Nothing Gold Can Stay

Robert Frost

Nature’s first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf’s a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.
Analysis of Poem

• Identify the literary elements of the poem and discuss their **effect**.

• Key vocabulary word: “subside” – Why did Frost use this specific diction?

• Write a paragraph relating this poem to the novel.
How would Quentin Compson relate to this poem?

- Looks at his family’s past and sees a “golden age”
- Looks at the current state of his family and sees it in decline
- At least on some level connects the (pre-fall) Eden archetype with the antebellum South
Quentin as Adam

• Before the fall of man, Eden was a place with no concept of conflict.

• Did you notice the presence of the lion and the lack of concern by the “prey”? 

• This place is perfect for Quentin: all is innocent, nothing dies, everything stays perfect.
Harmony in the Garden

- Quentin wants life to stay harmonic, like the picture.
- What is it that upsets the harmony of his world? Sex. Specifically, Caddy’s sexuality.
- Do you remember what was the symbolic harbinger of the chaos that would disrupt Quentin’s order?
The Creation of Eve

• God is creating Eve from a rib of Adam.
• Eve is intended to be Adam’s wife.
• However, they must share a whole lot of genetic similarities.
• This would make Eve rather sister-like as well as wife-like!
• See the connection to the novel?
God lays out the rules of the garden. No tree.

Quentin follows the rules of the garden (doesn’t climb the tree, doesn’t “experience” mortality [e.i., Damuddy’s death]).

While the South is in a state of physical decay, the South of Quentin’s mind is still intact as long he and Caddy can stay in the garden.
The Divergence

• What if Adam refused the fruit?

• Quentin views Caddy’s behavior as a “sin” that places her outside of his well-ordered Eden. With his world in chaos, what does he do? Does he join her and forsake the garden (his romanticized South)? No, he pretends that he bit the apple!
“Father I have Committed Incest.”

• As Adam futilely begs to stay in the garden, Quentin begs his father to believe this absurd lie.

• With Eden crashing down around him, he is trying to create some pretext to draw Caddy back in (thinking that he will be able to restore order to his world).
Expulsion from Paradise

- Adam and Eve leave together. There is a chance for some balance to be restored. Mankind can be redeemed.
- Quentin refuses to leave. He stays amidst the decay, and refuses to live, change, adapt. There can be no redemption if he refuses to alter his mindset. The South isn’t going to rise again, baby.
Let's Take a Look at Quentin's Eden.
The Southern Female in Childhood
Female Maturity

Must have a proper passage into this stage. No making out in secret.
The Model Southern Gentleman
African American Life in the South
The Myth of Southern Benevolence, Part I
The Myth of Southern Benevolence, Part II
Idyllic Southern Mansion
The Decline...

Quentin’s mind refuses to accept this.
...And Fall

Next is a visual representation of the physical, economic, spiritual, and psychological state of the postbellum South which Quentin rejects.
Reflection

• How does Faulkner use an archetypal story to deepen the meaning of the text?

• As you continue to read the novel, begin trying to identify subtleties in the text that could be explored and developed into a paper.