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Nicole J. Camastra

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NICOLE J. CAMASTRA
University of Georgia

“Waters of the Fountain Salmacis”: Metamorphosis and the Ovidian Subtext in William Faulkner’s *Sanctuary*

WILLIAM FAULKNER’S *SANCTUARY* STRONGLY ALLUDES TO OVID’S *THE Metamorphoses*, primarily through the myth of Narcissus. Horace sees both his and Popeye’s reflections in the opening scene; Popeye obsesses about his hair, asking the sheriff to “fix” it just before he hangs for murder; and Temple’s “painted” face repeatedly stares back at her from a compact mirror. Elements of the Narcissus myth help to establish the themes of self-love and self-loathing that course through the novel.¹ But the violent shift from innocence to knowledge experienced by Temple Drake and the center of the novel’s concern with evil and violable sanctuary are more concretely rooted in the darker tale of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus. Focusing on sexual and epistemological transformation, Ovid writes of a young man and a nymph forever fused into one being, “nor boy nor girl, / Neither yet both within a single body” (122). The girl, Salmacis, seems culpable since she articulates her mad desire to make love to the boy; but Hermaphroditus, “half innocent of love” (121), coyly dismisses the girl’s assertive sexual overtures, encouraging her even more. After a violent struggle in a “tempting pool” (120) of water, the gods join the two irrevocably, granting the pool its “weird magic.” Both figures succumb to impulses they only partially understand, and their own agency seems subordinate to that of the “fountained pool” (122) that devours them both.

The tale of Salmacis and others in *The Metamorphoses* indulge Ovid’s fascination with the psychology of love and sex, and his consistent placing of “natural law above decorum” (Gregory xviii), as in his *Art of Love* along with *The Metamorphoses*, precipitated his exile. As a story teller, Ovid aimed to vivify, not judge, the human condition. The

¹See John T. Irwin’s discussion of the Narcissus myth and Horace Benbow in both *Sanctuary* and *Flags in the Dust*.

radical changes the characters experience in *The Metamorphoses* remind us that “they live and act within a world of irrational desires which are as vivid to them as things that happen in a dream” (Gregory xi). In *Sanctuary*, Horace and Temple wrestle with irrational and irreconcilable desires in a dark, dream-like world “filled with all the nightmare shapes” (222). They both court metamorphosis as a means to deal with sexual and sensual forces they neither consciously welcome nor completely understand. Horace and Temple remain “half innocent of love” and the Salmacis myth resonates with both of them.² Ovidian hermaphroditism, the shifts in identity resulting from natural impulses rather than moral consequences, figures prominently in the revised version of *Sanctuary*. Since the original text of the novel focuses mostly on Horace’s story, the female element of the Ovidian androgyne seems poorly represented and, therefore, unconvincing.³ In contrast, the revised text puts equal implicit weight on Temple’s drama and provides more depth to the violent metamorphosis they both experience. More importantly, good evidence exists that Faulkner’s idea for the novel originated with a vision of Temple Drake and her father in the Luxembourg Gardens, facing a fountain (316). Faulkner’s early conception of what would become the final scene in both texts not only

²In *Faulkner’s Olympian Laugh*, Walter Brylowski reads some of Faulkner’s work as indebted to Ovid, though he never exhibits definitive proof of Faulkner’s having read the Roman poet (45-47). The likelihood of Faulkner’s acquaintance with *The Metamorphoses* is pretty high, given his statements concerning another classic author during one of his class conferences at the University of Virginia in 1957: “Well, I’m sure if I ever read Vergil [sic]—I can’t remember whether I did or not—I’d have stolen from him too for the reason that the writer is influenced by everything he ever read” (*University* 150). Incidentally, a 1956 edition of Virgil is listed as a component of his library (Blotner, *Library* 80). More importantly, Joseph Blotner’s introduction to *William Faulkner’s Library* reminds us that “one should remember that he obviously read many books—throughout his life but particularly during his literary apprenticeship—of which this catalogue gives no indication” (8). Faulkner’s “apprenticeship” is precisely the era during which he composed *Sanctuary*.

³This essay does not seek to compare the original and revised texts, but citations from both are juxtaposed more than once in order to show that Faulkner worked with and tempered allusions to the Salmacis myth throughout the composition of *Sanctuary*.

portends Temple's weightier presence in the revised version, but it also suggests that Ovidian waters nourish the allusive depth of *Sanctuary*.⁴

Water evokes pernicious desire in Ovid's myth. It is the fountain of Salmacis and not its namesake that has "earned an evil name" (Ovid 120). Similarly, spring imagery provides a primary key to the Ovidian subtext in *Sanctuary*. In the introductory scene of the novel, Horace and Popeye meet at a spring and are first acquainted through their reflections in the water. John T. Irwin sees this as decidedly Narcissistic imagery: "the presence of both images on the mirroring surface codes Horace and Popeye as mirror images of one another, as antithetical doubles" (545). Noel Polk also sees the two men as very much alike through the lens of Narcissus: "if Popeye is a mirror image of Horace, it is very significant that Horace drinks from the Narcissus-spring, and Popeye spits in it" ("Afterword" 304). The opening scene certainly establishes a binary relationship between the two men. Faulkner's "interest in doubling and twinship, in mirror images" (Irwin 545) and in the inherent implications of Narcissus's myth proved more favorable to him than the opening he wrote for the original text of *Sanctuary*, which depicts the black

⁴The underpinning of hermaphroditism is neither coincidental nor incidental in *Sanctuary*, and its presence signals Faulkner's creative experimentation with it. I am indebted to H. R. Stoneback's discussion of androgyny in Faulkner and Hemingway, which served as a springboard for this essay when it noted that "From 1920 on, Faulkner manifests in his early poetry and fiction his fascination with hermaphroditism, with the epicene figure." This "fascination" can be traced over a decade in the fictive vision of both *Mosquitoes* (1927) and *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem* (1939) and in his poem "Hermaphroditus," published in *A Green Bough* (1933) (Stoneback). Lisa Rado believes that Faulkner's "narratives" from this period are "filled with references to androgynous men and women" and that they continually return to "subjects like hermaphroditism" (14). Regarding *Sanctuary* specifically, Noel Polk argues that, in connection with the influence of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* on the novel, Horace "is the Tiresias figure . . . the hermaphroditic, the sexless" (*Children* 47-48). Faulkner's early abortive novel, *Elmer*, also contains strong evidence of his obsession with androgyny and, indirectly, the Ovidian myth. The clear "celebration of androgyny and of the epicene girl" in *Elmer* derives from what Cleanth Brooks identifies as a major influence on the novel: Theophile Gautier's *Mlle. De Maupin* (122). Gautier's protagonist considers the "nature of hermaphroditic beauty" and notices that his beloved, who is dressed as a man, "has preserved . . . more of Salmacis than did the Hermaphroditus of the *Metamorphoses*" (124). For Brooks, *Elmer* represents Faulkner's "attempt to undercut the romantic dream" (119). *Sanctuary* realizes that endeavor since the dream plays an important part in destroying the romantic's love affair with the world. Although Robert Penn Warren asserts that Faulkner's works offer the chance for characters "to achieve some measure of redemption through love" (69), this text denies any such opportunity.

murderer in jail awaiting execution. The shift in scene communicates a change in thematic emphasis as well. Instead of justice, the narrative focuses on some form of self-love and self-loathing as indicated by reflection.⁵

More than the two men who see each other's reflection in the water, the spring assumes paramount significance for its Ovidian characteristics. Ovid presents the Narcissus spring "well-deep and silver clear. . . . Nourished by water, grass grew thick around it, / And over it dark trees had kept the sun / From ever shedding warmth upon the place" (97). Faulkner's presentation contains remarkable resonance: "It was surrounded by a thick growth of cane and brier, of cypress and gum in which broken sunlight lay sourceless" (3).⁶ The word "spring" appears fourteen times in the beginning of the novel, some six pages before Horace and Popeye begin to walk "the path from" it (6). Faulkner uses the same word only nine times in the original text. Increased emphasis in the revised edition may signal Faulkner's manipulation of the scene's allusive qualities (*SO* 20-24). Those same pages in the original text also indicate Horace's preoccupation with the spring itself, with the fact that he recognizes its agency. The spring is not merely a mirror. Horace thinks about himself and Popeye, "facing one another across the spring. Only the water seemed to move, to have any purpose. It whispered and gurgled and wimpled on, glancing from sunlight to shadow, on and away among the willows to which it communicated a faint unceasing motion in no wind, no breath" (*SO* 23). Though Horace and Popeye stare at each other without speaking, the spring "whispered" and "communicated." The fountain of Salmacis possesses a "purpose" beyond the control of the

⁵Blotner claims that Faulkner's "intensive rearranging" of the opening scene reflected his foray into a new genre, that of the detective story and that this "mystery-story mode" made requisite the need to "heighten suspense and emphasize action" (*Biography* 609-10). The galley proof revisions support Blotner's position, but Faulkner's "rearranging" could also be associated with his ambitious creative reach in this project, namely, to combine popular fiction such as the detective story with artistic vision such as allusion to classical literature. Vincent Allan King's deft article "Faulkner's Brazen Yoke" discusses the relationship between pop and high art in *Sanctuary*. King also points out that Horace "bears the name of the Roman poet" (309), indicating perhaps the influence of such "classic" art on this novel.

⁶All quotations are taken from the Vintage edition of the corrected text. Any quotations from the original text of *Sanctuary* are taken from the Random House edition and are referred to parenthetically as *SO*.

individuals who bathe in it. By contrast, the spring of Narcissus intimates "purpose" only through its namesake. The insistent imagery in *Sanctuary* communicates the primary importance of the particular Ovidian myths employed. But, a myopic reading of the introduction as rendition of Narcissus's myth precludes any sense of that other, more dangerous spring of Salmacis, which informs the work on a deeper level.

Ovid's myth of Salmacis, different from Narcissus,⁷ focuses more clearly on the destructive power that accompanies sexual maturity. At fifteen, Hermaphroditus stands on the verge between adolescence and adulthood. As the son of Mercury and Venus, "his pretty face showed who his parents were." After being raised in "Mount Ida's caves," the youth begins his travels "To visit hills and streams of foreign lands; / Boyish delight made rough foot-travel easy / And pleasures came with each strange thing he saw." The boy discovers a "tempting pool of water" that is "so clear that one could read its sandy depth" (120). Seduced by the pool's graceful beauty, he insists on bathing in it, even after the resident nymph, Salmacis, frightens him by asking for a "sister's kiss" and reaching for his "snow-white neck" (121). Her demand for a "sister's kiss" indicates both her own measure of partial innocence and the element of taboo. The brief exchange between Salmacis and Hermaphroditus has all the trappings of the awkward transition from sexual innocence to sensual experience. Shaken by his demands to leave him alone, the nymph obeys. He continues to stroll "the green turf" as "though he were unseen," suggesting that he knows she continues to watch him (121). By even mildly encouraging her voyeurism, Hermaphroditus becomes equally responsible for his fate. His childlike preoccupation with indulging his impulses, a swim in her pool in this case, blinds him to a graver complicity in his doom.

Contrary to Hermaphroditus's wanderlust, Salmacis, the inhabitant of the "fountain" that bears her name, "never stirred abroad." She rejects her sisters' invitation to play; she does not enter "friendly races with the

⁷Ovid writes that the good-looking youth was "proud" and "had little feeling / For either boys or girls." The goddess Nemesis grants an unrequited lover's curse, that Narcissus should "love himself alone . . . / And yet fail in that great love" (97). Narcissus, "charmed" by the spring, "bent / To drink, to dissipate his thirst" (96-97). He eventually dies after enduring "agony" and "misery," and in his place grows the "flower of gold with white-brimmed petals" (99-100). That his pride invited such reprimand mitigates the cruelty of Narcissus's punishment. One sympathizes with his melancholy over the love that "eludes" him but recognizes the satisfaction of justice in his demise.

girls”; and she never takes out “hunting license with Diana” (120). Instead, the vain nymph enjoys gazing “at her lovely arms and legs in water, / and found her private pool a likely mirror” (120). Upon seeing Hermaphroditus, she falls in love with him, which incites her mad desire to “take him in her arms” (121). The boy refuses her advances. In a clever turn, Salmacis pretends to leave the youth alone and hides behind a hedge. As soon as he dives into the pool, she realizes her victory, crying out “I’ve won, for he is mine.” She clings to him, “stroking his breast, / Surrounding him with arms, legs, lips, and hands” in an act that resembles how “the cuttlefish at deep sea’s bottom / Captures its enemy.” She asks the gods to grant her the wish of permanent physical union with the boy. When Hermaphroditus learns his fate, that “his bath had sent him to his doom, / To weakened members and a girlish voice,” he asks his parents for justice, to “make all who swim these waters impotent, / Half men, half women” (122). This outcome is what has “earned an evil name” for the “waters of the fountain Salmacis.” Men who partake of them become “effeminate or merely zero . . . less than men” (120). Salmacis’s crafty lures invite reprimand, but her lover’s ignorance also courts disaster.

Horace and Temple do not fuse into a hermaphrodite; they do not equal their Ovidian counterparts. But certain characteristics of each correlate with Ovid’s tale and resonate with specific images in *Sanctuary*, rendering the allusive depth of the novel more vividly. Just as Hermaphroditus looks for sanctuary in Nature, Horace similarly seeks her embrace. Exasperated, Horace leaves his wife and stepdaughter to wander away from the “flat and rich and foul” country of the Delta (15), an act that bears some resemblance to Hermaphroditus’s departure from his stepmother, Ida. Horace wants “a hill to lie on for a while” (15) and is also drawn to a tempting spring that “welled up at the root of a beech tree and flowed away upon a bottom of whorled and waved sand” (3). Although he believes the impetus for his self-imposed exile to be the nature of woman, his wandering results instead from his reluctance toward a more mature epistemology. Clinging to an idealistic sense of order that he believes exists, he remains “half innocent” of the cunning that surrounds him. Horace does not recognize the “logical pattern” of evil (221) until near the end of the novel. Far from being a boy of fifteen, Horace still finds delight in his amblings, especially since Nature remains one woman from whom he does not feel alienated. That he seems

comfortable in her presence is indicated by the fact that he knows both the formal and local names of the singing birds he hears. Like Hermaphroditus, Horace seeks refreshment and wonder, though neither goal anticipates the dark truths that accompany satiation.

Salmacis's lover possesses a "fragile beauty" that increases with the colors of red and white "as apples ripen in a sun-swept meadow / Or ivory brushed with paint" (121). The colors ivory, white, and red pervade the myth but, in the novel, pertain more to Temple than Horace. The original text of *Sanctuary* highlights "the rigid, placative *porcelain* of" Temple's "grimace" (SO 183, my emphasis). The revised text reiterates the crimson color of Temple's "bold painted mouth." Several illustrations call attention to her "mouth boldly scarlet" and "red hair" (36). Later, she "powdered her face and rouged her mouth" (138). The latter third of the novel depicts her "mouth painted into a savage cupid's bow" (214). During the trial, her "face was quite pale." On that white canvas were "two spots of rouge like paper discs pasted on her cheek bones, her mouth painted into a savage and perfect bow . . . like something both symbolical and cryptic" (284). The "symbolical" meaning lurking behind Temple's face paint grows with intensity from "bold" to "savage." Finally, she reflects a one-dimensional picture of lust, proscribing love with her mockery of "cupid's bow."

Temple's painted mouth, more than any other, signifies sexual and epistemological metamorphosis.⁸ Seeing her as a Salmacis-like nymph, however, dismisses the delicate allusive balance between the Narcissus and Salmacis tales. One of the ways in which Temple achieves some agency after her ordeal is by relying on the Narcissus impulse in the men around her. She knows they see her as a "good looking" (294). By mirroring their desires, she blinds them temporarily to her efforts at autonomy. She may look like a femme fatale, according to Scott Yarbrough, but if she does, it is because she wants men to perceive her that way. Yarbrough cogently argues that Temple's appropriation of the masquerade acts as a weapon against the outside world. He suggests that "she becomes a femme fatale because such a transformation and reconstruction of self are, to her, the only ways to salvage her life and her soul" (53). Dianne Luce Cox similarly asserts that Temple must learn to adopt a sexual cunning in order to reclaim any "measure of innocence"

⁸For a different perspective on Temple's painted mouth and identity, see Polk, *Faulkner and Welty* 39.

(317). The tension between her irrecoverable innocence and her growing awareness of sexual power translates, appropriately, in the descriptions of her body, not of her face. Her face can assume a masquerade, but her body belies a constant vulnerability.

Beyond the colors of her visage, mythic or, more specifically, nymphic qualities dominate Temple's bodily description. Her long legs are "blonde with running" (28), and she is "thin armed, with high small buttocks—a small childish figure no longer quite a child, not yet quite a woman" (89). The liminal space between innocence and maturity represents the fear of sexual power and a dormant longing for it as well. The scene at the Grotto aptly illustrates this tension. Taunting Popeye, telling him that he will be sorry for hurting her mouth, she senses that her provisional agency trumps his impotence, but she cannot control her power for extended periods of time and with calculated results. Her confidence soon erodes under the rhythmic volition of the "sultry, evocative" music (232-33). Unsure of her place in this sexual world filled with irrational desire, she says,

"Oh, God; oh, God," . . . her lips scarcely moving.
"I'll go. I'll go back." (233)

Trying to reclaim her courage, Temple caresses Popeye, leaning "her thigh against his shoulder, caressing his arm with her flank. 'Give it to me, daddy,' she whispered" (236). This sexual poise undoubtedly empowers her, except for the fact that Popeye, though irritated by her behavior, does not capitulate to it. She cannot escape and defeat him alone. Though Temple wants Red to help her, Cox argues that objective as the only force driving Temple's seduction of him (317). Temple's rape renders her more mature in many ways but not completely detached. Survival informs her ethos, but so does desire.

Fantasizing that Red has already killed Popeye, Temple thinks about Red's body and suffers "agonised sorrow and erotic longing" (237). Part of the scene's Ovidian characteristics result from confused "longing," but longing nonetheless. In Ovid's tale, Salmacis jumps in after her lover to capture him; but far from being the controlling instigator, she appears "as though she were a snake caught by an eagle" before she can wind "her tall body / Around his head" (122). The fleeting role reversal from predator to victim highlights her vulnerability and her insecurity. Just as Salmacis grasps her lover, Temple similarly clings to Red "in a

voluptuous swoon . . . straining at him as though she were trying to touch him with all of her body-surface at once" (239-40). Her attempt to envelop him mimics Salmacis's capture of Hermaphroditus, "as though she were quick ivy tossing / Her vines round the thick body of a tree" (122). Salmacis surrounds the boy with "arms, legs, lips, and hands" (122), an image that depicts not only her lover's eclipse but also the destructive watery embrace that swallows them both.

The "tempting pool[s] of water" (Ovid 120) in *Sanctuary* point to the inherent despair in the Salmacis myth. The evil, enveloping waters of the fountain of Salmacis and the experience of doomed Hermaphroditus reverberate throughout the novel. Sensual desire precipitates sorrow. Temple's room at Miss Reba's illustrates such loss since, "in the wavy mirror of a cheap varnished dresser, as in a *stagnant pool*, there seemed to linger spent ghosts of voluptuous gestures and dead lusts" (155, my emphasis). Shadowy desire and "dead lusts" underline fluid identity, an issue that plagues both Horace and Temple. They do not know exactly who they are or what they want. Horace knows only that he seeks change to calm his existential fears; Temple admits courting metamorphosis to escape them. Her conversation with Horace suggests the violence she experienced at Popeye's hands: "I'd try to make like I was a boy. I was thinking about if I just was a boy and then I tried to make myself into one by thinking. . . . I'd think about what they tell children, about kissing your elbow, and I tried to" (216-17).⁹ The desire for a change in identity informs Temple's struggle to reconcile with her experience, but the clock in her room denies the annealing quality of time. It "was of flowered china, supported by four china nymphs" (148). In a strange homage to Salmacis, those nymphs support the clock and gleam "in hushed smooth flexions: knee, elbow, flank, arm and breast in attitudes of voluptuous lassitude" (150) just as their Ovidian prototype uses "arms, legs, lips, and hands" to hold her love. The nymphs' dangerous embrace of time translates as yet another affirmation that sanctuary is not possible, not even with the passing "of the season of rain and death" (317).

Horace does not escape dark waters, either. Ovidian despair appropriately waits for him in the family home. The incest taboo and

⁹According to Blotner's notes (reprinted in the Vintage edition from *Novels 1930-1935*), this means "that if you could actually do it, you could change your sex" (325).

related prohibitions inherent in Salmacis's request for a "sister's kiss" recall the "weird magic" of her pool and resonate in the "scrubbed floor spaces" that appeared, to Horace, "still as *dead pools* within the ghostly embrace of hooded furniture" (120, my emphasis). Recalling the "wavy mirror" in Temple's room, "dead pools" such as these possess spectral "lusts." That Horace moves back into the family home to his sister's dismay marks his naïve and futile lust to assert his independence from her. When he tells Miss Jenny, "I haven't quit one woman to run to the skirts of another" (107), he protests too much, for he does run from one woman to another seeking sanctuary. He believes he must match his sister's "imperviousness" with his own kind of autonomy, but his underdeveloped sense of domesticity, evidenced by his lack of skill with a mop and a hammer (120), only exaggerates his vulnerability and reliance on the very women he seeks to escape. Just as Hermaphroditus pretends stoic disgust at Salmacis's request for a "sister's kiss," Horace similarly attempts to distance himself from his sister's desires. His perspective on women like Ruby and Temple further complicates this awkward adolescent position, that he admires the enduring, mother-type like Ruby and fears a "good looker" like Temple. Both women's stories captivate him, but Temple's produces a visceral response. More than being "some baby" (294), she represents, in Matthews's words, "the prohibition against incest as the breaching of innocence by knowledge, as the broaching of nature by culture" (254). Horace fears her because he fears his own growing awareness of sexual power and unfettered lust.

The knowledge of sex and its attendant power figure prominently in the shift from adolescence to adulthood. Subsequently, the myth of Salmacis remains much more central to *Sanctuary* than that of Narcissus. The act of consummating a desire is very different from the existence of desire. Narcissus, as Irwin observes, can never "consummate" his love; the "being" he adores does not exist in a physical sense and so renders him "necessarily impotent" (546). Salmacis, on the other hand, consummates her love against her lover's will, and the painful consequences change him thereafter, rendering him not just physically but spiritually impotent. Enervation in *Sanctuary* is paradoxically signaled by a beacon of sexuality: the painted mouth. The "savage" paint Horace sees on so many lips around him mock the sorrowful but inevitable change from hope and wonder to skepticism and doubt. Horace's quest for a "hill to lie on" grows from his discovery of "a rag

with rouge on it," found "stuffed behind the mirror" in Belle's room: "a handkerchief where she had wiped off the surplus paint when she dressed and stuck it behind the mantel" (15). When looking for Temple at Ole Miss, he notices the young college girls, the "cool, innocent, unabashed expression" in their eyes, and "the savage identical paint upon their mouths." These nymphs become reminiscent of "all lost days and outpaced delights, in the sun" (172). Nubile young women vivify "dead lusts" and spent ghosts, reminding Horace of his own irrecoverable innocence.

In an effort to deny the knowledge of maturity, Horace holds tight to his concept of Little Belle, though what she represents suggests even more danger. Matthews posits that "Little Belle invariably conflates promise and prohibition; as the violation of a minor metaphorically substitutes for 'incest proper,' so the stepdaughter is one in a series of metonymic substitutions for the mother or sister" (249). Horace does not want to engage in incest any more than Quentin Compson does, but he longs for some recovery of his own lost childhood, of what Matthews calls a "prelapsarian sanctuary" lacking the "prohibitions and alienations of maturity" (248-49). Such a place remains a chimera because, beyond Little Belle's ostensible innocence, "the rigid travesty of [her] painted mouth" (167) tells him that she possesses a degree of sexuality he must reluctantly accept. Her voice makes him painfully aware of her sophistication; he notices that it is "controlled, cool, discreet, detached" (300). The tension between innocence and experience translates in the "chiaroscuro" that shrouds Little Belle's picture (222). It is also made manifest as Horace muses upon his stepdaughter's image and meditates simultaneously on Temple's experience. He imbibes an "almost palpable" synesthesia of "scent," "voluptuous languor," "invitation and voluptuous promise," and "secret affirmation" (223). The combination proves too much for him as he rushes to the bathroom. That the picture of Little Belle appears at the same time Horace revisits Temple's nightmare has something to do with what Irwin asserts, that "Horace's vomiting becomes a kind of perverse ejaculation, expressing at once his forbidden desire and his revulsion at this desire" (560). And although the novel deals with forbidden natural impulses at odds with culturally erected boundaries, as Matthews suggests, Horace's purgation may also represent the ostensible catharsis of which Temple is not capable or will not

choose. Horace's vomiting signals his empathy, not sympathy, for her, a feeling that truly requires a hermaphroditic imagination.¹⁰

Vicariously experiencing Temple's ordeal allows Horace to realize a fact he manages to avoid for most of his adult life, that there is a "logical pattern to evil" (221). The "logical pattern" results from a human element, an intentional cunning. Subsequently, Horace possesses the capacity for evil.¹¹ This axiom dissolves the tethers of childhood. Horace realizes, too, that upon admitting the pattern of evil, "we die" (221), and he does suffer a kind of Hermaphroditic death when his identity becomes conflated with another: sexual vulnerability predicates metamorphosis. Following his psychological fusion with Temple's rape and suffering the horror of his own darkest fears, the watery embrace of maturity swallows him, catapulting him into a darkness "filled with . . . nightmare shapes" (222). That he seems to hope for Temple's death has much to do with this violent metamorphosis that stems from his ability to empathize with her experience. Cox believes that Horace desires Temple's death because it would erase the temptation of a lust he neither understands nor consciously welcomes. If he understands enough to know he may be at the mercy of an uncontrollable, forbidden desire, then he might also embrace his own demise. When Horace thinks it would be "better for her if she were dead tonight," he thinks it for himself as well (221).

Instead of courting death, Horace returns to his wife. His Hermaphroditic wonderings have ended. His dream is shattered. His love affair with the world has been "marooned in space by the ebb of all time." No natural luminosity exists to assuage his fears; the moon stands "overhead, but without light" (222). Horace's romanticism dooms him to such vulnerability. In contrast, Temple's end does not involve vulnerability but, rather, some measure of impermeability.¹² She becomes like Narcissa in this sense. Although she achieves

¹⁰Polk also sees Horace's vomiting as a kind of hermaphroditic identification; he claims that "Horace's identity is . . . diffused centrifugally among the novel's major characters. He is at one and the same time male, female, androgynous" at the moment of his purgation (*Children* 46).

¹¹Matthews notes, for example, that "Popeye transfixes Horace because he represents the savagery within himself and within civilization" (263).

¹²Recognizing her impermeability, Faulkner admitted fascination in "how all this evil flowed off of her like water off a duck's back" (Blotner, *Biography* 613).

"imperviousness," its cost precludes any enjoyment of her ostensible autonomy. Temple flees with her father to the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris in what Matthews calls a "caricature of recovered innocence" (264). She appears "sullen and discontented and sad" at the end of *Sanctuary* precisely because she grasps her irrecoverable innocence; the "stained marble" queens (317) she looks at mirror her own metaphysical imprisonment. The ludicrous distortion of her "innocence" seems to match Horace's ill-founded resentment of it.

The epistolary sections at the end of the Original Text provide explicit information the revised text only suggests. Writing to his sister after returning home, Horace explains what "hurts" him is not that evil exists; "evil belongs in the world," he writes. Instead, the particularly feminine quality of being "untouched" by it bothers Horace immensely (SO282). What he understands as a female talent for survival mocks his own dependence on women. His epistles to Narcissa clearly indicate his return to Belle as an antidote for the overwhelming "reality" he found in the world away from the Delta (SO281). They also suggest a level of self-awareness Horace seems not to have earned, while emphasizing his potential to recognize and "rectify" (SO282) his natural impulses. At the end of the revised version, Horace appropriately appears willfully ignorant in a way the Original Text does not allow. Remaining "half innocent of love," his homecoming and interaction with Belle depict a darker, Hermaphroditic fate, inherently dismal because he remains partially unaware of its totality. Belle's repeated command for Horace to "lock the back door," given three times in three pages (299-301), points to the culpability in his own imprisonment, an isolation precipitated by his myopic search for sanctuary despite the fact that all he has witnessed points to the contrary. Horace may never truly grasp his fate, and, recalling the Salmacis myth, time offers no consolation.

Although Ovid's tale exists as only one of many influences on the novel, it holds special significance for its place in Faulkner's composition process. The final scene, depicting Temple and her father near the fountain in the Luxembourg Gardens, was most likely the first vision Faulkner had of the novel. Nearly four years prior to the publication of *Sanctuary*, Faulkner composed a long poem "written in prose form," describing the Luxembourg Garden scene. In a letter to his mother dated "September 6, 1925," Faulkner writes, "I have just written such a beautiful thing that I am about to bust—2000 words about the Luxembourg Gardens

and death. It has a thin thread of plot, about a young woman" (*SL* 17). Though Faulkner managed to cut the "original" ending down to "250 words" (Blotner, *Biography* 617), Polk posits acute theories concerning the excised portion. He links the nascent *Sanctuary* text, the missing words, and Paris together as part of Faulkner's early creative vision; he also addresses Faulkner's "French Connection" (*Faulkner and Welty* 34) and the indispensable Gallic influence on the young author.¹³ He cites Faulkner's admission of completing 20,000 words "on his novel" during his time in Paris. The composition process of *Sanctuary*, then, poses intriguing queries. Polk wonders about the missing words:

Are they lost? Was he referring to *Elmer*? Did they become part of *Sanctuary*? Did those 20,000 or 2,000 words become part of *Flags in the Dust*, a novel with many important connections to *Sanctuary*? . . . At least part of *Sanctuary*, then, seems to have been written before *The Sound and the Fury*, perhaps before *Flags*, perhaps even before *Soldiers' Pay* and *Mosquitoes*. ("The Space Between" 105)

The fictive vision in *Sanctuary* possesses more artistic seriousness than the sensational label often associated with it, owing, in large part, to Polk's suggested chronology of Faulkner's composition. By contrast, the widely accepted compositional date of 1929 tends to indicate *Sanctuary* as a hastily wrought work, a quick fix for the author's financial concerns. Faulkner's vision of a "spectacular mystery-detective-gangster story" (Blotner, *Biography* 606) may speak to sensationalist demand,¹⁴ but the development of his benchmark preoccupation with history remains unconventional.

The historical element of *Sanctuary* relies centrally on the final scene. According to Polk, "the setting in Luxembourg Gardens thus provides *Sanctuary* its only historical dimension. *Sanctuary* is quite remarkable for its almost complete lack of history of the South that is otherwise

¹³Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* has much to do with this Gallic influence and has been treated most extensively by André Bleikasten.

¹⁴Phil Stone, a close friend of Faulkner's, listened to the author read from the work in progress, and he "felt absolutely sure that Faulkner was intent on shaping it into a serious work of art rather than a sensational potboiler" (Blotner, *Biography* 612). Frederick Keefer defended the work in 1969 from dismissive critics and readers against claims that it was simply a product of "those inevitable lapses of any great writer," and from Faulkner's own derision of the work (97). More recently, King's argument claims *Sanctuary* as a serious work of art precisely because of its effort to bridge "irreconcilable artistic traditions," namely, high and low art (312).

integral to Faulkner's oeuvre" (*Faulkner and Welty* 36). As a student of history, Faulkner may have been captivated by the city of lights, perhaps causing him to envision a novel in which no amount of light can suffice. Indeed, most of the extant light takes on the dangerous qualities of "stagnant pools." The light at Miss Reba's had a "spent quality; defunctive, exhausted—a protracted weariness like a vitiated backwater beyond sunlight." The comparison of light to "vitiating backwater" underlines "flesh stale and oft-assailed" (144), the kind of corporeal deterioration and despair yielded by the Salmacis myth. The light of history, too, holds little redeeming power in *Sanctuary*, a fact that perhaps explains its comparatively limited historical setting. More realistically, the timeline of composition could explain the "lack of history." If Faulkner composed *Sanctuary* before or concomitantly with his early novels, then his vision of Yoknapatawpha had not yet materialized. Seeking to integrate a sense of history did, however, as Faulkner's reliance on Ovid, "the original storyteller" (Stoneback), suggests.

Faulkner's reverence for the Roman poet signals a generation's admiration; *The Metamorphoses*, especially the implications it held for androgyny and art, influenced several artists and writers at the turn of the century. One such artist was Auguste Rodin, the French sculptor.¹⁵ His work *The Metamorphosis of Ovid* (1886) was created to be part of his grand Dantesque piece, *The Gates of Hell*. If Faulkner was, as Polk claims, "fascinated with the statue, the sculpted idol" (*Faulkner and Welty* 40), then he would certainly have visited the Musée Rodin and seen *The Metamorphosis* during his stay in Paris.¹⁶ The sculpture depicts two lovers, one of indeterminate sex, caressing each other. Though it suggests two women, the physical gender markers of one figure are

¹⁵In addition to Rodin, Faulkner's "French Connection" also included Honoré de Balzac. Polk cites Faulkner's admitted penchant for reading Balzac perennially, owing to his grandfather's library replete with French classics, including "complete sets of Balzac and Dumas and Hugo." Polk argues that Faulkner had "taken France's language, literature, and culture to his heart long before he first visited it for the first time in 1925" (*Faulkner and Welty* 35-36). Of the French authors' influence, Balzac holds special interest because of his novella about a castrato, *Sarrasine* (1830). The *castrati* make manifest a variation of hermaphroditism; they were male opera singers who were castrated in order to produce a higher, more genuine female range than falsettists. Such a topic may have piqued Faulkner's imagination.

¹⁶Rodin died in 1917, and the museum opened in 1919. See Vilain.

hidden. Rodin's soft lines recall the watery scene in the Salmacis myth. Hermaphroditus's "glittering body / Flashed and turned within clear waters"; the mutable outline of his frame appears "as if / It were of ivory or of white lilies seen / Through walls of glass" (122) and thus portends Rodin's supple marble shape. For Faulkner, viewing *The Metamorphosis* would not only recall Ovid but would also suggest the symbiotic relationship between the sculpture before him and the nymphic girl he envisioned near the fountain in the Luxembourg Gardens. The sculpture expresses a tension between fixed and fluid sensuality and questions the true nature of identity.¹⁷ Rodin's sculpture, Ovid's myth, and Faulkner's novel all express the same aphorism: selfhood becomes inseparable from sexuality. Unfortunately for Horace and Temple, too many exterior forces impose "voluptuous promise" and offer only "dead lusts." Temple's sexually violent episode changes Horace forever. Popeye's sexual dysfunction alters Temple irrevocably. Salmacis's desire imprisons Hermaphroditus for eternity, and his subsequent androgyny forever hides any distinguishing traits of his sexuality and, therefore, himself. Finally, a "tempting" pool of water swallows them all, pointing to the agency each has in his or her own demise by succumbing to the seductive spring.

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¹⁷ Interestingly, Polk describes Faulkner's "first published book," *The Marble Faun* (1927), as evidence of the author's interest in sculpture: "a marble statue of Pan meditates upon a changing natural world that he cannot participate in because the marble binds his sexual nature" (*Faulkner and Welty* 40). That Faulkner sought to articulate the theme of identity predicated on sexuality here and in *Sanctuary* suggests Rodin's influence on more than one Faulkner work.

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