An Aesthetic Consciousness:

An Existentialist Reading of William Faulkner's Fiction

Maya Heller
MPhil
English and Comparative Literature

Goldsmiths, University of London
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I hereby declare that all of the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Maya Heller, 7th December 2017

Abstract

This thesis presents an existentialist reading of William Faulkner's early fiction (1925-31). Moving away from a regionalist perspective the thesis argues that Faulkner's work can be viewed as part of a universal and aesthetic exploration of the human condition. By focusing specifically on Jean-Paul Sartre's early philosophy (1930s-40s) and the concepts of consciousness, the duality of being: *being-in-itself* (the world of objects) and *being-for-itself* (human consciousness), the thesis investigates the way in which consciousness operates ontologically in Faulkner's prose. It argues that a decidedly existentialist consciousness can be traced in Faulkner, one in which a linked relationship between imagination and reality lays bare the fragility of the characters and a sense of displacement in Faulkner's fiction.

Within the context of existentialism, the thesis also emphasises the importance of the artist figure within Faulkner's writing. As the embodiment of existential action and choice, the artist in Faulkner's fiction reflects a sense of liberation and freedom. In this context, the existentialist reading re-examines the way the artist's sense of reality hinges on the interaction between human consciousness and the world of objects, between Faulkner's representation of art (text, painting and sculpture) and form and technique (fragmentation and multiple perspective).

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INTRODUCTION

'… So vast, so limitless in capacity is man's imagination to disperse and burn away the rubble-dross of fact and probability, leaving only truth and dream …' [1]

This research project proposes an existentialist reading of Faulkner's early fiction. The aim is twofold, first of all, to provide a platform on which to investigate the role of imagination in Faulkner's fiction and secondly to rethink some of the reasons for Faulkner's popularity in the context of French existentialism. Through an existentialist reading, Faulkner's representation of reality will also be analysed in an attempt to move away from the traditional regionalist perspective on his work. My argument will also highlight Faulkner's certain universal themes in Faulkner's work, particularly with respect to the concepts of being and consciousness as defined by Jean-Paul Sartre in his works, *The Imaginary - A Phenomenological Psychology Of The Imagination* (1940) and *Being and Nothingness: An Essay On Phenomenological Ontology* (1957). I will argue that Faulkner's early prose between 1925-1931 exhibits most clearly what can be defined as an existentialist form of imagination and reality through the use of textual form (such as ellipsis and italics) and technique (such as multiple perspective and fragmentation) as particular aesthetic devices. Faulkner's early prose in: *Elmer* (1925), *Mosquitoes* (1927), *Sanctuary* (1931) and *As I Lay Dying* (1930), displays an important attention to colour, fragmentation, multiple perspective and the art object as a way to question how imagination operates. For Faulkner, the re-representation of reality necessitates the artist's eye, it necessitates in other words, the artist's complete immersion into the surrounding landscape. By focusing on these aesthetic ideas, Faulkner's fiction will be inserted into a reading in which his writing is seen as an investigation into a universal

[1] William Faulkner, *Requiem For a Nun*, (Penguin books, 1960) (1951) p. 219.

metaphysical state of being, a state, which situates the individual as the core subject through choice and human freedom.

I intend to focus on aspects of consciousness and imagination in Jean-Paul Sartre's early philosophy (1930's- 1940s') as found in: *L'Être et néant* (1943) *Being and Nothingness: An Essay On Phenomenological Ontology,* (1957), *L'Existentialisme Est Un Humanisme* (1946) *Existentialism and Humanism* (1948) and *L'imaginaire* (1940) *The Imaginary- A Phenomenological Psychology of The Imagination* (1940), as well as Sartre's critical work on Faulkner: 'William Faulkner's Sartoris'[2] (1938), and 'On The Sound and the Fury: Time in the Work of Faulkner'[3] (1947). My aim is not only to identify particular existentialist concepts within Faulkner's fiction, such as freedom, choice, bad faith, contingency, facticity and the duality of being, being-in-itself (être–en-soi) and being–for-itself (être-pour–soi), and to evaluate how they effect Faulkner's use of characterisation and narrative, but to apply these terms specifically to Faulkner's use of form and technique. Aesthetic elements of Faulkner's prose such as fragmentation and multiple perspective gain emotional and critical weight when viewed in the light of these existentialist ideas. They accentuate certain crucial thematic concerns in Faulkner's fiction, such as how human consciousness channels individual struggle and universal dilemmas in the face of death. This will be explored in *As I Lay Dying*, as will violence as a form of physical choice in *Sanctuary* and artistic freedom in *Mosquitoes* and *Elmer*.

My approach will thus be both philosophical and historical. The argument continues with the identification of some of the elements common to the existentialist reading of form and technique in Faulkner with that of American criticism of his work mainly from the 1950s onwards. Some of the American critics who will be discussed are: Robert Penn Warren, Michael Millgate and Olga Vickery, all a part of the New criticism of the 1940s-1950s who moved away from 'biographical, sociological, and historical analyses […] and argued for a turn to the text itself and the practice of what they called

[2] 'Sartoris', *Nouvelle Revue Française*, L (February 1938), 323-28. In (Situations I).
[3] 'On the Sound and the Fury: Time in the Work of Faulkner', *Literary and Philosophical Essays*, trans. Annette Michelson (London: Rider, 1955), 79-87.

close reading'[4]. By comparing some of these formalist ideas regarding form and technique with existentialist concerns the introspective nature of Faulkner's characters, and how they operate within their environment will be analysed. Such an analysis will unravel some of Faulkner's concerns regarding mortality, human endeavour and individual isolation.

The motivation for my existentialist reading stems partly from a gap in scholarly research on Faulkner and existentialism. I have encountered numerous readings of Faulkner by critics such as Lothar Hönnighausen and André Bleikasten that mention existentialist terms, such as "de trop" and "consciousness", without fully developing or explaining them. It is my aim to elaborate and explain some of this existing criticism in relation to Faulkner's fiction. Critics such as William J Sowder and Ralf A Ciancio, present only a partial existentialist reading of Faulkner's work, and thus my aim is partly to expand on these existential readings. Some of Faulkner's texts, such as *Mosquitoes* (1927) and *Elmer* (1925), have not been examined in existential terms at all.

The line of inquiry will hinge on Sartre's early (1930s-40s) existentialist conception of *consciousness* as the starting point for a rereading of Faulkner's writings. The concept of human consciousness will be viewed from interconnected ontological and aesthetic angles. The ontological argument will focus on the binary relationship between being-in-itself (the world of objects) and being-for-itself (human consciousness) and the importance of the physicality and concreteness of existence. At the heart of the conflict of consciousness according to Sartre is the realisation that the world and its objects are indefinite and concrete, whereas human consciousness is continually changing and non-lasting. This friction between human fluidity of thoughts and actions and the world of objects, is also part of an aesthetic argument, which will be further explored through Faulkner's use of fragmentation and multiple perspective in *As I Lay Dying*. Faulkner's techniques are read in the context of the existential split between the external and the internal aspects of consciousness and its implications for understanding man's place in the world. My argument will also connect

[4] Annette Trefzer, 'Introduction', in Annette Tretzer and Ann J. Abadie (eds.) *Faulkner and Formalism: Return of the Text* (University of Mississippi Press, 2012), pp.IX-XXIII.p.IX.

Faulkner's notion of how form operates within narrative, and its relation to existentialist reality, with that of art and the role of the artist. The example used will be an analysis of how Cubist aesthetics and wider modernist concerns relate to existentialist theory.

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Chapter 1, 'William Faulkner's *Sanctuary* (1931) - French existentialist reception of William Faulkner in the 1930s and 1940s'

In this chapter the important role of the French critic and Princeton professor Maurice-Edgar Coindreau in translating Faulkner's fiction into French will form the starting point for a reading of Faulkner's reception in France. The correspondence of Coindreau and Faulkner also sheds some light on how Faulkner perceived his own reception in France. I will then trace the qualities that Sartre was looking for in American literature and particularly in Faulkner's fiction. Sartre rejected French authors such as Gustave Flaubert and Émile Zola and the use of realism and naturalistic devices. Instead, he was searching for fiction that focused on physical action and a form of physicality indicative of agency and choice. He found in Faulkner's work an example of that physicality and direct action.

In the second part of chapter 1, an existentialist reading of *Sanctuary* examines the duality of being (being-in-itself) and (being-for-itself), consciousness, choice, freedom, bad faith and the physical act. The existential concepts illuminate the important role of the individual in Faulkner's fiction and his and her search for freedom, action and choice. In the case of Temple Drake, these concepts will be examined in order to show that she embodies, to some extent, existential freedom. My argument differs from the dominant reading of Temple as a victim.[5] In existential terms, Temple represents the physical aspect of consciousness: choice is manifested by her action to stay in the hands of Popeye. Through the analysis, Faulkner's use of violence will be viewed as a form of existential action and thus as an essential part of his

[5] See, Richard Gray, *The Life of William Faulkner – A Critical Biography* (Blackwell Publishers, 1994), p. 164; Leslie Fiedler, in Caroline Carvill, 'Feminist and Gender Criticism', in *A Companion to Faulkner Studies*, ed. by Charles A. Peek and Robert W. Hamblin (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2004), p. 320.

narrative concerns. My analysis will also incorporate some feminist readings such as Linda Dunleavy and Emilia Angelova (from the 1970s onwards), in order to re-consider how the existential concepts of *choice* and *consciousness* allow a more performative reading of Temple's body as representative of a form of ontological freedom. I will focus on Simone de Beauvoir's feminist approach in *The Prime of Life* (1962) and *The Second Sex* (1973) and discuss her influential terms 'transcendence' and the 'other' in relation to Temple. In an extension to the notion of violence in *Sanctuary,* I will discuss the way silence is a metaphor for the terrifying quality in the novel. Silence is manifested through still action with no added commentary, which as a result, accentuates the violent atmosphere. The non-cerebral quality demonstrates not only the importance of physical action as a plot device and as part of a disoriented atmosphere, but also points to Faulkner's concern with the nature of language and articulation.

Chapter 2, 'William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* (1930) - Aesthetic Consciousness: form and technique'.

In this chapter the crucial element of imagination, specifically as it relates to Sartrean concepts of the 'imaginary' and the 'unreal' and the way in which human consciousness interprets reality, will be traced in *As I Lay Dying*. The chapter will look at how the representation of imagination enables the spectator/reader and the writer to move from a realistic depiction of reality to an 'unreal' fictional realm of reality. In this context, the focus in this chapter is to establish the interlinking points between Faulkner's use of fragmentation and multiple perspective and existentialist feelings of dislocation towards oneself and one's surroundings. By focusing on form and technique, the representation and questioning of reality in *As I Lay Dying* will be seen to emphasise the use of imagination as a creative means for interpreting reality. While in chapter 1, consciousness was analysed in relation to choice and physical action, consciousness in chapter 2 is examined through the ontological notions of the duality of being - being-in-itself and being-for-itself - contingency, facticity and negation, as outlined by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology.* These aspects of

consciousness can be traced through Faulkner's use of fragmentation as a way to expose dichotomies of introspection and extraversion, harmony and discord, and stasis and movement. The focus on Faulkner's configurations of form such as the relational value of colour tropes in *Elmer*, the texture of sculpture in *Mosquitoes*, and multiple perspective in *As I Lay Dying,* enhances Faulkner's predominant but concealed need for coherency and structure.

The notion of life viewed side by side with death is, the thesis argues, at the core of both existentialist thought and Faulkner's narrative. In chapter 2 an analysis of the object of the coffin in *As I Lay Dying*, demonstrates how Faulkner uses fragmentation both internally and externally. The internal state includes the emotional perspective of human consciousness (being-for-itself), while the external state (being-in-itself), includes the exterior world of objects. Chapter 2 thus examines how Faulkner's use of fragmentation and multiple perspective can be compared with the Cubist technique of multiple perspective. Different modes of representation in Cubism, Faulkner's fiction, existentialism and modernist thought ultimately identify some of the ways in which Faulkner's dismantling of reality is a deliberate aesthetic and artistic choice. Darl's monologue in *As I Lay Dying* allows, in this context, a re-reading of the existentialist concepts of *facticity*, *anguish* and the *absurd.*

Chapter 3, William Faulkner's *Mosquitoes* (1927) and *Elmer* (1925), and Jean-Paul Sartre's *Nausea* (1938) - *Imaging Consciousness*: an analysis of the artwork and the imaginary object.

This chapter extends the notion of imagination and form to Faulkner's discussion of the artist and the role of the art object. It also examines the way imagination is made manifest in Faulkner's fiction through a deliberate focus on art and the role of the artist within modernity. In order to elaborate on this, the concept of consciousness as outlined by Sartre in *The Imaginary - A Phenomenological Psychology Of The Imagination* (1940) as *Imaging Consciousness* is discussed in relation to *Mosquitoes* and *Elmer.* A comparative analysis of the relevance of Sartre's philosophy in *Being and Nothingness: An essay on phenomenological ontology* (1943) and *The Imaginary* (1940) is shown as applicable to *Mosquitoes, Elmer* and *Nausea.*

In order to explain the aesthetic process of consciousness in existential terms, the interlinking concepts of the *imaginary object*, *analogon*, and *imaging consciousness*, are identified and explored in Faulkner's novels. Consciousness is presented purely in relation to the art object, and Faulkner's notion of art and the art object is crucial in this respect because it illustrates the binary split between the real and the imaginary in an existentialist sense. Through art objects, which include the novel itself, music and the marble torso and clay bust in *Mosquitoes* and *Sanctuary*, Faulkner establishes a complex investigation into what it means to be an artist. The complex role of consciousness (being-for-itself) in evoking imagination through the *analogon* in the spectator, and in the artist/writer, presents another important facet of Faulkner's fictional technique.

Imagination will be set in contrast to other aspects of reality, which in contrast to the nature of imagination, are filled with anxiety and doubt. In this context, I will explore the concept of *contingency* and how it manifests itself physically through the existentialist expression of nausea in Faulkner's *Mosquitoes* and Sartre's *Nausea*. The expression of existential angst in Faulkner's use of the colour red in *Elmer* will be compared with Sartre's use of the colour black in *Nausea* as another indicator of Faulkner's highly aestheticized approach to reality. Faulkner's literature demonstrates two facets of reality, one that is full of alienation and disorientation, and another, which is full of creativity and imagination as expressed by the artist.

It is important not only to recognise how Faulkner used the idea of art imaginatively in his fiction, but how Sartre recognized this as the 'magical object' in his piece on 'William Faulkner's Sartoris'. The 'magical object' in Faulkner's fiction is another way to view art as specifically situated in the realm of the imagination, and it takes, according to Sartre, the artist and the spectator a particular imaginative process to evoke the magical object. Thus, Faulkner's focus on the art object will be seen as crucial for an understanding of his aesthetics. As the thesis will seek to demonstrate, it is through the dichotomy of the real and the unreal, imagination and reality, that the importance of individual freedom in Faulkner's narrative construction fully emerges.

Chapter One

William Faulkner's *Sanctuary* (1931) French Existentialism and William Faulkner in the 1930s-40s.

My principal discussion of Faulkner's critical reception in the 1930s and 1940s will hinge on a dissection of the existential concepts of *consciousness* and physical *action*. These concepts will be used to compare the varied philosophical interpretations of Faulkner's work, and to establish some aspects of the critical reception particularly in France from the early 1930s to the late 1940s. By taking an ontological perspective, Sartre provides a particular critical and historical tool with which to view Faulkner's work. In this chapter the concept of action in Faulkner's *Sanctuary* (1931) will be examined in order to show how the character Temple exemplifies, to some extent, the embodiment of existential freedom. Sartre valued the physical *act* as a complete contrast to a certain form of French 19th century literature - overly refined realist novels-which had fallen out of favour in France. I wish to explore the reasons for this polarity of acceptance and rejection, which then dominated French criticism.

The first part of this chapter focuses on the existentialist perspective, and my angle of approach is philosophical as well as historical. I will analyse the historical milieu of the Second World War and its effect on the French view of American literature. I will then explore the concept of consciousness as manifested in *Sanctuary* by closely examining the existentialist concepts of *choice* and *bad faith* in order to apply them to Faulkner's work. My analysis will also include feminist readings of *Sanctuary* (from the 1970s onward). The aim is to investigate how Temple's body can operate as a site for ontological freedom within the existentialist concepts of *choice* and *consciousness,* whereby Temple's body is seen in terms of ontological freedom. When the existentialist

angle is juxtaposed with current and past readings of *Sanctuary*, intersections emerge, which provide new interpretations of Faulkner's text.

The person who played a significant role in translating and promoting William Faulkner in France was the French critic and Princeton professor Maurice-Edgar Coindreau. He was, according to the editor George McMillan Reeves, 'a translator, critic, chronicler of literary trends, […] [F]or forty-five years [he] has been an interpreter of American culture to his native France.'[6] Between 1931 and 1963 he wrote more than a dozen articles and prefaces, most of them in French, relating to Faulkner.[7] Coindreau knew Faulkner, and the two often worked together on the translations, enhancing their authenticity and precision. According to Thelma M. Smith, Coindreau worked closely with Faulkner on *The Sound and the Fury*, discussing mainly the grammatical difficulties:

> Coindreau talked with Faulkner about the problems involved several times during the summer of 1937. One trouble was the pronouns. The English language has no grammatical gender and therefore an *it* may have a very vague reference. Every time the translator asked the novelist what his reference was Faulkner answered the question specifically. The result of this collaboration is a good translation of one of Faulkner's novels most difficult to render into another language.[8]

Faulkner was very pleased with Coindreau's translations: in a letter to him dated 26 February 1937, Faulkner writes: 'After reading *As I Lay Dying* in your translation, I am happy that you are considering undertaking S&F [*The Sound and the Fury*].[9] In another letter to Coindreau, on 14 April 1932, Faulkner thanks him for an article he has written:

> Please accept these belated thanks for sending me La Nouvelle Revue in which was Septembre Ardent. I thought the translation excellent there, but the one of A Rose for Emily, in Commerce lost nothing at all, even of that which a writer perhaps alone feels in his story but never quite gets into the actual words. But principally I wish to thank you for your critique among the Lettres Etrangères in a recent number of La Nouvelle Revue, which I received from a friend in Paris.[10]

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[6] George McMillan Reeves, 'Preface', in Maurice Edgar Coindreau, *The Time of William Faulkner*, p. XVI.
[7] Maurice Edgar Coindreau, *The Time of William Faulkner*, p. XVII.
[8] Thelma M. Smith and Ward L. Miner, *Transatlantic Migration: The Contemporary American Novel in France*, p.10.
[9] William Faulkner, *Selected Letters of William Faulkner*, p. 99.
[10] Ibid. pp. 63-64.

Coindreau complained that he was often reproached by Americans for translating certain American authors, Faulkner among them: ''Why', they say, 'present to the foreigner the most unpleasant side of our society, why run the risk of giving a false idea of what is happening on the other side of the Atlantic?''[11] Sartre encountered a similar attitude when an American said: 'But is it this time – when all countries must combine their efforts to understand one another better – to present the French with an unjust and black picture of our civilization?'[12] On another occasion, Sartre recalled, he met an American author of historical novels, 'When I mentioned Caldwell, his friendly smile vanished suddenly; at the name of Steinbeck he raised his eyebrows; and at the mention of Faulkner he cried indignantly, "You French! Can't you ever like anything but filth?"'[13] The American writer continued: 'You [Sartre] like Faulkner because you have never read any other novel about the South. We have hundreds of them. Read Dreiser, read Henry James. These are our great writers.'[14] In similar vein, the French scholar Henry Peyre argued in 'American Literature Through French Eyes' (1947), that the Americans' lack of enthusiasm for their own authors could be seen in their lack of financial and commercial support for their writers and intellectuals; the French, on the other hand, provided great support for their men of letters as 'The French have been the past masters of efficient literary strategy. They never spare funds in exporting their bearded Academicians, their latest Surrealist rebels or abstruse Existentialist prophets.'[15]

Although Coindreau was the first to translate Faulkner's work into French, it was André Malraux who introduced Faulkner critically to the French public. Albert Camus acknowledged this in the foreword to his 1956 stage adaptation of *Requiem for a Nun*:

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[11] Maurice Edgar Coindreau, *The Time of William Faulkner,* p 3.
[12] Sartre, 'American Novelists In French Eyes', p 116.
[13] Ibid. p. 115.
[14] Ibid. p. 115. According to Henri Peyre, Henry James had little influence in France: 'Henry James is respected in France by all, read by a very few, and considered as a classic, but without living influence. Proust was content to know him by name only […] The French, apparently, find that they have the equivalent of James in their own analytical novelists, who are legion, and find his psychology too static and devious, his pace too slow, his content too remote from common life'. Quoted in Henry Peyre, 'American Literature Through French Eyes', p. 426.
[15] Henry Peyre, 'American Literature Through French Eyes', p. 426.

> The goal of this Foreword is not to present Faulkner to the French public. Malraux undertook that task brilliantly twenty years ago, and thanks to him, Faulkner gained a reputation with us that his own country had not yet accorded him. Nor is it a question of praising Maurice Coindreau's translation. French readers know that contemporary American literature has no better, nor more effective ambassador among us.[16]

In the article 'American Novelists in French Eyes' (1945)[17] Sartre argued that:

> The greatest literary development in France between 1929 and 1939 was the discovery of Faulkner, Dos Passos, Hemingway, Caldwell and Steinbeck. The choice of these authors, many people have told me, was due to Professor Maurice-Edgar Coindreau of Princeton, who sent us their works in translation with excellent prefaces.'[18]

It seems that while acknowledging Coindreau's significant input, the existentialists, and in particular Sartre, were aware of their collective, conscious role in selecting Faulkner, as Sartre argued: '[A] selection by one man is effective only if he foresees the demands of the collective group to which he addresses himself. With Coindreau as intermediary, the French public selected the works it needed.'[19] In this respect, the requirements of the French public were represented by the critics and divided between the urge to embrace new elements lacking in their own literature and a self -reflective exploration. Reeves argues that 'perhaps it was not so much that they needed him [Faulkner] as it was that they saw themselves in him.'[20] Adopting a new literature was thus a dual exercise in self-analysis and self-criticism. However, the emerging argument will emphasise that the French did not set aside their national literature in evaluating American literature. Instead, they used it as a backdrop for a re-assessment of Faulkner's work.

JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

While acknowledging the importance of Coindreau and Malraux in introducing Faulkner to France, I will now focus on Sartre and his critical stance in relation to Faulkner. First, I want to trace some of those critical

[16] Albert Camus*, Lyrical and Critical Essays*, trans. Ellen Conroy Kennedy (Vintage Books, 1970), p. 311.
[17] Sartre, 'American Novelists In French Eyes', pp. 114-118.
[18] Ibid. p.114.
[19] Ibid.p.114.
[20] Ibid. p. XVIII.

elements that Sartre and other critics found and appreciated in Faulkner's work, elements that they saw as fundamentally different from the realist novels of Flaubert, Zola and Maupassant. It is important to define my scope of analysis in relation to existentialism. Existentialist thought is hard to define, for, as the critic Walter Kaufmann observed: 'Existentialism is not a philosophy but a label for several widely different revolts against traditional philosophy [...] existentialism is not a school of thought nor reducible to any set of tenets.'[21] Thus, there is no common body of doctrine to which all existentialists subscribe. For my purposes, I do not wish to contrast Sartre's thought with that of other existentialists or to debate the general purpose of existentialism. My argument centres on reading Sartre's existential concerns solely in relation to Faulkner in order to expose the critical appreciation of Faulkner in France in the 1930s and 1940s. By focusing on Sartre as the leading critical voice, I am able to utilise his direct commentary on Faulkner and reveal existential elements within Faulkner's work. My aim is to focus on Sartre's early philosophical work (1930s- to early 1940s) and not his later, more political works. I will focus on existential concepts such as *freedom*, *consciousness* and *choice*– all key components of the inquiry into the metaphysical act of being that situates the individual as the core subject within existentialism.

According to Jean-Philippe Mathy, Sartre was 'extremely attracted to the American literature of the 1920s and 1930s, perhaps more so than any other French writer of his generation, with the exception of Simone de Beauvoir […]'[22] Sartre's essay, 'On *The Sound and the Fury:* Time in the Work of Faulkner [23] highlights his attention to Faulkner's novelistic time-specifically to his 'super-reality' past and 'catastrophic' present, in which 'the actions themselves, even when seen by those who perform them, burst and scatter on

[21] Walter Kaufmann, *Existentialism From Dostoevsky to Sartre* (New York: New American Library, 1975), p. 11.
[22] Jean-Philippe Mathy, *Extrême-Occident: French Intellectuals and America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 129.
[23] Sartre, 'On *The Sound and the Fury*: Time in the Work of Faulkner' (1947), in William Faulkner, *The Sound And The Fury*, David Minter (ed.) (New York; London: Norton and Company, Second edition,1994),pp.265-271, p.266. Appeared originally in Jean-Paul Sartre, *Literary and Philosophical Essays*, trans. Annette Michelson (London: Rider,1955), pp. 79-88.

entering the present'[24]. Sartre criticised Faulkner for situating his narrative in the past with no reference to a clear future. However, what is relevant to my argument is Sartre's overall philosophical approach, as his analysis strips Faulkner's work of any historical and social verisimilitude and factuality, and instead scrutinises Faulkner in terms of metaphysical freedom. Sartre does not mention a geographical (American) or historical (1940s) stance in analysing Faulkner and as a result, values Faulkner's work through the notion of consciousness first and foremost: 'Man is not the sum of what he has, but the totality of what he does not yet have, of what he might have.'[25] While Sartre criticises Faulkner's metaphysics, the focus on freedom exemplified through a rejection of 'intellectual and chronological order' and the adoption of an emotional order is seen as the heart of Faulkner's concerns. Faulkner himself often referred to the notion of freedom in his interviews:

> All men are born with the equal right to attain freedom, not to be given freedom, but the equal right to earn freedom and keep it as they are responsible and are strong and are truthful. People should not be given anything as a free gift because that's bad for man, but all men should have the right to attain freedom if they are responsible and will work to deserve it and then defend it and keep it. [26]

Faulkner uses terms such as 'freedom' and 'responsibility', which hold existentialist meaning. The focus on the physical act and on *consciousness* as an expression of freedom will be seen to play a crucial role in *Sanctuary*.

Sartre was selective in his choice of American literature. This selective process is best exemplified in his revealing article, 'American Novelists in French Eyes' (1945). The style of Sartre's article suggests he is addressing the American public directly: 'There is one American literature for Americans and another for the French.'[27] This sentence encapsulates the main thesis of Sartre's article as he accentuates the dichotomy between the needs and expectations of a French and American reading public. Sartre suggests that most French critics are misguided in their choice of American literature as 'in France the general reader knows *Babbitt* and *Gone with the Wind*, but these books have had no influence on French literature.'[28] According to Sartre, the

[24] Sartre, 'On The Sound and the Fury: Time in the Work of Faulkner', p.266.
[25] Ibid. p. 271.
[26] William Faulkner, *Lion in the Garden: Interviews with William Faulkner 1926-1962,* p. 199.
[27] Sartre, 'American Novelists In French Eyes', p. 114
[28] Ibid. 114.

authors who were most influential were Faulkner, Dos Passos, Hemingway, Caldwell and Steinbeck. Even though 'these authors have not had in France a popular success comparable to that of Sinclair Lewis. Their influence was far more restricted, but infinitely more profound.'[29]

Sartre suggests that Faulkner is part of an exclusive group of writers used by a select group of critics to distance themselves from more popular preferences. As he says directly to an American audience: 'We needed them and not your famous Dreiser.'[30] While acknowledging the need for certain American authors, Sartre in effect complements and reinforces the role of the French intelligentsia in determining what foreign literary imports the French public really needs. By mentioning Dreiser, Sartre acknowledges the difference in taste and appreciation between the Americans and the French:

> I was asked, "What do you see in Faulkner? Why don't you admire rather our Henry James, our Dreiser?" I answered that we do admire them both, but coldly. It is entirely natural that the American public, weary of direct and brutal novels which attempt to paint groups or sociological developments, should return to novels of analysis. But analytical novels flood our country. We created the genre, and the best of the analysts, Benjamin Constant and Marcel Proust, are French. Henry James can please us, charm us, but he teaches us nothing – nor does Dreiser. [31]

Sartre exposes here an anti-realist stance as he rejects Dreiser's naturalism and social concern. Similarly, he rejects Henry James even though his subject matter differs greatly from Dreiser's. In this context, Sartre constructs a generalised stance as he places two very different writers on one platform. For Sartre, James and Dreiser are, paradoxically, realistic and analytical simultaneously. In rejecting these qualities, Sartre implies that the French are bored by or uninterested in qualities that they themselves, in literary terms have invented. Instead, Sartre argues, the French desire literature that is brutal, violent and non-realistic, based mainly on physical action. He felt that these qualities were lacking in his country's literature, which had become overly analytical and passive. According to Jean Bruneau, the existentialists rejected the devices of the realistic and naturalistic protagonist found in books by Gustave Flaubert, Émile Zola because in such a novels 'it matters little whether the hero is presented from within or without; […] his existence is no

[29] Ibid. 114.
[30] Ibid. 114.
[31] Ibid. 116.

longer a life, but a fate, oriented as it is by the omnipotent novelist toward a logical and ineluctable end.'[32]

On the other hand, Coindreau, who was not an existentialist, considered the majority of French readers to be realists: 'A Frenchman is essentially a realist. […] But strangely it seems that his realism has need from time to time to acquire new strength from foreign sources in order to preserve its integrity.'[33] Coindreau suggests here that foreign literature serves to boost French literature by allowing it to re-evaluate and re-establish its own strengths. As opposed to Sartre, who rejects a particular style of literary realism, Coindreau does not reject what he considers an already ingrained French realism, a realism that stems from the very heart of the French school of Gustave Flaubert, Guy de Maupassant and Émile Zola.

Sartre's concern was to explore the individual and his relation to others. He rejected the deterministic and rational view and instead wished to highlight man's absurdity, alienation, loneliness and, ultimately, death. The focus on the individual allows Sartre to centre his ideas on the importance of choice and action and provides, then, an escape from what he considered a stultifying literary realism. According to Lawrence H. Schwartz, Faulkner represented such an escape:

> For French critics, Faulkner offered a view of existence that relied on personal values as a way to confront an increasingly anarchic and horrifying world – that is, he was a writer concerned with the mysteries and intricacies of life. Faulkner came to be praised for an authentic style and for creating a special imaginative universe, a "fiction" that could be divorced from, and set above, the social realism of the 1930s.[34]

Sartre stresses the notion of the physical act as the main appeal of American literature, and makes a strict distinction between the overly analytical French literature and the 'brutal' and violent American literature, which he describes as raw, rootless and ruthless:

> What fascinates us all really – petty bourgeois that we were, sons of peasants securely attached to the earth of our farms, intellectuals entrenched in Paris for life -

[32]Jean Bruneau, 'Existentialism and the American Novel',*Yale French Studies*, No.1, Existentialism (1948), pp. 66-72, p,67.
[33] Maurice Edgar Coindreau, *The Time of William Faulkner,* p. 4.
[34] Lawrence H. Schwartz, *Creating Faulkner's Reputation – The Politics of Modern Literary Criticism,* p. 34.

> was the constant flow of men across a whole continent […] the hopeless wanderings of the hero in *Light in August* […]'[35]

Sartre emphasises the French intellectual passivity, the bourgeois café life in Paris, compared with the supposedly aimless, physical wanderings of the American hero, a distinction that creates a rather simplistic division. André Malraux took a similar view, saying that 'the essential characteristic of contemporary American writing is that it is the only literature whose writers are not intellectuals.'[36] Somewhat ironically, Faulkner might have partly agreed with Sartre, as he said in an interview in 1952: 'I love France and the French people very much. I feel at ease in France; it is so lovely. […] The French think too much, and in doing so, destroy something of man's original flavour.'[37]

Sartre's emphasis on action and the rejection of what he considered French intellectual literature extended itself beyond existentialist thought. Peyre likewise highlights the importance of action as he says that:

> Since 1925 or 1930, French fiction, led by Malraux, Saint-Exupéry, Giono, has aimed at capturing the mysteries of man in action and not at rest […] While they were thus seeking new paths away from a valuable but exhausted French tradition, they lit upon Faulkner and Dos Passos [...]'.[38]

Simone de Beauvoir, too, felt that the 'French language was becoming an end in itself, entirely academic, and that French literature as written by Gide, Valéry, Giraudoux was far too abstract.'[39] As Sartre put it:

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[35] Sartre, 'American Novelists In French Eyes', p. 114.
[36] Jean Bruneau, 'Existentialism and the American Novel', p.67.
[37] William Faulkner, *Lion in the Garden: Interviews with William Faulkner 1926-1962,* p. 72. Faulkner recognised the overly analytical mind of the French, but its doubtful whether he would have agreed with Sartre's notion that his literature could not be considered intellectual. For a further discussion on Faulkner's evaluation as an intellectual, see Joseph R. Urgo, *Faulkner in America: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha series*, in Joseph R. Urgo and Ann J. Abadie (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2001) Urgo argues that the 'critical focus on race, sex, gender, has prevented us from an adequate understanding of [Faulkner's] mind.' Urgo uses a quote from *A Fable* (1954) to establish his point, using Faulkner's own lyrical words: 'To think: not that dreamy hoping and wishing and believing (but mainly just waiting) that we would think is thinking, but some fierce and rigid concentration that at any time-tomorrow, today, next moment, this one – will change the shape of the earth.' In 'Where was that bird? 'Thinking America Through Faulkner', in *Faulkner in America: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha*, (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1998), pp. 98-115, p.104.
[38] Henry Peyre, 'American Literature Through French Eyes', p. 422.
[39] Ibid. p. 41.

> We were weighted down, without being aware of it, by our traditions and our culture. These American novelists, without such traditions, without help, have forged, with barbaric brutality, tools of inestimable value. We collected these tools but we lacked the naïveté of their creators […].[40]

Nonetheless, the categorical assertion that the French were somehow supreme intellectuals creates a paradox. On the one hand, Sartre and Coindreau promote anti-intellectualism as a desired form of writing, establishing an American tradition of writing described in primitivist terms, yet at the same time they want to remain intellectually superior. This leads to the question of whether they designate American literature as the 'other' only to reinforce their own literature. For instance, Coindreau quotes La Rochefoucauld: 'We can love nothing except with relation to ourselves, and we are only following our own taste and our own pleasure when we prefer our friends to ourselves.'[41] Or, as Coindreau wrote: 'Readers act like those travellers who seek in foreign countries only what resembles their own countries most.'[42]

WORLD WAR 2

The great interest in the American novel reached its peak during the Second World War according to Thelma M. Smith, even though the vogue of the American novel was a gradual process:

> A groundswell, hardly noticeable from the shore, began at the end of World War I. Slowly the wave built up through the Thirties. It crashed with huge force, flying spray, and loud noise immediately after World War II. The war itself with its ban on American novels was obviously the first reason for the force.'[43]

Reading and selling illegally American novels became a symbol of resistance when the Germans prohibited the sale or translation of any books from the Allied countries. This in turn created a thriving black market for American and English books. Sartre gives as an example an editor of a 'luxurious' magazine *L'Arbalète,* named Marc Barbizat, who published extracts from

[40] Sartre, 'American Novelists in French Eyes', p. 118.
[41] Maurice Edgar Coindreau, *The Time of William Faulkner,* p. 4.
[42] Ibid. 4.
[43] Thelma M. Smith and Ward L. Miner, *Transatlantic Migration: The Contemporary American Novel in France,* p. 39.

American books without submitting them to the censor. It was 'right in the midst of the occupation'.[44]

During the war there was a general 'underground' encouragement to introduce and to sell American literature through popular magazines: 'Between 1939 and 1946 no new translations of Faulkner's novels appeared in France. Nor could the French critics in the occupied zone publish articles on him. So resistance magazines took centre stage in continuing the literary debate.'[45] In 1943 several magazines were printed in Algiers, some for the use of the French underground. According to Richard Lehan, in August 1943 one of these, *Fontaine*, produced a special issue on American literature, 'Ecrivains et Poètes des Etats-Unis'. It was an anthology containing selections from the works of Hemingway, Steinbeck, Faulkner and Caldwell, among others.[46]

However, Faulkner's position changed direction by the late 1940s as various French critics published unfavourable views of American literature. Some of the adverse criticisms was summed up by French writer Maurice Blanchot: 'Many good critics begin to complain about American literature; they judge it less original than it appeared at first; they mock the young writers who believe to be modern in imitating Faulkner, Dos Passos, or Steinbeck, […]'[47] Partly, the commercial popularity of the American novel may have created a sense of insecurity among French authors and critics. De Beauvoir wrote in 1947 that 'during the occupation, when American books were forbidden, they became all the more precious.'[48] But de Beauvoir also admits to a shift in attitude, as the French began to feel a certain resentment towards American authors as 'the infatuation became so strong that certain French writers, who at first had welcomed with the greatest warmth the

[44] Sartre, 'American Novelists In French Eyes', p. 115.
[45] Thelma M. Smith and Ward L. Miner, *Transatlantic Migration: The Contemporary American Novel in France*, p. 131.
[46] Richard Lehan, *A Dangerous Crossing: French Literary Existentialism and the Modern American novel*, p. 35. Lehan reveals that the magazine *Confluences* also got out a special issue, devoted to 'Problèmes du Roman, and during 1946 special numbers devoted to American literature and life were produced by *Cahiers des Langues Modernes*, *Esprit, Renaissances* and *Les Temps Modernes*.'p. 36.
[47] Thelma M. Smith and Ward L. Miner, *Transatlantic Migration: The Contemporary American Novel in France,* p 46.
[48] Simone De Beauvoir, 'An American Renaissance in France' *New York Times Book Review*, (22 June 1947), pp. 28-29, p. 28.

message from America, began to find the whole thing a bore.'[49] While staying in New York, de Beauvoir found that even Americans were amazed by the lack of critical judgment by the French. According to Beauvoir:

> even here, I have met many writers and critics who are scandalized by the interest we take in the books coming from this country: they find it suspect: they accuse the French public of uncritically taking up second-rate or third-rate works with an enthusiasm […]'[50]

De Beauvoir's argument shows that Faulkner's dwindling popularity was part of an overall fatigue with American literature.

SANCTUARY (1931)

Having traced some of the main critical points Sartre and others found in Faulkner's work, I now wish to apply some existential themes and relate them to a close textual analysis of Faulkner's *Sanctuary*[51]. In *Sanctuary* Sartre's preference for the physical act will be developed further. This notion of the physical act will also take on another interlinked form in this context: that of a metaphysical form of *consciousness*. The existentialist reading of Faulkner by the critics William J. Sowder and Ralph A Ciancio[52] illuminates the importance of Sartrean consciousness and the notion of *being* in the diverse characters used by Faulkner. While Sowder and Ciancio link Faulkner with existentialist thought, they nevertheless neglect the importance of physical action as a crucial fictional device in Faulkner's fiction. The contrast of the physical and ontological condition allows one to unravel Faulkner's aesthetic concerns in relation to form and technique and the nature of art and the art object. This will be explored in chapters two and three.

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[49] Ibid. p. 28.
[50] Ibid.p.28.
[51] William Faulkner, *Sanctuary* (1931) Throughout the thesis all primary citations are from, *Sanctuary*, corrected text, (ed.), Noel Polk (New York: Vintage Books, 1987) Hereafter abbreviated as SAN and cited parenthetically by page number. It important to note, that Sartre did not publish any writings on *Sanctuary.*
[52] See Sowder articles on Faulkner and existentialism: 'Lucas Beauchamp as Existential Hero' *College English*, Vol.25, No.2 (Nov 1963), pp. 115-127. ; 'Colonel Thomas Sutpen as Existentialist Hero', *American Literature*, Vol.33,No.4 (Jan 1962), pp. 485-499; 'Faulkner and Existentialism: A note on the Generalissimo' *Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature*, Vol,4, No 2 (Spring-Summer 1963), pp. 163-171. See also Ralph A. Ciancio, 'Faulkner's Existentialist Affinities', in *Studies in Faulkner*, pp. 69-91.

In a reflective account, Simone de Beauvoir articulates some of the essential points both she and Sartre found in Faulkner's work:

> *Sanctuary* we found even more interesting. We had not hitherto understood Freud, or sympathized with his approach; but the moment someone presented his discoveries in a form more accessible to us, we were all enthusiasm […] The flames that toward the end of *Sanctuary* transform a man into a living torch are only superficially due to a can of gasoline […]'[53]

For De Beauvoir and Sartre the tragic manifestations and physicality of *Sanctuary* are crucial. Thus, the interlinked terms I propose to use to illuminate Sartre's existentialist act are the notion of *being* and *consciousness*, *choice* and the fundamental principle in which *existence precedes essence*. My aim is to develop these terms and then apply them to Faulkner's *Sanctuary*, in order to argue that the main character in the book, Temple Drake, embodies the very essence of existential freedom. My main argument moves away from a reading of Temple as solely a victim of male violence. I intend to argue that when Temple is viewed from an existentialist standpoint, she becomes a multifaceted free self - a conscious being. This freedom is tragic and melancholic, not joyful, yet it is her subjective and chosen freedom. What makes Sartre's definitions of the act and its manifestations useful for my purpose is the notion that, apart from the significance of action as a way to find individual meaning in the world, it is also synonymous with consciousness, an important part of being. This is an important theoretical device in Faulkner's work itself.

Furthermore, in the section below the existential preference for the physical will be seen in Faulkner's use of metaphors. The exterior in *Sanctuary* will be viewed in relation to violence and its non-verbal outlet, namely a terrifying silence. Silence also operates in existential terms as an external function, which fits Sartre's preference for the physical and non- verbal commentary. It is this quality of the external that Sartre found so attractive in Faulkner's work.

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[53] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Prime of Life,* trans. by Peter Green (Cleveland, OH: World Publishing, 1962), p. 150.

EXISTENCE PRECEDES ESSENCE

This first fundamental notion of existentialism is that *existence precedes essence*. There is no pre-established essence for the existentialist man and there is no pre-conceived purpose or reason for man to exist. Therefore, 'Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself. That is the first principle of existentialism.'[54] It was not enough for Sartre to recognise action intellectually; thus, 'Man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world – and defines himself afterwards.'[55] The physicality of human interaction with the world, the subjective motivation of the individual, is one of the key elements that Sartre found in Faulkner's literature. When Sartre says that the French were fascinated with 'the constant flow of men across a whole continent, […] the hopeless wanderings of the hero […]'[56], he stresses the primary need for action and the abandonment of definitions and explanations. The emphasis on action is crucial for Sartre:

> […] it cannot be regarded as a philosophy of quietism since it defines man by his action; nor as a pessimistic description of man, for no doctrine is more optimistic, the destiny of man is placed within himself. Nor is it an attempt to discourage man from action, since it tells him that there is no hope except in his action, and that the one thing which permits him to have life is the deed.'[57]

Sartre believed that existence begins with the subjective. The analogy given by Sartre is that of a book or a paper-knife, which possess an essence. The essence exists because the objects are made by an artist who planned their conception and their 'definite purpose'. As a result, the objects always have an essence before existence; '[I]ts essence – that is to say the sum of the formulae and the qualities which made its production and its definition possible – precedes its existence.'[58] Subjectivity is a crucial foundation in Sartre's existentialist thought as it encompasses individual subjectivity and the rejection of objectivity. Sartre's example of the paper-knife exemplifies the (interlinked) dichotomy between objects and humans. Subjectivity is attached to humans since their existence precedes essence - as opposed to objects,

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[54] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, (1946) trans. Philip Mairet (Methuen, 2007), p. 28. Appeared originally as *L'Existentialisme est un humanisme* (Paris: Les Editions Nagel, 1946)
[55] Ibid. p. 30.
[56] Sartre, 'American Novelists In French Eyes', p. 114.
[57] Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism,* p. 51.
[58] Ibid. p. 28.

which possess essence before existence. The notion that *existence precedes essence* is tied to Sartre's atheistic approach. To continue with Sartre's analogy of the paper-knife:

> When we think of God as the creator, we are thinking of him, most of the time, as a supernal artisan. [….] The conception of man in the mind of God is comparable to that of the paper-knife in the mind of the artisan: God makes man according to a procedure and a conception, exactly as the artisan manufactures a paper-knife, following a definition and a formula.'[59]

Sartre rejects the notion that humans have a pre-established essence, and thus he denies God's existence. As a result, existential man is often alone and experiences *abandonment* by God or any other pre-determined essence.

CONSCIOUSNESS

The physical act and the rejection of intellectual reasoning is one aspect of Sartre's thought, but an equally important element is consciousness. For Sartre, reality is contingent upon human consciousness. One aspect of reality could be seen as *Being–for– itself* (être pour–soi) and *Being–in–itself* (être–en-soi). Being–for–itself might be defined as human consciousness- '[...] the subjective, personal, individual, free, undetermined element'[60] - or as '[…] a *way* or *mode* or *manner* of being'.[61] Being–in-itself could be defined as 'non-conscious Being. It is the being of the phenomenon and overflows the knowledge which we have of it.'[62] The notion of consciousness could be defined as 'the activity of revealing; that is, of reflecting, of intending. As an activity, consciousness is doubly dependent on being.'[63] In a sense, consciousness is seen as empty; it cannot be isolated as it depends on the

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[59] Ibid. pp. 28-9.
[60] Lehan, *A Dangerous Crossing: French Literary Existentialism and the Modern American Novel,* p. 14.
[61] Gregory McCulloch, *Using Sartre: An Analytical Introduction to Early Sartrean Themes*, (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 3.
[62] Jean – Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (1943), trans. Hazel E. Barnes (London, New York: Routledge Classics, 2006), p.650. Appeared originally as *L'Être et le néant* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1943)
[63] Hazel E. Barnes, 'Sartre's Ontology: The revealing and making of being', in Christina Howells (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 13-38, p. 16. See William J. Sowder analysis of being-in-itself and being-for-itself in relation to existentialist God and the Generalissimo, in 'Faulkner and Existentialism: A note on the Generalissimo', p.163; and similarly consciousness in relation to man and others in Faulkner's fiction in, 'Lucas Beauchamp as Existential Hero', p. 115.

objects perceived by consciousness. In other words, 'All consciousness is consciousness *of* something'[64], or, as Sartre defined it, as *intentionality* - the particular element of consciousness that aims at an object. The reference to action could thus be applied as the consciousness. For Hazel E. Barnes: 'Consciousness is aware of objects and of its own activity by its power of detachment. […] It is this that we mean when we say that consciousness intends its objects or that consciousness reveals being […]'[65]

The notion of consciousness is analysed by Sartre in his critique of Faulkner's *Sartoris* (1929): '[…] everything conspires us to believe that the consciousness is always empty, always thus fleeting, Why? Because consciousness is too human a thing […] But Faulkner knows very well that consciousness is not and cannot be empty.'[66] Sartre is frustrated with Faulkner as he feels that consciousness is not fully described. Since consciousness is always aware of something, it can never be empty. When Sartre writes that consciousness cannot be empty, he means that consciousness is overloaded with *intentionality,* which is the complete antithesis of emptiness. Furthermore, consciousness can also be defined as '[…] the activity of revealing; that is, of reflecting […]. As an activity, consciousness is doubly dependent on being.'[67] Thus, consciousness defined as an *activity* cannot be a non-static occurrence: hence it requires description. This activity belongs to a being -that is, of a Being-for-itself. Sartre quotes Faulkner's *Sartoris* to demonstrate that Faulkner is very much aware of consciousness: 'She forced herself once more to think of nothing, to keep her consciousness immersed, as a little dog that one keeps under water until he has stopped struggling'.[68] Sartre sees Faulkner as aware of the existence of consciousness: 'Yet he [Faulkner] fails to tell us what there is inside this consciousness that one would like to drown. It is not that he wishes exactly to conceal it from us; he wishes rather that we guess what it is […]'[69] On one level, there is a sense of the object being projected - water. But

[64] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 11.
[65] Hazel E. Barnes, 'Sartre's Ontology: The Revealing and Making of Being', p. 15.
[66] Jean- Paul Sartre, 'William Faulkner's Sartoris' (1938) *Yale French Studies*, No.10, French – American Literary Relationships (1952), pp. 95-99. Appeared originally as 'Sartoris', *Nouvelle Revue Française,* (February 1938), pp. 323-328.
[67] Hazel E. Barnes, 'Sartre's Ontology: The Revealing and Making of Being', p. 16.
[68] Sartre quotes, William Faulkner's *Sartoris*, p. 3.
[69] Sartre*,* 'William Faulkner's Sartoris', p. 3.

there is a lack of understanding as to why *being-for-itself* (human consciousness) chose to focus on water and why negative emotions are evoked by it. Sartre demands a coherent description of the individual acts of consciousness, but by focusing on this demand, he presents a contradiction, since his argument also desires a rejection of all forms of psychological analysis. As Sartre writes: 'The heroes of Hemingway and Caldwell never explain themselves – do not allow themselves to be dissected.'[70] He goes on to say, 'they [the acts] live because they spurt suddenly as from a deep well. To analyse them would be to kill them.'[71]

Thus, the nature of consciousness according to Sartre should be felt and lived instantly without in-depth analysis, yet when it comes to literary descriptions, Sartre demands the unveiling of the characters' motivation. Roger Asselineau refers to the very same point in *Sartoris*:

> And we can see here how Sartre's accusations are inappropriate. He [Sartre] reproaches Faulkner for cheating in his stories by disguising his characters' actions in order to preserve all their mystery. For Faulkner the event does not count. It has no reality. What interests him is not the outside but the inside, […], not the act but its author's essential nature[72].

Asselineau sees Faulkner's absence of descriptions as a focus on the internal, and thus the external descriptions are unnecessary. However, I would like to point out the opposite: the internal takes secondary position, and it is through the external act that a new meaning emerges.

ANALYSIS OF TEMPLE IN *SANCTUARY* (1931)

Faulkner's main character, Temple Drake in *Sanctuary*, embodies a notion of existentialist freedom. My argument goes against the dominant critical view of Temple as above all a victim of violence. Temple makes self-conscious existential *choices*, which in turn lead her actions to their tragic and sad deterioration. The focus on Temple's own choices partly explains the prolongation of her physical and mental misery. When Sartre discusses

[70] Sartre, 'American Novelists In French Eyes', p.117.
[71] Ibid. p. 117.
[72] Roger Asselineau, *William Faulkner – Critical Assessments,* Henry Claridge (ed.), Vol. IV (Helm Information Ltd, 1999), p. 600.

the notion of *choice*, in *Existentialism and Humanism* (1948), he says it derives from the idea that existence precedes essence, and if there is no God, this in turn places the emphasis on subjectivity - meaning that we are free. Therefore, if we are free, we must, as individuals, make choices, act and take responsibility for our actions: 'If, however, it is true that existence is prior to essence, man is responsible for what he is.'[73] The responsibility for one's choices is crucial for Sartre, as he believes that not only should one accept responsibility for one's own choices but for all society: 'the first effect of existentialism is that it puts every man in possession of himself as he is, and places the entire responsibility for his existence squarely upon his own shoulders. […] We do not mean that he is responsible only for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men.'[74]

FREEDOM, CHOICE, BAD FAITH

The choices Temple makes are not positive but they nevertheless indicate a form of choice and thus freedom. The introductory description of Temple is revealing:

> [...] Temple, a snatched coat under her arm and her long legs blonde with running, in speeding silhouette against the lighted windows of the Coop, as the women's dormitory was known, vanishing into the shadow beside the library wall, and perhaps a final squatting swirl of knickers or whatnot as she sprang into the car waiting there with engine running on that particular night (*SAN* 28)

This description of Temple emphasises a certain element of physical fluidity and movement. The highlighting of movement is significant, as later on it changes into stagnation and immobility. Temple's physical and mental state deteriorates from the young, vibrant girl to an isolated being: 'Lying on her back, her legs close together, she began to cry, hopelessly and passively, like a child in a dentist's waiting-room.' (SAN, 150) The extreme contrast between Temple's early vibrancy and subsequent decline is partly due to the choices she makes.

Temple's personification of freedom stems from her *choice* not to run away from Popeye, his physical abuse and the suffocating surroundings of the

[73] Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism,* p.31.
[74] Ibid. p. 31.

house, or, as Faulkner ironically titled it, *sanctuary*. This choice is crucial as it personifies her existential freedom. Temple's rejection of numerous opportunities to escape exemplifies her self-conscious decision to face violent and often sadistic behaviour by Popeye. Olga W. Vickery[75] argues that Temple is indecisive when it comes to her own chance to flee because 'she persists, half fascinated by the idea of her own rape and half-dreading the actual experience. She can never quite make up her mind to flee either at Goodwin's, the filling station, or Miss Reba's.'[76] However, that very indecisiveness is already choice-making in existential terms.

> She began to back slowly away. […] in the hall she whirled and ran. She ran right off the porch, into the weeds, and sped on. She ran to the road and down it for fifty yards in the darkness, then without a break she whirled and ran back to the house and sprang onto the porch […] (*SAN* 65)

Sartre rejects any form of indecisiveness and sees it as part of *bad faith,* one's attempt to deny freedom. In contrast, I would like to argue that Temple was not indecisive but very aware of her choices and thus acting in opposition to bad faith -- she demonstrates signs of *authenticity*. Apart from Temple's choice not to escape, Elizabeth M. Kerr argues that Temple is directly responsible for evil: 'The central pattern of Temple's actions in *Sanctuary* is her deliberate choice of evil […] she deliberately chose wrong when she got off the train […].'[77] *Bad faith*, (*mauvaise Foi*) is defined as 'a lie to oneself within the unity of a single consciousness. Through bad faith a person seeks to escape the responsible freedom of Being-for-itself.'[78] Bad faith can encompass two types

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[75] Vickery's criticism on Faulkner was associated with Formalist or more specifically New Criticism, which moved away from cultural and historic context and instead concentrated on a close reading of text with particular interest in form and technique. According to Timothy P. Caron, the New critical reading was dominant in the 50s and 60s and they included: Cleanth Brooks's *William Faulkner*: *The Yoknapatawpha Country* (1963) Olga Vickery's *The Novels of William Faulkner* (1959), Michael Millgate's The Achievement of William Faulkner (1966), and Edmund Volpe's *A readers Guide to William Faulkner* (1964). Furthermore, the above helped to 'secure Faulkner's reputation and created a critical orthodoxy that, in some respects, we are still responding to and reacting against today'. In Timothy P. Caron, 'He Doth Bestride the Narrow World like a Colossus: Faulkner's Critical Reception', in Richard C. Moreland (ed.), *A Companion to William Faulkner*, (Blackwell Publishing: 2007), pp. 479-498, p. 483.

[76] Olga Vickery, *The Novels of William Faulkner: A Critical Interpretation* (Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), p. 107.

[77] Elizabeth M. Kerr, *William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha*, "A Kind of Keystone in the Universe", (New York: Fordham University Press, 1983), p. 295.

[78] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 649-50.

of people described by Sartre as 'coward' and 'scum', who deny their freedom:

> Those who hide from this total freedom, in a guise of solemnity or with deterministic excuses, I shall call cowards. Others, who try to show that their existence is necessary, when it is merely an accident of the appearance of the human race on earth, I shall call scum'.[79]

Temple, on the other hand, demonstrates the opposite of *bad faith*. By excluding some of the elements that typify *bad faith*, Temple exemplifies freedom. She does not fit into the category of a coward, as she faces her freedom and does not hide behind any determined elements. As Robert Wicks argues, 'The key process in bad faith is that of "objectification": we escape responsibility by objectifying ourselves as having a certain kind of permanent character or certain kind of secure social role.'[80] Temple demonstrates signs of *authenticity* as she attempts to escape her established social codes. By choosing to stay in the Old Frenchman Place, she questions her own upbringing and the false security of her family name. By shaking her comfortable world she in effect avoids being part of *bad faith*.

When Temple recounts her rape, she strips down the experience to a bare state of being: 'It just happened. I don't know. I had been scared so long that I guess I had just gotten used to *being.*' (*SAN* my italics 215) Later she also mentions a state of being: ' "So I'd hold my eyes tight shut and say Now I am. I am now.' (*SAN* 217) Sartre stresses that people often cannot face their own freedom and the consequences of that freedom as 'the reality of our freedom is so unbearable that we refuse to face it. Instead of realising our identities as free conscious subjects we pretend to ourselves that we are mechanistic, determined objects.'[81] Temple faces her freedom by managing to break away from socially expected roles and background. *Bad faith* could also be explained as: 'Refusing to freely make ourselves what we are, we masquerade as fixed essences by the adoption of hypocritical social roles and an inert value system.'[82] Temple, coming from a privileged background, says:

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[79] Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism,* p. 52.
[80] Robert Wicks, *Modern French Philosophy - From Existentialism to Postmodernism*, (Oxford: Oneworld, 2003), p. 42.
[81] Sartre, *Basic Writings*, Stephen Priest (ed.), (London, New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 204.
[82] Ibid. p. 204.

'My father's a judge. Judge Drake of Jackson." She thought of her father sitting on the veranda, wearing a linen suit, a palm-leaf fan in his hand, watching the negro mow the lawn.' (*SAN* 54) Yet Temple decides to ignore her background and not to return to it. By doing so she strips off her social role and thus gets closer to her freedom. In existential terms, Temple does not hold on to a fixed personality but changes and moves into an unknown world.

Temple's defining choice not to escape thus in some respects manifests a form of existential freedom and an awareness of being. This reading also invites a Feminist approach, as the notion of Temple's stasis position is equally examined. The other point of discussion, which designates Temple as responsible for her actions and thus her freedom, is her perjury in court – a conscious choice to protect her rapist Popeye. The Feminist reading charts Temple's character in relation to sexuality, femininity and freedom. The confluence between the Feminist and existentialist discourse in evaluating Temple is an interesting one. The main disjuncture between the two readings is the Feminist reliance on Freudian psychoanalysis with its focus on the unconscious, which Sartre would not have agreed with. However, in this context, the comparison highlights Temple's sense of a free being through her body.

It is important to note that there is no single critical approach to Feminist interpretations of Faulkner's work and that they often intersect with other theoretical readings such as psychoanalytical, poststructuralist and others.[83] The dominant thread in the various phases of Feminist criticism in relation to Faulkner is an axis of acceptance and rejection and, equally, the binding of the two to form a concurrent criticism. As Caroline Carvill argues: 'While influential early critics labelled him a misogynist, others argued that his women characters escaped stereotypes, with both positive and negative portrayals.'[84]

[83] Caroline Carvill, 'Feminist and Gender Criticism', Feminist and Gender Criticism', in Charles A. Peek and Robert W. Hamblin (eds.) *A Companion to Faulkner Studies* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2004), pp. 215- 232, p, 216.
[84] Ibid. p. 221.

Some of the early Feminist criticism concentrated on Faulkner as a misogynist. A typical example of that was by Leslie Fiedler in *Love and Death in the American Novel*, (1966):

> […] he reminds us (again and again!) that men are helpless in the hands of their mothers, wives, and sisters; that females do not think but proceed from evidence to conclusions by paths too devious for males to follow; that they possess neither morality nor honour; that they are capable, therefore, of betrayal without qualm or quiver of guilt but also of inexplicable loyalty; that they enjoy an occasional beating at the hands of their men […] [85]

Similarly, Richard Gray argues that 'there is, in other words, little sense of women as subjects in *Sanctuary*: they are objects in whom the male gaze situates its fears and desires.'[86] He continues: 'They [women] are unthinking creatures, responding merely to impulse (fear, sex) or to superficial triggers.'[87] The critical progression from this limiting and binary position evoked a newer criticism seen as a direct reaction to early criticism as 'much of the feminist criticism of Faulkner begins by pointing out where earlier critics have, in their view, over looked, misconstrued, or relied overmuch on the opinions of Faulkner's male characters.'[88] As Feminist criticism progressed, the role of the 'other' in Faulkner's work created a reversal of power as pointed out by Deborah Clarke: 'Seldom has a writer examined so thoroughly and so obsessively the concept of woman as other. Yet ultimately the boundaries of that "otherness" break down, and women become uncannily and paradoxically the emblems of his fictional vision.'[89] Thus, it is this narrative of deconstruction that raises Faulkner's female characters to the focal point of investigation.

Temple's existence is filled with acts of violence and solitude. The violence takes on a strange coexistent silence as: 'Temple gazed dully forward as the road she had traversed yesterday began to flee backward under the wheels as onto a spool, feeling her blood seeping slowly inside her loins.' (*SAN* 137) Silent violence is also seen in physical hunger: 'I haven't eaten

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[85] Ibid. p. 218.
[86] Richard Gray, *The Life of William Faulkner – A Critical Biography* (Blackwell Publishers, 1994), p. 164.
[87] Ibid. 166.
[88] Caroline Carvill, 'Feminist and Gender Criticism', p. 221.
[89] Deborah Clarke, *Robbing the Mother: Women in Faulkner* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994), p.6.

since ….. since …… Yesterday was one day, she thought, but I didn't eat then. I haven't eaten since.' (*SAN* 88) For André Bleikasten, this notion of silence in *Sanctuary* defines it as a 'mute text'.[90] Silence makes horror manifest by creating a textual emptiness in which the reader can trace and decode moments of plot. The clue to the novel's terrifying quality is the accentuation of atmosphere that stems from still actions with no commentary. According to Hyatt H. Waggoner, it is '[p]erhaps because it is behaviouristic, not cerebral. […] it subjects us to an experience that we feel it would be no exaggeration to call "terrific" and an "outrage".'[91] The focus on non-cerebral accentuation as indicated by Waggoner complements Florence Dore's argument, in which she establishes the connection between the visual as 'exteriorized' and the silent:

> The purely verbal context of the narrative renders bizarre the construal of the central action of the story as entirely visual, and indeed visuality in the novel produces an odd narrator […] This narrator not only anticipates and delays, that is, he also appears to see what the reader cannot; he gives the sense that what he does not say he sees.[92]

The visual then takes on a metaphoric position in capturing the non-verbal and the physical exteriorised silence. This metaphoric exterior sits comfortably with Sartre's interest in the non-interior and the physical, and here the physical creates a visual impact as a result. It is this outward device that Sartre found appealing in Faulkner's work. According to Dore, the visualisation is often constructed through a photograph, which plays a constructive role in setting up a mood often caught in a transitional state. Dore presents the example of Horace looking at the photograph of his stepdaughter Little Belle as a subtle yet disturbing shift of emotional states:

> As if of its own accord the photograph had shifted, slipping a little from its precarious balancing against the book. The image blurred into the highlight, like something familiar seen beneath disturbed though clear water; he looked at the familiar image with a kind of quiet horror and despair, at a face suddenly older in sin than he would ever be, a face more blurred than sweet, at eyes more secret than soft. (*SAN* 167)

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[90] André Bleikasten, 'Terror and Nausea: Bodies in *Sanctuary', The Faulkner Journal,* Iss. I.I (Fall 1985), pp. 17-29, p. 18.
[91] Hyatt H. Waggoner, *William Faulkner – From Jefferson to the World* (Lexington: Kentucky University Press, 1959), p. 90.
[92] Florence Dore, *The Novel and the Obscene – Sexual Subjects in American Modernism* (California: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 75.

The mental journey of Horace is captured externally through the photograph. The stillness of the photograph changes into a mobile blurriness of vision. This blurriness can be seen as an in-between state with a terrifying sexual quality. In Dore's words: 'as the face becomes unclear, it begins to signify illicit sexuality. […] That is, the face is "inscrutable" only when it appears "clear".'[93] The shift of sexual mood takes another symbolic fusion according to Joseph R. Urgo:

> The desire for Little Belle reaches its height. Temple's ordeal helps him discover what it was he wanted from Little Belle: in a fantasy the images of Little Belle and Temple fuse. Now Little Belle's photograph comes to life before him, "the face appeared to breathe in his palms." He becomes aroused with the smell of honeysuckle, a signal for sexual energies throughout Faulkner's work.[94]

Apart from the externalised dark emotions evoked through the photograph, Faulkner utilises the photograph as an observational tool to set up detached, desolate moments within the setting of Memphis:

> […] a metal coffee-urn and a fat man in a dirty apron with a toothpick in his mouth,
>
> stood for an instant out of the gloom with an effect as of a sinister and meaningless photograph poorly made. From the bluff, beyond a line of office buildings terraced sharply against the sunfilled sky […] (*SAN* 142)

This sombre atmosphere is the background and the backbone of Temple's own visual rendering. The use of visual descriptions implies an exterior detachment of emotions manifested through an outer surface: 'Temple flung the covers back and sat up. Her head was tousled, her face puffed, two spots of rouge on her cheekbones and her mouth painted into a savage cupid's bow.' (*SAN* 214) Colour is used here in the form of make-up to create a visual barrier in which emotions are suppressed thus increasing the eerie quality of silence as a subdued form of aggression. Equally, in a similar description of Temple, the visual takes a double textured form:

> Her face was quite pale, the two spots of rouge like *paper* discs pasted on her cheek bones, her mouth painted into a savage and perfect bow, also like something both symbolic and cryptic cut carefully from *purple paper* and pasted there.' (My italics, *SAN* 284)

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[93] Dore, *The Novel and the Obscene – Sexual Subjects in American Modernism,* p.78.
[94] Joseph R. Urgo, 'Temple Drake's Truthful Perjury: Rethinking Faulkner's Sanctuary', *American Literature*, Vol.55, No. 3 (Oct 1983), pp. 435-444, pp. 441-442.

Faulkner uses here the technique of collage as another visual device to create a distancing of emotions. By using the added texture of paper, Faulkner reduces the external surface to a flat emptiness of silence. He uses collage in many other works, including *As I Lay Dying* (1930):'He begins to move slowly backward from the bed, his eyes round, his pale face fading into the dusk like a piece of paper pasted on a failing wall, and so out of the door.' (*As I Lay Dying*, p.44) By using this visual effect, Faulkner creates a silent aggression, which plays a crucial stylistic component. The overall visual construction, obtains a symbolic form in relation to Temple's body, as it highlights Temple's exterior detachment through her silenced body. The manifestations of the visual form, will be analysed in the next chapter by linking Faulkner's use of fragmentation in technical terms with that of Cubism. The underling thread of argument will be to highlight Faulkner's representation and reconstruction of reality.

As discussed, silence is seen as the symbolic stasis of violence and horror in *Sanctuary*. The most direct manifestation of silence transcends to the act of rape:

> He turned and looked at her. He waggled the pistol slightly and put it back in his coat, then he walked toward her. Moving, he made *no sound* at all; the released door yawned and clapped against the jamb, but it made *no sound* either; it was as though *sound and silence* had become inverted. She could hear *silence* in a thick rustling as he moved toward her through it, thrusting it aside, and she began to say Something is going to happen to me. She was saying it to the old man with the yellow clots for eyes. "Something is happening to me!" she screamed at him, sitting in his chair in the sunlight, his hands crossed on the top of the stick. "I told you it was!" she screamed, voiding the words like hot *silent* bubbles into the bright *silence* about them until he turned his head and the two phlegm-clots above her where she lay tossing and thrashing on the rough, sunny boards. "I told you! I told you all the time!" (My italics, *SAN* 102)

The dominant silence is seen as a veil of suppressed emotions, and the articulation of silence creates a new meaning, a symbolic heaviness of pain. In her Feminist reading, Dore focuses on the text's repetition as a reinforcement of silence: 'The idea of repetition as creating silence is odd, since it seems to add, to reiterate, rather than the reverse. […] It is the rape in particular that the narrator repeats without saying.'[95] Indeed, the rape is never articulated but only suggested. The suggestion is the unspoken juncture, which creates a

[95] Dore, *The Novel and the Obscene – Sexual Subjects in American Modernism,* p. 72.

narrative gap in understanding that rape is actually occurring. Further on, the stress on the external act takes on another form of 'defilement'. For Robert R. Moore: 'Faulkner creates his most discomfiting effects using the symbolic imagery of defilement. […] Dominated by images of impurity—stain, disease, contamination, dirtiness — the expression of defilement identifies evil as external.'[96] These images evoke both revulsion and allure, designating Temple as both a virgin and a whore:

> Like the town, we respond to Temple both as virgin and whore; our horror at what befalls her mingles with an indefinable, leering attraction. We are disgusted and fascinated as we watch the process of Temple's degradation, seeing her as an ambiguous participant in her own debasement. We want to turn away from what we see and we want to see more.'[97]

This sense of duality manifests itself, according to Moore, through voyeurism as a metaphor for terror. The notion of voyeurism is indirectly connected again to watching and observing without verbalising or giving sound to horror:

> Her hand moved in the substance in which she lay, then she remembered the rat a second time. Her whole body surged in an involuted spurning movement that brought her to her feet in the loose hulls, so that she flung her hands out and caught herself upright, a hand on either angle of the corner, her face not twelve inches from the cross beam on which the rat crouched. For an instant they stared eye to eye, then its eyes glowed suddenly like two tiny electric bulbs and it leaped at her head just as she sprang backward, treading again on something that rolled under her foot. (*SAN* 92-3)

The above scene occurs before the rape and is an example of voyeurism as Moore argues: 'Significantly, watching in this world replaces talking; words, in the sense of meaningful communication, are abandoned. Faulkner presents these scenes at the Old Frenchman Place increasingly as tableaus that we *must* watch from without.'[98]

Dunleavy, in her argument, tries to break away from the binary opposition of 'subject/object and victim/victimiser', in order to explore 'the sexual difference', specifically its articulation in rape.'[99] This articulation of

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[96] Robert R. Moore, 'Desire and Despair: Temple Drake's Self- Victimization', in Harold Bloom (ed.), *William Faulkner's Sanctuary* (New York: Chelsea House, 1988), pp. 121-133, p. 122.
[97] Ibid. p. 124.
[98] Ibid. p. 125.
[99] By sexual difference Dunleavy refers to, '"Biological or physical difference" a typically understood binary opposition of male and female based on primary physical characteristics; "gender difference" refers to behaviour differences between women and men as they are conventionally understood to typify binary opposition, i.e. men are aggressive and women are

both physical and gender difference manifests itself in the Feminist interpretation of Temple's rape. Thus, the articulation of biological and behavioural difference comes to the fore, as the rapist Popeye is impotent and attempts to rape Temple with a corncob. Temple, as part of the traumatic experience, imagines that she is a man:

> So I'd think about praying I'd be turned into a boy and I would pray and then I'd sit right still and wait. Then I'd think maybe I couldn't tell it and I'd get ready to look. Then I'd think maybe it was too soon to look; that if I looked too soon I'd spoil it and then it wouldn't, sure enough. So I'd count. I said to count fifty at first, then I thought it was still too soon, and I'd say count fifty more. Then I'd think if I didn't look at the right time, it would be too late. (*SAN* 217)

Popeye's impotence is seen as a 'classic representation of Freudian castration' According to Dore[100]. In Freudian terms, the female has a strong desire for a phallus, which is unfulfilled, but in Temple's case the object of the corncob enables her to take the imagined role of the phallus. This imagined role creates a temporary form of liberation, as Linda Dunleavy argues:

> While the impotent Popeye tries to penetrate Temple with a corncob, she imagines that she has a phallic object or that she has turned into a man. For neither Temple nor Popeye is the means to rape a component of their biology; both need to claim access to a phallic object outside of themselves to assert their position within the structure of power that defines their relationship. Popeye appropriates the corncob as penis, while Temple tries to imagine that she herself has a penis or a penis-like apparatus.[101]

In her argument Dunleavy focuses on the sexual difference in the rape scene: Temple 'appropriat[es] various objects that will give her phallic power and thus define her not as rape victim, but as rapist. […] She imagines having a penis, because that would signify to men that she is not different, that she is not a victim...'[102] The point of contention between Feminist critics is the issue of sexual difference in the context of Temple's rape. For Dunleavy, sexual difference between Temple and Popeye is 'elided'. They become almost sexually equal. The rape, however, signifies their social difference, according to Dunleavy: 'Even if Temple "has" the phallus at the moment of her rape, she is socially inscribed as a rape victim (being the phallus) before and after

passive; "sexual difference" refers to both of these things together.' Dunleavy, 'Sanctuary, Sexual Difference and the Problem of Rape', p. 175.

[100] Dore, *The Novel and the Obscene – Sexual Subjects in American Modernism,* p. 15.

[101] Dunleavy, 'Sanctuary, Sexual Difference and the Problem of Rape', p. 175.

[102] Ibid. p. 174.

it.'[103] However, for Deborah Clarke, sexual difference is reinforced by 'Temple's imaginative wish to become a man: Yet Temple's desperate attempt to ward off rape by making the body "come into being" fails because the mark of gender in her case is the mark of sexual difference: the penis.'[104]

The focus on the body by some feminist critics can also be related to Sartre's conception of the body. The relation of consciousness to the body brings to the fore the term *embodied consciousness*, which can be explained as the 'for-itself *is* conscious body. Consciousness exists embodied. Sartre tells us that the body is the facticity of the for-itself, the fact of its being situated in the world.'[105] 'Sartre's term *Facticity* (facticité), refers to the necessary connection with the In-itself, hence with the world and its own past. It is what allows us to say that the For-itself is or exists.[106] The body is always seen in relation to the external world, according to Sartre: 'To be conscious is always to be conscious of the world, and the world and the body are always present to my consciousness, although in different ways.'[107] Consciousness, then, is at the very core of being and being-for-itself requires the external being-in-itself. The body, according to Sartre, is associated with freedom because consciousness is in constant activity to connect the for-itself to the external in-itself.

Temple, in an existential sense, fulfils the prerequisite of freedom through her conscious choices to stay with Popeye and lie in court. By doing so, she questions her background, social positioning and attitudes. Similarly, consciousness through the aid of the body establishes the connection to the outside world in the most direct way. Through her body, Temple questions her being-for-itself through consciousness. As consciousness transcends, it is always free as it is always in motion: thus the body is never static but always in the process of becoming and changing. And, as a result, always free. The process of becoming is also part of how the body is seen to others or how, equally, the body is seen to 'the Other's body' – that is, a body as it appears to another consciousness.[108]

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[103] Ibid.p.173.
[104] Clarke, *Robbing the Mother: Women in Faulkner,* p. 64.
[105] Hazel E. Barnes, 'Sartre's Ontology: The Revealing and Making of Being', p. 20.
[106] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness. An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology,* p. 652.
[107] Ibid.pp.439-40.
[108] Hazel E. Barnes, 'Sartre's Ontology: The Revealing and Making of Being', p.21.

The relation of Simone de Beauvoir to the existential framework is crucial in this context. Judith Butler writes:

> "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman"[109] - Simone de Beauvoir's formulation distinguishes sex from gender and suggests that gender is an aspect of identity gradually acquired. This distinction between sex and gender has been crucial to the long-standing feminist effort to debunk the claim that anatomy is destiny; *sex* is understood to be the invariant, anatomically distinct, and factic aspects of the female body, whereas *gender* is the cultural meaning and form that that body acquires[…]

De Beauvoir in this respect could be seen to pave the way for future Feminists (including Dunleavy) to develop terms such as 'sexual difference', the woman as 'Other', gender and sex. De Beauvoir's theories stem from an existentialist standpoint, as she herself makes clear that 'in the perspective I am adopting – that of Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty- if the body is not a *thing,* it is a situation; it is our grasp upon the world and the outline of our projects.'[110] In adopting concepts such as embodied consciousness, de Beauvoir often disagrees with Sartre and develops the concepts to suit her Feminist outlook. For example, the concept *situation* stems from Sartre's *embodied consciousness*, as Emilia Angelova argues:

> The very notion of embodied consciousness is linked with history or rather historicity, not biological organism or psyche. This is where de Beauvoir departs from Sartre. For Sartre, the body is facticity ('I am trapped in my body'), and in choosing what I am to be, I commit the factical body to nonbeing; I transcend it. For de Beauvoir, woman's situation, her body, *is* what woman is, it cannot be transcended in this way; but because the body is not merely facticity or destiny, it can be exceeded in historicity. The body itself is a situation of possible transcendence.[111]

For de Beauvoir, the notion of *transcendence* is used in relation to a woman's history or historicity: as woman is not a 'completed reality, but rather a becoming, it is in her becoming that she should be compared with man; that is to say, her *possibilities* should be defined.'[112] Thus, a woman is not limited to her born sex, but her gender always evolves culturally and socially. As opposed to Sartre, de Beauvoir takes the concept of the body as the situation of *becoming* a woman and as a result it can evoke a sense of freedom. Some of

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[109] Judith Butler, 'Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex'*, *Yale French Studies*, No.72, Simone de Beauvoir: Witness to a Century (1986), pp. 35-49, p. 35. Butler quotes Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p.301
[110] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p. 73.
[111] Emilia Angelova, 'Feminist Philosophy', p. 592.
[112] Ibid. Angelova quotes Simone de Beauvoir, p. 592.

Sartre's existential concepts such as *transcendence*, *body* and the e*xistential situation* are used by de Beauvoir to address women specifically and as a result she creates a strong existential-Feminist approach. By isolating women, de Beauvoir sees them as 'Other'. According to Emilia Angelova: 'de Beauvoir, by appropriating existentialism, shows that woman is a becoming, her very body and history are a possibility of transcendence that only has to be taken up.'[113]

Thus, Temple's narrative symbolically follows de Beauvoir's notion of *becoming*. As quoted by de Beauvior earlier in the chapter, 'In Faulkner's work sex quite literally brings fire and blood to the world. The inner drama of the individual is symbolized, externally, by rape, murder, and arson.'[114] Existential action, then, takes the form of changing and *becoming* in this instance through rape to symbolise an existential need to exteriorise action as a form of freedom, an important point for both de Beauvoir and Sartre.

While de Beauvoir's perspective may partially explain Temple's sense of freedom, the other important distinction in Feminist terms the question of sexuality versus femininity. Deborah Clarke highlights the maternal and the feminine as a form of strength as opposed to sexuality as she argues that 'this is not a novel with strong women characters; it is, however, a novel with a strong feminine presence.'[115] Sexuality, on the other hand, according to Clarke, is almost non-existent: 'What may be most striking is that her body seems out of touch with her sexuality, as Faulkner repeatedly stresses that she lacks a sexually suggestive figure. […]'[116]

In light of Clarke's point, it is interesting to use Ruby's character to expose the differences between her and Temple's conception of sexuality. In the passage below, Ruby addresses Temple:

> "Oh, I know your sort," the woman said. "Honest women. Too good to have anything to do with common people. You'll slip out at night with the kids, but just let a man come along." She turned the meat. "Take all you can get, and give nothing. 'I'm a pure girl; I dont do that. You'll slip out with the kids and burn their gasoline and eat their food, but just let a man so much as look at you and you faint away because your father the judge and your four brothers might not like it. (*SAN* 57)

[113] Ibid. p. 593.
[114] Beauvoir, *The Prime of Life*, p.150.
[115] Clarke, *Robbing the Mother: Women in Faulkner,* p. 52.
[116] Ibid. p. 64.

Ruby distinguishes her social and moral position from Temple's, as she believes Temple is still caged within her patriarchal background. Ruby, on the other hand, chooses to become a prostitute. As Clarke argues:

> The women are particularly threatened by Ruby because they see in her the fragility of their own positions. The only thing separating her from them is marriage. Giving her body without demanding legal marital status in return sets a dangerous precedent by undermining the institution which determines women's place. Thus she presents the possibility of women losing their primary legal, social, and personal identity and being relegated to bodies.[117]

Clarke's argument exposes Temple's fragile social position in relation to Ruby. However, Temple eventually subverts her social positioning and challenges her identity by her perjury in court. Temple demonstrates here an existentialist choice in giving false testimony in naming Goodwin as Tommy's killer and her rapist. As argued earlier, Temple's choice not to run away from Popeye creates a position of freedom. Equally, Temple's perjury is another choice, a way to control her fate and ultimate if unhappy freedom. Similarly, through the Feminist approach and Beauvoir's take on the notion of the body as part of an ontological process of *becoming* and thus a form of freedom - it becomes clear that Faulkner is also engaged in various forms of social critique.

Linking Feminist and existentialist discourse highlights common elements in Faulkner's work. By aligning existentialist concepts such as *transcendence* and *consciousness* with Feminist concepts, such as *sexual difference*, crucial intersections emerge. Through the existentialist reading of Temple's actions, and the notion of the body, a sense of existentialist freedom stems from her choices. Equally, the important influence of de Beauvoir's existentialist standpoint to feminist theory is also highlighted. The body is seen by both Sartre and de Beauvoir as a metaphor for the external and the physical, as 'the body is always seen in relation to the external'. The importance of the external or the physical act to Sartre in relation to Faulkner is thus manifested visually and sexually by Temple.

Sartre's ontological framework was used in order to examine concepts such as *consciousness*, as part of *being* – with its two interconnected manifestations, the physical and the metaphysical. The metaphysical included

[117] Ibid. p. 57.

the concepts of *freedom*, *choice* and *bad faith* as well as the physical act, which included Sartre's appreciation of the external and physical in Faulkner's work. In other words, the underlying motivation for action is to be found in the nature of consciousness, which is a crucial part of being. In light of this, the focus on existentialist criticism illuminates some of the reasons why Faulkner was accepted by the French. Nevertheless, the French position remained paradoxical, since they argued on the one hand that they needed to adopt a new, physical, non-realistic form of literature, a rejection of the old 'intellectual' French literature and yet they adopted Faulkner's literature in order to reinforce their own literature, which they considered superior. Sartre especially projected his own existential philosophy upon Faulkner's literature and in effect 'used' Faulkner to promote his own ideas. The historical circumstances of war fuelled a self-reflective analysis, which soon gave way to self-doubt. This, in turn, partly explains the appeal of American literature, as it reflected the changing times.

Most crucially, the existentialist perspective paved the way for dominant future American criticisms (from the 1950s onwards) to concentrate on other elements of Faulkner's work such as form and technique and themes such as alienation and freedom. My argument in the next chapter will be to compare and find common elements in American critical readings of form and technique, mainly from the 1950s onwards, with Sartre's conception of consciousness.

Chapter Two

William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* (1930) – Aesthetic Consciousness: form and technique

In the last chapter *consciousness* was analyzed in relation to *choice*, *intentionality*, and nature of being in order to illuminate the applicability of Existentialist theory to the work of Faulkner. In this chapter, the key concept of consciousness will be developed further by applying it directly to Faulkner's form and technique, including narrative structure, point of view and perspective. The analysis of Faulkner's technique and form will thus be viewed as a direct reflection of an existential consciousness that parallels Sartre's definition of consciousness. As a result, the twining of the concept of consciousness with literary technique will question the notion of reality and locale in Faulkner's work. The emerging argument will demonstrate that by drawing out the ontological perspective in Faulkner's writing, Faulkner's writings can also be seen as visual. In effect, the existential reading complements and magnifies the visual aspects of Faulkner's writing.

This chapter will thus analyse the notion of fragmentation of form and technique in relation to *As I Lay Dying* and how Faulkner's use of consciousness can be defined in existentialist terms. Faulkner's techniques such as multiple viewpoints and geometric patterns will illustrate the notion of fragmented form. Thus, the aim is to highlight the dislocation and disruption of form, which echoes the attempt to render a disoriented reality in Faulkner's fiction. The disruption of form in Faulkner thus mimics metaphorically, existentialist consciousness and fragmentation of being. There are several aspects of consciousness, which will be identified: *being–for– itself* (être pour–soi) and *being–in– itself* (être–en-soi), *contingency*, *facticity,* and *negation.* The emblematic image of the coffin in *As I Lay Dying*, will be analysed in relation to the varied elements of consciousness, in order to express a fragmentation of form and existentialist angst in relation to Faulkner's use of multiple

perspectives. Moreover, the coffin will also be seen to symbolize the exteriority of the fragmented form as well as the notion of death. The character of Darl, in this context, will be seen to embody the existentialist crisis of consciousness. Through a close analysis of textual form in *As I Lay Dying* these issues will become more apparent as will the concepts of *anguish*, *facticity*, and the *absurd*. The emphasis on the application of these existential concepts amplifies the importance of form and technique in Faulkner's fiction, not only as an aesthetic device but as an ontologically determined narrative.

EXISTENCE

In 1932, Faulkner said:

> '[…] it does sort of amuse me when I hear 'em talking about the sociological picture that I present in something like *As I Lay Dying*, for instance.' [118]

Faulkner's comment is significant, as it indicates that he had no intention to generate a socio/realistic reading of his work. The move away from social reality is evident in Peter's Swiggart's criticism from 1962 as he argues that 'in *As I Lay Dying* there is little if any social meaning to be derived from the action. The Bundrens live in virtual isolation, without a significant past and without a sense of any social role to be maintained in the world's face.'[119]

One of the early prominent critics who dealt with style as the core subject in the novel was Olga W. Vickery. Her criticism of *As I Lay Dying* was first published in the Journal *Perspective* in 1950.[120] In her study, Vickery – unlike many critics of the time - discusses the importance of imagination and focuses on levels of consciousness in relation to the various characters, with a particular in-depth character analysis.[121] From the outset, Vickery points to how, '[...] the language of the unconscious relies heavily on symbols with

[118] William Faulkner, *Lion in the Garden: Interviews with William Faulkner,* p. 220.

[119] Peter Swiggart, *The Art of Faulkner's Novels* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962), p. 109.

[120] I use the revised study of Olga W. Vickery's 1964 book, *The Novels of William Faulkner: A Critical Interpretation* (Louisiana State University Press, 1964)

[121] For early criticism on Faulkner's style see Warren Beck, 'William Faulkner's Style', *American Prefaces*, Vol. VI, No. 3, Spring (1941), pp. 195-211.

their power to evoke rather than to define reality.'[122] Vickery's early questioning of the importance of reality and her attempt to, in effect, reconstruct Faulkner's fictional reality by piecing together both narrative and characters' roles is crucial. According to Arthur F. Kinney, facts as part of this questioned reality also take on a new and different meaning as 'the final focus is never on source as it is never on fact, but is rather on the perception of fact or the alternative ways of seeing facts. This is where truth finally lies for Faulkner, in fiction as in life […]'[123]

Part of the 'alternative' way to see facts was offered by Panthea Reid Broughton in her study, *William Faulkner: The Abstract and the Actual* (1974), in which she views Faulkner's fiction from the point of view of the abstract. She argues that Faulkner mixes 'concrete with the abstract, the finite with the infinite.'[124] The abstract is linked to art, and life to concrete reality.[125] Broughton's notion of concrete reality could be linked to existentialist thought, as concrete reality in Faulkner is viewed as an all-consuming process that ultimately leads to a questioning of existence. As discussed in the last chapter, Sartre's dictum: 'existence precedes essence', could thus be seen as the core of an existentialist process in Faulkner's fiction.

It is also precisely this point, of 'existence precedes essence', which Sartre recognised in his essay: *William Faulkner's Sartoris* (1932)[126]:

> With the necessary perspective, good novels come to resemble completely natural phenomena; one tends to forget that they have authors, one accepts them as one does trees, because they are present, because they exist. *Light in August* is one of these hermetic, mineral-like works. One does not accept *Sartoris* in just this way, and that is what makes this book so precious. Faulkner reveals himself in it; his hand and his craft are easily discernable throughout. [127]

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[122] Vickery, *The Novels of William Faulkner: A critical Interpretation*, p. 51.

[123] Arthur F. Kinney, *Faulkner's Narrative Poetics: Style as Vision* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1978), p.8. In a similar fashion, Patricia's O. White study of Beckett and existentialism, questions the nature of reality and places Beckett within the context of consciousness: 'Beckett, like many contemporary writers, doubts the reality of society. He can be certain of only the personal experience of his own consciousness. As an artist he seeks to give shape or definition to the nothingness, which he perceives. In, Patricia O. White, 'Existential Man In Beckett's Fiction', *Critique*, 12:2 (1970), pp. 39-49, p. 40.

[124] Panthea Reid Broughton, *William Faulkner: The Abstract and the Actual* (Louisiana State University press, 1974), p. 36.

[125] Ibid. p. 37.

[126] Jean- Paul Sartre, 'William Faulkner's Sartoris', (1938) *Yale French Studies*, No.10, French –American Literary Relationships (1952), pp. 95-99.

[127] Ibid. p. 95.

Sartre's essay reflects both an appreciation and criticism of Faulkner's fiction, resulting in a slightly contradictory argument. Sartre complements Faulkner's *Light in August* (1932), calling it 'mineral like' – meaning that Faulkner's fiction is like a natural object with essential qualities that are similar to that of being-in-itself [a non-conscious being]. In other words, Faulkner's fiction could be construed as part of 'being' in the world and as such possesses existentialist qualities.

In his essay, Sartre singles out Faulkner's fiction as a 'natural phenomena'. The above quote is highly significant as it demonstrates Sartre's existentialist interpretation of Faulkner's work. For Sartre, Faulkner's fiction is construed as a separate 'living' unit, a form of being, 'being-in-itself', in other words, an object of existence. Similar to the description of 'mineral like' quality, Sartre compares Faulkner's fiction to trees, 'one accepts them as one does trees', his ultimate example of being-in-itself.[128] Sartre locates the most crucial aspect of his philosophy in Faulkner's fiction as he views Faulkner's writing as part of the experience of being and existence on the whole, since the dynamics of existence include the invisible interplay of being-for-itself and being-in-itself. Being-in-itself, relates generally to the world of objects, a non-conscious being, and being-for-itself more akin to state of existing as a human being with a free flowing consciousness. Both forms are metaphorically presented in Sartre's quote. On the one hand, Faulkner's fiction is described as an object (mineral like and trees) by Sartre, which indicates a stable and fixed entity. On the other, Sartre's own [the reader's point of view] free-flowing subjective interpretation of Faulkner's text can be seen as (being-for-itself), a human consciousness free, constantly evolving and responsible for its own existence.

The contradictory aspect of Sartre's reading of Faulkner can be seen in the following quote:

> Here is, then, the man he [Faulkner] presents to us, and whom he wishes us to accept. This man eludes us. One cannot grasp him through his gestures, which are only a façade, nor through his stories, which are fabrications, nor through his acts, lightning flashes, which defy description. Yet beyond the acts and the words, beyond the empty

[128] Among the group of 'objects', which Sartre includes are: rocks, paper-knifes and trees. All discussed in Sartre's, *Existentialism and Humanism* (1948), the chestnut tree can be found in Sartre's *Nausea* (1938).

> consciousness, the man exists. We have a presentiment of a true drama, a kind of intelligible symbol, which explains everything.[129]

Sartre criticises Faulkner for not telling or revealing enough in his narratives: 'There is a certain formula: it consists in not telling, remaining hidden, dishonestly secretive, - telling *a little*.'[130] Part of this shortage according to Sartre, is Faulkner's lack of description when it comes to narrative 'acts'. Instead, Faulkner only reveals 'gestures', which may include: 'tennis, piano, whiskey, conversation'[131] However, Sartre does stress that these gestures illustrate a form of consciousness: 'They speak, they reflect upon themselves, they stir'[132]. Yet in the above quote, paradoxically, Sartre moves away from his critique of Faulkner's lack of description back to an appreciative observation: 'Yet beyond the acts and the words, beyond the empty consciousness, the man exists. We have a presentiment of a true drama, a kind of intelligible symbol, which explains everything.[133] Sartre highlights the most important aspect of Faulkner's fiction and that is pure existence. It is the basic exploration of existence and its projection through narrative and characters, which Sartre is most appreciative of.

The metaphysical concern with existence takes precedence in Faulkner's drama, which according to Sartre, is not always clear or well defined: 'decline of race or of the family' […] 'a repressed sexual urge', as '[…] often Faulkner fails to inform us about it'[134]. Nonetheless, these realistic moments of drama are not Sartre's main concern because 'what concerns [Faulkner] is rather the "nature" of this new being he suggests to us: a nature preëminently [sic] poetical and magical, whose contradictions are numerous but veiled.'[135] Sartre's concern is existence, but what also concerns him is the imaginative exploration of existentialist dilemmas. In other words, Sartre's focus is on the imaginative use and interpretation of form as an alternative take on reality through the prism of existentialist thought. Moreover, it is the questioning of what reality is in Faulkner's fiction, through the identification of existentialist

[129] Sartre, 'Sartoris', p. 98
[130] Ibid.p.95.
[131] Ibid.p.96.
[132] Ibid.p.95.
[133] Ibid.p.95.
[134] Ibid.p.98.
[135] Ibid.p.98.

elements, which proves the importance of imagination in Faulkner's fiction. Thus while Sartre begins his essay by critiquing the lack of information, towards the end he embraces what he calls Faulkner's sense of obscurity: 'He [Faulkner] dreams of an absolute obscurity in the very depth of the "conscious," of a complete obscurity that we should ourselves create within ourselves.'[136]

However, the sense of 'obscurity' and the importance of 'brute existence' in Faulkner's fiction, as acknowledged by Sartre, constitutes yet another crucial facet. Existence is also concerned with the dynamics of interplay between the interior and the exterior. The harshness of existence cannot be viewed from the outside but must be conveyed from the inside. Ralph A. Ciancio refers to this in his important yet overlooked paper on Faulkner and existentialism, 'Faulkner's Existentialist Affinities' (1961)[137]. Ciancio links Faulkner's style to existentialist thought and emphasises the importance of existentialism to art. Ciancio's is the only critical paper I have found that relates Faulkner to the aesthetic aspects of existentialism. Yet Ciancio does not fully expand on how to use existentialist concepts in relation to Faulkner's work. According to Ciancio:

> The concrete experience of being-in-the-world-together-with-others is the Existentialist primordial datum, his starting point […] not by standing aloof from the world, but by actively deepening his experience of it; not by reflecting on it, but by boring into it with his total self. [138]

According to Ciancio, the progression of the self reaches its full potential through a relationship with others. In existential terms, the being, of 'being-for-itself' (consciousness), is in a constant mode of changing, negating the irrelevant through individual choices. A being cannot be passive but must reach his ultimate experience through action. So, this all - consuming sense of consciousness seen as 'The transcending for-itself'[139], is difficult to articulate

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[136] Ibid.p.99.

[137] Ralf A. Ciancio, *Faulkner's Existentialist Affinities,* 'Studies in Faulkner', 6, Carnegie Series in English, (Freeport, New York: Books for Library Press, 1961), pp. 70-91.

[138] Ciancio, *Faulkner's Existentialist Affinities,* p. 71. Ciancio highlights the similarities between art and existentialist thought which deals with concrete experience. Both art and existentialism 'allow the world to reveal itself as a totality.' p.73.

[139] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness- An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology,* trans. Hazel E. Barnes (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 650. First published, *L'Être et le néant* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1943).

in a fictional terms. The solution, I would argue, is a more metaphoric visual output, a way to express existential dilemmas. As Bruce F Kawin puts it: 'The essence of the literature of consciousness is that it presents thought in written form. But the problem is that conscious activity is not always linguistic; it can include visual impressions, […] to which words feel inadequate […]'[140]. Even though Kawin does not refer directly to existentialist consciousness, but to a fictional aspect of consciousness, it nevertheless can be read through the prism of existentialism. What Kawin indicates is that the image provides an alternative means to capture ontological moments and to thus render the individual dilemmas of existence.

The image in Faulkner, then, has a twofold role. It firstly subverts Southern reality in Faulkner's fiction, and secondly, it could be read as a vehicle for existentialist consciousness. As Broughton suggests, abstraction in Faulkner's fiction helps to 'transcend his material'[141] Similarly, the concept of consciousness is always seen as, 'the transcending for – itself,'[142] since it is always conscious of something (object), this fleeting, transcending mode of being is, as we will see, best captured through the metaphoric image. As I will demonstrate in the next section, the image of the coffin in *As I Lay Dying* symbolises on the one hand a form of concrete reality and at the same time a transcending being-for-itself (consciousness). The fragmentation of form stems partly from the symbolic role of the coffin, which represents on the one hand, the notion of form as an external manifestation of reality, (being-in-itself) and on the other, the internality of form manifested in consciousness, (being-for-itself). Through the image of the coffin, Faulkner manages to capture moments of consciousness by using a visual image and techniques such as multiple perspective to enhance and create both fragmentation and dislocation of form.

[140] Bruce F. Kawin, *The Mind of the Novel – Reflexive Fiction and the Ineffable* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 251.
[141] Broughton, *William Faulkner: The Abstract and the Actual,* p.37.
[142] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p.650.

DEATH AND FRAGMENTATION OF FORM

In an interview with Jean Stein, Faulkner stressed the importance of technique in *As I Lay Dying*[143]:

> Sometimes technique charges in and takes command of the dream before the writer himself can get his hands on it. That is *tour de force* and the finished work is simply a matter of fitting bricks neatly together, since the writer knows probably every single word right to the end before he puts the first one down. This happened with *As I Lay Dying*.[144]

According to Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying* was *a priori* a fragmented narrative, culminating in the entire novel being divided into fifty-nine monologues spoken by fifteen narrators: 'Each fragment is a consciousness, a peculiar eloquence, a way of seeing and saying, […] trying to articulate the temporary magic of design.' [145] Yet each individual part is integrated into a unified whole. Faulkner's use of fragmented form not only highlights the physical attributes of characters, text and settings, but also presents the importance of the physicality of form. Physicality of form is exemplified in Faulkner by the concreteness of forms, highlighted in the heaviness of the coffin, the geometrical descriptions and by the very use of fragmentation, which makes one aware of the heaviness of objects and equally the feelings of mortality and death. Through the non-linear narrative and unreliable narrator there is 'a deliberate attempt to capture the human processes of thought and growth which are never one dimensional, but which oscillate, expand, contract, retrogress, mobilize, partially atrophy, proceed erratically'.[146] Thus, the multiplicity of form, like life itself, is seen as convoluted and indefinable. As Calvin Bedient argues, Faulkner's indefinable use of form can be defined as 'opaque', and as a result a form of 'patternlessness': 'The problem is that it can be discussed endlessly, since its patternlessness results, not in emptiness, but precisely in a continuous, turgid thickness of meaning, the significant

[143] William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying* (1930), (Vintage, 1996), hereafter abbreviated AS and cited parenthetically by page number.
[144] Faulkner, *Lion In the Garden*, p. 244.
[145] Donald M. Kartiganer, *The Fragile Thread: The Meaning of Form in Faulkner's Novels* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1979), p. xviii.
[146] Kinney, *Faulkner's Narrative Poetics: Style As Vision,* p. 5.

indefiniteness of life itself.'[147] Interestingly, Michael Kaufmann also uses the term 'opaque', but in a different context:

> The visible surface of the text calls attention to itself as a representation. The physical text is at once "opaque," as it calls attention to its printed surface, and "transparent," as it purports to show the world of the narrative. The repeated phrases and words call attention to and make opaque the textual surface, darkening it and making it difficult to see through; at the same time, the use of the present tense in many sections fosters transparency, encourages the readers to see through the textual surface to the events apparently transpiring right before their eyes. [148]

Kaufmann points out the importance of form, and the relationship between the printed form and the narrative. The opaqueness of the printed text creates an alternative view of the narrative's reality: 'The contradictory nature of the novel derives from Faulkner's attempt to *create* a reality – as other modernist artists did – rather than simply *represent* one.'[149] This is a crucial point: Faulkner's attempt to recreate his reality is manifested paradoxically through the fragmentation and accentuation of form itself.

The 'thickness of meaning' with its opaque nature in Faulkner's text suggests both concepts of life and death. The binding theme and core subject of the novel is the death of Addie Bundren and her funeral procession to the town of Jefferson. The difficult subject matter is directly expressed through the fragmented form and technique, as death and life are set side by side through an intermingled journey, 'a journey through life to death and through death to life.'[150] This interaction is symbolically multifaceted and fractured. As Ciancio suggests, the close proximity of life and death can equally be applied to existential thought. According to Heidegger:

> Death is a presence-not something confronted in the future, […] Man is bounded by death; it is a part of the structure of his existence […] It is also the inexorable termination of man's drive to complete himself, the impossibility of possibilities. Facing death, however, man becomes cognizant of the salient characteristic of his existence – its finiteness and begins to understand his existence.[151]

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[147] Bedient, 'Pride and Nakedness: As I Lay Dying', p. 262.
[148] Michael Kaufmann, 'The Textual Coffin and the Narrative Corpse of As I Lay Dying', *Arizona Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No.1 (1993), pp. 99-116, p.104.
[149] Ibid.p.99. See the following criticism on form in Faulkner's work: Warren Beck, 'William Faulkner's Style,' in *Faulkner: Essays* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), pp.34-51; J.E. Bunselmeyer, 'Faulkner's Narrative Style', in *American Literature*, 53, No.3 (November, 1981), pp. 424-42; Lothar Hönnighausen, *William Faulkner: The Art of Stylization in his Early Graphic and Literary Work* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
[150] Hyatt H. Waggoner, *William Faulkner: From Jefferson to the World* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1959), p.62.
[151] Quoted in Ciancio, *Faulkner's Existentialist Affinities,* p.79.

To expand Heidegger's point, John Macquarrie breaks down the concept of death and outlines the tension between the possibility of death, its projection into the future, and *facticity*. The term facticity can be defined as one's individual past, but it also holds a complex meaning in relation to existence:

> possibility is directed to the future, to the 'not yet'; facticity, on the other hand, concerns what has been, the 'already'. From the very beginning of life, the human existent is already in the situation of mortality. He is always old enough to die.'[152]

In other words, death is part of the 'human condition' as it is situated in the future, therefore, all decisions are made in the shadow of death as 'death is seen as the supreme possibility of human existence, the one to which all others are subordinated. All our possibilities are, so to speak, spread out in front of death.'[153]

In *As I Lay Dying,* Faulkner manages to encapsulate various aspects of death: Addie's approaching foreseeable death, the moment of death itself, and the journey of the burial. Death is in a sense the star of the show but it is life, side by side with death, which is the dominant factor in Faulkner's narrative. As André Bleikasten argues: '*As I Lay Dying* works from the start with the double paradox of a dying life and an active death.'[154]

The focus on life in the shadow of death can be related to Sartre's conception of death:

> Death haunts me at the very heart of each of my projects as their inevitable reverse side. But precisely because this "reverse" is to be assumed not as *my* possibility but as the possibility that there are for me no longer any possibilities, it does not penetrate me [….] Death is not an obstacle to my projects; it is only a destiny of these projects elsewhere. And this is not because death does not limit my freedom but because freedom never encounters this limit. I am not 'free to die,' but I am a free mortal.' [155]

Death is a fact and is constantly present it is almost ignored although not forgotten. Rather, death is seen as a constant reminder that existence is the centre point from which to make life choices and avoid *bad faith*. Death is not seen as a form of *nothingness,* but perceived as giving a sense of urgency to *being-for-itself*, to choose and live existentially. 'In Sartre's view, death, like

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[152] John Macquarrie*, An Introduction, Guide and Assessment-Existentialism* (New York: Penguin Books, 1972),p. 197.
[153] Ibid. p. 196.
[154] André Bleikasten, *Faulkner's As I Lay Dying,* trans. Roger Little (Bloominton: Indiana University Press, 1973), p. 115.
[155] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 568.

birth, is a facticité, contingent, mindless, and as such beneath contempt.'[156] This is similar to Heidegger's position in which death was viewed in relation to the life of an individual and his unchangeable past. If, as Redfern points out, death, according to Sartre is equal to *facticity,* facticity is a form of the past that one cannot change and as such it should not become the focal point for life. In fact, 'For Sartre death has no special importance in itself – it is just the final absurdity, neither more nor less absurd than life itself. Death comes along 'into the bargain', as he expresses it.'[157]

THE COFFIN AS AN EXISTENTIALIST OBJECT

My argument singles out the coffin in *As I Lay Dying* in order to examine it as an emblem of existentialist consciousness with a particular relationship to the notion of death. The metaphoric position of the coffin will be analysed in the context of Faulkner's use of form, and more specifically through the fragmentation of form within the novel as a whole. In this context, the coffin will be analysed as fragmented both physically and ontologically through the metaphoric collision of being-for-itself and being-in-itself. The characters, Vardaman and Cash, exemplify in different ways a fragmented relation to the coffin, which will in turn situate the coffin as an existentialist object.

This existentialist duality of life and death is captured when Addie's coffin is complete:

> It is light, yet they move slowly; empty, yet they carry it carefully; lifeless, yet they move with hushed precautionary words to one another, speaking of it as though, complete, it now slumbered *lightly alive, waiting to come awake.* On the dark floor their feet clump awkwardly, as though for a long time they have not walked on floors. (my emphasis *AS* 73)

Faulkner juxtaposes life side by side with death or 'lightly alive,' a duality, which is a recurrent pattern throughout the novel. Here, life equals action, and the plot focuses on action and mobility in light of Addie's death rather then passive immobility. Existential action is personified by the funeral

[156] Walter Redfern, 'Praxis and Parapraxis: Sartre's "Les Mur"', in Harold Bloom (ed.), *Modern Critical Views: Jean –Paul Sartre* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2001), pp. 149-159, p.151.
[157] Macquarrie, *An Introduction, Guide and Assessment-Existentialism,* p.198.

procession, the action of building Addie's coffin, and the physical attempt to rescue the coffin from the river. Even the title of the novel indicates a continuous action according to Bruce F. Kawin:

> "As" is process, a continuity of being and doing. "I" is the mind of the novel. "Lay" suggests that the novel's consciousness-complex and its process are being viewed from some exterior perspective; […] "Dying" unites "as" and "lay" in perfect ambiguity, since it could refer to a finished or an unfinished process […], and links "I" to Addie, since she is the only character in the novel who dies. [158]

The various perceptions of death and the notion of physical and emotional fragmentation are illustrated in the subjective relation of the characters to the physical coffin. Vardaman cannot accept or understand Addie's death. The thought of Addie suffocating in the coffin alarms him: '[…] " Are you going to nail her up in it, Cash? Cash? Cash? " ' (*AS* 59). The thought of suffocation arises simultaneously with Vardaman's memory of himself being trapped in a crib: 'I got shut up in the crib the new door it was too heavy for me it went shut I couldn't breathe because the rat was breathing up all the air.' (*AS* 59) Vardaman also mixes his mother's death with the death of a fish, which he had caught earlier: ' I can feel where the fish was in the dust. It is cut up into pieces of not-fish now, not-blood on my hands and overalls.' (*AS* 48) Later on he expresses the underlying idea in a simple statement: 'My mother is a fish' (*AS* 76). The technique of the interior monologue exposes Vardaman's disconnected thoughts and interior conflicts and projects them onto a visual image. Vardaman's painful bereavement develops into a confusion between the dead fish, a feeling of suffocation and Addie's death, all of which materialize into a disintegrated reality, as Tull narrates Vardaman's action:

> And the next morning they found him in his shirt-tail laying asleep on the floor like a felled steer, and the top of the box bored clean full of holes and Cash's new auger broke off in the last one. When they taken the lid off they found that two of them had bored on into her face (*AS* 66)

Vardaman envisages that Addie is suffocating in her coffin, which drives him to bore holes in her coffin so she will be able to breath, but in the process he bores holes in her face. The breaking down of the object (coffin) as well as the damaged human form creates a collision of consciousness, as the object could be existentially viewed as a being–in-itself, a non-conscious being, which is

[158] Bruce F. Kawin, *The Mind of the Novel – Reflexive Fiction and the Ineffable*, p.271.

defined and determined and as a result unable to change, 'It is a plenitude, and strictly speaking we can say of it only that it is.'[159] Thus it takes the being-for-itself, the human consciousness, to 'activate' so to speak, the in-itself and evoke illusion of transcendence between the two forms of being. In this respect, the coffin, which is constructed of wood, is defined as being-in-itself precisely because it is an object caught in a fixed and unchangeable mode, and it takes the form of being-for-itself (Vardaman) to create an interaction between the two states of being:

> It was not her because it was laying right yonder in the dirt. And now it's all chopped up. I chopped it up. It's laying in the kitchen in the bleeding pan, waiting to be cooked and et. Then it wasn't and she was, and now it is and she wasn't. And to-morrow it will be cooked and et and she will be him and pa and Cash and Dewey Dell and there won't be anything in the box and so she can breathe. (*AS* 60)

Vardaman represents here being-for-itself (consciousness), and since consciousness is always consciousness of something, (the coffin) he is able to reflect on Addie's death by focusing on the object that is the coffin. This interaction between being-in-itself, and being-for-itself, is part of the invisible process of being. The fictional action of boring holes in the coffin symbolises the synthesis of both states of being, representing action by the for-itself, and the transformation of the in-itself (coffin), into a new transcended form of being.

The coffin has another symbolic function in that it represents a form of *contingency*. The various relations of the characters to the coffin unravel different levels of contingency. Defined by Sartre, 'In the For-itself this equals facticity, the brute fact of being *this* For-itself in the world.'[160] In other words, contingency in existential terms relates back to the idea of existence, *because* there is no clear reason for us to be in the world or pre –essence to our existence, we all live in a form of contingency. As Sartre illustrates in *Nausea* (which will be discussed at length in the next chapter) when an individual recognizes his own contingency, his own incidental reason to be in the world, that realization can produce nausea. Nausea can be defined as: 'The "taste" of the facticity and contingency of existence; "A dull and inescapable nausea

[159] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 650.
[160] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p.651

perpetually reveals my body to my consciousness."[161] Thus, the coffin evokes in Vardaman a recognition of his own contingency which produces a form of nausea. The analogy of the fish – so instrumental in *As I Lay Dying* - can be found in Sartre's *Nausea,* as the character Roquentin, confuses his own hand with that of a fish:

> My hand turns over, spreads itself out on its belly, and now it is showing me its back. A silvery, somewhat shiny back – you might think it was a fish, if it weren't for the red hairs near the knuckles. I feel my hand.' (*Nausea* 144)

Following on from Sartre's example of the hand as an indirect projection of contingency, another key implication of contingency is the relationship between the body, Vardaman and the coffin. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre stresses the relationship of the 'Other's body' as a form of physical projection of contingency:

> The flesh is the pure contingency of presence. It is ordinarily hidden by clothes, make-up, the cut of the hair or beard, the expression, *etc.* But in the course of long acquaintance with a person there always comes an instant when all these disguises are thrown off and when I find myself in the presence of the pure *contingency of his presence.* In this case I achieve in the face or the other parts of a body the pure intuition of flesh. This intuition is not only knowledge; it is the affective apprehension of an absolute contingency, and this apprehension is a particular type of *nausea*.[162]

The reduction of the body into flesh creates a form of contingency as the fragility of existence is revealed. Vardaman manages to experience a similar contingency by the very physical act of boring holes in Addie's face. Sartre's contingency of the body could be compared to Vardaman's physical experience of Addie's fragmented body, where the body is reduced to flesh and blood. Furthermore, like Roquentin's morphing process of body into fish, Faulkner enhances this process between Vardaman (being-for-itself), fish and Addie, through the use of fragmented narrative. The discontinuous narrative echoes the metaphysical transcendence of Vardaman's point of view. The validation of Vardaman's discontinuous mental encounter with the fish is backed up by Dewey's narration as well:

> I light the kitchen lamp. The fish, cut into jagged pieces, bleeds quietly in the pan. I put it into the cupboard quick, listening into the hall, hearing. It took her ten days to die; Maybe she won't go until Cash. Or maybe until Jewel. I take the dish of

[161] Ibid. p.653.
[162] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 367.

> greens from the cupboard and the bread-pan from the cold stove, and I stop, watching the door. (*AS* 53)

Dewey's narration objectifies Vardaman's very subjective experience of himself, the coffin and Addie. The acknowledgement of the fish being cut is also associated with Addie's death. This indicates that Vardaman's conception of Addie's death is not an imaginary act but based on reality. The actual confusion of all the elements indicates a specific form of contingency and subjective interpretation unique to Vardaman's being-for-itself (human consciousness) experience.

Vardaman's experience involves the metaphoric materialization of the coffin and the body. The coffin represents an exteriority of form in relation to death and the flesh and corpse of Addie accentuates the interiority of the coffin. André Bleikasten highlights the image of the corpse as the link between life and death:

> It is precisely the *corpse* which offers us the most arresting image of the impossible separation of life and death. In the corpse, death becomes visible and reveals itself as the degradation of the human body into an inert object. A fascinating object, certainly, insofar as "the corpse is its own image," linked with living flesh in a relationship of perfect resemblance and absolute difference; a disquieting and distressing object which materializes the unreal and gives absence a face; an incongruous object, too, as if come from elsewhere, and one which is *de trop* in our world.[163]

Bleikasten describes the corpse as an independent object set in between two worlds. At the same time, the independent image signifies a form of *de trop.* Bleikasten does not expand on the existential concept of *de trop,* however, it is important to broaden this crucial concept. Similar to the concept of *contingency, de trop,* also signifies the notion of a contingent, gratuitous, meaningless existence. De trop is also described by Sartre in relation to the body and flesh as something superfluous in *Nausea*:

> Superfluous, my corpse, my blood on these pebbles, between these plants, in the depths of this charming park. And the decomposed flesh would have been superfluous in the earth which would have received it, and my bones, finally, cleaned, stripped, neat and clean as teeth, would also have been superfluous; I was superfluous for all time.' (*Nausea* 184-5)

[163] André Bleikasten, *Faulkner's As I Lay Dying*, p. 116. Bleikasten quotes Maurice Blanchot in *L'Espace Littéraire* (Gallimard, 1968) p.351.

The notion of a decomposition of the body exposes the idea of existence as contingent or as de trop. The process of decomposition is captured with the slow rotting process of Addie's body. The rotting may indicate Faulkner's attempt to delay death by prolonging the journey of the burial. Moreover, it may also symbolically expose Faulkner's own attitude to death. Hamblin and Peek argue that 'for Faulkner the ultimate meaning is to be found not in the fact of death but in the heroic resistance to that fate.'[164] The grotesque element of the decomposed body, is highlighted by Bleikasten:

> They [the Bundrens] are too absorbed by their immediate task to realize how shocking the unduly prolonged presence of a rotting corpse may be to others; they even forget its nauseating smell, which attracts buzzards and repels people. To this guileless scorn of decorum and convention, this obstinate failure of realization, this seemingly unruffled innocence in the face of death the story owes much of its baffling extravagance'. [165]

Similarly, Eric Sundquist argues that the novel itself could be seen as a corpse: 'The logic thus presents itself of speaking of the novel too as a corpse, as a narrative whose form is continually on the verge of decomposition and whose integrity is retained only by heroic imaginative effort.'[166]

In contrast to Vardaman's emotional fragmentation, Cash's relation to the coffin and Addie's death is clinical and physical. His narrative concentrates on his *choice* of making the coffin. The following numerical passage reflects a very practical and systematic thought process, expressed here through the construction and deconstruction of the coffin, signifying yet another form of fragmentation. The form of description is presented in numbers from 1 to 13, which gives the text itself a vertical rather than horizontal shape:

I MADE it on the bevel.
1. There is more surface for the nails to grip.
2. There is twice the gripping-surface to each seam.
3. The water will have to seep into it on a slant.
   Water moves easiest up and down or straight across.
4. In a house people are upright two-thirds
of the time. So the seams and joints are made up-and-down. Because the stress is up-and-down. (AS 75)

[164] Robert W. Hamblin and Charles A. Peek (eds.), *A William Faulkner Encyclopedia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), p.93.
[165] Ibid. p.117.
[166] Eric Sundquist, 'Death, Grief, Analogous Form: *As I Lay Dying'*, in Michael Gorra (ed.), *As I Lay Dying, William Faulkner*, pp. 286 – 304, p. 288.

Cash's descriptions are reduced to geometrical forms, '[…] water moves easiest up and down or straight across, '[…] the joints and seams are made sideways, because the stress is sideways'. , […] A body is not square like a cross-tie.' (*AS* 75). The simultaneous interplay of various components gives each part particular importance and creates an overall image of the final object. The finished coffin, however, does not remain whole, but goes through physical and metaphorical fragmentations – almost burned in the barn fire, lost in the river, as well as carried in the long and difficult procession. The object is physically challenged, exposing the fragility of its own physical form as well as symbolizing the fragility of the characters' emotions. This is shown when the coffin is almost lost in the river, and while Jewel frantically tries to save it, Cash's own narration, on the other hand, concentrates on the position of the coffin on the wagon: ' " It won't balance. If you want it to tote and ride on a balance, we will have ---"' (*AS* 87) Thus, Cash's main concern is with the creation and maintenance of the coffin. The physical action or the process of building the coffin could be seen as existential. As Daniel J. Singal explains:

> Cash invests so much of himself in his craft because it is his sole means for securing a viable identity, for "contesting the amorphousness, the appalling anonymity of existence itself." The coffin he lovingly constructs for Addie represents a perfect example of this sort of existential gesture of self-definition. Though Cash is well aware it will soon disintegrate into oblivion, he insists on taking extra time to bevel all the seams and joints, for that is the only way he knows how […][167]

In complete contrast to Vardaman's tendency to articulate through apparently un-associated elements, Cash's main focus is on the coffin as a reconstructed object. The transformation from woodcuts to a recognized coffin shape symbolizes the need to put an order and meaning to Cash's life. It is also emblematic of existentialist action as the choice to construct the coffin indirectly focuses on existence and therefore life. In this respect, the prospect of death only magnifies the need to make choices and to take direct action in life in order to live life to its full capacity:

> Death is no longer the great unknowable which limits the human; it is the phenomenon of *my* personal life which makes of this life a unique life – that is, a life which does not begin again, a life in which one never recovers a stroke. Hence I become responsible for *my* death as for my life.' [168]

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[167] Daniel J. Singal, *William Faulkner: The Making of a Modernist* (Chapel Hill, NC. : University of North Carolina Press, 1997), p.151. Singal quotes Bedient in 'Pride and Nakedness', pp. 147-49.

[168] Sartre, *Being And Nothingness*, p. 553.

Furthermore, the reconstruction of the coffin highlights the exterior texture and form of the wood itself. Wooden imagery is recurrent as seen in the description of Jewel: '[…] his pale eyes like wood set into his wooden face, he crosses the floor in four strides with the rigid gravity of a cigar-store Indian dressed in patched overalls […]' (*AS* 1) Thus the reader becomes aware of the physicality of the coffin's texture and its ongoing construction, and equally the reconstruction of the character's point of views and its key place in the narrative. The exteriority of the wooden form is emphasized in the diagram of the coffin illustrated in the text:

> They had laid her in it reversed. Cash made it clock-shape, like this  with every joint and seam bevelled and scrubbed with the plane, tight as a drum and neat as a sewing basket, and they had laid her in it head to foot so it wouldn't crush her dress. It was her wedding dress and it had a flare-out bottom, and they had laid her head to foot in it so the dress could spread out, and they had made her a veil out of a mosquito bar so the auger holes in her face wouldn't show. (*AS* 80)

The diagram thus highlights the coffin as an essential entity, almost separate from the rest of the text, stressing its ontological and physical importance. In addition, Jewel's view of the coffin intersects with Cash's physical work: 'It's because he stays out there, right under the window, hammering and sawing on that goddamn box' (*AS* 11). As Jewel sees it, the location of the coffin's construction is important, because it takes place under Addie's window. The coffin form is compared by Eric Sundquist to the form of the novel itself:

> […] it amplifies that one by bringing into focus the relationships between body and coffin, and perhaps more notably between coffin and book, as objects of extraordinary fragility and devotion. Against flood, fire, and scavenging buzzards, the coffin, though hiding it from view, preserves its rotting cargo long enough to get it buried in Jefferson – preserves the integrity of the object it both literally contains and figuratively renders absurd *as* an object in the same way that the form of the book, elaborately pieced together, both literally contains its central event, Addie's death, and figuratively renders absurd the physical limits of that event.'[169]

Whilst Sundquist stresses the similarity between book and the coffin by exposing what is visible and equally invisible, Michael Kaufmann argues that the coffin's form highlights an 'imaginative absence' as 'the presence of the coffin is an absence that masks the blank that Addie's death leaves in the family (another "gap to fill a lack"). […] it is a blank constantly filled by each

[169] Sundquist, 'Death, Grief, Analogous Form: *As I Lay Dying',* p.301.

family member as they imagine what it is Addie "wants" of them.'[170] The exterior coffin thus takes on a paradoxical role. On one hand it is a solid reminder of death, yet at the same time, 'the presence of the coffin holds only the absence of death'[171]

Likewise the idea of an imaginative absence can be traced in Faulkner's use of visual fragmentation. Among other things, this is exemplified in the printed text, with large gaps within the words. The space within the sentence accentuates Cash's physical relation to the coffin,

> […] a good carpenter, Cash is. He holds the two planks on the trestle,
> fitted along the edges in a quarter of the finished box. He kneels and squints along the edge of them, then he lowers them and takes up the adze. A good carpenter. Addie Bundren could not want a better one, a better box to lie in. It will give her confidence and comfort. I go on to the house, followed by the Chuck Chuck Chuck of the adze. (*AS* 2)

The visual appearance of the text reveals how fundamental aspects of the narrative, such as the making and finishing of the coffin, play a substantial part in the novel. Similarly, the sound and spacing of the adze may symbolize Addie Bundren's heartbeat, which will soon fade away as death looms. The spacing in the text amplifies Cash's determination to finish the coffin and strengthens the intensity of his work. Faulkner's use of broken form distinguishes existentially the coming together of the being-for-itself (Cash) and the coffin (in itself), as both are separate and connected at the same time. They are separate because they have two distinct entities. One is a coffin (being–in-itself) and the other is Cash (human consciousness). On the other hand, they are connected because of the physical interaction between Cash and the act of constructing the object of the coffin, which as a result sees the duality of being metaphorically coming together. As *being* on the whole cannot survive without the other, one cannot separate them as isolated entities. The physicality of Cash's action and the notion of being are strengthened by how 'the unusual placement imitates visually the aural effect of the adze blade regularly and persistently smoothing the rough planks […] the description emphasizes the almost physical nature of the sound and

[170] Kaufmann, 'The Textual Coffin and The Narrative Corpse of As I Lay Dying', p. 113.
[171] Ibid. p. 113.

silence.'[172] In addition, the graphic description of the adze is set in a parallel position to the ironic description of Addie's imminent death: 'Addie Bundren could not want a better one, a better box to lie in. It will give her confidence and comfort.' (*AS* 2) The spatial composition and fragmentation of the two sentences set the ironic tone of the novel and appropriates death as its major theme. Moreover, the spatial positioning of the sentence is important as it is placed in the final sentence of the opening monologue, and as a result gives a dramatic impetus to the plot.

In preceding sections, the argument focused on the notion of fragmentation exemplified through the conflict of being. The coffin was seen as an example of the fragmented being. This fragmentation was explored through the rupture of being–between being-in-itself (the coffin) and being-for-itself (human consciousness). The duality of being was depicted through several characters, each of who had a different relation to the coffin. Vardaman's confused approach to the coffin exemplifies the notion of contingency, as reflected partially through Addie's fragmented body. On the other hand, Cash's relation to the coffin was physical and tactile. Faulkner's use of italic form, ellipsis and illustration within the text, viewed within the context of an existentialist framework, transcends mere stylistic experimentation and enables Faulkner to question the representation of reality. Faulkner's approach to reality will be looked at and scrutinized further in the next section, where the technique of multiple perspective will be closely analysed in relation to Faulkner's imaginative and existentialist take on reality.

For Faulkner the notion of a spatial and emotional fragmentation is crucial and is strengthened by his use of multiple perspective: 'Multiple perspective in *As I Lay Dying* is not merely the presentation but the subject […]'[173] Peter Swiggart argues that multiple views are, 'the same central action that systematically deprive the reader of any consistent attitude.'[174] However, from an existentialist perspective, consistency does not reflect an accurate

[172] Ibid.p.106.
[173] Kinney, *Faulkner's Narrative Poetics: Style As Vision,* p. 162.
[174] Swiggart, *The Art Of Faulkner's Novels,* p. 116.

view of the human project, as it is precisely the flux of change that most genuinely mimics the inconsistency of existence.

Simone de Beauvoir recognized the importance of technique and multiple viewpoints in Faulkner's work:

> Not only did he [Faulkner] show great skill in deploying and harmonizing multiple viewpoints, but he got inside each individual mind, setting forth its knowledge and ignorance, its moments of insincerity, its fantasies, the words it formed and the silences it kept. As a result the narrative was bathed in a *chiaroscuro*, which gave each event the greatest possible highlight and shadow. His stories appealed to us equally for their themes and for their artistic skin.[175]

This recognition of Faulkner's use of multiple perspectives, as a way to get 'inside the human mind', highlights the aesthetic appreciation both de Beauvoir and Sartre had of Faulkner's writing. Ralph A. Ciancio study of existentialist motifs in Faulkner's work repeatedly concentrates on the 'totality' or 'comprehensiveness' of the 'whole' experience: 'primordial experience, everything is carried along and seen in the light of the whole.'[176] Ciancio points to Faulkner's use of multiple point of view, and stresses the 'comprehensiveness' of this technique as the various angles help the reader gain a better understanding of the experience presented.[177] While Ciancio's point is crucial he provides few examples of Faulkner's work in terms of how this technique may operate, and similarly does not fully expand on the notion of 'comprehensiveness' in relation to the existentialist stance. Nonetheless, extending the link between the multiple point of view technique and the individual point of view has serious existentialist ramifications. Two main points about Faulkner's technique will be discussed. First, I will look at the process of *negation*, or, in other words, the individual process of selecting certain elements to focus on. Second, absence will be viewed as part of the *nihilating* process through consciousness (being-for-itself).

NEGATION

Crucially, Ciancio links the process of existentialist 'probing' to Faulkner's multiple- point-of-view technique and the process of negation: '[Faulkner's]

[175] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Prime of Life,* trans. Peter Green (Cleveland, Ohio:World publishing, 1962), p.149-150.
[176] Ibid. p. 73.
[177] Ibid. p.73.

use of the multiple point of view is Faulkner's circumspection, his stylistic tendency to speculate and probe.'[178] I expand this important point and argue that Faulkner's use of existentialist negation is pivotal to his conception of multiple perspective in *As I Lay Dying*.

Faulkner's technique of multiple- perspective could be divided into individual points of view and an overall simultaneous perspective. In existential terms, an individual view or perspective could be seen as part of a negating process. Sartre defined *negating* (*Négatité*) as a:

> word for types of human activity which while not obviously involving a negative judgment nevertheless contain negativity as an integral part of their structure; *e.g.,* experiences involving absence, change, interrogation, destruction.'[179]

Sartre points to the different forms of negativity that evoke from consciousness. In other words, the point of departure of consciousness is always from nothingness (*Néant*), as nothingness can be seen as a symbolic split between being-for –itself and being-in-itself. So, consciousness undergoes different types of negativity (which stems from nothingness) such as absence, change, etc. Part of the process of negation is deciding what to include or mainly exclude in a subjective perspective, which in return creates freedom of choice. This process was explored in my earlier analysis of the characters Cash and Vardmann and their relation to the coffin. Their two very different connections to the coffin, in existential terms, illustrate the notion of exclusion. Cash does not focus on the emotional aspect of Addie's death, nor on his past or memories involving Addie. As a result, his only focus is on building the coffin and on present action. Thus, his process of negation rejects all elements that he cannot relate to and instead moves on to focus on the coffin. On the other hand, Vardaman's point of departure is his emotional reaction to Addie's death. Vardaman first acknowledges Addie's absence (which is a form of exclusion) and her death. As a result, Addie's absence creates an emotional turmoil in Vardaman, and his chosen negation causes him to focus on his extreme emotion provoked by Addie's death.

[178] Ibid. p.74. Ciancio provides some short examples from Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom* (1936) and *Go Down Moses* (1942) in the context of negation.
[179] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p.653.

Thus, another significant aspect of negation rests in Faulkner's multiple perspective technique, which provides metaphoric space for each individual to negate – in other words- freedom to choose what to focus on and what to ignore. It is left to the reader to view all individual standpoints (negations) from a panoramic 'comprehensive' perspective. Faulkner's technique creates a form of existential freedom by providing each character the room to negate and as a result include or exclude relevant elements within the narrative.

As David Detmer highlights, part of the process of negating is the process of questioning, which signifies freedom of being.[180] Furthermore, Detmer calls attention to Sartre's idea that by applying questions the for-itself (consciousness) is free because he/she can choose what to concentrate on and what (more importantly) to ignore.[181] Sartre explains this notion of questioning as a means of freedom of being:

> […] every question in essence posits the possibility of a negative reply. In a question we question a being about its being or its way of being. This way of being or this being is veiled; there always remains the possibility that it may unveil itself as a Nothingness. But from the very fact that we presume that an Existent can always be revealed as *nothing*, every question supposes that we realize a nihilating withdrawal in relation to the given, which becomes a simple *presentation*, fluctuating between being and Nothingness.'[182]

Sartre stresses here the possibility that nothingness always underlies the interrogative process. By asking questions, consciousness (for-itself), evokes a *nihilating* process. The very act of questioning is a form of narrowing and specifying and by doing so, other details of the in-itself (objects) disperse or are nihilated.[183] In other words, the for-itself excludes those elements in which he or she is disinterested.

In a similar way, the multiple-point of view technique allows each character to question the same elements of the narrative from an individualised perspective. By questioning, the characters are *nihilating* what is not relevant to them, and it is through the overall multiple perspective that the reader is aware of the individual point of views and their process of exclusion.

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[180] David Detmer, *Sartre Explained: From Bad Faith to Authenticity* (Carus Publishing, 2008), p.65, Detmer links succinctly Sartre's use of asking questions as part of the process of negation and connects it to the notion of absence as a clear example of 'the powers of consciousness', p. 67.
[181] Ibid. p. 65.
[182] Ibid. p.47.
[183] Ibid. p. 65.

According to Sartre's definition of nihilation: 'Consciousness exists as consciousness by making a nothingness arise between it and the object of which it is consciousness. Thus nihilation is that by which consciousness exists.'[184] Thus Faulkner's use of multiple-perspective allows space for the reader to comprehend each individual point of view and/or their individual nihilation. The reader's awareness of the overall multiple point of view sharpens our sense of the individual. So when discussing the concept of nihilation, the character (for-itself/consciousness) creates in effect a symbolic non-visible form of nothingness.

Furthermore, the very nature of negating which results in nihilation creates a form of vacuum, an absence. Sartre gives an example of this absence:

> When I enter this café to reach for Pierre, there is formed a synthetic organization of all the objects in the café, on the ground of which Pierre is given as about to appear. This organization of the café as the ground is an original nihilation. Each element of the setting, a person, a table, a chair, attempts to isolate itself, to lift itself upon the ground constituted by the totality of the other objects, only to fall back once more into the undifferentiation of this ground; it melts into the ground. For the ground is that which is seen only in addition, that which is the object of a purely marginal attention. Thus the original nihilation of all the figures which appear and are swallowed up in the total neutrality of a *ground* is the necessary condition for the appearance of the principle figure, which is here the person of Pierre.' [185]

Sartre is looking for his friend Pierre in a cafe, he needs to exclude all objects in the room or nihilate them in order to focus and find his friend. The very act of the search evokes absence until the moment Pierre is found. In other words: 'No one object, no group of objects is especially designed to be organized as specifically either ground or figure; all depends on the direction of my *attention*.'[186] Through the specific attention or focus, Sartre manages to negate objects within the café that are not relevant to him, until the moment he finds Pierre.

In the preceding sections, I have explored how Sartre's philosophical concepts of negation and nihilation relate to *As I Lay Dying*. By focusing on these concepts, the importance of subjective consciousness is strengthened as a crucial element in Faulkner's narrative. I would now like to analyse the way

[184] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 653.
[185] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 33-34.
[186] Ibid. p. 33.

in which Faulkner's usage of multiple perspective and character point-of-view reflects Sartre's notion of human consciousness. Sartre's examples are phenomenologically based, as the focus is on the description of direct experience, and the emphasis is on the subjective interpretation of that experience. In similar terms, Faulkner's multiple perspective accentuates experience from different points of view.

Faulkner's rendering of the subjective experience of various characters can be seen in the description of the river crossing and the loss of the coffin. It is seen through simultaneous points-of-view, since the same scene is narrated by Darl, Vardaman and Vernon Tull, who describe different aspects of the same event. The river, its surroundings, and the coffin represent being-in-itself, and the characters represent different forms of consciousness, as they choose what to focus on or negate according to their perspective and emotional stance. The different points-of-view create shifts in attention and focus, as they move between close and distant perspectives. The raging river is described by Darl, for instance, in a picturesque manner:

> Before us the thick dark current runs. It talks up to us in a murmur become ceaseless and myriad, the yellow surface dimpled monstrously into fading swirls travelling along the surface for an instant, silent, impermanent and profoundly significant, as though just beneath the surface something huge and alive waked for a moment of lazy alertness out of and into light slumber again. (*AS* 128)

Darl's description highlights the dangerousness of the river and its close proximity as Cash and Jewel attempt to cross it with the coffin in the wagon. Meanwhile, Vernon, Anse and Dewey Dell stand across the river and watch the scene from a distance. The shift of perspective occurs when Vernon Tull describes Cash and Jewel from his distant point of view:

> I knew that the horse had got dragged off the ford too, and with that wild drowning horse and that wagon and that loose box, it was going to be pretty bad, and there I was, standing knee deep in water, yelling at Anse behind me: "See what you have done now? See what you done now? (*AS* 142)

From the other perspective Darl can see them too:

> The river itself is not a hundred yards across, and pa and Vernon and Vardaman and Dewey Dell are the only things in sight not of that single monotony of desolation leaning with that terrific quality a little from right to left, as though we had reached the place where motion of the wasted world accelerates just before the final precipice. Yet they appear dwarfed. (*AS* 134)

The varying distance provides the changing configuration, as the crossing of the river reveals the different positions and the unity between the characters. The different point of views, create a form of absence here, as each character is engaged in a nihilating process. In other words, the characters focus their attention on different aspects of the coffin in relation to the river. The 'attention' or focus on the coffin by the characters nihilates metaphorically all other aspects of nature (being-in-itself).

Further on, Faulkner's use of broken form highlights the river wildness and its threat to the safety of the coffin and the lives of Darl, Cash and Jewel. The focus of attention by Darl (human consciousness) on the river is mimicked and magnified by the use of italics, as the physical moment of danger and loss is described by Darl:

> *I felt the current take us and I knew we were on the ford by that reason, since it was only by means of that slipping contact that we could tell that we were in motion at all.*
> *What had once been a flat surface was now a succession of troughs and hillocks lifting and falling about us, shoving at us, teasing at us with light lazy touches in the vain instants of solidity underfoot. Cash looked back at me, and then I knew that we were gone.* (*AS* 135)

'Here the italics represent a spatial, graphic form break, since the visual change of the print echoes the shift in narrative.'[187], according to Kaufman, indicating a loss of control, danger and extreme emotions. Vernon Tull sees that dangerous moment from his perspective: 'The wagon hung for a long time while the current built up under it, shoving it off the ford, and Cash leaning more and more, trying to keep the coffin braced […] then the wagon tilted over and then it and Jewel and the horse was all mixed up together' (*AS* 141) On the other hand, Vardaman's perspective concentrates on the loss of the coffin: 'Cash tried but she fell off and Darl jumped going under he went under and Cash hollering to catch her and I hollering running and hollering and Dewey Dell hollering at me' […]' (*AS* 138)

Similarly, the death scene of Addie Bundren expresses emotion through multiple viewpoints as the moment of death is experienced by several characters captured through various perspectives. The reader is aware of the

[187] Michael, Kaufmann, 'The Textual Coffin and the Narrative Corpse of As I Lay Dying', p.105.

process of negation by each character as every individual or consciousness standpoint is different in relation to Addie and the bed she lays on. Here, the focus of consciousness is the bed (which represents the being-in-itself) and Addie. As a result, all other objects in the room are non -existent, as all the irrelevant elements are negated by the focus on Addie and the bed. The bed in which Addie lies is at the centre of the collective focus, or negation. The alignment of the characters around the bed could be analyzed as geometrically composed: 'Pa stands *beside* the bed. From *behind* his leg Vardaman peers […] (my emphasis, *AS* 42), while Dewey Dell stands, ' […] Leaning *above* the bed, her hands lifted a little, the fan still moving like it has for ten days, she begins to keen' (my emphasis *AS* 43). On the other hand, Cash keeps his distance from the bed. 'Cash looks down at her face. […] He does not approach the bed. He stops in the middle of the floor, the saw against his leg, his sweating arms powdered lightly with sawdust, his face composed.'(*AS* 45)

Addie's own perspective is demonstrated mostly in her facial expression. Her eyes reflect her growing weariness: 'She looks at pa; all her failing life appears to drain into her eyes, urgent, irremediable.' (*AS* 42) But Addie's seeming detachment and dissatisfaction evaporates as she raises herself and looks out the window: 'She is looking out the window, at Cash stooping steadily at the board in the failing light, labouring on toward toward darkness […]' (*AS* 42) The point-of-view switches to Cash as he sees his mother, 'He looks up at the gaunt face framed by the window in the twilight. It is a composite picture of all time since he was a child' (*AS* 42). Addie appears to Cash as a pictorial image statically framed by the window, fixed by her last look. Addie observes her own coffin being completed – in a sense she is watching her own death being actualized in the materialization of the geometric wooden box. Addie's final fragmented expression: 'She looks at Vardaman; her eyes, the life in them, rushing suddenly upon them; the two flames glare up for a steady instant. Then they go out as though someone had leaned down and blown upon them.' (*AS* 43) The technique of multiple points-of-view dramatizes the death of Addie Bundren by magnifying the individual responses, while also providing an overall comprehensive view of the scene.

Faulkner's fragmented form takes on a new perspective when viewed in the context of existentialist consciousness. The multiple-perspective, which is seen as part of the fragmentation of form, is not only a stylistic device to enhance narrative progression but it can, in this context, be seen as a projection of existentialist angst. The notion of fragmentation highlights, in this instance, a vision of detachment as coexistent with a sense of existence. As existence coexists with the prospect of death, death is seen as an important aspect of life, and thus Faulkner's fiction could be viewed as an active form of choice and action, the building blocks of existentialist thought. The analysis of form illuminates the conception of reality in Faulkner's fiction, and the existentialist stance accentuates Faulkner's use of form as a means to highlight man's condition in relation to death and his place in the world. The dissection of consciousness and the analysis of being, both for-itself and in-itself in relation to form, character and narrative, adds another dimension to Faulkner's narrative construction. In the next section, I will analyse the concept of a Cubistic form as another facet of fragmented form. Through the exploration of Cubistic form, and its identification with comparable existential motifs, Faulkner's conception of reality will be defined further.

FRAGMENTATION OF FORM AND CUBISM

In the last sections, my argument focused on the fragmentation of form in *As I Lay Dying* through the prism of existential thought, in particular the process of being-for-itself and being-in-itself. While the exteriority of form was seen in relation to the image of the coffin and how various characters viewed it, an extension to the argument of the physicality of form could be compared to cubism with its exteriority of form signified through geometric lines and metaphoric exterior textures. Most crucial to my argument is the assertion that, 'Faulkner's attempt to *create* a reality – as other modernist artists did - rather than simply *represent* one.[188] And as such, through a comparison to Cubism, Faulkner's use of form as an imaginative and creative tool will be highlighted. By looking at Cubism as an aesthetic device that functions in

[188] Michael Kaufmann, 'The Textual Coffin and the Narrative Corpse of As I Lay Dying', p. 99.

visual as well as literary terms, Faulkner's very subjective take on reality can be further explored. The focus on Cubism and fragmentation will also be set in the context of modernism, as Faulkner's work - and especially his technique – can be seen as part of a larger movement with similar concerns.

In this context, the fragmentation of form in Faulkner's fiction could be compared to Cubism in the way that it articulates the necessity not to imitate reality but to re-represent and re-recreate it through a subjective conception of that reality. The breakdown of form in Faulkner's fiction creates a multi-dimensional composition in which each part, each fractured monologue, is as important as the whole. Just as multiple-perspective was exemplified in Faulkner's use of comprehensive perspective and individual point of view, cubism is defined by the deconstruction of form and space characterized by the breaking up and fragmentation of objects and picture surfaces. In Cubism the juxtaposition of various elements is significant in the overall composition. The proximity and distance between facets and contours, as well as colours and viewpoints, helps to create the multi-dimensional surface. This dichotomy of part and whole is crucial to the very conceptualization of Cubism.

Faulkner's attitude to Cubism and art in general was enthusiastic, according to Ilse Dusoir Lind, who argued that Faulkner's involvement with the visual arts was of an active nature as 'almost as early as Faulkner could write stories and poems, he began to sketch and draw […] in particular, he showed an early interest in cartoons, with a distinctive style of line and design dominating over realistic detail.'[189] Faulkner, later in his career, refers directly to Cubism in the typescript of *Elmer* (1925)*,* which includes a description of Paris:

> '[t]hat merry childish sophisticated cold-blooded dying city to which Cézanne was dragged by his friends like a reluctant cow, where Degas and Manet fought over obscure points of colour and line and love, cursing Bougereau [*sic*] and his curved pink female flesh, where Matisse and Picasso yet painted […]'[190]

[189] Ibid. p.127.

[190] William Faulkner, *Elmer* (1925) incomplete typescript, in (ed.) Dianne L Cox, *Text, Mississippi Quarterly*, 36:3 (1983:Summer), pp.343-447, p.432. For a discussion on Faulkner's active involvement with the visual arts see also Panthea Reid Broughton, 'Faulkner's Cubist Novels' in Doreen Fowler and Ann J. Abadie (eds.) 'A Cosmos of My Own'*: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1981), pp. 59-94. Broughton discusses Faulkner's trip to Paris in 1925 as influential as he absorbed its treasure trove of art. Faulkner wrote to his mother on September 21: 'I spend yesterday in the Louvre, to see the

Faulkner was exposed to Cézanne when he visited Paris in 1925. Absorbing its treasure trove of art, he wrote to his mother on September 22, 1925:

> I have seen Rodin's museum, and two private collections of Matisse and Picasso (who are yet alive and painting) as well as numberless young and struggling moderns. And Cézanne! That man dipped his brush in light like Tobe Caruthers would dip his in red lead to paint a lamp - post…'[191]

However, the analogy between Faulkner's fiction and Cubism, in particular the focus on innovative technique and form, can be placed in the general modernist framework. This point is important, since part of my argument aims to establish common points between Faulkner's fiction, existentialism, Cubism, and its connection to modernist thought. The main theme running through all these is the notion of the breakdown of form as indicative of a larger disconnection as 'the starting point of modernism is the crisis of belief that pervades twentieth-century western culture: loss of faith, experience of fragmentation and disintegration, and the shattering of cultural symbols and norms.'[192] This sense of a general modernist disintegration, technical innovation and the similar existentialist preoccupation is described by Joyce Medina:

> […] The emphasis on technical advances and, at the same time, the discovery and presentation of new "modern" subjects – were but two sides of the same modernist coin. Experimentation with form (colour, brushstroke, two-dimensional arrangement, etc.) could be seen as a collapsing of renewed aspects of content into sensory and signifying elements; at the same time, form itself collapsed into the contextual and existential (emotional, spiritual, social, communicational) aspects of content.[193]

Medina's reference to formal experimentation can be linked to Cubism. Like so many modernist aesthetic exercises, it is symptomatic of a general sense of disintegration and a search for clarity: 'Modernist thought represents an attempt to restore a sense of order to human experience under the often

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Winged Victory and the Venus de Milo, the real ones [...] it was fine, especially the paintings of the more- or- less moderns, like Degas and Manet and Chavannes. Also went to a very Modernist exhibition the other day – futurist and vorticist.' Broughton, pp.75-6.

[191] Joseph, Blotner, (ed.), *Selected Letters of William Faulkner* (London: The Scolar Press, 1977), p. 24.

[192] Susan Stanford Friedman, *Psyche Reborn: The Emergence of H.D.* (Bloomington, IN.: Indiana University Press, 1987), p.97.

[193] Joyce, Medina, *Cezanne and Modernism: The Poetics of Painting* (State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 4.

chaotic conditions of contemporary existence'.[194] Existentialism also centres on the notion of disunity between the individual and his surroundings, and the profound sense of detachment felt by the individual. At the same time, crucially, it aims, like modernism, to build coherence and order by redefining the individual's conception of reality. This duality is particularly important in Faulkner's fiction, which depicts disintegrating relationships and crumbling environments while demonstrating the necessity of finding a personalised sense of coherence and order.

The existentialist reading adds weight to the modernist elements and sense of individual isolation in Faulkner's fiction and distances him from the familiar environment of the South. However, there is a paradox here, as Daniel J Singal argues that the notion of disintegration can be replaced with a sense of 'super-integration', as it also indicates the all-inclusive concept of *simultaneity,* 'where the viewer could not select individual facets of the painting for attention but would have to experience it as a fused whole'[195]. This notion of simultaneity is both abstract and contemporary: it includes the part and the whole, and it is an important idea in existentialist thought, as the isolated parts are further contemplated from an overall perspective.

Another key implication of the modernist debate is the cross-fertilisation between literary modernism and the visual arts, which arise partly because of the unpredictability of a fast changing world as 'at some point near the turn of the 20th century the intelligentsia in Europe and America experienced a profound shift in sensibility that would lead to an explosion of artistic creativity'.[196] The shifting mood and creativity inspired writers like Gertrude Stein to be directly influenced by art:

> Everything I have done has been influenced by Flaubert and Cézanne, and this gave me a new feeling about composition. Up to that time composition had consisted of a central idea, to which everything else was an accompaniment and separate but was not an end in itself, and Cézanne conceived the idea that in composition one thing was as important as another thing. […] Picasso was painting my portrait at the time, and he and I used to talk this thing over endlessly. At this time he had just begun on Cubism.'[197]

[194] Daniel J. Singal, *William Faulkner: The Making of a Modernist*, p. 8.
[195] Ibid. p. 10.
[196] Ibid. p. 7.
[197] Quoted in Peter Childs, *Modernism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p.113.

According to Wendy Steiner, the influence of Cubist art in bringing together a diversity of writers reflects the major impact of Cubism as a movement. One might argue that the diversity of the writers illustrates the creative and original spirit of the Modernist period.[198] As Joseph Frank suggests:

> Modern literature, as exemplified by such writers as T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound […] is moving in the direction of spatial form… All these writers ideally intended the reader to apprehend their work spatially, in a moment of time, rather than as a sequence.[199]

Frank's stress on space as fragmented and non-sequential, brings to the fore the existentialist notion of being-for-itself (consciousness), as free-flowing, with no particular order or defined sequence. The notion of consciousness mimics the individual's particular thought pattern in relation to the outside world and the world of objects. In a similar way, the fluidity of consciousness and the non-linear space in modernist literature can also be equated with the notion of simultaneity: 'The modern novel […] is a world of simultaneous events and ideas – the concurrent flow of many forces, all occupying different areas of space but existing in the same moment in time.'[200] Wynne argues that in literature the idea of simultaneity comes across in the form of repetition, rhythm, large blocks of colour or episodes, which are comparable to the plastic arts. This point is exemplified by Faulkner's word repetition in *As I Lay Dying*: 'Darl is my brother. Darl. Darl' (*AS* 240) - but also by his use of juxtaposition, flattening and fragmentation, all techniques found in Cubism.

The scene of the fire in the barn as described by Darl in *As I Lay Dying* includes a direct reference to Cubism. Here fragmentation is both structural and akin to a flattened picture plane, cohering into an overall conception of space:

> The front, the conical façade with the square orifice of doorway broken only by the square squat shape of the coffin on the saw-horses like *a cubistic bug*, comes into relief'. (my emphasis, *AS* 204)

According to Watson Branch:

> Not only does Darl make an explicit verbal allusion to Cubism, he also creates a Cubist painting by reducing the three dimensional barn to geometric shapes –

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[198] Wendy Steiner, *The Colors of Rhetoric: Problems In the Relation Between Modern Literature and Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 178.
[199] Joseph Frank, *The Widening Gyre: Crisis and Mastery in Modern Literature* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1963), p. 9.
[200] Caroline Wynne, 'Aspects of Space: John Marin and William Faulkner', *American Quarterly*, Vol.16, No.1 (Spring, 1964), pp. 59-71, p.63.

> conical – and square – flattened to the two-dimensional surface of the façade with the coffin and sawhorses brought up to the plane of the empty doorway.[201]

There is, moreover, an element of juxtaposition, where on one hand the tone of narration is calm and collected -'The sound of it [the fire] has become quite peaceful now, like the sound of the river did' (*AS* 207) as echoed in Darl's consciousness and his sedate observation of the barn's destruction, while on the other hand, Jewel's reaction is frantic and somatic, as he tries to save the animals and coffin:

> The stall door has swung shut. Jewel thrusts it back with his buttocks and he appears, his back arched, the muscles ridged through his garments as he drags the horse by its head. In the glare its eyes roll with soft, fleet, wild opaline fire; its muscles bunch and run as it flings its head about, lifting Jewel clear of the ground. (*AS* 205)

Juxtaposing these contrasting reactions reveals the nature of the relationship between the physical being of Jewel and the mental awareness of Darl. The physical and the mental are placed parallel to one another. This alignment of contrasts creates a unique space of multiple point of views and a form of flattening not unlike that of Cubist painting. In the next section, the alignment of existentialist thought with Cubist technique such as multiple perspective, will be shown to exemplify Faulkner's sense of loss of cohesion by the individual and the need for a formation of a particular subjective reality.

The cubist Juan Gris said that 'Cubism is not a manner but an aesthetic, and even a state of mind; it is therefore inevitably connected with every manifestation of contemporary thought.'[202] The question nonetheless remains whether the Cubist 'state of mind' can be compared to the existentialist stance. John Macquarrie argues that certain forms of modern art can be paralleled to existentialism, 'as these forms of art bring to expression in their own medium ideas that are given their philosophical formulation by the existentialists.'[203] Similarly, according to Charles D. Tenney, Sartre 'approves

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[201] Watson Branch, 'Darl Bundren's "Cubistic" vision', in *William Faulkner's As I Lay Dying: A Critical Casebook*, Dianne L. Cox (ed.) (New York: Garland Publishing, 1985), pp. 111- 129, p. 117.
[202] Quoted in Christopher Gray, 'Cubist Aesthetic Theories', John Hopkins Press, 1953, p.3
[203] John Macquarrie, *An Introduction, Guide and Assessment-Existentialism,* p. 266.

the disintegrative power of Picasso'[204] Macquarrie in particular mentions Paul Cézanne (1839-1906) as an example of 'one of the most influential figures in modern art as, 'For in him we see the break –up of traditional forms and the eventual creation of new ones, allowing us to see things in a new way […]'[205] Further on, Macquarrie points out that Cézanne proved that 'the abandonment of one conception of form and order does not mean the abandonment of all form.'[206] Faulkner, likewise, with his imaginative use of form, created a new individual take on reality, not by distorting reality [the South] but by adding a new perspective. The existing geographical form [the South] is no doubt evident in Faulkner's fiction, but the Cubistic argument brings to the fore Faulkner's subjective interpretation of that form.

Similarly, Sartre's comment on cubism is important as it contains some of the major points of his aesthetic theory, such as *irreal* objects:

> And even when the objects depicted have their usual sense reduced to a minimum, as in cubist paintings, at least the painting is not *flat*. The forms that we grasp are certainly not the forms of a rug, a table or anything else that we ordinarily grasp in the world. Nevertheless, they have density, a matter, a depth, they bear relations of perspective to one another. They are *things*. And precisely to the extent that they are things, they are irrealities. One is accustomed, since cubism, to claiming that the painting need not *represent* or *imitate* the real, but should constitute an object in itself.[207]

Sartre's passage contains some of his more complex ideas regarding art, aesthetics and in particular what constitutes the *aesthetic object* in relation to the conception of art. The concepts of the aesthetic object and 'irreality' will be discussed in depth in the next chapter. However, what is relevant here is the focus by Sartre on Cubist painting as a direct manifestation of his general philosophical ideas, and, second, the similarity of his conception to the modernist preoccupation with what constitutes reality and the way it is captured and analysed. Echoing modernist concerns, Sartre points to the need not to represent or imitate reality, but rather to create a new and imaginative conception of a particular reality. This point creates a similar intersection

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[204] Charles D. Tenney, 'Aesthetics in the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre' in Paul Arthur Schilpp, (ed.), *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1981), pp. 112-138, p, 116.
[205] Ibid. p. 266.
[206] Macquarrie, *An Introduction, Guide and Assessment-Existentialism,* p. 266.
[207] Sartre, *The Imaginary - A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination,* trans. Jonathan Webber (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p.190. The original title: *L'imaginaire* (Éditions Gallimard, 1940).

between Faulkner, existentialism and the Cubist form: the question of what constitutes reality, and the way in which ordinary objects and familiar surroundings are transformed into a new and imaginative configuration. Cubist art, for Sartre, captures best the existential concerns of what constitutes a work of art. A Cubist painting is seen as a self-contained unit, separate momentarily from a known reality and as a result a unique object of art: this is, in short, what constitutes the 'aesthetic object'. Sartre argues that Cubist art does not capture ordinary objects, such as 'a rug, a table or anything else that we ordinarily grasp in the world' in a realistic way; rather, objects are captured in a new manner, which results in a separation of a work of art into separate 'things'. Art is classified as a separate and unique object, and when Sartre says, 'The work of art is an irreality'[208], he means that a work of art becomes detached from reality into a separate and new component, a process that results in various schisms of reality/non-reality and real/unreal. This is at the core of Sartre's aesthetic concerns.

Apart from Sartre's identification with Cubist art, another significant factor to consider is the Cubist technique of multiple perspectives, which can be related to the concept of being. The phenomenologist Maurice Merleau–Ponty, in his essay 'Eye and the Mind', (1964 [1945]), relates painting to a form of being:

> Because depth, color, form, line, movement, contour, physiognomy are all branches of Being and because each one can sway all the rest, there are no separated, distinct "problems" in painting, no really opposed paths, no partial "solutions, " no cumulative progress, no irretrievable options. There is nothing to prevent a painter from going back to one of the devices he has shied away from - making it, of course, speak differently.[209]

Merleau-Ponty articulates the importance of multiple-perspective, since individual parts are important in the context of the whole. In other words, whilst separate parts are crucial to the shaping of a painting, the important point is that it should be viewed in the context of the unified whole, which is similar conceptually to the formation of being. This point can be related specifically to the break up of cubist form and can also be compared to

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[208] Sartre, *The Imaginary- A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination,* p. 188.
[209] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Eye and the Mind' in *Maurice Merleau-Ponty: Basic Writings*, Thomas Baldwin, (ed.), (New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 290-324, p. 319.

modernism's use of disintegration and simultaneity. Similarly, as argued earlier, multiple-perspective in Faulkner's work can be viewed in the context of *being* through individual point of views and an over all perspective. Sartre similarly discusses 'the whole of the being':

> In fact the lemon is extended throughout its qualities, and each of its qualities is extended throughout each of the others. It is the sourness of the lemon which is yellow, it is the yellow of the lemon which is sour. […] The fluidity, the tepidity, the bluish color, the undulating restlessness of the water in a pool are given at one stroke, each quality through the others; and it is this total interpenetration which we call the *this*. This fact has been clearly shown by the experiments of painters, especially of Cézanne. [210]

This passage captures the main essence of Sartre's phenomenological approach and his existentialist outlook on the conception of being on several levels. First, Sartre uses the analogy of the lemon to express his all-embracing philosophical notion of being. Second, he argues that Cézanne and the medium of painting in general captures best the comprehensive element and 'totality' of being. The various layers of the painting (strokes, shapes, colours) capture the impossible fluidity of being, most successfully in Cézanne's painting, according to Sartre. The 'qualities' that Sartre singles out, such as the 'restlessness of the water' and the 'bluish color', are part of the articulation of being, which incorporates being-for-itself (consciousness) and being-in-itself (objects). When Sartre writes *this,* he means the physical qualities of being-in-itself in the painting (colour, shape, water, pool) as presented through the 'total' experience. The totality of experience includes the being-for-itself (human consciousness), in this case both Cézanne and the spectator, who interprets the specific physical qualities (colour, shape, water, pool). However, the totality of experience also means the ability to capture convincingly facets or objects of existence through the latitude of the medium of painting.

One of the main points that Sartre makes with reference to Cézanne and painting is the important role of objectivity as part of the aesthetic experience. According to Sara Heinämaa:

> Sartre is not concerned with images, memories, or fantasies of empirical individuals, but aims at capturing the modes of being that belong to things

[210] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 209.

> themselves as they are given in lived experience. So his inquiry is not about our subjective impressions, but about the *objective meanings* of material things.[211]

Heinämaa points to the almighty strength of objects over humans, and how objectivity is used to reflect their dominance in the world. In addition, Heinämaa stresses the importance of 'lived experience'. These points can be further clarified in Sartre's example of the fruit of the lemon and its relation to the all-embracing comprehensive perspective since 'It is the sourness of the lemon which is yellow, it is the yellow of the lemon which is sour'. In other words, Sartre uses the analogy of the whole lemon, with its separate layers, such as taste, colour and shape, mingling into one overall experience. As in a Cézanne painting, all facets of experience are captured by a single object. This comprehensive stance is not subjective but objective. Sartre points to the importance of objectivity: 'But the yellow of the lemon is not a subjective mode of apprehending the lemon; it is the lemon.'[212] The lemon will always stand as a solid and domineering object in the world (being-in-itself), and thus neutrally objective.

Furthermore, the experience of directly consuming a lemon is part of the 'lived experience' in a phenomenological sense as 'Sartre treats phenomenology as a powerful tool which can reveal and understand all levels of experience and thought, and consequently take us to the structure of human being.'[213] In other words, the lemon encapsulates the direct experience of both the object (lemon) and the way human consciousness interprets that experience. The multiple facets of the lemon capture the 'structure of human being' (both aspects of being-in-itself and being-for-itself). According to Sartre, a work of art, specifically the abstract approach of Cubism, managed to express most convincingly the fluid and multi-dimensional experience of being.

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[211] Sara Heinämaa, 'Psychoanalysis of Things: Objective Meanings or Subjective Projections' in Christine Daigle and Jacob Golomb (eds.), *Beauvoir & Sartre – The Riddle of Influence* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), pp. 128- 143, p. 128.
[212] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 209.
[213] Steven Earnshaw, *Existentialism, A Guide For The Perplexed* (New York: Continuum, 2006), p. 131.

DARL'S EXISTENTIALISM

In many respects, Darl represents a special existential sensitivity and awareness. In *As I Lay Dying* the idea of geometric patterns is exemplified in the descriptions of the settings and characters. Darl, who narrates the opening chapter, represents the most complex character, since he has a sensitive awareness of his surroundings, his family and his own perennial thoughts and conflicts. This heightened awareness is evident when he describes the path leading to the cotton house:

> The path runs *straight* as a plumb-line, worn smooth by feet and baked brick-hard by July, between the green *rows* of laid-by cotton, to the cotton-house in the *centre* of the field, where it turns and *circles* the cotton-house at four soft right *angles* and goes on across the field again, worn so by feet in fading precision. (my emphasis *AS* 1)

The text's visuality is expressed through the breakdown of space as the description of the path and the exterior space draws the reader's attention to its geometric design; the surface of the path is smooth and reduced in volume to a flat surface, the path runs in a straight line towards the centre field. The description of geometric patterns of squares and circles appears disjointedly throughout the novel. The circular hovering of the buzzards wheeling above is described numerous times: ' Motionless, the tall buzzards hang in soaring circles, the clouds giving them an illusion of retrograde.' (*AS* 86) and later in the novel: 'High against it they hang in narrowing circles, like the smoke, with an outward semblance of form and purpose […]' (*AS* 212). The buzzards' circular movements follow the events of the narrative, observing and objectifying the action, while also serving as a binding thread of time and space. The geometrical description is potent as an attempt to provide a concrete pattern or structure to the dilemma of existence. Darl's geometrical reduction of the path and its surroundings is an attempt to break down existence into lucid units in order to comprehend and understand existence. However, Darl's sensitivity is not only indicative of his mental state, it also suggests a certain insanity. According to Reed, Darl's imagination 'is capable of almost any form, almost any design or abstraction that is relevant, except a

design which would give him a sense of that which might limit his shapings, that which most threatens him – the line between sanity and insanity […][214]

Reed views Darl as an artist whose use of abstraction signifies his convulsive move between sanity and insanity. However, Darl's descent into possible insanity can arguably be viewed as symptomatic of his existentialist angst. Part of his fictional journey is a subjective excursion of consciousness and the following passage narrated by Darl is an existential example of that journey:

> In a strange room you must empty yourself for sleep. And before you are emptied for sleep, what are you. And when you are emptied for sleep, you are not. And when you are filled with sleep, you never were. I don't know what I am. I don't know if I am or not. Jewel knows he is, because he does not know that he does not know whether he is or not. He cannot empty himself for sleep because he is not what he is and he is what he is not. Beyond the unlamped wall I can hear the rain shaping the wagon that is ours, the load that is no longer theirs that felled and sawed it nor yet theirs that bought it and which is not ours either, lie on our wagon though it does, since only the wind and the rain shape it only to Jewel and me, that are not asleep. And since sleep is is-not and rain and wind are *was,* it is not. Yet the wagon *is*, because when the wagon is *was*, Addie Bundren will not be. And Jewel *is*, so Addie Bundren must be. And then I must be, or I could not empty myself for sleep in a strange room. And so if I am not emptied yet, I am *is*. (*AS* 73-74)

The above passage according to Robert Hemenway, 'is one of the most difficult passages in all the Faulkner's canon, […]'[215] However, the complexity of the passage mirrors Darl's attempt to deal with issues of existence, the notion of being and its relation to the world as 'Darl's primary concern is the subsuming question of being: "I am?" or "Am I" He wants to know nothing less than what is existence? What is the nature of *being*?[216] This complexity of existence and the nature of being are best captured in the form of the novel according to Simone de Beauvoir:

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[214] Joseph W. Reed, JR, *Faulkner's Narrative* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1973), p. 98. Reed's argument applies to Faulkner's various geometrical modes such as circles, verticals, and horizontals and applies them to different characters. Reed applies the 'curve' shape, such as the circle, to Darl's image as a metaphor on time: 'A good part of the horror of the journey for Darl is that it will not end-that time has somehow been abolished or become confused with space […]' p.104.

[215] Robert Hemenway, 'Enigmas of Being in "As I Lay Dying"', *Modern Fiction Studies*,Vol.16, Iss.2 (Summer 1970), pp. 133-146, p.133. Hemenway argues that the interpretation of this passage has often been avoided by critics calling it: "accidental" and "unsophisticated". See his notes p.133.

[216] Ibid.p.134.

> While philosophy objectifies human reality, the novel captures it as it is lived, in all its subjective complexity and ambiguity. Only the novel [...] can evoke the original upsurge of existence. This is because it presents existence not as an object of thought but as action, feeling, and experience. It is thus a unique revelation of being, irreducible to a formula or to a system of philosophy. [217]

Darl's phenomenological probing of being raises the very question of existence. By describing his lived experience through a mixture of seemingly disconnected observations the non-linear and seemingly non-logical impressions become the dominant and perplexing element in Darl's text. This disconnection not only indicates a sense of existentialist probing it raises the question of what constitutes reality in Faulkner's fiction. As argued by Joseph R. Urgo:

> In *As I Dying*, for example, voices compete in an effort to define just what reality amounts to, and to define just what it is that is shared as "the real". Reality is repeatedly defied, in Faulkner, by the mind's capacity to define it and its power to configure it.' […]What is *real* in Faulkner is not external "reality," and neither is it any particular view of reality. What is real in Faulkner is the drama itself, the drama of meaning continually reasserted, continually denied, continually remade, in eternal conflict with its source and signification. Meaning understood as a drama can no more exist independent of the mind than can the act on stage exist independent of the actor, the human subject and object of the drama.'[218]

For Urgo, Faulkner produces a certain 'drama of meaning', which is 'primarily an epistemological one'. Urgo's argument, however, cannot be seen as entirely existentialist, as the stress of his argument is on the notion of inner knowledge and eternal drama seen at the core of Faulkner's fiction. This sits in opposition to existentialist concerns, which, as de Beauvoir indicates, is with the 'upsurge of existence' in the novel together with '… action, feeling and experience'. In this respect, Darl's monologue is closer to de Beauvoir's conception of the novel, as it is presented from the subjective point of view of the character and action is expressed through Darl's external experience. Darl's monologue may on the surface seem internal, but the non-linearity of expression is physical insofar as it captures the outward feelings or 'upsurge' of existence in a moment of contemplation. The perplexing element of Darl's

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[217] Quoted in Richard E. Baker, *The Dynamics of the Absurd in the Existentialist Novel* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), p. 3.
[218] Joseph R. Urgo, 'William Faulkner and the Drama of Meaning: The Discovery of the Figurative in As I Lay Dying', *South Atlantic Review*, Vol.53, No.2 (May 1988), pp.11-23, p.13.

monologue encapsulates the overall dynamics of the narrative. Furthermore, while it seems that the narrative centres on Addie's burial journey with the aim of including all the characters' points of view, it in fact revolves around Darl's contemplations. However, the main complexity of the plot is not the eternal drama, as Urgo suggests, but in part on the tension between eternal thoughts and external action. Darl encapsulates this tension most profoundly, illustrating the stress on the duality of being- the inner consciousness and the external world of objects.

Further on, the non–linearity of Darl's observations creates a sense of confusion:

> [Darl's] words comprise a strange, provocative interplay of sights, sounds, and memories. But he cannot separate those visions and sensations that simultaneously engage his consciousness; they are his existence at this moment. […] the surfaces of his perceptual field converge upon one another, each contingent upon yet defining the next. Sorting through these disparate images affords the reader a chance to view the world as Darl does. [219]

Pettey argues that Darl cannot distinguish between his sensations and perceptions, and that in turn highlights his turmoil. This turmoil can also be seen as part of the totality of experience, captured at a moment in time. Faulkner attempts to depict a 'lived moment' based on experience, not unlike the example of Sartre's 'yellow of the lemon', as discussed earlier. Echoing the lemon's depiction of the totality of experience, Darl expresses his overwhelming experience of Addie's death from all possible directions and perspectives. He questions his position within the family hierarchy, his relationship with his mother and his ability to cope with life at a moment of crisis.

Darl's impressions seem disconnected, but at the core, his crisis of being is connected metaphorically to sleep: 'And when you are filled with sleep, you never were. I don't know what I am. I don't know if I am or not'. As we try to comprehend Darl's understanding of what being is, its relation to existence and how that relates to sleep, and other characters such as Jewel and Addie, the issue of language and articulation become paramount. In the next section,

[219] Homer B. Pettey, 'Perception and the Destruction of Being', *Faulkner Journal*, Vol. 19, Issue 1 (2003), pp. 27-46, p. 34.

I aim to analyse Darl's existentialist monologue in relation to facticity, anguish and the absurd, in order to attempt to gain a better understanding of his moment of crisis.

The question still remains, what is at the root of Darl's crisis of consciousness? The trigger is no doubt Addie's death, Darl's position within the family dynamics and Darl's past, which is fixed and unchangeable. Darl's past reflects the existential concept of *Facticity*. The emphasis here is on the notion of subjective existence, as a given fact because 'the only thing we *know* beyond doubt is that we *are*. The realization and rationalization that we exist as a given fact can create a certain anxiety'.[220] According to Macquarrie, there is a general conception of facticity, which defines all the human race, and there is another individual aspect of facticity, which is based on the individual's situation. The situation may include the emotional, historic, physical make-up of an individual life.[221] There are certain factual conditions, which one is unable to change. Thus, 'Facticity may be considered the opposite to possibility'[222] For Macquarrie, one 'never start[s] from scratch, nor do I ever have before me a *tabula rasa*, I am always already in a situation, bringing to it capacities that are already fixed within fairly narrow limits'.[223] In other words, Darl's anxious position is partly due to his unchangeable past, which consists of specific qualities unique to him, as well as the general existential angst whereby one's past or existence is a 'given fact', which one can not change and which, as a result, creates anxiety. Thus, part of Darl's crisis of consciousness is the burden of his past, which he cannot shake or ignore. Darl's monologue accentuates the metaphoric fight between the for – itself and the in-itself, i.e., his past and his world, and thus his facticity.

Part of Darl's unchangeable facticity is the very fact that Addie did not wish to have him, something that lies at the heart of Darl's consciousness. As Addie narrates:

> Then I found that I had Darl. At first I would not believe it. Then I believed that I would kill Anse. It was as though he had tricked me, hidden within a word like within a paper screen and struck me in the back through it. But then I realized that I

[220] John Macquarrie, p. 190.
[221] Ibid. p. 190.
[222] Ibid. p. 191.
[223] Ibid. p. 191.

> had been tricked by words older than Anse or love, and that the same word had tricked Anse too, and that my revenge would be that he would never know I was taking revenge. And when Darl was born I asked Anse to promise to take me back to Jefferson when I died, because I knew that father had been right, even when he couldn't have known he was right any more than I could have known I was wrong. (*AS* 160-161)

Darl's metaphysical crisis stems from Addie's rejection of him. Her association with Darl's birth and her foreseeable death has caused a doomed relationship from the outset. This sense of familial and oedipal alienation is part of Darl's facticity, this specific individual relationship with Addie is unchangeable and the strained relationship and her death requires a new search for identity:

> And when you are filled with sleep, you never were. I don't know what I am. I don't know if I am or not. Jewel knows he is, because he does not know that he does not know whether he is or not. He cannot empty himself for sleep because he is not what he is and he is what he is not. (*AS* 73)

Darl questions the notion of his being and non-being through his facticity and at the same time questions how he might deal with his past and future as 'existence never escapes from the tension between possibility and facticity. On the one side, man is open and projects his possibilities; on the other side he is closed by the factual situation in which he already finds himself.[224] Robert Hemenway, argues that death is another form of consciousness:

> Darl starts with a metaphorical truth which is scientifically false: "In a strange room you must empty yourself for sleep." One's mind cannot be "emptied" for sleep; sleep is but the alteration of consciousness, the movement from awakened consciousness to sleep consciousness. Darl senses that something, perhaps indefinable, is taken away, that the consequent void is filled with a "never were" of simulated oblivion, and he is uncertain about that essential "state of being" which apparently vacates the premises: "Before you are emptied for sleep, what are you." The entire passage is designed to answer this question, and when Darl concludes in the last sentence, "I am is," he has unknowingly defined existence as consciousness itself, a definition that limits man's essence to the "is" of present tense reality.[225]

Hemenway's argument is the closest to an existentialist perspective as Darl's "emptied" for sleep, signifies Darl's 'in between' facticity position. Darl wants to metaphorically "empty" or get rid of his associative memories of his mother through sleep. The problem is that Darl is unable to get rid of all the thoughts and memories that will enable him to sleep: 'To exist factically is to

[224] Macquarrie, *An Introduction, Guide and Assessment - Existentialism,* p.192.
[225] Hemenway, 'Enigmas Of Being in "As I Lay Dying"', pp.135-6.

be there, that is to say, to occupy a particular situation and to see everything from the perspective of that situation.'[226] Darl's uncomfortable position between a desire to sleep and inability to do so exemplifies his awareness of his facticity - his past and his present, undistinguished in time and space. Hemenway articulates an important point, which can be related to existentialist thought: Darl is aware of his consciousness, and his inability to distinguish between being asleep and being awake. Hemenway points to Darl's acknowledgement of the 'present tense reality', another way to identify Sartre's concept of a 'lived moment' or the realisation of the totality of experience itself, viewed in a moment in time. Thus, sleep is seen as a continuation of being awake, insofar as it is the same mode of consciousness. In other words, Darl is trapped within his own consciousness.

Darl's reflection over his own sense of being, the death of his mother and his ultimate place in the world, evokes feelings of *anguish*. Ralf A. Ciancio sees Darl's feelings as akin to an existential *anguish*: 'It is not surprising that his [Faulkner's] characters exist in anguish; it requires heroic resolve, the Existentialists say, to live in the awareness of one's redoubtable and inescapable Nothingness.'[227] Ciancio's reading raises a crucial point that requires further analysis. Sartre defines anguish as:

> The reflective apprehension of the Self as freedom, the realization that a nothingness slips in between my Self and my past and future so that nothing relieves me from the necessity of continually choosing myself and nothing guarantees the validity of the values which I choose. Fear is of something in the world, anguish is anguish before myself. […]'[228]

Anguish is the ultimate self-reflective process, which consists of various components; on one level, it consists of the freedom of negation. In other words, anguish is the product of consciousness as it chooses or negates its focus and attention. According to Sartre: 'We wished only to show that there exists a specific consciousness of freedom, and we wished to show that this consciousness is anguish. This means that we wished to establish anguish in

[226] Macquarrie, *An Introduction, Guide and Assessment – Existentialism,* p. 192.
[227] Ciancio, *Faulkner's Existentialist Affinities,* p.85.
[228] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 649.

its essential structure as consciousness of freedom.'[229] In other words, freedom is the direct by-product of anguish. On a different level, consciousness is about the possibility of embracing nothingness as a choice and thus illuminating the gap between the world (or objects) and of the past and the future. This sense of nothingness is expressed in Darl's self reflective state of mind:

> I used to lie on the pallet in the hall, waiting until I could hear them all asleep, so I could get up and go back to the bucket. It would be black, the shelf black, the still surface of the water a round orifice in *nothingness,* where before I stirred it awake with the dipper I could see maybe a star or two in the bucket, and maybe in the dipper a star or two before I drank. (my emphasis, *AS* 7)

Darl's lyrical expression of consciousness displays an acute self-awareness and apprehension of nothingness. Christopher Macann explains Sartre's difference between fear and anguish:

> Anguish has to be distinguished from fear since fear is ordinarily understood to be fear in the face of some *external* threat, therefore fear in the face of a threat which can be either conquered or evaded by means of the two basic strategies of fight or flight. But anguish is essentially the anguish of the self in the face of itself, therefore anguish in the face of that which can neither be overcome nor circumvented.[230]

Darl's display of anguish plays out in his search for identity in the face of Addie's death, and for a life in the shadow of death. This process of inner contemplation, in existential terms, is part of consciousness's search for freedom through a process of negation and nihilation. The end product of anguish is also displayed in the face of the future and the past: 'it is through my horror that I am carried toward the future, and the horror nihilates itself in that it constitutes the future as possible. Anguish is precisely my consciousness of being my own future, in the mode of not-being.'[231] Thus, the true 'horror' of anguish is not necessarily a 'threat' from an outside source, as Macann argues, but as Sartre points out, it is the future possibilities and options that one needs to choose or negate. It is the responsibility of the individual to act and make choices, and it is this freedom of choice that results in anguish.

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[229] Ibid. p. 57.
[230] Christopher Macann, *Four Phenomenological Philosophers*: *Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.119.
[231] Ibid.p.56.

Darl's self-reflective thought process, his inner turmoil is thus in existential terms a form of freedom and not necessarily madness. Nonetheless Michel Gresset claims that 'Darl falls a victim to the tyranny of his own, divided glance, having become literally his own voyeur, the voyeur who spies on himself and ends a victim of schizophrenia.'[232] Even though it is right to question Darl's sanity, my existentialist reading situates Darl's state as part of a crisis of existence. Rather than suffering from 'schizophrenia', as Gresset suggests, Darl is aware of different levels of his consciousness, such as his anguish, and as a result gains an uncomfortable insight into his own state of being. Calvin Bedient argues that:

> In this novel, shapelessness is the condition against which the characters must define themselves, and Darl cannot find his own shape. It is thus his destiny to be, not himself, but the world. Since Darl neither acts (he is called "lazy"), nor possesses anything that he can call his own, nor is loved, he must fall back upon introspection to give him identity. But, as Husserl observes, consciousness is itself empty; we must be conscious of something to be conscious at all.; and when Darl turns in upon himself, he finds nothing there. Tragically, Darl is not made present to himself as an *object* until he is acted upon, literally apprehended by the world and conducted to the insane asylum at Jackson (for, to be acted upon, one must exist). [..] [233]

Bedient's argument is existential in nature, although that is not acknowledged explicitly. Bedient contends that Darl has lost his sense of identity because all the building blocks of his personality have been stripped away from him (by lack of love and Addie's death). Darl, according to Bedient, is left empty and is unable to recognise his own existentialist consciousness, since he is not even conscious of anything outside himself. However, Darl is not left 'empty'; rather, the recognition of death and his lack of a place within the family creates a greater understanding of his own existence. Thus, emptiness should be replaced by something intrinsically different, namely the heightened awareness of certain choices, which results in an ontological crisis. Bedient hints at Darl's lack of action, however, Darl's action of burning of the barn is an example of physical action resulting from the for-itself relation to the in-itself (barn), and a means to stop the ridiculously long burial journey: 'For an instant longer he runs silver in the moonlight, then he springs out like a flat

[232] Gresset Michel, *Fascination: Faulkner's Fiction 1919- 1936*, adapted from the French by Thomas West (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989), p. 219.
[233] Bedient, 'Pride and Nakedness: As I Lay Dying', p.269.

figure cut cleanly from tin against an abrupt and soundless explosion as the whole loft of the barn takes fire at once, as though it had been stuffed with powder.' (AS 204) Darl's direct action is the attempt to burn Addie's coffin, which is situated inside the barn, in order to give Addie a more honourable burial. Darl's action could be viewed in existential terms as an act of freedom, and as a direct result of his ongoing anguish through out the novel. Darl's placement in an insane asylum is viewed as a reflection of his madness, but is he mad? Could his so-called madness be part of his attempt to understand his existence, which cannot be contained, understood or lived with? In an impossible moment of self-awareness, Darl narrates his own journey to Jackson (asylum):

> DARL has gone to Jackson. They put him on the train, laughing, down the long car laughing, the heads turning like the heads of owls when he passed. "What are you laughing at? I said.
> "Yes yes yes yes yes." (*AS* 241)

The third-person narration by Darl objectifies his actions and seals his heightened awareness. Darl's laughter confirms his impossible existentialist angst, which cannot be understood by others or contained. Darl's anguish is only one aspect of his ontological crisis. In this final section, Darl's state will be read in relation to the absurd.

Part of Darl's ontological position also brings to the fore the notion of the absurd. For Sartre, 'Contingency is seen as the absurd, '(our lack of necessity because of our facticity').[234] Whilst contingency is referred to as the absurd, the absurd is generally associated with Camus.[235] As Daniel J. Singal points out:

> The result is that Darl becomes effectively isolated within his own mind, his primary social role that of a crude existential commentator registering through his harsh laughter the insight that all human endeavour is inherently absurd. His one attempt to act decisively -- setting fire to Gillespie's barn in order to burn up his mother's coffin and stop the family's senseless journey -- fails because he is totally

[234] Quoted in Richard E. Baker, *The Dynamics of the Absurd in the Existentialist Novel* (Peter Lang. 1993), p. 33.
[235] For the differences and similarities between Camus and Sartre in relation to the absurd see: *The Dynamics of the Absurd in the Existentialist Novel*. Richard E. Baker (Peter Lang: New York. 1993). For my purposes, I do not wish to compare the two concepts but to concentrate on their common meanings in relation to Faulkner's work.

unable to share his complex motives with others and thus is badly misunderstood'.[236]

In this respect, Darl displays the absurdity of existence throughout the novel, constantly caught in an internal (consciousness) and external (being-for-itself) conflict. As discussed, Darl's for-itself clash with the in-itself is already present in his relation to the coffin, and the burial journey on the whole as a demonstration of the 'absurd nature of existence'[237] The sense of absurdity stems partly from the six-day burial journey, which is all too long, and the ways in which the coffin is subject to countless dangers such as the fire in the barn, the treacherous river and the physical mutilation of the coffin by Vardaman. The buzzards hovering above the coffin are a reminder of the stench of the decomposing body. Eric Sundquist argues that it is Vardaman who questions and raises 'the farcical funeral journey', and that 'the technically absurd and paradoxical notion on which funeral ceremonies are based – that the corpse both *is* and *is not* the self of the person […]'[238] For Sundquist, Faulkner's ability to capture an absurd moment in time, an in-between state of life and death is reinforced by the long burial trip. The funeral ceremony, which Sundquist highlights, also raises an existentialist realisation of the absurdity of life as the prolonged ceremony pinpoints the tension of life side-by-side to death.

Furthermore, Richard E. Baker, in his argument on the absurd, links the absurd with the comic. He refers to Sartre's novel, *Nausea*, and the character of Roquentin as representative of how 'the comic and the absurd are aspects of something transcendent, the human passion for more life.'[239] The absurdity of life is heightened by the comic element and the unexpected, 'In other words, people laugh when they radically perceive incongruous ideas, situations, events, or people, and one possible indication of this absurd perception is laughter, which demonstrates passion.'[240] Thus, the absurdity of existence is partly evoked from the unexpected elements of life that are

[236] Singal, *William Faulkner: The Making of a Modernist,* p.149.
[237] Singal, *William Faulkner: The Making of a Modernist,* p. 148.
[238] Eric Sundquist, 'Death, Grief, Analogous Form: *As I Lay Dying' 'Faulkner: The House Divided* (John Hopkins University Press, 1983), pp. 28-43., reprinted in 'As I Lay Dying, William Faulkner', Edited by Michael Gorra, (A Norton Critical Edition, 2010) pp. 286-304.
[239] Richard E. Baker, *The Dynamics of the Absurd in the Existentialist Novel,* p. 44.
[240] Ibid. p. 45.

emphasized through the comic. The comic element is evident in Faulkner's narrative such as the basic burial journey, which is too long and pointless, even Vardmann's confusion of Addie and the fish evokes a certain comic strain. The example of Cash's homemade cement cast signifies most successfully the element of the comic:

> I mix the cement in the can, stirring the slow water into the pale-green thick coils. I bring the can to the wagon where Cash can see. He lies on his back, his thin profile in silhouette, ascetic and profound against the sky. "Does that look about right?" I say. "You don't want too much water, or it won't work right," he says. "Is this too much?"
> "Maybe if you could get a little sand," he says. "It ain't but one more day, " he says. "It don't bother me none." (*AS* 195)

The scene creates an infusion of opposites, with the agonized Cash being seen as tragic while the action itself is comic. There is no logical reason to make a cement cast and that is part of the comic effect, 'Thus Faulkner's world is absurd because it has the capacity to erupt violently and because it transcends reason. We seem to have motion without meaning.' [241]

Another core element of the absurd is the correlated notion of death. As Sartre observed: 'What must be noted first is the absurd character of death.'[242] Interestingly, in an essay by Faulkner on the death of Albert Camus, Faulkner discusses the theme of death in relation to the absurd:

> CAMUS said that the only true function of man, born into an absurd world, is to live, be aware of one's life, one's revolt, one's freedom. He said that if the only solution to the human dilemma is death, then we are on the wrong road. The right track is the one that leads to life, to the sunlight. One cannot unceasingly suffer from the cold. […]
> At the very instant he struck the tree, he was still searching and demanding of himself; I do not believe that in that bright instant he found them. I do not believe they are to be found. I believe they are only to be searched for, constantly, always by some fragile member of the human absurdity. Of which there are never many, but always somewhere at least one, and one will always be enough.
> […] When the door shut for him, he had already written on this side of it that which every artist who also carries through life with him that one same foreknowledge and hatred of death, is hoping to do: *I was here*. He was doing that, and perhaps in that bright second he even knew he had succeeded. What more could he want? [243]

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[241] Richard Lehan, *A Dangerous Crossing: French Literary Existentialism and the Modern American Novel*, p.74.
[242] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 554.

[243] *William Faulkner, Essays, Speeches & Public Letters,* ed. by James B. Meriwether, (Modern Library, 2004), pp. 113-114. Firstly appeared in *Nouvelle Revue Française* in 1960 in French.

Faulkner parallels life, absurdity and death, in a similar manner to existentialism. The existentialists juxtapose life and death in order to value life, through choice and action in order to sustain life. Faulkner acknowledges the absurdity of life and argues that the way to combat this is to value life, to create and leave something behind. Being 'aware of one's life' and 'one's freedom' is crucial to existential thought, as recognising one's surroundings and, equally, the inner eternal feelings is paramount for an active and responsible life. Faulkner's fiction explores the line between death and the state of living, and the idea of freedom as manifested through the characters' conscious choice to act. Faulkner's fiction is a celebration of life: he tries to capture the multiple facets of existence, which are part of the all-consuming 'human dilemma'. By exploring and documenting the transient quality of life, Faulkner encapsulates the universal struggle of the individual and his place in the world. In the next chapter, Faulkner's transient sense of reality is further examined through the process of making art. Questions such as how imagination operates in relation to reality, and the importance of the subjective conception of reality will be placed as part of the human condition.

Chapter Three

William Faulkner's *Mosquitoes* (1927) and *Elmer* (1925), and Jean-Paul Sartre's *Nausea* (1938) – *Imaging Consciousness*: an analysis of the artwork and the imaginary object

In the previous chapter, my argument aligned the notion of Faulkner's fragmentation of form with that of existentialist terms such as *contingency* and *facticity,* to reflect angst and man's dislocated being in the world. Being and consciousness were viewed in relation to Darl, in *As I Lay Dying*, and his relationship with his family and the world around him. The existentialist reading also enabled a reading of Faulkner's aesthetic qualities by first positioning his fiction in a non-specific locale, in order to stress the ontological being as the main priority in his fiction. Secondly, by focusing on form and the technique of multiple perspective, and aligning them with the existentialist perspective, the aesthetic, visual aspect of Faulkner's work gain further meaning and significance.

In that chapter, I applied the concept of consciousness mainly through various modalities of being: the being-in-itself and being-for-itself. In this chapter I will examine another aspect of consciousness in Faulkner's fiction in the context of Sartre's aesthetic theory, in particular his existential concepts of *imaging consciousness*, the *imaginary object* and the *analogon.* The aim is to delve deeper into the way imagination, through the identification of existential terms, operates in Faulkner's fiction. The argument will unravel the crucial role of art in Faulkner's fiction to exemplify the disparity between imagination and reality, as well as the importance of artistic freedom. Faulkner's artist encapsulates the existentialist dilemma of the individual's angst and attempts to control that precarious state through art. This somewhat ironic disposition creates an embodiment of contradictions in Faulkner's fiction, which includes a sense of stasis and movement and also anxiety and freedom.

The concept of imaging consciousness in relation to reality is at the core of Sartre's aesthetic theory, as Christina Howells observes:

> Since the art-object - novel, play, painting – is ultimately imaginary and unreal, it always risks distracting the reader or spectator from her situation in the world, leading her potentially to deny the real and escape into the realm of fantasy.[244]

According to Sartre, 'the work of art is an irreality'[245] whereby imagination is key to the formation of the art object. Existentialist angst or the realisation of our meaningless existence finds a resting place, albeit a temporary one, through the use of the spectator's imagination, in order to awaken or substantiate the work of art. Thus, imagination is crucial to the creative process in existential thought. My aim in part is to show that Faulkner was considered by Sartre to be an imaginative writer. This adds another important dimension to Faulkner's fictive imagination.

In this context, Faulkner's characters and setting will be analysed in relation to Sartre's ontological concepts of the real and the imaginary. These concepts will be set in relation to the important role of consciousness and to the way imagination operates through imagery. This chapter will examine a selection of Faulkner's work through the existentialist prism of art, whilst the concepts of imaging consciousness, the imaginary object and analogon will be identified and analysed in *Mosquitoes* (1927). In addition, the incomplete typescript *Elmer* (1925) will be analysed in relation to Sartre's aesthetic theories. To this end, Sartre's theoretical criticism, *The Imaginary* (1940) and *Essays in Aesthetics* (1963), will be referenced. My argument uses a comparative analysis of Sartre's novel *Nausea* (1938) and Faulkner's fiction in order to demonstrate the presence of these existential concepts and it will draw attention to some of the similarities in the aesthetic ideas of Faulkner and Sartre as a way to illuminate their perspectives on the human condition.

By examining the Sartrean concepts of the 'imaginary' and the 'unreal' within Faulkner's fiction I hope to illuminate how fiction, for Faulkner, becomes an expression of consciousness vis-à-vis the milieu of the art object. I have chosen to focus on *Mosquitoes,* and *Elmer,* which have received much less

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[244] Christina Howells, *Sartre – the Necessity of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 77.
[245] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Imaginary - A phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination*, p.188.

critical attention than Faulkner's later fiction. Part of the existing critical reading of *Mosquitoes* is the discussion on art, discussed by critics such as John Earl Bassett and Kenneth Wm Hepburn. However, it is through an existentialist reading that the profound sense of characters' isolation and the importance of imagination as an expression of freedom are made manifest.

MOSQUITOES (1927) AND *NAUSEA* (1938)

According to Olga W. Vickery, *Mosquitoes* is 'considered to be Faulkner's weakest novel, probably because both the intention and the content seem superficial'[246]. For Diane Brown Jones:

> Until recently, critics have generally given only passing attention to *Mosquitoes* except to say that it represents an advanced stage of Faulkner's pre-Yoknapatawpha apprenticeship and to note its similarity to other satirical works of the 1920s -- especially Aldous Huxley's *Chrome Yellow*.'[247]

The plot centres on a four-day cruise on a yacht named *Nausikaa,* held by Mrs Maurier, a wealthy patroness of the arts. Aboard the *Nausikaa,* a reference to a young character in Homer's *Odyssey*, Faulkner assembles a varied group of people, divided between artists and non-artists. The artists include Gordon, a sculptor; Dawson Fairchild, a novelist: Dorothy Jameson, a painter, Julius, 'the Semitic man', an art critic; and Mr. Talliaferro, a poet. The non-artists include Jenny Steinbauer and Pete, and Patricia Robyn, the inspiration behind Gordon's sculpture. Much of the criticism of the novel dealt with how Faulkner's personal life was reflected in the novel:

> The actual event behind the writing of *Mosquitoes* was an outing on a yacht in April, 1925, from New Orleans toward Mandeville. A dozen or so including Sherwood Anderson, Hamilton Basso, William Spratling, and Faulkner fought off mosquitoes and rain while navigating across Lake Pontchartrain.'[248]

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[246] Olga W. Vickery, *The Novels of William Faulkner- A Critical Interpretation*, p. 8.

[247] Diane Brown Jones, 'Mosquitoes' in Robert W. Hamblin and Charles A. Peek (eds.), *A William Faulkner Encyclopedia* (Greenwood Press, 1999),pp.257-258, p.257.

[248] Quoted in John Earl Bassett, 'Faulkner's "Mosquitoes": Toward a Self-Image of the Artist', in *The Southern Literary Journal*, Vol.12, No.2 (Spring 1980), pp. 49-64, p. 51. For a further discussion see Joseph Leo Blotner, one volume edition, *Faulkner: A Biography* (Jackson: The University Press of Mississippi, 2005), p.182 'The real events of the river trip were based on a group of friends among them Sherwood and Elizabeth Anderson who rented a 'yacht called *Josephine* for a day's outing to Mandeville, twenty-three miles due north across Lake Pontchartrain. But after they were under way the day darkened, the engine lost power, and they were stranded, near shore but short of Mandeville. Coughing from the engine smoke, scratching bites from the swarming mosquitoes, they found the main cabin a poor

As Frederick R Karl, who compares *Mosquitoes* with Faulkner's personal experiences, suggests: 'Dawson Fairchild stands in, in many ways, for Sherwood Anderson, who had helped Faulkner when the latter came to New Orleans.'[249] And indeed, the autobiographical background, is echoed by Faulkner who creates a character within the novel who mirrors him:

> He was a white man, except he was awful sunburned and kind of shabby dressed – no necktie and hat. Say, he said some funny things to me. He said I had the best digestion he ever saw, and he said if the straps of my dress was to break I'd devastate the country. He said he was a liar by profession, and he made good money at it, enough to own a Ford as soon as he got it paid out. I think he was crazy. (*MOS* 145)

There is an arguably a self–deprecating and ironic statement by Faulkner as the character Jenny is unable to recall Faulkner's name in *Mosquitoes*:

> "Walker or Foster? Well, which one was it?
> "It must be Foster because I remembered it by it began with a F like my girl friend's middle name – Frances. […] Only I don't think it was Foster, because – "
> "You don't remember it, then."
> "Yes, I do. Wait . . . Oh, yes: I remember – Faulkner, that was it."
> "Faulkner?" the niece pondered in turn. "Never heard of him," she said at last, with finality. (*MOS* 145)

The ironic tone of his own appearance in *Mosquitoes* encapsulates the main theme of the novel, which is the artist's position in the world and how art is interpreted. Faulkner's tone exposes a critical view of art and the artist as he views *Mosquitoes* in terms of '[…] his self - image as artist'[250]. On the one hand, Faulkner contends that the artist should not take himself too earnestly, while on the other, he is interested in the artist's persona, as reflected to the outside world. Similarly, Faulkner touches on the essential way the artist internalises

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haven at best. It was almost dark when they got to New Orleans. Almost everyone had mosquito bites and some were sun burned. Others had the makings of hangovers.' Joseph Leo Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography*, pp.142 -43. For a detailed discussion on Faulkner's modelling on real life characters such as Sherwood Anderson, Bill Spratling, Helen Bird, among others, see Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography* pp. 182-185. Furthermore, It has been argued by Joseph Leo Blotner, that much like 'Hemingway's Paris friends had played the game of identifying the models for characters in *The Sun Also Rises*, so Faulkner's New Orleans friends would be able to do the same with *Mosquitoes*.' Joseph Leo Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography,* p.183.

[249] Frederick R. Karl, 'Introduction', in William Faulkner, *Mosquitoes* (1927), p.1. Throughout the thesis all primary citations are taken from, William Faulkner, *Mosquitoes* (New York, London: Liveright, 1997), hereafter abbreviated MOS and cited parenthetically by page number.

[250] Bassett, 'Faulkner's "Mosquitoes": Toward a Self-Image of the Artist', p. 49.

his conflicts. The contrast between the interior and the exterior persona of the artist is evident throughout the narrative. It also mimics the existentialist concerns in a way that interior human consciousness is in constant battle with the exterior aspect of consciousness – the environment and other people.

Frederick R. Karl acknowledges another aspect of Faulkner's friction in the novel as reflected in the tension between the artists and the non-artists: 'A curious doubling process is at work, for he [Faulkner] demonstrates deep suspicions of the very thing the novel is about – how the artist may survive a ship of fools.'[251] Not only is there a disparity between the artists and non-artists as all are placed in the claustrophobic setting of the boat, but it also hints at a certain criticism by Faulkner regarding the absurdity of some of the characters' views in relation to the artist as supreme and untouchable. The mocking tone is set early in the novel, when Mrs Maurier, the wealthy patroness of the arts visits the sculptor Gordon in his studio with her niece Patricia she reflects, '"It's so interesting to see how they live, darling. You'll simply love it,"' (*MOS* 21) Further on:

> "So this is where genius labours. How charming: so – so original. And that –"she indicated a corner screened off by a draggled length of green rep " – is your bedroom, isn't it? How delightful! Ah, Mr. Gordon, how I envy you this freedom. And a view – you have a view also, haven't you?" She held his hand and stared entranced at a high useless window framing two tired looking stars of the fourth magnitude.
> " I would have if I were eight feet tall," he corrected. (*MOS* 22)

The over-glorified way the artist is perceived and represented is accentuated by Faulkner's sardonic tone. According to Thomas L McHaney:

> [Faulkner] satirizes the pretensions of certain kinds of artists. Both it [*Mosquitoes*] and *Elmer* play up the excuses and distractions to which the would-be artist succumbs. Faulkner wrote these satires, we may assume, not because he rated art and artists low, but because he put art at a premium and held the highest standards for the artist.[252]

As McHaney suggests, Faulkner values art highly and sees it as an essential part of life, and *Mosquitoes* often reflects Faulkner's concerns with assessing what art may mean to a varied group of people. The existing autobiographical

[251] Karl, 'Introduction', in William Faulkner, *Mosquitoes* p.4.
[252] Thomas L. McHaney, 'The Elmer Papers: Faulkner's Comic Portraits of the Artist' in James B. Meriwether (ed.), *A Faulkner Miscellany* (Jackson, MS.: University Press of Mississippi, 1974), pp. 37-70, p.68.

critical discourse on *Mosquitoes* touches on the way Faulkner injects his own personal life and his insecurities into his novel: 'Every aspect of Mosquitoes radiates out from Faulkner himself, just on the cusp of finding himself: his difficulties with women; his dislike of parasitic pretenders […]'[253] Thus while *Mosquitoes* Faulkner's second novel, is often viewed as part of an early writing exercise by the author to test out his ideas on art and writing in general, Kenneth William Hepburn nevertheless reads *Mosquitoes* as the 'pivotal point of Faulkner's career', not so much in terms of any 'great quality' of the novel but as an example of 'various artistic strategies' as a basis for the future 'Yoknapatawpha material [being] central to the development of the open-ended poetic'.[254] In line with Hepburn's point I wish to reexamine the importance of the artist in *Mosquitoes* as emblematic of certain aspects of existentialist thought.

THE NOTION OF NAUSEA

The conflict of the individual in *Mosquitoes* manifests through internal anxiety and is projected through a sense of physical nausea. This will be demonstrated through a comparative analysis of *Mosquitoes* and Sartre's *Nausea*. The notion of reality and how existentialist consciousness plays a part in it is questioned in both *Nausea* and *Mosquitoes*. Both novels reflect a sense of nausea: the sense of 'how a man – an ordinary enough man- comes suddenly to doubt not only the purpose of his existence, but also its very reality.'[255] John Fletcher argues that 'the central nub of the plot - how a man suffered a kind of metaphysical concussion and, slowly coming round, then saw life in a new light, is a profoundly original theme […]'[256]. The 'metaphysical concussion' is experienced by the main character and narrator, Antoine Roquentin, who fails to complete his historical work on the Marquis de Rollebon in Sartre's *Nausea*. Roquentin, 'goes for walks in the town; watches his solidly bourgeois

[253] Karl, 'Introduction', in William Faulkner, *Mosquitoes,* p.4.
[254] Kenneth Wm. Hepburn, 'Faulkner's "Mosquitoes:" A Poetic Turning Point', *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol.17, No.1 (Jan 1971), pp.19- 28, p, 19.
[255] John Fletcher, 'Sartre's Nausea: A Modern Classic Revisited' in Robert Wilcocks (ed.), *Critical Essays on Jean-Paul Sartre* (Boston, Mass.: G.K Hall &Co,1988), pp.172-182, p.174.
[256] Ibid. 174.

fellow-citizens; writes his book; goes to the library; has occasional encounters with a man he has nicknamed the Autodidact […]'[257] It is the recording of mundane, everyday activities in diary form that leads to a metaphysical breakdown for Roquentin.

As in Sartre's *Nausea*, *Mosquitoes* echoes the diary form. Faulkner records the yacht trip in a linear sequence: the prologue: a chapter for each of the four days of the voyage; and the epilogue. He attempts to give an order and a sense of time to the trip, which seems timeless, as the destination is not crucial for the narrative progression - but what are more significant are the thought processes and the actions of the characters. According to Christina Howells, in *Nausea* there is 'little or no mention of heredity or family background; the characters tend to be isolated, shown at leisure rather than at work, unstable and unpredictable'[258]. In a similar way, the characters in *Mosquitoes* are isolated, and their extreme differences in opinion and outlook isolates them even more. The typical Sartrean man is a 'radical wanderer', according to Bernd Jager, and is 'permanently beyond rest and settlement, forever ready to leave behind the comfort of familiar surroundings, of acquired habits and possessions, forever willing to travel to the very end of the world to pursue the limits of an idea or a practice'[259]. Likewise, in *Mosquitoes*, the characters are uprooted from their usual surroundings into an unfamiliar territory - a transient location that is even more perplexing. It is partly perplexing because the unfamiliarity of the location evokes unfamiliar emotions. The river is seen as a foreign entity and the contrast between the stability of the shore and the fluidity of the river conjures a sense of isolation: 'The shore and the river curved away like the bodies of two dark sleepers embracing, curved one to another in slumber; and far away opposite the Point, banked lights flickered like a pile of yet living ashes in a wind.' (*MOS* 47) Moreover, the emphasis on the group gathering in *Mosquitoes* reinforces the individual sense of

[257] James Wood, 'Introduction', Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea* (1938), pp. vii- xx, p.viii. Throughout the thesis all primary citations are taken from, Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), hereafter abbreviated NAU and cited parenthetically by page number. Originally published as, *La Nausée*, (Librairie Gallimard, 1938).
[258] Christina Howells, *Sartre – The Necessity of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.53.
[259] Bernd Jager, ' 'Sartre's Anthropology: A Philosophical Reflection on *La Nausée*' in Paul Arthur Schilpp (ed.), *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*. (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1981), pp. 477- 495, p.477.

displacement and alienation. A sense of mild chaos is imparted early in the novel when all the characters gather to board the yacht:

> Mrs. Wiseman and Miss Jameson, flanking Mr. Talliaferro, sat with cigarettes also. Fairchild, accompanied by Gordon, the Semitic man and a florid stranger in heavy tweeds, and carrying among them several weighty looking suitcases, had gone directly below.
> "Are we all here? Are we all here?" Mrs. Maurier chanted beneath her yachting cap, roving her eyes among her guests (*MOS* 55)

The notion of isolation is also part of the awareness of nausea. The experience of nausea in Sartrean terms, both in fiction and philosophy, is often described as an awareness of one's *contingency*, as manifested in the tension between 'being-in-itself' (world of objects) and being-for-itself (human consciousness).[260]As introduced earlier, contingency is the notion that there is no pre-essence or reason to be in the world but that it is a 'brute fact' that being-for-itself or human consciousness is in the world.[261] The physical sensation of that recognition and fear, as expressed and defined by Sartre, is nausea. Rhiannon Goldthorpe acknowledges the various functions of consciousness in *Nausea*, including the 'contingency of the *pour-soi*, revealed through its awareness of its physical existence', as well as 'the impact of the contingency of external objects upon the consciousness'.[262] In other words, the sense of the conflict of existence derives from the acknowledgment by the human consciousness of physical objects. That recognition creates nausea or a sense of contingency, since one is suddenly aware that the world of objects is stable and permanent, whereas the world of human consciousness is finite. The following passage describes the nausea Roquentin experiences when he touches an object (being-in-itself) – in this case, a pebble. In the second passage the touch of a human hand and the contrasted object creates nausea:

> Now I see; I remember better what I felt the other day on the sea-shore when I was holding that pebble. It was a sort of sweet disgust. How unpleasant it was! And it came from the pebble, I'm sure of that, it passed from the pebble into my hands. Yes, that's it, that's exactly it: a sort of nausea in the hands.' (*NAU* 22)

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[260] *Nausea* is often analysed in reference to Sartre's philosophical concepts especially the duality of being. As Rhiannon Goldthorpe writes: 'In the novel, as in his theoretical work, Sartre is as preoccupied with the nature and activity of the *pour-soi*- human consciousness – as with the world of the *en-soi*.' Rhiannon Goldthorpe, *Sartre: Literature and Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 4.
[261] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 651.
[262] Goldthorpe, *Sartre: Literature and Theory,* p, 6.

> Objects ought not to *touch*, since they are not alive. You use them, you put them back in place, you live among them: they are useful, nothing more. But they touch me, it's unbearable. I am afraid of entering in contact with them, just as if they were living animals. (*NAU* 22)

Roquentin's sense of his own existence manifests itself in his direct contact with external objects, creating a sense of nausea and profound alienation. As Howells argues: '[…] [Roquentin] feels alienated not only from his body but also from his thoughts and feelings: the contingency of his own existence fills him with repugnance [..]'[263] I argue that a similar sensation of recognition of existence and thus a sense of alienation occurs in *Mosquitoes*. Nausea in Sartre's fiction is more self-reflected and apparent in its directness and confrontational style: in *Mosquitoes,* however, it is much more subtle and not as straightforward. The metaphysical similarities between the two works lie in the ontological conflict of being and the questioning of reality. Further on, the battle of being, between the being-for-itself (consciousness) and being-in-itself (external object), appears in *Mosquitoes* in the scene in which David West and Pat Robyn attempt to leave the yacht and go camping but soon get lost in the swamp on their way to the town of Mandeville. David West is a steward working aboard the yacht and Pat is the niece of Mrs Maurier, the wealthy organiser of the yacht trip. Pat also plays an important role in her relationship with the artist Gordon, as will be discussed in a later section. The camping expedition begins innocently enough:

> They ate again: the oranges; they broiled bacon, scorched it, dropped it on the ground, retrieved it and wiped it and chewed it down; and the rest of the loaf. "Don't you just love camping?" "Let's always do this, David: let's don't ever have a house where you've always have to stay in one place.' (*MOS* 171)

But this false sense of security soon change as the pair is lost:

> The swamp did not seem to end, ever. On either side of the road it brooded, fetid and timeless, somber and hushed and dreadful. The road went on and on through a bearded tunnel, beneath the sinister brass sky. [...] David tramped behind her, watching two splotches of dead blood on her stockings.' (*MOS* 177)

The transformation of a familiar environment into an unfamiliar, hostile one creates an acute awareness of the world of objects (being-in-itself): there is no

[263] Howells, *Sartre – The Necessity of Freedom,* p. 52.

harmony between the outside world and the characters but an acute awareness and fear. This notion is exemplified when David and Pat become aware of the wildness of the trees and more specifically the roots of the trees:

> They had found the road at last- two faint scars and a powder of unbearable dust upon a raised levee traversing the swamp. But between them and the road was a foul sluggish width of water and vegetation and biology. Huge cypress *roots* thrust up like weathered bones out of a green scum and a quaking neither earth nor water, and always those bearded eternal *trees* like gods regarding without alarm this puny desecration of a silence of air and earth and water […]' (My emphasis *MOS* 174)
>
> It was she who found the fallen tree, who first essayed its oozy treacherous bark and first stood in the empty road stretching monotonously in either direction between battalioned patriarchs of trees. She was panting a little, whipping a broken green branch about her body, watching him as he inched his way across the fallen trunk. (*MOS* 174)

This scene exemplifies an existentialist nausea on various levels. First, it can be construed as a metaphoric clash between being-for-itself (consciousness) and being-in-itself (objects), which in this case are the trees and vegetation. David and Pat are lost physically but they also become aware of the forcefulness of nature. As a result, one aspect of nausea occurs as the world of objects (being-in-itself) unravels its dominance over human consciousness (being-for-itself). Further on, part of this forcefulness is the distortion of familiar shapes and forms into something unfamiliar. The phrase 'battalioned patriarchs of trees' carries a sexual connotation which is also present in Gordon's use of genderised form in his sculpture ('motionless and passionately eternal – the virginal breastless') (*MOS* 11) and there are hints of sexual tension between the two sexes on the yacht ('Mr. Talliaferro was conscious of the clean young odor of her, like that of young trees […]' (*MOS* 21). Faulkner presents sex and gender in this scene as suggestive and threatening: the description of nature mimics his conflicted take on sexuality in the novel as disharmonious and hazardous. The lack of physical sex in *Mosquitoes* is reduced to its suggestive nature, is seen by Mary M Dunlap as part of being 'impotent' since '[…] *Mosquitoes*, is a sterile world populated by artists and non-artists most of whom are physically and imaginatively impotent.'[264] Dunlap's argument focuses on the 'sterility of words', which

[264] Mary M Dunlap, 'Sex and the Artist in "Mosquitoes"', *Mississippi Quarterly*, Vol. 22, Iss.3 (1969 Summer), pp.190 – 206, p.190.

finds its equivalent in the sterile world of the artists, a 'bisexual world full of sexual abnormalities'[265]. Dunlap argues that most characters are caught up in the atmosphere of sexual tension, but do not act on it. Frederick R. Karl also relates the tension of sex to art:

> The sexual landscape of the novel mirrors the uneasiness Faulkner felt in areas of art. Sexual frustration – among the adult figures only the sculptor Gordon acts on a sexual urge, and he visits a whorehouse – is connected mysteriously to frustration with language, with expression itself.[266]

Thus, the sexual conflict indicates the co-existence between an over-sexed desire and inability to perform. This sexual dichotomy reflects the miscommunication and isolation between characters, their inner wishes and the external disappointments in expressing honest emotions. This is indicative of the danger of the characters' façade and the deep desire to break loose from all pretence.

Furthermore, the sense of nausea occurs as the trees transform into a perturbing and unfamiliar entity, and in many ways a reflection on what art can and cannot do in terms of realist representation. The recognition of the trees and the tree roots brings to mind a similar key scene in *Nausea*, when Roquentin has a revelation regarding existence upon staring at the root of a chestnut tree:

> I was in the municipal park just now. The root of the chestnut tree plunged into the ground just underneath my bench. […] I was sitting, slightly bent, my head bowed, alone in front of that black, knotty mass, which was utterly crude and frightened me. And then I had this revelation.
> (*NAU* 182)

The 'revelation' of the tree root affirms the notion of existence and thus creates a nauseating feeling of contingency. It is the sense of an overwhelming 'knotty mass' almost out of control that creates nausea. As Mary Warnock argues:

> Sometimes Sartre seems to envisage a man's being overcome by disgust, as Roquentin was in the novel *La Nausée*, at the thought of the frightful teeming unmanageable mass of material of which the world is made. Part of the terror felt by the conscious being in the face of the world is the terror that he cannot properly manage his environment.[267]

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[265] Ibid. p. 206.
[266] Karl, 'Introduction', in William Faulkner, *Mosquitoes,* p.5.
[267] Mary Warnock, *Existentialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p.110. Vegetation is a recurrent theme in Sartre's *Nausea*, as John Fletcher argues: 'One of the many sources of disgust which Roquentin finds in Bouville is the emasculated vegetation, which is ever-ready,

The battle is clearly between the almighty power of nature and the feebleness of human consciousness. It is a doomed battle from the outset, a constant reminder of the constant frustrations of human consciousness and therefore a source of existentialist angst. The roots of the tree are all the more frightening because their presence is always implied; they are never entirely visible. Sexual undertones are rife, just as they are in the 'battalioned patriarchs of trees' experienced by Pat – which reinforces the threat embodied by the unrecognisable mass of nature.

Another facet of the argument of nature and plants is the sense of human 'envy' of the forcefulness of nature. As Bernd Jager suggests: 'Roquentin looks upon vegetation with a mixture of disgust and envy that reflects his ambivalent feelings about the self-evident ties that connect a plant to its ground. A tree is at one with its ground, but man is his *own* ground in the manner of not being it.'[268] Jager points here to the conflict of being and stresses the difference between being-in-itself (trees), seen as a non-changing, stable and therefore powerful being, and being-for-itself, or human consciousness, which lacks this concrete stability of nature as it is always fleeting, changing. Thus, consciousness wants to become something it can never fully be and as a result a sense of nausea occurs. As in the case of Pat and David, both feel helpless and terrified because, to use Sartre's terminology, the battle of in-itself and for-itself is in full force, resulting in feelings of alienation. Alienation here is caused by human consciousness acknowledging its helpless position, as being-in-itself will always be more dominant and stable.

Further on, Pat and David look at what, on the surface, should be simply trees and water, but what they experience is a sense of 'sluggish width of water and vegetation and biology' – this assemblage of elements shares a great deal with Sartre's sense of *viscosity*. The sensation of viscosity emerges at the moment of transition from the familiar to the unfamiliar. It is what occurs

in his distorted imagination, to suck him in […]' Fletcher, 'Sartre's Nausea: A Modern Classic Revisited', p.375.

[268] Jager, 'Sartre's Anthropology: A Philosophical Reflection on *La Nausée*', p. 487.

as the feeling of existence surges. Sartre describes a feeling of 'amorphous sticky existence'[269], which occurs when Roquentin encounters various objects:

> And then, all of a sudden, there it was, as clear as day: existence had suddenly unveiled itself. It had lost its harmless appearance as an abstract category: it was the very stuff of things, that root was steeped in existence. Or rather the root, the park gates, the bench, the sparse grass on the lawn, all that had vanished; the diversity of things, their individuality, was only an appearance, a veneer. This veneer had melted, leaving soft, monstrous masses, in disorder – naked, with a frightening, obscene nakedness. (*NAU* 183)

Sartre's example of viscosity is exemplified by the description in the 'soft, monstrous masses' of the tree, just as, for David and Pat in *Mosquitoes,* the '[h]uge cypress *roots* thrust up like weathered bones out of a green scum' (*MOS* 174). The quality of viscosity according to Warnock indicates a way 'to reveal to us the threat, the possibility which we must necessarily hate above all others, that we might be in some sense taken over by the mindless In-Itself and that we might totally lose control over our environment.'[270] Furthermore, this sense of sticky amorphous exterior is what partly constitutes existentialist reality according to Warnock: such visions 'will exercise a peculiar fascination for us, as revealing the true nature of reality; and they will disgust us accordingly'[271]. Reality for Sartre is manifested in the recognition of the concreteness of the physical objects - 'the root', 'the park gates' - and the realisation that all objects posses a reminder of 'brute' existence. This frightful recognition provokes a sense of nausea, an erasure of the individuality of objects into one mass of viscosity. This sense of 'monstrous masses' is subsequently reduced to 'obscene nakedness'; nakedness that suggests birth, a sense of new beginning. Thus, the scene captures the cycle of life; birth, death (a form of viscosity) and rebirth, all recognised in the materiality of nature as an object.

In this way, the existentialist battle between the all-consuming power of being-in-itself and consciousness finds an output in the aesthetic expression of amorphous reality in both Faulkner and Sartre. The elastic quality of the amorphous can also be indicative of both the flux of emotions, and feelings of

[269] Warnock, *Existentialism,* p.110.
[270] Mary Warnock, 'Intro', Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. XV.
[271] Warnock, *Existentialism*. p.110.

isolation expressed in *Mosquitoes*. Feelings of isolation are reflected in the contrast between the fluidity of space (the river) and the stillness space of the yacht:

> The world was becoming dimensionless, the tall bearded cypresses drew nearer one to another across the wallowing river with the soulless implacability of pagan gods, gazing down upon this mahogany-and-brass intruder with inscrutable unalarm. The water was like oil and the *Nausikaa* forged onwards without any sensation of motion through a corridor without ceiling or floor. (*MOS* 83)

The contrast between the river and the boat emphasises the weakness of the constructed form of the 'mahogany-and-brass' yacht. The man made yacht is described as an 'intruder' to the forceful power of the river. Similar to the earlier example of the vegetation, the river holds an important role in *Mosquitoes*. It represents the being-in-itself, a powerful entity of nature, and is set as a constant reminder to the characters (being-for-itself) of their own human fragility. The contrast between the fluidity and stillness of nature points to a universal recognition of the human condition. However, the paradox of Faulkner and existentialism is reflected through two contrasted emotions – firstly in the way in which the artists on the yacht attempt to gain a sense of control through making art, as will be exemplified in Gordon's active engagement in making sculpture, likewise, the act of conversation on art by most of the characters. Secondly, by being constantly aware of the precarious state of being, or in other words, recognising the contingency of existence or the lack of control or reason for existence.

The human condition in *Mosquitoes* is also reflected in the attempt to bring together into one confined space (the yacht) various characters with conflicting agendas (artists and non-artists). The focus on the dislocation of space or undefined geographical locale allows for a questioning of the self and one's place in the world. In fact, the recognition of existence in Faulkner's fiction, that is, the questioning of man's place in the world, is at the core of the aesthetics in *Mosquitoes*.

Literature for Sartre is an exploration of man's situation in the world:

> I should say that we are all metaphysical writers . . . for metaphysics is not a sterile discussion of abstract notions outside experience, it is a living attempt to embrace from within the human condition in its totality.[272]

[272] Quoted in Christina Howells, 'Sartre the Necessity of Freedom', p. 46.

In *Mosquitoes* the experience of the 'human condition' in enabled by assembling various characters with different experiences and outlooks on to one boat. The yacht, *Nausikaa,* plays an important objective role as it acts as a silent observer, constantly present and overlooking events and characters, but it also holds a curious in–between position of a world in transit:

> The *Nausikaa* lay in the basin – a nice thing, with her white, matronly hull and mahogany-and-brass superstructure and the yacht club flag at the peak. (*MOS* 54)
>
> The *Nausikaa* sped youthfully and gaily under a blue and drowsy day, beneath her forefoot a small bow wave spread its sedate fading fan. (*MOS* 58)

The yacht dislocates the plot and characters from a specific locale to an undefined space where it either moves and sails or is stuck in a static position. The undefined physical setting mimics the restlessness of the characters' inner being as the intermediate positioning of the yacht accentuates the inconsequential aspect of the geographical locale. According to Hepburn:

> The somewhat tired suggestion of *Mosquitoes* is that all the characters have been removed from time, have had meaningful experiences in a timeless state, and, subtly altered, have been returned to a time sequence which will expect them all to be unchanged. However, only the true artists, Gordon and Fairchild, and Julius, really undergo any substantive change […]'[273]

Hepburn points to a noticeable transformation, which occurs only to the artists in the narrative and as a result separates them from the collective experience of all the characters throughout the boat trip. However, this point is questionable since the timeless state and the actual journey induces certain changes true to both artists and non-artists. The difference is that the artists are able to express and visualise their changes in an outward manner through art. This visible change is seen in Gordon's sculptures, which will be discussed later in the chapter. The non-artists, on the other hand, have no physical output to show their changed state of mind, but they too, experience change through their restlessness and the actual recognition of the differences between the characters. This disparity between the non-artists and artists, and their place on the yacht, is questioned by the character Mrs Maurier:

[273] Hepburn, 'Faulkner's "Mosquitoes:" A Poetic Turning Point', pp. 19-20.

> "Patricia," she demanded, "what on earth did you invite those two – young people for?
> "God knows," the niece answered, looking past her aunt's yachting cap to Pete, belligerent and uncomfortable bedside Jenny's bovine white placidity. "God knows. If you want to turn around and take 'em back, don't let me stand in your way." (*MOS* 58)

Mrs Maurier doubts the suitability of the characters Jenny and Pete on the yacht and questions of belonging, acceptance and rejection by the characters create a sense of alienation and disparity throughout the trip. Faulkner manages to create a dual sense of isolation: aboard the yacht among the characters themselves; and through the unspecified locale of the yacht, which creates a sense of collective isolation.

The collective/universal experience and the stress on unspecified locale is not accidental. According to Faulkner, the search for what he calls universal truth is a central concern in his writing:

> I think the setting of a novel is just incidental, that the novelist is writing about truth; I mean by truth, the things that are true to all people, which are love, friendship, courage, fear, greed […]'[274]

The notion of truth, according to Faulkner, forms part of collective universal moments of living. Or, as Olga Vickery points out, 'The state of "just being" and of instinctively knowing, which precedes self-consciousness and verbalization, is one of the constant sources of value and strength in Faulkner's novels.'[275] Vickery accentuates the importance of evaluating moments in time, which are not articulated but lived. This argument stems from Vickery's recognition that *Mosquitoes* is partly a critique on the nature of words and the excessive use of words. For the character Fairchild: 'Talk, talk, talk: the utter and heartbreaking stupidity of words. It seemed endless, as though it might go on forever. Ideas, thoughts, became mere sounds to be bandied about until they were dead.'[276] Vickery points to Faulkner's recognition of the importance of universal moments of action by all the characters, and when Faulkner says, 'things that are true to all people', such as 'love, friendship, courage, fear, greed', he implies that it is the way those

[274] William Faulkner, *Lion in The Garden: Interviews with William Faulkner, 1926-1962*, p. 202.
[275] Olga W. Vickery, *The Novels of William Faulkner – A Critical Interpretation*, p.9.
[276] Ibid. pp.8-9. In William Faulkner, *Mosquitoes*, p.186.

moments are expressed by deeds or actions rather than how they are spoken of, that are true to all people.

Faulkner's comment on the need to seek 'truth' in writing can be applied to the common qualities of the human condition in terms of man and his position in the world. William J Sowder points to the similarities in universal concerns between Sartre and Faulkner: 'Like nearly all existential writers, Sartre and Faulkner show little concern for the origin of man, but both try to explain "that in him" which makes him endure *as man*.'[277] The 'endure' reference by Sowder is derived from Faulkner's Nobel prize speech, in which Faulkner says:

> I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. […] It is his [author, poet] privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride […][278]

To develop Sowder's point, in existential terms, Faulkner may not be interested in the *essence* of a character but rather in the hard facts of existence. In other words, it is not the psychological or historic background of the character that concerns him, but rather the way in which the character expresses the present austereness of existence. In line with the existentialist tenet of 'existence precedes essence', the harshness of existence, with its 'concrete, individual being here and now'[279], is at the core of Faulkner's concerns. In these terms, the element of 'endurance' is important because it acts as a human tool with which to deal with the harshness of reality. This specific reality is read in existentialist terms, and consists of acknowledging one's contingency.

To this point, I have traced some existing critical discourse on *Mosquitoes* and identified some key points regarding the artist in the novel. The self-image of the artist, as projected to others, and feelings of anxiety were exemplified through a sense of nausea, and compared to Sartre's fictional account of the character Roquentin in *Nausea* and his discovery of the

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[277] William J. Sowder, 'Faulkner and Existentialism: A Note on the Generalissimo' in *Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature*, Vol.4, No.2 (Spring-summer 1963), pp.163-171, p. 168.
[278] William Faulkner, 'Address upon Receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature' – Stockholm, December 1, 1950. In James B. Meriwether (ed.), *William Faulkner Essays, Speeches & Public Letters* (New York: The Modern Library, 2004), p.120.
[279] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p.652.

chestnut tree. I argued that Faulkner uses similar examples of nature, such as trees and the swamp, to convey the sense of contingency felt by the characters Pat and David. The sense of nausea in *Mosquitoes* is heightened by a set of dichotomies: the familiar environment and the unfamiliar surroundings, a sense of stillness and fluidity, and an awareness of viscosity and a quest for order. Part of the expression of viscosity, the 'sticky' quality of the being-in-itself, is rendered through the abstract use of colour. As I shall argue in the next section, in Faulkner's *Elmer* the use of colour tropes serves to convey the eponymous main character's sense of alienation and is a direct reflection of existentialist angst.

COLOUR IN *ELMER* AND *NAUSEA*

In *Mosquitoes* the concept of viscosity, can be seen as a form of aesthetic device in Faulkner's fiction and as a mode of existence in Sartre's philosophical trajectory. I have shown how nausea is manifested through the struggle of being and consciousness. The amorphous, formless quality seen in the viscosity of existence as exemplified in the wild and threatening vegetation encountered by Pat and David in the swamp represent a battle. This battle of form and amorphousness in relation to Faulkner is questioned by Lothar Hönnighausen:

> The distinctive feature in this portrait of the artist is the notion that creation is not experienced as an effortless pagan delight but as an existential battle against shapelessness. The drama between form and amorphousness provides the emotional and spiritual context from which the motives arose that drove Faulkner to embrace, in *Elmer* and *Mosquitoes*, the modernist masks of the writer as painter and as sculptor: "...what hand holds that blood to shape this dream within me in marble or sound, on canvas or paper, and live?" (*MOS* 12).[280]

While Hönnighausen does not expand on the meaning of 'existentialist battle against shapelessness', or what it actually signifies existentially, he

[280] Lothar Hönnighausen, *Faulkner:Masks and Metaphors* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1997) p. 93. His argument on the personae of the artist in *Elmer* and *Mosquitoes* is threefold: first, it is seen as reflection of modernist writers with 'the sensuousness of painting and the plasticity of sculpture to redeem the verbal art from its abstractness and discursiveness'. Second, it is the preoccupation with the unconscious and the 'darker self'. Third: it is the 'continuing if modified fascination with the aesthetic ideal of romanticism'. Hönnighausen, p. 94.

acknowledges that Faulkner's creation of the artist is to give an order or a sense of form to a formless world. The existentialist milieu is shapeless because the nature of existence itself is shapeless and undefined. I would like to extend the argument and argue that the tropes of colour in Faulkner's *Elmer* (1925) and Sartre's *Nausea* are another aesthetic way to express the notions of contingency and nausea. In this section, the notion of the amorphous quality will be linked to Faulkner's use of the colour red in *Elmer* and compared with the colour black in Sartre's *Nausea*. The aim will be to examine colour symbolism, the relational meaning of colour and how it fits into Faulkner's overall concerns with what art means. Furthermore, the use of colour as a stylistic device will be placed in the modernist aesthetic in order to establish some intersecting points between colour symbolism, the art of Cézanne, Cubism and existentialist thought.

Mosquitoes, according to most critics, is a result of Faulkner's failed attempt at a novel, the unfinished *Elmer* (1927), 'which Faulkner began with enthusiasm in Europe before losing control and interest.'[281] According to James B Meriwether, 'Had he completed it, *Elmer* would have been William Faulkner's second novel. His first, *Soldiers' Pay*, was finished late in the spring of 1925. Soon afterwards he sailed for Europe, where he would spend five months in Italy and Switzerland and France and England, tramping and sketching, writing poetry and travel articles and short fiction.'[282]

In comparison with other novels by Faulkner, the unfinished manuscript of *Elmer* has received scant critical attention. This may be because *Elmer* was incomplete, but also because, as Meriwether suggests: 'His vein of satire proved thin, perhaps necessitating the many awkward changes in tone and

[281] Bassett, 'Faulkner's "Mosquitoes": Toward a Self-Image of the Artist', p.51. Similarly, according to Thomas L. McHaney: 'Faulkner saved the unfinished typescript, and in the next decade he tried several times to salvage portions of the original conception.' McHaney, 'The Elmer Papers: Faulkner's Comic Portraits of the Artist', in *Mississippi Quarterly*, 26:3 (1973: Summer). p. 282. McHaney also argues that some stories such as "Divorce in Naples", first published in the 1931 collection *These 13,* […] draw explicitly on the unfinished novel, many characters, themes, and even patches of dialogue and imagery from "Elmer" found a way into the novels which followed, especially *Mosquitoes* (1927) and *Sartoris* (1929)' .p. 282.

[282] James, B. Meriwether, 'Foreword'*, in Elmer,* Mississippi Quarterly, 36:3 (Summer 1983) pp. 339-342, p. 339. According to Meriwether: 'In deciding to abandon a book to which he had devoted so much effort, and which contained so much that was good, he proved that he possessed a quality essential for his continued growth towards artistic maturity and mastery – the capacity to be ruthless and objective critic of his own work.' Meriwether, 'Foreword'*, in Elmer,* p. 342.

mood.'[283] However, I would like to argue that *Elmer* exemplifies Faulkner's acute aesthetic sensibility in his use of colour tropes. More precisely, Faulkner's use of colours such as red, white and blue is close to Sartre's use of the colour black. Colours can be specifically viewed in relation to consciousness and the notion of nausea.

Elmer, tells the story of the would-be-artist Elmer Hodge. The plot focuses on the life journey of Elmer, through a series of flashbacks. As in *Mosquitoes,* many scenes are set on a boat:

> Yes, Elmer couldn't deny that civilization was getting him again. While at sea his individuality had become a gentle solution in a remote bowl which weather warmed but slightly and cooled as little, over which day and dark passed in a timeless procession: a dull happiness without beginning or end.'[284]

As in *Mosquitoes* a timeless quality is emphasised by Faulkner in much the same way. The sea and the unspecific in-between locale set the artist in a strange space. Apart from various life events that Elmer recalls, such as his relationship with his sister Jo-Addie, his family and his lovers, Faulkner uses dominant colour descriptions to indicate Elmer's artistic ambitions, but also to reflect mood and characters' state of mind. Faulkner singles out the colour red as especially prominent and important, a point recognised by Hönnighausen, as being 'as much for poetically structuring his prose as for revealing the origins of the artist's anxiety'[285]. Elmer's anxiety stems from his unfulfilled desire to make art and as a direct reflection of his emotional upheavals. It is also a reflection of the idea that art constitutes a nostalgic memory for Elmer: 'When he was in Jonesboro, in the fourth grade in school, he got a box of paints for Christmas. Cheap water colors and an impossible brush bristling smartly from a celluloid tube into which the wooden handle would never stay rigidly fixed.' (*ELM* 367) Elmer's childhood memories are closely related to a naïve reflection of what art should be, the feelings he wishes to maintain but was unable to sustain throughout his adult life. The disparity between viewing art as a form of escapism with a false sense of

[283] Meriwether, p. 341.
[284] William Faulkner, *Elmer* (1927) in Cox, Dianne L., (ed.), *Text*, *Mississippi Quarterly*, Vol.36, No.3 (Summer 1983) pp. 343-447), p. 345. Hereafter abbreviated ELM and cited parenthetically by page number.
[285] Hönnighausen, *Faulkner: Masks and Metaphors*, p. 94.

security and the harsh reality of not managing to create art is at the heart of Elmer's anxiety. The descriptions of colour in *Elmer* reflect the colour palette of Elmer's imagination, the way the world is viewed through his own eyes. The colour green is seen as a memory: 'How green that water was. Elmer remembered it later, recalling how an endless dreadful interval in the normal course of his life had already been marked indelibly on his memory by an association with a color: the green of the Mersey shores.' (*ELM* 414) and as a present contemplation: 'Venice looked like voluptuous lace. The sea was like a blue scarf with a thin jade-green border and from out walls of hushed pink and yellow and lavender …' (*ELM* 413).

The colour red has various meanings in relation to Elmer, and goes through various metaphorical meanings to reflect Elmer's state of mind. In the following example red is associated with fire and danger:

> He opened them again reading the clean label smugly breaking its hushed dull gleam. Red said the label and red the rectangular border. When he was young red had troubled him. When he was five years old the house in which they were temporarily living had burned. […] Never would he forget the red horror of that night. (*ELM* 345)

Thomas L McHaney argues that red is significant as it indicates Elmer's transformation to artist and painter: 'he associates [it] first with the "red horror" of a burning house and the scarlet throats of his displaced, weeping brothers at the fire […].'[286] Elmer later manages to transform the meaning of the colour red to suit his evolving artistic sensibilities, 'because he has lost his dread of the colour red'[287]:

> It was in Chicago that he had lost his dread of the color red. There was a picture in the Hutchinson galleries that had red in it, that for Elmer was all red. It was by a Frenchman and it may have been a vase of flowers or a woman's dress: he had forgotten which; but from it he had learned that no color has any value, any significance save in its relation to other colors seen or suggested or imagined. (*ELM* 363)

Faulkner's use of the colour red and the emphasis on the relational meaning of colour can be related to modernist aesthetics, and specifically to cubism. As we saw in the previous chapter, elements of Cubistic style such as

[286] McHaney, 'The Elmer Papers: Faulkner's Comic Portraits of the Artist', p. 284.
[287] Ibid. p. 284. See McHaney for a discussion on Elmer's link to art, sexuality, Freud and Bergson's theory.

fragmentation and multiple- perspective were present in Faulkner's use of form. In my analysis in chapter 2, the fragmented parts and the overall perspective was viewed as an essential part of Faulkner's technique, and was equally connected to the importance of part and a whole in existentialist thought. In *Elmer*, colour can similarly be viewed as interdependent with all other elements in the scene. For *Elmer*, the colour red no longer indicates dread because the symbolic meaning is not fixed on one specific emotion. Instead, it is an evolving process, a process, which mimics his personal journey of the artist. Thus, when Faulkner writes that, 'no color has any value, any significance save in its relation to other colors' it demonstrates how one colour or one emotion is always co-dependent with other colours and other emotions. Faulkner's statement is close to a cubist definition as the movement was against:

> The assumption that a painting must represent a single moment in time and be seen from a fixed position in space. The cubists overturned these methods by introducing multiple view-points […] and ambiguous spatial relations into their painting…'[288].

An example of the relational value between colours and the human form is present in *Elmer* :

> Her black eyes beneath brows symmetrical and unbroken as two brush strokes, her short calcimined nose in which the nostrils were like two holes burned with a cigarette in a piece of paper, her red mouth that laughed so quickly, vivid and mobile with a dry elasticity, as though merely a muscular impulse like a wink revealed those slightly yellow teeth bedded in pale wide gums […]' (*ELM* 423)

The collage technique in the text emphasises the dynamic and overlapping relationship between the colours black, red and yellow in relation to the human face. The colours gain their intensity and meaning through the specifically located relation to other colours and contrasted to particular facial parts such as 'eyes', 'brows', 'nostrils', 'mouth' and 'teeth.' The singularity of colour/emotion cannot be isolated completely without accentuating its relation to all other emotions, an idea that echoes the existentialist notion of transcendence: the fluid relational connections of human consciousness and the world of objects. The above example demonstrates fluidity through facial

[288] Mark Antliff, Patricia Leighten, *Cubism and Culture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001), pp. 9-10.

expressions, 'laughed so quickly', 'vivid and mobile with a dry elasticity', and painterly descriptions of 'two brush strokes' and 'a piece of paper'– demonstrates the fluidity of human consciousness.

Furthermore, the relational value in the above scene raises the importance of colour symbolism in modernist literature. For Hönnighausen:

> Characteristic of blue as metaphor is its dynamic, ambiguous, and all-embracing quality. Like James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and other modernists, the young Mississippi writer posing as painter was finding out that color symbolism and the musically structured leitmotifs answer particularly well the purpose of transmitting psychoanalytic themes in a multivalent poetic prose.[289]

Hönnighausen's reference to the 'all-embracing' quality of colour in *Elmer* is also comparable to the amorphous quality of being. This quality of being mimics the dynamics of colour in the way it is spread out, shapeless, and signifies the symbolic physical example of the inner struggle of human consciousness. The blurriness of colour mimics the foggy internal turmoil in *Elmer* :

> After twenty days on a freighter pushing one empty horizon before and drawing another one behind, empty too save for a green carpet of wake unrolling across that blue monotone as though before a great cathedral prepared for an elegant wedding in high life, Elmer forgot how to be anything except hungry and sleepy […] (*ELM* 343)

The existential struggle for coherence and the attempt to reconfigure reality can also be applied to modernist thought. As is acknowledged by Hönnighausen, the visual aspect of writing was crucial to modernist writers, and the focus on form, colour, line and shape was seen as an important way of re-presenting reality. The art critic Roger Fry established the notion that modern art should not 'seek to imitate form, but to create form; not to imitate life, but to find equivalent for life'[290].

Thus, form and colour are components of life itself; the all-embracing qualities that unite all aspects of life are assembled into an external platform of art. Fry's edict is arguably existential in nature, as he highlights the importance of the all consuming, transcending aspects of life presented with

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[289] Honnighausen, *Faulkner: Masks and Metaphors,* pp. 96-97.

[290] Quoted in Randi Koppen, 'Embodied Form: Art and life in Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse', *New Literary History*, Vol. 32, No 2 (Spring 2001), pp. 375—389, p.376.

no particular order or coherence into one single source of recognition. This all-embracing quality of individual elements captures the existential struggle of the inner being and the external world. The artistic struggle of form and content mimics the philosophical relationship between being-in-itself and being-for-itself. The fluidity of human consciousness is evoked through the exterior form of objects. The outer and inner struggle is arguably also at the heart of modernist art:

> Beyond the sensuous immediacy of impressionism lay the constructive color of Cézanne, whose art symbolized nothing in particular, but "turned all external appearances of real things into a symbol of 'being', 'which is eternal'".[291]

In others words, Cézanne captures in his art the hub of existentialist being: the external surface of objects is immortalised by colour, shape and light/shade, and each 'appearance' represents the hidden eternal struggle of human consciousness.

In *Elmer*, the confusion of exterior/interior and undefined form thus both mimics and reenacts modernist aesthetics and existentialist concerns with opacity:

> After Elmer had stared at the light a while it became two lights and looking away *red* stars vomited behind his eyelids somewhere between his eyelids and his eyes, and the paper on the ceiling figured to a geometric idiocy lowered itself becoming transparent: soon there was a ceiling where the ceiling should be and between him and that ceiling was another one reduced and transparent. Two ceilings and he decided he would raise his hand and thrust his finger through that near one stretched over him like oiled paper, becoming immediately *nauseated*.' (My emphasis, *ELM* 350)

Here, the amorphous quality is exemplified in the blending of colour (red) and surroundings, a way to render both form and non-form. The light blends all the structures of the exterior form - the ceiling is 'reduced' and becomes 'transparent'. Equally, the texture of form goes through a kind of visual metamorphosis, from the ceiling being described as 'a geometric idiocy', to 'transparent' and then to 'oiled paper'. The texture of objects mimics the interior dynamics of the human senses, such as touch -'thrust his finger'- and sight: 'looking away red stars vomited behind his eyelids'. The final outlet of Elmer's sense of confusion is narrowed down to smell and taste, which are reduced to nausea. This indicates that the texture of objects and their infusion

[291] Jack F. Stewart, 'Color in To the Lighthouse', *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Winter, 1985), pp.438-458. p. 439 Stewart quotes from Kurt Badt, *The Art of Cézanne* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1965), p. 49.

into the senses can be seen as a metaphor for the actual process of painting – a microcosm of the creative process. Elmer, in effect, describes the process of producing a painting: from the imaginative thought process of 'geometric idiocy' to the physical act of painting: he 'thrust his finger through that near one stretched over him like oiled paper'. Both the imaginative and the tactile side of the creative process are captured in the scene, and it is a solitary process, which seems difficult since it encompasses all aspects of human being.

The sense of nausea, then, is partly a projection of the exhaustive procedure of the creative act, echoing some of Faulkner's concerns regarding the nature of the artist's life and work. For Faulkner art is a comprehensive human process, which involves all forms such as writing and painting. This echoes Virginia Woolf's comment on the similarities between painters and writers: 'Painting and writing have much in common. The novelist after all wants to make us see […] All great writers are great colourists …"[292] Woolf did not dismiss the differences between writing and painting, or place one form of art over the other. What was crucial to Woolf was the need to capture the visual qualities of colours through the written form. However, Woolf's comment encapsulates a larger point: that the shared elements between writing and painting are comparable to the metaphoric relational meanings between colours.

Thus, the description of the colour red in *Elmer* functions as one way to render the undefined nature of form, which represents the metaphoric and undefined process of art. The colour red with its dynamic quality is thus one way to render Elmer's manic thought process and state of mind. According to Hönnighausen:

> While Elmer as artist persona allowed Faulkner to introduce color patterns as a means to provide his poetic prose with non- discursive structures, the persona of the sculptor suggested firmness of contour and the controlling force of form.[293]

As we will see, Gordon and his art are concrete and defined whereas the colour red – in this instance – seems to represent an undefined mode of existence, which results in physical nausea. Gordon, on the hand, represents

[292] Virginia Woolf, "Walter Sickert," *Collected Essays* (London: Hogarth Press, 1966), II, 241.
[293] Hönnighausen, *Faulkner: Masks and Metaphors,* p. 102.

the end product of that exhaustive creative process, which results in an actual art object, whereas Elmer encapsulates the practical and strenuous element of the creative process. Both modes are essential and are part of a necessary chain in the creative process.

Faulkner's concerns with the schism between the interior and the exterior, the fuzziness of boundaries and the elastic quality of colour can also be traced in Sartre's *Nausea*. The amorphous quality of colour and especially the colour black is indicative of Roquentin's existential awareness of contingency. Here, Sartre manages to capture the difficult, indescribable ontological conflict of existence through the colour black:

> Black? I felt the word subside, empty itself of its meaning with an extraordinary speed. Black? The root *was not* black, it was not the black there was on that piece of wood – it was …. something else: black, like the circle, did not exist. I looked at the root: was it *more than black or almost* black? *(NAU* 186)

> I didn't *see* that black in a simple way: sight is an abstract invention, a cleaned-up, simplified idea, a human idea. That black, a *weak, amorphous* presence, far surpassed sight, smell, and taste. But that richness became confusion and finally ceased to be anything at all because it was too much.' (My emphasis, *NAU* 187)

In the same way, Faulkner's description of the colour red is not seen as an accurate and realistic description of his environment but as an imagined sensation. That sensation becomes the instant recognition of contingency, which is often indescribable. When Sartre writes, 'I looked at the root: was it *more than black or almost* black' – it indicates a desperate need to find a coherent explanation and definition. The fact that Roquentin cannot decide on the shade of colour or its specific intensity points to his struggle in finding coherence and ultimately meaning in his existence. The visual description of colour is a metaphor not only for the confusion of the inner being, but also for the intensity and overwhelming presence of nature and its forcefulness. Sartre's focus on colour itself as opposed to any other sensations - 'far surpassed sight, smell, and taste' – indicates the hunger for clarity and the need to centre on one thing (colour) and one moment in time. However, there is another crucial point to this lack of clarity and ultimate struggle, and that in effect holds the key to the understanding of the creative act. Sartre articulates that the artist or the writer requires this struggle between incoherence, or amorphous presence, and transcendence in order to create art.

From the lack of clarity and resulting anxiety, the need for coherence takes over, and the result is a work of art.

The attention to the colour black and the idea that it is not easily defined has –in Sartre's case – ontological reasons. Rhiannon Goldthorpe argues:

> […] when he [Roquentin] contemplates the tree-root, his failure to interpret its colour in terms of 'blackness' does not merely demonstrate the artificiality of our normal differentiation of sense-perceptions [….] It is as though the temporal activity of his consciousness, with its powers of sense-giving and abstracting, had been engulfed by the a-temporality of concrete existence. [294]

In other words, Goldthorpe points to the sensation of existence, or 'concrete reality', as something that takes over and in a sense interrupts any attempt by consciousness to abstract the world of objects. As a result, the imaginative quality of human consciousness with its ability to extract and conceptualise, is temporarily abolished, and the harshness and 'a-temporality of concrete existence' takes over. What is left is the 'concreteness' or heaviness of reality, which then dominates all aspects of abstraction. The concrete nature of existence is so overwhelming that it strips off any sense of time and space.

This notion of 'concreteness' is emphasised through the symbolic function of colour with its lack of clarity and amorphous quality. The 'brute reality' of existence is associated with being-in-itself, as colour is considered one of the qualities of being-in-itself, according to DJ Fletcher[295]. In other words, 'brute reality' encapsulates all that is stable and threatening to human consciousness - the unchanging, fixed positioning of objects. This specific aspect of reality is the domineering element of being-in-itself, which reveals itself in moments of contemplation of existence. Colour, in this instance, is part of the ontological aspect of being-in -itself – the shade, hue and tone are predetermined and not permeable. When the overbearing moment of existence takes over, the qualities of a colour are not debatable or open for interpretation, as the colour is fixed in a moment, possessed by being-in-itself. Thus, as Fletcher suggests, colour is a mode of 'apprehending reality'. Reality in the context of colour is set in an in-between state, not quite predefined,

[294] Rhiannon Goldthrope, *Sartre: Literature and Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 33.
[295] D.J. Fletcher, 'The Use of Colour in "La Nausée"', *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (Apr 1968), pp. 370-380, p. 370.

with its 'concrete existence' connotation, yet still set in a process of motion with its amorphous, undefined state.

Thus, it is particularly the state of viscosity, according to Fletcher, as presented in *Being and Nothingness,* that is seen as 'a threatening mode of being because it portrays a state where the liquid flow of consciousness is becoming clogged, and is in danger of becoming completely engulfed by the solid mass of brute being'[296]. In other words, Fletcher points to the battle of the in-itself and the for-itself, which is exemplified through the use of colour. The state of viscosity - a moment in time, captured through an undefined colour with the intermingling of the interior and the exterior – encapsulates the notion of art in existential terms, and also in modernist terms. This intermediate mode of confusion evokes the conflict between the world of objects (being-in-itself) and human consciousness. What emerges from that conflict is the ability of human consciousness to create, to imagine and to form new meanings from that chaos. Thus, art is used as a way to find equilibrium between the two opposing state of being. The key element to finding that balance is imagination, which is unique to human consciousness and essential to the existentialist conception of art. The description of colour is therefore an attempt to take control over nature because it seeks to individualise and redefine reality according to a particular set of sensibilities. Thus, Faulkner's focus on colours in *Elmer* is an attempt to redefine reality and a statement about the importance of art as an expression of imaginative and creative freedom. The recognition of the split between form and non-form, amorphous quality and coherence, is crucial to the conception of art and in particular to Faulkner's fiction. The existential angle strengthens the need for a conscious moment to observe reality and utilise selected shades and elements within the spectrum of colour, to overemphasise moments of action by the characters.

The need to create order and at the same time recreate reality is symbolically traced in Faulkner's differentiation of colour. Faulkner distinguishes between qualities of colour: the colour red is well defined, whereas white brings about more abstract associations. As in Sartre's *Nausea*, colours are dominant in *Elmer* and reflect Elmer's state of mind and his

[296] Ibid. 371.

subjective reality. Colour is also split between its amorphous quality and a more defined quality. The following passage in *Elmer* demonstrates the contrast between the colour red, which is defined, and the colour white, which is more spread out and in this case also involves sexual undertones:

> Red. Solid and comfortable as a torpedo tube. White, a big one. You'll need lots of white that bright cold saleswoman had told him. White. What would this tube bear? A woman white and soft as the inside of a loaf of bread, heavy-limbed, of a dull inevitable calmness leaning her full breasts on a window-sill, brooding on far things while a lean Harlequin striped like a snake in a slim passionate immaturity plucked his insincere guitar, singing up into a sky larks had emptied, unheard? No. Elmer thought of pure spaced marble shapes rising endlessly from out dark green, discovering with a shock that he had imagined a grave-yard. . . he slid the tube of white back into its place. (ELM 356)

In this case, Faulkner demonstrates the conflict of being-for-itself and being-in-itself through the colours red and white. Red as a solid colour represents the in-itself, the strong, unchanging entity of the world of objects. White, on the other hand, represents the projected, imaginative workings of Elmer or human consciousness (being-for-itself) -which is less defined and amorphous. The qualities of the colour white can only come about only because consciousness is able to find the abstract output to fight, so to speak, the concreteness of being-in-itself. As Goldthorpe argues:

> The abstract essence or meaning which 'haunts' concrete being can be revealed only through the temporal nature of human consciousness, which can go beyond the present and the brute 'presence' of the *en-soi* to seize its meaning […]'[297]

Whereas Roquentin's colour black brings about strong and solid sensations of 'brute reality' – which existentially may indicate the forcefulness of contingency - Faulkner's symbolic white stresses the fluidity of imagination, which moves along from the 'softness' of a woman to a morbid vision of a 'grave-yard'. The anxiety here derives from a sense of morbidity, so evident in Faulkner's prose, and similarly it indicates the endless possibility of the imagination. In existential terms, Faulkner emphasises the stillness of the red as a metaphor for being-in -itself, but it is consciousness in the form of the colour white, with its sense of fluidity, that in fact dominants.

Another similar point between Faulkner and Sartre, in terms of the use of colours, is the rejection of the notion of total abstraction. Colour is used not

[297] Goldthrope, *Sartre: Literature and Theory,* p.33.

to emphasise chaos, but as a tool to find coherence. In the next example, Sartre explains the need for the artist to 'introduce order':

> One of the chief motives of artistic creation is certainly the need of feeling that we are essential in relationship to the world. If I fix on canvas or in writing a certain aspect of the fields or the sea or a look on someone's face which I have disclosed, I am conscious of having produced them by condensing relationships, by introducing order where there was none, by imposing the unity of mind on the diversity of things. [298]

Sartre points to the need of the artist to focus on certain aspects of reality such as the, 'sea', or the 'look at someone's face', which are unique and individual to the artist. In other words, the inclusion and seclusion of certain elements are a conscious choice by the creator and essential in creating art. However, the significant point that Sartre makes is the need to be engaged with aspects of reality in order to create a sense of order. This point is significant because it reflects Faulkner's similar concerns with what art is and what it should reflect: Faulkner is similarly concerned with pointing to the disorderly nature of life, but the chaotic aspects of life are always set in relation to concrete reality. Nonetheless, this is not to say that Faulkner's literature intended to be primarily realistic. Faulkner's method is to engage in a recognised reality, such as the South, but to mould that reality according to his imagination.

By the same token, Faulkner's fiction is not totally abstract: it is always viewed in relation to reality. Noel Polk, in his introduction to Faulkner's one-act play, *The Marionettes* (1920), argues that Faulkner's 'implicit' criticism of the art-for-art's-sake movement, 'which denied that life had any real meaning outside of art'[299] was crucial. Polk then quotes Michael Millgate suggesting that 'Faulkner is here, even this early in his career, at least indirectly voicing that moral concern with the problems of being human that is at the root of all his mature writing'[300]. The statement about Faulkner's preoccupation with art also holds true for *Mosquitoes* and *Elmer*. In both works, Faulkner's concern is with the way in which art is represented through the eyes of the artist, and the

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[298] Sartre, 'What is Literature?' (1948) trans. Bernard Frechtman (London and New York, Routledge, 2007), p.28. French original, *Qu'est-ce que la literature? Situations II* (Librairie Gallimard, 1948).

[299] William Faulkner, *The Marionettes,* Noel Polk, 'Introduction' (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia,1977), p. xxiii

[300] Noel Polk quotes Michael Millgate, *The Achievement of William Faulkner*, (Constable, 1966), p.287. In Polk, p. xxiii.

way in which life or reality is then translated by the subjective interpretation of the artist and the reader. Sartre, like Faulkner, rejects the notion of art-for-art's-sake. According to Christina Howells, Sartre discusses this issue in 'L'Idiot de la famille', suggesting that: 'he [Sartre] sees it as alienating the artist just as effectively as the bourgeois quest for profit.' '[301] Thus, the focus on the analysis of colour in *Elmer*, is purely about colour, but colour is a multifaceted metaphor for its relationship with selected aspects of reality.

This section of the chapter has focused on the use of colours as an immediate projection of how the artistic imagination is entangled with existentialist angst and nausea. As we saw, the use of certain colour tropes and symbols enabled a landscape designed to articulate interior states as much as external realities. While the artist's anxiety is identified in this section, the need to create a work of art is evoked from the need to control man's disposition in the world. By the very act of making art, man is able to utilise his feelings and gain a sense of order. Thus, the next section aims to focus on the positive mindset of imaginative thought, such as *imaging consciousness*, to demonstrate how music and sculpture in Faulkner's *Mosquitoes* and *Sanctuary* illuminate the existentialist conception of imagination and art in Faulkner's fiction.

THE MAGICAL OBJECT AND *IMAGING CONSCIOUSNESS*

By way of contextualization, Sartre's concepts of *imaging consciousness* and *analogon* and their role in relation to a work of art and the *imaginary object* will be used as analytical frameworks. I will first analyse Sartre's direct reference to Faulkner's fiction as the magical object, another term for the imaginary object. I will then compare some of the art objects that occur in both writers' work, such as music in Faulkner's *Sanctuary* and in Sartre's *Nausea* as well as refer to Sartre's philosophical writings, *The Imaginary* (1940) and *Being and Nothingness* (1943) My aim is to show Faulkner utilises imagination in the form of the physical analogon, consciousness and transforms it into a work of art.

[301] Howells, *Sartre the necessity of freedom*, p.134.

Part of the difficulty in discussing Sartre's aesthetic theory stems from the fact that, as Thomas R Flynn points out, 'Sartre's analysis of the imagination is part of an unsystematic part of aesthetic theory which Sartre developed in essays in philosophical psychology and art and literary criticism.'[302] Thus, rather than outline the development of Sartre's aesthetic theory I will concentrate on the role of the analogon, part of imaging consciousness, and the relationship between the imaginary and the real. I aim to focus mainly on Sartre's philosophical work, *The Imaginary*, (*L'imaginaire,* 1940) in relation to the aesthetic object. The aesthetic object includes all art in this case, such as a novel, plastic art and music. This work is hugely extensive and covers wide topics of aesthetic appreciation in the context of the nature of imagination. By concentrating on Sartre's 'unified' take, which includes literature among all forms of art, we see how:

> […] Sartre aims to present a unified theory of aesthetic appreciation as imaginative experience. The artist presents the audience with an analogon, a canvas, through which the audience can imaginatively apprehend the aesthetic object itself. Similarly, the novelist presents the audience with a book, through which an aesthetic object can be imaginatively apprehended; and a performance of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony is an analogon through which the audience can imagine the symphony itself.' [303]

For us to understand concepts such as imaginary object and analogon, they first need to be placed in the context of imaging consciousness. Sartre's sentence: 'The work of art is an irreality'[304] is the starting point, as it encapsulates his main aesthetic theory.

In simple terms, what Sartre means when he says that a work of art is an irreality or not real, is that the spectator and writer need to use their imagination through a specific process of consciousness in order to evoke it [the imaginary object] and place it in the imaginative realm. Thus, imagination is key to the creative process and to existentialist thought. In this context, it is worth examining why Faulkner was considered by Sartre to be an imaginative writer. This is the fundamental point in discussing Faulkner in the context of Sartre's aesthetic theory. In effect, placing Faulkner's fiction in

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[302] Tomas R. Flynn, 'The Role of the Image in Sartre's Aesthetic', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 33, No.4 (Summer 1975), pp.431-442, p.431.
[303] Jonathan Webber, 'Philosophical Introduction', in Sartre, *The Imaginary- A phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination*, pp. xiii- xxvii, p. xviii.
[304] Sartre, *The Imaginary- A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination,* p. 188.

the context of Sartre's aesthetic theory, reinforces and adds another facet to Faulkner's fictive imagination. Having established the important aspect of imaginative thought in Faulkner, I will explain how imaging consciousness and the by-product of imagination, the analogon, manifest themselves in Faulkner's *Mosquitoes* and Sartre's fiction.

Sartre uses the term *magical* as a homogeneous expression with consciousness, which is a crucial component of Sartre's aesthetic theory:

> The categories of 'suspicious,' of 'alarming,' designate the magical insofar as it is lived by consciousness, insofar as it urges consciousness to live it. The abrupt passage from a rational apprehension of the world to a perception of the same world as magical, if it is motivated by the object itself and if it is accompanied by a disagreeable element, is horror; if it is accompanied by an agreeable element it will be wonder.[305]

The term magical is interpreted by Sartre as part of the experience of consciousness in order to move away from a 'rational apprehension' of the world into an imaginative interpretation. Sartre also uses the term directly in relation to Faulkner's fiction. In his essay on Faulkner's *Sartoris* [306], Sartre says:

> What concerns him [Faulkner] is rather the "nature" of this new being he suggests to us: a nature preëminently poetical and magical, whose contradictions are numerous but veiled. […]
> Faulkner's heroes carry it inside them from the moment of their birth. It has the persistency of stone or rock, it is a "thing"- a "chose-esprit," a solidified spirit, opaque, following in the wake of consciousness, shadowy, yet limpid in essence. This is the *magical object*, *par excellence*. Faulkner's creatures are victims of sympathetic magic: a stifling atmosphere of sorcery surrounds them. And this is what I meant by "disloyalty". These magic spells are not possible, not even realizable. So Faulkner is careful not to make us conceive of them. All his methods conspire merely to suggest them.' (My emphasis, 'Sartoris', 98)

Sartre designates Faulkner first and foremost as an artist whose fiction is situated existentially in the realm of the imagination. Faulkner's conception of reality is from the outset categorised differently from that of the non-artist. As Fritz Kaufman argues, 'Art-creation may be understood as a revolt against the ordinary modes of cognizing reality. The artist is extraordinary in so far as he

[305] Sartre, *The Emotions: Outline of a Theory* (1939), trans. B. Frechtman (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948), p.85. French original, *Esquisse d'une théorie des émotions*, (1939).
[306] Sartre,'William Faulkner's *Sartoris*', pp.95-99.

takes a magical view of the content of experience.'[307] Thus, Faulkner is able to draw and concentrate on elements of reality, which are important to him: or, to use Sartre's terminology, consciousness is essential for the imaginative output of the artist. Consciousness and imagination come hand in hand, as Edward S Casey argues:

> […] one cannot be a conscious being without being able to imagine, and this is so for two reasons. To begin with, imagining is essential to the freedom of consciousness. Or rather, imagination is this freedom: imagining "is consciousness as a whole insofar as it realizes its freedom!"'[308]

In this context, Faulkner's fiction reveals essential qualities of freedom. He does this by focusing on the way in which consciousness operates in evoking imagination.

When Sartre writes that 'Faulkner's characters are victims of sympathetic magic', he means that Faulkner manages to designate consciousness from a 'rational apprehension'[309] of reality to a world of the magical – a world of imagination. Sartre here places reality in opposition to imagination or, in other words, places a need to distinguish between mere perception and imagination. This is crucial for Sartre in the way he views the artist's work, such as fiction or equally the plastic arts. Thus, central to the understanding of what imaging consciousness is, is Sartre's need to distinguish between imagination and perception. According to Sartre, the way in which Faulkner manages to create a magical object (or an aesthetic object) or characters surrounded by 'a stifling atmosphere of sorcery', is by using imaginative qualities and not the mere mimicking of perception in order to create his characters. The artist needs to evoke or single out a particular image or object from the world of ordinary perception in order to create an imaginary object. Christina Howells points out the disparity between perception and imagination in Sartre's philosophy:

> At certain moments, however, particularly when everyday actions are temporarily suspended, one pole of the dialectic may require particular prominence. When this is the imagination, the world appears as a spectacle for contemplation, in a form of

[307] Fritz Kaufman, 'Toward a phenomenology of the Aesthetic Object', in Maurice Natanson (ed.), *Literature, Philosophy, and the Social Sciences: Essays in Existentialism and Phenomenology*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962), pp. 79- 85, p. 81.
[308] Edward S. Casey, 'Sartre on Imagination', in Paul Arthur Schilpp (ed.), *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1981), pp. 139-167, p. 145. Casey quotes Sartre in, *the Psychology of Imagination*, p. 243.
[309] Fritz Kaufman, 'Toward a Phenomenology of the Aesthetic Object', pp. 81-2.

> the aesthetic attitude, and events may assume an impression of finality and be interpreted in terms of lived adventures. When it is perception which dominates, it produces an awareness of contingency […] In *La Nausée* Roquentin experiences both modes of consciousness: it is his *perception* of contingency which induces nausea, and his *imaginative* delight in the jazz-tune which transforms life into an art-form, charged with finality and purpose.'[310]

Howells gives the example of Roquentin as consumed, on one hand, with the world or perception and as a result made aware of contingency or nausea. As I explored in the first part of the chapter, Roquentin is aware of existence when confronted with the root of the tree. Equally, Pat and David are consumed with feelings of contingency. The one aspect of consciousness that Roquentin, Pat and David experience here is a moment of perception – that is, the world as it appears as just a 'brute existence'. However, the other aspect of consciousness, or as Sartre calls it imaging consciousness, is when imagination takes over and creates an imaginary object (or magical object in relation to Faulkner), and then the notion of contingency subsides and, as Howells points out, 'imaginative delight' occurs. This is my central point in this chapter – to demonstrate that Faulkner's characters and works of art, as reflected in fiction and particularly music and sculpture, can be viewed existentially as part of imaging consciousness.

The use of the imaginative aspect of consciousness is thus a 'defense against the persistent onslaught of contingency'[311]. In this respect, art in the form of fiction or plastic art is a form of salvation from the harsh reality or contingency of existence. In a similar way, writing for Faulkner was seen as a way of coping with contingency and the arbitrary nature of existence. Faulkner, like Sartre, wished to create in order to have a reason for existence. In an interview in 1956 Faulkner stated:

> Since man is mortal, the only immortality possible for him is to leave something behind him that is immortal since it will always move. This is the artist's way of scribbling "Kilroy was here" on the wall of the final and irrevocable oblivion through which he must someday pass.[312]

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[310] Howells, *Sartre the Necessity of Freedom,* p. 58.
[311] Marie-Denise Boros Azzi, 'Representation of Character in Sartre's Drama, fiction, and Biography', in Paul Arthur Schilpp (ed.), *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1981), pp. 438-477, p. 448.
[312] William Faulkner, *Lion in the Garden: Interviews with William Faulkner,* p.253.

Leaving behind a novel, a work of art or in existential terms an aesthetic object is the ultimate way to combat immortality and relieve the contingency of existence. The act of creating is embedded in the theme of *Mosquitoes* and is a major similarity between the artists in *Mosquitoes* - Gordon the sculptor, Fairchild the novelist, among others - and the writer Roquentin. Just like Faulkner's point on art and immortality, Roquentin also realises that he does not wish to write history books but instead wishes to write a work of fiction, a work of art that will exist for future generations:

> A book. A novel. And there would be people who would read this novel and who would say: 'It was Antoine Roquentin who wrote it, he was a red-headed fellow who hung about in cafés', and they would think about my life as I think about the life of that Negress: as about something precious and almost legendary. A book. (*NAU* 252)

MUSIC AND *ANALOGON*

Faulkner's notion of 'leaving something behind' is a dominant aspect in *Mosquitoes*, a novel in which art - such as writing, listening to music and creating sculptures – forms the imaginary object. However, there is an important point that needs to be established in order to understand a work of art in existential terms: what is an analogon in relation to imaging consciousness? In order to establish this concept in relation to Faulkner, I will use the example of music in *Mosquitoes* and *Sanctuary* (1931), and also in *Nausea*. Music as a form of art is evident (however, not dominant) in *Mosquitoes* and I would like to argue that in a similar way to the expression of music in *Nausea*, it reflects the existentialist notion of imaging consciousness and analogon.

In a 1956 interview with Jean Stein, Faulkner stressed the importance of music:

> I would say that music is the easiest means in which to express, since it came first in man's experience and history. But since words are my talent, I must try to express clumsily in words what the pure music would have done better. That is, music would express better and simpler, but I prefer to use words as I prefer to read rather than listen. I prefer silence to sound, and the image produced by words occurs in silence. That is, the thunder and the music of the prose take place in

silence. [313]

In binding together music and silence, Faulkner makes two important points, which on the surface seem unconnected but are in fact interrelated existentially. The correlated point of both music and silence is that both need to use imagination in order to express the imaginary object and by extension their role as art. On the one hand, music is interpreted as the purest form of expression, and as I shall argue, this is exemplified in Faulkner and Sartre's writing. On the other hand, Faulkner stresses the importance of silence in his fiction and as a result a doubt in relation to the purpose of words. Olga Vickery's seminal analysis of *Mosquitoes* concentrates on the role of language, and argues that language acts to 'obscure truth rather than to reveal it'[314]. Words, according to Vickery, are viewed as an almost meaningless obstruction as she points to the schism between word and action as expressed by the writer Dawson Fairchild:

> "'Well, it is a kind of sterility – words," Fairchild admitted. You begin to substitute words for things and deeds, like the withered cuckold husband that took the Decameron to bed with him every night, and pretty soon the thing or the deed becomes just a kind of shadow of a certain sound you make by shaping your mouth a certain way.[315]

The struggle between silence and words is reflected through the characters of the writer Fairchild and the sculptor Gordon. The former is verbal and the latter is more silent, but he is seen as the active creator of art. As Kenneth W Hepburn recognised:

> Gordon, the loner, is usually portrayed either in silent and intense scrutiny of something or someone or through internal monologue; Fairchild is typically seen in a crowd of which Julius, a sensitive and concerned friend, and Ernest Talliaferro, a foppish dabbler in art and life, are most prominent members.[316]

The importance of words is expressed by Fairchild:

> But words brought into a happy conjunction produce something that lives, just as soil and climate and an acorn in proper conjunction will produce a tree. Words are like acorns, you know. Every one of 'em won't make a tree, but if you just have enough of 'em, you're bound to get a tree sooner or later" (*MOS* 210)

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[313] Faulkner, *Lion in the Garden*, p. 248.
[314] Vickery, *The Novels of William Faulkner – A Critical Interpretation,* p. 8.
[315] Ibid. p. 9.
[316] Hepburn, 'Faulkner's "Mosquitoes:" A Poetic Turning Point', p. 19.

Gordon is the only character, according to Vickery, who is a 'genuine artist in the group, [and] has the least to do with talk. Talliaferro, on the other hand, verbalizes all possible approaches to action, and for that very reason is incapable of performing any act.'[317] Thus, Gordon represents the more active artist, since his silence gives way to action. However, his silence also presents the reader with the ontological space in which to imagine the imaginary object. The act of reading and the participation of the reader's imagination are crucial for the revelation of the imaginary object [which is usually absent]. Imagination, or more specifically imaging consciousness, needs both the reader's sense of imagination and the writer's imaginative ability to evoke the imaginary object. The importance of silence in Faulkner's fiction was also analysed in chapter 1, as the terrifying quality of *Sanctuary* was partly seen through the non-cerebral, action-based silence. Silence was connected to the existentialist preference for action and the non-verbal in Faulkner's fiction therefore commended by Sartre. Thus, chapter 2 touched on Temple's physical action in relation to silence: in this chapter, by contrast, music and sculpture are the solid examples of the active, silent, yet positive engagement of a work of art.

Sartre writes about silence as an aid for the imaginative abilities of the reader of fiction:

> [….] from the very beginning, the meaning is no longer contained in the words, since it is he, [the reader], on the contrary, who allows the significance of each of them to be understood; and the literary object, though realized *through* language, is never given *in* language. On the contrary, it is by nature a *silence* and an opponent of the word.[318]

Sartre stresses that the 'writer appeals to the reader's freedom to collaborate in the production of his work'[319]. In other words, it is through the silence of reading, the silence of the word, and through the consciousness of the reader and thus his ability to imagine, that the aesthetic meaning or object comes

[317] Vickery, *The Novels of William Faulkner – A Critical Interpretation,* p. 9.
[318] Sartre, *What is Literature*, my empasise (silence), pp.31-2.
[319] Ibid. p.34.

across. Silence and music, paradoxically, share this non-verbal element and are seen as the platform for an imaginative appreciation of the work of art.

I have discussed the importance of silence to imagination, but music is equally a crucial aesthetic device for the imagination. In *Sanctuary*, Faulkner concludes his distressful narrative as Temple sits in Luxembourg Gardens listening to music[320]:

> In the pavilion a band in the horizon blue of the army played Massenet and Scriabin, and Berlioz like a thin coating of tortured Tschaikovsky on a slice of stale bread […] Rich and resonant the brasses crashed and died in the thick green twilight, rolling over them in rich sad waves.' (SAN, 316-317)
>
> She closed the compact and from beneath her smart new hat she seemed to follow with her eyes the waves of music, to dissolve into the dying brasses, across the pool and the opposite semicircle of trees where at sombre intervals the dead tranquil queens in stained *marble* mused, and on into the sky lying prone and vanquished in the embrace of the season of rain and death.' (My italics, SAN 317)

On the surface, the music here is described as an imaginative pause from the horror of Temple's experiences. However, what does it mean to imaginatively escape, in existential terms? The 'waves of music' transport Temple to a different and imaginative realm: her imaginative consciousness negates the note of music, which transcends from the reality of being-in-itself (the world of objects) to an unreal space. Imagination in existential terms is able to transcend the real world (that is, the world of objects or being-in-itself) and as a result is able to uplift the sense of the contingency of the world of things to a new and unreal territory. Thus, when Sartre says the work of art is unreal or 'irreal', he means that in order to 'see' and form the imaginary object the viewer/reader/listener and writer need to evoke an *intentional act.* [321] The imaginary object is considered not real because it is set in the imaginary: it takes the writer and the reader a specific existentialist process to unravel the work of art. Marie–Denise Boros Azzi points to Sartre's dichotomy of the real and the unreal, of a very particular reality, which only the artist in his own specific negation manages to reveal:

> To opt for the imaginary is to choose a specific way of coping with things; the result

[320] Critical writing in relation to Faulkner and music is mostly viewed in the context of race. See for example, Ken Bennett, 'The Language of the Blues in Faulkner's "That Evening Sun", *Mississippi Quarterly*, Vol.38, Iss.3 (Summer 1985), pp. 339-342. And, Erich Nunn, "Don't Play no Blues": 'Race, Music, And Mourning in Faulkner's *Sanctuary',* in *The Faulkner Journal,* Vol.24, Iss. 2 (Spring 2009), pp.77-98.

[321] Sartre, *The Imaginary – A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination*, p.189.

> is therefore a deliberate sequestration in unreality. This is precisely what the artist achieves. The work of art amounts to a systematic negation of the different manifestations of reality. It constitutes a daring challenge to contingency by creating a world where everything is endowed with necessity and permanence.[322]

Thus, reality transforms in part into an unreality when imaging consciousness takes over, so to speak, and negates or in other words selects parts of reality to focus on. When Faulkner describes Temple in Luxembourg Gardens, she 'seems to follow with her eyes the waves of music, to dissolve into the dying brasses, across the pool and the opposite semicircle of trees'. (*SAN* 317) Music here is unreal because even though Temple can hear the music from a specific source - the band - which is based in reality, her negation of the *intentional act,* or in other words her choice to focus on the music from all other sources creates the imaginary object. The imaginary object – music - is not fully based in reality and is therefore considered unreal: it is located in the realm of imagination far beyond the location of Luxembourg Gardens and beyond all geography.

However, there is a crucial component of imagination that needs to be explained in order to comprehend the imaginary object, and that is the concept of the analogon. The analogon is the physical substance that 'mediates between the imaginer's consciousness and the imagined object'.[323] As Howells explains:

> […] The paint on the canvas constitutes an analogon of the image, which is the real domain of aesthetic appreciation. This applies not only to representational painting, where the paint directs our imagination towards the object represented, but also to abstract art; and a similar process takes place in the case of literature, music, drama, etc. The differences between these various forms of art lie, in this context, in their connection or lack of connection with the real. But in all instances, Sartre contends, the aesthetic object itself is unreal or imaginary. In the case of literature, for example, the words on the page once again serve simply as an analogon, on the basis of which the reader, like the writer, constitutes the work of art proper […]'[324]

In other words, the analogon constitutes all exterior or physical forms of art, painting, literature, music. It is the paint on the canvas, the ink on the page,

[322] Marie-Denise Boros Azzi, 'Representation of Character in Sartre's Drama, Fiction, and Biography',p.448.
[323] Casey, 'Sartre on Imagination', p.156.
[324] Howells, *Sartre the Necessity of Freedom,* p.120.

the instrument or band playing music. But the imaginary object is not the paint on the canvas: it is beyond the realm of reality and it is only through imaging consciousness via the analogon that it comes about:

> The aesthetic object is not seen as the physical objects of painting like paint, or canvas, but they form an essential background for the *analogon* of the image, which materializes through the imaginative mind of the person looking.'[325]

Thus, the analogon in chapter 31 of Temple in Luxembourg Gardens is first and foremost the words on the page or the ink on the page, which Faulkner consciously selected for the reader to focus on. Second, when Faulkner writes, 'In the pavilion a band in the horizon', the band itself also constitutes a form of analogon because it is situated in a particular real space and time. The band can be seen as the 'material vehicle'[326] or physical entity for the creation of the imaginary object. The imaginary object in this case is the projected music, which is transformed into the realm of the imaginary and is not 'spatially-temporally located', but it takes the analogon of the band by the reader and writer to evoke the imaginative object of the music to come to the fore. Music is in the world only because it is part of our imagination. As Sartre says, 'The aesthetic object is properly the world in so far as it is aimed at through the imaginary.'[327]

Sartre writes of 'escaping the real' in his philosophical work *The Imaginary*, and gives as an example Beethoven's Seventh Symphony:

> The Seventh Symphony is in no way *in time*. It therefore entirely escapes the real. It is given *in person*, but as absent, as being out of reach. It would be impossible for me to act on it, to change a single note of it, or to slow its movement. Yet it depends, in its appearance, on the real: that the conductor does not faint, that a fire out in the hall does not put a sudden stop to the performance.' (The Imaginary, pp.192-3) 'Does one not clearly see that the performance of the Seventh Symphony is its *analogon?* It can be manifested only through analogons that are dated and that unfurl in our time.[328]

What emerges from Sartre's point is both the distinction between the real and the unreal and the interdependent connection of the two that allows the imaginary work of art to be materialised. Going back to Faulkner, the band in

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[325] Ibid. p. 117.
[326] Stephen Priest, *Jean-Paul Sartre: Basic Writings,* Stephen Priest (ed.), (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 292.
[327] Ibid. p. 292.
[328] Sartre, *The Imaginary – A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination*, p,192.

the park is crucial for Temple to recognise and listen to because it is the analogon of the imaginary object [music] being conveyed. Thus, the imaginary realm that Temple experiences mimics her displaced position within the narrative as she goes through dramatic changes. Again, here, change as a form of action is directly related to existentialist thought as a form of transcendence. The work of art could be seen as 'imaginatively presented with a transformed world'[329], and the active element of imagination is key to this transformed world. The analogon of the band creates an imaginative transformation within Temple, which in turn emphasises the important quality of imagination in Faulkner's fiction. Faulkner is interested in taking a laborious and self-conscious route towards the imaginary in order to highlight the complexity and multifarious nature of the characters. At the same time it is an attempt to actively engage the readers in the act of reading as part of the imaginary process.

The imaginative process of recognising the analogon and as a result the work of art creates a temporary relief from nausea. This is exemplified when Roquentin listens to the tune 'Some of these Days':

> What has just happened is that the Nausea has disappeared. When the voice sounded in the silence, I felt my body harden and the Nausea vanished. […] At the same time the duration of the music dilated, swelled like a water spout. It filled the room with its metallic transparency, crushing our wretched time against the walls. I am *in* the music.' *(NAU* 38)

> *It* does not exist. It is even irritating in its non-existence; if I were to get up, if I were to snatch that record from the turn-table which is holding it and if I were to break it in two, I wouldn't reach it. It is beyond—always beyond something, beyond a voice, beyond a violin note. Through layers and layers of existence, it unveils itself, slim and firm, and when you try to seize it you meet nothing but existents, you run up against existents devoid of meaning . . . It does not exist, since it has nothing superfluous: it is all the rest which is superfluous in relation to it. It is. (*NAU* 248)

As Mark Carroll argues:

> 'Some of these Days' provides [Roquentin] with temporary relief because it offers an ideal form of existence, a flight into an imaginary realm that helps him to reconcile the freedom-cum-straitjacket of pour-soi with the finite en-soi of the world around him.'[330]

Carroll demonstrates that music encapsulates the existential conflict of being

[329] Priest, *Jean-Paul Sartre: Basic Writings,* p. 292.
[330] Mark Carroll, 'It Is': Reflections on the Role of Music in Sartre's 'La Nausée', *Music & Letters*, Vol. 87, No.3, (2006), pp.398- 407, p.398.

when the 'being-for-itself' (human consciousness) and 'being-in-itself' (non-conscious objects) collide metaphorically together into an 'ideal' state since they are usually opposing states. Thus, music provides the imaginative space for Roquentin to piece together the two faces of being, alleviating the burden of contingency. According to Carroll music 'is not the product of Roquentin's imagination. Rather, the song represents an imaginary world[…]'[331] In other words, art in existential terms is not a fictive imaginative product of the artist/character's imagination, it is something that derives from concrete reality, which then transcends into the realm of the imaginative. This is one of the key points which binds Faulkner and Sartre – the desire to take the real as a springboard for the imaginative in intricate terms. It is Faulkner's need to take the familiar and alter it into a newly transformed reality. He is not interested in diminishing all aspects of familiar reality into an unrecognisable version of reality, but rather consciously select elements of reality and transfigure them into a subjective experience.

There is a comparable example relating to music in Sartre's *Nausea* and Faulkner's *Mosquitoes*: Chopin is mentioned in both novels. Interestingly, in both works Chopin is interpreted as a negative example of music as an art form. This is expressed in *Mosquitoes* as follows:

> "Chopin," Mrs. Wiseman interrupted. "Really, Dorothy, I'm disappointed in you."[…]
> Mrs. Maurier said with relief:
> "How much Chopin has meant to me in my sorrows" – she looked about in tragic confiding astonishment – "no one will ever know."
> "Surely," agreed Mrs. Wiseman, "he always does." […]
> "With all deference to Mrs. Maurier, so many people find comfort in Chopin. Its like having a pain that aspirin will cure, you know. I could have forgiven you even Verdi, but Chopin! Chopin," she repeated, then with happy inspiration: "Snow rotting under a dead moon." (*MOS* 185)

Similarly, in *Nausea*, Chopin is seen as an example of solace to the character Aunt Bigeois:

> To think that there are idiots who derive consolation from the fine arts. Like my Aunt Bigeois: 'Chopin's *Preludes* were such a help to me when your poor uncle died.' And the concert halls are full to overflowing with humiliated, injured people who close their eyes and try to turn their pale faces into receiving aerials. They imagine that the sounds they receive flow into them, sweet and nourishing, and that their sufferings become music […]' (*NAU* 246)

[331] Ibid. p. 407.

According to George Howard Bauer, the existential flaw stems from appropriating Chopin's music as a form of comfort:

> Roquentin sees their suffering embodied in the music. The error of his aunt was to have felt her suffering transformed into the music of Chopin when she sought consolation in her grief. For Roquentin, just as for Sartre, the work of art brings the spectator or listener back to the painter or composer's suffering. [...]'[332]

The actual comfort of listening to music is derived, according to Bauer, from the identification of the composer's own suffering. The criticism stems from listening to Chopin and drawing comfort from music because that is not what constitutes the art experience or work of art in existential terms. The listener in Faulkner's case, Mrs Maurier, and in Sartre's, Roquentin, project into the music their so-called dissolving sorrows but that is not the purpose of art according to Sartre.

Sartre rejects the idea of beauty in art and the notion of 'aesthetic contemplation'[333]: 'What he [Roquentin] has refused is the consoling aspect of music for those who seek compassion in its beauty.'[334] The reason Sartre finds relief from contingency in a work of art is that it is perceived by imaging consciousness as set in a world outside reality: it is not part of the physical, 'being-in-itself' world. Thus, the suffering of the composer still exists but it is placed in a different realm. As Bauer puts it, 'The deliverance from the consoling idea of the melody results from the understanding that it is beyond this world.'[335] Sartre is not looking for recognition of beauty but quite the opposite: 'Sartre's account of the aesthetic object aims at removing all beauty from the real world and investing it in the imaginary.'[336] In other words, Sartre is not interested in acknowledging beauty in reality, but in acknowledging the virtual journey by the spectator/reader, through the imagination, as indicative of the original suffering of the composer. Thus, the

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[332] George Howard Bauer, *Sartre and the Artist* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. 38-39. In his study Bauer focuses on the identification of the art objects in Sartre's fiction.
[333] Carroll, 'It Is': Reflections on the Role of Music in Sartre's 'La Nausée', p. 403.
[334] Ibid. p. 403
[335] Bauer, *Sartre and the Artist*, p.38.
[336] Christina M. Howells, 'Sartre and the Commitment of Pure Art', in http://www.bjaesthetics.oxfordjournals.org, pp.172-182, p.174.

role of reader/spectator in taking part in the process of the imagination, and the creation of the aesthetic object, is crucial.

Furthermore, Sartre's notion of art sees art as based on what it signifies to the spectator/reader. When various characters view Gordon's marble statue their opinions move between appreciation of the marble bust as pure art to a realistic representation of life. In *Mosquitoes* Mrs Maurier, Mr Talliaferro and others discuss the marble bust and what it represents:

> "Do you see what he has caught?" he bugled melodiously. "Do you see? The spirit if youth, of something fine and hard and clean in the world; something we all desire until our mouths are stopped with dust. " Desire with Mr. Talliaferro had long since become an unfulfilled habit requiring no longer any particular object at all.
> "Yes," agreed Mrs. Maurier. "How beautiful. What – what does it signify, Mr. Gordon?"
> "Nothing, Aunt Pat," the niece snapped. "It doesn't have to."
> "But, really –"
> "What do you want it to signify? Suppose it signified a – a dog, or an ice cream soda, what difference would it make? Isn't it all right like it is?"
> "Yes, indeed, Mrs. Maurier," Mr. Talliaferro agreed with soothing haste, "it is not necessary that it have objective significance. We must accept it for what it is: *pure form* untrammeled by any relation to a familiar or utilitarian object." […]
> "But it has what Talliaferro calls objective significance," Gordon interrupted brutally. "This is my feminine ideal: a virgin with no legs to leave me, no arms to hold me, no head to talk to me." (*MOS* 26)

This scene captures the various attitudes toward art by various characters. Gordon represents the notion of pure art as Mr. Talliaferro stresses that art should not have an 'objective significance': it is 'pure form' in that it does not need to represent reality. This point is very similar to Sartre's aesthetic outlook, as Christina M. Howells argues: 'As an aesthetician Sartre's concern is always with 'pure' art.'[337] Sartre was against 'representation' of reality in art and as an expression of beauty. Most importantly for Sartre, a work of art highlights the problems of being. According to Bauer:

> The work of art must not serve as a model for a man's life, as Sartre repeatedly demonstrates in his fiction. It can only serve to show the impossibility of *being* in life and become the basis on which a new myth might be created in stone, pigment, or words.[338]

Thus, a work of art can indicate a new conception of life, rather than a reconstruction of existing life. Ted Atkinson argues that Gordon 'clearly

[337] Ibid. p. 172.
[338] Bauer, *Sartre and the Artist,* p.91.

embodies the notion of the artist as solitary and supreme creator of "pure" art – a fundamental component of the aesthetic ideology of formalism […]'[339] The move away from realistic depiction of reality and the stress on the imaginative process of art will be traced in the creation of Gordon's marble torso.

I would like to argue that Gordon in *Mosquitoes* and his art – the marble torso and clay bust - reflect the existential notion of the imaginary object and the notion of the analogon. By concentrating on the sculptures, I aim to highlight the importance of imagination in Faulkner's narrative, the significance of art in *Mosquitoes* and how reality is transformed by the sculptures. By examining the marble [analogon] in the context of the existentialist being-in-itself and being-for-itself and through a comparison with Sartre's art theory on sculptors, the statute gains in significance. I will then place the statue in the more general reading of stasis and movement and argue that the existentialist notion of *reduction* and imaging consciousness is linked to this. Thirdly, Gordon's relationship, and more specifically the look between him and Pat and other characters, can be seen as a form of stasis. Faulkner links this to the notion of the artist as alienated from society - a creator who is also a silent observer of life.

For Joyce W Warren, Gordon is an isolated figure and a 'silent observer who communicates only through his art'[340]. Moreover, Gordon is the only artist in *Mosquitoes* who produces art in the form of sculpture. Gordon is often being described through contrasting elements of shadow and light:

> The chisel bit steadily beneath the slow arc of the maul. His host ignored him. Mr. Talliaferro slapped viciously and vainly at the back of his hand, sitting in lukewarm *shadow* while *light* came across roofs and chimneypots, passing through the dingy *skylight*, becoming weary. His host labored on in the tired *light* while the guest sat on his hard block regretting his sleeve, watching the other's hard body in stained trousers and undershirt, watching the curling vigor of his hair.(My italics, *MOS* 10)

> The manipulator of the chisel and maul ceased his labor and straightened up, flexing his arm and shoulder muscles. And as though it had graciously waited for him to get done, the *light faded* quietly and abruptly: the room was like a bathtub

[339] Ted Atkinson, 'Aesthetic Ideology in Faulkner's Mosquitoes: A Cultural History', *The Faulkner Journal*, Vol.17, Iss.1 (Fall 2001), pp.3-16, p.5. Atkinson argument focuses on *Mosquitoes* in the cultural and political context referring to the period of the late twenties and early thirties "literary class war", but he also discusses representation of language, which is more relevant to my a-political argument.

[340] Joyce W. Warren, 'Faulkner's "Portrait of the artist'' *Mississippi Quarterly*, Vol.19, No.3 (Summer 1966) pp. 121-131, p.123.

> after the drain has been opened. Mr. Talliaferro rose also and his host turned upon him a face like that of a heavy hawk, breaking his dream.' (My italics, *MOS* 11-12)

Gordon is situated between shadow and light: the setting is described as full of light - 'light came across roofs and chimneypots'. Light here indicates a creative setting for his imaginative contemplation. Gordon, 'the manipulator of the chisel and maul', transcends reality as the focus on light becomes part of the process of creation. The use of shadow and light is also seen in the description of Roquentin:

> Something is going to happen: in the shadows of the rue Basse-de-Vieille there is something waiting for me […] At the corner of the street there is a sort of white stone. From a distance it seemed black, and at each step I take it turns a little whiter. […] It is so close now, that white beacon emerging from the shadows, […] But it is impossible to break the spell. I go forward, I stretch out my hand, I touch the stone.' (NAU 82)

In both *Nausea* and *Mosquitoes* there is an expectation that some form of creation is evolving. Gordon creates his sculpture in moments of light, and Roquentin transcends through shadow to a white stone. Shadow and light are very much metaphoric elements of a creative process. Roquentin touches a stone and in effect Gordon is in the process of chiselling a stone into a sculpture and into a work of art. The stone turns into Gordon's marble torso.

The following is a description of the finished marble sculpture:

> As you entered the room the thing drew your eyes: you turned sharply as to a sound, expecting movement. But it was *marble*, it could not move. And when you tore your eyes away and turned your back on it at last, you got again untarnished and high and clean that sense of swiftness, of space encompassed; but on looking again it was as before: motionless and passionately eternal – the virginal breastless torso of a girl, headless, armless, legless, in marble temporarily caught and hushed yet passionate still for escape, passionate and simple and eternal in the equivocal derisive darkness of the world. Nothing to trouble your youth or lack of it: rather something to trouble the very fibrous integrity of your *being*.' (my emphasise *MOS* 11)

Faulkner couples the marble bust with 'the very fibrous integrity of your being': the connection between work of art and the notion of being is linked to aesthetic consciousness. In *Nausea* Sartre describes a small statue:

> I was staring at a little Khmer statuette on a card-table next to a telephone. I felt as if I were full of lymph or warm milk.(*NAU* 14)

Similarly, the twofold aspect of being that the statue represents can be applied to Gordon's statue as a manifestation of being. On the one hand, the torso is made out of marble, which could be directly seen as being-in-itself. As previously argued, being-in-itself is seen as the form of being that belongs to the world of objects, still and unchangeable. The being-in-itself often creates tension and anxiety, as expressed through Roquentin and his relation to objects and Pat and David's interaction with the swamp and trees. But in this case the being-in-itself (stone) has another meaning, as it is transformed into a work of art, and the very essence of the work of art relieves the contingency of existence. It takes the imaging consciousness of Gordon to transform the material of marble (analogon) into a specific 'virginal torso of a girl'. The finished product of the torso is, in effect, the work of art, and the very imaginative transformation from stone to a torso is part of the process of imagination.

But, there is a difference between the two statutes. In Faulkner's case, Gordon is the artist who curves the stone into a shape and then into a figure, resulting in an object of art, whereas Roquentin views the statue from the spectator's point of view. In existential terms: 'Only when the individual takes the position of creator is there the slight possibility that the artist's life might be transformed in the *being* of the work of art […]'[341] Thus, Gordon manages existentially to encapsulate the ultimate higher form of being, responsible for the transformation of the being-in-itself (stone) to a work of art.

According to Bauer, Sartre admired contemporary artists and rejected the older artists who were stuck 'in a fixed place in a religious or political myth' or represented 'an ideal of monarchy, divinity, or bourgeois morality.'[342] Bauer suggests that Sartre admired contemporary artists such as David Hare, paying particular attention to the material of marble. As Sartre says: 'Marble suddenly reveals its defects: inalterable in appearance, a secret crumbling gnaws at it; this pure hardening of space is made up of separable

[341] Ibid. p. 42.
[342] Ibid. p. 93.

parts.'[343] According to Bauer, Sartre sees in the material of marble a form of fragility:

> The act of the sculptor chiseling in order to create an external image of eternity reveals the weakness of the materials with which he works. […] The technique of craving forces the sculptor to proceed gradually from one part of the anatomy to another and in so doing fragments his conception of the finished work in the accomplishment of the individual detail. Each of the parts of the body reproduced by the artist in stone exists in its own right as a fragment that predicts the work as a whole.'[344]

Bauer highlights the importance of Sartre's idea of parts and the whole in a work of art, recalling my argument about Faulkner's use of fragmentation of form and technique as a way to render multiple perspective and by extension highlight the negation of reality through consciousness. My argument connected Cubism and Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* vis –à- vis existentialism to highlight the importance of part and the whole in art. This argument continued with my analysis of colour tropes and their relational meaning in *Mosquitoes* and Sartre's *Nausea*. The focus on the part and the whole highlights Faulkner's desire to break down elements of his writing through form, colour and plot reflects his symbolic desire to reconstruct reality and in effect to create a subjective world manifested in his work of art (fiction). The conscious dissection of carefully chosen smaller elements by Faulkner is also exemplified through the notion of stasis and movement discussed in the next section.

STASIS AND MOVEMENT

Sartre's description of the material of marble, with its transformative quality, can be applied to Faulkner's wider criticism of stasis and movement. In Gordon's use of two materials, first marble and then clay, the transformation of a work of art is made manifest in a bust of Mrs Maurier. The marble moves between stages of fixed mode and movement, which is also significant in relation to Gordon and Faulkner's overall notion of art.

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[343] Quoted in Bauer, *Sartre and the Artist,* p.99. Originally quoted from Sartre's "Sculptures à 'n' dimensions", *Derrière le miroir* no.5 (1947), pp.1-4, p.1.
[344] Ibid. p. 99.

Faulkner refers directly to the notion of motion and stasis in his work:

> The aim of every artist is to arrest motion, which is life, by artificial means and hold it fixed so that 100 years later when a stranger looks at it, it moves again since it is life. [345]

His reference to 'arrested motion' captures the symbiosis of movement and stasis. The notion of stasis and movement has been a recurrent topic in critical work on Faulkner. Edwin T Arnold refers to it in terms of 'freedom and bondage'[346]: 'For Faulkner, the concept of the bondage of stasis and the antithetical freedom inherent in movement and change was fundamental to his work and the philosophy it expressed.'[347] Thus, freedom, which manifests itself in movement, is key to Faulkner's approach. As Faulkner says: ' […] life is motion and the only alternative to motion is stasis - death.'[348] In similar terms, this sense of fluidity and movement is key to existentialist thought, as the focus on existence by definition centres on action and choice, and in aesthetic terms, action reflects the transcendence of consciousness. In fact, action or the act of movement is, as Goldthorope points out, the representation of art through an act of consciousness and imaging:

> […] the phenomenological principle that the image is not a *content* of consciousness, but a spontaneous *act* of consciousness which intends (i.e. is "directed towards") a transcended object, although the object of that act of consciousness is either absent or non-existent.'[349]

Thus, when the reader /viewer encounters the marble torso, the marble, which acts as a physical analogon, it evokes a certain movement or act of the imagination. In trying to comprehend what the role of the marble is and what it means, it questions the very conception of reality.

Furthermore, the notion of stasis and movement can be seen in Faulkner's description of the statue of Andrew Jackson in the town square:

> Twilight ran in like a quiet violet dog and nursing his bottle he peered out across an un-dimensional feathered square, across stencilled palms and Andrew Jackson in

[345] Faulkner, *Lion in The Garden*, p.253.
[346] Edwin T. Arnold, 'Freedom and Stasis in Faulkner's "Mosquitoes"', *Mississippi Quarterly*, Vol.28, No.3 (Summer 1975), pp. 281-297, p. 282.
[347] Ibid. p. 282.
[348] Ibid. p. 282.
[349] Goldthrope, *Sartre: Literature and Theory,* p.138.

> childish effigy bestriding the terrific *arrested* plunge of his curly balanced horse, toward the long unemphasis of the Pontalba building and three spires of the cathedral graduated by perspective, pure and slumberous beneath the decadent languor of August and evening. (My italics *MOS* 13-4)

> Looking through the tall pickets into Jackson Square was like looking into an aquarium – a moist and *motionless* absinthe –cloudy green of all shades from ink black to a thin and rigid feathering of silver on pomegranate and mimosa- like coral in a tideless sea, amid which globular lights hung dull and unstraying as jellyfish, incandescent yet without seeming to emanate light; and in the centre of it Andrew's baroque plunging *stasis* nimbused about with thin gleams as though he too were recently wetted.' (My italics *MOS* 49)

In this example Faulkner uses the image of stasis in the still statue as well as in the description itself. The reference to 'the terrific arrested plunge of his curly balanced horse' synthesizes the tremendous power behind the particular figure and at the same time renders it strangely impotent. The fluidity of movement, so crucial for existential thought, is presented here through the act of looking and observing the square: 'Looking through the tall pickets into Jackson Square was like looking into an aquarium'. The analogy of the aquarium opens up the fluidity of movement and transcendence. The transcendence is realised by observing all possible elements in the square and describing them through the spectrum of colours: 'cloudy green of all shades from black to a thin and rigid feathering of silver'. The stasis occurs as consciousness in the form of the observer concentrates on the statue with specific elements describing it as a 'childish effigy'. Arguably, Sartre would have liked this critical description of a well-known person immortalised not to be adored, as he was against idolising public figures through a work of art. Sartre resented false depiction of well-known people in painted portraits, as described in *Nausea*: 'The power of art is truly admirable. Of this shrill-voiced little man, nothing would go down to posterity except a threatening face, a superb gesture, and the bloodshot eyes of a bull.' (*NAU* 136) The 'little man' was the official Olivier Blévigne who was in fact only five feet tall, and was often ridiculed for his small stature, although his portrait showed him with a threatening build with the strength of a bull. However, Faulkner's description of an immortalised public figure is an embodiment of contradiction: his core criticism of the statue stems from the contrast in movement and stasis - not

powerful enough to be fully 'arrested in motion' and not static enough to be solidified as strongly robust.

Furthermore, Karl E. Zink's study focuses on Faulkner's notion of stasis and movement throughout his fiction. Zink argues that stasis is essential in understanding the 'human state in time'[350], but most importantly it sheds light on the way Faulkner, '[...] thinks about and looks at his world, having for him something fundamental to do with ultimate reality'[351]. Zink concentrates on the effect and purpose of stasis and gives a useful description of what he calls the, '*tableau vivant*':

> The *tableau vivant* is a description of human action, sometimes concise and impressionistic, sometimes extended like a conceit. It is an actual stoppage, a freezing of time and motion in order that a certain quality of the human experience may be held and contemplated – made "ponderable," as Faulkner puts it frequently'. [352]

Zink's suggestion, that certain moments in Faulkner's narrative are static in order for them to be 'contemplated', is useful for my argument, as this form of stasis is comparable to the existentialist idea of analogon and *imaging reduction*. By freezing a moment you are in effect magnifying a moment in time. What Zink defines as, ' [...] a stopping of dynamic flow for the purpose of contemplation; for a moment it isolates an object or scene out of its normal fluid context.'[353]

Thus, the example of the marble statue echoes a contemplative frozen moment in time. As Arnold argues, the statue is seen as '[...] the ultimate image of stasis' and [...] for the very nature of Gordon's art precludes motion and gives only its illusion'[354]. Stasis, in these terms, presents itself by the very nature of the still statue itself, but it also signifies movement because it presents the material of marble as an analogon – seen as a particular physical material –whose meaning as a work of art relies on the imaginative faculties of both the artist and the viewer. In other words, the torso could be seen as an example of that 'ponderable' moment, significant to Gordon as well as the

[350] Karl E. Zink, 'Flux and the Frozen Moment: The Imagery of Stasis in Faulkner's Prose' *PMLA,* Vol. 71, No. 3 (Jun 1956), pp. 285-301, p.286.
[351] Ibid. p. 286.
[352] Ibid. p.291.
[353] Ibid. p. 297.
[354] Arnold, 'Freedom and Stasis in Faulkner's "Mosquitoes", p. 290.

reader. The torso is an expression of stasis, but in existential terms it is also a form of flow and movement.

The 'ponderable moment' can thus be defined as the existentialist version of an imaging reduction. The notion of reduction is part of consciousness's attempt to break the ordinary form of perception. As Fritz Kaufman argues,

> This is the first meaning of reduction. To create, then, is to separate, to exclude, to deny a whole by intending a fraction of that whole. The daring and inventiveness of the artist lie in the risk he takes in rejecting both the traditional picture of experience and the traditional way of comprehending that experience. In this view the art object becomes the resultant ultimately of an act or acts of segregation and placement.'[355]

In other words, consciousness in the act of imagination 'places' a selective portion of reality and enhances and magnifies it into a transformed art object.

There is another sense of transformation from stasis to movement reflected through Gordon's change of material. The classic heavy marble statue is replaced by the clay bust of Mrs Maurier:

> It was clay, yet damp, and from out its dull, dead grayness Mrs. Maurier looked at them. Her chins, harshly, and her flaccid jaw muscles with savage verisimilitude. Her eyes were caverns thumbed with two motions into the dead familiar astonishment of her face; and yet, behind them, somewhere within those empty sockets, behind all her familiar surprise, there was something else – something that exposed her face for the mask it was, and still more, a mask unaware. "Well, I'm damned," Fairchild said slowly, staring at it. "I've known her for a year, and Gordon comes along after four days . . . Well, I'll be damned," he said again.' (*MOS* 322)

Kenneth W Hepburn traces the development of Gordon's 'artistic stance', as the shift from marble to clay represents '[…] the clay mask of Mrs. Maurier which, in its material and execution, is the antithesis of the "sexless statute"'[356]. The clay's texture is fluid and flexible, it is not carved into smaller pieces and reassembled to form something new. The movement of the clay equals Gordon's new sense of artistic sensibility and progression. Faulkner uses examples of plastic arts as detached works of art, but also as a direct reflection of Gordon's state of mind and as a device to indicate a narrative

[355] Kaufman, 'Toward a Phenomenology of the Aesthetic Object', pp. 81-2.
[356] Hepburn, 'Faulkner's "Mosquitoes:" A Poetic Turning Point', p. 20.

progression. On one hand, there is a sense of progression in the lightness of the clay material and the flexibility of description, but on the other hand, there is a sense of heavy morbidity and morality. Death is mentioned several times: 'dead grayness', 'with two motions into the dead familiar surprise'. Death is identical to the stillness of the mask and its description forms a memento mori. The 'moment of contemplation' here goes beyond the stillness of the mask and evokes fluid thoughts on mortality, which are part of the construction of the imaginary object. Even though the bust (analogon) is set in reality, the emotions and thoughts evoked by the sculpture transcend into the imaginary realm. The tension of stasis and movement is not reflected only within the art object itself, it is represented through the point of view of the characters and interaction with the sculpture. In the next section, the notion of the look as another example of stasis and movement will be explored.

Another example of stasis rendered as a form of contemplation is the idea of the *look*, (*le regard*). The relationship between the character Pat and Gordon and the marble statue can be seen in relation to the look. The look, in existential terms, functions as a form of alienation and as part of *being-for-others*.

The following example captures the notion of the look and the physical relation to the marble bust:

> The niece said suddenly: "I like him." She too gazed at the door through which, passing, he seemed to have emptied the room. "I bet he doesn't come back," she remarked.
> Her aunt shrieked. "Doesn't come back?"
> "Well, I wouldn't, if I were him." She returned to the marble, stroking it with slow desire. Mrs. Maurier gazed helplessly at Mr. Talliaferro.' (*MOS* 29)

This scene captures three important elements: first, the notion of the look between Pat and Gordon and the way in which the marble statue obtains a sense of fluidity through the very human and physical interaction between Pat and the statue. The gaze has a second role in that it can be seen as an aesthetic tool that delays time, enabling us to focus on the relationship between characters and on the marble statue as a device of reflection. Thirdly, the interaction of Pat and Gordon throughout the novel also creates a form of awakening within Gordon as an artist. As Ted Atkinson argues: ' 'Through

his encounters with Patricia Robyn, his statue come to life […] Gordon develops a less abstract aesthetic and acknowledges the substantial ties between art and social relations.'[357] Atkinson argues that the sexual tension between Gordon and Patricia allows them to objectify each other:

> This tension is compounded by the fact that each tries to render the other as object through the power of perception. In Patricia's eyes, Gordon, with his "hard high chest" (Mosquitoes p. 82), virtually embodies his work. In turn, Gordon tries not only to control Patricia's movement but also to arrest it as he would one of his stone creations.'[358]

In fact, there is a slight resemblance and an almost a metamorphosis between Pat (as described by Gordon) and the description of the marble statue:

> Gordon examined with growing interest her flat breast and belly, her boy's body which the poise of it and the thinness of her arms belied. Sexless, yet somehow vaguely troubling. Perhaps just young, like a calf or a colt.' (*MO*S 24)

> […] the virginal breastless torso of a girl, headless, armless, legless, in marble temporarily caught and hushed yet passionate still for escape, passionate and simple and eternal in the equivocal derisive darkness of the world.' (*MOS* 11)

The similar descriptions indicate a sense of transformation from stasis to movement as the still torso is transformed to a living form in the shape of Pat. However, the transformation also occurs through the constant gazing at each other:

> Her jaw in profile was heavy: there was something masculine about it. But in full face it was not heavy, only quite. Her mouth was full and colorless, unpainted, and her eyes were opaque as smoke. She met his gaze, remarking the icy blueness of his eyes. (like a surgeon's she thought) and looked at the marble again.' (*MOS* 23-4)

As Atkinson argues, the objectifying process between the two happens through the notion of perception. However, I would like to argue that it is specifically through the existentialist notion of the look that the true sense of objectifying occurs. While Atkinson argues that Pat manages to 'socialize' Gordon, the look paradoxically causes a bigger separation and alienation between the characters. In order to view the look as existentially objectifying, you need to place it in the context of being-for-others first.

[357] Atkinson, 'Aesthetic Ideology in Faulkner's Mosquitoes: A Cultural History', p. 6.
[358] Ibid. p. 6.

Being-for-others

I have explored the duality of being-in-itself and being-for-itself in relation to characters and objects, but there is a third aspect of being called *being-for-others* (*l'être-pour-autrui*), which in the most simplified terms means the existence of others or other beings. 'By "being-for-others" Sartre means my mode of being, my overall state of experience, when I take myself to be as others perceive me, or when I make myself be as others perceive me, or both.'[359] Sartre uses the phenomenology of the body as an expression of being-for-others:

> My own body is not for me a *thing*. It is a thing from the perspective of another, and another's body is a thing from my perspective, but my own body is not presented to me as an object in the world; as something I could encounter or straightforwardly observe.'[360]

Thus, the relationship between Pat and Gordon is very much based on the acute observation of the body, as presented in the marble statue, 'the virginal breastless torso of a girl, headless, armless, legless […]' (MOS 13). Other examples include Gordon staring at Pat and as a result fantasizing about immortalising her in marble:

> Sunset was in his eyes: a glory he could not see; and her taut simple body, almost breastless and with the fleeting hips of a boy, was an ecstasy in golden marble, and in her face the passionate ecstasy of a child.' (*MOS* 82)

The notion of the look is expressed here as a captured moment in the form of 'golden marble'. This process can be seen as an essential element in the creative process of imagination to visualise a work of art. On the other hand, the look could be interpreted as essentially objectifying, as Sartre argues that one person always dominates the other:

> It is Sartre's view that there is no human encounter where one party does not psychologically dominate the other: one is master and one is slave. If two strangers pass in the street "the look" ("le regard") of one will make the other uncomfortably subservient.[361]

[359] Priest, *Jean-Paul Sartre: Basic Writings,* p.222.
[360] Ibid. p. 222.
[361] Ibid. 223.

It is worth noting that Sartre referred to Faulkner's fiction as an example for the extreme form of the look - that is, sadism. Sadism is defined by Sartre as: 'Sadism is an effort to incarnate the Other through violence, and this incarnation "by force" must be already the appropriation and utilization of the Other.'[362] For Sartre: 'Nobody has better portrayed the power of the victim's look at his torturers than Faulkner has done in the final pages of *Light in August*.[363] Sartre then quotes from Faulkner's *Light in August* (1932):

> But the man on the floor had not moved. He just lay there, with his eyes open and empty of everything save consciousness, and with something, a shadow, about his mouth. For a long moment he looked up at them with peaceful and unfathomable and unbearable eyes.'[364] […]

The description of the eyes is a dominant feature throughout Faulkner's fiction. In this instance, extreme emotions reflect the struggle and ultimately humiliated submission of the victim. Part of the humiliation occurs because the victim is stripped of any dignity and loses his ultimate freedom, which is the most essential prerequisite in existentialist thought.

The struggle of dominance and the notion of objectifying through the look can also be seen in the example of Mr. Talliaferro as he looks towards Jenny:

> '[…] he came near and bending he traced with his hand lightly the heavy laxness of Jenny's body through the canvas which supported her. Then he thought terribly that some one was watching him, and he sprang erect with an alarm like a nausea, staring at Jenny's closed eyes. (*MOS* 127)

The objectifying process here occurs as Jenny's body becomes an object - a being-in-itself. The struggle is not between human consciousness and the world of objects, the struggle is between people:

> My body as I experience it is *pour-soi*. My body as experienced by another is *en-soi*. There are not two numerically distinct bodies, but there are two radically distinct modes of being exhibited by one and the same body: subjective and objective, free and mechanical, lived and observed.[365]

Thus, the look creates a solidification of being, as Stephen Priest suggests, whereby your own body becomes both being-in-itself and being-for-itself. This

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[362] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p.421.
[363] Sartre quotes Faulkner, *Being and Nothingness*, p.427.
[364] Sartre quotes from Faulkner's *Light in August*, (1932) in *Being and Nothingness*, p. 427.
[365] Ibid.p.222.

in turn creates a profound alienation between the characters. Sartre's renowned example of peeping through a keyhole shows the effect of the look:

> […] the keyhole is given as "to be looked through close by and a little to one side," *etc*. Hence from this moment "I do what I have to do" [….] My attitude, for example, has no "outside"; it is a pure process of relating the instrument (the keyhole) to the end to be attained (the spectacle to be seen), a pure mode of losing myself in the world, […]'[366]

> 'But all of a sudden I hear footsteps in the hall. Someone is looking at me! What does this mean? It means that I am suddenly affected in my being and that essential modifications appear in my structure – modifications which I can apprehend and fix conceptually by means of the reflective *cogito.*'[367]

On one hand, the look is seen as a means of freedom to observe and imagine, but it soon swiftly changes into a form of confinement and alienation. The relationship between Pat and Gordon exemplifies the objectifying process, and the marble bust as a work of art can be seen as a symbolic continuation of that crisis of being. The look holds the notion of detachment and human isolation, which is directly reflected in the art object and the overall aesthetics of the novel. Thus, the art object as exemplified in Gordon's marble bust encapsulates the many conflicting yet harmonising elements of existentialist aesthetic theory: it represents both stasis and movement, or transcendence and fluidity of consciousness. It represents both a sense of order and chaos manifested through the nature of being. It demonstrates both the real and unreal qualities of existence, as it sheds light on the burdensome elements of brute reality, yet leaves room for imaginative thought to reconstruct reality.

[366] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 283.
[367] Ibid. 284.

Conclusion

Faulkner's work is most commonly associated with American modernism, with particular attention paid to the social and cultural concerns of the 'Southern' discourse. This partly includes the Southern Gothic and the Southern Renaissance. My argument moved away from the dominant regional and national concerns, by re-reading Faulkner as both a continental modernist and as an 'existentialist' for whom investigation into the human condition on a universal level shares a great deal more with French philosophy than has generally been acknowledged. In this respect, the universal element was throughout linked to the aesthetic exploration in Faulkner's writing through the technique he employs, which in turn was seen as a direct consequence of this desire to articulate as truthfully as possible the human condition.

While the existentialist reading of Faulkner's work highlights the human condition through binary ideas such as reality and imagination, the real and the unreal, in relation to the concept of consciousness and the individual, the crucial role of the artist and the work of art in Faulkner's early work cannot be underestimated. In this respect, the dichotomy between reality and imagination in Faulkner's fiction is partly embodied by the artist, who encapsulates the struggle of the individual through feelings of dislocation and isolation, as well as the creative means of liberation that art (novel, sculpture, music) provides. The focus on the artist overturns some established readings on Faulkner's fiction as abounding with gloom, terror and fatalism. Paradoxically, through the existentialist reading, Faulkner's artist appears hopeful and is seen to take control of his\her life through action and choices, which results in a sense of liberation and freedom. Existentialist thought, on one level, recognises the metaphysical crisis of existence, but on the other, acknowledges that one should be responsible for one's life through action. That in turn, situates existentialist thought and equally Faulkner's literature as optimistic at the core.

The existentialist reading of Faulkner's fiction highlights the interwoven layers of the crisis of consciousness. At the heart of that crisis is the

ontological and aesthetic aspect of existentialist thought. In essence, "ontological" refers to the battle of being – that is, human consciousness (being-for-itself) and the world of objects (being-in-itself) - and "aesthetic" to the way in which a work of art (text, painting, sculpture) is imaginatively interpreted (through fictional technique) by human consciousness. I have traced this battle of being, or crisis of consciousness, in Faulkner's fiction in an attempt to tap into the heart of his concerns: the individual's interpretation of reality and the crucial part imagination plays in reconstructing that reality.

In this thesis, the human condition has been specifically examined in relation to Jean-Paul Sartre's early (1930s-1940s) philosophical concerns, which dealt mainly with the individual and his relationship with the outside world. The ontological approach, with its focus on the notion of being and consciousness in relation to the inner self and the outside world, was used to emphasise my argument about Faulkner's relation to and conception of reality. Faulkner created his own reality, one that is imaginative and that is concerned with interrelated, ontological, universal concerns, with a stress on the act of attempting to realise individual freedom. Sartre argued that reality is contingent upon human consciousness - in other words, that the subjective view of reality depends on the interaction between human consciousness and the world of objects. This definition of reality is key to my overall argument: by applying the ontological view of reality to Faulkner's fiction, I aim to show that his sense of reality hinges on varied aspects of consciousness and its relation to the outside world.

The aesthetic aspect of the argument refers to the emphasis on imagination and its relationship to reality in Faulkner's fiction. Imagination viewed specifically from the existentialist angle is paramount in Faulkner's fiction and manifests itself in interconnected ways: through the use of form and technique (such as multiple perspective and fragmentation), its relation to art (Cubism) and the analysis of the art object in the form of music, writing and sculpture. While analysis of Faulkner's technique and form have been undertaken by critics such as, Michael Kaufmann and Panthea Reid Broughton, the existentialist reading highlights the importance of technique not only as an aesthetic exercise, but as an exploration of man's fragility and

displacement in the world. My reading exposed Faulkner's characters as profoundly lonely and isolated – a sense that is heightened by the technique and form with which they are created.

The analysis of *As I Lay Dying* aimed to expose Faulkner's imaginative interpretation of technique and form as an alternative take on reality through the prism of existentialist thought and in particular through the concept of consciousness. One aspect of form I explored in Faulkner's fiction was the notion of fragmentation. The fragmentation in *As I Lay Dying* – achieved through the use of ellipsis, italics and multiple perspective – strengthens the existentialist sense of the misplaced position of the individual and complements the visual elements in Faulkner's writing. Consciousness was viewed in the context of Faulkner's fragmented technique and in terms of the duality of being – the interconnected relationship of being-for-itself (human consciousness) and being-in-itself (the world of objects), which is present throughout my analysis. This idea of the duality of being is crucial to my argument and is developed throughout the thesis, from Temple Drake's ill-fated decision to stay with Popeye in *Sanctuary* to the fragmentary form of being in *As I Lay Dying.* It was also examined in the analysis of the coffin and its subjective interpretation by the characters of that novel and the work of art in *Mosquitoes*.

I have used the existentialist terms *absurd* and *anguish* to highlight Faulkner's depiction of emotional fragmentation and his attempt to recreate an emotional reality through the use of fragmentation and the accentuation of form in *As I Lay Dying*. The fragmentation technique mimicked the sense of estrangement felt by Temple Drake and Darl Bundren, among others, and evoked the unsettling effects of a changing modern world (as explored by other modernists) reflecting an individual inner crisis of anxiety and despair. This particular sense of alienation as manifested through the contrast of the interior consciousness and the outside world, creates an acute awareness by Faulkner's characters. As a result, the sensitivity of the characters perception produces an emotional remoteness and a distinct segregation of the individual from his surroundings and from other characters.

In an extension to the argument about the fragmentation of form, Cubism was used as a comparison with which to investigate the idea of design, structure, and metaphoric exterior textures. While Faulkner's work has been discussed before in relation to cubist techniques, notably by Broughton and Ilse Dusoir Lind, this thesis has argued that Faulkner's construction of a new reality contains elements from existentialist thought, Cubist technique and modernism. This comparison raised an interdisciplinary debate on issues such as multiple perspective and fragmentation as a technical means to expose humanity's predicament. By comparing a Cubist aesthetic in writerly terms with an existentialist perspective, I aimed to shed a new light on Faulkner's use of part and whole in regards to his characters and their environment. By re-reading existentialism as another form of modernist perspective, particularly with regard to style, enables us to examine how 'the contradictory nature of the novel derives from Faulkner's attempt to *create* a reality – as other modernist artists did – rather than simply *represent* one.'[368]

This need to create a new 'reality' was also evident in Faulkner's use of colour in *Elmer.* I chose to concentrate on the incomplete typescript *Elmer* (1925) partly because of the scant critical attention it has received but also to argue that there is a gap in critical discourse about the novel. My analysis of colour in *Elmer* showed the important aesthetic quality that often goes unrecognised in the work. *Elmer* was discussed in relation to *Mosquitoes,* generally regarded as a failure by critics of the day. My argument not only established the importance of colour in *Elmer* as an expression of contingency – or, in other words, the incidental reason for a person to be in the world - but also re-emphasised the prominence of Faulkner's visual descriptions of characters and how they affect the plot. The sense of contingency in Faulkner's use of colour with its amorphous quality was traced in characters' states of mind, in the acknowledgment of one's lack of a reason to exist, partly manifested in a physical surge of nausea. The notion of contingency occurs on several levels, first as an acute awareness of the world of objects and then as a lack of harmony between characters and the environment.

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[368] Michael Kaufmann, 'The Textual Coffin and the Narrative Corpse in As I Lay Dying', *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture and Theory* 49, No 1 (1993), p. 99.

By concentrating on the role of red, and comparing it with Sartre's use of the colour black in *Nausea* (1938) similarities in the use of colour and existentialist meaning appeared. As well as exploring the existentialist ramifications of colour, I searched for overlapping ideas about colour in modernist thought. In similar ways, the concept of imagination in *Elmer* is emphasised by the use of the colour red, seen not as an accurate and realistic description of his environment, but as an evoked sensation of an imaginative nature.

Yet another key facet of the aesthetic debate in Faulkner's fiction is the importance of imagination as a form of freedom: by the creation of an art object (writing, sculpture, music) man casts off the burden of existence. Freedom is key to dissipating existential anxiety, and it is achieved most convincingly through the imaginative process of making and perceiving a work of art. My argument singled out Gordon's torso and the clay bust in *Mosquitoes* as examples of Sartre's notion of the *analogon* and *imaging consciousness*, in order to highlight the crucial aspect of creativity in Faulkner's fiction. Faulkner's depiction of the art object reveals his interest in how human consciousness perceives a work of art and the crucial role of imagination in that perception. Comparing the fictional examples from Sartre with those from Faulkner allows us to examine a unique balance between being and consciousness, presented as partly formless, and deriving from the need to create form through aesthetic experimentation. Through the twining of imagination and the artist, Faulkner questions the essential role of imagination, and the artist's place in society. Faulkner's ultimate answer is that the artist is an essential proponent in society, but the way he is perceived is often problematic. In *Mosquitoes,* Faulkner often criticised the way in which non-artists view artists as distinctively different from others. In fact, Faulkner wished to diminish the divide between the artist and non-artist, and focus instead on the homogeneous human quality of creativity. Faulkner reveals a certain criticism of the fact that the artist is not always liked, understood, and often seen as isolated. Ironically, even though the artist's role is so essential in society according to Faulkner, the artist will inevitably always be cast as an outsider.

As well as illuminating dominant aesthetic elements in Faulkner's fiction, my argument has focused on the being-in-itself (world of objects) aspect of consciousness and Sartre's maxim 'existence precedes essence', with the aim of identifying the concrete, physical aspect of existence in Faulkner's writing. Faulkner's action was – in this context - viewed through the concept of the existentialist *act*. Action was seen as an expression of freedom, a quality in Faulkner's writing in evidence in *Sanctuary* (1931). Viewing Temple as an example of the existential form of freedom overturned existing critical readings that cast her as a victim of violence first and foremost, revealing her entrapment and bondage as a conscious decision and thus paradoxically an expression of existential freedom. The existentialist view casts Temple not as a victim but as a self-determining, albeit tragic, heroine. A sense of fluid physicality emerges from Temple in this analysis, as she does not hold on to her past and decides to ignore her background: in existential terms, she transcends her action into an unknown future. The focus on physical action fits Sartre's philosophical concerns, as he believed that '… man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world – and defines himself afterwards'[369].

Temple's decision not to escape from Popeye is a form existential action in this respect. The notion of action takes on a double meaning in the context of existentialism: it plays an important role in the narrative, but action can also be viewed as synonymous with consciousness and, therefore, as an integral part of being. This reinforces the ontological aspects of Faulkner's writing: action is seen as a fundamental part of the human make–up, with choice as the physical outcome.

In the context of physical action and its importance in ontological terms, Faulkner's use of silence as a manifestation of external physical action has to be taken into account. Silence in *Sanctuary* operates in existential terms: it functions externally, which fits Sartre's preference for physical action and non-cerebral commentary. The notion of silence was discussed in relation to music and silence in *Mosquitoes,* and how this related in turn to imagination and consciousness. From the existentialist perspective, the non-verbal quality

[369] Jean - Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, trans. by Philip Mairet (Methuen, 2007), p. 28

in Faulkner's work is therefore crucial. Part of the argument established here was to identify existential concepts in Faulkner's work, in order to add an extra dimension to certain more widely recognised themes in Faulkner's narrative, such as silence, action and style.

In my argument I singled out Addie's coffin in *As I Lay Dying* as an example of the existentialist object. The coffin symbolises all aspects of consciousness explored in the thesis. It signifies several important qualities: in the context of style, it was interpreted as an example of fragmentation of form. Fragmentation through the object of the coffin was analysed both ontologically (through the concept of consciousness) and physically. The ontological approach included an analysis of the duality of being, which reflects both a form of fragmentation and a split in the notion of being. Furthermore, the concept of contingency was explored in relation to the coffin. The various attitudes of the characters to the coffin unravelled different levels of contingency. The coffin itself was viewed as an aesthetic object, which was analysed through various levels of emotions and concrete action.

The example of the coffin and the overall emphasis on human consciousness exposed the fragile position of the individual both internally and externally, but at the same time it underlined the strength of the individual in Faulkner's fiction. His characters often demonstrate strength because they are aware of their delicate position, and it is through their desire to display choice and action that their resilient nature shines through. The binary conceptual terms discussed throughout the thesis, such as the need for coherent form in a formless world and the question of the real and the imaginary, are all complementary and incompatible at the same time. It is then through the recognition of the contradictory elements in Faulkner's fiction that new meanings emerge.

To conclude, my overall argument has sought to place Faulkner, as an American writer with universal and oftentimes ambitious ontological questions, within the context of existentialism. Faulkner acknowledged the very subjective nature of his fictional world throughout his career: it is well documented that he recognised his difficult relationship with the South and

his need to create 'a cosmos of my own'[370]. The existential reading has sought to expand on Faulkner's need to create a fictional world in which the vulnerability of the individual and his relation to the world could be made manifest. Faulkner's greatest legacy was to create a world close to his heart, yet he managed to expose universal human concerns, which omnipresent readers can relate to. Faulkner said in an interview: 'I like to think of the world I created as being a kind of keystone in the Universe; that, as small as that keystone is, if it were ever taken away, the universe itself would collapse.'[371] The existentialist perspective presents this keystone analogy as a world within a world, a universe that can easily disappear if the person stops imagining or recognising his unique existence.

[370] William Faulkner, *Lion in the Garden: Interviews with William Faulkner 1926-1962*, p. 255.
[371] Ibid. p.255.

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