

# Toward a Psychological Portrait of William Faulkner:

## The Meaning of Imagery in Faulkner's Early Works

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William Faulkner once said: "Freud I'm not familiar with."<sup>1)</sup> It would seem, however, that some scholars would insist on pursuing their researches on Faulkner's literature in the belief that Faulkner was well acquainted with Freud, when intending to study Faulkner's works in connection with psychoanalysis.<sup>2)</sup> Carvel Collins, for example, is

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I also wish to express my thanks to Mr. Michael Van Remortel who offered me much valuable advice.

- 1) Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner (eds.), *Faulkner in the University: Class Conferences at the University of Virginia 1957-1958* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1977), pp. 147, 268; *Lion in the Garden Interviews with William Faulkner, 1926-1962*, James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate (eds.), (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 251.
- 2) See Judith Bryant Wittenberg, *Faulkner: The Transfiguration of Biography* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1979) p. 80; David Minter, *William Faulkner: His life and Work* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), p. 56.

T. McHaney is another example, in that he also presumes—even

one of the scholars who entertain that belief most firmly; he is strongly opposed to Cleanth Brooks (who thinks Faulkner picked up some of Freud's ideas only by listening to others), criticizing Brooks's interpretation concerning the protagonist of *Mayday* as a complete misunderstanding.<sup>3)</sup>

The fact is, however, that we cannot know definitely to what degree Faulkner had knowledge of Freud and/or whether he wrote some of his works employing Freud's ideas. Therefore, I am intending here not to elucidate an internal relationship between Faulkner and Freud, but to study a character in one of Faulkner's novels by using Freudian psychology simply as an investigational means external to Faulkner's literary world—just as Freud once analysed the character of Shakespeare's Hamlet.

It is possible, I think, that analysing a Faulkner hero psychologically leads us to a better understanding of the whole of his novel. My idea is, however, to go further forward to obtain, through that psychological analysis of the hero, a clue for looking into his originator—Faulkner himself—while considering Freud's Hamlet interpretation that it can of course only be the poet's (Shakespeare's) own mind which confronts us in Hamlet.<sup>4)</sup>

If we are to believe, under direction of the psychoanalysis conceived by Freud, that an individual has memories which are significantly influ-

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though with measured words—a good possibility of Faulkner's having some knowledge of Freudian psychology. Thomas L. McHaney, "The Elmer Papers: Faulkner's Comic Portraits of the Artist," *A Faulkner Miscellany*, James B. Meriwether (ed.), (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi), pp. 40-42.

- 3) See Cleanth Brooks, *William Faulkner Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978), p. 60; Carvel Collins, "Biographical Background for Faulkner's Helen," in William Faulkner, *Helen: A Courtship and Mississippi Poems* (Tulane University and Yoknapatawpha Press, 1981), p. 30.

Collins's view of connecting Faulkner with Freud is more immediately shown in Carvell Collins, "Introduction," in William Faulkner, *Mayday* (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978).

- 4) Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, James Strachey (tr.), (New York: Avon Books, 1965), p. 299.

ential upon his life in spite of his being unconscious of them and which poets can bring out as images in their works, it will be possible to say that a psychoanalytic interpretation of images can present new and more intellectual problems concerning an author as well as his works. Freud wrote *The Interpretation of Dreams* 'Die Traumdeutung' stating that the dream is the first member of a class of abnormal psychic phenomena. Along the lines set out by Freud, I will begin by introducing a dream described by Faulkner.

In an unpublished and uncompleted novel *Elmer*,<sup>5)</sup> there is an account of a strange daydream the hero, Elmer, had while he was traveling in Italy. It is just after sundown that Elmer had this daydream. We will be able to regard it, however, as a nightdream because "unconscious day-dreams are ... just as much the source of night-dreams as neurotic symptoms."<sup>6)</sup> As a few researchers have already pointed out, Faulkner incorporated some of the description of this dream in EPILOGUE, Section 9 of *Mosquitoes*. The original dream description is made out

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5) The TSS. of *Elmer* in the Alderman Library of the University of Virginia have four kinds of opening pages which have respectively different titles. One of them is "Portrait of Elmer Hodge." But this is different from "A Portrait of Elmer" in *Uncollected Stories of William Faulkner* (Random House, 1979), which Blotner edited on the basis of the so-called Rowan Oak Papers in the custody of the University of Mississippi Library. The latter is a work written in and after 1930. See Linton R. Massey, *William Faulkner "Man Working," 1919-1962* (Charlottesville: The Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia, 1968), p. 69; James B. Meriwether, *The Literary Career of William Faulkner* (Columbia, S. C.: The University of South Carolina Press, 1972), pp. 13, 81.

The controversial Elmer's daydream is described, in the above typescripts, from #81 to #85 of the pages which were paginated by Faulkner himself. (William Faulkner Collection—Acc. No. 6074, University of Virginia Library. Quoted by permission of the executrix of the estate of William Faulkner.)

6) Sigmund Freud, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, Joan Riviere (tr.), (New York: PermaBooks, 1957), p. 382; Sigmund Freud, *Introduction à la Psychanalyse* (Paris: Petite Bibliothèque Payot, 1979), p. 351.

of more than eleven thousand words. Its essential part, which is three-fifth as long as the whole, is as follows:

... Three gray soft-footed priests had passed on, but in an interval hushed by windowless old walls there lingered of a beggar sleeping beside a high stone gate. Unreproved they swarm about his motionless shape exploring his clothing in an obscene silence, dragging their hot bellies over his lean and age-chilled body sniffing his intimate parts.

Torches approach smoking circles on the chill stars and he Elmer sees heralds in black and orange bearing sultry trumpets. The heralds pass on and three more priests bare-foot, in robes the color of silence appear from nowhere and speed after them, sulking: the walls hush away their gray and unshod feet. The rats are supercilious as cigarettes of poets at La Rotonde at six o'clock.

Then come six torchbearers bearing torches, and behind them six more antic as goats in flame-colored silk, but without torches. Then a young naked boy whose skin has been daubed with vermilion passes carrying casually a crown: behind him a girl with straight hair neither brown nor gold, in an ungirdled amythest (sic) robe bears a broken two handed sword. There is a slender bright chain between her ankles that makes a faint ceaseless golden sound as she walks. She passes on.

An elephant like a snow bank looming bears in a brass howdah the naked headless body of a black woman: she is rigid, her limbs are as beautiful as if carved from ebony and eight black slaves bear her head in an open ivory litter. Then six more torchbearers smoke-blackened and patient. They pass on: the windowless walls hush their footsteps away, measured into silence. The beggar sleeping shapes yet his stolen crust; the rats are like a row of curious cigarettes. The silence fades. Then more torches like rings of flame with breasts of virgins shortening among the rings, and in the midst of women white and sorrowful, clad briefly in skins and chained one to another among which flame-clad pages neither

boy nor girl and pages in blue and green leap like salamanders, there passes a white ass on which in a glass coffin lies a young man; and as the procession passes windows open like eyes in the blind walls and young girls leaning their soft breasts on the window-sills cast violets upon him; and shadows and echoes and perfumes swirling upward slow as smoke gain form changing, becoming a woman slender as a taper with raised joined hands, taut and proud, fierce and young and sorrowful; and a young rosy child is also in the cloud ere the shadows and echoes and perfumes whirl away.

Then three more priests in sleep-colored robes pass. When they see the beggar, he (the beggar) lies motionless beneath the stone gate above which a girl leaned recently flinging violets: he yet shapes his empty hand to his stolen crust. Then one of the priests becoming bold, leans closer yet and slips his hand beneath the beggar's sorry robe, against his heart. It is cold.

The three priests cross themselves while the nuns of silence blend a new their breath, and pass on: soon the high windowless walls have hushed away their thin celibate despair. Spring was shrill and cold as pipes to which the first doomed immortals lemon-robed, forewarned by death and derided, but anguished still for breath, beneath a thin and bitter moon, between shivering tipsy trees, danced wild and passionate and sad ...

It is said that dream interpretation requires the associations of the dreamer as an important method to that end and, moreover, that the dreamer's experiences just before he had a dream also provide a clue to the interpretation. However, Freud notices that the interpretative activity will be independent of the associations if the dream-content symbolizes something else—in other words, if the dreamer has employed symbolic elements in the content of the dream: dreams of such kind, he explains, are those which everyone dreams alike and which we are accustomed to assume must have the same meaning for everyone and, therefore, which presumably arise from the same sources in every case. 7)

Freud furthermore states that most of the artificial dreams constructed by imaginative writers are designed for a symbolic interpretation of this sort and that they are perfectly correctly constructed and can be interpreted just as though they have not been invented but have been dreamt by real people.<sup>8)</sup> Bearing this opinion of Freud's in mind, how then shall we interpret Elmer's above-mentioned dream? Since, as Freud admits, there are some difficulties in interpreting symbols in a dream even when the analyst does his analytic work vis-à-vis with the dreamer, it will be unavoidable that uncertainties attach more to interpreting a dream contained in a literary work. Taking this matter into consideration, I will make a list of some symbols which are among symbolic elements in Elmer's dream-content and which, at the same time, appear to correspond to the dream-symbols Freud illustrated in his books. (Accounts in parentheses in each of the following paragraphs contain stock interpretations by Freud.<sup>9)</sup>)

1. Windowless walls: (*Smooth walls* correspond to human bodies—men.) However, it may be more appropriate here to think this symbol stands for 'a female body with which the dreamer has had no sexual relations yet' in connection with the two symbols—"a gate" and "opened windows"—which appear later in the dream.
2. Hills: (*Mountains* and *rocks* are symbols of the male organ.); (A 'hill' represents the mons veneris.)
3. Three priests: (The number 'three' has been confirmed as a symbol of the male genitals.)
4. Rats: (*Mice* represent the genitals—especially the public hair.)
5. A high stone gate: (*Windows, doors* and *gates* mean the uterus or the opening of the body.)
6. Torches, trumpets, cigarettes: (All elongated objects or other objects which are capable of elongation stand for the male genitals.)

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7) See *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 274.

8) *Ibid.*, p. 139.

9) Henceforth, as to Freud's interpretations, see the following parts of the above noted English and French editions of his works, except ones clearly particularized by other notes. *The Interpretation of Dreams*, pp. 389-402; *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, pp. 161-66; *Introduction à la Psychanalyse*, pp. 138-44.

7. A naked boy carrying a crown: (A 'hat' is a symbol of a man or of male genitals.), (*Children* in dreams stand for the genitals.)
8. A broken sword: (*Daggers* and *sabres* symbolize the penis.), (A *broken* candle means that the man is impotent.<sup>10)</sup>)
9. A elephant bears the headless body of a black woman: (*Decapitation* represents castration.), (*Wild beasts* represent passionate impulses of which the dreamer is afraid, whether they are his own or those of other people.<sup>11)</sup>)
10. [The black woman's] head in an open litter: It is possible to interpret the black woman's "head" as the castrated male genitalia in connection with the Paragraph 9. ([A man] *carrying his head on a plate* is a dream of castration.), (*Vessels* of all kinds represent the uterus.)
11. Flame-clad pages neither boy nor girl: (*Flames* symbolize the male genitalia.<sup>12)</sup>), (*Clothes* and *uniform* represent nakedness.), (*Children* stand for the genitals.)
12. In a glass coffin lies a young man: (*Boxes* and *chests* represent the uterus.)
13. Young girls cast violets: (*Buds* and *flowers* represent the female genitalia, more particularly, in virginity.), ('Violet' alludes to 'violate', and it refers to the violence of defloration. 'The gift of flowers' connotes making a gift of the virginity of a woman.<sup>13)</sup>)
14. Windows open: (*Windows* stand for the entrances to cavities in the body.)
15. A young rosy child is in the cloud: (*Children* stand for the genitals.), (Dreams of *flying* or *floating* refer to general sexual excitement.)

Moreover, according to Freud's opinion, various colors will be associated with color impressions from the events the dreamer experienced

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10) *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 220.

11) *Ibid.*, p. 445.

12) *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, p. 170; *Introduction à la Psychanalyse*, p. 147.

13) *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 410.

recently. *Priests*<sup>14)</sup> and the number *six* will also, I assume, have respectively some grounds for appearing in the dream. I have no basis upon which to define the meanings of those symbols here. Nevertheless, looking at the interpretation of symbols in the above Paragraphs 1-15, I notice instantly that two-thirds of the examples are connected with the male genitals.

Does this suggest that the dreamer, Elmer, has an inclination toward homosexuality? As aforesaid, the dreamer's experiences immediately prior to a dream provide a significant clue to interpret the dream. We are thus required to ascertain in what state Elmer was before having that daydream.

According to Faulkner's description, Elmer at that time was steeping himself in the voluptuous atmosphere of Venice: Walls of hushed pink and yellow and lavender—hushed shades of color blending like tuned instruments beneath an intimate afternoon in a Leda-esque languor (We may be able to find the source of colors in the dream here in this depiction.) —a magnificent dinner and liquor; a woman of a soiled exciting smell who gives herself to a man for payment.

From the above description no one will likely find anything suggesting homosexuality. Meanwhile, David Minter, taking up a depiction in *Elmer*—feeling his tubes of paint, Elmer thinks of them as “thick bodied and female and at the same time phallic”—maintains that inside Elmer there was a latent but furious flame of a bisexual desire which he had fostered while devoting his affection on his boyish and slim-bodied sister, Jo-Addie.<sup>15)</sup> However, if Elmer is regarded as

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14) Brooks says that “priests (on their gray feet)” is one of Faulkner's obsessive images (see Brooks, p. 28). During his New Orleans stay in 1925, Faulkner wrote a series of short stories for the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*. “The Priest” is among them, and it describes a young priest who vainly tries to overcome the appetites and hunger of his blood and flesh by a fervent prayer, only to suffer from the irresistible gnawing of flesh on a street corner in New Orleans at dusk. And it also seems suggestive that the word “tobacco” is brought forth in a casual manner at the last part of this story. *Uncollected Stories of William Faulkner*, Joseph Blotner (ed.), (New York: Random House, 1979), pp. 348-51.

15) Minter, pp. 57-58.

bisexual on the basis of this alone, it must be said that Minter's assertion rests on slender authority. I will refer to this problem again below.

Elmer's dream has colorful and at the same time somber tones like an old mandala, but nothing in the dream can be found to be related to abnormal love. Perhaps, it would be possible to think of two reasons for the someberness of the dream if we take events before Elmer had that dream into consideration. One is Elmer's self-consciousness about the lack of his sexual ability which he felt when he was about to have relations with a woman. In fact, Freud says: "If one of the ordinary symbols for a penis occurs in a dream doubled or multiplied, it is to be regarded as a warding-off of castration."<sup>16)</sup>

The other reason for it may be that the somberness appeared as a representation of Elmer's guilty conscience—of an inclination toward castration for self-punishment: Elmer has basically a "fierce proud Dianalike... and impregnably virginal" girl as an ideal, and in reality he was attached, at that time, to two girls—Ethel whom he thought of as approximating his ideal and Myrtle who was "like a star, clean and unattainable." Conceiving this kind of love, yet Elmer has yielded to the temptation of sensuality and is now going to give way to his carnal appetites.

I presume that the two above-mentioned conjectures must have both been true as regards Elmer. In order to explain this, however, I will begin by presenting the following episode, which is told in Book I, Chapter I, Section I of *Elmer* (TS., pp. 31-33): Elmer was a boy of fourteen. He was in admiration of an older boy, tall and beautiful as a young god. Worshipping but not daring to approach the deity, Elmer could not face him when passing him on the street. Elmer's 'god,' arrogant with physical pride, surrounded by satellites whom he maltreated at will, often tripped someone in his path on the playground, forcing him to the ground. One day Elmer was tripped by that boy; he knew for the first time and the last time the god's touch and his very willingness to be overthrown made his fall the harder. The boy yelled "Fini! Fini!"—a term of opprobrium and ridicule which was current on the playground—and ran away. Then Elmer exploded in self-scorn

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16) *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 392.

"Fool," though there was no one to hear him.

Minter tries to see a representation of Elmer's bisexuality in the above episode. It is worthy of note, however, that Erich Fromm used, in his psychoanalysis through the interpretation of dreams, much the same illustration as young Elmer's experiences described by Faulkner.<sup>17)</sup> Fromm's illustration is as follows:

Yes, when I [Patient] was fourteen or fifteen I was rather shy. ... I liked one of the tough kids very much and wanted to become his friend. We had hardly talked with each other, but I hoped that he would like me, too, if we would get better acquainted. One day—and it took a lot of courage—I approached him and asked him whether he would not like to come to my house; that I had a microscope and could show him a lot of interesting things. He looked at me for a moment, then he suddenly started to laugh and laugh and laugh. "You sissy, why don't you invite some of your sisters' little friends?" I turned away, chocking with tears.

This patient is suffering from an unconscious inferiority complex in real life. One day he has a dream that he was riding on a charger, reviewing a large number of soldiers who cheered him wildly. Fromm explains about this dream that a feeling of defeat and powerlessness, which this patient has unconsciously possessed since his childhood and which is still so remarkable he feels that no girl can be interested in him, worked to make him have a fantasy of fame and power, with an event during the preceding day as the momentum. If it is so, whether or not young Elmer's episode took root in Faulkner's own experiences (if it is completely the fruit of Faulkner's imagination, we will find here another illustration of the power of Faulkner's imagination, which seems to anticipate the realities of life), we may learn that Elmer's

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17) See Erich Fromm, *The Forgotten Language: An Introduction to the Understanding of Dreams, Fairy Tales and Myths* (N. Y.: Grove Press, Inc., 1951) pp. 150-56. As to the episode of the patient's boyhood, see p. 51.

devotion to a physically beautiful boy was also not homosexual nor bisexual in nature, but adoration which was a transformation of his feeling of inferiority in regard to physical endowments; that Elmer's anxiety about impotence, which can be traced back to his childhood, took the form of that dream of a warding-off of castration or an opposition to impotence under impetus from an event that he became intimate with a demimondaine.

When some parts of Elmer's dream were used in *Mosquitoes*, the following paragraph was newly produced to add to them:

*Then voices and sounds, shadows and echoes change from swirling, becoming the headless, armless, legless torso of a girl, motionless and virginal and passionately eternal before the shadows and echoes whirl away.*<sup>18)</sup>

This is added after the description that "A door opened in the wall," (it will not be inappropriate to recall here once again the above-mentioned Freudian interpretation of dream-symbolism) and Gordon lifting a woman entered a brothel smothering her squeal against his tall kiss. As Brooks points out,<sup>19)</sup> it is obvious that Faulkner here is urging the contrast between a woman to relieve Gordon's carnal desire and the woman who represents his ideal love. By keeping our eyes on this face, we can consider EPILOGUE, Section 9 a distressful record of Gordon's spirit suffering from his self-reproachful feelings caused by his own discrepancy of having connection with women only to appease his sexual desires despite his enshrining a girl "passionate and simple and eternal in the equivocal derisive darkness of the world"<sup>20)</sup> as an ideal in his heart.

To restate the idea, we are able to see that the symbols in Elmer's dream stand for an inferiority complex toward his body and a self-punishment for his easy wish-fulfillment—not only either the former or the latter, but both of them at once. From what sources then did

18) William Faulkner, *Mosquitoes* (New York: Liveright, 1955), p. 339.

19) Brooks, p. 136.

20) *Mosquitoes*, p. 11.

Faulkner derive Elmer's dream-symbolism—namely, Faulkner's own images?

As Freud writes, these symbols must have been first derived "from fairy tales and myths, jokes and witticisms, from folklore, i. e. from what we know of the manners and customs, saying and songs, of different peoples, and from poetic and colloquial usage of language."<sup>21)</sup> Along with those sources, however, it will be necessary to consider Faulkner's own experiences in his childhood which must be closely connected with those sources somewhere in the deep recesses of his mind. As mentioned above, psychoanalysis asserts that a literary man has memories of far-off days which are very significant to his life in spite of his lapse of them, and that those memories can emerge from his unconscious only by taking the form of images in his works. In Freud's way, that assertion will be expressed as "It is impossible for me to think of a number arbitrarily: the number that occurs to me will be unambiguously and necessarily determined by thoughts of mine."<sup>22)</sup> There is indeed no gainsaying that the world of literary images is rooted more or less in each writer's childhood.

Some of the images Faulkner used in "Elmer's dream" actually appear in his early works repeatedly, and this well indicates that those images took root deep inside Faulkner.

I will take poem XX in Faulkner's second published book of verse *A Green Bough* as another example. This poem (which, according to Blotner, was originally entitled "Orpheus" in a collection of typed poems *Vision in Spring* that was a personal gift to Estelle Franklin in 1921<sup>23)</sup>) seems to express a man's afterthought of his vanished beloved. The third stanza of the poem is as follows:

Here he stands, without the gate of stone  
Between two walls with silence on them grown,  
And littered leaves of silence on the floor;

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21) *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, p. 166; *Introduction à la Psychanalyse*, p. 144.

22) *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 553.

23) Henceforth, on all matters connected with *Vision in Spring*, see Joseph Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 1974), pp. 307-11.

Here, in a solemn silver of ruined springs  
 Among the smooth buds, before the door  
 He stands and sings.

Comparing at least "gate," "wall," "bud," "door" etc. in this stanza with the aforementioned Freudian interpretations of dream-symbols and then viewing the whole of the poem, we become aware that this man's reminiscence is tinged with a strong erotic quality.

I will go further forward and investigate, through the typescripts held in the Faulkner Foundation Collection of the University of Virginia Library, the original version of a poem which was entitled "Marriage" in *Vision in Spring* before it was reworked and became *A Green Bough II*. The original poem depicts a man sitting by firelight, watching a woman for whom he yearns playing the piano (or rather, it might be more appropriate if we imagine him to be watching her 'in a vision' running her fingers over the keys of a piano), and when the music ceases he gazes after her—or probably, envisions her mounting the stair-way with her subtle suppleness, feeling "his brain disintegrate, spark by spark." If we interpret, in reference to Freud's dream-symbolism, images in this poem—especiall those in some lines, such as "Laxly reclining, he sees her sitting there/ With *firelight* like a hand upon her hair,/ With firelight like a hand upon the *keys*/ Playing a music of lustrous silent gold," "It is as though he watched her *mount a stair*/ And rose with her on the suppleness of her knees" and "A bursting *moon*: wheels whirl in his brain./ She plays, and softly playing, sees the *room*/ Dissolve, and like a dream the dim *walls* fade/And sink, while music softly played/ Softly flows through lilac-scented gloom" (italics mine), we will be able to clearly see young Faulkner writhing, as if him to join another man and who is now perhaps in the other's arms without him to join another man who is now perhaps in the other's arms without scruple under the pretext of "marriage." According to Freud, walking up and down ladders or staircases in dreams stands for copulation—the keyboard itself is a staircase<sup>24)</sup>—playing the piano indicates sexual gratification; rooms represent the uterus,<sup>25)</sup> and the moon, as I describe

24) *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 406.

25) *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, p. 171; *Introduction à*

in detail later, is the buttocks or thighs.<sup>26)</sup>

In 1924 Faulkner gave a typed sheaf of twelve poems collectively entitled *Mississippi Poems*—of which eight were published in *A Green Bough* in 1933—to a long-time friend, Myrtle Ramey.<sup>27)</sup> Of those twelve, a poem titled “Pregnancy” which became XXIX of *A Green Bough* also is interspersed with the same kinds of images. It is said that Faulkner would tell Mrs. Sherwood Anderson a fabrication that he had left a girl and illegitimate child in Oxford,<sup>28)</sup> just as Elmer in *Elmer* nourished a fantasy that Ethel had his baby. I presume that Faulkner might have written “Pregnancy” by thinking of Estelle as he must have done while writing “Marriage.”

As to ancient music's hidden fall  
Her seed in the huddled dark was warm and wet,  
And three cold stars were riven in the wall:  
Rain and fire and death above her door were set.

Her hands moaned on her breast in blind and supple fire,  
Made light within her cave; ...<sup>29)</sup>

The “wall” appears again. A “cave” as a hollow object represents the uterus as well as the aforementioned cases, vessels. And it is note-

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*la Psychanalyse*, p. 148.

26) After this, “Marriage” takes the form of the intermediate typescripts which are now contained in the Rowan Oak Papers, and in *A Green Bough*—its final form—some verses are added, such as “As through a corridor rushing with harsh rain/ He walks his life, and reaching the end/ He turns it as one turns a wall” or “She is a flower lightly cast/ Upon a river flowing.” As for dream-symbolism, a corridor—namely, a narrow passage—stands for the vagina, and as already stated, a cast flower connotes surrendering virginity: it is certain that this poem has been reinforced in terms of images, too. See *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 433; *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, p. 170; *Introduction à la Psychanalyse*, p. 147.

27) Joseph Blotner, “Introduction,” in William Faulkner, *Helen: A Courtship and Mississippi Poems*, pp. 135, 141–44.

28) Wittenberg, p. 41; Minter, p. 47.

29) *Helen: A Courtship and Mississippi Poems*, p. 161.

worthy that dreams of falling can symbolize a surrender to an erotic temptation.<sup>30)</sup> "Music" connected with a "lyre" and a "song" in the succeeding stanzas naturally involves rhythm, and a series of rhythmical movements stands in general for the sexual act. Thus—even if the atmosphere the whole of "Pregnancy" produces, as Blotner points out,<sup>31)</sup> must be lacking in happiness, insofar as we consider the above-quoted lines at least, the poet seems to gaze at a rather sensual love which he well knows will bring forth the fact of pregnancy.

While living in New Orleans for a time in 1925, Faulkner fell in love with Helen Baird and a little later he made her a gift of handwritten book of sixteen poems titled *Helen: A Courtship*, conveying his feelings for her in verse. Reading through the book, we are able to easily find the above-mentioned Freudian symbols in each of those sixteen poems, too.

As the assertor of Faulkner's possessing adequate knowledge about Freud that he is, Collins seems to be sensitive to the meanings of images in those poems. While Minter relates Faulkner's "moons" with women's "periodical filth"—menstruation,<sup>32)</sup> Collins points out that Faulkner meant the "moons" to be in apposition with "hips" or "thighs," citing the lines in *Helen* V: "That hive her honeyed hips like little moons./ These slender moons' unsunder I would break."<sup>33)</sup> Indeed, we can remember here Freud's explanation of the moon in a certain dream: the pale "moon" is a symbol of the white "bottom."<sup>34)</sup>

Moreover, some of the familiar images are found for example in sonnet XII, the thirteenth poem of the above book, too. I will cite several lines from stanzas 3 and 4:<sup>35)</sup>

Life is bony structure, breath is flesh,  
Love's the fire to harden and renew;  
Farewell's a paper sword, and life in mesh

30) *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 430.

31) Blotner, in *Helen: A Courtship and Mississippi Poems*, p. 144.

32) Minter, p. 163.

33) Collins, in *Helen: A Courtship and Mississippi Poems*, pp. 61–62.  
This poem became XLIII of *A Green Bough*.

34) *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 436.

35) *Helen: A Courtship and Mississippi Poems*, p. 123.

Laughs the stroke away. And this is true:

The fuelled fire, fecund in her bed,  
 Contemplative, in close satiety  
 Shakes not her caverned walls while she is fed;

The strength of the cords of love will be the primary subject of this sonnet. But it is not a mere achromatic paeon of chaste love: viewing it from another angle, I believe the sonnet richly represents sensual love.

It is needless to say that these kinds of images do not only appear in those particular poems I have thus far taken up as examples, but are interspersed everywhere in *Helen* as well as in the aforementioned *Mississippi Poems*. And this is also true of *The Marble Faun* (published in 1924), which Faulkner seems to have written during April to June, 1919 with a mind to seeing Estelle, who was returning to Oxford to visit her parents. This poetry, the cycle of nineteen pastoral poems which clearly echoes Swinburne and Keats, has images of various shapes. Among them, those which appear frequently are images accompanied by the words "hill," "wall," "fall," "flame" and the like. Some examples will be shown by verses like "On every hill battalioned trees/ March skyward on unmoving knees"<sup>36)</sup> or "Still the blaring falls/ Crashing between my garden walls."<sup>37)</sup> And it will not be useless to point out that Collins has also referred to the significance of the words "fall" (related to hawks' sexual acts) and "flame" in Faulkner's poems;<sup>38)</sup> that "fire" as well as "water" is the word which appears most frequently in *Mayday*, one of Faulkner's early works which was also a gift to Helen several months before *Helen: A Courtship* was presented.

In addition, I would like to take notice of a scene of the procession of the Princess Aelia in *Mayday*—that procession Sir Galwyn

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36) William Faulkner, *The Marble Faun and A Green Bough* (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 29.

37) *Ibid.*, p. 47.

38) Collins, in *Helen: A Courtship and Mississippi Poems*. As to "fall" and "flame," see pp. 73-74 and p. 92 respectively.

encountered at dawn after he parted from the Princess Elys with whom he had shared the bed the night before.<sup>39)</sup> As depicted, it conspicuously resembles the one Elmer saw in his dream.

Furthermore, it seems to me that Faulkner's attachment to the word "bell" which Minter refers to<sup>40)</sup> also has a profound significance. To Faulkner, Helen Baird's name sounded "like a little golden bell hung on [his] heart." And therewith, we should be reminded that Faulkner sang the connection between the sound of bell and a dance of lovers as "A sound like some great deep bell stroke/ Falls, and they dance"<sup>41)</sup> in *The Marble Faun*, which is presumed to have been written in parallel with *L'Après-Midi d'un Faune* in 1919, with Faulkner cherishing the memory of Estelle.

*Dancing* is of course a representation of sexual intercourse, and *the sound of a bell* also will be understood, because of a sense of rhythm that the trailing notes of a bell involve, as being related to the sexual act—or rather, in this context, as the introduction to sexual intercourse.

These facts demonstrate that a group of images in Elmer's dream was not merely a collection of casual ideas appearing in that dream alone, but that many of those images continued to be animate within Faulkner, the artist of words, throughout his life; that they appeared again and again in his 1920s' works in both prose and verse—granting that we limit the discussion to only his works of that decade for argument's sake—to have a significant effect on their structure. In other words, the above investigation leads us to think that Faulkner had within him the images (rooted in the experiences of his childhood in spite of his being unconscious of it) whose significance would be revealed by Freudian interpretation of dream-symbols; that Faulkner's literary cosmos was constructed out of those cardinal images and their multiple variants.<sup>42)</sup>

39) *Mayday*, pp. 72–73.

40) Minter, p. 67.

41) See "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune," in *William Faulkner: Early Prose and Poetry*, Carvel Collins (ed.), (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1962), pp. 39–40.

42) The short story "Carcassonne," for example, has images of "rats,"

And if matters are as suggested above, we come to learn that Faulkner's own was, in truth, Elmer's mind we knew by analyzing the dream of this young man aspiring to be a painter—that is, an inclination to self-abasement and self-punishment, a stubborn conflict between desires and repression.

Most scholars share common ground in pointing out that *Elmer* is to a great extent autobiographical. But of course, I never intend to maintain the absurd proposition that we can identify the hero with his creator because of the work's autobiographical nature. I choose to place stress on the fact that through the analysis of images, Faulkner's reflection in Elmer is clearly shown.

It is now a matter of common knowledge that Faulkner liked boyish-bodied girls. That fact, however, by no means indicates that Faulkner had a homosexual or bisexual tendency. On the contrary, Faulkner's above-mentioned early works definitely reveal to us that he must have been sensitive to feminine allure and had very normal and, therefore, very "healthy" sexual appetites as regards women.

Furthermore, with exclusive regard to sexual attractiveness, I cannot avoid believing that Faulkner was also sensitive enough to the attractiveness of women as sound, rich and fecund as the earth—quite the opposite of boyish girls, just as "Faulkner" in *Mosquitoes* related to Jenny:<sup>43</sup> Faulkner would have been incapable of creating those female characters such as Belle in *Flags in the Dust* and *Sanctuary*, Lena in *Light in August*, and Eula in *The Town*, let alone the above Jenny, had he been insensitive to feminine sexual allure. However, one element of *The Town* has perhaps a profound significance in that Gavin Stevens restrained himself from becoming intimate with Eula, and broke off with her eventually; for it is not so hard to see in Stevens the reflection of the manner toward women of Faulkner, who was not insensitive to buxom girls' attractiveness but controlled himself to

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"caverns," "grottoes," "corridors," "gardens" and so forth: sex, in this work, seems to overlap with everlasting rest—that is, death. See "Carcassonne," in William Faulkner, *These Thirteen* (New York: Jonathan Cape & Harrison Smith, 1931), pp. 356, 358; (London: Chatto & Windus, 1968), pp. 269, 271.

43) See *Mosquitoes*, p. 145.

the utmost so as to avoid having relations with women of such allure. And supposing Faulkner was particularly restrained in his manner toward women of that sort, it would not be a great mistake to perceive that coming out of Faulkner's strong self-awareness of his poor physique with which he had been even incapable of defending himself in fights since childhood. Recent biographical studies often refer to how much Faulkner strived to mask his boyish face, which made him appear like an adolescent even at the age of thirty, and his smallish stature.<sup>44)</sup> As such outward gilding was done to compensate for his inferiority complex about his physique, so that well-known fiction that he joined the Canadian Air Force and suffered an injury also might have been created to offer a somewhat exciting topic to the people of his hometown. Ostentation is among the characteristics common to youth, but in Faulkner's case it appears excessive. Does it not mean that Faulkner was compelled to be particularly conscious of his small build when standing face to face with a woman? It is only reasonable to recall here that in Elmer's dream many images representing male genitals connoted resistance or protestation against castration. A woman researcher says; After Estelle's divorcing Cornell Franklin, Faulkner's long-cherished desire of marrying Estelle was going to be fulfilled; though, as the wedding approached Faulkner may have come to have fears about the sexual aspect of married life.<sup>45)</sup> As far as this matter alone is concerned, her assumption might be close to the truth.

Apart from Estelle, in case a woman appeared whose rich, buxom body was her most attractive asset, Faulkner when facing her seems to have been conscious of his poor physique and felt himself 'castrated' more strongly than in any other instance. For example, one of the major subjects of *Mayday* is disappointment in love—frankly speaking, the emphasis that sexual relations with any woman in this world bring nothing but disappointment. But such an assertion seems psychoanalytically to be a turning-over of the fear that he may disappoint his woman's expectations at the time of sexual intercourse—"distortion" in a technical term. As this awareness had its roots sunken deep inside him, Faulkner presumably came to hate mere sexual contacts with women, mere

44) Wittenberg, pp. 27-28; Minter, pp. 31-34.

45) Wittenberg, p. 91.

carnal knowledge—at least he must have become unable to satisfy his sensual appetites as coolly as ordinary young men.<sup>46)</sup>

Subsequently, two characteristic tendencies of Faulkner's were derived from that antisensuality, as it were: one being a stern and moral attitude toward sex; the other the adoration of virginity—namely, a romantic longing for eternally immaculate girls.

The former will clearly be illustrated by a letter Faulkner at the age of twenty-eight wrote his mother from Paris in 1925, for example. Watching his countrymen running around Paris in search of voluptuous pleasure, Faulkner reflects in this letter about an America spoiled by sex. And of course he cannot have written this stressing himself as a well-behaved son in hopes of receiving his mother's praise. Moreover, as an example of the strong self-restraint which the young Faulkner imposed on himself we can take his words in the typescript of "Verse, Old and Nascent: A Pilgrimage" presented to Myrtle Ramey toward the end of 1924, at an earlier time than that of the above letter.<sup>47)</sup> In that essay, Faulkner stated that it was Housman's stoicism—"the splendor of fortitude" of Housman's<sup>48)</sup>—that most impressed him.

Meanwhile, as for Faulkner's romantic longing for immaculate girls with no sexual desires—or at least, with the autosuggestion of being released from sensuality—we can gauge it fully through his letters addressed to Joan Williams,<sup>49)</sup> for instance. Even through those published and rather fragmentary letters, it is easy to see Faulkner's straightforward affection for Joan, which is intertwined with his zeal to make an established writer of her.

And from the above observations, the reason for Faulkner's liking "boyish, slender-bodied girls" becomes clear to some extent. Was it not that Faulkner first felt drawn (perhaps by psychological reaction) to girls who were the opposite of rich, buxom women—bodies he could face with no feeling of impotence—more frankly, physique wanting in sexual attractiveness; and that that inclination gradually became firm as if it

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46) *Selected Letters of William Faulkner*, Joseph Blotner (ed.), (New York: Random House, 1977), p. 24.

47) Blotner, in *Helen: A Courtship and Mississippi Poems*, p. 135.

48) See *Ibid.*, p. 165; *Early Prose and Poetry*, p. 117.

49) *Selected Letters of William Faulkner*, pp. 297–360 passim.

had been inborn?

Of course there is no accounting for tastes, as people say. Moreover, the problem may as a matter of fact have been of a simple nature: it is not necessarily unthinkable that Faulkner was merely influenced by the popular fashion in the 1920s—people's preference for boyish girls—as Brooks says.<sup>50)</sup> When one analyzes Faulkner's images, however, one cannot restrain oneself from thinking that Faulkner was suffering from a feeling of powerlessness toward women. Emphasizing excessively Faulkner's feeling of estrangement from his father, along with his mother's strong character which was close to coldheartedness, Judith B. Wittenberg asserts that because of the influence of this home environment in childhood Faulkner came to be troubled by mental impotence at the later stage of his life.<sup>51)</sup> But the cause of a feeling of powerlessness Faulkner truly suffered from cannot be fully clarified by intentionally emphasizing one aspect of Faulkner's surroundings in order to make the problem expediently compatible with Freudian theory: it must be understood that his sense of powerlessness derived from a feeling of inferiority which was much more deeply rooted inside him.

Regardless of being troubled by impotence or living in a romantic manner, however, sexual appetites do well up inside any adult so far as he has a live and healthy body. In respect of revealing one side of Faulkner's character, the story will be true that he visited a brothel in Memphis merely for the liquor sold there in Prohibition times, but not for engaging prostitutes.<sup>52)</sup> But another account that "it was at about the time of his late teens that Faulkner seems to have begun to visit prostitutes in Memphis"<sup>53)</sup> must have also some truth which cannot be necessarily put aside as his brother's irresponsible, affected joke.

Needless to say, it is not important whether Faulkner employed prostitutes or not. What I wish to say is that no one could doubt that despite his self-imposed moral restraint, Faulkner would have been

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50) Brooks, p. 120. However, Théophile Gautier's influence on Faulkner's early novels is Brooks's most emphatic point here.

51) Wittenberg, pp. 20–29.

52) Collins, in *Helen: A Courtship and Mississippi Poems*, p. 64.

53) See Wittenberg, p. 29.

tortured with sexual desires welling up from within his body—reminding us forthright of that “Marble Faun” who sorrowed over his fate to be a bound prisoner and ardently longed for freedom and liberty.

And it can readily be imagined how bitterly Faulkner, the young man who was a great admirer of Housman and controlled himself more sternly than did any other young man, accused himself if he fulfilled his desires under the impulse of momentary passion. To put it strongly, it might almost have been something close to self-liquidation. Psychoanalysis will explain such an attitude as “[With regard to] a stubborn conflict between libidinal desires and sexual repression, between sensual and ascetic tendencies,...if [victory were made] possible to the sensual side, the disregarded forces repressing sexuality would have to indemnify themselves by symptoms.”<sup>54)</sup> From here, conjecture is also possible that Faulkner’s notorious inebriation which lasted for several days may have been a representation of a cruel punishment upon himself when defeated by his inner weakness.

As reasons for Faulkner’s drinking habit, some have adduced that heavy drinkers can be found among his forebears, that Faulkner himself was accustomed to drinking from his childhood, and the like. These accounts, however, throw almost no light on the matter. What is important is to have insight into Faulkner’s drinking habit by connecting it with his fundamental attitude toward life beyond a mere outward appearance of the fact. Viewing this problem from that standpoint, therefore, one would be able to think that Faulkner’s drunkenness meant ‘dying once in order to start his life afresh’—namely, death for the purpose of regenerating. Indeed no one can forget the fact that the problem of “sex and death (aiming at regeneration)” was a major one Faulkner pursued through all his life as a writer.<sup>55)</sup>

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54) *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, p. 440; *Introduction à la Psychanalyse*, p. 410.

55) As to Quentin’s and Sir Galwyn’s suicides by respectively throwing themselves into rivers, Freudian psychology will make the following interpretation possible: water has something to do with *birth* and a dream of falling into water symbolizes the relation between mother and child. Therefore, it is possible to understand ‘suicide by throwing oneself into the water’ to be ‘return to the origin of life’—namely, to be a wish for regeneration. See *A General Intro-*

Faulkner, a great writer who created Thomas Sutpen along with representing Dilsey and Flem Snopes, of course perceived to the utmost the reality of life—that is, human beings' goodness and badness, their strength and weakness. And this no doubt means that he was extremely aware of his own human weakness.

Despite a stern morality underlying his literature, no one calls Faulkner a moralist, if this word is used in an ordinary sense. Rather, we say that Faulkner was a man who took up his position opposite the bigoted moralists. But, at the same time, we must acknowledge that he was a writer who continued to show us how human beings should live in this muddy world. Without doubt, at the root of his morality—or rather, of his thought—was a deep awareness about the existence of man—in Ray West's terms, a recognition of the significance of evil in this world, which is in the tradition of Hawthorne and Melville.<sup>56)</sup> And it is also true that only persons who recognize life to be by no means monotonal and are conscious of the ugliness and weakness of man directly confronting them can understand the true significance of evil.

In Faulkner's case, not just his frustration but also his glory were probably founded on the human weakness inside himself—or rather, on the consciousness of that weakness. A man who gazed at his own weakness and conflicted with it unflinchingly whether he was defeated or not—that precisely was Faulkner.

In the meantime, to those who make attempts at disturbing his privacy he gives a refusal so flat that it appears extraordinary even when one accepts Faulkner's belief that "a writer's works are in the public domain, but his private life is his own."

There is no immediate connection between Faulkner's two attitudes noted above, but his fight against himself must have been a truly solitary one, and therefore so hard that it firmly rejected others' unnecessary curiosity about his private life. Faulkner, I believe, continued to struggle with his own weakness through life and ended by carrying the weakness—without exposing it to the public inspection—into his

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*duction to Psychoanalysis*, p. 160; *Introduction à la Psychanalyse*, p. 138.

56) Ray B. West, Jr., *The Short Story in America 1900–1950* (New York: Freeport, Books for Libraries Press, 1968), pp. 18, 19.

grave along with his own dead body. It appears to me that the following paragraph<sup>57)</sup> written by Faulkner but not known to the public before his death is very suggestive:

... that dumb spark of the universal truth which each man carries inside the slowly hardening shell of his secret breath, into a solitary grave.

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57) The typescript of the Original Version of *Sanctuary*, p. 80; *Sanctuary: The Original Text*, Noel Polk (ed.), (New York: Random House, 1981), p. 66.