expressive than any whirlwind of activity (Gelfant, 58). The bear seems to be capable of some semblance of

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[6]Blanche H. Gelfant, "Faulkner and Keats: The Ideality of Art in 'The Bear,'" Southern Literary Journal 2 (Fall: 1969), 43. Hereafter cited in the text.

intentionality, perhaps because it realizes Isaac is incapable of harm, or maybe the bear realizes its precarious state as its own "ungendered progenitor," and acknowledges Isaac as sharing some sort of commonality (GDM, 210). While the second possibility seems relatively speculative, the bear's end foretells Isaac's own future, as Isaac will be childless, without companions, and representative of a time precluded from the experience of the present.

Isaac's refusal to kill Old Ben abrogates "all the ancient rules and balances of hunter and hunted" (GDM, 207). He wishes to preserve Old Ben in an effort to pursue him indefinitely like the ever-courting lovers on the urn. Faulkner was once asked who he sympathized with the most in "The Bear." In his response, Faulkner addressed the audience's (as well as Isaac's) urge to preserve valued entities in the face of change.

> What the writer's asking is compassion, understanding, that change must alter, must happen, and change is going to alter what was. That no matter how fine anything seems, it can't endure, because once it stops, abandons motion, it is dead. [7]

In the end, the immense figure of the bear cannot remain both in the world of the immortal image of art and still exist in the corporeal realm. Old Ben is relegated to being the "leaf-fringed legend [that] haunts" the stasis of memory and myth (GU, 5). Faulkner expands the scope of the question from merely the obsolete shape of the woods or the bear, to a socio-political reality.

> It's to have compassion for the anguish that the wilderness itself may have felt by being ruthlessly destroyed by axes, by men who simply

[7] Faulkner in the University, 227. Cited by Korenman, 17.

> wanted to make that earth grow something they could sell for a profit, which brought into it a condition based on an evil like human bondage. It's not to choose sides at all-just to compassionate the good splendid things which change must destroy....[8]

Faulkner's answer seems to point in two different directions: that one must accept that change will inevitably destroy that which cannot change, and a nostalgic insistence of value in appreciating the "good splendid things" rendered obsolete by the process of time. Faulkner thinly conceals his own "side" in his attempt to remain somewhat neutral in his response, presenting the change resulting in the destruction of the wilderness into a "condition based on an evil like human bondage." In many ways, Faulkner's sense of grim loss reflects Isaac's doomed attempted to preserve the wilderness, even if it means an irreparable fracture between what is perceived and what is actually happening. In Isaac's undisturbed stasis where the woods can still exist and there is a place amid the ruination of civilization that retains an element of "unravish'd" purity. How much is Isaac to blame for wanting the bear to remain undisturbed in its natural habitat? Though I interpret Isaac's inability to kill the bear as evidence of his disconnect with life, it is also possible to see Isaac's non-action as an innocuous conservation effort.

As the world of Isaac's youth is irrevocably changed, it is hard to not feel sympathetic toward Isaac for wanting to escape from the world that has destroyed the woods as well as everything else he valued (Sam, woods as the mother/father figure, the bear).[9] While Isaac's sympathy for the bear temporarily lengthens the bear's life, the bear

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[8] Faulkner in the University, 227. Cited by Korenman, 17.

[9] Ironically, it is Major de Spain who eventually sells the remnants of the sacred woods to a logging company for clearing.

ends up having a considerably less glorious death at the hands of the pathetic hunter, Boon, instead of being killed by a worthy adversary such as Isaac. He is the one who has been groomed to kill the bear, it his consuming drive until he sees the bear. Isaac turns away from his seemingly fated duty, foreshadowing his later renunciation.

The bear is finally brought down by the formidable Lion, a dog that was meaner and bigger than any dog had been in the years hunting Old Ben. Isaac watches as the bear catches the dog "in both arms, almost loverlike" as the dog clamps on to the bear's throat (GDM, 240). Boon jumps on Old Ben's back and brings his knife back as if in slow motion. The blade "[f]ell just once. For an instant they almost resembled a piece of statuary: the clinging dog, the bear, the man stride its back, working and probing the buried blade" (GDM, 241). In a last gasp of defiance, the bear is still able to rise before faltering: "It didn't collapse, crumble. It fell all of apiece," (GDM, 241). Boon, Lion, and Old Ben become inextricable in their "mad pursuit" as they rise and fall as if a singular entity, reducing the individual, desperate motions of battle to a joint crescendo of violence (GU, 9). Faulkner's (or Isaac's) description seems more fitting for a somber, war memorial than the calamitous event of the death of an indomitable force. Old Ben's death has disastrous consequences for Sam and Isaac as they "equate Old Ben with [an] image of permanence and immutability, a transcendence belied by the animals' vulnerability and death. Thus Old Ben dies, and, since Ike never recognizes the difference between the material creature and his idealized vision, truth dies for him with Old Ben" (Danner, 289).

The strangely integrated effort of the combatants can be interpreted through Keats's fourth stanza of the "sacrifice," revealing how tenuous the link between the Lion,

the bear, the woods, Sam, and Isaac is (GU, 31). If we identify Old Ben as the necessary sacrifice on the "green altar" of his forest floor, Faulkner's earlier comments about the necessity for the removal of the obsolete suggests perhaps that not only was Old Ben's death was required but that it paved the way for the forest's destruction (GU, 31). It is also equally plausible to envision Sam in the role of the priest, leading the "heifer" to his assured death, though the sacrifice meant Sam's death as well (GU, 33). Isaac, innately attuned to workings of the forest like Sam, realizes a distinct foreboding when a "panther" began killing livestock around the area (GDM, 206). Isaac looks to Sam and realizes that the panther is in fact a dog, *the* dog who will take down Old Ben. Isaac is sadly aware that Sam's inaction in the matter will save Old Ben's life, but Isaac imagines that Sam is glad "because for seventy years now he had had to be a Negro. It was almost over and he was glad" (GDM, 208). Though the battle has irreversibly ruined Isaac's peaceful serenity in the constant presence of the woods, Sam's torment is over. Sam finds release from the static existence of his solitary oppression.

When Isaac reads the commissary ledgers of his family's history in Part IV, he is shocked by his family's role in a history of subjugation. Kenneth LaBudde observes, "In Part IV, we realize 'The Bear' is an affirmation of primitivism. Civilization is evil."[10] The ledgers tell the story of the miscegenation between Old Carothers (Isaac's grandfather) and his slave Eunice, which produced a daughter, Tomasina. Isaac obviously cannot deal with the depravity of his family's history, so he attempts to concoct a love story between Carothers and Eunice, "[s]*ome sort of love. Even what he*

[10] Kenneth LaBudde, "Cultural Primitivism in William Faulkner's 'The Bear,'" In Bear, Man, and God: Seven Approaches to William Faulkner's 'The Bear' Ed. Francis Utley (New York: Random House, 1964), 232-233.

would have called love: not just an afternoon's or a night's spittoon" (GDM, 270). As Isaac attempts to idealize, or at least soften the blow of his grandfather's lechery, he turns the page of the ledger to realize that Carothers also engendered a child with Tomasina, "*[h]is own daughter. No No Not even him*" (GDM, 270). Isaac concludes that Eunice's death is the result of a suicide: "he seemed to see her actually walking into the icy creek on that Christmas day six months before her daughter's and her lover's (*Her first lover's* he thought *Her first*) child was born…" (GDM, 271). [11] While it is not clear how much Isaac veers from the truth in his experience reading the ledgers, Isaac is clearly aghast at the vile history of his ancestors revealed in "one instantaneous field the myriad minutia of its scope" through the sparse records of births deaths, and finances in the family ledger (GDM, 298).

As a result of his reading the family ledgers, Isaac decides to repudiate his birthright to the land of his forefathers due to him on his twenty-first birthday. Isaac's decision to reject his inheritance as a dramatic protest against slavery seems admirable as he turns down an assured amount of wealth and privilege for his ideology. Isaac sees slavery as tainting the very land of the South: "[t]his whole land, the whole South is cursed, and all of us who derive from it, whom it ever suckled, white and black both, lie under the curse" (GDM, 278). Modeled on the ideals represented in Keats's ode, Isaac has likewise absorbed the virtues of the Bible as absolutes. In his attempt to live as Jesus, he wishes to be not just a "mere static and hopeful emulation of the Nazarene" but to live in the same manner as Jesus did (GDM, 309). While all of Isaac's aims are well intentioned, he is more fixated on the pursuit of perfection than the human experience.

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[11] Ostensibly, Carothers was the first lover to both Eunice and his daughter, Tomasina, whom gave birth to Terrel (or Turl).

Gelfant concurs: "[t]hus, he changes from an uninitiated boy into a Hunter-ideal, embodying the virtues of courage, pride, humility, and endurance. But he does this at the sacrifice of human flexibility, for as a perfected being, any further gesture he could make would involve a departure from the ideal" (Gelfant, 52).

In Isaac's argument with his cousin, McCaslin Edmonds as to whether Isaac should accept his birthright, Isaac contends he cannot repudiate the land that "was never mine to repudiate" (GDM, 256). Isaac's repudiation is now shown seen as an "act of escaping" both the evil of the world and the responsibility to set things right (GDM, 294). McCaslin, not given to the uncomprehending extremes of Isaac, sees Isaac shirking his familial duty and escaping into the suspended illusions of Truth and Beauty. During their discussion, the narrative flashes back to a moment years prior when McCaslin discovered that Isaac had seen Old Ben and did not shoot him. Realizing that the much younger cousin was trying to prolong the "wild ecstasy" of pursuit from the inevitable motion of time, McCaslin reads Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" to Isaac:

> *'But you didn't shoot when you had the gun,' McCaslin said. 'Why?"'*
>
> [McCaslin retrieves a book and opens it]
>
> *'Listen,' he said. He read the five stanzas aloud and closed the book on his finger and looked up. 'All right,' he said. 'Listen,' and read again, but only one stanza this time and closed the book and laid it on the table. 'She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,' McCaslin said: 'Forever wilt thou love, and she be fair.'*
>
> *'He's talking about a girl,' he said.*

> *'He had to talk about something,' McCaslin said. Then he said, 'He was talking about truth. Truth is one. It doesn't change. It covers all things which touch the heart--honor and pride and pity and justice and courage and love. Do you see now?'* (GDM, 296-297)

McCaslin perceives Isaac's inability to kill Old Ben as a way of preserving the purity of his ideals. Repeating the second verse of Keats's ode emphasizes McCaslin's awareness of Isaac's refusal to risk the "spirit ditties of no tone" by necessitating change (GU, 14). This passage reveals McCaslin's awareness of Isaac's stasis as much as it is a study on the subjectivity of interpretation. Isaac assumes Keats is referring solely to the girl, missing McCaslin's point that Keats was using the girl a way of expressing something larger. McCaslin sees the ode not only as a direct commentary on the urn's ideals, but illustrating a truth that can be removed from the context of the poem and still be true.

Isaac has restricted Truth to have a limited meaning an application that cannot cover "all things which touch the heart," but only what has been expressively shown. McCaslin wants to prove to Isaac that by ignoring the part of the bear that is subject to change and decay, he removes the possibility of coming any closer to this image. Isaac cannot understand his cousin's implied universality and instead traps himself into a life that is incontrovertible, as he believes if Truth cannot change, neither should he. In rejecting his inheritance, Isaac also shows a withdrawal from time that dooms him to the still life of his imagination, just like the immobile "men and maidens" on the Grecian urn. In his attempt to personify the eternal verities Keats associates with the urn, he limits himself from the action of Truth and the experience of Beauty.

Isaac's return to the woods after Old Ben's death and his repudiation illustrates Isaac's obliviousness to the world around him. While searching for the graves of Sam and Lion, he concludes, "there was no death, not Lion and not Sam: not held fast in earth but free in earth and not in earth but of earth.... (GDM, 328-329). This conceit becomes more apparent as the woods, though unchangeable to Isaac, now are lined with "... miles and miles of stack steel rails red with the light bright rust of newness" (GDM, 318). Faced with the desecration of his woods, Isaac desperately tries to remember when the trains were distant and unthreatening, moving "as if there were a point between immobility and absolute motion where even mass chemically altered, changing [...] not only in bulk and shape but in color too, approaching the color of wind" (GDM, 21). The middle ground between absolute motion and immobility is perhaps is symbolic of the human experience: unable to remain consistent in a world of change, but nostalgically yearning for the good, "splendid things" of the past.

Having discarded reality, Isaac can only function in a passive state as the end of his life he becomes an "apostate his name and lineage by weakly relinquishing the land which was rightfully his to live in town on the charity of his great-nephew" (GDM, 40). When the great granddaughter of Tommie's Turl shows up at his house, Isaac sees the crime of Carothers's miscegenation (and incest) repeated in one of his descendants, Roth Edmonds. Isaac instructs the girl:

> Marry a black man. You are young, handsome, almost white; you could find black man who would see in you what it was you saw in him, who would ask nothing of you and expect less and get even still less than that,

> *if it's revenge you want*. Then you will forget all this, forget it ever happened , that he ever existed.... (GDM, 365 emphasis mine).

The racism that horrified Isaac in his family's history still resides strongly in Isaac, as the evil he sought to "repudiate" has been committed again rendering his repudiation a meaningless act. The woman responds to Isaac saying, "Old man," [...] "have you lived so long and forgotten so much that you don't remember anything you ever knew or felt or even heard about love?" (GDM, 365). Isaac's devotion to upright ideals has blinded him even to the possibility that they can exist in any form of life. Though Isaac is Faulkner's most endearing character based on Keats's ode, he still inevitably fails. The urn depicts a world that is unattainable as much as it is a finite expression. Faulkner seems to be emphasizing how the celebrated immortality of art cannot exist in the innumerable variations of experience. The deaths of the woods, the bear, and Sam have left Isaac abandoned like the town on the urn. Keats's realization, "why thou art desolate," can be extending to Isaac as well as his attempt to attain the ideals in the urn has left an absence of human compassion.

Conclusion

The continued presence of Keats's ode and arrested motion throughout Faulkner's career indicates the attachment Faulkner had with Keats's ode as well as the key importance it has behind his work. A close examination of Faulkner's arrested motion reveals its literary foundation of the stilled-life on the Grecian urn. Faulkner inhabits a similar role as Keats by splitting his characters into the binaries of static and dynamic. The stasis perpetuated in Faulkner's characters shows a conscious efforts to create not only the conditions of the urn in the narrative, but as an external parallels to Keats's ode. We see characters like Narcissa or Old Ben as singular images that exhibit the same pull on the imagination as the Grecian urn is to Keats. The problematic duality of art representing art is a motif that recurs in Faulkner's work usually associated with an urn-like silence and motionlessness. Faulkner reinvigorates static form of the urn as it becomes the foundation for people, settings, and the narrative itself.

I do not think Faulkner is necessarily contesting Keats as much as he, like Keats, is contesting the urn though Faulkner is vastly different in his approach. The ode Faulkner adopts is one of ambivalence and this characteristic is retained throughout its many incarnations in Faulkner's work. The characters constructed in stasis alternatively raised and degraded by Faulkner's presentation. The undying past, either through memory of one or a collective is perhaps one of Faulkner's most central themes to which his fascination with Keats's ode remains instrumental in our understanding of Faulkner's suspension of motion. Faulkner inserts the politics of the urn in the "real life" as a meditation on the limitations of human temporality and the transcendental quality of the

ideal, statically depicted on the urn. Through Faulkner's destabilization of Keats's ode art is revealed to be nothing more than a canvas of suspended thought, incapable of responding to the world outside of it. But this does not devalue the importance of artistic expression to Faulkner as we see that even in stasis, tremendous motion is conveyed through the imaginative interaction between the object and the viewer. Faulkner found in the Romantic movement a heightened experience of art through an inner- discourse that is seemingly hinged on subjective interpretation. Faulkner proves that the subjectivity of the re-visualized world both releases and constricts the self. While this layered world of associations reveals numberless opportunities for self-expression, the license to create a new reality reduces expression to a futile exercise in narcissism.

Appendix:

Ode on a Grecian Urn

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,
 Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
 A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape
 Of deities or mortals, or of both,
  In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
 What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
 What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
  What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
 Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
 Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
 Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
  Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;
 She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
  For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
 Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
 For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
 For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
  For ever panting, and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
 That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
  A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
 To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
 And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea shore,
 Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,

Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,"—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know. -John Keats 1820

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